

## Book Reviews

Rolf A. Jacobson and Michael J. Chan. *Introducing the Old Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023. xxvii + 653 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0801049255. \$38.49.

Rolf Jacobson and Michael Chan's *Introducing the Old Testament* is the companion volume to Mark Allen Powell's *Introducing the New Testament*. The authors state that they followed Powell's pattern to help the reader have an "interesting, enjoyable, and intellectually rewarding experience" (p. xiii). It is certainly a versatile resource since it can be used for academic purposes and for study in other environments. It is also attractive—and suitable for personal reading by a broader audience. It is clearly written, and classic and modern artistic representations enrich the text.

The work is structured in five parts. The first focuses on contextualization as it analyzes the ancient context in which OT literature was generated. The remaining four comprise 39 chapters, introducing the traditional divisions of the OT in the Protestant tradition. These parts focus on each of the books, with some treated together, such as 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. The authors provide concise information here. However, their effective and attractive introductions (to each OT book) avoid compromising the academic demands that should characterize a work of this nature. The brief introductions are followed by contextual details (where composition and development history are generally given) and genre, then sections on literary, theological, and historical interpretation.

The page layout deviates helpfully from traditional convention: text cells in the margins contain additional information, explaining the meaning of relevant words and terms, while informational "boxes" contain both explanatory graphics and a more in-depth analysis of the topics addressed in specific sections or chapters. This noteworthy stylistic innovation enhances the book's value.

A key strength of the work is its equitable treatment of various literary, theological, and historical approaches, each of which is treated meticulously. Also, while each section is introduced as an artificial unit, it is presented with singularity, clarity, and coherence. The graphics are impeccable and contribute significantly to understanding the content. Visual elements deserving special mention are charts offering a chronological

comparison of the kings of Israel (p. 263), and the "anatomy of a psalm" (p. 349).

Most OT introductions treat Ezra-Nehemiah together but as separate works. In this volume the authors innovatively treat them as a unity, to provide a new perspective for readers interested in these two books. Then, the section on biblical poetry is one of the most outstanding parts of the book. Here the authors offer data that provides a solid understanding, both of key elements of the Bible and of the genre of poetic biblical Hebrew.

Some aspects of the work could be better. Chapters such as "Numbers" seem excessively dependent on a single source. Offering a broader range of references to support the arguments would have been beneficial. The authors make an initial commitment to present diverse perspectives, reflecting different academic positions, but do not follow through consistently throughout the book. For example, their examination of certain OT books' composition within the corpus of the so-called Deuteronomistic History essentially excludes other interpretations. Moreover, the Deuteronomistic History itself is sometimes referred to as a collective work but elsewhere as coming from a single editor.

This discrepancy may derive from the authors' decision to present their points of view without interfering in each other's arguments. In fact, they do not indicate which of them is specifically responsible for different paragraphs or chapters. It would have aided clarity and coherence (and reduced confusion) in certain sections of the book if this issue had been dealt with transparently and uniformly throughout. In addition, the authors seem to overlook the cultural aspects of the ancient Near East (ANE) in some places, favoring modern and ideological approaches instead. Addressing cultural realities from antiquity in a more complex way would have been better than forcing a sensitivity to modern audience concerns.

Overall, although there are some points that could be improved, this volume is a valuable contribution to OT teaching. Its richness of content, quality of graphics, and use of language open to different audiences, commend it to anyone interested in studying the Old Testament.

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Esther Eshel and Michael Langlois, eds. *The Scribe in the Biblical World: A Bridge Between Scripts, Languages, and Cultures*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022. vi + 382 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-3110996685. \$99.99

*The Scribe in the Biblical World* is a collection of papers presented at the University of Strasbourg from June 17–19, 2019 (p. 1). The conference aimed to investigate “the status of the scribe” in the biblical world, covering scribes’ training, practices, and work (p. 1). Fifteen essays explore this topic from various angles, focusing on topics from the Late Bronze Age to the turn of the era, and covering locations such as Israel, Ugarit, Byblos, Egypt, and ancient Assyria and Babylon. This balanced collection enhances an understanding of the scribe’s status in the biblical world, serving as a useful resource for interested scholars.

The book begins with Emmanuel Tov’s treatment of scribal approaches emerging from the Judaean Desert. Before discussing the complexities of this topic, Tov carefully describes the subjectivity of this task since it depends on determining a manuscript’s *Vorlage* or source text (pp. 3–21). André Lemaire examines the status and function of the royal scribe from 1250–600 BC while Sara Milstein investigates the role of legal texts in a scribe’s education (pp. 54–56). Aaron Demsky suggests “curse formulas” were subject to “literary borrowing” (pp. 69–70). For his part, Jan Dušek tests Holger Gzella’s argument that inscriptions of central Syrian Aramaic all derive from the same scribal school (pp. 87–114). Anat Mendel-Geberovich discusses the dating of Judaean seals and bullae from the 8th–6th century BC by focusing on provenanced artifacts and concludes that the paleography does not support a more precise dating (pp. 115–38).

Next, Stefan Jakob Wimmer updates his 2008 work on hieratic numerals on Iron Age tax bullae by discussing thirty-six additional bullae (pp. 139–61). Aren M. Wilson-Wright establishes a timeline for the borrowing of Egyptian scribal terms and concludes that six words were borrowed by Hebrew’s linguistic ancestors while three were directly borrowed into Hebrew (pp. 163–82). Tania Notarius discusses the terms for writings in Northwest Semitic (NWS), especially the NWS root *špr*. She investigates the alphabetical texts from Ugarit and concludes that the verbal noun *špr*, “counting, listing,” derives from the NWS root for “count” (p. 187). William M. Schniedewind argues that letter writing was a primary school exercise in Israelite scribal training based on “model letters” from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (pp. 203–32).

Esther Eshel then provides a helpful introduction to the Aramaic lapidary script. She investigates two new inscriptions, one of which makes

precise dating difficult since it combines older and newer letter forms (pp. 233–48). Michael Langlois discusses the phenomenon of texts that preserve theonyms in paleo-Hebrew. He concludes that this feature occurred after paleo-Hebrew was abandoned for copying and writing literary texts and was likely used to distinguish the sacredness of theonyms (pp. 248–94). Paul Mandel investigates the terms *sofer/safar* and concludes that these terms “do not refer to the writing professional associated with the production and transmission of biblical and associated texts” (p. 296). Guy Stiebel studies the epigraphic remains copied at Masada to investigate how stress affected scribal production (pp. 321–42). Jeffrey Stackert discusses the phenomenon of scribal fatigue and its effect on the task of copying a text (pp. 343–70). Finally, Eshel and Langlois, the editors, provide a helpful summary of each chapter, restating the contributors’ main conclusions.

A strength of this unique book is the authors’ investigation of the scribe’s role from new perspectives. Tov’s essay, for example, discusses the concept of two scribal approaches to copying. Most scholars discuss these phenomena, but Tov’s treatment helpfully investigates the validity of this basic and widespread belief. Stiebel too takes a new approach to understanding the remains of Masada by asking how stress might have affected the artifacts.

Another strength is the cautious approach of many of the authors. Eshel, for example, argues that precise dating of some Aramaic texts is difficult due to the combination of older and newer forms into a single text. Mendel-Geberovich arrives at a similar conclusion concerning the Judaean Glyptic objects, based on a “wide variation in letter forms” (p. 125). Stackert’s paper on scribal fatigue is also helpful, but at times, speculative. Although he introduced me to a new and important topic, his basic premise depends on knowing the text’s *Vorlage*, something Tov is rightly cautious of.

Overall, this work assembles papers covering diverse geographic regions and chronological times to present the status of the scribe in the biblical world. The work is well-rounded and introduces readers to new questions that are sure to help those interested in this important topic.

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Kyle R. Greenwood and David B. Schreiner. *Ahab's House of Horrors: A Historiographic Study of the Military Campaigns of the House of Omri*. Bel-  
 lingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2023. xx + 268 pp. Paperback. ISBN  
 978-1683596486. \$22.99.

This volume is the second installment in Studies in Biblical Archaeology, Geography, & History, Barry J. Beitzel, editor. It joins another peer-reviewed monograph, Barry Beitzel's *Where Was the Biblical Red Sea?* (2020).

*Ahab's House of Horrors* focuses on the biblical martial contexts during the reign of the Omrides, attested by relevant ancient Near East (ANE) witnesses, particularly the Tel Dan, Kurkh, and Mesha inscriptions, along with relevant Assyrian archives. Kyle Greenwood and David Schreiner discuss the impasse created by an either-or approach to these records. First and 2 Kings present a negative view of the Omrides, especially Ahab, leaving the impression that they were ineffective leaders. The ANE records show them as sometime major players attempting to blunt successive waves of Assyrian advance into the eastern Mediterranean littoral. The authors detail events of the 9th century BC, valuing, but also nuancing, the ancient witnesses. What emerges is a balanced presentation of the era, surveying the various scholarly approaches and building toward a unified understanding.

The authors begin with a discussion of the later years of the house of Omri featured in 2 Kings 9 and the Tel Dan inscription. This brings the issue of differing accounts into high relief. The Tel Dan inscription appears to credit Hazael of Damascus with the killings of Israel's king Joram (or Jehoram) and Judah's king Ahaziah. 2 Kings 9 credits these to Jehu. To address the impasse, Greenwood and Schreiner survey various solutions offered in the secondary literature. Such explanations involve technical lexical and orthographic observations. The authors give some solutions more probability than others. Without providing a firm conclusion to the discussion, they demonstrate a key overall point: the biblical and secular ANE accounts are complementary. Both should be considered in any conversation.

Chapter 3 takes up the account of the siege of Samaria (1 Kings 20–22). Some question its historicity because of its use of royal titles rather than specific names—an anonymizing of the major players, e.g., Ben-Hadad (“son of Hadad” [a national deity]) or “king of Israel” instead of personal names. Tracing the narrative and other OT historical accounts, the authors conclude that this tendency is characteristic of such texts. Non-biblical material illuminating the Aram/Israelite history is limited, chiefly focusing on the Tel Dan inscription and the Kurkh Monolith

(styled as Shalmaneser's account of westward expansion, including Qarqar [853 BC], with Ahab as a player). Greenwood and Schreiner survey the Aram/Israel interaction from the patriarchal age almost through the end of the monarchical period. The passages show a predominant use of anonymity. The authors also briefly note the use of royal anonymity in the Assyrian and Babylonian sources. In this there is nothing to disqualify the account of 1 Kings 20–22. That it differs from contemporary ANE accounts would be expected since its controlling foci—the rule of Yahweh and obedience to the Law/prophetic word—make this material substantially different from the secular.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 consider the battles at Aphek, Ramoth-Gilead, and the revolt of Moab. The Aphek discussion includes an alternative interpretation for “like two little flocks of goats” (1 Kgs 20:27) suggesting a meager force (the Kurkh inscription suggests Ahab was a sometime major player) and considers the meaning of *hērem* (what is “devoted”). The expression translated “little flocks” might suggest something like scrappy or ready for a fight, while “devoted” fits well with a military context implying complete annihilation.

The battle of Ramoth-Gilead ends a period of relative peace between Aram and Israel (1 Kgs 22:1). During this time, Assyria was prevented by internal difficulties from exerting much control over the region and the significant players were the more local kingdoms. Greenwood and Schreiner detail the difficulties of this material (the location of Ramoth-Gilead, the number of encounters there, two Ahaziahs and J(eh)orams vs. one each, and the differing arrangement of chapters between the MT and LXX). The authors present the various options without declaring a winner.

The revolt of Moab (2 Kings 3 and the Moabite Stone [or Mesha Stele]) raises again the either-or question regarding historicity. The ancient accounts vary in some details, but the authors rely on Joe Sprinkle's excellent treatment (*BBR* 9 [1999]: 247–70, incorrectly typed “History of Historical Fiction” instead of “History or...”), showing several specific points of agreement to argue that the accounts complement each other. Neither should be excluded from the discussion.

This is an excellent example of careful scholarship and should serve as a model for future studies both in this series and more broadly.

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Brent A. Strawn, edited by Collin Cornell and M. Justin Walker. *The Incomparable God: Readings in Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023. xxvii + 480 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0802879493. \$59.99.

Brent A. Strawn's *The Incomparable God* is comprised of 18 essays and sermons edited by Strawn's former students Collin Cornell and M. Justin Walker. The volume consists of three sections: "Readings" (i.e., exegesis), "Biblical Theology," and "Practice" (i.e., sermons). As his editors note, Strawn's work in this volume is indeed "rangy" (p. xiii): He has published on each testament, Bonhoeffer, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Gangsta Rap, Herodotus, Ugaritic, and more. Due to space constraints, this review summarizes the book's six previously unpublished essays/sermons (chapters 5, 6, 11, 14, 16, and 18).

In Chapters 5 and 6, Strawn encourages readers to resist ethical discomfort by reading putatively cruel texts afresh. He finds room to question long-held assumptions and uses these challenging texts as sites of contemplation. While Chapter 6 could have been shorter, both chapters effectively illustrate how to read brutal texts profitably. Thus, in Chapter 5, Strawn reconsiders Psalm 137's desire for Babylon's babies to be smashed against rocks. In a plea for "poetic justice," the psalmist prays that Babylon receives its just deserts for slaughtering Jerusalem's children (p. 116). Whereas other psalms (e.g., Ps 110:5–7) call for God's immediate vengeance, this one only hints that God will be the agent of retribution (Ps 137:8–9).

In the sixth chapter, Strawn revisits "Elisha and the Bears," one of Scripture's most puzzling texts. Providing a "spiritual reading" (p. 133), he argues the church can read 2 Kgs 2:23–25 profitably. He emphasizes how the content of Elisha's curse and a link between the curse and the mauling are absent, inviting interpretive possibilities. Then he explores the "ecclesiological connection" between the church which suffers after Jesus' ascension and Elisha who suffered after Elijah's (p. 157). As Elisha stopped to offer a perfunctory curse, so too the church may become sidetracked from its divine mission. However, in each case, God's ultimate purposes are not hindered. Finally, Strawn surprisingly envisions himself as one of the youths: "Maybe I, like those youths, too frequently pose hindrance to ... God's divine work" (p. 160).

In Chapter 11, Strawn compares Tolkien's orcs with the Canaanites (pp. 313–16). He counters those who separate Jesus from the Old Testament God by observing that Canaanites "serve as models of faith" (p. 320) and that some Canaanite-centered texts criticize Israel (p. 317). Unlike the orcs, Canaanites can be good or bad (p. 323). Moreover, helpfully, he encourages readers that "after critique," one should always look to the

grand narrative of Scripture (p. 326). The Canaanites were orcish "for a moment" (cf. Isa 54:7–8), deserving of wrath, but—perhaps like Tolkien's orcs—the narrative arc intimates the Canaanites' redemption (pp. 327–28). Strawn's sensitivity, erudition, and range supply fresh insight into an old problem (cf. p. xiii).

Similarly, in Chapter 14, Strawn problematizes Pharaoh's stereotypical status as the "bad guy" (p. 360). The stereotype works in Exodus, but Genesis 12, Isaiah 19, and Ezekiel 32 complicate it. In Genesis, Pharaoh innocently takes Sarah only to give her back upon realizing her identity, and he cares for Joseph. Here, Pharaoh is "a decent guy" (p. 361). By contrast, the Pharaoh in Exodus is an "egotistical tyrant," deserving of rebuke (p. 362). Finally (and unexpectedly!) in Ezekiel 32 and Isaiah 19, Pharaoh is repentant (Ezek 32:31) and becomes one of God's people alongside the Egyptians (Isa 19:25). Pharaoh's complexity demonstrates how the gospel can incorporate God's archetypal enemies—even us. Appropriately placed in this book's "Practice" section, Strawn pressures Christians to reassess their models of insider/outsider, urging them to liken themselves to Pharaoh's mixed portrait.

Strawn offers a biblical theology of "priesting" in Chapter 16's sermon on Leviticus. In Exodus 19, all Israelites are priests; in Leviticus, only certain people can "priest"; and in 1 Peter 2, every Jesus follower becomes a priest. Next, he draws an analogy between the priest's duties and the modern believer's role (pp. 378–81). Priests and believers each examine, perceive, and judge: priests with "boils, scabies, burns, raw flesh, and fungus" and believers with interpretations and actions (p. 381). This sermon exemplifies Strawn's plea to preach the Old Testament well (as does Chapter 17).

In the volume's 18th and final chapter, he urges early career scholars to integrate faith and vocation (p. 392). They should work for the academy and the church, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes discretely (pp. 393–95). Helping Strawn integrate faith and vocation are Simone Weil's observations that education's emphasis on "attention and humility" can aid "spiritual life" (p. 397); Brother Lawrence's admonition to live wholly for God; and Deut 17:14–20's kingly Torah reader. (Chapter 15 explores this text further, pp. 396–400). Though aimed at academics, Strawn's advice to "integrate!" faith and vocation also applies broadly to the church (p. 395).

In sum, *The Incomparable God* demonstrates Strawn's "ranginess." Its first two sections ("Readings" and "Biblical Theology") display his skill as an exegete and a biblical theologian. However, the third section ("Practice") dazzlingly combines exegesis and biblical theology with edifying ap-

plications relevant to all believers. Using a Strawnesque pun, the third section reads less like “Practice” and more like expertise.

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Matthew V. Novenson and R. Barry Matlock, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. 753 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0199600489. \$145.00.

This recent addition to the Oxford Handbook series offers readers an up-to-date guide to a wide range of subjects that relate to the Apostle Paul’s life, ministry, and writings. As explained by Matthew Novenson, the volume is designed to “take the field of Pauline Studies as it is, in all its bewildering variety, and to orient the reader to it” (p. 2). The editors have certainly succeeded in this endeavor. The collection of essays contained in the volume provides readers with accessible treatments of an impressive range of subjects, some of which have been debated and studied for several years, while others have only recently become the subject of scholarly attention.

The volume includes a total of 38 essays that are organized around five broad categories. Part One explores “Paul the Person” and includes essays that address various portrayals of Paul. Part Two, “Paul in Context,” provides an eclectic assortment of essays that relate in one way or another to the background, legacy, or historical study of Paul. Part Three, “Pauline Literature,” includes essays that pertain to the production, composition, circulation, and transmission of the Pauline Epistles. Part Four, “Pauline Theology,” assesses several subjects that are addressed in Paul’s writings. Finally, Part Five, “Approaches to Paul,” concludes the volume with a treatment of a few interpretive strategies that have been applied to the study of the Pauline writings. Some of these approaches have an established history, while others have come to the forefront of the study of Pauline literature only recently.

Although many of the essays address subjects that are notoriously challenging and technical in nature, they tend to be well organized and written in a clear and accessible style. None contain footnotes or endnotes. Instead, in-text citations appear sparingly throughout the work. Extensive bibliographies helpfully appear at the end of each essay, prefaced with a short “Suggested Reading” section that briefly identifies the seminal works in the field. The bibliographies are specific to the subject addressed in the essay and serve as a valuable resource for those looking to continue their investigation of specific subjects.

Those familiar with the general landscape of Pauline studies will undoubtedly be familiar with several of the contributors, many of whom are recognized for their previous scholarship on the topics they address in this volume. However, in addition to more widely known Pauline scholars, a few younger and lesser-known scholars from diverse backgrounds contribute to the work, some of whom deal with recent developments and trends in the world of Pauline scholarship.

Like any major compendium of this type, there will naturally be essays that readers find more useful and convincing than others, and some subjects that could have been treated more thoroughly. It is certainly unrealistic for a single volume to include a thorough treatment of everything related to the study of Paul and his writings. Consequently, the editors should not be criticized too harshly for their decision to include or exclude certain subjects from the handbook. Having said that, a possible shortcoming of the work is the scope of its treatment of the disputed writings and other historical issues. Treatment of the disputed Paulines is limited to a single essay, less than half of which addresses theories and arguments related to the subject of authorship. Given the widespread debate that has ensued during the last few centuries over the authenticity of several of the Pauline writings and the ancient practice of pseudepigraphy, further treatment of the subject of authorship and the historical background of the individual letters might have been expected. In addition, the volume could have provided a fuller treatment of Paul’s upbringing and early Christian years, the style and structure of his writings, the relationship of Hebrews to the Pauline letter collection, and the dating and provenance of the epistles. For a volume of this length, the treatment of foundational historical matters could have arguably been more robust. It seems though that several important historical issues were given only minimal attention to accommodate the treatment of several subjects that are of more contemporary interest.

Despite these minor shortcomings, the volume promises to serve as a valuable resource to students, scholars, and lay readers who wish to expand their knowledge of specific subjects relating to the study of Paul or simply to remain current on recent developments in the field. In sum, the handbook provides a helpful complement to other recently published resources on Paul such as the *T&T Clark Handbook to the Historical Paul* (2022) and the second edition of the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (InterVarsity Press, 2023).

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Michael F. Bird and Scot McKnight, eds. *God's Israel and the Israel of God: Paul and Supersessionism*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023. xii + 188 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1683596080. \$28.99.

Supersessionism is a loaded word. Evoking strong responses in contexts where the gospel and the Jews are discussed, it is the topic of Michael Bird and Scot McKnight's edited volume, *God's Israel and the Israel of God*. The book emerged from the editors' lament over scholarship on supersessionism and the apostle Paul (p. 1), which led to a collection of essays by seven authors.

To begin, there is no definitive agreement on what supersessionism is. As Bird points out in his introduction, understandings of the term range from "the Jews have been replaced by Christian gentiles" to finding "anything deficient in the Jewish religion that is supplemented by faith in Paul's Christ" (p. 1). Such views stem in part from the contrasting Pauline assertions in Gal 2:21 and Rom 11:29: "if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose" and "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (ESV). Bird highlights the difficulty of unifying these biblical claims in the present, although the book does not resolve the issue: "Paul himself was trying to affirm God's faithfulness to Israel—and God sending his Son Jesus to Israel for the sake of the world as the definitive instance of his faithfulness" (p. 8). The challenge though, as McKnight affirms in his conclusion, is Christians should "simultaneously affirm the *solus Christus* (Christ alone is Savior) of their confession and the proposition that . . . outside of Israel there is no salvation . . . without denigrating those who share in the flesh and family of the Jewish Messiah" (p. 176).

So, how do the editors rise to this task? In two parts, they present three essays by McKnight, Bird, and Ben Witherington III showing the inevitability of supersessionism (of some kind) when salvation in Christ is paramount, followed by four responses by Lynn Cohick, David Rudolph, Janelle Peters, and Ronald Charles. The first three pieces (with McKnight's conclusion) are persuasive: "How can one say Jesus is Messiah and not, at some level, be supersessionist in one's faith, in comparison to those who think Jesus is not Messiah?" (p. 16). However, despite the cogency of the first essays, one cannot miss the towering figure of N. T. Wright, and especially his magisterial (1,696 page!) *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* behind the scenes. In fact, Wright's influence is such that one might wish the editors had brought his name into the book's subtitle in some way. Alternatively, the book could have been far better had it considered supersessionism in the New Testament as whole, drawing on the expertise of many more authors.

In any event, it may be useful to consider the views of the responding authors briefly, not least to contrast them with the editors' assertion that Paul was supersessionist to some extent. Cohick, the first, helpfully affirms gospel-focused supersessionism but warns against a "broad definition of Christian supersessionism [which] carries with it centuries of wicked deeds done [against Jews] in Christ's name" (p. 84). She recommends emphasizing "identity in Christ, and within this identity celebrating the distinct tribe, language, tongue, and nation of each believer" (p. 102). This is laudable, but celebration should be accompanied by lament. Every people group (including Jews) has distinctive sins. These must not be smothered by celebration as we prioritize our identity in the one who died and rose for us.

Rudolph, a Messianic Jew, objects to McKnight, Bird, and Witherington's lack of clarity on "whether they believe the Jewish people continue to be in a unique covenant relationship with God" (p. 105). McKnight affirms Jews' distinct covenantal calling in his conclusion but argues that this is "to call people to an eschatological faith that comes to expression in Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah." He then goes on to critique Rudolph's silence on whether "all Jews need to believe in Jesus to be saved" (p. 169). The answer must be yes. Theologically speaking, God's ultimate focus is salvation in Jesus. At the same time, Rudolph rightly warns against the belief "that Jews are no longer needed in the world and ideally should be phased out" (p. 110). Such an idea has chilling real-world implications and must be roundly condemned. He also highlights the danger of "assimilation and the loss of Jewish presence" in our churches (p. 114). Quite frankly, the Old Testament—and believers who embody it—should carry far more weight in evangelical ecclesiology than they typically do.

Peters wrestles with supersessionism as a Roman Catholic, but concludes her discussion with some alarming assertions: "Although Paul, a former Pharisee, couldn't resist engaging in dialogue with his former Jewish colleagues, the Roman Catholic Church must definitely not pressure Jews into following Christ. Jews have salvation on their own terms" (p. 145). Really? While pressuring anyone is a questionable tactic, Paul's confidence in the gospel for salvation, starting with the Jews (Rom 1:16), must not be abandoned.

Finally, Charles provides a "very critical response" (his words, p. 147) to the first three essays. Unfortunately, the dismissive thrust of his critique (which is steeped in postmodernism, repeatedly demands qualifications of readily understood terminology, and condemns evangelical Christianity), makes it difficult to discern any constructive contribution to the discussion. Moreover, it is probably no coincidence that his chapter is characterized by a paucity of footnotes when compared to the others.

In sum, I would recommend this book for McKnight's conclusion that expansionism is a better word to use than supersessionism: "That is, the people of God expands to include gentiles on the basis of faith in Jesus as Messiah. Israel is not replaced but expanded—but that ... occurs in Christ and through Christ" alone (p. 170). At the same time, another work, based on this theme, but turning to the entire New Testament—with many more scholarly contributions—would be very welcome indeed.

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Dean Flemming. *Foretaste of the Future: Reading Revelation in Light of God's Mission*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022. 232 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-15140015601. \$28.00

Reading a lot of academic books, rarely am I as excited as I was to encounter Dean Flemming's *Foretaste of the Future*. Flemming is a unique scholar. He has a PhD in New Testament Exegesis from the University of Aberdeen (1988) and teaches NT at MidAmerica Nazarene University. However, along with this formal training, he also writes and teaches in the field of missiology. I have used his book, *Contextualization in the New Testament* (IVP, 2005) for years and students have benefited greatly. While I do not follow some of his interpretive and missiological decisions, his latest book did not disappoint. I believe it makes a worthy contribution to the fields of both NT studies and missiology.

The book opens with an acknowledgement that the book of Revelation holds a special place in the NT canon. It is loved, hated, and feared by casual readers and exegetes. For this reason, it may be the most neglected book in the NT. In *Foretaste of the Future*, the author suggests that, rather than avoiding the last book in our Bible, Christians should study it as a "culmination of God's entire loving purpose for the world" (p. 3). Flemming follows the order of John's vision but does not write a verse by verse (or even chapter by chapter) exposition. Instead, he interprets the book thematically, "exploring the various dimensions of a missional reading" (p. 10). Each of his ten chapters develops important missiological ideas taught in Revelation.

Flemming begins his work with an overview of God's mission exercised through the slaughtered lamb and practiced by God's people. In these chapters, he supplies the reader with a vision for God's mission of redemption and restoration. The following chapters, "Mission as Witness," "Mission and Judgement," "Missional Worship," "Missional Politics," and "A New Jerusalem Mission," work through key portions of Revelation to show practical implications and challenges for those who

would seek to live missionally in a fallen world.

Nevertheless, NT scholar Grant Osborne is correct when he suggests that "our understanding of the meaning of Revelation depends on the hermeneutical perspective we bring to bear on it" (Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002], 18). Traditionally interpreters have fallen into one of four schools (or a combination of these):

- *Historicist*—the symbols and plotline of John's vision chart Western history.
- *Preterist*—the setting and meaning of the book refer to John's time rather than a future apocalypse.
- *Idealist*—the symbols of the book contain universal, spiritual significance, but are not anchored in a specific historical period.
- *Futurist*—the plot and symbolism found especially in chapters 4 to 22 point to a moment in the future.

Readers looking to place Flemming's book within these traditional categories will be frustrated as he engages in an entirely different exercise. Rather, his work is an attempt to:

show that Revelation ... reveals God's great purpose to redeem and restore the whole creation, including people, through the mission of the slain lamb. At the same time, Revelation seeks to shape and equip Christian communities to participate in God's saving purpose by living as a foretaste of God's coming new creation now, through their lips and through their lives. (p. 3)

It is this missional interpretation of the text as well as the missional application for the church that makes the book a valuable tool for biblical scholars, theologians, and missiologists.

Another beneficial feature of this work is the inclusion of quotes (or pictures) that give voice to a range of scholars and churchmen. These sidebars are presented without comment but serve as a window into how Christians living in a variety of global contexts understand and seek to live out the truths of Revelation. It may take the reader a few pages to appreciate this structure. Sidebars are usually designed to highlight an author's significant ideas. They can serve as guides for the reader. Here, however, the sidebars are not part of Flemming's work but simply serve as additional illustrative voices.

An aspect of Flemming's work that I found frustrating was his emphasis on creation care as an important element of *Missio Dei*. While he falls well within the Cape Town Commitment developed by the Lausanne Movement in 2010, I have a different understanding of this topic. My

concern is not with his commitment to evangelical orthodoxy. Instead, I wish he had placed as much emphasis on the evangelization of the lost; especially on those lacking adequate access to the Christian gospel. To be fair, he stresses that evangelism is necessary, and rejects any form of pluralism. However, the passion for creation care seems a bit out of balance.

In sum, the value of this book is not that it affirms everything I believe. Its contribution is drawing together two academic disciplines in a way that challenges each to take notice. *Foretaste of the Future* is a perfect complement to John's vision in the book of Revelation. It is comforting, challenging, disturbing, and convicting. It is certainly worth reading.

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Stanley E. Porter and Benjamin P. Laird, eds. *Five Views on the New Testament Canon*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 287 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0825447273. \$24.99

Interest in the New Testament canon has surged recently. Unfortunately, for those uninitiated in the complex debates surrounding this subject, the explosion in canon research has not guaranteed greater clarity. In this context, Stanley Porter and Benjamin Laird avoid adding to the quagmire of secondary canonical research with another comprehensive history or technical study. Rather, they aim to “provide readers with a unique opportunity to evaluate a variety of perspectives on the more foundational questions relating to the study of the canon” (p. 36). To accomplish this objective, they feature scholars representing diverse viewpoints—conservative evangelical (Darian Lockett), progressive evangelical (David Nienhuis), liberal protestant (Jason BeDuhn), Roman Catholic (Ian Boxall), and Greek Orthodox (George Parsenios)—to address three critical aspects of the NT canon. These are (1) the historical factors that led to the formation and recognition of an authoritative collection of Christian writings, (2) the canon's basis of authority, and (3) the canon's “hermeneutical implications” (p. 37).

The book consists of three parts. In Part 1, the editors introduce the study of the NT canon. They overview the history of the discussion from the 16th century to the present day, then forecast the essays which follow by highlighting the most critical issues at stake.

In Part 2 the contributors outline their perspectives. Lockett emphasizes the church's early and natural reception of the NT canon in response to the apostolic writings' divine inspiration. Nienhuis critiques the prioritization of historical questions in canon studies and highlights the canon's theological nature. BeDuhn lauds the historical-critical study of Scripture

and outlines the historical processes behind the canon's formation and its status as a creation of the church's leaders (p. 111). Boxall affirms the Council of Trent in 1546 as the “decisive date” for the NT canon's formation (p. 131). However, he traces its development from the early apostolic witness to a growing consensus about core writings to Athanasius's list in 367 CE. The canon is not a “straightforward consequence of ecclesiastical politics” (p. 143), yet the church's role was to discern the canon (p. 144). Finally, Parsenios attributes the Orthodox Church's late official statement on the canon's limits in 1672 to the church's reactive canon law (p. 172), and the role of tradition. Tradition—defined as the church's “practice over time” in response to the leading of the Spirit—“established and solidified” the extent of the canon (pp. 174–76). Significantly, Orthodox theology affirms the inseparability of Scripture and tradition; the former being the “historical record of what God has done to guide his creation” (p. 177) and the latter the “lived experience of Christ in the present” (p. 178).

In Part 3 each presenter briefly summarizes his own position and responds to the other views. Then the editors conclude by highlighting points of agreement and contention between the views and overview primary sources for studying the NT canon.

Porter and Laird skillfully accomplish their stated objective, primarily through three key strengths. First, they select an adequate yet not overwhelming number of viewpoints, introducing the reader to the representative breadth of mainstream positions on the NT canon. By including Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox perspectives, the volume stands apart from the typically tribal (and mostly Protestant) conversations on the canon. Second, the format of the response essays promotes clarity and highlights the most critical issues of the debate. Since each respondent summarizes his own position and the opposing views as he critiques them, the reader is reminded of the key areas of agreement and disagreement. In contrast, books comparing positions often disorient readers by offering responses before each contributor clearly presents his or her viewpoint. Third, the editors were wise to insist that each contributor discuss both the canon's historical and hermeneutical aspects. Often the two are separated with disturbing effects. Including both promotes reflection upon the canon's theological nature and one's approach to its history, which shapes our understanding of what the canon is and how we should read it. At the same time, readers would perhaps be better prepared to understand the different viewpoints if the survey of primary sources on the canon was included in the introduction. Nevertheless, that choice does not detract from the volume's success.

Porter and Laird's affordable book boasts a treasure of historical data



and theological reflection. It should be a valuable resource for the study of the NT canon for years to come. It would also be an excellent supplemental textbook for undergraduate or seminary courses in NT or theology. In this reviewer's opinion, the introductory essay and Lockett's contribution alone justify its price.

Levi Baker  
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R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman. *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022. xxvi + 289 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1540964670. \$24.49.

R. B. Jamieson and Tyler Wittman, the authors of *Biblical Reasoning*, are dissatisfied with much theological work on two fronts: biblical scholars do not do enough theology and theologians do not do enough exegesis. They attempt to right the ship by arguing that Nicene and Chalcedonian doctrines exist in the text of Scripture already. The Scriptures do not merely give raw material to develop into orthodoxy, and they certainly do not teach contrary to Nicaea and Chalcedon. In fact, the best exegete learns proper doctrine of Trinity and Christ from Scripture and then carries those insights back into future exegesis. In this way theology and exegesis are mutually related and only separated at the expense of each discipline's quality.

The book features ten chapters plus an introduction and conclusion. The introduction explains the goal of the work, the organization of the material, and the primary resources it draws on. However, there is a stark difference in style between the sections written by each author. Some readers may prefer Wittman's scholasticisms (chapters 1–6 and conclusion), while others may favor Jamieson's pastoral tone (introduction and chapters 7–10).

Chapters 1 through 9 articulate seven theological principles, discerned from Scripture, as well as ten exegetical rules that follow from the theological principles. These principles and rules are displayed in a convenient chart in the book's appendix and set out at the beginning of each chapter in which they are discussed.

Chapter 1 argues that the Bible presupposes readers who seek Christ's glory, and so the goal of exegesis is not observation of the text, but contemplation of its subject matter. Chapter 2 situates Scripture within a wider scheme of divine pedagogy. As such, it leads its students to the vision of Christ's glory adaptively, gradually, and formatively, in the manner of a master teacher. Chapter 3 may be the central chapter of the book

in that it seeks to show the "reciprocal, though asymmetrical, relation between exegesis and theology" (p. 42). This argument stems from the third theological principle, that Scripture is God's own voice. From this principle the authors argue that the Bible must be read as a unity, and each part should be read in relation to a larger theological vision.

Chapter 4 articulates God's holy otherness and then asks readers to read depictions of God in the Bible in a way that is fitting for his unique divine character. Chapter 5 explains the unity of the Trinity insofar as substance is concerned, but distinctiveness insofar as the three persons relate to each other. Three rules follow from this. First, "redoublement" is the idea that Scripture must be read with an eye toward whether something is held in common among the Trinitarian persons or is particular to one person. Second, chapter 6 sets out "inseparable operations," wherein Scripture may refer to one member of the Trinity, but all three are present and active, implicating each other. Third, Scripture's appropriation holds that sometimes one member of the Trinity is assigned a common trait as if it were proper. In these cases, the unity of the Trinity should be upheld.

Chapter 7 moves on to Christological issues, arguing from the hypostatic union that we should never attribute some actions to the divinity of Christ and some to his humanity. Also, we should preserve the paradoxes of Scripture that attribute divine acts to the man Jesus, and human acts to the divine Son. Chapter 8 builds on the hypostatic union to argue for partitive exegesis. This rule holds that Scripture sometimes discusses Christ in a human register, and sometimes in a divine register, therefore good exegesis will notice which register is operative and respond accordingly. Chapter 9 endorses Trinitarian eternal relations of origin, and correspondingly recommends that exegesis upholds these relations. Chapter 10 then applies the ten rules discerned to a reading of John 5:17–30.

This book offers a convincing explanation of the relationship between doctrine and exegesis. As a biblical scholar, I found the theological aspects challenging, enlightening, and enjoyable, and I suspect theologians will have similar feelings about the substantive exegesis. However, I was disappointed by the authors' lack of interest in engaging with alternative views, especially Eternal Functional Subordination and the paper-thin theological methods that produce this error of Trinitarian theology. I also wish the authors had explicitly stated that this work is a corrective to the popular theology of Baptist theologians of recent generations, which it surely must be. In any event, the positive case the authors offer is strong, so I will recommend and cite this book in the future.

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Jordan Daniel Wood. *The Whole Mystery of Christ: Creation as Incarnation in Maximus Confessor*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022. 384 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0268203474. \$70.00.

The mothers and fathers of the church experienced Christ not only in liturgical rites and the pages of Scripture, but also in the whole of creation. Few, however, gave such precise expression to this experience as St. Maximus the Confessor. Patristic scholars are still realizing the depth of his cosmic awareness. Insight continues to flow from the saint's oeuvre, exemplified by the recent work of Jordan Daniel Wood, *The Whole Mystery of Christ*. Here, the author draws another bright stone from the Maximian mine with his "literal reading" of the Confessor's celebrated statement: "The Word of God, very God, wills that the mystery of his Incarnation be actualized always and in all things." This impressive statement, according to Wood, means just what it says. The book endeavors to prove this thesis and unfold its provocative implications.

Perhaps the foremost of these daring suggestions involves the "identity" of Christ and creation. In Wood's reading, Maximus teaches a *hypostatic* identity between God and the world in Christ's person, in his hypostasis. Wood writes, "In Christ, the divine Son is no more divine than he is human, no more God than man, no more uncreated than created" (p. 38). This hypostatic identity is qualified, though, by an equally strong statement of *natural* non-identity. Indeed, an "absolute natural difference" pertains between divine and human nature (p. 43). For Wood, creation and Incarnation both employ the same "Christo-logic" and even encompass the same act: despite their infinite natural difference, God and the world enjoy perfect hypostatic union in the person of Christ. Briefly put, "God and the world are identical because the one Word is both" (p. xiv). Christ's hypostasis is neither purely divine nor purely human but equally both.

Wood aptly forestalls pantheism by the natural difference between created and divine nature. One could ask, however: why assert an *absolute* difference, even to the point of natural opposition (p. 43)? This quality of complete incompatibility seems to make the God-world union in Christ's person haphazard, and even illogical. Is it true that God and the world have no natural commonality? No living semblance between beings and their source in Being? No ontological interlude to which analogical speech applies? In sum, is grace utterly discontinuous with nature such that the hypostatic union pertains despite a sheer natural inconsistency? These questions enjoin a more holistic Christian ontology that upholds creation's *inherent* image and likeness to God (Gen 1:26)—an image and likeness superlatively revealed in the man Christ Jesus. After all, the gospel

reveals the astonishing reality that the more fully human a person is (i.e., Jesus), the more divine he is.

Speaking of *theosis*, one of the most profound Maximian concepts Wood presents is the idea that, in the deification of creation, man becomes God to the same extent that God became man. This so-called *tantum-quantum* principle of Maximus posits not only that "God became man so that man might become God," an earlier and universally accepted tenet. This axiom goes further to suggest a "mutually proportional" relation between the historical Incarnation and the deification of creation (p. 101). In the self-emptying of the Word, there is a symmetrical exchange of equivalent degree, actualizing a reciprocal communication of idioms: God is born, thirsts, suffers and dies; man can likewise be deemed uncreated. This principle radically (and rightly) restates the biblical notion of creation's participation in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), accomplished in the Incarnation.

In one sense, Wood's thesis that creation is Incarnation in Maximus is not new. Many have recognized the Confessor's teaching that the Word is both one and many—both singularly incarnated as Jesus Christ and present in all individual things. God's Word (the *Logos*) is discernable in creation because he has endowed something of himself (the *logoi*) to each creature. The *logoi* are the rational principles of existing entities, the divine meanings for all things, proceeding from and returning to the One. As Wood sums up Maximus, "The Logos is the *logoi* and the *logoi* the Logos" (p. 69). Commentators regularly notice this identity, but unlike most, Wood denies these *logoi* are the same as Platonic ideas. Instead of "separately subsistent, participated [Platonic] forms," the *logoi* are "the personal Logos crafting all things within himself, within them" (p. 71). Again, Wood places special emphasis on the *hypostatic* quality of the God-world identity.

*The Whole Mystery of Christ* is no light read. Wood revised his PhD dissertation into book form, complete with scholarly detail. To be fair, this often chimes with Maximus' own form of discourse. Both authors prove difficult to decode. Thus, Wood's contribution is a historical, exegetical, analytically rigorous philosophical theology which will mainly appeal to experts in the field. The text is demanding in terms of scholastic jargon and conceptual sophistication. But the payoffs are generally worth the work. I recommend Wood's book to patristic scholars, academic philosophers and the most interested—the most dedicated—lay readers of speculative Christian theology.

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Oliver Crisp. *Participation and Atonement: An Analytic and Constructive Account*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022. 272 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0801049965. \$29.99.

Oliver Crisp is a well-respected theologian in the philosophical theology tradition. He serves as the Head of the School of Divinity at Saint Andrews as well as the Director of the Logos Institute and has authored numerous works on theology. Here, Crisp seeks to answer the question, “*What is the mechanism by means of which Christ’s work reconciles human beings to God?*” (p. 3). Pursuing an answer, he breaks his book into three sections: methodological, historical, and synthetic.

The methodological section is arguably Crisp’s strongest. In it, he offers definitions for terms that are commonly used interchangeably but with various meanings in atonement literature: motifs, metaphors, doctrines, and models. Even with his clarification, he suggests a “*chastened realism*” for theologians due to their natural limitations. In constructing his full account, it is important to understand that “motifs and metaphors of the atonement are elements that may compose aspects of a doctrine or model” (p. 30). Thus, a full-orbed account of the atonement will use elements of all four.

In the historical section, Crisp looks at four major historical views of atonement: Moral Exemplarism, Ransom, Satisfaction, and Penal Substitution. In his treatment of these views, he argues for a version of the satisfaction theory. His critiques fall along standard lines, but the added precision of his terminology allows him to reclassify deficient views of the atonement into motifs or metaphors. However, the razor-thin nature of philosophical terminology leads to what is the most difficult differentiation—between Christ suffering the punishment for sin and Christ suffering the penal consequences for sin. Crisp finds this distinction of critical importance arguing that “the claim that Christ is punished in the place of fallen humanity is much more difficult to defend than the claim that Christ suffers the penal consequences of human sin” (p. 121). Here he follows Richard Swinburne in claiming that punishment is involuntary, but atonement is voluntary (p. 130). Due to this distinction and other “problematic aspects,” he decides it is better to fall back to a robust satisfaction theory of the atonement (pp. 144–45).

With the methodological and historical sections complete, Crisp turns to the third and final part of his book where he offers his own view of the atonement. Here his dogmatic minimalism takes center stage, as he attempts to remove the need for a historic Adam from Reformed thought and create a “moderate Reformed” doctrine of the atonement (p. 155).

His understanding of original sin revolves around a corruption-only approach, separating guilt and sin, so that we receive a corrupted human nature but not the guilt for Adamic sin (p. 161). With this shift in the understanding of sin, he can reposition the mechanism of the atonement to a “vicarious, representative, and penitent act of soteriological representation” (p. 189). Thus, instead of Christ paying the legal cost of sin by taking our punishment on himself, he performs an act of vicarious apology (p. 200). Crisp is clear that, while being dogmatically minimalist, “penal substitution is excluded” (p. 202).

Having cleared up his doctrine of the atonement, the author turns to believers’ union with Christ, arguing for a realist union account through the work of the Holy Spirit (p. 228). Here he uses new insights from social ontology to address how it is that Christ is our head as the new Adam. Finally, he ends by offering a very helpful synthesis by way of clarification, offering numerous definitions and bulleted recaps of his thoughts throughout the book.

Overall, Crisp’s work stands firmly in the tradition of analytic theology. His classification of differing thoughts on the atonement into motifs, metaphors, models, and theories is most helpful and, if standardized, will bring greater ease of access to the field of atonement theology. He is also quite charitable with the four views he interacts with in the historical section. My main concern with his work is that his “dogmatic minimalism” forces him to be overly accepting at times. This is most notable in his conversation on a historic Adam and Eve, since it is not clear how Christ could act as our representative head and the second Adam in the same way that an aboriginal group of 10,000 could (pp. 196–97). Despite such weaknesses, Crisp’s book is helpful for scholars attempting to understand the modern landscape of atonement thought.

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Michael Berra. *Towards a Theology of Relationship: Emil Brunner’s Truth as Encounter in Light of Relationship Science*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022. xvii + 248 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1666737653. \$ 36.00

Emil Brunner’s theology has recently received much-needed scholarly attention. Michael Berra’s study, *Towards a Theology of Relationship*, highlights the lodestar of Brunner’s theology, the I-You relationship.

Berra’s work is broken into four parts. In Part 1 he demonstrates how the I-You relationship serves as the focal point in Brunner’s theology and clarifies why Brunner is the focus of an examination of relationship science. The I-You encounter (in Brunner’s theology) underlines that

the categories of objective and subjective concerning truth are meaningless since God is not an object one believes [in], but a subject person, who gives himself, and the human response of trust is something entirely different than subjectivism since it involves the whole person. In short: it is not an I-it relationship but an I-You relationship. (p. 31)

In Part 2 of the book, Berra provides interpretive tools to understand Brunner's use of different terminology and helpfully engages different interpretations of Brunner's theology. He capably shows how Brunner's conception of the I-You encounter should not be understood in abstract terms or in an overtly subjective manner. Berra's description of the reciprocal yet fundamentally asymmetric relationship between God and the human being is most helpful in this section. Capturing much of Brunner's thought, he writes,

As such, God acts and calls in absolute freedom, yet binds himself to humans by giving them relative freedom so that they can freely answer. Moreover, God's ongoing self-disclosure and responsiveness ... is intended to elicit an equally self-disclosing and responsive human reaction, leading to an ongoing intimate relationship. (pp. 125–26)

Part 3 then attempts to show how the relationship between God and the human creature is akin to human relationships. Finally, Part 4 emphasizes the need for a relational understanding of God, which has implications for the way theologians and churches approach him.

The Epilogue provides Berra's account of how this relational understanding of God has shaped his life and ministry, while the Appendix provides a summary and introduction of the major frameworks utilized in relationship science.

The book is at its strongest when the author carefully takes the reader through Brunner's theological framework. He shows how Brunner's I-You framework transcends both the objective and subjective poles in theology. He also demonstrates that the I-You relationship between God and the human being is always asymmetrical yet characterized by responsiveness. Additionally, Berra utilizes relationship science to explain how Brunner's framework could incorporate the scriptural language of union:

congruent with IOS [Including Other in the Self], the more intimate the relationship that is perceived, the more the partner is included in the self, and the more the circles overlap voluntarily. Importantly and objectively, even the highest degree of intimacy does not lead to total oneness, a fusion with the loss of the individual self (total overlap in the IOS scale), but to a voluntarily increasing

interdependence of "both partners' distinct, individual selves." (pp. 168–69)

Consequently, Brunner's emphasis upon the I-You encounter can incorporate Jesus's scriptural language of "Whoever abides in me, and I in him" (John 15:5 ESV) without diluting the distinction in the relationship between God and the human creature.

Berra's work shows how the God-human relationship is characterized by asymmetry but also how asymmetric human relationships may be analogous (and open to analogous reasoning) to the God-human relationship. However, he is quick to note that "God is not a human; he is perfectly secure, loving, committed, self-giving, and responsive and as such the perfect partner. Human relationships, and therefore also relationship science, can only theoretically point to this kind of ideal partner" (pp. 171–72). Thus, the unique God-human relationship informs human-to-human relationships. As Berra comments, "Jesus, for example, while constantly referring to God as Father, corrected the common image and perception of human fathers by explaining that God is a different, better father" (p. 172). Here, the God-human relationship informs human conceptions of fatherhood. What is less clear though, is whether asymmetric human relationships also shed light on the God-human relationship. This question is worth asking because Berra appears to leave some theoretical room for asymmetric human relationships to provide some insight on the God-human relationship.

Berra's book raises fundamental questions about how to think about God and provides compelling answers. I highly recommend it as a study of Brunner and as a resource for theologians engaging the question of the relationality of God.

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John Piper. *Come, Lord Jesus: Meditations on the Second Coming of Christ*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2023. 303 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433584954. \$29.99.

Many discussions, debates, and theological differences on eschatology are occasioned by the apparent delay between Christ's incarnation and his return (cf. 2 Pet 3:9). In this regard, John Piper's *Come, Lord Jesus* serves as a helpful resource on Jesus's second advent. He utilizes a three-part methodology to accomplish the book's purpose, captured in his stated thesis of helping "people love the second coming of Christ" (p. 15).

Part 1, which takes up most of the work's contents, explains how a

believer's affections are formed by the reality of Christ's return (pp. 21–22). Piper defines the “affections” as a “heart feeling of astonishment or amazement or awe” (p. 53). He articulates that these feelings are not anthropocentric but rather Christocentric (p. 61). It is God's grace that regenerates a person to an accurate longing and love for the second coming. Piper states that Christ's return does not bring fear to a believer because at the final resurrection, all of Christ's followers will joyfully and rightly worship and praise him (p. 103).

He goes on to explain that a believer's joy will be complete even though non-believers will succumb to Christ's wrath. He rationalizes, “We do not delight in the pain of the punished for itself. We delight in the justice of God and the righteousness of Christ” (p. 115). Christians will be able to experience full joy because both justice for evil and imputed righteousness will magnify the glory of Christ's return. Piper concludes that the second coming puts suffering in its proper perspective, causes believers to remain vigilant, encourages the pursuit of holiness, recognizes eternal rewards, and leads to personal joy (pp. 102, 131, 152, 156, 167).

Part 2 of this work addresses how Christ will return. Piper's intent is to illustrate why postmillennialism helps “us love the Lord's return” and “live our lives with the kind of vigilance and expectancy commended by Scripture” (p. 180). He utilizes the “prophetic perspective” of George Eldon Ladd to interpret various passages of Scripture. Piper argues that texts like Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 refer to distant events foreshadowed in the near (i.e., “the devastation of Jerusalem in AD 70”) emphasizing how these circumstances exist as a preview of faraway ones (p. 186). He concludes that Jesus's return is potentially, holistically, and divinely near (pp. 194–202). He denies the reality of a pretribulation rapture and the tenets of such eschatology, and explains that fulfilling the Great Commission, increasing rebellion, and the arrival of the man of lawlessness will usher in Christ's return (pp. 233–45).

Part 3 could be described as the ethics associated with postmillennialism. Piper asserts, “We pursue with moral earnestness our full salvation in the future, because salvation has already been secured for us in the past” (p. 250). The gospel saves, but the second coming provides the “soil” to “take root and bear the fruit of obedience” in the present while awaiting complete sanctification in the future (p. 252). He thus concludes that the imminent return of Christ ought to cause God's people to stay awake, to avoid deception, to pursue holiness, to adopt a Protestant work ethic, to prioritize gathering with other believers, to devote themselves to prayer, and to fulfill the Great Commission (pp. 249–84).

Piper's argument for the affections associated with Christ's return is one of the book's greatest strengths. Unlike others, it helps Christians

long for and love the return of Christ. In fact, this work could be seen as *Desiring God* meeting eschatology. It makes the book not only unique in its explanations, but also a profound contribution to end-times discussions.

However, it does contain two shortcomings. First, Piper does not treat all eschatological views equally. In Part 2, he focuses primarily on refuting the premillennial position, and in a content footnote, provides his disagreement with the amillennial interpretation of Matthew 24:4–31 (pp. 187–88). Unfortunately, he does not clarify why he has chosen to focus primarily on the premillennial view and neglect amillennialism.

Second, Piper does not defend his postmillennial position (p. 206). Although he references the works of Ladd and Stanley Gundry, they do not clarify his view. His lack of an exegetical argument to elucidate his eschatology could be considered a hindrance to his thesis (pp. 11, 206). If the return of Christ contains a normative ethic, it would be enhanced by a robust defense of Piper's eschatological views.

The shortcomings of the book, however, do not detract from its value and contribution to discussions surrounding Jesus's return. No matter one's eschatology, believers will fall in love with the second coming as Piper effectively shows the glory of Christ in that blessed event. I highly recommend *Come, Lord Jesus* as a valued resource for any Christian, scholar, or pastor.

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Chloe Starr (ed. and trans.). *A Reader in Chinese Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022. 524 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1481312103. \$39.95.

Since at least 2016, with the publication of her *Chinese Theology: Text and Context*, Chloe Starr has publicly championed Chinese theology for English readers. Her three-part series, *Modern Chinese Theologies*, continues this endeavor by providing selected essays discussing the history of twentieth-century Chinese theology. Since “Chinese theology has rarely exported its fruit” she has aimed to change this (*Modern Chinese Theologies: Volume 1: Heritage and Prospect* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2023], ix). In both *Modern Chinese Theologies* and her most recent *A Reader in Chinese Theology*, she is attentive to the full scope of Chinese theology. The latter work is significant not only because it is the first such reader to be published in English (p. ix), but also because it provides an excellent, though inevitably incomplete, survey of historical and contemporary Chinese theology. The book translates and adapts the first of a two-volume Chinese reader: *Sino-*

*Christian Theology Reader* edited by He Guanghu and Daniel H.N. Yeung. A second volume provides further readings from 20th and 21st century theologians in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora, and one can only hope that Starr will edit and adapt it as well.

*A Reader in Chinese Theology* is divided into three major sections comprising a total of 35 excerpts from significant Chinese theologians. The first section covers the theology of traditional China, but includes Matteo Ricci, the one Western author in the book. The second section covers the theology of revolutionary and nationalist China, and the third section is devoted to contemporary theologians and academics. Selections from some authors, such as Watchman Nee, John C. H. Wu, or K. H. Ting, may already be familiar to readers from their English language writing or previously translated works. However, most of the volume's excerpts have never appeared in English, coming from authors unknown to an English-speaking audience.

A short review cannot provide critical interaction with every selection in the book. Alternatively, critically discussing just one or two pieces seems pointless, given the work's wide-ranging nature. Consequently, this review simply commends the excellent choice of articles and authors. The volume begins with a translation of the Nestorian stele and puts a significant emphasis on highlighting the full range of traditions and beliefs present in Chinese Christianity. Nestorian Christians, Roman Catholics, Confucian-Christians, Missionary churches, Three-Self Protestants, Evangelical Fundamentalists, Holiness Movement contributors, and non-Christian academics writing on Christian theology are all represented.

Two important points of contention within the Chinese church have been its fraught relationship with Western Christianity and its desire to be authentically Chinese. The latter impulse can lead to it simply becoming one more syncretistic influence in Chinese popular religion, an arm of the Communist party, or being subsumed by the *sanjiao* ("three teachings") of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. The two-fold tension is often referred to in contemporary Chinese theology as the problem of indigenization, and both its importance and various attempts to resolve it come through very well in the selected readings.

While the book's wide-ranging selections are an overall strength, they can leave the reader somewhat consternated at times. For instance, moving from Wu Leichuan's "The Renewal of Christianity and the Revival of the Christian Nation," through Wu Yaozong's "Christianity and Materialism: Confessions of a Christian," to Wu Jingxiong's "Mortification' from The Interior Carmel: The Threefold Way of Love," presents three very different perspectives not only on issues in Chinese theology, but on what Chinese theology is even about. The inattentive reader may be left

confused, especially so a student confronting these ideas for the first time.

In any event, the publication of the first English language reader in historical and contemporary Chinese theology is an exciting moment for anyone interested in the field. It gives English-speakers access to and insight into the development of one of the fastest growing Christian traditions. The selections in the book are well considered and give the reader a sense of the full range of thought in Chinese theology. In addition to benefiting seasoned practitioners, this book will be especially helpful to new scholars encountering Chinese theology for the first time or as a supplement to undergraduate or graduate level classes covering Chinese theology.

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Douglas Sean O'Donnell and Leland Ryken. *The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition: Preaching the Literary Artistry and Genres of the Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022. 302 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1433570445. \$23.99.

*The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition* is a tandem effort by Douglas Sean O'Donnell and Leland Ryken. O'Donnell, a former student of Ryken's, provides the "voice" of the book by crafting its contents largely from material his mentor provided over the years in his publications and class instruction.

Core convictions about faithful hermeneutics and fruitful homiletics motivate this work. Both authors believe that because the Bible is literature, approaching it *as literature* will foster more accurate interpretation and thus, better preaching. By observing and honoring the various literary compositions and textures of Scripture, preachers will deliver less reductionistic, more diverse, and more lively sermons. Therefore, a church to whom the Bible is preached with rich literary appreciation will grow to enjoy more the divinely inspired artistic essence of the entire canon. Put simply, they will better appreciate, admire, and apply the Bible in their lives.

At the outset, O'Donnell identifies two main goals for the book. First, he seeks to "inform and inspire" preachers with a literary appreciation of the Bible that is imperative for faithful preaching. In other words, one must see the beauty in the Bible to increase the power of one's expositional ministry. Second, O'Donnell strives to help preachers preach less dull, propositionally cumbersome homilies and preach more vibrant sermons. In other words, he wants preachers to add power to their messages by enhancing their beauty.

Toward these ends, O'Donnell covers six specific genres: narratives (Chapter 1), parables (Chapter 2), epistles (Chapter 3), poetry (Chapter 4), proverbs (Chapter 5), and visionary writings (Chapter 6). Each chapter contains two main parts (the lone exception is Chapter 2, which includes an expanded introduction on the literary attributes of parables). In each chapter's first part, O'Donnell discusses how to *read* a particular genre of Scripture. In other words, he presents interpretive principles specific to that genre. In the second, he considers how to *preach* that genre. In these sections he makes numerous practical suggestions for preparing and preaching sermons from each genre. The chapters end with a helpful list of suggested resources to encourage building the preacher's library within that genre.

The authors have accomplished their stated goals with this work. They demonstrate that effective exposition demands skilled literary interpretation. They convince the reader that the different genres of Scripture must not only be approached and interpreted differently; they should also be preached in ways that recognize, indeed utilize, their differences. The writers also encourage preachers to pursue a more living and active pulpit ministry through the appreciation of genre artistry. O'Donnell's style reflects the combination of beauty and power in the title of the book. He writes with a heavy dose of clever humor (beauty) while serving a meaty discussion on the nature of Scripture's various genres (power).

At the same time, the eager reader will likely wonder if chapters assigned to prophecy and perhaps to the legal sections would have improved the book. Also, one cannot help asking how the authors would suggest reading and preaching the sub-genre of genealogy. Nevertheless, *The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition* is an exceptional introduction to reading and preaching the various genres of the Bible. It is a work that honors the Bible as God's word and exhorts preachers to feed their people well by identifying authorial intent through authorial design. This volume will greatly benefit all preachers, whether veteran pastors or pastors-in-training. It is highly recommended for study and application at seminaries, at both masters and doctoral levels.

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