

REVIEWS

Gary M. Burge. *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to “Holy Land” Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. 153 pp. \$21.99 (paper).
Reviewed by Michael J. Vlach, Professor of Theology.

Gary M. Burge, professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, offers a critical response to what he calls “Holy Land theology” that affirms territorial and national significance to Israel. The list of Christian Zionist offenders according to Burge includes the usual suspects—Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, John Hagee, etc. To his credit Burge sticks mostly to biblical issues and avoids name calling and characterizations that often have permeated recent works of this nature.

Burge’s main point is that issues like land, temple, Jerusalem, and Israel, which are prominent themes in the Old Testament, are reinterpreted and fulfilled in Jesus who transcends the physical and national implications expected by the Jews in biblical times. Thus, Christian Zionists who miss this and affirm present and future significance to national Israel and the holy land are misguided. According to Burge, placing significance on Israel’s land and territory means “to regress utterly in a most miserable way” (107).

The sections Burge focuses mostly on are John, Acts, Gal 3–4, Rom 4, Rom 9, Hebrews, and Revelation. It is in these sections that Burge sees a replacement and reinterpretation of the traditional Jewish hope for Israel, land, temple, and Jerusalem. If one accepts Burge’s general assumptions of God’s spiritual purposes and his hermeneutic of reinterpretation and replacement then his conclusions have an internal consistency. But it is on these two foundational issues that this reviewer disagrees and finds the book’s fatal flaws.

First, Burge appears to operate from Spiritual Vision Model assumptions in which physical and national matters are viewed as lesser things that need to give way to greater spiritual realities. For example, Burge says, “Hebrews says that our ‘homeland’ has changed. It is not on the earth” (101). He also argues that Jesus’ words in John 15 mean that “*Jesus spiritualizes the land*” (56) (*italics in the original*). Burge is resistant to the idea that God’s future purposes could involve the nation Israel (60–61). While Burge insists that he (and the Bible) is not promoting an entire Greek dualism (107), which is true, such spiritualizing of key themes occurs repeatedly.

Significantly, Burge appears to positively affirm the ideas of Philo, the Jewish theologian who allegorized and reinterpreted Israel’s land promises. According to Burge, Philo held “*That land is reinterpreted as the knowledge*

and wisdom of God" (22) (italics in the original). Under the influence of Philo (and Josephus) "we see that Judaism's 'Land Theology' has been entirely redefined. And it will be a redefinition that will deeply influence the formation of Christian thinking in the New Testament" (24). It seems that Burge is viewing the alleged influence of Philo on the New Testament as a positive development. But this reviewer wonders how Philo, who adopted a radical allegorizing approach and operated in the philosophical tradition of Plato, could be a positive influence. Plus, this reviewer challenges the idea that Philo's ideas actually influenced the New Testament writers.

Second, in regard to hermeneutics, Burge operates under the view that Jesus and the New Testament writers "reinterpreted" Jewish expectations. For example he says, "Jesus and his followers reinterpreted the promises that came to those in his kingdom" (35). Burge also places much emphasis on "replacement" language: "In the Fourth Gospel, the land is subsumed within John's theology of Christological replacement/fulfillment" (57). This reviewer counted at least four other times that "replacement" terminology was used in Burge's chapter dealing with the Gospel of John.

In sum, this reviewer rejects the conclusions of Burge simply because the New Testament seems to affirm the very things that Burge claims it is reinterpreting or replacing. The New Testament reaffirms the restoration of national Israel (Matt 19:28; 23:37-39; Acts 1:6; Rom 11:26), the deliverance of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24), and a future "temple of God" (2 Thess 2:4). Even in a state of disobedience, the covenants, promises, and temple service still belong to Israel (Rom 9:4-5). Thus, the New Testament does not reinterpret and replace the Old Testament revelation, it affirms it.

The conclusions of *Jesus and the Land* cannot be recommended. But this book has value in that it is a concise delineation of a non-dispensational approach that operates from Spiritual Vision Model assumptions and a hermeneutic of reinterpretation and replacement.

Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins. *King and Messiah as Son of God : Divine, Human and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 261 pp. \$28.00 (paper).
Reviewed by Trevor Craigen, retired Professor of Theology, *The Master's Seminary*.

Originally consisting of six chapters, this book came into the light of day as *The Speaker's Lectures* at Oxford University, May 2006. Subsequently two chapters were added, giving four chapters to each author. Although it is not this reviewer's practice to read the conclusion first, it was done in this instance, because something just didn't fit after a quick preliminary perusal of the book.

This book concentrates on the question of the divinity of the messiah (xi). Far from being a simple question with an easy answer, the subject matter is considered complicated. The introduction does signal that the source of information may not be only the Scriptures but also other literature and

influences of other ancient Near Eastern nations. After noting the titles of recent works on messiahship, Collins sketches out the sources of the divinity of the messiah: (1) rooted in the royal ideology of ancient Judah, (2) influenced by Egyptian kingship mythology, and then (3) qualified by the Deuteronomists and the prophets. This idea of the divinity of messiah remained embedded in texts that became part of the OT canon (xi). Collins remarks that it is not possible to study the development of Christology without acknowledging the Jewish context in which its roots were to be found. The Egyptian king was not rated as being a god incarnate, but someone vested with a divine office. Undoubtedly, the Pharaoh was taken to be different from the ordinary. A significant point to make, though, is that evidence of cultic veneration of kings in Judea is lacking. Psalm 2 has been influenced by Egyptian and Assyrian sources, although it was not all that clear what these influences were in the psalm itself (10–14). Psalm 110 also gets Collins' attention. The focus of the discussion was upon Egyptian influence and in particular the textual corruption at v. 3b. Little or no comment is made of the opening words of Psalm 110. It and Psalm 2 are then summarized as being Jerusalem enthronement ceremonies. Little was said about the deity of the Messiah from either of the two psalms. It was mentioned a page or so earlier that Ps 45:6 is where the king is addressed as God (15). Since the divinity of the messiah is the goal of this book, it is sort of strange that they are not given much of a profile.

Since Deuteronomist ideas are accepted, differences in the dating of the prophetic corpus will occur, and early messianism will also be viewed as coming later in history (25–47). The ease with which a straightforward understanding of the Isaianic text is not always taken that way is demonstrable—note the following: 1) Hezekiah is the promised Immanuel, the child of Isa 9:6, despite the chronological problems this may cause, 2) Isa 6:18 presupposes more than one child, with the Immanuel already born, 3) the present form of the passages is later than Isaiah's time—no proof put forward, 4) the word for virgin (65) does not mean that, 5) the child could have been born of Hezekiah, 6) not sufficient indication in LXX of Isaiah that Immanuel is to be identified as the Messiah, 7) the Assyrian context of Isa 7 is acknowledged, the prophecy could have referred plausibly to a son of a king but not necessarily to a future ruler!? 8) this prophecy refers to the enthronement of Hezekiah and not to a birth. It is strange to propose Hezekiah as the one to whom the “for unto us a child is given...” applies (40–41). Collins' evaluative remark on accession to the throne, “While the argument is not entirely conclusive, it is persuasive and it has been widely accepted” exemplifies how interpretive options are formulated.

Here is Collins' closing observation to this chapter on kingship in Deuteronomistic and prophetic literature: “I would argue, then, that in the heyday of the monarchy the king in Jerusalem was conceived in mythological terms as the son of God, in a way that was influenced by Egyptian tradition but less emphatic in the presentation” (47).

Undoubtedly, four hundred years in Egypt would have had some impact upon the thinking and the culture of Israel even though they were

separated from the Egyptians geographically. Was Collins anticipating that his readers would be able to point out the influences of Egypt on the nation of Israel?

Chapter Three treats quite thoroughly the Son of God in the Hellenistic period. In twenty-six pages (48–74), Collins conducts the reader on an historical tour through this important part of those periods when Scripture was being given.

Adela Yarbro Collins then brings her contribution into play. She opens Chapter 5 by reference to William Wrede who in 1901 argued that the earthly activities of Jesus were unmessianic. It was only after His resurrection that His followers conceived of Christ as messiah. No critique is offered on the unmessianic conclusion. One must ask why this is so. It seems as though any theory will do. So whatever is a viable theory to one person is unacceptable to another. “The Synoptic Sayings Source (Q) and Paul.” The fact that Jesus coming down from heaven is not mentioned specifically in the critical reconstruction of this Sayings Source is offset by it being implied in several other sayings. Adela then cites three instances, giving only Q cross-references, of the Son of Man coming at an unexpected time, the Son of Man will be like the lightning flashes, and Son of Man coming analogous to the Flood of Noah’s day. These are well-known passages putting the Son of Man’s second coming in the *eschaton*. Does the lack of the term “heaven” point to an implication only of His coming from that realm? Where else would He have come from? However, Adela does clearly accept the fact of the Son of Man being identified with the son of man in Daniel 7 (103–04). On one page mention is made of the Son of God enacting deliverance from wrath in 1 Thessalonians. She concludes that at the time of God’s wrath at His coming, Jesus will deliver from imminent wrath by raising and by transforming faithful saints (104–05). If there was any further interest in the eschatological setting, it was precluded from the discussion.

The concluding reassessment given on the Pauline concept of pre-existence in Chapter 5 occurs at the end of Chapter 6. The final words of this draft are a “Reassessment of the Pre-existence of the Messiah in Paul’s Letters” (147).

Her husband had written the previous chapter showing how Paul adapted and elaborated the tradition that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God (123), and that Luke, like Mark, combined both prophetic and royal traits in their portrait of the Messiah. The vocabulary, however, used in discussing passages of Scripture sounded less than certain and far more reflective of parallel concepts in other non-Hebrew literature and cultures. Divine revelation, inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility appeared not to have deserved any comment. Also, the OT is not what the Hebrews were thinking as they developed their own worldview, but was God telling them what they were to be thinking. Of course, one cannot offer a definitive statement of everything read, but guesswork is manifested otherwise. Words such as: “suggests, probably, apparently, possibly, seems, it could have....” The concise survey of selected Son of Man references in Matthew are noted for emphasizing Him as

eschatological judge and as one having a kingdom. The chapter includes discussion of the derivation of the Son of Man sayings—derived either from a Semitic idiom or from Daniel 7 and the Aramaic text. A ten-page summary of the different writers on the Semitic Idiom view since the late 1800s follows. A show of complete agreement by these writers is not forthcoming; they had a hard time agreeing fully with each other (164–65).

“So how then did Jesus become a god?” asks Adela, as the opening line of the section “Conclusion: Early Worship of Jesus?” She dubs as plausible the theory that Jesus spoke of one like the son of man in Daniel as the coming Messiah. Further, some of His followers after His crucifixion had visions of Jesus raised from the dead and exalted to heaven. They enlisted the help of Daniel 7 and Palm 110 in the service of their misunderstanding. The coming one would act as God’s agent in ruling, judging, and defending God’s people. Now, if Jesus had taken over God’s function as king, warrior, and judge at the End, then one must look to Hellenistic cults when the deity of Christ would perhaps have been perceived primarily in functional terms [174.] This opened the doors to speculations of pre-existence. Such a notion intensifies the divine status. Apparently, pre-existence is not acceptable, and apparently, too, one must look to the Hellenistic cults which would exercise influence over the interpretation. The cultural environment allowed for human beings to be elevated to a level of worship as gods, not always after death. Given the practices of the imperial cults, it is not surprising that Jesus was viewed as a god who would be worshiped rather than the emperor [174].

To put the biblical record of Jesus on a par with Hellenistic cults is a gross distortion of that record, notwithstanding some apparent parallel. The factuality of Christ’s pre-existence, incarnation, God becoming man, thus yielding the God-Man really cannot be denied nor redefined so as to be more palatable to the thinking of the scholar’s mind. None of these phenomena can be construed as fitting in with pagan religious notions and explanation.

The final chapter is “Messiah, Son of God and Son of Man in the Gospel and Revelation of John.” Adela disagrees with the proposal that John’s Gospel is the only document in the NT in which the deity and incarnation of Jesus are unequivocally proclaimed, for example the third clause of the prologue could be translated “the word was a god” in place of “the word was God.” If that was so, she asks, then what of the Christological controversies in the early church. Whether or not Jesus was viewed as wisdom or as logos, created or eternal, the prologue implies that He was a pre-existent figure who became incarnate, and that could only mean pre-existence. Hear the passing assessment of the prologue by Collins: “the editor or author who composed the prologue elaborates a bit more, yet in a brief, ambiguous, and poetic way,” but she had just said a few lines earlier that “as we have seen, the prologue explicitly identifies Jesus Christ, that is Jesus as the messiah” [181]. Then she inserts into the text a dialectical twist, stating that it doesn’t matter whether or not Jesus was viewed as wisdom or as logos, as created or eternal, the prologue implies that He was a pre-existent figure who became incarnate [178]. So, to whom does the

text refer? Another Logos or a god instead of the God? [182]. Quite obviously, some scholars have difficulty in accepting the factuality of the biblical text.

Now, how does one wrap-up a look at the book which essentially did not accord the Scriptures *the* predominant place in its studies. It may be useful in an OTI or NTI course or a seminar in OT or NT studies to see how those who accept historical criticism have had their hermeneutics negatively influenced. Proceed with caution.

Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears. *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2008. 335 pp. \$21.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Cliff McManis, TMS alumnus and Associate Professor of Theology, The Cornerstone Seminary.

Mark Driscoll is the high-profile and controversial pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, and co-founder of Acts 29 Church Planting Network (249). Gerry Breshears is the lesser-known preaching elder at Grace Community Church in Gresham, Oregon, and professor of theology at Western Seminary in Portland (12). This duo collaborates here to write a book on practical ecclesiology (9), what they call the “*being*” and “the *well-being* of the church” (37). They have also co-authored books on Christology, *Vintage Jesus* (2007), soteriology, *Death by Love* (2008), and theology, *Doctrine* (2010), all by Crossway. This book constitutes gleanings from the lessons learned by Driscoll who began pastoral ministry in 1996 (12) as a young, inexperienced twenty-five year old (243). Driscoll is the speaking voice throughout the book, while Breshears helped with conceptual underpinnings and editing (11).

The book has twelve chapters and is composed thematically of three main emphases: (1) foundations of the church (chapters 1–5); (2) church life (chapters 6–8); and (3) the purpose of the church (chapters 9–12). The book concludes with an appendix (311), which amounts to the church covenant of Mars Hill Church. This is followed up with a subject index (317–25) and a Scripture index (326–35).

All twelve chapter titles are questions, the first one being “What is the Christian Life?” This first chapter is foundational for the rest of the book, as it champions the incarnation of Christ, (affirming His full deity as the God-Man), His empowerment by the Spirit, His death on the cross for sin (which was a “*penal substitution*”) (20), His resurrection, Pentecost, the saving gospel and sanctified living. For Driscoll, a theology of the church begins and ends with who Jesus is and what He accomplished (28).

Chapters Two through Four are on defining what a church is, church leadership and biblical preaching, respectively. He defines the church positively by distilling a theology of it from the book of Acts, and negatively by contrasting the true definition of what a church is with counterfeits including Catholicism (41–45), the church-growth movement (52), the emerging church (53), and seeker churches (56). Driscoll attributes his resultant working

definition of the New Testament church to the seasoned theological precision of Breshears, and is delineated in part as follows:

The local church is a community of regenerated believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord...organize under qualified leadership, gather...for preaching and worship, observe...baptism and Communion...are disciplined for holiness, and scatter to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission...for God's glory and their joy (38).

Chapter Three answers the question, "Who is supposed to lead a church?" Driscoll's answer is, "a plurality of biblically qualified elders." An elder is also called a pastor, overseer or bishop (69). Driscoll calls himself a "soft complementarian" (67), rejecting egalitarianism as well as conservative complementarianism. Thus he endorses female deacons, and says women should be permitted to attend seminary (67).

In Chapter Four Driscoll extols preaching as the primary and priority ministry of the church, every other ministry being supplemental. Jesus is the model preacher. In the local church, only elders should preach from the pulpit. The preacher's arsenal should include expository, textual, topical and narrative sermons on a rotating basis. This chapter bleeds with some idiosyncratic oddities that were troubling for this reviewer. For example, Driscoll ill-defines the different kinds of preaching. He anemically defines expository preaching as, "simply going through a book of the Bible verse by verse" (92). But going through a book verse by verse does not guarantee that the preaching will be expository. He goes on to define textual preaching as going through only a portion of a Bible book instead of the whole book, which Driscoll says amounts to expository preaching.

For Driscoll, textual preaching and expository preaching are mutually exclusive. On the contrary, for the faithful and informed preacher, all textual preaching is to be expository, for true expository preaching is explaining the true meaning of any given text of Scripture. Another strange oddity is when Driscoll recommends that pastors learn from and mimic stand-up (worldly) comedians like Chris Rock to improve delivery (105). Such a suggestion directly undermines the time-honored doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, implying that the countless models of God-fearing, Spirit-empowered preachers from the Old Testament prophets, to the apostles and Jesus Himself are not adequate models to follow for modern-day preachers to be effective. Another egregious and alarming foible is when Driscoll unjustifiably accuses his Christian readers of having more interest in looking for pornography in his book on the church than wanting to understand what the Bible says about the priorities of biblical preaching (91). And finally, in an attempt to be humorous, Driscoll demeans a fellow preacher by referring to a graphic depiction of a deviant and shameful act of sexual lewdness (95). This is in sheer violation of Scripture which says "it is disgraceful to even speak of the things which are done by them in secret" (Eph 5:12).

Chapters Six through Eight discuss church life, addressing the topics of unity, church discipline and corporate love. In Chapter Six he defines unity and then gives nine reasons for division in the local church, including heresy, pride and legalism. The next chapter on church discipline is practical and quite helpful, as it draws on the principles given in Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6 and other pertinent passages. Chapter Eight addresses biblical love which the church is to live by after the perfect model of love displayed among the three persons of the Trinity.

The last four chapters address methodology of ministry and the purpose of the church, and as a result are the most controversial chapters in the book. Chapter Nine answers the question, "What is a missional church" and proves to be the weakest chapter of all due to Driscoll's exegetical shortcomings, theological ineptitude, compromised ecclesiological presuppositions and his seemingly inescapable desire to be relevant, hip and couth. He attempts to define "missional" and then show why truly biblical churches are missional. Ironically throughout the book Driscoll calls modern-day Christians to abandon Christian jargon, or "pious talk" (228), in order to be relevant to non-Christians (222), yet wields his own religious lexicon of made up nuanced buzz words and phrases that come right out of emerging, liberal and other aberrant theologies; words like: missional (16), incarnationally (20), contextualization (228), glocal (233), authentic (233), cultural transformation (289) and others. He even eschews the word "God," writing it off as "vague" and meaningless (222). One wonders how it is possible to be a faithful teacher of Scriptures like John 14:1, where Jesus said, "Believe in God, believe also in Me," while holding to such a fabricated replacement hermeneutic.

He struggles to define a "missional" church in a way that shows it is distinct from non-missional churches. For example he says that missional churches are biblical, preach repentance, evangelize, love people, train missionaries, believe in prayer, do not love the world and disciple others. Contrary to his argument, these principles are not novel or innovative, nor are they the sole marks of being missional. They are marks of historic biblical Christianity. The one attribute he uses to describe being missional that is modern is "contextualization." For Driscoll, this is the goal of transforming cities, nations (169) and the culture (239). He writes, "the missional church seeks the welfare of the...sinful culture" (239). This idea of transforming and reconstructing society and the culture of the world is nothing more than repackaged theonomy. Jesus came to save individual sinners (Luke 5:32), not transform the culture (Luke 10:13). If Jesus' goal was to eradicate poverty, then He failed (John 12:8). He goes on to say that true missional pastors engage the culture by watching as much TV as possible, using three TiVo's (225), own homes and lots of real estate in the community, and should plant gardens in their yards and eat their own produce (235). He gives no Bible verses for this flurry of imperatives.

In Chapter Ten Driscoll credits having multiple church sites with video-sermons as the catalyst for having the fastest growing church in America

(249). He hopes to keep growing the Mars Hill phenomenon until it becomes “a national and international church” (252). Chapter Eleven addresses the efficacy of modern technology in the local church. Here he recommends that pastors be like “a late night talk–show host” if they truly want to be effective in the modern era (278). In the last chapter Driscoll tells how to “transform the world.” How does the church transform the world? Neither through the gospel of Jesus Christ, nor through individuals being saved and getting renewed hearts, but rather through the ideology of sociologist Davison Hunter (290).

In conclusion, *Vintage Church* is an enigma, much like the pastor who wrote it. The deluge of schizophrenic statements throughout the book is baffling. On the one hand Driscoll says Spurgeon is his hero (100), yet the surly sarcasm with which he writes (91, 95, 243) betrays the gracious, profound and reverent style of Spurgeon. In one sentence he spurns church-growth (52) and seeker types, yet on another page he gives homage to Rick Warren as a model to emulate in preaching (90). In the beginning of his book he disparages all things emerging (52), but in the last four chapters he propagates the misguided missional contextualization of Lesslie Newbigin (218). Throughout the book he preaches love, unity and tolerance for all people (195), yet repeatedly maligns Christians who are fundamentalists (105), hyper-Calvinists (229), conservatives (243), and dispensationalists (289). He boasts that Jesus is the answer to everything, yet when it comes to transforming the world we must rely on the ideology of Peter Berger (291). He says we need to be submissive to Scripture in everything (11), yet we cannot use “pious” biblical words and concepts that will make non-Christians feel unwelcome (228).

In the end this book is bitter-sweet. Sweet in that it offers helpful biblical summaries of topics covering church leadership, preaching, the ordinances and church discipline. Bitter in its occasional lowbrow vernacular, spotty sarcastic tone, and compromised scriptural fidelity when it comes to a true definition of biblical missions, evangelism and discipleship.

Bart D. Ehrman. *Forged: Writing in God's Name, Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*. San Francisco: Harper One, 2011. x + 306 pp. \$26.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Director of the Seminary Library

Bart D. Ehrman is the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Ehrman's early education was evangelical, studying at Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College. He then went to Princeton and studied under Bruce M. Metzger, one of the foremost New Testament scholars of the 20th century. He compares the educational quality of Princeton to that of his previous schools saying that Princeton, “stresses critical scholarship rather than uncritical dogmatism” (116). He became Metzger's protégé and came alongside him to co-author the fourth edition of *The Text of the New Testament: It's Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* (Oxford Press, 2005). In the introductory chapter Ehrman describes

his path from believing in an inerrant and inspired Scripture to his conclusion that, “the Bible not only contains untruths or accidental mistakes. It also contains what almost anyone today would call lies” (5).

This is a river that Ehrman has been floating down for some time with his previous works, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford, 2005) and *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (Harper One, 2007), being other bends in the river. In short, Ehrman believes that the “Christianity” that exists today is simply the version that “won” from the multiple competing versions, and that the New Testament we possess today is the compilation of sacred books that supported the “winner.” In that process the New Testament books were developed by the “winners,” with books that favored the particular doctrines and practices retained, while those which did not were discarded.

Ehrman states that he has been investigating and researching forgery in the ancient world with a goal to writing a scholarly monograph on that subject as it relates to the New Testament. He states that, “this book is not that scholarly monograph” (10) but rather a popular work for the “general reader, who on some level is, like me, interested in the truth” (11). This seems a reverse of the more acceptable procedure, developing the detailed and thoroughly researched arguments at a “scholarly level,” and then distilling those thoughts into a more accessible version; as he did with the publishing of *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (Oxford, 2003) then following it with *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament* (Oxford, 2004).

Ehrman clearly details the purpose of this book,

I want to inform my readers about an important ancient literary phenomenon. I want to correct mistakes that other scholars have made in discussing that phenomenon. I want readers to think more deeply about the role of lies and deception in the history of the Christian religion. I want to show the irony in the fact that lies and deceptions have historically been used to establish the “truth.” I want my readers to see that there may be forgeries in the New Testament (170–71).

His thesis is twofold: (1) Except for six of the Pauline Epistles (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon) all of the New Testament is a forgery; it was created by individuals for their own purposes and usurped the name of an apostle or other notable figure as the author to give the forgery credibility; and (2) that such forgeries were not viewed favorably in the ancient world, that “even though it was widely practiced, it was also widely condemned and treated as a form of lying” (36). However, even those books that the author believes to be actually written by Paul are not entirely “pure” with the prohibitions to women speaking in the assembly (1 Cor 14:34–35) being inserted later at the same time the forged Pastoral Epistles were created (244–45).

It is the concept of “forgery” that is central to the book. In the past, while denying the traditional authorship of the New Testament, some advanced the concept of the “Pious Forger” to explain that the New Testament retained ethical and religious value, despite the fact books were not written by whom it was claimed. Paul, for instance, may not have written the Pastoral Epistles, but they represented “Pauline thought” and were written and attributed to him in an honest manner (cf. 118). Ehrman, convincingly in this reviewer’s opinion, shows that “ancient authors who discuss the practice condemned it and considered it a form of lying and deceit. Forgers who were caught were reprimanded or punished even more severely” (40). Ehrman states in his conclusion:

In sum, there were numerous ways to lie in and through the literature in antiquity, and some Christians took advantage of the full panoply in their efforts to promote their view of the faith. It may seem odd to modern readers, or even counterintuitive, that a religion that built its reputation on possessing the truth had members who attempted to disseminate their understanding of the truth through deceptive means. But that is precisely what happened. The use of deception to promote truth may well be considered one of the most unsettling ironies of the early Christian tradition (250).

Some of Ehrman’s underlying assumptions for applying the label of forgery to the bulk of the New Testament are certainly questionable. He asserts that the apostles, for the most part, were incapable of writing the New Testament because they were illiterate (8, 71–77, 198). “One [problem about those who forged the New Testament] involves a reality that early Christians may not have taken into account, but that scholars today are keenly aware of. Most of the apostles were illiterate and could not in fact write” (8). He then spends an entire section (43–77) in a discussion of the “clear evidence” that the apostle Peter could not have written the two epistles that bear his name, citing oddly enough, as he believes Acts is a forgery, the passage in 4:13. This is an old canard which has been refuted thoroughly in various venues (see C. K. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:232; and Krauss, “Uneducated, Ignorant, and Even Illiterate” *NTS* 45:3, 439–49).

The bulk of Ehrman’s argument lies in comparing ancient Christian extra-biblical literature to the New Testament. He demonstrates the real problems with these books, such as the *Gospel of Peter* (52–60), *The Letters of Paul and Seneca* (90–92), etc., and then attempts to show how New Testament books supposedly have the same problems; ergo they must also be forgeries. The work is terribly repetitive in places (see the discussion of Clement of Rome, 20, 62, 190, 222; for virtually identical wording). There is little flow and regardless of the chapter divisions, virtually no organization. This results in a literary device where the authors point is repeated over and over in seemingly new ways, when frankly he is actually saying nothing new or adding to his discussion.

The value in this work is that Ehrman makes a compelling case for what “forgery” really is and how it was negatively viewed in the ancient era. This book is also important because it demonstrates where New Testament scholarship, in its most skeptical stream, has gone and continues to flow. Given the wide publicity this work received it is likely to be a subject of discussion in local churches.

However, all the *ad populum* appeals to “scholars” and “recent scholarship” aside, Ehrman presents no new objections or evidence in this work regarding the nature and composition the New Testament that have not been answered, and decisively so, in multiple works of New Testament introduction previously (e.g. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* [InterVarsity, 1990]; D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* [Zondervan, 2005]; and Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* [Doubleday, 1995] as just a few examples).

D. A. Carson, commenting of Ehrman’s *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (Oxford Press, 2004), stated, “the author is far too impressed with his own skepticism” (*New Testament Commentary Survey* [Baker, 2007], 40). This is an entirely apt summation and most certainly applicable to *Forged*.

John Goldingay. *Old Testament Theology, Volume 3: Israel’s Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009. 912 pp. \$45.00 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Volume three of Goldingay’s *Old Testament Theology* (see the review of the first two volumes in *MSJ* 20, no. 1 [Spring 2009]: 103–6) examines Israel’s life as she should have lived it, not as she actually conducted herself (13). Therefore, the volume represents the author’s detailed and systematic presentation of OT ethics. He argues that ethics and theology depend on one another (15). Doctrine must be praxis, or, as he puts it, “Doctrine needs to be singable; songs need to be believable” (16)—a concept to which church worship leaders would do well to give attention.

While the author emphasizes the role of Scripture in spirituality, his view of the biblical text is not conservative. For example, he rejects Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (34) and when he deals with the issue of the *prescriptive* vs. *descriptive* nature of the biblical text, Goldingay appears to caution against believing in the authority of Scripture (580–81). For him, Scripture merely presents a variety of “ways of looking at an issue (for instance, by telling us various sorts of stories) so that we can imagine working with them or can dream of others” (581).

Following an “Introduction” (13–50) establishing a threefold organization of First Testament theology and the First Testament as the source for a systematic theology, Goldingay divides the volume into three parts: “Living with God” (51–322), “Living with One Another” (323–582), and “Living with Ourselves” (583–831).

The first part divides the topic of “Living with God” into two major categories: “Submission and Celebration” (53–190) and “Prayer and Thanksgiving” (191–322). The author identifies and examines nearly all of the major OT terms and phrases describing life with God under the first category. “Obeying Yhwh” (53–75) includes deferring to and acknowledging Yahweh, as well as walking in His way, following Him, living in the light of His deliverance, responding in covenant, keeping commitment, and loving and delighting in Him. In addition, heeding the Torah, prophecy, and warnings require attention. “Revering Yhwh” (75–99) carries the reader into an analysis of fear itself and its comparison with awe and wonder. Goldingay also touches upon reverence for Yahweh as it relates to openness, honor, respect, joy and relaxedness, diffidence, and the mystery of disobedience. Contrasting fear of humans with fear of God continues the conversation, which moves on to discussing the relationship of fear and confidence, fear and comfort, and an acceptance of Yahweh’s vision.

Following “Obeying Yhwh” and “Revering Yhwh,” the volume turns to “Trusting Yhwh” (99–116, containing comparisons of trust with such things as hope, expectancy, waiting, risk, composure, and silence), “Serving Yhwh” (116–34, discussing the nature of OT worship), “Giving to Yhwh” (134–51, including an examination of the various levitical offerings), “Sojourning with Yhwh” (151–72, involving a description of the various feasts of Israel), and “Praising Yhwh” (172–90, touching upon, among other topics, music and singing).

Goldingay distributes the second category (“Prayer and Thanksgiving”) under the headings of “Communication” (191–209), “Protest” (209–30), “Plea” (231–53), “Confidence” (253–67), “Intercession” (267–87), “Penitence” (287–308), and “Thanksgiving” (308–22). Under each of these headings, a number of related topics systematically address the major issues related to the topic. Running heads on each page of the volume help the reader keep track of the topics under each category (e.g., “2.3 Trusting Yhwh” and “3.3 Plea”)—the first number is the chapter number.

The second part of the volume (“Family and Community”) draws the reader into some of the major issues of OT interpretation, theological thinking, and ethical application. Goldingay seems to associate exegesis with radical views such as theonomy and other “isms,” such as “conservationism, evangelicalism, feminism, fundamentalism, vegetarianism, Calvinism, pacifism, Anglicanism” (329–31). In his section on “Marriage” (350–83), he covers a wide range of sub-topics like gender roles, romance, sex, faithfulness, divorce, and homosexuality. With regard to the last, Goldingay’s parting comment asks whether homosexuality should be understood “in the context of the pain of human experience in the world” due to sinfulness (383). Under the topic of “Family” (383–420), his discourse includes children, worship, education, work, and land. “Community” (420–58) gets into neighborliness, friendship, lending, respect for property, market forces, tolerance, conflict, restitution, murder, and justice. Goldingay addresses the matter of turning the other cheek by pointing

out that the believer ought to turn the other cheek, but the legal community should still discipline the attacker for the sake of victim, community, and even the attacker (447). "Servanthood" (458–76) deals with the topic of slavery.

Consideration of city, nation, and kingdom occupy the author in Chapter 5 (477–582), which involves Goldingay's treatment of politics from the viewpoint of the First Testament. He identifies national "defense" as a euphemism (548) and war as an inevitable result of statehood (550). Interestingly, the author exhibits a bit of anti-Americanism when he attributes inherent belligerence to the character of the United States as a nation and declares that it "should not trust its own judgment" (557). His discussion of war extends over thirty-five pages (548–82) and includes a fairly full examination of the annihilation of the Canaanites.

The third part of the volume ("Living with Ourselves") takes up "Spirituality and Character" (585–707) and "Leaders and Servants" (708–831). Godlikeness, holiness and purity, life and death, time and stuff, wisdom, speech, suffering, and transformation fill out the areas in which the OT describes what spirituality looks like in life. Although Goldingay declares that "The First Testament does not believe in moral growth but in conversion" (707), unfortunately he does not provide any discourse on OT conversion. His final chapter commences with a discussion of the theology of servant-leadership (708–31) then examines the roles of kings (732–46), ministers (746–59), prophets (759–92), poets, visionaries, and actors (792–811), and victims (811–31).

As Goldingay brings his "Conclusion" to a close (832–39), he offers his own "Decalogue" for selective or even partial obedience (839). The only one that seems at odds with an OT worldview is his fifth: "Keep out of department stores and shopping malls (beware the Internet too)." However, the reader must remember that Goldingay associates the Tenth Commandment regarding covetousness with shopping:

The Decalogue's stance strikes at the heart of Western economies, whose functioning depends on covetousness, the habit of going shopping, the desire to acquire "stuff," the attitude the West has propagated elsewhere in encouraging globalization. In the West, dominated by commercialism, the indicator of being the church lies in refusal to go shopping. (650)

The volume closes with an extensive "Bibliography" (840–72), an "Author Index" (873–81), a limited and less helpful "Subject Index" that too often follows the structure of the volume's headings (882–94; e.g., "Scripture, function of," 891, misleads the reader, since it deals only with the use of Scripture by advocates of various views on war), and a "Scripture Index" (895–912).

This volume might be the most valuable and useful of all three volumes in Goldingay's *Old Testament Theology* because of the significant contribution

it makes to the identification and discussion of OT ethics. Despite its occasional problems and eccentricities, every evangelical interested in biblical ethics will find practical insights within its pages—as well as a challenge to respond to some tough questions.

Peter J. Leithart. *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010, 373 pp., \$22.00 (paper). Reviewed by Jonathan Moorhead, TMAI, Samara, Russia.

Peter J. Leithart is a professor of theology at New Saint Andrews College and pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Moscow, Idaho. He has written on a variety of subjects, ranging from Old Testament and New Testament commentaries to biographies on people such as Jane Austen and Fyodor Dostoevsky. He has also written on theological issues such as baptism and historical issues such as the fall of Communism.

Leithart has four major goals in *Defending Constantine*. First, he presents a biography to “summarize some results of the newer scholarship for a wider audience to provide a fairly detailed, fairly popular, and fairly fair account of Constantine’s life and work” (10). This biography has an apologetic tone, defending many mischaracterizations of Constantine. Second, shifting from apologetics to polemics, the author provides a corrective to the popular understanding of Constantine. Third, “Constantinianism,” as defined by pacifists such as John Howard Yoder, is examined and critiqued. Fourth, the author considers various applications to contemporary politics from the life of Constantine. Considering the author’s affiliation with New Saint Andrews College, his being a signatory to the “Federalist Vision,” and the endorsement from Douglas Wilson, the reader senses the theonomist direction of the book when the author, in the inception of his work, writes, “Constantine provides in many respects a model for Christian political practice” (11).

The biographical sections will be most helpful to readers considering the sincerity of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity. The ideological and religious contrasts between Constantine and previous emperors provide a vivid picture for how life can change through religious experience. Namely, any belief system that undermined sacrifice, undermined Rome by welcoming the displeasure of the gods, and was punishable by torture and death. The author memorably summarizes the Roman opposition to Christianity on this count, “. . . the tortures resemble sacrificial procedures: human beings were flayed and dismembered and burned like animals offered to the gods. One way or another, the Romans said, Christians would offer to the gods” (25). Establishing this paranoid superstition, the author describes the importance Constantine’s decision to abandon the gods for Christianity (even to blazon its symbol on the shield of his soldiers),

A superstitious/religious Constantine would be disinclined to insult the gods by changing the standards of his army on the eve of a major battle. Roman army standards were religious objects, venerated by the troops and often credited with talismanic powers, as indeed the *labarum* eventually was. Changing standards announced a change of loyalty from one divine patron to another. Constantine would not have changed the standards without powerful justification" (73–74).

Constantine's refusal to sacrifice to Jupiter upon his return to Rome also indicated the significance of the emperor's spiritual experience at the battle for Milvan Bridge. Further evidence of Constantine's conversion is demonstrated through monument inscriptions, senatorial proclamations, coinage inscriptions, architecture, art, his opposition to paganism and Christian heresies, the prohibition of gladiator games ("The shows were as basic to Rome as sacrifice. Rome was the arena, and the arena was Rome. What would the empire be without it" [196]), adjustment of punishment for crimes, establishment of churches, institution of laws protecting the weak, memorials to martyrs, elevation of Christians to positions of power, his deathbed vow, etc. The author recognizes, however, that pagan symbols never completely disappeared from Rome, but Leithart attributes their presence to political inspiration, being "metaphors rather than realities" (76).

Constantine's role in the Council of Nicaea has gained interest since the ahistorical account of the council in Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*. Addressing the common objection that Constantine desired the unity of the Church solely for the benefit of the Empire, Leithart posits that "Constantine's argument was directly theological. Divisions in the church displease the one God whose church it is, and God in his anger might well, Constantine thought, take his vengeance not only on the church but on the emperor himself" (84). It is difficult to reconstruct many of the details of Nicaea, but the author defends Constantine from claims of being overbearing. The author concludes,

Constantine did not dominate the council. He did not formulate the final creed, nor did he sign off on it—being, again, an unbaptized nonbishop. It is difficult, however, to believe that the bishops could have come to such a thoroughgoing conclusion without his political skill and strength of personality" (170).

Although "missional," "evangelistic," and "church planter" are not concepts that most would attribute to Constantine (at the risk of being labeled a panegyrist), Leithart provides details of Constantine's life that warrant his use of these images. "Constantine was not just a Christian; he was a missional Christian" (88; cf. 111). This is the interesting, forgotten history of Constantine that many will find captivating and thought provoking. A variety of primary sources demonstrate that Constantine was concerned with converting pagans, ensuring Christianity of a good reputation among unbelievers, providing copies

of the Bible, preaching the Scriptures (even personally), and protecting Christians throughout the Empire (cf. his “evangelistic” letter to Shapur I on behalf of suffering Christians, intact with an “alter call” [247]).

If Constantine was a Christian, what is to be said of his continued devotion to the sun god, as well as his murderous activities? Identifying the Milvan Bridge vision with a “sun halo” (“a circular rainbow formed when ice crystals in the atmosphere refract sunlight” [78]) accounts for his faithfulness to the sun god, but what of his involvement in the deaths of his son Crispus, his wife Fausta, Licenius, and Licenius’ son? The author provides plausible explanations for each death, showing that some would involve just punishment under Roman law, one involved accidental death, and one involved suicide. Although these are viable options, Leithart concedes, “Constantine was less brutal than some emperors, but one does not have to be a pacifist to notice unpleasant resemblances between Christian Constantine’s career and that of any of a dozen pagan emperors” (237). Summarizing his perception of the emperor, Leithart writes, “Flawed, no doubt; sometimes inconsistent with his stated ethic, certainly; an infant in faith. Yet a Christian” (96).

Despite providing us with a helpful history with many interesting details, Leithart overstates his case in some instances. For example, when he asserts that “the empire’s devotion to the church was one of the causes for its eventual decline” (291), he does not discuss any of the significant facts which actually led to the fall of Rome. He simply states, “Baptized Rome found that it could join with baptized *barbaria*, since Jesus had broken down the dividing wall” (292). The Arianism of these barbarians (namely of their leader Alaric) is absent in this discussion and would severely hinder such unity. Readers may also be unconvinced of the author’s claim that Constantine’s Christianity “subverted the empire” because “people of goodwill decided that maintaining justice, peace and civilized life did not require the maintenance of the Roman empire” (293). Again, the author does not treat the political realities leading to Alaric’s invasion of 410. Also as a matter of confusion, the reader is left wondering what eschatological system Eusebius promoted because Leithart denies that Eusebius supported an earthly political kingdom; yet, he asserts that Augustine wrote *The City of God* to combat the Eusebian notion of an earthly political kingdom (179, 284). Surprisingly, the author did not treat Eusebius’ “Oration in Praise of Constantine,” which illustrates Eusebius’ understanding of the eschatological significance of Constantine’s rule (4.3, 5.1).

The final chapters contain Leithart’s most trenchant critique of Yoder. Of primary importance are the questions of “Constantinianism” (“the premise ‘that one nation or people or government can represent God’s cause ...’” [253]), that Constantinianism made Christians comfortable with the world, and that Constantinianism resulted in Christians abandoning the pacifism that dominated the early church. Here, and throughout the book, Leithart provides convincing arguments that Yoder commits historical mistakes in order to make his pacifistic point (see his chapter, “Pacifist Church?”). It is hard to disagree with Leithart that Yoder’s “claims are, as historical claims, sometimes questionable,

sometimes oversimplified to the point of being misleading, sometimes one-sided, sometimes simply wrong” (254).

Despite the strength of his historical argument, Leithart's theological alternative may fall victim to the same verdict he pronounces against Yoder. In his final chapter, Leithart confesses, “My main interest in this project has been theological My historical portrait has implied a political theology” (306). Sympathizers of Yoder will find Leithart's theological critique of pacifism to be simplistic, lacking interaction with alternative views. In particular, the author does not discuss issues of continuity and discontinuity between the testaments; instead, Leithart simply states, “unless one follows an almost Marcionite contrast of Old and New, the Old Testament remains normative for Christians” (335). Although he never explicitly names his eschatological system, Leithart's postmillennial views are exposed by his view of the baptism of nations:

This is the ‘baptism’ that I refer to, a moment in history, or a period of history, when a people, nation or empire receives the gospel of the victory of Jesus and is blown by the Spirit from the world of sacrifice, purity, temples, and sacred space and is transferred into a new religio-socio-political world. It is a baptism out of the world of the *stoicheia*, which, at least for Gentiles, involved the worship of ‘not-gods,’ into a world without sacrifice, a world after the end of sacrifice Baptisms have continued since and will continue until the nations . . . are made disciples” (326–27).

He also holds a Preterist view of Revelation (280). As a further description of the coming of the kingdom, Leithart writes,

Yoder is wrong, and that we can escape apocalypse. But this can only happen on certain conditions: only through reevangelization, only through the revival of a purified Constantinianism, only by the formation of a Christically centered politics, only through fresh public confession that Jesus' city is the model city, his blood the only expiating blood, his sacrifice the sacrifice that ends sacrifice. An apocalypse can be averted only if modern civilization, like Rome, humbles itself and is willing to come forward to be baptized” (342).

Although many will not agree with Leithart's theological conclusions, one should not ignore his historical contributions. In general, the book is well written, although the narrative is choppy at times. It is well documented, but it is overly dependent upon secondary sources. It is engaging, but the depth of scholarship and research is not consistent. Leithart has attempted to cover too many historical and theological issues in this book to excel at any one of them, but the overall treatment of Constantine serves as a helpful corrective and is, therefore, commendatory.

Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. xxiv + 967 pp. \$50.00 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings (DOTWPW) continues IVP's superb *Dictionary of the Old Testament* series, which started with *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, edited by David W. Baker (2003). For DOTWPW, 92 contributors present 143 entries covering almost everything someone might want to know about Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ruth, and Esther, as well as the Book of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. As in the other volumes, front and back materials enable readers to get the most out of the volume: "How to Use This Dictionary" (ix-x), "Abbreviations" (xi-xx), "Transliteration of Hebrew" (xx), "Contributors" (xxi-xxiv), "Scripture Index" (942-59), "Subject Index" (960-66), and "Articles Index" (967). Cross-references enable serial reading of connected topics as well as pertinent entries in companion volumes in the IVP Dictionary series.

Bibliographies concluding the individual entries vary in length and detail. Those supplied for biblical book entries (e.g., "Ecclesiastes 1: Book of," 121-32, by Peter Enns) divide the sources into two sections: "Commentaries" and "Studies" (131-32). Charts and tables like the following visualize significant information: "Panofsky's Method of Image Analysis" (310), "Structure of Job" (334), "The Triangle of Claims" (for the Book of Job, 340), "Individual Lament" (387), "Corporate Lament" (390), "Structure of Sumerian City Laments" (412), "The Plot Structure of the Book of Ruth" (678), "Comparison with Egyptian Love Lyrics" (for the Song of Solomon, 744), and "Qumran Psalm Manuscripts" (798). More charts would enhance the volume's impact. A few figures also appear in the volume (e.g., "Late Bronze Age seal from Tell el-Far ah [sic]," 312; "Mid-eighth century seal: unprovenanced," 312; "Kassite cylinder-seal," 622; "Bethsaida stela," 623).

A large number of significant entries make this volume an extremely valuable reference work. For example, entries on poetic elements and devices usually provide definitions, classifications, examples, discussions, and bibliographies that help dictionary users access the best of information gleaned from a wide range of key sources ("Acrostic," "Ambiguity," "Chiasm," "Ellipsis," "Imagery," "Inclusio," "Merism," "Meter," "Parallelism," "Personification," "Refrain," "Sound Patterns," "Stanza, Strophe," and "Wordplay"). In "Chiasm" (54-57) Paul B. Overland identifies four suspicious scenarios that might be involved in over-detection of chiasm (55). Walter L. McConnell presents a balanced discussion of the issues involved with meter in biblical Hebrew poetry ("Meter," 472-76). Joel M. LeMon and Brent A. Strawn contribute an informative entry regarding recent debates over the identification, classification, and use of parallelism in Hebrew poetry ("Parallelism," 502-15). A less informative entry ("Sound Patterns" by Tremper Longman III, 770-72),

however, suffers from brevity, especially in the discussions of assonance, alliteration, and onomatopoeia, as well as a weak bibliography.

Frederick J. Mabie's "Chaos and Death" (41–54) takes a biblically conservative and historically sensitive look at biblical references to chaos as well as ANE chaos myths. He develops their implications for biblical interpretation and theology, especially as related to death. Mabie, a TMS graduate, also contributes the entry on "Destruction" (99–102). Along the same basic lines of approach as Mabie's treatment of "Chaos and Death," Michael S. Heiser examines the "Divine Council" (112–16) in the Bible and in ANE literature. One of his carefully reasoned insights involves identifying the "viceregent slot in the Israelite [concept of] council" with the second person of the Godhead (114). Assessing the character and actions of Esther, Elaine A. Phillips ("Esther 6: Person," 188–93) offers three major observations indicating Esther's deficiency as a role model (190). Unfortunately, neither Phillips nor Karen H. Jobes ("Esther 1: Book of," 160–70) list John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *Esther: The Triumph of God's Sovereignty*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Moody, 1979), who offers a superb treatment of both the historical background and theological significance of the Book of Esther. John H. Walton ("Job 1: Book of," 333–46) identifies what he claims to be four Israelite features in Job (344). However, all four are subjective in nature and pale in comparison to the internal evidence for the patriarchal period (see, among others, Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* [Baker, 2005], 22–23). "Psalms 4: Titles" by Dale A. Brueggeman stands out as one of the very few works on the Psalms to actually give serious consideration to J. W. Thirtle's theory in Thirtle's *The Titles of the Psalms: Their Nature and Meaning* (Henry Frowde, 1904) and Bruce K. Waltke's excellent article, "Superscripts, Postscripts, or Both," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991): 538–96. Most recent commentaries fail to adequately handle this issue, ignoring Thirtle and dismissing Waltke.

David G. Firth ("Asaph and Sons of Korah," 24–27) rightly identifies the "sons of Korah" as descendants of the Korah of Numbers 16, but omits reference to 26:11 which reveals that the earth did not swallow up the children of Korah (26). In "Ecclesiastes 1: Book of," (121–32), Peter Enns argues (quite weakly, in this reviewer's opinion) that explanations for Solomonic authorship "have the ring of desperation" (123; also, 122). The bibliography for "Imprecation" (by Brent A. Strawn, 319–20) omits three key evangelical resources: James E. Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace: Lessons from the Imprecatory Psalms* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1991); John N. Day, *Crying for Justice: What the Psalms Teach Us About Mercy and Vengeance in an Age of Terrorism* (Kregel, 2005); and J. Carl Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138, no. 549 (January 1981): 35–45.

Finally, readers should pay particular attention to three outstanding contributions this reviewer feels compelled to mention: Daniel I. Block, "Ruth 1: Book of," (672–87); Paul D. Wegner, "Text, Textual Criticism" (794–805); and Daniel J. Estes, "Wisdom and Biblical Theology" (853–58). It is difficult to

limit oneself to mentioning these three, since so many of the entries display research and writing excellence combined with keen insight and careful reasoning. Besides those cited in this review, a number of the 92 contributors make the use and purchase of the volume imperative: Craig C. Broyles, C. Hassell Bullock, Duane A. Garrett, James M. Hamilton, Richard S. Hess, Ted A. Hildebrandt, Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., Kenneth A. Kitchen, Alan R. Millard, Cynthia L. Miller, John N. Oswalt, Tiberius Rata, Willem A. VanGemeren, and Edwin M. Yamauchi.

James McKeown. *Genesis*. Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008. ix + 398 pp. \$25.00 (paper).
Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

This volume represents the first book published by James McKeown who serves as Vice-Principal of Belfast Bible College and Lecturer in Old Testament in the Institute of Theology at Queen's College, Belfast. His doctoral dissertation presented at Queen's University of Belfast (1991) was "A Study of the Main Unifying Themes in the Hebrew Text of the Book of Genesis." With T. C. Mitchell, McKeown co-authored the "Altar" entry in *The New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (IVP, 1996), 26–27. He also contributed an essay ("A Theological Approach," 48–60) to *Make the Old Testament Live: From Curriculum to Classroom*, eds. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham (Eerdmans, 1998). More recently, he wrote two entries in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (IVP, 2003): "Blessings and Curses," 83–87 and "Land, Fertility, Famine," 487–91.

The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary series (J. Gordon McConville and Craig Bartholomew, eds.) combines theological exegesis and theological reflection in a paragraph-by-paragraph commentary on the biblical text. This commentary apportions its materials as follows: "Introduction" (1–17), "Commentary" (10–193), "Theological Horizons of Genesis" (195–375), "Bibliography" (376–84), "Index of Names" (385–86), and "Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Writings" (387–98). Commentators contributing to this series represent a variety of theological traditions and perceptions regarding the work of theology and theological hermeneutics. The series focuses primarily on students, pastors, and other Christian leaders who are engaged in theological interpretation of Scripture.

McKeown begins his "Introduction" with an agnostic approach to Genesis—"We are not told anywhere in the Bible who wrote it, nor are we given any clues about the date when it was completed" (1). He also denies any single plot for the book, since it contains a number of stories with their own plots (1). He adopts a two-part structure with chapters 1–11 and 12–50 (2), as compared to the three-part structure strongly supported by Tremper Longman III in *How to Read Genesis* (IVP, 2005; 99–100). When it comes to rhetorical characteristics of Genesis, McKeown identifies repetition as the most widely used device (3–4). In the section discussing "Reader Expectations" (4–7), he deals briefly and

incompletely with the tension between science and Scripture regarding creation and the Noahic flood. However, he does return for a little more detailed examination of these topics in the theological section of the volume (see below).

Noting the demise of the Documentary Hypothesis (7), McKeown summarizes five of its arguments against Mosaic authorship and concludes that the authorship of Genesis is still an open question (8). Interestingly, he chooses to focus on the exilic and post-exilic readers (“because this avoids most objections about the date of authorship,” 10) in a consideration of how the ancient readers approached Genesis and how the book would have affected them. This exilic standpoint comes out again and again throughout the commentary (e.g., 38, 52, 63).

Comparison of Genesis with other ancient Near Eastern literature reveals that the book “leaves not a vestige of mythical language or thought” (14). McKeown suggests that Genesis was written with the intent of refuting the Babylonian creation account (14). However, he also observes that the OT account “has little in common with these myths” (17)—including the chaos monster (Tehom) myth.

The commentary section of this volume treats the text concisely and paragraph-by-paragraph. McKeown cites the Hebrew when it contributes significantly to the discussion of meaning, as with *רִואַח אֱלֹהִים*, *rūaḥ ʾēlōhīm*, in 1:2 (21) and *לֶק-לֶקָא*, *lek-lēkā*, in 12:1 (75). A number of interpretative observations will enlighten readers. For example, the issue of light in 1:3–5 must take into account that “God is the real source of light” (21) and a study of the person of Noah should recognize his depiction as the forerunner of Moses (65). Readers will learn much from the commentary section, but must read it with care. McKeown’s primary contextualization involves showing “how Genesis would have encouraged exilic and postexilic readers” (10). Such an approach not only neglects a more thorough examination of the issues of authorship and date, but also ignores the impact of Genesis intertextually even within the Pentateuch itself and within the historical setting of both the wilderness wanderings and the conquest of Canaan.

The commentary often lacks substance. For example, the author identifies a variety of translation problems by citing representative English versions, but fails to specify the problem, offer the best solution, or to present evidence supporting the best solution (see 97, 125–26, 143–44). McKeown appears to avoid mention of homosexuality in both the polemic of 2:18–25 (34) and the description of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah in 19:1–11 (106–7). A lack of adequate discussion hampers his discussion of the extent of the Noahic flood (58). In one particularly misleading statement (“no personal names are found in the pre-Mosaic period compounded with Yahweh or with the abbreviated form Yah,” 359), he ignores the names Abijah (1 Chron 2:16; cp. Gen 38:29–30; 46:12), Ahijah (1 Chron 2:25), and Azariah (1 Chron 2:8) occurring as much as 400 years before Moses. One must keep in mind that those names occur only in the genealogy of Judah, because it is the only tribal line of interest to the Chronicler’s focus on the Davidic dynasty and Davidic covenant.

Many more names might have existed with the theophoric element of *-jah* or *-iah* in other tribal lines.

The primary contribution of *Genesis* comes in the theological portion of the volume. McKeown begins with the “Theological Message of the Book” (195–294), continues with “Genesis and Theology Today” (294–349), and concludes with “Genesis and Biblical Theology” (349–75). The first of these three sections covers the main themes of Genesis (descendants, blessing, and land). In an extensive discussion of “seed,” the author indicates that the use of contrasting descendants in Genesis leads to a highlighting of Judah, so that there “can be little doubt that one of the goals of the book of Genesis is to anticipate the Davidic kingdom” (216). McKeown apparently rejects the messianic interpretation of Genesis 3:15 (38–39, 204–5) in favor of a “chosen line” interpretation with a minimum of exegetical analysis. However, he also indicates that the line of descent from the promised seed will restore “peaceful relations with God” (254)—which most theologians would identify with Messiah’s accomplishments.

In his discussion of creationism and science (263–69, 294–317), the author concludes, “It is hoped that the above discussion is fair to all sides in this debate and that the material will help the reader to understand the main issues and make an informed decision for themselves” (317). He does discuss a variety of viewpoints in this subject area and mentions a number of pros and cons for each one. The claim of fairness, however, might be questioned due to the fact that he sometimes utilizes outdated and abandoned arguments as though they still represent current viewpoints (e.g., the appearance of age theory and canopy theory for creationists, 298, 300). The smorgasbord type of approach leaves readers without any direction. Pastors, students, and laymen seeking a Genesis commentary that presents carefully reasoned argumentation guiding them to a recommended solution will not find this volume helpful—it might even prove frustrating. On the other hand, the volume will aid those who wish to gain a grasp of the content and flow of Genesis, together with its major theological themes.

Christopher W. Morgan. *A Theology of James: Wisdom for God’s People*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010. 218 pp. \$17.99 (paper).
Reviewed by Paul W. Felix, Associate Professor of New Testament.

Is it possible for a NT letter to have a theology that is worth exploring in a full-length book, when that canonical work says nothing about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Should a writer examine the theological teachings of a five-chapter NT epistle which has been called an “epistle of straw” by the Protestant reformer Martin Luther? Are the words of Martin Dibelius, “James has no theology,” to be ignored in the pursuit of determining the theological message of this letter? Christopher W. Morgan, Professor of Theology and Associate Dean of the School of Christian Ministries at California Baptist University in Riverside, California, answers with a resounding “Yes!” He is no

stranger to the letter of James, having previously coauthored with B. Dale Ellenburg the commentary: *James: Wisdom for the Community* (2008). With his current work, Morgan adds his voice to those of several recent biblical commentators (Craig Blomberg and Mariam Kamell, *James*; Dan McCartney, *James*; Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*) who advocate a robust theology of James. The essence of his work is: “While relying upon careful exegesis and being informed by systematic theology, this volume is a work in biblical theology and therefore seeks to connect the dots of the particular texts in the epistle of James and show its primary message” (xvi).

In the opening chapter, “James in Context,” the author explores the historical and literary context of James. The matters of authorship, date, recipients, language and style, form, and structure are adequately dealt with. The next chapter, “Influences on James’s Thought,” identifies the primary literary sources of this letter as the Old Testament and the teachings/sayings of Jesus. The third chapter, “James’s Pastoral Burden,” focuses on the core of the message of James which is to offer the readers “wisdom for consistency in the community” (40).

The heart of *A Theology of James* is chapters 4 through 11. Chapters Four through Nine give attention to the following major themes: wisdom (47–54), consistency (55–64), suffering (65–76), the poor (77–94), words (95–114), and God’s word and law (115–27). The typical approach of the writer for these chapters is to first identify the major principles that support the theme and second to unpack each principle by examining the underlying passage in James in light of the sources of James and its contribution to the theme. In Chapter 10 (“James and Paul”), the author weighs in on the well-known apparent conflict between James’s words that a person is “justified by works” (2:24) and Paul’s words that one is “justified by faith” (Rom 3:28). Chapter 11, “A Sketch of James’s Theology” (an interesting title in light of the title of the book), provides the particulars of the theology of James using the following categories: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Humanity and Sin, Salvation and the Christian Life, the Church, Last Things. Since Scripture was dealt with as a theme in Chapter 9, it is not included as one of the categories.

The concluding chapters of this book are “Theology at Work” (Chapter 12) and “James for the Twenty-first-Century Church” (Chapter 13). It is Morgan’s contention that the exhortations of James are rooted in theology and that the theology presented in James is pastorally applied (169). The timely message that today’s church needs to be aware of in light of the theology of James is truth is to be viewed holistically, Christianity brings a reversal of values, covenant faithfulness is important, and most significant of all, the view of the church as presented by the brother of Jesus.

A Theology of James is a well-written work that dispels the mistaken idea that James does not have a theology. The intended audience of this book (college seniors, thoughtful lay readers, seminarians, or pastors) and also the series (*Explorations in Biblical Theology*) will be convinced that this five-chapter canonical book has a robust biblical theology. Some of Morgan’s

interpretations and conclusions are questionable, although they do fall within the realm of responsible exegesis (i.e., the rich in 1:10–11 as unbelievers; 3:13–18 continuing the argument in 3:1–12 concerning those seeking to be teachers; etc.). At times, one wishes the author had given more exegetical insight into the meaning of phrases and verses (i.e., “the perfect law of liberty” in 1:25; interpretive challenges of 5:14–15; etc.).

Early in the book the author acknowledges that *A Theology of James* uses portions of material from his commentary on James (xi). This is an understatement! Only three chapters, 9, 12, and 13, are substantially new. The other chapters are found in a more concise form or in total in the commentary. The forty-two page fifteenth chapter of the commentary *James* entitled “Theology of James” forms the heart of the book being reviewed. Ideally, the two books should be combined. The advantage of this format is one could easily consult the commentary to determine the basis of the conclusions that were reached by Morgan on scholarly debates in James. Yet, despite this limitation, the reviewer commends this volume to those interested in an important work on the theological message of the practical epistle of James.

Ken Ramey. *Expository Listening*. The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2010. 127 pp. \$11.99 (softbound). Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Many people who attend church have a set-in-stone mindset that “It is the preacher’s job to preach.” This is accurate to a degree, and not only to preach but to preach the Word accurately and in season and out of season (2 Tim 4). God will hold every preacher and teacher accountable by Him for the biblical truthfulness—or lack thereof—of his sermons. Ken Ramey, a graduate of The Master’s Seminary and the pastor-teacher of Lakeside Bible Church in Montgomery, Texas, argues that the Bible presents this as a much more joint venture between the preacher and the congregation. *Expository Listening* was written primarily with the congregation in mind and not simply to the preacher of the Word.

The book is easy to read and contains some profound quotes from some of the expositors of older and recent times. An ample bibliography for those who want additional reading is included at the end of this book.

Sadly, part of the reason for such a book comes forth from the times in which we live, where many deem the Word and its authoritative preaching to be outdated and irrelevant, as Ramey points out:

The church growth movement that boomed during the eighties and nineties concluded that preaching is an outdated form of communication in our technically advanced, media-savvy society. Surveys found that most listeners were interested only in hearing amusing and inspiring messages that addressed the practical problems they face in life . . . In the last few years, the Emergent Church

Movement has undermined biblical preaching even further by declaring that people no longer recognize the authority of propositional truth or the authority of the preacher. Consequently, preachers must be less authoritative, add more dialogue—swap out biblical confrontation for mere conversation. In fact, some in the movement have gone so far as to hold that the traditional form of preaching characterized by bold declaration is detrimental to the church (5–6).

Fortunately, God strongly disagrees with the above paragraph. *Expository Listening* repeatedly develops and traces many of the verses in Scripture that give the simple and repeated commands to “Hear the Word of the Lord!” Of course, included throughout the multiple times that God calls people to hear His Word is in the truest sense of “hear and obey,” or “hear and take warning.” It is very much an active and on-going call to be implementing by one’s lifestyle the Word that will be heard (James 1:23, 25), with eternal consequences for either doing so in obedience or ignoring it and refusing to submit to it. Often the invitation to hear the Word of the Lord is an invitation to repent (either on the personal or national basis); often it is a warning to repent followed by the consequences of not heeding God’s Word; sometimes it is a rebuke to scoffers; often it is encouragement for the discouraged faithful. But as Isa 55:8–11 clearly shows, God’s Word does not return void without accomplishing all His purposes.

Thus, the listening to God’s Word is not only important but takes a trained and cultivated mind (or ear). Ramey calls for developing a four-step “biblical audiology” (10–22) that will train the listeners of God’s Word to receive more out of the process. Using the example of Jesus’ “Parable of the Soils” reminds us that there is one message but four different responses to the Word by the soils; not everyone is on the same reception level when the Word goes forth. Ramey’s point is well taken and should be helpful for expositors in that soils can change. The preacher’s responsibility is to be faithful in delivering the Word; God is the one who brings about the results that He intends.

Expository Listening challenges the listeners to prepare during the week to hear the Word of God, instead of merely showing up on Sunday, as many people do. Aspects of this preparation include a call to prayer, reducing media intake, and spending time with God and the Bible. In short, it is a call to active discipleship that will show itself in this area. The love of God’s Word—or the avoidance of it—will be eventually seen in whether these steps are implemented on a personal or group basis or not. The book contains a “Quick Reference List” of specific things people who take their walks seriously and want to be in the Word of God can do before the sermon, during it, and after it (111–15). Also, each chapter ends with three study or discussion questions for an individual or a group. The final part of each chapter is a brief prayer in asking God to help one implement what has been taught in each chapter. Throughout the book the overriding theme of eternity weaves itself from chapter to chapter as God will even ultimately use some of the messages that people had rejected, when they

stand before Him in judgment. Serious indeed is both the calling to preach the Word and the calling to hear the Word of the Lord.

Expository Listening could be used in several different ways. For those doing a church plant, it may be a good book to go through with the potential leadership before studying it as an entire church. It could also be a good Wednesday night study or a Sunday night series. The book could be a helpful Sunday school course for a number of weeks from the youth on up. The concepts within the book are not too difficult for youth to handle, and they may very well be brought under conviction by the very Word of God as to the seriousness of hearing—and heeding—God’s Word. This would be a tremendous blessing in and of itself. *Expository Listening* could also be a useful Bible study for either a men’s or women’s group.

Michael J. Vlach. *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010. 224 pp. \$19.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Mike Vlach has written a detailed and very persuasive book addressing the repeated question over the centuries as to whether the church has replaced Israel, especially as it relates to eschatological matters. “At the heart of the controversy is the question, Does the church replace, supersede, or fulfill the nation Israel in God’s plan, or will Israel be saved and restored with a unique identity and role?” (1) Vlach documents his findings with copious footnotes, which is fitting since he traces the origin and development of the three various forms of replacement theology, referred to throughout the work as “supersessionism.” He argues: “One hermeneutical topic looms especially large—how the NT applies OT passages that speak of Israel’s future. As will be shown, one’s hermeneutical assumptions will largely determine where one lands on the relationship between Israel and the church” (ibid).

Vlach begins with an introduction to supersessionism, which he argues is a better-suited term than “replacement theology”:

Supersessionism, therefore, appears to be based on two core beliefs: (1) the nation Israel has somehow completed or forfeited its status as the people of God and will never again possess a unique role or function apart from the church, and (2) the church is now the true Israel and has permanently replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God” (12).

He further delineates between some of the variations within supersessionism.

Part two of the book traces the origin, development, and progression of supersessionism. Vlach explains,

Three factors contributed to the appearance of supersessionism in the early church: (1) the increasing Gentile composition of the early church, (2) the church's perception of the destructions of Jerusalem in AD 70 and 135, and (3) a hermeneutical approach that allowed the church to appropriate Israel's promises to itself. Together these factors contributed to the belief that the church had permanently replaced Israel as God's people (28–29).

He also notes that within this theological camp some are nonetheless looking for a future salvation of the Jewish people including, surprisingly perhaps, Augustine (45–47). In tracing the development of supersessionism up through modern times, Vlach argues that the Holocaust and the modern state of Israel have caused many to reevaluate their position (68–72). Chapter 7, "Supersessionism in the Modern Era," presents one of the most surprising elements within the book, showing the gradual decline of supersessionism in recent times and strong trend, by many, away from this concept. The author supports this observation with quotes from Roman Catholics and Presbyterian groups who are looking for God to work in the nation of Israel in the future (70–71). This section concludes with a summary of supersessionism in church history (75–76).

Part three deals with the hermeneutics of supersessionism. Vlach warns against two extremes that need to be avoided when approach biblical passages. First, assuming the NT always deals with the OT in a straightforward, literal manner, and second, concluding that since NT writers sometimes quote or appeal to OT passages in ways that appear less than literal, then we should not expect any literal fulfillment of OT promises and covenants to Israel (92–93). This contains a very helpful section on this controversial matter of how the NT should influence how the OT should be read (or vice versa).

The final division deals with "Supersessionism and Theological Arguments." Vlach details five primary arguments supersessionists use to support their theological position. In chapter 13, "Evaluating the Theological Arguments for Supersessionism," Vlach offers reasonable rebuttals to the controversial (for some) verses that people use to show that God is done with the nation of Israel, including such passages as Matt 21:43; Gal 3:7, 29 and 6:16; Rom 9:6; 1 Peter 2:9–10; Eph 2:11–22; and Rom 11:16b–24. The concluding chapters are the rationale for the restoration of national Israel including "God's Future Plan for the Nations," and "A Case for the Restoration of National Israel."

Vlach concludes with this assessment: "The primary error of supersessionism is this: *In their desire to emphasize the unity in salvation that Jews and Gentiles have experienced, supersessionists have mistakenly concluded that such unity excludes a special role for Israel in the future*" (204, emphasis his). In agreeing with Ronald Diprose's work *Israel and the Church* (Paternoster, 2004), he states,

“[Diprose] correctly pointed out that on their own merit certain texts ‘may be . . . compatible with *replacement theology*.’ But he also states, ‘They do not require it.’ This is a key distinction. There is an important difference between saying that some texts may be consistent with supersessionism and asserting that certain texts demand supersessionism” (205).

While this book perhaps will not persuade any diehard supersessionists, it will give strong support for the dispensational eschatology and perhaps convince those who are “on the fence” about this indispensable topic that affects how virtually every book in the Bible is to be understood.

Has the Church Replaced Israel? would be a most helpful eschatology textbook in a seminary or college, but it also will be very persuasive for those who hold to a literal understanding of the prophetic passages regarding Israel but may not know how to articulate this position or give good answers for friends who are supersessionists. Vlach’s work would also be a wonderful resource for “the educated layman” or student who wanted to dig deeper into this ongoing controversy, if for no other reason that Vlach does such a superb job in clearly laying out “who believes what” and the reasons for their positions. If this book were to be used in a Sunday school or small group, I would recommend it for an advanced college group or that the teacher would walk a less-trained group slowly through this material.

I highly recommend *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* for those who want to get deeper into the Word and who are looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.