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Book Reviews

Ruth A. Clements, Russell E. Fuller, Armin Lange, and Paul D. Mandel, eds. *The Textual History of the Bible from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Biblical Manuscripts of the Vienna Papyrus Collection*. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 137. Leiden: Brill, 2023. xxvi + 668 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-9004504622. $198.00

This volume is one of the latest contributions to the impressive series Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah. It provides a textual history of the Bible from our earliest manuscripts to medieval manuscripts of the Vienna Papyrus Collection—which most likely originated from the Cairo Genizah. The work's title is like that of the monumental series Textual History of the Bible (THB), and it often complements those works. THB, however, provides a more thorough overview of the textual history of the Hebrew Bible. The volume under review is much more selective in its presentation but provides groundbreaking analysis in some key areas of the discipline.

The Textual History of the Bible is divided chronologically into three parts in addition to an introduction to the textual history of the Hebrew Bible. The book's first part focuses on the Jewish Scriptures of the Second Temple period. Russell E. Fuller begins by surveying how two important books—Isaiah and the Twelve—were used in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, and the Septuagint (pp. 25–42). Armin Lange's contribution to this section on the history of Jeremiah is impressive (pp. 43–154). He builds on his earlier work and draws several important conclusions on the history of this book, including the claim that MT-Jeremiah was the dominant text since at least the third century BCE (p. 127). Other important contributions in this section include Pablo A. Torijano Morales's investigation into the relevance of the Old Latin Text for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible (pp. 155–82). David Frankel, then, investigates Gen 9:6 to illustrate the common notion that textual and literary criticism overlap (pp. 183–218). Guy Darshan attempts to show how 1 Kings 6–8 in the MT tradition evidences a free approach to copying (pp. 219–40). Alexander Rofé discusses midrashic elements in the biblical texts as he has helpfully done in other works (pp. 241–52), while Jonathan Ben-Dov explores the witnesses to the book of Deuteronomy and the degree to which these texts refer to angels and demons (pp. 253–84).

The second part of the book surveys the history of the Hebrew Bible

from the Jewish Wars to the early Masoretic codices. In this section, Noah Hacham and Armin Lange helpfully outline criteria to distinguish between Christian and Jewish Greek biblical papyri (pp. 288–301). Emmanuel Tov surveys how scribes copied the divine name in Greek biblical manuscripts (pp. 302–15). Nancy Benovitz's fascinating chapter discusses the text, date, provenance, and function of a silver armband inscribed with the text of Psalm 91(90):1 in Greek (pp. 316–43). Shamma Friedman's essay concerns the Aramaic demonstrative pronoun דיכי, and more specifically, its five uses preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Targums, and the Babylonian Talmud (pp. 344–62). Geoffrey Khan concludes this section by discussing the Karaites' central role in preserving and developing the Masoretic tradition (pp. 363–95).

The third and final section of the book investigates issues related to the Vienna Papyrus Collection. This section begins with a helpful table listing the Vienna Papyri that preserve Hebrew text. Most of these are biblical texts but some are Masoretic notes (pp. 399–400). Next, Bernhard Palme provides an accessible and helpful introduction to these texts. He outlines their discovery, and how they were donated to the library (pp. 401–10). The remaining chapters all seek to introduce the reader to various manuscripts in this collection and to show their importance to understanding the textual history of the Hebrew Bible. Yosef Ofer discusses H 133 and notes several important details such as its orthographic profile (pp. 411–55). Although this differs from the MT, it was corrected towards it (p. 412). Next, Ursula Schattner-Rieser situates the paragraphing system and text of biblical fragments of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers and concludes that the paragraphing system often corresponds to that of the DSS and that the variants (though few) often evidence differences in the reading tradition (pp. 456–511). Leeor Gottlieb, then, surveys H 12, a haftarah book with fascinating scribal features such as abbreviations of the divine name and ligatures (p. 516). The former prophets of the Vienna Collection are surveyed next by Viktor Golinets. He provides a helpful description of the manuscripts along with their scribal features and text (pp. 526–67). Josef M. Oesch discusses the fragments preserving portions of the Writings (pp. 568–93). The book concludes with an overview of the Masoretic lists and scribal exercises preserved in the Vienna Collection (pp. 594–615).

This collection of essays provides several ground-breaking discussions pertinent to the textual history of the Hebrew Bible. For me, Armin Lange's discussion of the text of Jeremiah and the collection of essays regarding the Vienna Papyrus Collection stand out. Anyone researching

in these areas will need to consult these monumental chapters.

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John Bergsma and Jeffrey L. Morrow. *Murmuring Against Moses: The Contentious History and Contested Future of Pentateuchal Studies*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2023. xiii + 308. Hardback. ISBN 978-1645851493. $39.95.

John Bergsma and Jeffrey L. Morrow (B&M) are important leaders of the St. Paul Center. They are also theology professors at the Franciscan University of Steubenville and Seton Hall University respectively. Their three-part *Murmuring Against Moses* has a two-part thesis: first, to "challenge the hegemony" of source-critical approaches and the classic documentary hypothesis to the Pentateuch and second, to "highlight new evidence for the Pentateuch's antiquity … prior to the Babylonian exile" (p. x).

Part 1 (chapters 1–3) offers a well-selected survey of modern scholarship that challenges the documentary hypothesis. Particularly relevant are Kenneth Kitchen and Edwin Yamauchi's work comparing the ancient Near East and the Old Testament (Chapter 2, pp. 39–54). Also, Isaac Kikawada's, Arthur Quinn's, Gary Rendsburg's, and Joshua Berman's explorations of ancient literary style indeed undermine many so-called surface inconsistencies that source-critical scholars emphasize (Chapter 3).

Part 2 (chapters 4–6) addresses the second part of the authors' thesis by offering a fresh argument for the Pentateuch's pre-exilic origins. First, they argue that if Ezekiel and Jeremiah are exilic, then their Pentateuchal sources (P, H, and D) must be pre-exilic (Chapter 4). Second, in Chapter 5—perhaps the book's strongest—B&M find it unlikely that post-exilic Judean priests would have embraced the Pentateuch as it now stands. The Pentateuch does not mention Jerusalem (unlike post-exilic *Jubilees* and Chronicles [pp.138–48]), celebrates patriarchal religion that later legal material considers deviant, and emphasizes northern Israel. The latter emphasis includes Abraham's altar at Shechem (Gen 12:6–7), Joseph's ascendancy (Gen 37–50), half-breed Judahites (Gen 38), Judah's terse kingly prophecy (Gen 49:8–10), and Joshua's covenant renewal at Shechem (Josh 24). Most importantly, Moses commands Israel to ratify the covenant on Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (Deut 11:29–31; 27:4–26), which are key locations for the northern Samaritans. These factors cause B&M to question whether post-exilic Judean priests zealous for Jerusalem would embrace a (recently compiled) Pentateuch that fails to mention Jerusalem

but validates their rivals', the Samaritans, claims. The authors conclude that the Pentateuch is pre-exilic, which is earlier than typically assumed in recent scholarship.

Part 3 (chapters 7–9)—perhaps the book's weakest section—summarizes Pentateuchal criticism from antiquity to Julius Wellhausen. In general, B&M argue that source criticism has been motivated by an "anti-church theology at the service of increasingly secular modern nation states" (p. 253).

To evaluate, B&M's survey in Part 1 thoughtfully assembles scholarship that opposes the classical documentary hypothesis. Part 2 compellingly presents why a post-exilic Pentateuch should emphasize Jerusalem more than our current Pentateuch does. The authors' examination uses biblical studies' tool of ideological criticism to demonstrate why it is unlikely for a post-exilic Pentateuch to disregard the "Zion theology" that was so dominant in the post-exilic period. The Pentateuch's glaring lack of such theology suggests it must have originated before the exile. This analysis is elegant and strong.

Nonetheless, I offer a few brief criticisms. First, fewer quotations and more summaries of the secondary literature would have made a smoother read. Although direct quotations are often helpful, occasionally I felt I was reading nothing more than a collage of other works (e.g., pp. 182–94).

Second, Part 3 strongly implies that the documentary hypothesis's alleged political affiliations weaken its validity (pp. 194, 198, 213–14, 223, 225, 249–53). One could easily argue that B&M's religious affiliations weaken their conclusions in the same way. Regardless, the motivations for an inquiry are largely irrelevant; the explanatory power of an inquiry's results matters most.

Third, B&M ended their survey of the documentary hypothesis with Wellhausen, which misses an opportunity to interact with the neo-documentary hypothesis. This is the most recent iteration of that hypothesis, offered most strongly by Joel Baden. Like B&M, I often find source-critical analyses inadequate, but even Baden—like B&M—acknowledges that source-critical analyses relying on stylistic features are flawed. Baden instead relies on "narrative inconsistencies and contradictions" to determine the Pentateuch's putative sources.[1] Some arguments presented in Part 1 (e.g., Berman's and Rendsburg's) along with other key works left uncited (such as Molly Zahn's *Genres of Rewriting* and David Carr's *The*

[1] Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (Yale University Press, 2012), 26–33, 30.

Formation of the Hebrew Bible)[2] could have been leveraged against the neo-documentary hypothesis to create a more current (and forceful) argument.

To summarize, despite a few concerns, *Murmuring Against Moses* is enjoyable, clear, and informative. B&M offer thorough surveys and a provocative case for the Pentateuch's pre-exilic origins.

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Mark Allan Powell. *Matthew*. Interpretation Bible Commentary 1. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2023. xii + 326 pp. Hardback. 978-0664264291. $22.95.

This is the inaugural volume in the new Interpretation Bible Commentary (IBC), designed to "extend and reframe" the original Interpretation series (p. xi). Aiming to serve pastors and teachers, the IBC stresses "both sound critical exegesis and strong theological sensibilities" (p. xi). The first commentary's author, Mark Allan Powell, is a leading New Testament scholar and a recognized expert in the Gospel of Matthew (GM), now retired from Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

In his 36-page introduction, Powell opens with a minimal (one-page) discussion of standard introductory issues and then summarizes what the GM "offers" both its "original readers" and "readers today" (pp. 2–3). Regarding the former, most significantly, he assumes Matthew's use of Mark and posits that Matthew wrote a "replacement Gospel" for his readers because he found Mark "inadequate," since it lacks an "effective doctrine for the church" (p. 3). Summarizing Matthew's offering for today's readers, he deems the GM "the most important book in the Bible for Christian ethics," largely due to its "sustained hermeneutic of 'binding and loosing,' by which faith communities might interpret Scripture to discern the will of God in diverse circumstances and ever-changing contexts" (p. 3). Next, he offers an overview on reading the GM (pp. 4–6), briefly outlining his primary concern to guide readers in understanding "how Matthew's readers would be expected to understand the Gospel" (p. 5) and the implications of the GM's nature as story. Finally, he concludes his introduction with a summary of seventeen key themes in the GM. These include commonly-discussed topics like God's presence and reign and

[2] Molly M. Zahn, *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism: Scribal Composition and Transmission* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 88–94; David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 456–86.

others like "binding-and-loosing commandments" (pp. 16–19) and Jesus's "critique of power, wealth, and wisdom" (pp. 31–34). He rightly clarifies that "binding" and "loosing" language appears in rabbinic legal debates, and thus, in Matthew it relates not to forgiveness of sins, but the church's prerogative to exercise "moral discernment" in "determining what kind of behavior constitutes sin" (pp. 189–90). In the remaining pages, he comments on the GM in a passage-by-passage manner, focusing on final form (cf. p. 2).

Powell's commentary is full of literary and theological insights and analysis. A potentially useful guide for students and pastors, its utility is enabled by five key strengths. First, while the author notes where Matthew departs from Mark, he focuses on Matthew's finished story, enabling his readers to better understand the GM for their preaching and teaching. Second, his expertise in literary analysis offers key insights into the GM's characters. For instance, he notes that "religious leaders" in the GM are "flat characters," whose "literary function" is "never to present a realistic depiction of people who exist … in the world outside the story," but "to provide personification of values" (p. 28). Such nuanced literary analysis prevents misreading Matthew's intentions. Third, his account of the GM's main themes is succinct and clear, offering readers a useful overview of the GM and a framework for understanding key texts. Fourth, he includes nine valuable excursuses addressing significant topics. Finally, his commitment to disclose Matthew's intentions delivers outstanding descriptions of the GM's theology. These include (but are not limited to) Matthew's scriptural intentions (pp. 2, 23), Jesus as a new Moses (pp. 19–20), the Sermon on the Mount as a new Torah (pp. 20, 74), and the parallels between the Great Commission and Joshua's commissioning (Josh 1:1–9, p. 20).

However, in at least three areas Powell's commentary displays weaknesses that inhibit its usefulness for his target audience. The first is the brevity of his introduction. Its discussion of critical issues is astonishingly brief at approximately one page, and he asserts a false consensus that "modern scholars" reject traditional authorship (p. 1). Additionally, though the GM's structure remains debated, Powell's introduction does not discuss it or justify his six-part outline. Such an explanation would be especially useful for pastors preaching on Matthew. The second weakness is his minimal evidence of engagement with scholarship. He cites only twelve scholarly works other than his own. In contrast, he tends to summarize a perceived consensus, using phrases like "modern scholars" (p. 1), "widely recognized" (p. 16), or "we now know" (p. 189), without citation. Although some examples appear accurate, a comparison of recent

commentaries reveals that Powell overstates the consensus regarding authorship (p. 1). Likewise, he only presents one side of the debate on Matthew's intention to replace (pp. 2–3) or endorse Mark's authority, again without documentation. Further citation throughout would strengthen his case and earn his readers' trust. Since this is the inaugural volume of the IBC series, perhaps Powell is following a new standard set by its editors. However, when compared to volumes in the predecessor series, the absence of discussion on the book's structure, one-page treatment of critical issues, and minimal interaction with other scholarship remains notable.

Finally, Powell's comments on the GM reveal an unfortunate attitude toward Matthew himself. While he rightly criticizes ways the GM has been (ab)used (pp. 4, 29), he extends his critique to Matthew himself, explicitly stating that Matthew is worthy of blame for how he tells his story (p. 29). The series' target audience (pastors) will likely include evangelicals who will deem such criticism of Scripture inappropriate.

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Michael Parker. *Through Middle Eastern Eyes: A Life of Kenneth E. Bailey*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2024. x + 372 pp. Paperback. ISBN 979-8385207794. $29.00.

Western Christians exposed to Kenneth Bailey's work are challenged to see the New Testament differently. Perhaps best known for his cultural insights on the parable of Luke 15 (the lost sheep, lost coin, and two lost sons), his singular achievement was showcasing Jesus as the NT's preeminent theologian, once he is properly seen within his Middle Eastern context.

Michael Parker, a missionary scholar with significant Middle East experience, has now produced a meticulously researched but eminently readable life of Bailey (1930–2016), *Through Middle Eastern Eyes*. Playing on the title of one of Bailey's bestselling and much translated books, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (2008), this biography is a superb introduction to a great but humble man and his groundbreaking work.

Parker accomplishes several things as he traces Bailey's life and legacy. He introduces the reader to a history of missions in the twentieth-century Middle East. He investigates the origin and development of Bailey's significant scholarly contributions. He illumines the challenges facing a missionary family in multiple war zones. And once he has done this, readers

leave the book feeling they know the Baileys personally.

The son of Presbyterian missionaries, Bailey and his wife, "Mickey," spent four decades ministering in Egypt, Beirut, Jerusalem, and Cyprus. They were forced to leave Egypt in 1965 when two church leaders complained about him to the secret police. These leaders were humiliated by their synod when their earlier attempt to dispense with his services was resoundingly defeated, and they responded maliciously (p. 118). This was an exception to the rule that "Few decisions were ever made at synod meetings because the losers would feel that their honor had been impugned" (p. 105). Honor is not to be sniffed at!

Significantly though, the insight which changed Bailey's life was thanks to an Egyptian preacher, Adib Qaldis. Speaking on John 4, the story of the woman at the well, in colloquial Arabic, he elicited a unanimous response from the village women present that she had to be a "bad woman" since none of them would ever go alone to the Nile to draw water. As Bailey realized, "there is a layer of meaning in the stories from and about Jesus that can only be unlocked by a more precise awareness of the Middle Eastern culture that informs the text" (p. 69). This perception led to his extremely thorough NT doctoral dissertation (published in 1976 as *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*) and other influential writings.

As Parker notes, Bailey's contributions were mostly well received, exemplified by Al Mohler's inclusion of *The Cross and the Prodigal* as one of the best books for preachers in *Preaching Magazine* in 2006 (p. 301), while "*Christianity Today* recognized *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes* as the outstanding book of the year in Biblical Studies for 2011" (p. 323). Naysayers typically disparaged the text of Scripture itself, disliking Bailey's emphasis on its unity and coherence: His "work required New Testament scholars who embraced form and redaction criticism to question their premises. Unwilling to do this, they concluded that Bailey's work was ultimately inadequate" (p. 207). On the contrary, it is those glued to their narrow preconceptions whose work proves inadequate. In Bailey's own discerning words, he sought "to demonstrate that the deepest level of understanding of the cross is available in the dramatic actions and teachings of Jesus, and that Paul's theology comes then as an enriching supplement, not as a first-time explanation of an unknown mystery" (p. 228).

Bailey's work stands on its own merits, of course, even when one does not agree with all his assertions. And Parker's fine biography captures key elements of his scholarship for newcomers and seasoned fans alike. The latter will encounter many surprises though—since Bailey never made much of himself. It is an eye-opener to realize he suffered from dyslexia and often had leg trouble to the extent he needed crutches. He and his

wife also took special care of their (adopted) daughter, Sara, who had chronic fatigue syndrome (and other ailments) for decades. It was later discovered this was caused by heavy metals and poisons in her body from "exposure to spent ordnance in Lebanon during the civil war" (p. 282). Tragically, they also lost their (natural) son, David, to cancer at age 44.

Through it all, Bailey faithfully followed the Good Shepherd. It is perhaps no surprise that his final book (which he saw as his best) is titled *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament* (2014), published soon before his death from an aggressive form of leukemia (pp. 333, 338–39). I would recommend anything Bailey has written, but an excellent place to enhance those works is Parker's *Through Middle Eastern Eyes*.

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G. K. Beale. *Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023. xviii + 576 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1540960429. $50.00.

Although Christians rightly confess the doctrine of the resurrection, how often is Christ's resurrection connected to other primary New Testament themes, such as justification, adoption, sanctification, return from exile, and the new creational kingdom? G. K. Beale addresses this connection in his *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, a "sequel" to his influential 2011 work, *New Testament Biblical Theology*.

Beale focuses primarily on the believer's union with the resurrected Christ as the beginning of the eschatological new-creational kingdom *and* on the aspects of the resurrected Christ attributed to those who come into union with him (p. 14). Although many books have recently been published on the theme of union with Christ, Beale's goal is to discuss union directly as it relates to the resurrected Christ and the believer's link to some facet of the resurrected Christ (pp. 14–15).

Part 1 (chapters 1–2) lays the book's foundation. In Chapter 1, Beale reviews the biblical-theological storyline of the Bible. His understanding of the Old Testament storyline includes God's progressive re-establishment of his eschatological new-creational kingdom (p. 62). It is foundational for his proposed storyline of the NT:

> Jesus's life, trials, death for sinners, and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfillment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in a worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God's glory. (pp. 62–63)

Chapter 2 deals with the theme of resurrection throughout the NT. He argues that the resurrection is the climax of each Gospel, but also demonstrates that the resurrection is at the heart of Pauline theology, which can be traced to the apostle's encounter with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. Beale admits it is an enormous claim to say that most of Paul's doctrines derive from his continuing reflection on Christ's resurrection and ascension. Still, he makes a strong case in showing that the resurrection is not a "center" but an organic generative influence (p. 97).

In Part 2 (chapters 3–17), Beale depicts the relationship between Christ's resurrection and the believer's union with Christ as facets of a diamond. These facets "are specific eschatological realities that Christ became and that also accrue and are attributed to believers in union with the resurrected Christ" (p. 100). He identifies them as return from exile, true Israel, last Adam, regeneration, righteousness, wisdom, justification, missiology, ecclesiology, glorification, sanctification, king-priest, tribulation, redemption, resurrection, pneumatology, temple, image of God, and sonship.

Beale notes that chapters 3–17 may be read in any order, which allows the book to be used more easily in teaching or even devotionally. Space does not permit an overview of each chapter, but some of the most significant material is highlighted here. In Chapter 3, he argues that Christ's resurrection is essential to Jesus's status as the last Adam, the Son of God, and true Israel. As believers are united to Christ, they become adopted sons and enjoy Christ's status as the true Israel. Chapter 5 also deals with Christ as the true Israel, but here the focus is more on the *ekklēsia* of God as the fulfillment of the assembly of Israel in the OT. Chapter 6 connects Christ's resurrection to our justification, sanctification, and redemption, with 1 Cor 1:30 and Rom 6 as foundational texts. Chapters 9 and 10 are the strongest in the book. Beale argues that just as Christ was transformed by the Spirit at his ascension, so believers are transformed because of their identification with the Spirit-resurrected Christ (p. 270). He also demonstrates the significance of the baptism of the Spirit in bringing believers into union with Christ's death and resurrection (pp. 306–9).

Readers may disagree with some exegetical conclusions in Chapter 8, which deals with Christ as the mission-oriented returnee from exile. Indeed, return from exile is a pervasive theme in the NT, and Beale successfully demonstrates that reconciliation is related to restoration from exile. However, he uses Col 1:24 as a foundational passage, arguing that Paul's sufferings brought Christ's sufferings to definitive completion. Further,

the connection between Paul's supposed partial fulfillment of Isa 49:3 and believers' union with Christ is somewhat confusing. That said, the overall argument of his book is not affected though.

Union with the Resurrected Christ is the fruit of a lifetime of biblical-theological scholarship. Beale demonstrates deep and substantive exegetical work, masterfully dealing with complex NT allusions to the OT. Although he references a fair amount of previous material, he has freshly examined and reworked it in light of the relationship between Christ's resurrection and the believer's union with him in his resurrection. In sum, Beale has served the Christian reader well, and I highly recommend this book to any serious student of the Bible.

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Andreas Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell. *Biblical Theology: A Canonical, Thematic, and Ethical Approach*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2023. xxxi + 981 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433569692. $64.99.

Evangelical Biblical Theology [BT] as a discipline differs from Systematic Theology in that it focuses on what the Scriptures said in the context when it was given rather than what Scripture teaches about certain cardinal topics and what that means for the church today. Even in BT there are differing approaches. Some works limit the study to a book or section of Scripture, seeking to synthesize its content and limiting its wording to its ancient context, a sort of "what did it say/mean." Another BT might seek a *Mitte* or center/hub concept that unifies a book, section, or Testament. Others trace several key themes through one or both Testaments or highlight a single theme that runs through the OT, NT, or both. There is no one correct BT approach. All are biblical theologies and contribute to understanding God's revelation. Seldom, however, is there an attempt to present a more integrated approach. This is what makes the canonical, thematic, and ethical approach of Gregory Goswell (OT) and Andreas Köstenberger (NT) unique. It goes beyond a one-dimensional BT. It traces the themes, ethics, and storyline contribution for each biblical book and then the larger sections of Scripture.

The authors outline their method in a 64-page introduction. Rather than a broad tracing of BT history and approaches generally, it features primarily on the nature and method of BT in evangelical studies, especially for the most recent half century. This provides a good updating of Gerhard Hasel's works *Old Testament Biblical Theology*, 4th ed. (Eerdmans, 1991) and *New Testament Biblical Theology* (Eerdmans, 1978). Also included are

brief discussions of the ordering of the canonical books and the relation of BT to ethics.

The major portion of the work discusses the OT along the traditional canonical ordering of the Masoretic Text—Law, Prophets, and Writings. The NT discussion reflects the English ordering for the books. Each Testament begins with a discussion of book order, and the NT material also briefly describes the relationship of the Testaments, including the use of the OT in the NT.

For larger units (e.g., Law or Gospels), the authors overview each book, describe its major themes, the ethics presented, and the contribution to the storyline of the Bible. The overview to a book briefly traces introductory matters, e.g., authorship, the present scholarly discussion, etc. Then the authors trace three to five prominent words or concepts. Ethics discussions center on the conduct expected toward God and others—unsurprising given Matt 22:37–40. In broad strokes the storyline traces a book's themes through Scripture. At the end of these larger units is a summary following the same structure. The OT covers 236 pp. and the NT 338 pp. A synthesis of 76 pages completes the work, followed by 125 pp. of bibliography and 90 pp. for indexes. A detailed page count is unusual in a review, but in this case, it demonstrates that this is a comprehensive and significant resource for anyone teaching or preaching the Bible, or for those who want an authoritative overview of the biblical message.

This work is a treasure trove for the discussion of the biblical text. Of course, no reader will agree with every interpretation given, but where there might be disagreement, the authors usually footnote resources and discussions to direct further study. At times there is more material in the footnotes than in the text of the page.

Regarding the term "canonical," some works, particularly in OT studies, use it to refer to the time-tested practice of interpreting Scripture with [especially NT] Scripture. This work relies on a differing form of canonical interpretation that draws exegetical significance from the positions of the biblical book relative to those before and after, or books within a group, particularly The Twelve [Minor Prophets], a favorite among canonically inclined scholars. And so, e.g., Joel and Obadiah, presumed to be from the time of the Babylonian threat or later (see pp. 230, 236), are compiled earlier in The Twelve. Also, Jonah is said to come from an even later period but placed earlier (see p. 753). According to this form of canonical interpretation, these out of sequence books are fitted into the present order by The Twelve's compilers and provide exegetical insights when read with adjacent books. The other major sections (e.g., the Law

or the Pauline corpus) also receive canonical discussion, but with less rigor. Space does not permit a fuller discussion of the benefits or critiques of this form of the canonical method. It is not embraced by all Evangelical scholars.

That observation aside, this is a major work contributing to an understanding of the Bible in part and in whole. It is a must have for the serious study of Scripture. The footnotes and bibliography alone are worth the price of the book. The authors provide a model of outstanding scholarship.

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W. Edward Glenny and Darian R. Lockett, eds. *Canon Formation: Tracing the Role of Sub-Collections in the Biblical Canon*. London: T&T Clark, 2023. 331 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0567692085. $135.00.

Many studies address the formation of the biblical canon. This body of essays stands out in showing the reader how canonical context affects biblical interpretation. The authors examine the role of canonical development in hermeneutics by considering the Bible's major canonical sub-collections.

The first major sub-collections are, obviously, the Old and New Testaments. These two sub-collections have their own canonical shape. In the case of the OT, those shapes differ in the Hebrew (Stephen Dempster) and Greek (John Meade) forms. The OT is further sub-divided into the Pentateuch (Stephen Chapman), the Psalms (Nancy deClaissé-Walford), Wisdom Literature (Craig Bartholomew), the *Megilloth* (Timothy Stone), the *Nebi'im* (Christopher Seitz), the "Twelve" (Don Collett), and the Twelve in the Septuagint (Edward Glenny). The NT is sub-divided into the Fourfold Gospel (Gregory Lanier), the *Corpus Apostolicum* (Darian Lockett), the Pauline Corpus (Randolph Richards), and the book of Revelation (Külli Tõniste). The work concludes with Ched Spellman's seminal essay, "Hermeneutical Reflections on Canonical Sub-Collections."

Canon studies, covering either canon formation or the role of canonical criticism in hermeneutics, is an exciting field of study. Lee Martin McDonald, a key scholar of canon development, concludes his foreword to the volume with a substantial, but not exhaustive, list of questions still being asked and answered. How the writings of Scripture came to be collected as the Bible, by which people might know God, his work, and his will, remains important for scholarship. But the question is important for the church as well.

Each chapter contributes separately to scholarship. Describing the formation of the sub-collections that comprise the Christian Bible is an immense input both to Scripture studies and to hermeneutics. The editors have done the discipline and the church a great service. However, Spellman's concluding chapter, demonstrating the value of a canonical approach to Scripture, is worth the price of admission, offering readers an insight into the importance of "canonical context" for biblical interpretation.

As Spellman explains, this collection of essays "asks several critical questions about the scope of the historical-critical project and concludes that it is not sufficient as a comprehensive program" (p. 312). This is not to deny the importance of the historical investigation into the canon's development, but to insist that such inquiry is inadequate to interpret the text of Scripture. That insistence is particularly important when considering the "pre-history" of the text, which should be relegated to the "preliminary phase of investigation" (p. 313). Spellman then demonstrates significant inter-biblical reflections between various sub-collections in Scripture, which has key hermeneutical implications: Intertextuality is vital to the *meaning* of the texts themselves. As he points out, reading the sub-collections of the Bible (or the books individually) in isolation from the remainder of Scripture limits the range of possible interpretations.

Spellman also notes that individual biblical texts are received into the canon as they relate to other texts. Seeing the Bible as a "collection of collections" is important to canonical analysis, since the texts are not merely individual writings collected alongside other writings. Instead, the writings are joined together because an organic relationship between and among the texts is recognized. It is claimed that these sub-collections circulated together because they inherently associate with one another in meaning. Readers who consistently grouped writings together understood the individual texts in relation to the other texts in the grouping.

The canonical approach to reading Scripture, as envisioned in the essays, repositions the individual texts of Scripture from their mere historical context to their canonical context. The history of canon formation, by which texts become associated with each other and then those collections in turn become associated with one another into a greater collection, guides the interpreter to the "ordering principle or associative logic at work in the formation and function of the collection" (p. 316). For example, the Law at the beginning of the OT establishes it as foundational to reading later texts. Thus, the ordering of biblical sub-collections shapes interpretation.

But the significant "ordering" is not simply of individual texts, but of sub-collections of texts. Spellman appeals to the metaphor of the solar

system to help. Within the solar system there are planets which all revolve around the sun, forming a single solar system because of the gravitational pull of the single sun. Those planets also have moons that revolve around them, being drawn gravitationally to the planet. Similarly, sub-collections are comprised of texts that were drawn together in their reception, but those sub-collections have their own gravitational pull to form a single canon. Reading the text of Scripture in the light of these associations, both within sub-collections and as a larger collection, guides the reader in interpretation.

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Brant Pitre. *Jesus and Divine Christology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024. viii + 408 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-0802875129. $31.62.

In *Jesus and Divine Christology*, Brant Pitre addresses the divergence between the conclusions of the quest for the historical Jesus (Jesus did not claim divinity) and recent trends in early Christological research (Jesus's early disciples regarded him as God). Pitre argues, "the best explanation for why the earliest Jewish followers of Jesus believed he was divine shortly after his death is because Jesus himself spoke and acted as if he were divine during his lifetime." Further, "Jesus … did so in a very Jewish way—using riddles, questions and allusions to Jewish Scripture to both reveal and conceal the apocalyptic secret of his divinity" (p. 12).

To prove this hypothesis, Pitre explores twelve pericopes across four main chapters (sandwiched between chapters stating the problem and drawing implications). For each pericope, he concerns himself with the *substantia verborum Jesu*, the basic substance of what Jesus said and did, and follows E. P. Sanders's Triple-Context Approach, which evaluates the historicity of each pericope according to its plausibility within a first-century Jewish context, its coherence with other instances of Jesus's thought, and its capacity to explain the Christology of the early church. In each instance Pitre argues convincingly that what is said of Jesus's identity in the text originates with Jesus himself.

In his chapter on epiphanic miracles, Pitre examines Jesus's stilling of the storm (Matt 8:23–27), walking on the sea (Matt 14:22–27), and transfiguration (Matt 17:1–9). He provides substantial evidence that these events not only affirm Jesus's divine self-identity but have historical support. Certainly, some readers will reject the authenticity of miracles; yet his case is not dependent on such authenticity. Regardless of one's presuppositions, Pitre provides a compelling case for the historicity of Jesus's

claims.

The subsequent chapter concerns Jesus's *meshalim*, "riddles, puzzling sayings, and/or questions that were deliberately intended to be both ambiguous and thought-provoking" (p. 111). Pitre examines Jesus's command to love him more than one's parents (Matt 10:37–39), his claim that no one is good except God (Matt 19:16–22), and his riddle about David's Lord (Matt 22:41–46). His identification of the "no one is good" discourse as a *meshal* is particularly helpful for the church, since opponents of Christianity often use the passage as evidence against Jesus's divinity. For this difficult passage, Pitre offers a considerable case to the contrary.

In Chapter 4, Pitre considers Jesus's use of apocalyptic language to identify as divine. Pitre investigates the healing of the paralytic (Matt 9:2–7), John the Baptist's inquiry about the "one to come" (Matt 11:2–6), and the revelation of the Father and the Son (Matt 11:25–27). Discussing the first passage, he notably refutes the assertion that priests had the authority to forgive sins. He rightly argues that Qumran's 4QPrNab ar frags. 1–3, lines 2–5 and Josephus's *Ant.* 6:92 do not demand priestly pardon, which removes a significant obstacle to Jesus's divinity. Pitre's inclusion of Philo's neglected words, "God could sooner change into a human than a human into God" (*Embassy*, 114–18), is likewise welcome evidence against the inconceivability that God could become human in a Jewish context.

In his fifth chapter Pitre argues convincingly that blasphemy for divine claims is the ultimate reason for Jesus's execution. He offers multiple instances where the crowds consider Jesus a blasphemer: the healing of the paralytic (Matt 9:2–7), Jesus's teaching during Tabernacles (John 8:58–59), the accusation of blasphemy during Hanukkah (John 10:31–33), and Jesus's Sanhedrin trial (Matt 26:63–66). While some scholars argue against the historicity of Jesus's trial because of later rabbinic prohibition during festivals, Pitre provides evidence that capital cases were a mandated exception to the rule.

In the final chapter, Pitre offers implications from the study and encourages readers to abandon the idea that Jesus never claimed to be divine "as the outdated relic that it is" (p. 329). The standard answers for how Jesus lived as a Jew but also began a movement which diverged from Judaism and declared him divine (due to his resurrection and revelatory experiences) cannot fully explain the historical events. Jesus's divine self-identification, however, does. Further, the complications entailed by Jesus's method of identification—riddles, allusions to Scripture, claiming oneness yet distinction, inferences to a dual nature—explain the significant time gap between him and the Nicaean Creed.

Overall, Pitre brilliantly succeeds in defending his case. While some

readers will object to his inclusion of John's Gospel, his case stands without John's episodes. However, the most significant aspect of his work is the comparison of his arguments with explanations from historical Jesus research. He illuminates the prevalent presuppositional bias and circular reasoning against divine identity and shows his case to be substantially preferable. As such, this work serves as a significant challenge to the status quo and merits serious consideration. Further, since arguments against Jesus's divine self-identity have reached the popular level, the work offers the church an accessible and competent case to the contrary.

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James K. Dew Jr. and Ronnie P. Campbell Jr., eds. *Natural Theology: Five Views*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024. vi + 289 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1540960443. $26.99.

One positive result of the decline of Christianity in America is that more people in the church are talking about natural theology. Since natural theology is "as old as philosophy itself," an introduction to the current state of scholarship is needed (p. 2). Providing this, editors James Dew and Ronnie Campbell bring together five contributors who advocate for or critique versions of natural theology. The book provides readers with a helpful introduction to the current state of scholarly conversations about natural theology.

The editors structure the book around three questions. First, what is natural theology? Although the contributors agree on some of the salient features of natural theology, noteworthy discrepancies appear in their definitions. Second, should we do natural theology? Most of the contributors answer this question from a pragmatic perspective. Third, how should we do natural theology? In this final question, the contributors analyze methods for arriving at theological truths.

Charles Taliaferro presents *A Contemporary View* of natural theology. Anyone familiar with the standard arguments of natural theology will be familiar with Taliaferro and the content of his essay. "Natural theology is the philosophical reflection on God based on reasoning that does not rely on revelation" (p. 15). We should do natural theology to establish theism independently of the Bible to substantiate some of the Bible's claims. It is done best by abductive reasoning, comparing competing worldviews for their coherence and explanatory power given the available data (p. 16).

As a discipline, natural theology has been criticized by some for internal problems of coherence. In *A Catholic View* of natural theology, Father

Andrew Pinsent likens the problem for natural theology to a Gettier-type problem whereby one arrives at a correct conclusion by improper means and thus does not have genuine knowledge (p. 61). In the same way, natural human reason alone is not a sufficient means to supernatural truths. The salient point in Pinsent's essay is the purported flow of knowledge in natural theology, moving in one direction from man up to God.

Advocating for *A Classical View*, Alistair McGrath views natural theology as a discipline that explores "the possible connections between the world of nature and a transcendent reality" (p. 112). Central to McGrath's understanding of natural theology is a "bidirectional" flow of knowledge (p. 113). We can reflect on nature and conclude that God exists; in the same way, we can begin with a belief in God and reflect on the natural world considering one's belief in God. For this reason, natural theology can take many forms and resists being defined (p. 113).

In *A Deflationary View*, Paul K. Moser wants to deflate our confidence in natural theology because its arguments do not lead to a morally perfect being; rather, only an imperfect being (p. 154). The ontological argument cannot provide an "existence-guaranteeing" concept of a morally perfect being (p. 155). The teleological and cosmological arguments only require causes commensurate to their effects (p. 157). And the moral argument and argument from consciousness do not logically entail the existence of a morally perfect being (p. 161). We can only arrive at a knowledge of a morally perfect being by supernatural means. According to Moser, *de re* experiential evidence in divine self-manifestation is the jointly necessary and sufficient condition that leads to knowledge of a morally perfect being, not human reason (p. 164).

John C. McDowell defends *A Barthian View*, arguing that natural theology suffers from a fatal flaw. It does not begin with a belief in God and thus does not constitute true theology (p. 211). McDowell's concerns resemble the debate about epistemological particularism versus methodism. It is entirely unnatural for any theology to suspend belief in God until validated by a method of acquiring theological knowledge since the presupposition of all theology, seen here as a necessary condition, is that God exists based on revelation (p. 212). According to McDowell, natural theology is a category mistake that only amounts to self-aggrandizement which leads to idolatry.

Should we do natural theology? One weakness of the book is a lack of conversation about the ethical implications of doing natural theology. Most of the contributors (Taliaferro, Pinsent, McGrath, and Moser) answer that question solely from a pragmatic perspective rather than an ethical perspective. Only McDowell discusses the ethical implications of doing natural theology. Nevertheless, the strengths of the book make up for

any shortcomings. Readers will gain a deeper knowledge of what constitutes natural theology and the various entailments of those definitions on theology proper.

Dew and Campbell have compiled an excellent resource for theologians, philosophers, scholars, students, and laymen to gain a foothold on the current state of scholarly conversations about natural theology. The contributors present their arguments clearly and respond to one another with grace. This book will encourage readers to explore the body of literature devoted to natural theology, both contemporary and historical, with confidence.

Ryan Clift
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Andrew T. Walker. *Faithful Reason: Natural Law Ethics for God's Glory and Our Good*. Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024. xi + 413 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1087757599. $34.99.

Will natural law become a regular part of evangelical Protestant ethics? Yes, if Andrew T. Walker has anything to say about it. As Western culture decays morally, more evangelical Protestants have begun to see value in natural law theory to arrest that decay. But since the natural law tradition has been dominated by Roman Catholic thinkers, few resources discuss natural law from an evangelical Protestant viewpoint. Walker aims to fill that void by providing a comprehensive account of natural law theory from the latter perspective.

"Christian natural law provides the most consistent, coherent account of morality necessary for the task of personal and social ethics" (p. 17). Walker sufficiently proves this thesis, dividing his work into two parts. The first is theoretical, dealing primarily in metaethics. The second is practical, dealing in applied ethics, centering around life, marriage, and order. Western culture has abandoned both a fixed moral order and human nature, leaving us without a shared moral vision of how we ought to live our lives. However, natural law theory provides a foundation for a shared moral vision by presupposing both, together with a framework to understand the categories of ontology, epistemology, and teleology.

Walker believes that Christian ethics, viewed from the vantage point of natural law theory, is the simultaneous glorification of God by right human actions, and true human flourishing—by those same actions (pp. 29–30). Two implications follow from this claim. (1) Natural law theory is teleological because it presupposes that the rational actions of human beings are end-directed, seeking some good. (2) A fixed moral order and

human nature exist.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism declares that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. If natural law theory aims at the same end, why do evangelical Protestants exclude natural law from their ethics? Because, according to Walker, the natural law tradition has not been sufficiently "Christotelic" (p. 71). However, since natural law theory is teleological, that means we must understand it Christologically, because Christ is our ultimate end. Unfortunately, he does not adequately establish the claim that the natural law tradition is insufficiently Christotelic; rather, he assumes it to be true.

In any event, Walker writes *Faithful Reason* with a certain interlocutor in mind: an evangelical Protestant who contrasts faith and reason, general and special revelation, and glory to God and human flourishing. He wants to collapse those dichotomies. Faith and reason are not opposed to one another; rather, they are "distinct ways of knowing" which emanate from the same source—God (p. 104). General revelation and special revelation do not counter each other; instead, they are distinct mediums of communication which emanate from the same source—God. Finally, glorifying God and true human flourishing are not in confrontation; rather, they are coextensive. Both manifest by the same means—obedience to God's commands. He thus links natural law to reason, general revelation, and true human flourishing.

Additionally, Walker's commitment to *sola scriptura* has certain theoretical implications. Natural law is useful in "articulating the underlying and theoretical reasonableness of biblical ethics" (p. 73). This implies that natural law makes explicit divine positive law (pp. 73, 75, 185, 248, 251–52). However, many in the natural law tradition reverse that paradigm. Because of sin, divine positive law was necessary to make natural law explicit. Those familiar with the natural law tradition may notice tension in Walker's paradigm here.

Overall, the author succeeds in introducing evangelical Protestants to natural law theory. One strength of *Faithful Reason* is his commitment to lead readers through the metaphysical assumptions of natural law theory before dealing with certain applied issues. This approach requires him to spend more time dealing with metaethics than applied ethics. However, a thorough understanding of metaphysical assumptions is invaluable since that is where most moral disagreements begin. A second strength of *Faithful Reason* is his breaking of new ground. He alerts the field to probable neglect of the relationship between Christology and natural law theory. There is tension in his paradigm, alluded to above, but that tension does not detract from the book. Since Walker has broken new ground, he has also paved the way for others to explore how Christology and natural law

theory relate.

This book is an academic one, but that should not discourage readers unfamiliar with natural law theory from buying it. For interested evangelical Protestants, accustomed to strict divine command theories, *Faithful Reason* opens the door to the rich field of teleological ethical theories and the notion of human flourishing. Walker has made a significant contribution to the field of Christian ethics and *Faithful Reason* should be a standard text for teaching it.

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C. Ryan Fields. *Local and Universal: A Free Church Account of Ecclesial Catholicity*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2024. 256 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1514006719. $40.00.

Christians of all communions should confess with the Nicene Fathers the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." The meaning of these attributes, however, has been contested throughout history. Ryan Fields seeks to provide a Free Church understanding of catholicity in constructive dialogue with Scripture, history, and other traditions. He establishes his work, *Local and Universal*, primarily in the narrative of biblical theology and secondly in the contributions of the Great Tradition of the church. Finally, he offers proposals for a concept of catholicity situated in the local church. The book is a compelling case for his aphorism: "no fulsome catholicity without sufficient locality and no fulsome locality without sufficient catholicity" (p. 4). By this, Fields argues that because of their dependence on the apostolic succession of bishops, episcopal church traditions (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox) deny the authenticity of "two or three" gathered under the lordship of Christ. By recognizing the ecclesial nature of all churches, the Free Church account shows a greater capacity for catholicity than the episcopal account.

As an evangelical pastor, it is unsurprising that Fields's strength is his biblical case for catholicity in Chapter 1. The church's universal nature is rooted in God's mission to call all peoples in all places to himself. This chapter is a brilliant synthesis of first-rate scholarship in missiological and biblical studies. It highlights God's desire for unity under the redemptive lordship of Jesus along with the ethnic and geographic diversity of his people. Unity in diversity is the biblical warrant by which we confess the church's catholicity.

Through a brief historical survey in Chapter 2, Fields provides various ways in which catholicity has been understood from the early church to

the present. This historically developed taxonomy is another strength of the work (e.g., p. 65). Fields recognizes the various and even contradictory ways in which catholicity has been used historically, while still gaining key insights from church history. Is connection to an institutionally visible church necessary for catholicity? Is creedal orthodoxy necessary? Does the provincialism of certain traditions negate their claims to catholicity? In answering such questions, Fields shows the richness of interacting critically with the competing claim of church history. This chapter alone will serve as a great resource to future scholars discussing this contested topic.

Chapter 3 interacts with Anglican arguments for catholicity. Fields highlights the failure of consensus within this episcopal tradition on the nature of catholicity. Does the office of bishop belong to the essence of the church or is it simply a historically beneficial administrative position? Because of diverse answers within Anglicanism, Fields claims that the Anglican tradition "leaves room for a Free Church account of catholicity" (p. 127). In this way, he builds common ground between the Anglican and Free Church portrayals.

Fields then sketches the history of the early modern Free Church movement. He draws insights from Anabaptists, English Baptists, and English dissenters. He is careful not to argue that they were all champions of catholicity, but rather that many in these traditions sought catholicity even while proposing radical changes in the nature of the church. He pairs the great confessions of the Baptist tradition (the *Second London* and the *Orthodox Creed*) with the theology of the Congregationalist John Owen to make this case. He maintains that rather than being sectarian, these seventeenth-century sources demonstrate the possibility of Free Church catholicity.

In the last two chapters, Fields offers a constructive account of Free Church catholicity. He relies on Miroslav Volf's interpretation of Matthew 18:20. For Volf and Fields, if two or three are gathered in the name of Christ the catholic church is present. This church has Christological catholicity because the church sits under the Lordship of Christ and orthodox catholicity because this is the Christ of the Creed. In this section, Fields provides a helpful but too brief discussion of the dimensions of the church. The church is militant and triumphant in terms of *time*; visible and invisible in terms of *perspective*; local and universal in terms of *space* (p. 195). Christians long to see the invisible church made visible and experience the eschatological triumph of the militant church. Similarly, Christians await the eschatological union of the universal church, while experiencing it through local manifestation. In making institutional claims regarding catholicity, other traditions often deprive themselves of the richness of locality.

An outstanding work overall, one weakness is its lack of interaction with the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Even in the historical survey, Orthodoxy is largely ignored. It seems that any treatment of catholicity must account in some way for this significant strain of the faith. A second point of critique is the overreliance on Matt 18:20 as a grounding for Free Church ecclesiology. As a Baptist, I am sympathetic to Fields's claim, but it seems that congregational polity needs a firmer exegetical basis than he has offered. Finally, the academic nature of his writing can sometimes obscure his meaning. However, Fields is developing a popular version to bring his insights to a wider audience. This endeavor is promising. So, despite the drawbacks, this work is an exceptional evangelical contribution to the topic of catholicity.

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Dustin Slaton. *Multisite Churches: Biblical Foundations and Practical Answers*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2024. 316 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0825448294. $22.99.

Most of the literature on the multisite church model provides practical applications, but critics of the model raise biblical and theological questions. What is needed is a work giving the "theological underpinning that provides biblical support" and a "fully formed ecclesiology for multisite churches" (p. 32). Dustin Slaton seeks to meet this need. Written originally as a dissertation within a Southern Baptist context, his thesis seeks to challenge the idea that "multisite models are incompatible with congregational polity." Rather, he seeks to "make the case that a form of multisite church exists that is compatible with congregationally led churches" (p. 33).

After 35 pages of introductory matter, the book is composed of three main parts, concluding with an outstanding 36-page bibliography. Part 1 is general background, sketching the many models found in multisite church scholarship, giving a brief history of multisite churches, and stating five "foundational assumptions of the multisite church movement" (p. 89), the most contested being that "multisite is a biblical model" (p. 92).

Part 2 develops a list of eleven characteristics of healthy churches, with a chapter devoted to each one. These chapters give a brief biblical background and historical perspective of the elements under consideration, but the most significant content discusses how the characteristic could be

applied within a multisite context. Roughly half of these are non-controversial in that few of the critiques of multisite churches address them (issues like discipleship, prayer, evangelism and missions, stewardship, and community). Slaton's comments on the other six characteristics (preaching, the ordinances, church membership, discipline, leadership, and corporate worship) acknowledge problems some multisite church models have developing them but also offer methods and practices multisite churches could adopt to counter the challenges.

Part 3 of the book is the author's response to criticisms of multisite churches. He states that apart from *MultiChurch* by Brad House and Gregg Allison, multisite advocates have given little response to these critics. Slaton thus seeks to defend multisite churches from unwarranted criticism and to present a model that is responsive to valid critiques. He devotes one chapter to disavowals of specific multisite models, most directed against the stereotypical multisite church model with a big-name preacher communicating a video feed to thousands of members in widely separated campuses. He accepts that some of these critiques have merit but has a simple response. There are many other multisite models, including the one he will advocate, that are not subject to these judgments.

Chapter 18, which follows, is the longest of the book and the one of greatest value. Here he addresses critiques that apply to virtually all multisite church models, and the evaluations that focus on biblical or theological matters or historical precedent rather than practical issues. He thus clarifies which model he advocates for, though there are hints of it in various chapters of Part 2.

This book has many strengths. He gives an excellent response to the most prominent critic of multisite churches, Jonathan Leeman, who charges that multisite churches are unbiblical, insisting that a valid church must assemble. Rather than seeing congregating as the essence of a local church, Slaton sides with J.D. Greear, Matt Chandler, Gregg Allison, Brad House, and Stanley Grenz that the crux of a church is the covenant commitment the members make to one another. He also includes evidence that the church in Jerusalem met in multiple locations, giving biblical support for multisites.

At the same time, Slaton is stronger than most multisite church advocates by insisting on the importance of periodic whole church gatherings for matters like the celebration of the ordinances and "necessary, nondelegable governing functions of the gathered body" (p. 256). The latter is important for his goal of a multisite model that is truly congregational. This insistence on occasional gathering of the whole body leads him to conclude that a multisite church's campuses must not "extend beyond a

reasonable driving distance" (p. 177, n. 70), which would prohibit occasional whole church gatherings.

Another notable contribution is his demonstration that earlier Baptists allowed for the possibility of one church meeting in multiple locations. He cites material I had not seen mentioned from John Broadus, B. H. Carroll, William Williams and J. B. Reynolds, that specifically contemplate some form of multisite ministry. Here, and throughout the book for that matter, Slaton's research is impeccable.

His work does have a few weaknesses though. His definition of a multisite church says the members "ideally gather together as a whole church occasionally" (p. 279). This is less substantial than his statement earlier that "there must be times when the whole church is gathered together" (p. 177). "Occasionally" is a very elastic word. Greater precision is lacking on just how important assembling is and how frequent such gatherings should be. And he could be clearer on the reason why churches must gather. He mentions unity (p. 176) and the requirements for congregational polity, but are there no stronger reasons?

Still, this is a very valuable resource. It will be my "go-to" book to introduce students and church leaders to the multisite church movement.

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Robert Chao Romero and Jeff M. Liou. *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023. xi + 178 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1540965196. $16.79.

Robert Romero and Jeff Liou's work is a treasure for those who read charitably and with an appreciation for nuance. They prepare both the reader's mind and heart for engaging with the upcoming chapters by beginning their introduction with personal stories of racial injustice and sharing that Critical Race Theory (CRT) has helped them share the gospel with those who would never enter a church. Their thesis is that rather than being "antithetical to the Bible" (p. 19), "the big tenets of CRT line up squarely with the teachings of Jesus and Scripture" (p. 12). Liou denounces the "unfair oversimplifications and false dichotomies" (p. 18) often lobbied against CRT and explains that they "have chosen to hold the tensions and point to ways that biblical theology can help us frame some of the key ideas of CRT" (p. 18).

In the first chapter, Romero discusses CRT's principle of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), which asserts that each ethnic group contains positive cultural wealth. He demonstrates how CCW aligns with John's

declaration that each ethnic group has a cultural treasure or wealth that glorifies God and will be part of eternity (Rev 21:22–27), while also providing a brief history of how America has instead seen other cultures as "deficient."

In the second chapter, Liou argues that "the way Christians understand the scope and nature of sin can be mapped onto one's posture toward CRT" and analyzes the propensity of evangelical doctrines of sin toward individuality rather than including the outcomes of sinful systems and structures (pp. 70–71). Here, Liou addresses Al Mohler's and the Southern Baptist Convention's written stances, stating that their fear that CRT is advancing a "'transcendent ideological framework' that competes with their account of a sinful world" is unfounded since CRT aims to describe the reality of the broken world rather than propose an ideology (p. 74). Liou also offers a helpful list of "nonindividualistic harmartiologies" (p. 76) including those of Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin among more contemporary theologians (pp. 76–80) and demonstrates how they are compatible with CRT's assertion that "racism is ordinary" because *sin* is ordinary (p. 63).

In the third chapter, Romero argues that since "one in three American evangelicals is now a person of color" (p. 101), theological institutions would benefit from CRT's Voice of Color Thesis that "people of color are in the best position to understand [their] own racialized experiences in the United States and to craft solutions" (p. 108). Romero notes this theory's consistency with Rom 12:5, Eph 4:13–16, and 1 Cor 12:12–27 and challenges institutional leaders to assess whether they are "truly interested in the perspectives that flow from journeying with Jesus in a different shade of skin" or simply in hiring people of color who will not change their status quo (p. 110). Romero then identifies five barriers to diversifying institutional leadership, using Acts 6 to argue against "Reactionary Color Blindness" which devalues diversity out of a belief that "we are all the same" and that intentionally hiring diverse candidates for positions is its own form of racism (p. 122).

In the fourth chapter, Liou argues that while *worldview* describes idealistic truth, CRT describes lived experiences in a broken world, and thus the two miscommunicate. Although Christians often believe that "the world outside the hard boundaries of the Christian community [is] bereft of the goodness of God" (p. 148), Liou challenges Christians to instead recognize that God is also at work "wherever justice and dignity are being secured" (p. 149). Yet here Liou also makes the book's strongest critique of CRT—the lack of a hopeful eschatology. While CRT often spirals into "rhetorical violence" (p. 153) and "deepening alienation" (p. 158), Christians can provide the eschatological hope of God's kingdom as they work

alongside CRT. Liou ends with an analysis of both parties: Christians rejecting CRT claim that God's justice is mighty yet live placidly as if there is no justice work to be done here on earth; Christians utilizing CRT also claim that God's justice is mighty yet live as though justice relies only on their own knowledge, agency, and vision (p. 164).

Romero and Liou have attempted to conduct a "loving intervention" between Christianity and CRT (p. 170). While Romero's chapters are easily accessible for lay readers, Liou's chapters use more scholarly vocabulary, which may hinder non-academic readers. However, this book would make a great classroom resource leading to riveting discussion. The short glossary provides working definitions of CRT terms to assist readers who may be new to CRT theories or have skewed presuppositions (pp. 179–80). So, for readers aiming to love their neighbors by seeking to understand all forms of racism (p. 21), this book is a welcome resource providing ample evidence that Christians can interact positively with CRT without betraying Scriptural truth.

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Steven Bouma-Prediger. *Creation Care Discipleship: Why Earthkeeping Is an Essential Christian Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023. 213 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1540966322. $25.99.

Climate change, population growth, pollution, and deforestation make global headlines. These issues lead some Christians to question how God wants them to care for his creation. Steven Bouma-Prediger writes *Creation Care Discipleship* to explain why the church "should be concerned about caring for the earth because it is integral to what it means to follow Jesus" (p. 3). He helpfully includes practical ways disciples can incorporate creation care into their lives.

From the outset, two terms are essential for his argument: "creation" and "earthkeeping." The former adheres to the orthodox Christian view that everything has been created and is being sustained by God. The latter describes "our calling to care for our home planet" (p. 9). Both terms remove the anthropocentric connotations attached to "stewardship" and mankind's self-serving domination over the earth (pp. 62–63).

The author's method can be broken down into five components, corresponding with each chapter. He begins his biblical warrant for earthkeeping with an exposition of various Bible passages (Chapter 2). He reviews the creation account of Genesis 1, the Sabbath of Leviticus 24, the prophetic literature of Isaiah 40, the eschatology of 1 Thessalonians 4,

and the renewal of heaven and earth in Revelation 21. Each text is designed to show the biblical vision for earthkeeping "so that all people will be drawn to the good news of Jesus and inspired to serve, protect, and restore the earth" (p. 40). This chapter argues that the concept of earthkeeping is present throughout Scripture.

Bouma-Prediger then transitions from the Bible to theology and ethics (Chapter 3). He denies the notion that creation care is a form of "nature worship" (p. 47). Instead, he states that "the earth is sacred ground," and "earthkeeping is an important form of Christian discipleship" (pp. 58–59). He argues that one's eschatology and Christian virtues "shape actions in the present" (p. 69). Therefore, earth's renewal and the virtues of justice, hope, and love require believers to embody the appropriate disposition for earthkeeping.

An overview of contemporary ecumenical teachings about creation care is introduced in Chapter 4. The author reviews the writings of Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew I, H. Paul Santmire, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Randy Woodley. He concludes this chapter with the words from "A Joint Message for the Protection of Creation," an ecumenical statement from the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Anglican Communion.

Bouma-Prediger provides practical ways Christians can become creation care disciples in Chapter 5. He pushes against the grip of materialism and the allure of secular ideologies that embrace overindulgence and maltreatment of the earth. He asserts that "love and justice are at the very center of Christian discipleship" (p. 138). He believes these two attributes contribute to environmental justice and education. Environmental justice is the combination of ecological flourishing and social justice, while education rejects consequentialism and creates systems for the sustainability of future generations—in terms of recycling, commuting, voting, etc. (pp. 144, 157–70).

The Bible's eschatological vision of shalom ends the book (Chapter 6). The author defines shalom as a "packed Hebrew term that strives to portray this world flourishing in all things and praising God in all ways" (p. 181). This future vision causes Christians to become "visionaries who ache for God's good future to be made real" (p. 188). Creation care discipleship connects the future vision of shalom to one's present reality through the means of earthkeeping.

In sum, Bouma-Prediger identifies creation care as an area of neglect in the church, which is one of the book's greatest strengths. Theology and eschatology do impact Christian ethics. Christians should be concerned about caring for the earth as redeemed image-bearers. Earthkeeping is a part of discipleship. It must be taught in the church, embraced by God's

people, and applied to the Christian life. This work challenges Christians to become better at caring for God's creation.

Creation Care Discipleship does contain two weaknesses though. First, the author implies that all facets of life on earth may be facing extinction if Christians do not practice earthkeeping. While humanity may contribute to earth's groaning (Rom 8:22–24), the biblical narrative does not state that humanity will destroy the world. This thinking seems to go outside the bounds of the Bible's teaching, and calls into question God's sovereignty, love, and goodness. The world is finite but is also sustained by an infinite and good Creator.

Second, the lack of engagement with contemporary ecumenical church writings hinders his argument. The necessity of including these writings is not apparent in this work devoted to Christian discipleship. Also, by not interacting with them he could imply that their positions are in line with the Bible's teaching. That may not be the case.

These critiques do not undermine the book's value for the church. Earthkeeping does have biblical warrant. Bouma-Prediger addresses an area often neglected by affluent church cultures. The church does bear responsibility to care for God's creation. *Creation Care Discipleship* is thus a recommended resource for churches, Christians, and scholars who desire to make well-rounded disciples.

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Andrew Walls. *The Missionary Movement from the West: A Biography from Birth to Old Age*. Edited by Brian Stanley. Studies in the History of Christian Missions. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023. 271 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0802848970. $32.99.

The Missionary Movement from the West is an excellent overview of the history of Protestant foreign missions from Europe and America to the majority world. The book is published posthumously, edited by Brian Stanley. It is a collection of lectures Andrew Walls gave at various institutions in Ghana, New York, and New Haven between 2005 and 2008. Divided into four parts, each constitutes a series. Stanley tells the reader that the original form and arrangement is retained, but a fair amount of "reconstructive surgery" was necessary to avoid redundance.

The book is primarily a Protestant narrative and an "Anglophone" one. The lectures were prepared for academic and general Christian audiences and the book thus retains both characteristics. Yet, Walls' primary thesis remains clear. He asserts, "We have not reached the end of the

missionary movement from the West, but it is no longer central to the evangelization of the world … we have [therefore] reached the old age of the missionary movement" (p. 24). Stating it this way, Walls intends to offer a history, not a prophecy. He seeks to look back in retrospection, not forecast what tomorrow might look like. Walls's four parts are divided between the birth and early years of Western missions, the middle age in the nineteenth century, the midlife crisis in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and old age following the Second World War and the opportunity of World Christianity.

Part 1 begins with the historical background of the Western missionary movement. Walls argues that the Christian Faith had always been a global principle since the time of the New Testament but had not become a truly global religion until after the "The Great European Migration." Walls defines this migration simply as that of European peoples for the world beyond Europe, from the beginning of the sixteenth century all the way through the late nineteenth century. "Christendom" also emerged in this background. "Christendom" for Walls means that the Christian Faith was embraced by entire communities, determining their laws and customs. However, the "Missionary" emerged contrary to the "Crusader," demonstrating and explaining the gospel, but never compelling. Against this background, then, Walls argues that the Western missions movement was born. The rest of Part 1 thus unpacks the impact of the Moravians, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, John Eliot, William Carey, George Liele, William Wilberforce, and the Haystack Prayer Meeting as key figures and events. Each of these played a key role in Christian expansion and acted as a catalyzing stimulus for Western missions.

Parts 2–4 unpack the stages of middle age, midlife crisis, and old age. The middle years represented a shift towards eschatology, ecclesiology, race, and culture. Part 2 thus looks at John Wesley, Rufus Anderson, Henry Venn, Thomas Buxton, and Robert Morrison. The midlife crisis years represented major changes, but also adulthood. Walls argues, "In the 1840s, the missionary movement reached maturity" (p. 140). Walls primarily means two things by this statement. First, even though the movement was still relatively small, the 1840s became the decade by which Christian missions was accepted and approved by many. Second, by the mid-nineteenth century the movement was characterized by diversity both theologically and denominationally. Walls points to the range of the holiness movements, Hudson Taylor's mission to China, Arthur Pierson and the Student Volunteer Movement, medical missions, the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, and the Tambaram Meeting. Finally, the major shift to old age in Walls's view is the movement from missions from the West to missions from everywhere to everyone. Walls

points to the major global changes after World War II and the rise of Christianity in places like India, China, and Africa. In retrospect Walls sees the missions movement as primarily Western up until 1945, but since then the central headquarters for foreign missions have shifted to the majority world.

Walls's work is important because readers can be confident they are being led by a trained theologian, historian, and informed participant in global Christianity. Walls has a keen eye for theological development among missiological thinkers and missionaries. He pays careful attention to pietism, conversion, eschatology, ecclesiology, and Christology. Readers might be overwhelmed with the large amount of material covered though, especially if they are not familiar with missions history. And the work is sometimes redundant, despite Stanley's attempt to remove some of it. Moreover, the coverage is still highly selective and thus reveals some omissions. For example, there is no mention of key missionaries such as Adoniram Judson or the Cambridge Seven. Walls also leaves out the missiologists Roland Allen, Robert Speer, and Ralph Winter. And finally, there is a lack of attention to women missionaries such as Amy Carmichael, Helen Roseveare, or Lottie Moon. Overall, though, the work is an excellent overview of God's work of missions from the West, faithfully explaining a chapter in the *Missio Dei* to make his name known among all the nations.

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