

Society's *Greek New Testament* began to share a common text (26th and 3rd ed. respectively), their common text has become known as the "standard text." This designation is unfortunate since it runs the risk of establishing this text as a new *textus receptus* and could be understood as implying that ongoing research into text-critical questions is unnecessary. Fortunately, the last decade has witnessed the publication of two new critical texts, which will remind pastors and students that differences of opinion on important text-critical issues continue despite the vast amount of manuscript evidence that has been amassed over the last two centuries. In 2010, the SBL Greek New Testament appeared. Edited by Michael Holmes, this text differed from the Nestle-Aland edition in 540 variant units. Just seven years later, another edition of the Greek New Testament has appeared. This text was edited by Dirk Jongkind and Peter Williams of Tyndale House in Cambridge.

Several features of the THGNT are distinctive. First, the text is a revision of the edition produced in the nineteenth century by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles. Tregelles emphasized the oldest evidence in his effort to reconstruct the earliest attested form of the New Testament books. Likewise, except in cases where this is unfeasible (such as the Book of Revelation for which few early manuscripts are extant), the editors have chosen readings that appear in multiple manuscripts, with at least one dating to the fifth century or earlier. This approach will set the THGNT apart from future editions of the Nestle-Aland text since the *Editio Critica Maior* of the Catholic Epistles has exhibited an increased respect for later Byzantine manuscripts.

Second, although other editions of the Greek New Testament are concerned almost exclusively with the wording of the text, this new edition seeks to restore the order of NT books, spelling and orthography, and paragraph divisions of the early manuscripts. The "standard text" places NT books in the order that was most popular in the Latin-speaking church, which is also the order in which the books typically appear in English Bibles. This text arranges the major groups of New Testament books in the order in which they appear in the early Greek manuscripts and Greek-speaking church fathers: Gospels, Acts, General Epistles, Paul's Epistles (including Hebrews), and Revelation. Most modern editions use standardized spellings of Greek words. However, standardization of the spelling of Greek words did not occur until the Renaissance. This edition seeks to restore the spelling, breathing marks, and accents utilized in the early manuscripts. This edition bases its paragraph divisions on evidence from ancient manuscripts and even uses *ekthesis* (first line of the paragraph juts past the left margin), the device commonly employed

by the early scribes to break the text into sense units, to mark these divisions.

Third, the editors of the THGNT viewed the text, rather than the apparatus, as their major contribution. Thus, textual notes have been kept to a minimum. The brief apparatus only lists (1) variants that were supported by evidence almost as strong as the variant given in the text, (2) variants of great exegetical significance, and (3) variants that serve as helpful illustrations of early scribal habits. In most cases the apparatus lists only papyrus and majuscule witnesses, plus minuscule 69 and 1424. An additional seven minuscules are cited for 1 John 5:7 and an additional two for Hebrews 2:9. The editors also refrained from placing text-critical sigla in the text. This allowed for an uncluttered presentation of the text that aids in undistracted reading.

At times, the textual decision reached by the editors was puzzling and seemed contrary to the principles on which the text was based. An example is John 1:18 in which δ *μονογενής υἱός* rather than *μονογενής θεός* is the adopted reading. However, the editors promise, "We will seek to give further transparency to our editorial reasoning in a textual commentary to be published subsequent to this edition" (p. 506). Many users of the new edition will anxiously await publication of that textual commentary. A thorough textual commentary could prompt many users to prefer the new edition to the SBLGNT for which no textual commentary has yet been published.

Many will appreciate other characteristics of this edition as well. Although the "standard text" generally comes with a blue or red cover, this edition generally has a black cover so that it looks more like a traditional Bible. While the "standard text" has the title etched in gold on the front cover, this edition has the title only on the spine (along with a handsome staurogram) so that a student may carry his Greek testament to church or Bible study discretely. Finally, the Smyth-sewn binding and the hardy cover will likely ensure the durability of the volume despite heavy use.

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Michael Bird. *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. xii + 310 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0802867698. \$28.00.

With this volume Michael Bird offers a fresh analysis of Paul with a specific focus on his "Jewishness." Bird considers how Paul, while "thoroughly Jewish," could still "become a figure of notoriety and controversy

among his Jewish compatriots" (p. vii). The answer is that he was "anomalous, a strange figure with a blend of common and controversial Jewish beliefs that brought him into conflict with the socioreligious scene around him" (p. vii). This portrait of Paul is developed in an introduction and five chapters, with chapters one, four, and five being expansions of previous publications.

In the introduction, Bird investigates Paul's self-identity as a Jew, arguing that while thoroughly Jewish, Paul understood his "identity and vocation as indelibly connected to Israel's sacred history" (p. 7). His Jewish identity was not totalizing; rather, his identity and calling were "determined more properly by his connection to Israel's Messiah" (p. 7). Bird surveys several scholarly assessments of Paul's Jewishness, and he finds Barclay's description ("an anomalous Diaspora Jew") most acceptable, while qualifying it by relating Paul both to Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism (p. 26). Paul's anomaly operated at the "convictional level," namely his "apocalyptic interpretation of the Messiah's death and resurrection," which caused him to read Scripture in a new way (p. 28).

After the introduction, Bird relates Paul's soteriology to "common Judaism" (p. 31). He surveys and critiques various proposals concerning the Judaism with which Paul dialogued (pp. 32–47). Significantly, Bird maintains that Paul faithfully represented Judaism (p. 37), that there were some perspectives within Judaism that treated Torah obedience "as a pathway to eschatological life" (p. 39), and that in certain socioreligious situations some Jews emphasized human initiative for receiving divine blessing (p. 40). Bird questions whether "covenantal nomism" adequately describes Paul's pattern of religion (p. 41), asserts that Paul's critique of Judaism cannot be restricted to Jewish exclusion of Gentiles alone (p. 42), and affirms that Paul's "anthropological pessimism" drives his understanding of the Torah's limitations (p. 46). For Paul, being "in Christ" "transcends" and "relativizes" his Jewish origin but does not negate it (p. 52), and he critiques Judaism because it "looks to the Torah rather than to the Messiah for the revelation of God's righteousness" (p. 68).

The second chapter concerns Paul's apostleship. Bird argues that while Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, earlier in his career he evangelized the Jews and continued to do so when given an opportunity later in life (pp. 70–71). The incident at Antioch represents a turning point that forced Paul "to socially separate his Gentile-believing majority assemblies from Jewish communities" (p. 95). The anomalous part of Paul's career is his simultaneous protection of Gentiles converts from Jewish proselytism and his continual evangelism of Jews and bridge-building among Jewish-Christian communities (p. 104).

In the third chapter Bird engages the longstanding debate regarding

whether Paul's theology is apocalyptic or salvation-historical. Bird offers a *via media* with his apocalyptic and salvation-historical reading of Galatians. Paul communicates justification using apocalyptic imagery directed at a "concrete social reality" (p. 146); however, rather than rejecting salvation-history, Paul's argument in Galatians 3–4 is "premised upon it" (p. 160). Furthermore, Paul's Christ/Law antithesis relates primarily to the Law's social role in defining Israel and its "limited role" in salvation history (p. 168).

In the fourth chapter Bird analyzes the Antioch incident. At issue was not the "food" but the "company" (pp. 187, 193). Paul opposed Peter's pragmatic withdrawal from table fellowship since it undermined the gospel message that "God accepts Gentiles as Gentiles on the basis of faith" (p. 201), and for this reason he was unwilling to accept such an "equal but separate" compromise (p. 203). Bird understands the aftermath as a "parting *in* the ways," leading to a very real but "not absolute" fracture between Paul and the Jerusalem church (p. 202).

In the fifth chapter, Bird considers Paul and the Roman Empire. He summarizes the balance of evidence for and against anti-imperial readings of Paul (pp. 205–17) and the state of the debate in the letter to the Romans (pp. 217–23). While cautious against parallelomania (p. 224), Bird identifies passages in Romans that potentially illuminate Paul's stance toward the Empire and compares their language with known Roman artifacts (pp. 223–52). He concludes that while Paul's theology was "pastoral," it was not "divorced from the sociopolitical realities" of the day (p. 253). The "totalizing vision" of Paul's gospel competed with that of the Roman Empire (p. 253).

This book is a rewarding read and showcases two of Michael Bird's key strengths as an interpreter. First, Bird's work is well-written and thoroughly-researched; he critically engages a wide variety of scholars and illuminates the key data and issues for his readers. Second, he combines charitable discourse with common-sense analysis. Not only does he judiciously assess the strengths and weaknesses of the positions he critiques, but he provides his readers with helpful criteria for evaluating the myriad of positions in Pauline scholarship. For example, with simple brilliance, his insistence that any depiction of Paul must explain why he was persecuted by his Jewish contemporaries offers some clarity in the debate over how Paul stood in relationship to Judaism (pp. 15, 24).

One possible critique of this book is that the discussion regarding the "anomalous" nature of Paul's theology could be more extensive. Bird addresses this matter briefly in each chapter; however, in a few places this seems underdeveloped. For instance, chapter five devotes one sentence to the theme (p. 206). Despite this minor weakness, the book is a valuable

resource for studying Paul, and it will no doubt contribute to ongoing debates regarding Paul's relationship to Judaism and Gentiles.

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Cornelis van der Kooi and Gijsbert van den Brink. *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. xiv + 806 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0802872654. \$45.00.

“Christian dogmatics” can be a wax-nose kind of phrase, but two contemporary Dutch theologians have chosen it as an accurate title for their survey of systematic theology for a very simple reason. In *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction*, they wish to convey what the church has to say about “the momentous news of God’s intervention in Jesus Christ” (p. ix)—that is “dogmatics”—in such a way that situates it within their own Reformed tradition and also for “the entire [Christian] faith community” (p. ix).

The authors thus survey each of the dogmatic loci, with a commitment to being what they call “loyally orthodox.” That is, the authors “seek to connect with the teaching tradition of past centuries but simultaneously try to be open to those who claim to have a better understanding of certain issues” (p. xi). They consider themselves to be receivers of the Christian tradition, while at the same time those called to speak to the present generation of Christians, in light of our contemporary context. Their primary intended audience is students, although they hope the book will also benefit pastors, scholars in related but distinct fields, and journalists who wish to learn about the Christian faith and its theological grammar. It is important to realize at the outset, then, as the authors make clear, that they are writing as Dutch Reformed theologians, within the contexts of the Great Tradition but also of the modern West, with students in mind.

The structure of the book is fairly straightforward in that it is similar to other systematic theologies. Prolegomena comes first, followed by the doctrines of the Trinity and theology proper, then later revelation, creation, anthropology, sin and evil, Israel and the covenants, Christology, pneumatology, Scripture, ecclesiology, soteriology, and eschatology. In the introduction (p. xii), the authors make particular note (and so should we) of two important aspects of the outline. First, the inclusion of a chapter on Israel and the relationship between the covenants is unique compared to many systematic theologies. While the impetus for such a chapter, namely the events of the twentieth century and particularly the *Sho’ah*, are discussed by other contemporary theologians, Van der Kooi and Van den Brink’s book is distinct in dealing with those issues in a chapter all by

itself.

A second feature of the outline comes in the placement of the doctrines of revelation and Scripture. Their separation and their absence from the chapter on prolegomena indicate something of the authors’ understanding of these doctrines. Regarding revelation, the authors are concerned to structure the book in such a way that it mirrors “the actual practice of faith,” namely that a personal encounter with God precedes our epistemological explorations of what he has revealed to us (p. 163). Or, to put it in more classical terms, faith precedes understanding. Likewise, the placement of the doctrine of Scripture after Christology and pneumatology is not intended to minimize its importance, but to indicate what the authors believe is the proper context for understanding God’s inspired Word: It is about Christ and inspired by his Holy Spirit.

Aside from these unique aspects of the outline, the book is a fairly standard introduction to systematic theology. Each chapter provides an overview of the history of a particular locus, introduces readers to the traditional grammar for that locus, gives an overview of contemporary debates related to the locus, and provides a list of recommended resources if students wish to study it further.

Christian Dogmatics treats each dogmatic locus with judiciousness. It is careful to present the terms of debate within each locus fairly and only to represent the best arguments for each perspective in those debates. On the one hand, this allows the student to gain an accurate view of the breadth of Christianity and of Christian reflection on dogmatic loci. So, given the book’s intended audience, one could say it succeeds in being a proper introduction to Christian theology. However, on the other hand, this judiciousness sometimes results in the authors taking an overly cautious approach on certain issues. For instance, the chapter on the Trinity does not include their understanding of social Trinitarianism but instead merely presents the arguments for it and against it, as well as the prospective positives and negatives of adopting it. Something similar happens in the chapter on anthropology, where the authors attempt to construct a theological framework for how to understand sex biologically and in terms of sexual attraction, but then they punt, so to speak, on the issue of same-sex attraction and same-sex marriage. Such extreme caution allows the book to be used by Christians from a wide variety of theological traditions. And that might be a positive element, at least in terms of its distribution and use among a broad audience.

For this reviewer, though, such extreme caution, even if it potentially broadens an audience, also means that the book does not do something that systematic theologies should do—shape and form their readers *systematically*. Or at least, it does not do it in places where it may matter most.

Many of the issues on which Van der Kooi and Van den Brink choose to “plead the fifth” are not *adiaphora*, tertiary, or ancillary. On the contrary, many of them stand at the heart of the Christian faith (the Trinity) or at the center of public discourse (sex and gender). For this reason, rather than being what others may consider a main strength of the book, this reviewer regards the authors’ overly cautious approach on matters of great importance to be a fundamental limitation.

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John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds. *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 1024 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433545917. \$60.00.

Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth is the latest contribution originating from the ministry of John MacArthur. Co-edited with Richard Mayhue, this volume is a substantial systematic theology that includes detailed exposition of theological positions for which MacArthur and The Master’s Seminary have become known: a presuppositional approach to Scripture, young earth creationism, Reformed soteriology, cessationism, elder-led free church ecclesiology, gender complementarianism, and futuristic dispensational premillennialism. Especially for those who share all or a significant portion of those beliefs, this will be a welcome resource.

The editors suggest the volume be used in conjunction with several related resources that share these commitments: the *MacArthur Study Bible*, the *MacArthur Topical Bible*, and the *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* series (p. 27). The lack of an Old Testament commentary series in this collection is an unfortunate gap.

Biblical Doctrine follows a traditional evangelical ordering of theological topics and includes several helpful features. Each chapter begins with a traditional hymn text and includes a bibliography of several systematic theologies and topic-specific resources. There are both general and scripture indexes. The editors emphasize the need for theology to be practical and to result in proper worship and obedience. There are also brief discussions of important contemporary cultural issues like race and gender, though they are lightly sourced and the bibliography on these issues is extremely limited.

The preface suggests *Biblical Doctrine* was designed with multiple audiences in view, ranging from seminary instructors to lay people (p. 26). This was perhaps too ambitious a goal since those various audiences have different needs. Because of this, the work imperfectly meets the need of

each of those audiences. For many lay persons, at over 1,000 pages, this will likely be too demanding a work. This is why comparable theologies like Erickson’s and Grudem’s have abridged versions (and in Grudem’s case, an abridgement of the abridgement). Nevertheless, for the pastor or motivated layman who shares the book’s theological framework and is willing to engage its depth, it will be a useful work.

Biblical Doctrine has some significant limitations for academic settings. Its confessional commitments will make it a difficult fit in some institutions. Even more problematic is the way that it handles alternative views. In most cases it describes alternative positions but frequently fails to develop the views or their arguments in sufficient detail. The bibliographies at the end of each chapter, while helpful for those agreeing with *Biblical Doctrine*’s conclusions, in most cases provide limited or no details on resources articulating those alternative views.

For seminary purposes, the limited range of resources and the lack of interaction with contemporary theologians like VanHoozer, McGrath, Bloesch, Pannenberg, Moltmann, and others, will limit its usefulness as a primary text. Barth, for example, is mentioned only twice. Similarly, there is a very Western focus to resources and issues addressed. Modern theological movements like liberation theology and process theology are not covered. Nor is there any significant interaction with theologians outside the Western tradition. These limitations will not be a major hindrance for many evangelical users, but those interested in a more global theological focus will need to look elsewhere.

Perhaps *Biblical Doctrine*’s most distinctive contribution among comparable evangelical theologies is its approach to eschatology, providing a helpful contemporary statement of futuristic premillennialism. It advocates a new creation eschatology rather than a spiritual vision focus. It provides a vigorous defense of futurism, premillennialism, the future fulfillment of Daniel’s seventy weeks, and a pretribulation rapture. Advocates of these views will appreciate this clear and coherent exposition. But the shortcomings noted above are evident. For example, the discussion of covenants and views of prophetic fulfillment (about 15 pages of text) includes only four footnotes to articles from the *Master’s Seminary Journal*, from which some of the material was adapted. The lack of sustained interaction with the most current resources for alternative positions is unfortunate and will limit its impact in academic settings.

There is also at least one idiosyncratic feature of the book. It has two general editors, but no authors. The preface does mention some Master’s Seminary faculty who contributed (and several sections reference faculty articles published elsewhere as significant resources), but it is unclear who assisted with what sections. I would prefer clearer credit be given to those

who contributed.

Despite these limitations, we should welcome *Biblical Doctrine* as a work which will draw attention to and encourage reflection on important theological themes. For that we give thanks and hope that this volume will spur further efforts to make theology relevant to the church.

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David L. Allen, Eric Hankins, and Adam Harwood, eds. *Anyone Can Be Saved: A Defense of "Traditional" Southern Baptist Soteriology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016. xii + 193 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1498285155. \$24.00.

Anyone Can be Saved is a defense of the Traditionalist Statement, a 2012 document defining the traditional soteriological view of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and thus the corresponding Traditionalist position on soteriology. The authors of this edited work argue they are attempting to build a doctrine of salvation that arises from the Bible alone, rejecting common presuppositions and definitions from the Calvinism-Arminian debate.

Eric Hankins's chapter on savability lays the foundation for the rest of the book. He provides the context of the soteriology debate and explains how he believes Southern Baptist theology fits into it. He argues the ten articles of the Traditionalist Statement "are simply an expression of the various implications of the belief that anyone can be saved forever" (p. 11). Hankins asserts that because of the SBC's "commitment to biblical authority, to simplicity and praxis, and to passion for missions," an explanation is due on what Southern Baptists mean when they say "the gospel is for all" (p. 11). After this introduction, the book follows the Traditionalist Statement article by article, explaining each tenet of the document. It concludes with a defense against charges of semi-Pelagianism and an overview of various views of divine sovereignty and human freedom.

One of the strengths of this work is the authors consistently return to Scripture to try to rightly interpret its soteriological passages. The authors should also be lauded for their passion to see every person saved and their dedication to this end. Unfortunately, many of their arguments are overshadowed by the book's weaknesses.

One of the main weaknesses of the book is its vague terminology. The contributors need to define several terms they use regularly to provide clarity in the work. The first term requiring definition is the "plain meaning of Scripture." An explanation would help the reader to understand the hermeneutic that the contributors are using because it is such a central

part of their argument. The contributors also need to provide a consistent definition of "Calvinism." In some instances, it refers to five-point Calvinism; in others it refers to a moderate form of Calvinism.

The authors also need to express care in defining their own view. The release of the Traditionalist Statement sparked debate over the issue of semi-Pelagianism. One of the final chapters of the work is a defense against the accusations that those who adhere to the Traditionalist Statement are semi-Pelagians, and while the authors offer a defense against these accusations, there are instances in this work where they get uncomfortably close to that position. This should be remedied in the future if a second edition is released.

Another area lacking refinement is the use of terms such as "many" or "most." In multiple instances, a contributor uses one of these terms without any citations to verify his statements. In his chapter on the free will of man, Braxton Hunter states that "most Southern Baptists find compatibilism to be an unsatisfactory theological explanation" (p. 121). While he may be correct in this statement, he needs a citation to demonstrate this claim.

In the same vein, the contributors make several faulty assumptions and generalizations, implying that the SBC is more cohesive than it actually is. Eric Hankins, for example, states, "For almost a century, Southern Baptists have found that a sound, biblical soteriology can be taught, maintained, and defended without subscribing to Calvinism" (p. 17). Yet, *The Abstract of Principles* (1858), which is still affirmed by some Southern Baptists today, clearly demonstrates affirmation of Calvinist views of soteriology within the SBC. Statements like Hankins's appear throughout the book and present a skewed view of Southern Baptist history. That assessment applies to some Southern Baptists, but certainly not all of them—there is no singular expression of Southern Baptist theology, and there never has been. If the authors desire to use such language they must qualify what they mean and provide evidence.

Finally, the contributors harbor harsh assumptions of Calvinism. There are better ways to critique a position with which one disagrees than by making judgments such as "some of the harsh realities of Calvinism are contrary to the clear teachings of scripture" (p. 77). Statements such as this assume Calvinists care more about their system than trying to rightly interpret Scripture.

To conclude, the editors desire to "contribute to the peaceable, ongoing, convention-wide conversation on the doctrine of salvation" (p. xi). The authors argue they are looking for the common ground they have with Calvinists in the Convention, that Calvinists should not be run out

of the Convention, and that there is a need for mutual respect amid disagreement. Unfortunately, the tone of many of the chapters does not live up to this desire. The overtly anti-Calvinist sentiment hinders the authors' desire to find common ground to work together. While this work desires to promote a dialogue, it fails in this regard. For those who read it and are already convinced of the authors' position, the book will solidify their beliefs. But those who hold to a different position will not be persuaded by its arguments.

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Thomas Dekker. *Four Birds of Noah's Ark: A Prayer Book from the Time of Shakespeare*, ed. Robert Hudson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 167 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0802874818. \$17.99.

Robert Hudson brings Thomas Dekker's collection of prayers, not published since 1924, into the hands, hearts, and minds of twenty-first-century readers. Hudson makes these 400-year-old prayers accessible to today's readers through careful editing and modernization of the original text. However, the original organization is maintained with four birds "to comfort [readers] with four different messages" (p. 19). Hudson's reintroduction of this prayer book gives these emotional and thought-provoking seventeenth-century prayers an opportunity to resonate with Christians today.

Hudson does not simply republish Dekker's work, but he takes accessibility a step further by modernizing the spelling, syntax, and grammar to make the prayers easier for modern readers to understand. He also adds explanatory endnotes for clarity. Some of the longer portions of Dekker's original prayers have been cut and others paraphrased for twenty-first-century readers. Through all the revisions Hudson attempted "to adhere to the high-mindedness of the original" (p. 15). He describes his changes and provides some biographical information about Dekker in the introduction. One of the most helpful revisions is Hudson's division of the prayers into short lines, grouping similar ideas together to encourage the reader to linger over these "stanzas" and meditate on God's provisions. He also adds references to Bible passages with each of the fifty-six prayers for readers who would like to use this edition devotionally. While the table of contents provides only the section headings, a helpful list of all of the prayers is printed at the end of the text.

Hudson follows Dekker's original division of the prayer book into four sections—the dove, the eagle, the pelican, and the phoenix—and concludes with Dekker's collection of pithy quotes. Each bird represents

a different kind of prayer. The dove section focuses on prayers for working people like farmers, apprentices, merchants, sailors, and even schoolchildren. Prayers for royals and rulers make up the eagle section. The pelican and the phoenix represent Christ who shed his blood for his children and rose from death to life. The pelican prayers include prayers against the seven deadly sins, and the phoenix prayers focus on thanksgiving "for the benefits we receive in the death and resurrection of Christ" (p. 123). The final section of the book, "Feathers," is a collection of short quotes from early church fathers which may be used as meditations to accompany the prayers.

Although these prayers were written over 400 years ago, they are strikingly modern in topic and tone and may be used to encourage the prayer life of Christians today. The dove prayers can be used for personal supplication or on behalf of others. For example, "A Prayer for a Chambermaid" could be applicable to any young person who would pray, "As I grow up in years, let me grow up in grace" (p. 35). "A Prayer for Sailors in a Storm at Sea" is not limited to actual sailors but may be prayed for anyone in the midst of the storms of life. Many of the prayers might also prompt readers to pray for those for whom they do not often pray, like people who visit the sick or prisoners in jail. "A Prayer for Those Who Work in Dangerous Places" could be applied to today's politicians, school teachers, or students who have just earned their driver's license. Those in dangerous places are led to pray, "guard me while I lay asleep—oh, let the same watchmen protect me now I am awake" (p. 57).

The prayers for rulers in the eagle section can easily be applied to today's government leaders. There are also prayers for the church and clergy, the courts and judges, the city, and the family. As readers seek to expand their circle of prayer, this section leads them to pray globally for areas of famine and Christians experiencing persecution. In addition to the prayers against the seven deadly sins, the pelican section begins with "A Prayer for the Morning" and ends with "A Prayer for the Evening." Readers are prompted to rise with thanksgiving looking forward to "rising from the grave, when the last trumpet shall sound" (p. 101). When going to bed they are reminded to forgive others as God has forgiven them. The last prayer section, the phoenix, is also encouraging to the modern reader who is reminded of various benefits of Christ's death and resurrection that are taken for granted all too often.

This book contains blessings and solicitations relevant to the twenty-first-century Christian and would serve as a useful instrument in the prayer warrior's tool belt. Pastors, Sunday school teachers, or other church leaders may choose to use this text as a resource to help their flock in the discipline of building a consistent prayer life. Hudson's edition is a

blessing to modern readers because these prayers are as comforting and inspiring today as they were 400 years ago.

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Douglas L. Winiarski. *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century New England*. Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, and Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. xxiv + 607 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1469628264. \$49.95.

Over the past decade, Douglas Winiarski has published a series of groundbreaking articles that have caused historians to reconsider widespread assumptions about the nature of revival in Colonial America and the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. As it turns out, these articles were part of a larger project that has culminated in Winiarski's new book, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century New England*. It promises to be the sort of work that reframes a field.

Over the course of five extensive "parts" (Winiarski eschews chapters), *Darkness Falls* recasts the story of the First Great Awakening as a radical religious movement, shaped far more by lay sensibilities than the sermons and writings of elite clergy. It upended the conservative sensibilities of New England Congregationalism and fostered a more conversionist, egalitarian religious paradigm that came to be associated with evangelicalism. Rather than seeing the mid-eighteenth-century revivals as the last days of Puritanism, the awakenings marked the transition—even the death knell—of Congregationalism's near-hegemony over New England religion, replacing it with an individualistic pluralism that became part and parcel of religion in the emerging nation. To make his case, Winiarski scoured an epic number of archives in an effort to focus on the lived religion of everyday believers who rejected their Puritan inheritance for an evangelical outlook. The result is a new grand narrative of the Great Awakening "from below" that demonstrates just how much revival was a challenge to Christian culture.

Winiarski argues that pre-revival New England was a conservative culture that emphasized nurture more than conversion. The world of the New England Puritans was a "Land of Light" where adults who had been raised in the church typically sought communicant membership once they had children and often never experienced full assurance of their salvation. Clergy shepherded generations of family members in parish churches whose attendance—and gradually membership—roughly coincided with

the local community. That changed when the revivals demanded Damascus Road-like conversion experiences of all would-be members, often collapsing assurance into conversion. The "Whitefieldarians"—Winiarski's name for radical evangelicals—emphasized the new birth more than church membership, countenanced personal revelations and impressions alongside belief in biblical authority, affirmed exorcisms and miraculous healings, and focused their preaching and teaching on election and conversion rather than a more fully orbed approach to doctrinal formation. Even when moderate (or repentant) Whitefieldarians sought to reign in the more radical elements of the emerging evangelicalism, laypeople remained attracted to the new movements—and the preachers who continued to embrace them.

The Congregationalist parish system gradually collapsed as the revived—almost all of whom were already church attenders and often communicant members—began to abandon their churches for New Light congregations that were more amenable to the Whitefieldarian ethos. Not a few of the radicals rejected the most important visible sign of the Holy Commonwealth—infant baptism—and embraced believer-only baptism as evidence of conversion and the pathway into communicant membership. Radical preachers and periodicals fed the Whitefieldarian tendencies on the left while conservatives, many of whom later became Unitarians and Universalists, rejected revival as religious enthusiasm that threatened the social order itself. Moderates such as Edwards—himself a chastened radical—tried to mark out a middle ground, though most pro-revival New Englanders moved in an increasingly radical direction. The Puritans did not become Yankees—they became evangelicals. And for evangelicals, conversion was normative, meaning arrangements that downplayed transformational encounters with Jesus Christ were actually a threat to authentic religion rather than evidence of a Christ-centered culture.

Darkness Falls on the Land of Light makes a signal contribution to our understanding of the First Great Awakening by focusing on the stories of laypeople and lesser-known pastors and casting the era as one of radicalism as much as revivalism. The scope of Winiarski's research is remarkable, far surpassing the work of other historians before him. While Winiarski's interpretations tend toward a secularist, "closed universe" account that explains away spiritual phenomena as the results of natural causes, he is respectful of the theological convictions of his subjects. Most of the readers of this journal are Baptists, and Winiarski's insights into the ethos of the radical Separate Baptists is an important corrective to the overemphasis on alleged doctrinal and liturgical differences between the ascendant Separates and the older Regular Baptists. Coupled alongside Robert Caldwell's impressive new work *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (IVP

Academic, 2017), which focuses on the thought of revival elites, Winiarski's narrative will shape the way a generation of historians thinks about the history of the First Great Awakening.

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Jarvis J. Williams and Kevin M. Jones, eds. *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017. xvii + 179 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1433643347. \$24.99.

For years, many leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) have worked diligently to change the popular perception of the denomination as a racist organization of churches born out of a defense of slavery and consisting primarily of white southerners. Despite the daunting task before them, these leaders set out to ensure that no other Protestant denomination in twenty-first-century America would come close to matching their efforts in denouncing racism and promoting genuine racial reconciliation. This effort began in earnest in 1995 when the SBC passed a resolution publicly repenting of its historic connections to both slavery and racism and reached a major milestone in 2012 with the election of an African American, Fred Luter, as the president of the SBC. Despite this aggressive campaign, and its notable accomplishments, the SBC and its churches continue to be looked upon with suspicion by non-whites. Although the SBC can lay claim to be the most ethnically-diverse Protestant denomination in America, it is still a predominately white, southern denomination. In addition, the recent actions of some of its leaders have caused some minorities to question the SBC's commitment to ethnic diversity. In 2016, a number of prominent individuals associated with the SBC, such as Jerry Falwell, Jr., and the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Robert Jeffress, championed the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump, whose campaign was widely viewed as driven by racist rhetoric. Likewise, in 2017, the SBC was widely criticized when it stumbled in passing a resolution condemning the white-supremacist-tainted Alt-Right movement because some questioned the wording of the resolution.

This new book, edited by two African-American professors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is a collection of essays written by black and white SBC leaders explaining the racist roots of the denomination, identifying the progress it has made, and most importantly, providing suggestions for moving forward. While the essays are uneven in length, quality, and substance, there are some common themes found throughout the book. Every contributor obviously longs for the day when racism no longer exists in the SBC, but none of them believe this goal has

been met. Several contributors reference relatively recent accounts of racism in the SBC. Some are examples of enduring racist policies, such as an SBC church not allowing the body of a biracial child to be buried in its cemetery (p. 132), while others reveal lingering racist attitudes, such as when, in 2012, a high-ranking administrator in an unnamed SBC seminary made it clear to Dr. Walter Strickland of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary that he did not consider the works of African-American theologians to be "real theology" (p. 54).

Another discernable theme running through the essays is that white members of the SBC generally (though not universally) possess noble motives when it comes to racial inclusion, but that it will take more than mere sentiments and statements to achieve their goals. What is ultimately needed is for the SBC to perceptibly practice racial inclusion rather than continue to reflect the majority culture. Fortunately, contributors to this book provide concrete steps to take to ensure the SBC will one day look more like the Bible's revelation of heaven: a gathering of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation worshipping God together as one.

The two primary steps identified in this book, from the bottom up, are: (1) white pastors should demonstrate their commitment to racial unity not only through the content of their sermons but also by ensuring that non-whites are found among their friends and staff members, and (2) SBC entities, including state conventions and agencies such as the IMB, NAMB, and LifeWay, should employ non-whites and provide products and services that will be welcomed by non-whites. Curricula and books published by LifeWay should not assume a white audience, depicting whites in pictures or exclusively featuring white authors. Seminary faculties, as well as the readings that faculty members assign their students, should also reflect greater ethnic diversity. And finally, non-whites should occupy prominent positions of power and influence in these various entities. In short, if the stain of racism is ever going to disappear from the SBC, then SBC churches, associations, conventions, seminaries, and agencies must indicate by their actions that they are not run by and for whites. Such change requires nothing short of a cultural shift in the SBC, whereby the thoughts, words, and actions of the whites who currently dominate the convention are guided not by the default majority white culture, but rather by one that is multi-ethnic, multi-racial, biblical, and inclusive.

Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention demonstrates that the SBC has made great strides in repudiating its racist heritage but shows that there is still much work to be done. By God's grace, the matter is not left there. Instead, those who contribute to this timely and helpful book explain what can and should be done to bring the Southern

Baptist Convention into conformity with God's vision for the church.

Brent J. Aucoin
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Jeremy M. Kimble. *40 Questions About Church Membership and Discipline*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017. 272 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0825444456. \$14.99.

Since the publication of Mark Dever's *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* virtually two decades ago, the topics of church membership and discipline have generated important discussions within many local churches. For several reasons, however, many of those churches are still unclear on exactly how to go through the distinct processes of church membership and discipline. Jeremy Kimble has done a fantastic job of assembling a straightforward and practical guide for local churches to address and practice these matters. Defining his target audience and purpose in the opening sentence of the introduction, he states: "This book is intended to assist Christians, pastors, and churches to rightly understand and apply biblical truth regarding church membership and church discipline" (p. 9).

Kimble's book is part of a continuing 40 Questions series. Much like the entire series, this volume is not intended to be a scholarly work. Rather, it is written as a handbook for pastors and church members and written on a layman's level. As the title highlights, Kimble has assembled forty questions regarding church membership and discipline. Each question is subsequently answered in a chapter that is approximately six to eight pages in length, making the entire book a total of 272 pages (including preliminary and supplementary material). Each chapter begins with the primary question as its title, then, typically, has a short introductory paragraph that provides the outline for the forthcoming response. The argument is presented and is followed by a succinct summarizing paragraph to draw the chapter to a close. Each chapter has approximately five "Reflection Questions," which are remarkably helpful for the intended audience. These questions are excellent tools to help churches and leaders apply the biblical truths that have been outlined.

While the book is divided into four parts, each segment is not equally weighted. Part One has four chapters, dealing with "General Questions about Membership and Discipline." Parts Two and Three are constructed and outlined in similar fashion and make up thirty-four chapters of the book (sixteen chapters and eighteen chapters respectively). Part Two is titled "General Questions about Church Membership" while Part Three is "General Questions about Church Discipline." Each of these parts is then divided into three sections dealing with: A. Theological Questions,

B. Ministry Questions, and C. Practical Questions. Part Four contains two chapters that connect membership and discipline to the broader picture of theology and everyday Christian life.

Let it be clearly stated that the strengths of this book are too numerous to list in this brief review. Kimble presents a practical, easy-to-read guide on these issues. He has certainly done his homework, as he includes an Old Testament perspective on both topics, which many books with similar discussions omit. Kimble is also willing to deal with difficult texts (e.g., Matt 7:1, on judging, p. 208) and offers practical suggestions for the modern local church, recognizing that his perspective may not be agreed upon by all readers. Finally, Kimble has carefully woven the issues of membership, discipleship, discipline, and ecclesiology into the larger framework of the Kingdom of God.

There are relatively few weaknesses and it seems hypercritical to highlight them. While most of the book is well organized, its concluding section is disproportionately brief. The breadth of material that Kimble has managed to cover in the previous thirty-eight questions is significant, so to conclude with two rather inconclusive and non-comprehensive questions ("What is the Significance of Church Membership and Discipline for Theology?" and "What is the Significance of Church Membership and Discipline for the Christian Life?") leaves the reader feeling that this discussion has yet to be finalized. Additionally, since Kimble uses several images to describe the church (p. 22), it is surprising, considering his ecclesiology, that he does not provide a description of the church as the "bride of Christ" (see Rev 21). Finally, Kimble uses the words "commitment" and "covenant" synonymously in his definition of church membership. It is my perspective that those terms have nuanced definitions, and church membership should be viewed and examined as a commitment (see Matt 5:37), not a lifelong covenant.

In conclusion, *40 Questions About Church Membership and Discipline* is an excellent contribution to the discussion of ecclesiology, not to mention the 40 Questions series. Kimble's submission should be on the shelf, and perhaps required reading, of every local church pastor. At the very least, it should be easily accessible when such issues arise within the church. While this book may not show up on a best-seller list, Kimble thoroughly accomplished his goal of assisting churches and pastors by applying biblical truth to the areas of membership and discipline.

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G. Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker, eds. *Finding Lost Words: The Church's Right to Lament*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017. xvii + 287 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1532617478. \$36.00.

Finding Lost Words (hereafter *FLW*) is a timely work on a neglected topic in the Christian church: lament. According to the editors, two underlying convictions and two general aims guide the volume. The two convictions are that “the church needs to rediscover lament” (p. 2) and that “there is a felt need to bridge the gap that exists between biblical scholarship and the church” (p. 3). *FLW* aims “to make recent development in Psalms scholarship accessible to pastors and students, and to assuage the loss of lament in the life of the church” (p. 3). It carefully defends these convictions and pursues these aims. It is an erudite combination of breadth and depth. It covers enough material to proffer a thorough argument, but it also provides such detailed argumentation that the relevant issues are adequately assessed. In the following paragraphs, I provide positive feedback and constructive criticism of *FLW*.

I focus on outlining four positive aspects of *FLW*, primarily by evaluating representative chapters. My explanation of the positive elements of the book, through the lenses of these individual chapters, hopes to elucidate the overarching contribution of this volume. First, the comprehensiveness of *FLW* is its greatest strength. In one volume, the authors engage in various fields of study such as the history of interpretation, speech act theory, theological interpretation, textual criticism, canonical theory, translation theory, pastoral theology, homily, and psychology, to name just a few. Each field is adeptly utilized, and the chapters carefully organized to defend, invite, and explain the place of lament in the contemporary church. *FLW*'s comprehensiveness and clarity make it a welcome contribution to the topic of lament. It is an exemplar of interdisciplinary biblical and theological research.

Second, *FLW* provides a potent argument for the revival of lament in the church. The authors make this argument from numerous angles, but one angle is particularly salient. David Burge shows that Jesus, Peter, and Paul lamented and even commended lament for later generations of Christians (pp. 116–29). Suffering was a common experience of these three figures and this led them to lament (e.g., Jesus' lament from the cross, Peter's bitter weeping after denying Christ, and Paul's unceasing anguish for the Jews in Rom 9:1–3). Christians sometimes think that lament is unacceptable because the New Testament teaches that suffering produces endurance and joy. Burge draws attention to the other side of the coin. Suffering also leads to lament in the New Testament, especially in the lives of these central figures.

Third, multiple chapters of *FLW* utilize reception history to defend their thesis. One chapter is particularly illuminating. Ian Maddock analyzes the reception of Psalm 77 in the preaching of John Calvin, Matthew Henry, John Wesley, and Charles Simeon (pp. 24–36). Simeon argued that Psalm 77 serves as an example of distrust in God while Henry emphasized that the psalm ends on a note of trust. For different reasons, they both believed that lament reflected faithlessness rather than faith. In contrast, Calvin and Wesley contended that Psalm 77 reveals a deep trust in God's faithfulness. Maddock uses these varied interpretations of the biblical text in times past to instruct the contemporary church in the practice of lament. Maddock commends the way of Calvin and Wesley rather than the way of Simeon and Henry. His use of reception history is keen and instructive.

Fourth, *FLW* untangles the thorny problem of imprecatory prayers. This problem arises in multiple chapters, but Kit Barker's explanation represents the balanced approach that the entire volume takes towards this delicate issue (pp. 94–107). Barker makes three points about imprecation: imprecation is not about personal vengeance but about entrusting vengeance to YHWH, it is an act of faith in YHWH's sovereignty, and it is an act of loyalty as it reveals that we are a part of YHWH's camp. This careful, balanced thinking pervades Barker's chapter on Psalm 69, and it characterizes much of the book.

These are a few examples of the general orientation of *FLW*. Overall, this volume is a clear, balanced, and timely approach to a neglected subject. It is not flawless, however. The flaws are not characteristic of the entire volume but rather of the individual chapters. Two examples are salient. First, David Cohen argues that the lament psalms attempt to leverage favor with God amid trying circumstances (p. 70). However, it is more likely that the lament psalms attempt to motivate divine action rather than leverage divine favor. Second, Andrew Shead uses meter in his (otherwise helpful) translation and analysis of Psalm 80 (pp. 175–88). This approach is undesirable since James Kugel (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*) and others have shown that biblical Hebrew poetry is not metrical.

In conclusion, this book deserves a hearing in the academy and the church today because it adequately addresses a neglected subject.

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Mark A. Maddix and James Riley Estep, Jr. *Practicing Christian Education: An Introduction to Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 192 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0801030963. \$22.99.

For some, the words “Christian education” conjure images of flannel graphs or poorly lit Sunday school classrooms with complimentary bad coffee. This sort of thinking is unfortunate if the goal of Christian education is to “[form] an environment wherein believers are instructed, equipped, and nurtured for a life of faith in the real world” (p. 6). So, given the importance of Christian education in the life of the individual Christian, the local church, and one’s community, Mark A. Maddix and James Riley Estep, Jr. have written *Practicing Christian Education: An Introduction for Ministry*.

Practicing Christian Education provides a thumbnail sketch of Christian education, particularly as it relates to the life of the local church. It does so over seventeen brief chapters, each of which concludes with reflection questions and suggestions for further reading. Some chapters include appendices. The authors draw on Christian theology and the social sciences to develop a practical guide to education that is Christian (p. 37).

In chapter one, the authors describe education, apply it to Christian education, and briefly state why it is necessary for the life of the local church. The authors rightly note that “wherever learning is occurring, education is occurring” (p. 2). This insight leads them to approach Christian education from a holistic perspective (p. 3).

Chapter two is a study of biblical principles for practicing Christian education. The authors cover several of the relevant texts (Deut 6:4–9; Matt 28:19–20; and Acts 2:42). They also look to Ezra’s example (in Ezra 7:10) to highlight four characteristics of effective Christian educators (p. 12): “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel” (ESV).

The goal of chapter three is to provide “an overview of the primary theological doctrines and their relationship to Christian education” (p. 15). Because of the brevity of the section on theological doctrines, the authors’ descriptions tend to be reductionist.

In chapter four, the authors focus on the historical development of Christian education until the present day. Included in this chapter are two extremely helpful tables (“Precursors to Christian Education” and “Rise of Christian Education”), giving a historical overview of Christian education (pp. 28–29, 30–33).

In chapter five, Maddix and Estep define Christian education and introduce and explain three approaches to theology and education: exclusivity, primacy, and an integrative approach, which they favor (pp. 43–

44).

Chapter six addresses the place of Christian education as a church-related ministry. After briefly describing what the New Testament says about ministry in general, the authors outline the defining marks of a Christian education pastor (pp. 48–50).

Chapter seven overviews three ways people learn and begins to think through how this might look in a Christian context. According to the authors, people learn through conceptual development, experiences, and skill learning (pp. 53–59).

In chapter eight, the authors discuss the place of Scripture in the formation of a Christian. Since Christian education is concerned with the formation of people into the likeness of Christ and because Scripture is “an indispensable element for practicing Christian education” (p. 63), they address three formative Bible practices related to Christian education: *lectio divina*, small group inductive Bible study, and corporate worship. However, the authors’ support of the Catholic practice of *lectio divina* is problematic due to its highly subjective nature.

Chapter nine explains congregational formation and how it is accomplished in the life of the local church. Chapter ten naturally follows with the “what and how” of Christian formation, particularly as it is facilitated in the local church (pp. 87–89).

Chapter eleven focuses on developmental theories and how they relate to learning and spiritual growth. To reach this goal, the authors discuss three theories of human growth: cognitive, moral, and faith development (pp. 92–96). The following chapter continues the theme with a discussion of human development, particularly as it relates to stages of life.

Chapters thirteen through seventeen are more practical in nature, as they discuss what a Christian education pastor does, namely, teaching, administering, curriculum evaluation, and equipping believers for Christian service. Chapter sixteen would be particularly helpful for anyone who teaches in a local church setting, especially one who has little or no formal background in Christian education.

Maddix and Estep are to be commended for tackling as broad a subject as Christian education in a book of this size. Alongside the theory of Christian education, they add much practical wisdom that should encourage and equip Christian educators in their ministry. This book would be an ideal text for an undergraduate course on Christian education and could also be used in a foundations course for a graduate program in Christian education, since almost all of the topics covered in the text are generally covered in greater detail as part of a program’s scope and sequence. The book, however, is heavily influenced by Wesleyan teaching on Christian education and Wesleyan theology. That is not necessarily a

bad thing. It must simply be recognized.

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Ayman S. Ibrahim. *The Stated Motivations for the Early Islamic Expansion (622–641): A Critical Revision of Muslims' Traditional Portrayal of the Arab Raids and Conquests*. Crosscurrents: New Studies on the Middle East. New York: Peter Lang, 2018. xxiv + 242 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433135286. \$99.95.

It is no secret that studies of Islamic origins are characterized by a good deal of ferment in our day. Whereas some engage in wholesale efforts to question the foundations of Islamic historiography, Ayman Ibrahim, an Egyptian Christian and director of the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam, draws on Islamic sources to raise two related questions: What can account for the rapid, early expansion of the Islamic Umma in the early decades of Islam? What were the motives of the generals and leaders under Muhammad and his successors as they engaged in one of the most rapid military expansions the world has ever seen?

Limiting himself to Islamic historians and chroniclers, and preferring the earlier ones when possible, Ibrahim examines what Muslims had to say about this rapid expansion. Of course, like anyone engaged in Muslim-Christian dialogue or Muslim evangelism, Ibrahim knows the standard apologetic line: The rapid expansion of *Dar al-Islam* was due to the sincere, spiritual desire of the Muslims to liberate communities living under the benighted practitioners of disbelief (*kufir*) and association (*shirk*). However, is this supported by the evidence?

With very extensive footnotes the author chronicles event after event—the extermination of the Jewish tribes of Medina, Muhammad's raids, the wars of apostasy, the conquest of Syria, the conquest of Egypt—and shows that in reality the principal motives of the conquerors had little or nothing to do with any spiritual endeavor. In fact, they were almost always dominated by the desire for spoils and slaves, and sometimes by a desire for political advantage. After outlining his methods and sources, he devotes the bulk of the book to examining the sources.

Chapter five is valuable enough to stand alone for researchers, since here the author explores some important—and controversial—terms in the Qur'an, namely *jihad* (struggle or strive) and *qital* (fighting). He also tries to discern to what extent the People of the Book (i.e., Christians and Jews) are to be fought against. Are all of them unbelievers by virtue of having rejected Muhammad? Or is it rather the case that only a *portion* of

the People of the Book are to be the objects of jihad, fighting, and killing? His painstaking treatment of the topic seems to presuppose that the Qur'an consistently and systematically sticks to this or that term. However, a strong argument can be made that the choice of vocabulary in the Qur'an has more to do with rhythm, rhyme, and oratory than any sort of grammatical consistency. Nevertheless, chapter five concludes with an interesting evaluation of certain verses that are commonly cited to assure the world that Islam is a "religion of peace."

A minor weakness of the book is Ibrahim's use of the term "traditional interpretation" of Islamic expansion. By this he means the standard exculpatory narrative, that the Islamic conquests were not carried out for the sake of booty but for the sake of spiritual "striving." In our own times when the public image of Islam has been tarnished in the eyes of many, it is not surprising that such an apologetic should become commonplace. It would be preferable though to refer to this "traditional interpretation" as the "apologetic interpretation," since the word *tradition* has a very specific meaning in Islam and can refer to the Sunna of Muhammad himself. And in fact, Ibrahim cites this very body of work at times to *refute* the "traditional interpretation." There are also a number of small grammatical and punctuation errors scattered throughout *The Stated Motivations*, and at times I felt like the text had been edited and re-edited by so many people that a clear line of argument was difficult to discern.

Nevertheless, Ibrahim's inclusion of Arabic phrases from the original (i.e., historical and qur'anic) texts is appreciated (albeit in the modified Latin alphabet). This is important because words in Arabic may have slightly different meanings than their English translations. Moreover, Ibrahim is clearly successful in his main endeavor—demonstrating that the apologetic reading of Islamic expansion finds no support at all in the words and texts of the earliest Muslim witnesses and their historiographers.

I certainly hope that Muslim scholars and apologists will carefully engage with this book. My own work on converts from Islam to Christianity points to the reality that when Muslims delve deeply into their own history and the biography of Muhammad, they often seriously start to question the rosy claims of the local imam. On the other hand, my years of experience in communicating with Muslims make me a little hesitant. As I've said in so many lectures and classes to Christians and secular people: What matters is not what actually happened at the birth of Islam; what matters is what Muslims *believe* happened.

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Terryl L. Givens. *Feeding the Flock: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Church and Praxis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. xi + 410 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0199794935. \$34.95.

Feeding the Flock: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Church and Praxis by Terryl L. Givens, a prolific and brilliant Latter-day Saint scholar, is the second of a two-volume set that explores the development and contemporary shape of Mormon thought and practice. (The first volume, *Wrestling the Angel*, lays the theological foundation necessary for this survey of Mormon practice.) Givens' work is unique in that he is careful not to create another commentary on the historical and contemporary Mormon experience (i.e., Mormon sociology) but steadfastly contrasts Mormon thought with its praxis (i.e., Mormon ecclesiology).

Feeding the Flock is a survey of an interconnected landscape of theology, sacraments, religious authority, ecclesiastical structure, and worship. Givens begins his survey with a foundational question: What is the LDS Church and why is it necessary? He prefaces his answer by acknowledging that the LDS Church in some ways mirrors Christianity while in other ways stands in stark contrast to it. Above all, on the heels of *Wrestling the Angel*, the LDS Church is Mormon thought incarnate. To Givens, it is a community of God's literal offspring journeying through faith-based and sacramentally-driven sanctification toward an exaltation of theosis so that the "New and Everlasting Covenant"—preached from time immemorial, lost to humanity through sin, and restored by Joseph Smith via prophecy and the Book of Mormon—may be fully realized.

This community is bonded together by a single covenantal system established by God and maintained through ordained authorities and divine sacraments. The theme of covenantal community, the flock of God, is woven throughout the entire book. Regardless of the flavor or mode of practices, covenant community is the sinew that holds Mormon praxis together. It is noteworthy that Givens juxtaposes Mormon communitarianism and Protestant individualism in a critique of the latter that, admittedly, I found a bit stale. He rightly notes that Protestantism (especially in America) has historically emphasized individual salvation. However, in recent years, a shift away from individualism has occurred that Givens does not address thoroughly. He acknowledges movements like the "New Perspective on Paul," but only in passing (p. 18). This shift away from individualism, I believe, warrants more treatment than it receives. Just as Givens is criticizing Finney's anxious bench, American Protestantism is loosening it from the church floor.

In any event, what is the purpose of Mormon sacraments? Unique,

and different to most Christian soteriology, Mormonism holds a paradoxical hope that the covenant community encompasses more than is contained within the borders of Temple Square. Through Mormon sacramentalism, practicing Latter-day Saints and the entire family of humanity are invited into a soteriological progression that extends itself beyond space and time. The sacraments are performed in sacred spaces in the here and now by Latter-day Saints but also include people who have passed on without the possibility of participating in their lifetime. Givens argues that these sacraments (e.g., eternal marriage, family sealing, signs and tokens, esoteric knowledge, baptism for both the living and the dead, etc.) are constitutive of, but not prerequisite to, salvation. This point seems contradictory. After all, how can an ordinance such as baptism be constitutive of salvation and yet not a requirement for it? The answer, I suspect, lies in the enigmatic relationship between Mormon exceptionalism and its welcoming of pluralistic (or, better, *inclusivist*) means of sanctification. Regardless, Givens rightly stresses that the LDS Church conceptualizes its core function as a "portal of salvation" (not a repository of salvation), sustained by a soteriology that envelops all humanity, living and dead, to varying degrees of glory (p. 29).

The LDS Church practices this sacramental system on the basis of priesthood authority. Having once been lost from the earth, the restored priesthood is a two-tiered order of authority (Aaronic and Melchizedek) whereby all members, not merely men, are invited to cooperate with the Holy Ghost in advancing the project of humanity's mortal probation toward exaltation. Givens tackles the contemporary issue of women and the priesthood by bifurcating priestly roles from ecclesiastical offices, where the former are open to all genders while the latter are reserved only for men. His defense for the LDS Church's policy is clear and succinct but, I imagine, far from being settled.

With restored priesthood authority comes the giving of spiritual gifts. Personal revelation—the internal subjective verification of Mormon truth claims—is, perhaps, the most well-known among non-LDS, but other gifts play a significant, albeit discrete, role in contemporary Mormonism as well (e.g., visions, prophetic testimony, healing, tongues, discernment, and exorcism). Givens concludes his survey by considering the role of the Mormon canon in the life of the LDS Church and by exploring its weekly liturgical worship, prayer, catechism, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines.

This work is yet another testament to Givens' considerable ability of distilling a mind-numbing amount of information into a masterpiece that speaks effectively to both experts and general readers. In short, Givens has done it again. *Feeding the Flock* makes for the perfect (even *necessary*)

companion volume to *Wrestling the Angel*, filling in what little theological blanks remained and opening new and interesting questions on Mormon praxis to advance the conversation. Together, these two volumes will serve non-LDS readers well in helping them to understand the thought and practice that drives Mormonism.

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