

REVIEWS

G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007. 1,239 pp. (cloth), \$59.99.

Reviewed by Michael J. Vlach, Professor of Theology.

Editors G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson offer Bible students a massive and important work with their 1,239-page project, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. This book is one of the most detailed and serious discussions of New Testament (NT) use of the Old Testament (OT) ever compiled. According to the editors, this book took nearly a decade to be completed (vii), which is not surprising considering the technical nature of this work and the number of scholars compiled to complete it. Eighteen scholars (including Beale and Carson) were asked to address various books of the NT and how these sections cited the OT. To maintain consistency in the book, all contributors were asked to address six separate questions:

1. What is the NT context of the citation or allusion?
2. What is the OT context from which the quotation or allusion is drawn?
3. How is the OT quotation or source handled in the literature of Second Temple Judaism?
4. What textual factors must be borne in mind in understanding a use of the OT?
5. How is the NT using or appealing to the OT?
6. To what theological use does the NT writer put the OT quotation or allusion?

Significantly, the editors state in the Introduction that this book is not about a particular theory of how the NT uses the OT. It is not an attempt to solve whether the NT writers are primarily using the OT contextually or not. It does not choose sides in the debate over how the NT uses the OT. It does not try to solve whether the NT writers were relying upon hermeneutical principles of Second Temple Judaism or not. If a student is looking for answers to those issues he or she

may be disappointed. At times, the individual contributors may address some of those things, but the editors clearly state that addressing those issues was not their goal.

The contributors are asked to directly address all the quotations and probable allusions to the OT found in the NT. This plays into the book's greatest strength which is detailed analysis of all explicit quotations and allusions to the OT in the NT. As with any book that has many contributors, the quality of the book will vary although the scholarship is very good across the board. This is not a book that most will want to read cover to cover since it functions more as a reference book and is very technical in the biblical languages. This reviewer has been doing recent studies in Matthew, Hebrews, and Revelation and has targeted the comments of Craig L. Blomberg (Matthew), George H. Guthrie (Hebrews), and G. K. Beale/Sean McDonough (Revelation).

The book will be especially helpful for pastors and students who come across many quotations of the OT as they study the NT books. The editors have a noble goal: "If this volume helps some scholars and preachers to think more coherently about the Bible and teach 'the whole counsel of God' with greater understanding, depth, reverence, and edification for fellow believers, contributors and editors alike will happily conclude that the thousands of hours invested in this book were a very small price to pay" (viii). This hope of the editors should be realized.

The eighteen contributors appear to be a mix of amillennialists and historic premillennialists. This reviewer was disappointed that no dispensationalist was a contributor. Yet, I am mostly positive about this work and believe it has a place on the shelf of pastors and teachers.

M. Daniel Carroll R. *Christians at the Border*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008. 174 pp. (paper), \$19.95.

Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Professor of Pastoral Ministry.

Christians at the Border is an attempt to make sense of the current immigration crises in America and help the Christian church develop a biblical approach at dealing with this thorny issue. The author, M. Daniel Carroll R., is Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary and adjunct professor at El Seminario Teologico Centroamericano in Guatemala City, Guatemala. The author is himself a son of a Guatemalan mother and an American father, and thus can speak on behalf of both worlds.

The author's intent is "to try to move Christians to reconsider their starting point in the immigration debate. Too often discussions default to the passionate ideological arguments, economic wrangling, or racial sentiments that dominate national discourse.... This book is a modest attempt to help remedy that shortcoming. It is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive. Rather, it is designed as a primer for a more biblically and theologically informed approach to the topic" (19–20).

In setting the background for the book, the author argues for the term *Hispanic* to identify the various groups of immigrants and groups coming from Latin America. He also prefers the term *undocumented immigrants* over *illegal aliens* when speaking of that group of Hispanics that has immigrated to America and is the focal point of the political discussion.

The author divides the book into five chapters. In the first he presents the history of Hispanic immigration, giving a summary of the major movements in American history. He enlightens the reader by showing how the immigration problem came into existence, and also the various contradictory and ineffective ways the government has addressed it. He does not propose a political solution to the problem.

The second and third chapters deal with the Old Testament treatment of immigrants, aliens, and sojourners, dealing first with biblical examples of immigrants in the history of God's people, and then giving the biblical instructions in the Law concerning the treatment of sojourners, and the behavior of sojourners in a foreign land. The fourth chapter is the New Testament teaching concerning the treatment of immigrants; although here, the author confesses that there is not much that is said. He draws some parallels from our Lord's treatment of Samaritans as a way in which the church is to treat the immigrant.

The author leaves the discussion from Romans 13 to the end, arguing that the church should consider the non-legal matters before resting on the application of the law to the immigration issue. He seems to argue that if one views the immigration law as unreasonable and against Christian principles, that one has the right to disobey it. Carroll tempers any gross misunderstanding by stating, "Before this statement raises all kinds of alarm, let me make it very clear that I am not advocating civil disobedience on a large scale....It is a narrow understanding of the nature of law and the Christian's relationship to human government that I question" (132).

The final chapter "Where Do We Go From Here?" offers a general appeal to Christians to begin to look at the immigration issue from a biblical perspective. The author asserts, "*Christians at the Border*, above all else strives to motivate believers of the majority culture and Hispanics to begin thinking, talking, and acting as *Christians* in regard to immigration" (138). This reviewer concurs that the book does move the Christian reader to begin to consider Scripture as the basis by which to assess the immigration problem and to use Scripture as the basis for a solution.

Darryl C. Cornett. *Christian America? Perspectives on Our Religious Heritage*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011. 381 pp. (paper), \$14.99.

Reviewed by Gregg L. Frazer, Professor of History, The Master's College.

Christian America? offers four competing answers to the question of whether America was founded as a Christian nation. Such books of this nature are often the work of four authors and are, as a result, often uneven in quality. Such is the case with *Christian America?*

David Barton, the “guru” of Christian America advocates, begins the book with his case for America being “distinctively Christian.” City University of New York professor Jonathan Sassi follows with his argument for America being “religious, eclectic, and secular.” William Henard, a pastor and professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, suggests that America is “essentially Christian.” The fourth view is offered by Darryl Cornett, a pastor and the book’s editor. He maintains that America’s founding was “partly Christian.” As is typical of “four views” books, after each view is presented, the other three contributors respond with comments regarding the argument, the evidence, and/or the presentation.

Barton begins by offering a five-part definition of a “Christian nation”; then he marches the reader through what he calls “eight categories of irrefutable historical documentation proving that America was deliberately formed, and continued to operate as a Christian nation” (39). The problems are that his definition is idiosyncratic and conveniently contrived, and his documentation is neither irrefutable nor does it prove what he claims.

In defining “Christian nation,” Barton takes what all would identify as characteristics of *America* and makes them the defining elements, thus trying to win the debate by defining the terms in a way that no one else would. He does not use the Bible to form his definition or even to demonstrate that there can be such a thing as a Christian nation. Under his definition, neither the Puritan commonwealth nor the Mosaic commonwealth nor the millennial kingdom would qualify as a Christian nation, but America, being America, does.

Though his evidence is far from “irrefutable,” it overall constitutes a very typical model of the Christian America case. Even if I were to devote the rest of this review to Barton’s evidence, there is not nearly enough space to point out all of the problems—certainly not to delve into all eight of his categories of evidence—so a few highlights must suffice to illustrate extensive evidential issues.

Ironically, the piece begins with two standard Barton tactics that are very problematic. He opens with a sliced-up quote from John Adams, improperly using ellipses to change or obscure the meaning of the original statement. This tactic is a Barton favorite. A critical part of Barton’s “irrefutable” evidence consists of quotes from endless numbers of individuals in favor of Christianity, but their opinions are not helpful unless we know what *they* meant by the term. Removing the quotes from their context in order to serve his argument only obscures the search for truth. Barton employs another of his standard tactics in the second paragraph where he quotes—as a definitive authority on the intent of the Founders—a relatively obscure individual who was not yet born in 1789, giving his own opinion more than fifty years later. This is an example of what Barton considers a “primary” source.

In general, Barton attempts to impress the ignorant and to intimidate opponents with a deluge of endnotes—385 in this essay. Dozens—perhaps hundreds—of the references are irrelevant to the issue at hand and most of the rest seek to establish matters which are not in dispute, such as the fact that the early Puritans sought to create a godly society or that some people living in the founding era self-identified as Christians.

In his superficial approach, Barton routinely quotes ministers as evidence of Christian and biblical influence on the Revolution without investigating whether

they were, in fact, Christians making biblical arguments. Two of his favorites, Jonathan Mayhew and Charles Chauncy, denied the fundamentals of the faith and preached salvation by works and universalism. Their arguments in favor of revolution were based on rationalism, not the Bible or Christian faith. Using these ministers as representative of Christianity or a biblical approach is like using John Shelby Spong or Deepak Chopra for that purpose.

Blatant errors on Barton's part include: a) his apparent ignorance of the abysmal treatment of blacks, Native Americans, dissenters, and loyalists; b) improper use of "framer"; c) conflating the eighteenth-century notion of "freedom of conscience" and the biblical meaning of "conscience"; and d) treating the words "religious" and "Christian" as synonymous.

Ultimately, Barton lays down an impressive smoke screen of "historical documentation," but his presentation is missing a smoking gun. None of the Founders said that they "deliberately formed" America as a Christian nation and the founding documents certainly did not do so. As one of the other authors observed in his response to Barton's essay, David Barton is an apologist, not a historian—and it shows in his contribution to *Christian America?*.

In his essay, Jonathan Sassi contends that the American founding was "religious, eclectic, and secular." He rightly focuses on the "last quarter of the eighteenth century" when the Revolution occurred and the United States was established. Sassi explains that centering attention on the early colonial period (as Christian America advocates do) "would obscure the tremendous changes that took place over the first century and a half of the colonial period and impose a proleptic unity over the colonies' diverse histories" (103). This is a crucial point, critical to a proper understanding of this issue.

Sassi effectively traces the religious diversity, eclecticism, and spirit of toleration which characterized eighteenth-century America and suggests that such religious pluralism "confirmed the necessity that governments confine themselves to secular matters" (106). He also discusses the fact that many of the Founders mixed Enlightenment rationalism with religious belief. So, while they were not irreligious, they were not motivated predominately by *Christian* faith.

Sassi contends that the causes of the American Revolution were "primarily secular ones" and that religious factors "played only a subsidiary role" (116–17). He importantly notes that there was no unified position among Christians; some were "patriots," but many were loyalists or even pacifists. Sassi observes that "the Continental Congress took a largely hands-off approach to religious matters, leaving them to the several states" (129) and that the Constitution did fundamentally the same thing. He calls the Constitution "a perfectly secular text for the founding of the new nation" (130). Sassi's contribution reflects solid scholarship and mostly sound reasoning. However, he makes a better case for religious eclecticism than the secular aspect of his view.

Henard's essay, supposedly representing a third view, begs the question as to why it was even included. His position, that the founding was "essentially Christian," is nearly identical to that of Barton. One is forced to wonder whether it was included merely to complete a foursome. Henard's argument only makes matters worse. One of the other authors charitably commented that an entire section of the essay is "not particularly helpful" (256). To put it more bluntly,

much of Henard's contribution is irrelevant and unnecessary. Extensive biographies of various sixteenth- and seventeenth-century individuals consume 65 of the 72 pages; but in so doing tell us nothing of consequence about the founding of America. He finally gets to some ideas, but as another responder observes: "he never ties any of them to the Revolutionary era or the founding of the United States beyond mere assertion" (251). Henard makes broad claims without any support, while assuring us that "one can surmise" or "one can imagine." A reader skipping this section will miss little of importance.

The final essay is the gem in the collection. Cornett effectively presents the view that America's founding was "partly Christian." His plainly stated thesis is: "Although the people who eventually became the United States of America came from a culturally Christian context, the primary shaping ideology of the Revolutionary Period was that of the European Enlightenment" (265). His essay persuasively supports that thesis.

Cornett's is the one essay which defines terms biblically and in which biblical principles are addressed, such as the inappropriateness of rebellion by a Christian. The historical evidence is solid and the train of argument compelling. He gets right to the heart of the issue regarding the founding documents by pointing out that the language of the Declaration can be embraced by Christians, Deists, and Unitarians alike; and that the Constitution contains "not a hint of desire in bringing glory to God or to advance Christianity in the society" (297)." He pointedly asks: "If the Founders drafted the Constitution as a Christian document, then why conceal the fact by excluding clear Christian language" (325n)?

One might read *Christian America?* to find a typical case for the Christian America thesis or a serviceable case for the secular America thesis. Those interested in the truth should read it for the concluding essay. Since readers of this journal are particularly interested in theology, I strongly recommend *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, Revolution* by Gregg L. Frazer (Univ. of Kansas Press, 2012) and *In God We Don't Trust* by David Bercot (Scroll Publishing, 2011). Both books address the issue from sound historical and theological perspectives.

Joel B. Green, ed., *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012. xix + 889 pp. (cloth), \$59.99.

Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Director of the Seminary Library and Director of Academic Assessment.

The issues in the current news from economics to the forthcoming presidential election; from the debate about health care to the issues of war, violence, and revolution around the world, all have a common thread—at their core lays a question of ethics. Even how those issues are confronted: from those who would "occupy" to those who would take up arms; working within the established socio-economic-politico structures or abandoning those structures and creating new ones; the chosen response is driven by ethical considerations.

The challenge of applying Scripture to ethical issues is considerable. In his Introduction, Joel B. Green, the general editor, states that, "for all the scholarly

attention to the relation of Scripture and ethics, it remains a labyrinth” (1). Differences in one’s theological framework, one’s view of Scripture, and the varying exegetical/hermeneutical options, will all, often, lead to a differing ethical conclusion. Green acknowledges this point and states,

The *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* does not pretend to resolve all of these problems but rather serves to codify the issues and to identify ways in which they are being acknowledged and addressed in contemporary discussion... It may be too much to hope that this dictionary will provide a way out of the labyrinth, but it aims to provide a little light on the path (2).

Green, Professor of New Testament and Associate Dean for the Center for Advanced Theological Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, demonstrates a skillful editorial hand, and the overall structure of the work (from the introductory articles, to the entries themselves, to useful indexes) cannot be faulted at any level. The introductory articles (“Ethics in Scripture” by Allen Verhey, 5–11; “Scripture in Ethics: A History,” by Charles H. Cosgrove, 13–25; and “Scripture in Ethics: Methodological Issues,” by Bruce C. Birch, 27–34) are essential reading if one is to use this volume to its full profit. Specifically, Birch’s section “The Nature of Biblical Authority” (31–32) will be of particular interest as his views are pervasive in the subsequent entries. He details his position clearly and cogently, but those holding to an inerrantist or even a maximalist position of Scripture will likely not be enthusiastic. Birch states,

The Christian moral life must include the Bible and its interpretative traditions as authoritative in some manner; otherwise, there is no basis on which to label our ethics as Christian. However, in Christian ethics, the Bible, though always primary, is never self-sufficient. The Bible cannot be the sole source of authoritative influence, and thus is never the exclusive authority for the moral life (31).

By and large the entries in this volume reflect this view of Scripture. One other over-arching criticism is that relative lack of contributors from a more conservative theological and/or socio-political and economic perspective. The reader is left with the notion that more conservative writers have made little or no contribution in the area of the application of Scripture to ethics.

The entries are well-written and obviously well-researched (each entry has a good bibliography and the longer entries are often accompanied by a significant one). The “see also” listings at the end of most entries are extremely helpful and lend cohesion to the volume. The entry titles are always clear and demonstrate an experienced hand in proper headings.

The less than “conservative” view of Scripture, generally presented in the entries, is also combined with a generally “left of center” socio-political perspective as well. “Capitalism” (115–17) is not viewed favorably (see also, “Wealth”, 827–31 and “Welfare State,” 831–33), but rather “Distributism” is generally portrayed as the Christian ideal; although there is no entry for this “third way” of economic theory (nor, sadly an entry for either G. K. Chesterton or Hillarie Belloc who

advanced this theory). Oddly, there is also no entry for “Socialism” or “Christian Socialism,” which was a significant movement and was the precursor to the “Social Gospel” (inexplicably there is no entry for this topic either). “Capital Punishment” (118–20), is regarded as being rejected by Christ and a societal relic of a past age. “Egalitarianism” (270–71) is viewed as the Scriptural ideal, although the balance of the volume would have been better served with an entry on complementarianism. While the entry on “Headship” (349–50) has an obligatory reference to the complementarian scholar Wayne Grudem and wisely refrains from any reference to the works of Catherine C. Kroeger in the bibliography, the text itself is a rather one-sided presentation in favor of the egalitarian interpretation. The entry on “Abortion” (35–37) is largely an exercise in circumlocution, failing to even mention the issues of creationism and traducianism, and in the end saying essentially nothing of value or interest. One might also quibble on some definitional points presented in “Evangelicalism” (287–88) and “Evangelical Ethics” (284–87). And some will certainly be surprised to see Greg Bahnsen and Rousas Rushdoony identified as “Fundamentalists” (319–20). The entry on “Eschatology and Ethics” (276–79) is exceptionally disappointing in that it is devoid of any discussion of futurism or any other millennial constructs as though one’s view of the millennium has no consequence to corporate or individual ethical outworking.

However, despite these criticisms, which given the stated theological orientation of the work should not be unanticipated, the overwhelming number of entries are excellent and thought provoking (even if one disagrees in terms of theology or praxis). The entry on “Divination and Magic” (238–42) by Bill T. Arnold is excellent. At first glance, the entry, “Healthcare Systems in Scripture” (358–60) might seem anachronistic, but Green nonetheless makes an excellent contribution. “Ecological Ethics” (255–60), is detailed and stimulating. The entry on “Reformed Ethics” (661–64), and its discussion on the contribution of John Calvin (1509–64) is excellent. Richard N. Longnecker on “Resurrection” (677–80) might be the most well-developed entry from a scriptural viewpoint. Other notable entries are “Free-Will and Determinism” (313–15); “Leadership and Leadership Ethics” (475–77); “Just War Theory,” (445–49); and “Public Theology and Ethics” (646–49).

There are also entries for each of the books of the Bible designed to “focus on the ethics of each book of the Bible and on the possible significance of each book for contemporary Christian ethics” (3). When read for what they are intended to accomplish, these entries are generally helpful. There are some entries that are a tad mystifying. The entry on “Information Technology” (407–09) is so randomly vague and largely self evident that it really makes no advancement, although it does acknowledge that there is no scriptural instruction on the subject at all.

Our overarching criticism of this work is the general lack of balance. The perspectives of traditional Protestant liberalism and Catholicism dominate this work. More conservative viewpoints, both in terms of Scripture and larger social, political, and economic viewpoints are not only absent as entries, but largely ignored even as a point of interaction. That being said, this work fills a void in the arena of theological reference, bringing topics of ethical importance into a single volume. It brings together a significant amount of research and deals with topics that are often excluded from other reference works.

John D. Hannah. *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to Church History: Volume 5—The Church in the Late Modern Period (A.D. 1650–1900)*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010. 32 pp. (paper), \$9.99.

Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

In 2000 Kregel released John Hannah’s *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to Church History* to begin what is now a five-part series. That introductory volume presents a wide sweep of the major developments from the early church, which he divides as AD 33–500, up through the final chapter entitled “The Future of the Church.” In volume 5 of this series Hannah combines chapters four and five of the first book, “The Late Modern Church” (parts I and II), to serve as the framework of this present volume. I would recommend having both books present, if possible, when you read this newest volume because Hannah presents much information regarding the negative influence of the Enlightenment and secular philosophy. And having both volumes will give you a good idea of the “bigger picture” God was and is doing. The first book also contains a foldout chart of church and secular history that is useful.

Even though it is presented as a pictorial guide, I was amazed by how much valuable information this book contains. I went through seminary, but I do not consider myself a good enough church historian to teach a class on church history. I am more in the category of “educated layman” as it relates to this topic. I was a Bible Exposition major all throughout seminary, so some of these matters in philosophy and their harmful effects were good reviews for me. Many may be in my situation, or for many, this will be entirely new information. Hannah superbly weaves the religious and secular histories through the book giving the reader many people and events to explore elsewhere in more detail, if they desire. Like a wounded bird that slowly circles downward, Hannah notes the disastrous effects these pagan teachings had on society in general. And also he discusses how these ultimately infiltrated and continually harmed the church. In 1 John 4:1–3 Christians are warned: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.” “The Spirit of the Antichrist” best describes so much of what has happened in history past and is gaining momentum in these last days. Nothing that occurs today simply takes place; all connects with history past, especially with the purposeful rejection of God’s propositional truth.

In this edition, Hannah focuses much on “The Modern Age” and how it affects modern thinking, but he notes, “The Modern Age as an era is difficult to define” (4). He dates the early modern period from 1500–1650 and sees it rooted in the late medieval Renaissance and characterized by a break with their predecessors when they set human reason over the authority of Scripture. Significant in this “new perspective” was the basis for much of what is occurring throughout the world including many of the same catchphrases popular today: “In the new outlook, philosophy had precedence over theology, the natural sciences and natural

philosophy over grace, and reason over faith. Human rights displaced religious creed in a progressively Christless, secularized worldview” (5). Further, “The Enlightenment was a death sentence for Christian culture dominance in the Western nations” (5).

In a section of the book entitled “The Enlightenment and the Rise of Skepticism,” the downward trend away from true biblical truth became more prevalent because of the replacement of core foundations: “The Age of Reason, as the Enlightenment is sometimes called, came about through a confluence of three phenomena: (1) the emergence of secularized philosophy; (2) the discrediting of revelation and tradition as sources of authority, and (3) advances in the natural sciences” (6). Further, “The world no longer was a mysterious place controlled by an incomprehensible God. Its complexity was governed by intelligible laws. Understanding those laws, humankind could engineer a glorious future. Ancient truths, such as the deformity of human sin, gave way to confidence that education would quiet the beastly side of human nature” (6). Fast forward this four to five centuries and the end result is the same core teachings of the Secular Progressive worldwide movement; indeed of truth Eccl 1:9 summarizes perfectly: “That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun.”

Hannah incorporates in his book how Deism became part of the logical digression downward as “an isthmus connecting the philosophical continents of theism and atheism. Like its close cousin, Unitarianism, it was designed to rescue religion from its out-of-date ideas,” such as “the divine Trinity, deity of Christ, divine justice, moral inability, and blood atonement were set aside as ridiculous and unneeded” (8). Under these parameters Deists sought to find the God whom they had already rejected. Later in a section entitled “The Rise of European Liberalism and Materialism,” we see where these picked up many of the previous denouncements of God and truth and added to them instead a humanistic view, however, that will manifest itself completely during the Tribulation. From their perception, “An impersonal force in the universe, the Deist, is pushing the human race forward to perfection” (15). From God’s perspective, 2 Thess 2:11–12 reveals where such rebellion is “progressing” to: “And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” One can see how this unified worldwide view of attaining human perfection—even deity within themselves for some—only germinates in what has been sown centuries before.

Hannah’s *Pictorial History* can be helpful in various settings. For beginners or for youth groups who are godly, this is a tremendously helpful tool in seeing “the big picture.” As I read and wrote this review, I would turn on the news and see evidence of the downward spiral away from God and the increasingly growing trends toward a perfected, one-world society. Also, depending on the interest, many subsidiary studies can emerge from this book. Often Hannah will write a paragraph on a particular group or person; entire books have been written on virtually all of these. So for those who want to dig deeper, this can be a good launching pad for additional and deeper studies. Further, especially when coupled with Hannah’s first book, these can be a good quick reference (especially the

historical chart included in the first volume). As sad as it is to read the spiritual decline as God and His Word are repeatedly and purposefully rejected, these books also point to God actively working in bringing about different ministries around the world. Indeed the wheat and the tares currently do grow side by side (Matt 13:30). Finally, this could make a good seven-week (or longer) overview course in “how things got to be the way things are” as the lost world races toward the revelation of the man of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:3–4) and his worldwide dominion that includes Satan’s authority (Revelation 13), while the church looks for “the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Tit 2:13), as we see both days “drawing near” (Heb 10:25).

Timothy Paul Jones, David Gundersen, and Benjamin Galan. *Rose Guide to End-Times Prophecy*. Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2011. 363 pp. (paper), \$19.99.

Reviewed by Abner T. Chou, Associate Professor of Bible, The Master’s College.

Timothy Paul Jones is Associate Professor of Leadership and Church Ministry at Southern Baptist Seminary in Kentucky. He has written several works including *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman’s “Misquoting Jesus”* (IVP, 2007) and *The Da Vinci Codebreaker: An Easy-to-Use Fact Checker for Truth Seekers* (Bethany House, 2006). His most recent work (co-authored with Benjamin Galan and David Gundersen, M.Div. and Th.M. graduate of The Master’s Seminary) brings clarity to the issues in eschatology, a subject ripe with complexities and debate.

The *Rose Guide to End-Times Prophecy* serves as a textbook on eschatology. As such, it is far more thorough than typical viewpoint books which focus only on particular topics (e.g., interpretation of Revelation or the views of the millennium). Most refreshing is the irenic tone in discussing the information, as well as a distinct focus on producing a “deeper recognition of the majesty and sovereignty of Jesus in all of life—including the end of time” (6).

The physical layout of the book aids in presenting complex information in an accessible fashion. The pages contain pictures, diagrams, schematics, and comparison charts to visually illustrate and synthesize the data. They are in color, which helps in differentiating categories of information (e.g., views, biblical books, and time periods). This makes the book an excellent tool for quick reference and handouts. However, an index of tables/charts where the reader can locate these diagrams is noticeably absent. Likewise, a scriptural index is also missing. Even though there is a topical index, it does not provide pinpoint accuracy of locating the desired information. Thus, one has to guess or recall where a table would be in the book. This lack hampers the ability of the book to be a quick reference guide.

In evaluating the content of the book, we ought to ask two major questions. First, does the book accomplish its purpose to direct the readers to seeing the glory of Christ and Christian devotion? Second, how fairly, clearly, accurately, and comprehensively does the book present the various viewpoints?

In answering the first question, Johnson solidly connects eschatology and practical theology. He begins by discussing the dangerous extremes of eschatological speculation and cynicism. To remedy these incorrect attitudes, the writer reminds his audience that eschatology can display the glory of Christ. Jesus talks about eschatology and demands His disciples to watch for His return (cf. Matt 24:42). That watchfulness does not mean going into wild conjecture but rather to anticipate and be ready for His coming through holiness and an eager yearning for God to display His glory (Matt 25:1–13; Rom 8:18–23; 2 Pet 3:11). The writer's tone assuages those who may perceive that eschatology is just for argumentative people.

The author continues his emphasis on the devotional implications of eschatology at the end of each major section. In his concluding remarks on eschatology in the Old Testament, Johnson reminds his readers that God will fulfill His Word (173). For the New Testament, the writer exhorts his audience to see the definitive victory of Christ and His supremacy over all creation (262). Johnson even gives practical insights of each eschatological viewpoint. Amillennialism reminds us of Christ's victory at the cross and resurrection (289). Postmillennialism champions the power of the gospel in this world (301). Dispensational Premillennialism teaches us to handle God's Word carefully and to preach the gospel in the current time (318). Historical Premillennialism reiterates that God will continue to purify His people through suffering (334). Overall, the book points people to the reality that eschatology is important and impacts one's walk with Christ.

Moving to the second question, Johnson is clear, accurate, and comprehensive in his presentation of views. At times, one may quibble with some of his wording that seems to be reductionistic and slightly misleading. For instance, he characterizes Dispensationalism as having two purposes and two peoples whereas Historical Premillennialism has a distinctive of a "singular plan" (329). While it is true that Dispensationalism asserts a distinction between church and Israel, does that mean that those two entities fall outside of a single plan? Such disagreements over word choice are minor in this reviewer's mind. The book provides working definitions that sum up viewpoints with clarity that a layperson can easily grasp.

The book's structure attests to its comprehensive scope. It covers hermeneutics, genre, Old Testament passages, New Testament passages, and concludes with a synthesis of eschatological viewpoints. Johnson defines four eschatological views (Amillennial, Postmillennial, Dispensational Premillennial, and Historical Premillennial), three theological systems (Dispensationalism, Covenantalism, and New Covenantalism), and four hermeneutical methods (Futurist, Preterist, Idealist, and Historicist). He traces how the different views/theological systems/hermeneutical systems interact with various biblical passages. The approach itself is helpful. It shows how different perspectives interpret specific texts. Conversely, the writer rapidly switches between all of these terms in his discussions and charts/tables. He talks about the covenantal viewpoint of the Abrahamic Covenant (99) but then discusses an amillennial position concerning the Davidic Kingdom (102). These shifts can be overwhelming and may provide a disjointed reading/learning experience. The reader can easily be confused

in correlating differing terms with their respective positions. It would be far simpler to choose one set of terms (e.g., the three theological systems) consistently used throughout the book so that each position could be easily traced.

Johnson's discussion on hermeneutics and genre is standard. He argues for the primacy of *sensus literalis* but acknowledges that certain eschatological passages have symbolism deriving from apocalyptic literature. What stood out was his substantial attention on the Old Testament. That particularly delights this reviewer since eschatological discussions often interact primarily with New Testament texts and make the Old Testament secondary. By page count, the book interacts with both sections of Scripture equally (approximately one hundred pages a piece).

In the Old Testament section, the book surveys through redemptive history showing the promise in the Garden (Gen 3:15) to the Exile. Within this, the book tackles a plethora of passages and issues. It includes discussions on Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant, Daniel's seventy weeks, Day of the Lord, and Ezekiel's temple. It even covers more detailed and nuanced issues such as how the phrases fit together in Daniel's seventy weeks based upon Hebrew accents. The breadth and depth of discussion is excellent.

Johnson presents the various viewpoints on these matters accurately. For example, Dispensationalism understands that the Abrahamic promises dictate that the nation of Israel will possess the land in the end times exactly as Gen 12:2–3 stipulates (57–58). Covenantalists believe that the church inherits the Abrahamic promises spiritually (59). The Abrahamic promise of land might have been fulfilled in the days of Joshua or Solomon (60). Alternatively, according to Covenantalists, Israel may have forfeited these promises by their rejection of Jesus (60). New Covenantalism views that the Abrahamic promises were a “temporary picture of what God would provide in Jesus” (100). This view argues that the land, seed, and blessings promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are really predicting the fullness of the people of God in Christ.

The book then moves to the discussion on the New Testament. It primarily covers the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation. The epistles receive some attention (254). The reviewer wished for more interaction with those texts (e.g., Rom 9–11; 1 Thess 4:13–5:11; 2 Thess 2:1–16; 2 Pet 3:8–16).

Johnson continues to show how different theological systems interpret elements of the New Testament passages. He provides detailed descriptions of each of these views as they interpret each verse of Matt 24:1–35 (202–20). He rightly assesses that Premillennialists view the Olivet Discourse as primarily future with a possible exception of Luke 21:20–24 (200). Amillennialists and Postmillennialists tend to view that Jesus' discourse predicts AD 70 (201).

His discussion of Revelation is equally as detailed. Johnson provides helpful charts describing the various viewpoints on the various characters in the book (e.g., the twenty-four elders and the beast who comes from the sea). He again reports the various views accurately and clearly. The book then provides another chart summarizing how the various interpretations (i.e., Futurist, Historicist, Idealist, and Preterist) of Revelation view every chapter of the book.

In the final part of the book, Johnson provides a synthesis of Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, Dispensational Premillennialism, and Historic

Premillennialism. This is useful since the presentation thus far has not been systematic but rather has examined the interpretation of each viewpoint on particular passages. At times, some of these discussions appear to be reductionistic (as mentioned above). Nevertheless, the book overall presents the various viewpoints within each system accurately.

On that note, Johnson's work accomplishes his tasks. He lays out a vast amount of information clearly and fairly in order to show people how eschatology exalts Jesus Christ. This reviewer particularly appreciated the side-by-side comparisons of how different systems interpret various parts of Scripture. Although I have expressed some reservations with his presentation, coverage, and wording, I can commend the book for higher Christian education and personal reference.

Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson. *Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*, Invitation to Theological Studies. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011. 891 pp. (cloth), \$46.99.

Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Director of the Seminary Library and Director of Academic Assessment.

At the end of any theological discussion, the foundational issue will always come down to the single subject of hermeneutics; that is how is the biblical text to be interpreted and thus viewed in a theological construct and then applied in a meaningful way to life? Despite the fundamental importance of hermeneutics, useful texts are still somewhat scarce (particularly from an inerrantist perspective on the Bible). The work by Köstenberger and Patterson ably fills that scarcity with this new volume.

The book is designed as a classroom text. At the end of each chapter there is a set of "Guidelines" which serve as a set of "bullet points" for the material just presented: "Key Words," "Study Questions," "Assignments," and a generally thorough "Bibliography" of works on the chapters subject. At the end of the work there is a useful set of indexes and two appendices: "Building a Biblical Studies Library" and a "Glossary" of common terms used throughout the book. Both appendices are useful and the section on "Building a Biblical Studies Library" makes recommendations for a basic library, covering all the areas of biblical and theological studies as well as a series of recommended commentaries on each book of the Bible. The recommendations are thorough, and although one might question the inclusion and exclusion of a title here and there, it is a thoughtful and scholarly compilation. Beyond this the authors provide their email addresses and welcome "questions, comments, or suggestions for improvement" (29). They also provide a link to the resources not contained in the book, including a syllabus shell, chapter quizzes and Power Point slides (*ibid*). One minor criticism is that the lengthy outline of the book (31–47) would have been much more useful if the page numbers of the book had been connected to the outline sections.

The opening chapter presents an overview of the history of biblical interpretation and then details the "triad" schema that forms the foundation for the

rest of the book. There is also a helpful discussion of the “character” requirements for the interpreter of Scripture (62–65).

The authors build their hermeneutical method around the triad of History, Literature and Theology, and the chapters are built around those themes. Those looking for the “traditional” hermeneutical labels (e.g., “Grammatical-Historical or Redemptive-Historical,” etc.) will be disappointed. Those labels are generally ignored and they simply present and defend their approach. In comparing their work to others in their field the author’s note:

This is now at least the third geometric figure used in a hermeneutical context. First came the hermeneutical circle (the notion that one’s understanding of a text in its entirety provides the proper framework for understanding the individual parts and vice versa). Then came the hermeneutical spiral (the notion that “biblical interpretation entails a spiral from text to context, from its original meaning to its contextualization or significance in the church today”). Now, at long last, comes the hermeneutical triad: the proposal that history, literature, and theology form the proper grid for biblical interpretation (23).

In explaining their methodology the authors also point out,

What is more we don’t start out pretending the Bible is just like any other book, because we don’t believe it is. Rather our purpose here is not to study just any form of human communication; our purpose is to study the Bible—the inerrant, inspired Word of God. This conviction governs our presentation from the very outset and it is maintained throughout the entire volume (26).

Around the triad, the authors present a seven-step outline:

- Step One: Preparation
- Step Two: History
- Step Three: Literature: Canon
- Step Four: Literature: Genre
- Step Five: Literature: Language
- Step Six: Theology
- Step Seven: Application and Proclamation

Each “step” is explained in detail and the authors (Patterson in the OT and Köstenberger in the NT) present “Sample” exegesis on particular passages to demonstrate an end result (e.g., The Book of Nahum [344–45]; Mark 15:33–41 [407–11]; Rev 11:1–13 [559–63]). The text is highly readable and the authors provide a wealth of information without getting bogged down in any one area. The notations reflect current scholarship and provide the reader with excellent resources for further study.

The bulk of the material is dedicated to the “literature” corner of the triad and here the authors provide the student with excellent discussions of genre and

aspects of language; both in terms of grammar and syntax, but also structure and argumentation. There is a helpful discussion of exegetical fallacies, particularly as they relate to determining word meanings (630–50). The discussion of biblical theology, which the authors call, “the crowning aspect of the hermeneutical triad” (693) is perhaps a little brief, given the “pinnacle” nature at which the triad places it. The final chapter is a concise and practical discussion of taking the hermeneutical skills and applying them to actual study. The discussion of resources, both print and electronic, is helpful. The brief discussion on “time management” (728–29) is very helpful.

The section “From Study to Sermon” (741–800) takes the reader through an overview of issues related to preaching different genres. The authors state that while a sermon may be “topical, textual or expository,” “It is our conviction that the majority of preaching should be expository, that is, explication a biblical text. A steady diet of topical messages or unconnected texts is hazardous for the health of your audience” (741).

This volume represents a valuable contribution that any student of the Bible will profit from. Patterson and Köstenberger, avoiding the parochial stridency that often enters into the discussion, have crafted a positive statement regarding biblical hermeneutics and clearly delineated a methodology that can only help any serious student of the Bible.

Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds. *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus*. Revised edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. xiv + 826 pp (cloth), \$44.99.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

The revised edition of *Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC)* sports new editors, new cover, new layout, and some new authors. The purpose and general theological tone of *EBC* remains unchanged from the first edition edited by Frank E. Gaebelin. Both John H. Sailhamer and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., also contributed their respective commentaries (“Genesis,” 21–331; and “Exodus,” 333–561) to the older edition. However, in this volume, the “Leviticus” (563–826) commentary by Richard S. Hess replaces the prior commentary by R. Laird Harris.

EBC's new look makes the text more readable with larger page surface, larger fonts, added headings, shading for the NIV text, and newly formatted charts and tables. Both Sailhamer and Kaiser perform a fairly thorough revision of their commentaries for this edition without altering overall content. Unfortunately, the bibliographies for “Genesis” (44) and “Exodus” (342–43) do not give much evidence of being up-to-date. Sailhamer adds only two sources from the 1990s (Sailhamer and Witte) and none from the 2000s. Kaiser includes only two from the 1990s (Houtman and Hoffmeier) and one from 2000 (Enns). In stark contrast, the bibliography by Hess (“Leviticus,” 574–76) presents a more complete listing of references with twenty-two from the 1990s and seven from the 2000s. However, it is unfortunate that he fails to include Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Baker 2002).

In his “Introduction,” Sailhamer expands his section on “Authorship, Date, and Place of Origin” (25–33) and adds sections on “Genesis and the Final Shape of the Primary History” (42–43) and “Genesis and the Tanak” (43–44). His “Bibliography” (44) continues to lack adequate references and omits three recognized evangelical commentators whom he had previously included (Aalders, Kidner, and Leupold). Sometimes notes have been shortened (e.g., 1:1 [51–53]; 4:8 [99]; 8:17 [129]) and, in at least one case, a note (for 2:15) is cited in the text (79) but no longer exists (cf. 82). Occasionally, Sailhamer adds a note (2:24 [83]). New charts in table format with cell borders enhance the commentary (e.g., 133). Readers will appreciate Sailhamer’s insertion of a significantly expanded commentary on 12:1–5 (150–55) that provides a fuller presentation of his views on the promise narratives and messianic implications—an area upon which he has more recently discoursed in *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (IVP 2009; see review in this issue of *MSJ*).

For “Exodus” Kaiser adds a new section (“Text of Exodus,” 337) to his “Introduction” and reduces his “Bibliography” (342–43), although his list of references is more complete and helpful than Sailhamer’s. Omission of the map of the exodus and the diagram of the tabernacle, which were in the former edition, impoverishes this revised edition. As with Sailhamer’s commentary, Kaiser utilizes refreshed charts in table form containing bordered cells (e.g., 339–40, 347, 399), but he inserts fewer than those Sailhamer provides.

Hess utilizes charts more frequently and quite effectively (e.g., 586–87, 605–6, 614–15, 651–52). Readers will find his commentary very informative. This reviewer was disappointed, however, in the relatively sketchy treatment of one of the most important chapters in the Pentateuch: Leviticus 26.

Hopefully, Zondervan will be able to publish the remaining volumes in this revised edition of *EBC* in a timely manner. To date, the second volume (*Numbers–Ruth*) has yet to appear, although some of its commentaries have been completed for nearly seven years. That circumstance can result in even the newer of the commentaries being severely dated at their time of publication. Regardless, *EBC* will continue to be a set that pastors, professors, and students alike will find profitable to possess for years to come.

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds. *Christ’s Prophetic Plans: A Futuristic Premillennial Primer*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012. 220 pp. (paper), \$19.99.

Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Adjunct Professor of Bible Exposition.

Five faculty members of The Master’s Seminary present reasons in ten chapters for believing that the most straightforward interpretation of biblical prophecies upholds the futuristic position. One thrust is how this stance can be consistent with a Calvinistic perspective. This book’s writers argue that Scripture viewed in its most natural sense supports this view. One emphasis is that the New Testament does not reject a premillennial view of details in the Old Testament, but upholds it.

John MacArthur, the seminary's president, contributes a lengthy Preface that ends with a chart on the sequence of events from Christ's cross to eternity future. MacArthur also contributes three chapters, "Does Calvinism Lead to Futuristic Premillennialism?" "Does the New Testament Reject Futuristic Premillennialism?" and "How Certain is Futuristic Premillennialism?"

The arguments in the book validate a literal, yet not a wooden, rigid interpretative system, understanding the frequent places where the meaning of figurative language and symbols must be discerned. The contributors also argue that regardless of their affirmation of a distinction between Israel and the church, the means of salvation in any age is always the gift of grace.

Regarding dispensationalism, this book presents the argument that God administered His program in different ways at various times. It insists that He will fulfill His Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants literally (cf. 11).

Richard Mayhue, Executive Vice-President and Dean, crafted the Introduction, "Why Study Prophecy?" plus the chapters "Why Futuristic Premillennialism?" and "Why a Pretribulation Rapture?" Michael Vlach, Associate Professor of Theology, offers lucid chapters on what dispensationalism is, then what it is not, plus a third called "What About Israel?" These parts contend for a future restoration of Israel to its ancient land to fulfill Old Testament promises in their most evident, plain sense. Nathan Busenitz, Instructor in Theology, calls upon probing research as the other writers do to support his affirmative answer in "Did the Early Church Believe in a Literal Millennial Kingdom?" And Matt Waymeyer, Instructor in Bible Exposition, delves deeply into Revelation 20 and details how the references to a thousand years most naturally point to a literal millennial reign of Christ filled with spiritual values after His second advent, before the eternal state.

This irenic book is articulate so as to be helpful to professors in seminaries and Bible colleges, students, pastors, and lay people. The work follows in a long train of books that endorse a premillennial case. Examples appear in recommended sources near the end. This list might be extended to include many other works that directly address premillennialism. Some early books, even those not as quick to get to the point, are Nathaniel West's *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments* and George N. H. Peters' *The Theocratic Kingdom* (3 vols.). Still, the list supplies a wealth of supportive sources, such as Alva J. McClain's *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, Ronald Diprose's *Israel in the Development of Christian Thought*, Robert Thomas' meticulously detailed exegetical commentary, 2 vols. on Revelation 1–7 and 8–22, Barry Horner's *Future Israel*, and Michael Vlach's published doctoral dissertation, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* The arguments of each chapter are supported by copious endnotes, at times with pertinent detail, showing frequent interaction with the best resources otherwise written on the issues.

MacArthur's chapter (7) on Calvinism (Reformed Theology) proposes that *reform* in such areas as eschatology would help a system of much truth to be even more consistently *reformed* to fit the Scriptures. He develops a point that those of his position, and also of Reformed Theology, often advance. If amillennialists would interpret prophecies literally as they interpret much of other Scripture, the premillennial conviction would be the consistent product. He cites Reformed scholars' candid statements which admit this (145–46). MacArthur reasons that just

as God will fulfill His elective promises to believers, so He will be just as insistent to carry out what He has pledged on the election of ethnic Israel. In both cases, he sees this in grace that triumphs over sinful failure. He cites Calvin to this effect, as well as Jürgen Moltmann (151). MacArthur also builds a case for the word “Israel” in its many occurrences in the Bible as always referring to people of ethnic Israel. He provides reasoning on examples in the most debated texts to show this—Rom 9:6 and Gal 6:16 (152–53). He shares how close study of verses in both Old Testament and New Testament led him to believe that he had no consistent option in eschatology but premillennialism (153–56). This will no doubt speak persuasively to influence many readers as they, too, weigh what is the most fitting, probable sense of Bible statements.

This reviewer himself has sought in nearly fifty years of seminary teaching on all the Bible’s prophetic books to grapple seriously with interpretive issues in the passages and in top commentaries and books. The fruitage of this background leads to a fair conclusion: the present product, despite its brevity, is as a “primer” one of the most clarifying, definitive, stimulating, and appealing works to date. This book is serious yet readable, and probes on issues, spotlighting them with provocative awareness. Writers here are aggressively abreast of relevant literature, old and recent. They press to the point about what is at stake and offer straightforward reasons on why the premillennial perspective flows out as the most natural hermeneutical sense of biblical statements. Mayhue’s points that favor taking “a thousand years” in Revelation 20 as literal (67–71) will offer evidence persuasive to many. Granted, others will opt for a figurative sense despite considerations he adduces. Waymeyer’s chapter (6) on Revelation 20, richly fed by his earlier book *Revelation 20 and the Millennial Debate*, erects more detail for a meaningful literality. If the natural sense makes sense even in prophecy, as premillennialists believe, his setting forth of specific, concrete evidence is not easy to dismiss.

Recommended sources are not the only added feature as the book draws to a close. The Glossary defines thirty-two terms for those needing the help, and at the very end is an extensive Scripture Index.

J. Gordon McConville and Stephen N. Williams. *Joshua*. Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010. xii + 257 pp. (paper), \$12.00.

Reviewed by Michael A. Grisanti, Professor of Old Testament.

This volume is part of a series that seeks to engage the biblical text in a paragraph-by-paragraph fashion while maintaining a deliberately theological focus. McConville is a well-known Old Testament scholar while Williams works in systematic theology. Their shared effort is called “theological interpretation” in modern scholarship. McConville wrote the introduction to the Book of Joshua and the commentary itself. Then Williams wrote a section dealing with the theological horizons of Joshua and another on reading Joshua today. McConville also wrote an essay on Joshua and biblical theology. Both authors respond to each other’s

theological observation. The book concludes with a helpful author and Scripture index.

McConville's commentary occupies only ninety pages in this volume, so his comments are very selective and addressed to the pericope or section rather than details of a passage. In vintage McConville fashion, he writes with clarity and substance. This volume, as others in the series, offers a glimpse into the interrelationship of exegesis and theology (both systematic and biblical). On the one hand, the connection of exegesis and theology is necessary for both disciplines to correctly contribute to our biblical understanding. Neither exegesis nor systematic theology can exist for long without the other. On the other hand, this volume also demonstrates how one's theology impacts their interpretation of the ultimate significance of a passage. For example, Williams' view of the "land" in the New Testament (regarding it as a non-issue in the NT) impacts his understanding of the biblical (OT and NT) teaching about the land of promise. Since the New Covenant community does not give attention to the "land," it is not part of the heritage of the NT believers and beyond.

Both McConville and Williams are clear writers and have given careful thought to the theological significance of the Book of Joshua. However, if you want a solid commentary on the Book of Joshua, I would look elsewhere.

Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt. *Genesis, Exodus*. Cornerstone Biblical Commentary. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008. xiv + 560 pp. (cloth), \$34.99.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Allen Ross is Professor of Divinity, Old Testament, at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, AL. He served as a translator and editor for the New King James Version and wrote the commentaries on Genesis and Psalms in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Chariot Victor Books, 1987), as well as *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker 1988, 1996), *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Baker 2001), *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Baker 2002), and *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Kregel 2006). His first volume for *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Kregel Exegetical Library) is scheduled for release in 2012. Although associated in his early background with Baptist and Presbyterian churches, since 1979 he has been active in the Episcopal Church.

John N. Oswalt authored *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39* (NICOT, Eerdmans 1986) and *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66* (NICOT, Eerdmans 1998), *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Evangel Publishing House 1999), *Isaiah* (NIVAC, Zondervan 2003), and *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Zondervan 2009). He was a member of the New International Version translation team and the Senior Translator, Prophets, for the New Living Translation. At the present he serves as Visiting Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (gen. ed. Philip W. Comfort) is based upon and contains the full translation of the second edition of the New Living Translation (NLT). The series represents the work of nearly one hundred biblical scholars of various evangelical church backgrounds from the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. Each commentary commences with an “Introduction” (“Genesis,” 3–29; “Exodus,” 261–83). Ross’ “Introduction” follows nearly the same arrangement and content as in his *Creation and Blessing*. The main body of each commentary is then presented by giving the full NLT text of the text unit, followed by “Notes” (dealing with the Hebrew text) and “Commentary” interpreting that text unit. In some cases, the treatment of an interpretive issue appears somewhat repetitive. For example, Ross’ discussion of Genesis 1:1–2 in the “Commentary” (32–33) repeats much of what he already presented in the “Notes” (31–32). At the end of each commentary, the volume includes a brief “Bibliography” (“Genesis,” 255–58; “Exodus,” 559–60).

In this commentary Ross does not come to a clear identification regarding the age of the earth or of the universe. His discussion implies that he only sees life on this planet as recent (32). For him, the “formless and empty” condition of the created earth and its darkness (Gen 1:2) indicates something that requires correction (33). This leads him to the conclusion that the creation account reveals that the Creator is “a redeeming God” (35). In another interpretive matter, Ross identifies the different ways to account for the origin of light on the first day as compared to the events of the fourth day, but does not take a position himself (38). Overall, the commentary does not provide a full interpretive analysis of the biblical text. The author by-passes a number of interpretive issues in order to give the reader an overview that touches on what the author has determined to be the more significant theological issues. For example, the reader finds no help with regard to whether it was a “spring” or a “mist” that watered the garden in 2:6. Nor does Ross explain the emphatic clause, “you are sure to die” (2:17) or identify the interpretive problem in 3:5 (“like God” or “like gods”?) or discuss the potential anachronism of “Chaldeans” in 11:28, 31 or the debate over the mention of “Rameses” in 47:11. On the other hand, he does explain what “helper” means in 2:18 (48), the meaning of “call on the name of the LORD” in 4:26 (63), and offers one potential solution for the use of “Dan” in 14:14 (105). When it comes to the flood, Ross understands 8:1–2 to say that both rain and “subterranean water upheavals” continued another 110 days following the initial torrential rain of forty days (76).

In his commentary on Exodus, Oswalt argues for a fifteenth century B.C. dating of the exodus from Egypt (265–66), but offers no mention or explanation of the debate over “Rameses” in 1:11 (286–89). However, he does examine briefly the variety of names applied to Moses’ father-in-law (293, 305), provides a fairly in-depth analysis of “I AM” in 3:14 (303–4, 311–12), and offers insightful comments regarding the incident with Moses and circumcision in 4:24–26 (306, 316).

Overall, this volume delivers what the commentary series promises. It is solidly evangelical in its theology and in its handling of the matters of authorship, date, and authenticity. Readers will need to resort to the more extensive exegetical commentaries on Genesis and Exodus to delve more deeply into the many interpretive issues not touched upon by Ross and Oswalt. No one will walk away from this commentary, however, without gaining a very good foundation in the

individual messages of Genesis and Exodus, as well as a very useful examination of the theological significance of these two biblical books. The two commentaries in this volume are very readable, presenting the reader with many delightful and thought-provoking statements. A few will suffice for illustration: “Thus, the Old Testament in general and the book of Genesis in particular are a cemetery for lifeless myths and dead gods” (16, Ross); “Although not many scholars are satisfied with the obvious, in this case it seems obvious that the text means what it says” (81, Ross); “If God did not act in the ways recorded, then the unique theology of the Bible becomes both inexplicable and suspect” (263, Oswalt); “Once again, as with the midwives, Jochebed, Miriam, and the pharaoh’s daughter, it is a woman who took courageous action to further the cause of Yahweh’s redemptive purposes” (316, Oswalt).

John H. Sailhamer. *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009. 632 pp. (paper), \$40.00.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Sailhamer has authored a number of Old Testament studies, most focusing on the Pentateuch: *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Zondervan 1992), *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Zondervan 1995), and “Genesis” in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan 1990), see review, 148–49. He also has published works in other areas of OT studies: *The Translational Technique of the Greek Septuagint for the Hebrew Verbs and Participles in Psalms 3–41* (Peter Lang 1991), along with a number of periodical articles and essays in collected works on a variety of OT topics. As Professor of OT at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Brea, CA, he has a reputation for immersing his students in the Hebrew Bible.

The Meaning of the Pentateuch comprises a compendium of conclusions Sailhamer has reached as the result of years of study, writing, and teaching. The volume focuses on “the compositional strategy of the biblical author of the Pentateuch” (11). Its goal is to identify the meaning of the Pentateuch for today’s readers (13). As Sailhamer unfolds his approach to the Pentateuch, he reveals that he holds to two editions of the Pentateuch (23), with the second coming after Malachi, the last of the prophets (24), and comprising the only edition to which the modern reader has access (24–25). He believes that the second edition has been retrofitted with “new ‘prophetic extras’” (51). Nowhere does the author explain why he would consider it impossible for the prophetic elements of the Pentateuch to be part of the first edition. In fact, he actually admits that the prophetic sources for the second edition were themselves “a product of the Mosaic Pentateuch” (52). This reviewer finds this two-way composition (Pentateuch > Prophets > Pentateuch) without adequate foundation. Sailhamer fails to present sufficient evidence contrary to a view holding that the prophets only expounded the Pentateuch—a one-way relationship (Pentateuch > Prophets). In other words, the prophets did not inform a supposed final edition of the Pentateuch at all. Their revelation *expounded on* the

Pentateuch's message, but they did not *expand* the written Pentateuch itself. It was already in its final form long before they proclaimed their supplementary revelation.

As far as the content and meaning of the Pentateuch is concerned, Sailhamer believes it to present a message quite "close in meaning to [the] NT book of Galatians" (27). He observes that Paul's view of the law in Galatians approximates that of the Pentateuch's view of the law (28). Just as in *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, the poems of the Pentateuch not only fill the seams of the Pentateuchal structure, they direct the readers to "the promise of a coming messianic king" (36)—a major and quite significant contribution of the Pentateuch.

The author divides his volume into three parts: "Approaching the Text as Revelation" (57–218), "Rediscovering the Composition of the Pentateuch within the Tanak" (219–415), and "Interpreting the Theology of the Pentateuch" (417–601). Much of the first part involves an extended discussion of hermeneutics in which Sailhamer regales the reader with the historical development of grammatical-historical hermeneutics. He calls evangelicals back to a focus "on the meaning of the Scriptures themselves (*sola Scriptura*)" (87). The question he asks concerns the "historical meaning" of Scripture and the apparent movement to separate history from the text itself (100–148). In this somewhat lengthy and seemingly esoteric discussion, Sailhamer examines the contributions of Ernesti, Keil, Schleiermacher, Wellhausen, Geiger, and others to the relationship of history and the text. In addition to the role of history to the text, Sailhamer seeks to define and identify authorial intent (the big picture) in the biblical text (150–56). He associates authorial intent with the interpreter's goal (153). The results of his analysis point to both "obedience to the law" and "living by faith" as the main emphasis of the Pentateuch as a whole (156).

Part Two explores "an evangelical alternative to the approaches of both von Hofmann and Hengstenberg" (233) with regard to the messianic strategy of the Pentateuch and of the entire Hebrew Bible. Three propositions express Sailhamer's approach: (1) prediction and identification are both part of the messianic prophecy of the Hebrew Bible, (2) in the final stages of composition the messianic vision's fragments gain an increasing cohesiveness, and (3) the Hebrew Bible displays commentary as much as it does text (235). Again and again, Sailhamer declares that the true focus of the Hebrew Bible, even in the Pentateuch, resides in the New Covenant (205, 243, 342, and 556). Basically, no substantial difference exists between what the Hebrew Bible conveys and what the apostle Paul taught (243). Accordingly, the author concludes that "the Pentateuch and its compositional strategy are strongly messianic" and that later stages of the Hebrew Bible "treat the earlier stages much like the NT treats the OT" (246).

As Sailhamer points out, no interpreter need go to the NT in order to properly interpret Genesis 3:15 as messianic. In his words,

One might be applauded for being careful not to see Christ too quickly in the words of the poem in Genesis 3:15, but in the end, one might also prove shortsighted in failing to find the author's delayed identity of that "seed" within the further compositional strategy of the Pentateuch and its poems.

The Pentateuch highlights the rising of a future king and the establishment of his kingdom (335, 582). The relationship of the part (e.g., Gen 3:15) to the whole inheres in the principle that “It is the whole that gives meaning to the parts” (491). The Pentateuch’s compositor employs even the exodus event itself “as a key messianic metaphor or image” (518).

If the focus of the Pentateuch directs readers to the New Covenant, how do its legal contents relate to that strategy? The author suggests that it is part and parcel of the propensity of mankind to seek gods other than the true God. That propensity necessitated the giving of laws to govern behavior and to turn people from idolatry (363). It is within the context of this discussion that Sailhamer’s narrative tends to be overly repetitious (cf. 388–98). Although the reader appreciates the author’s care to ensure proper understanding, the length of some discussions can cause the reader to lose sight of the logical order of overall argumentation.

Part Three of the volume examines the theological message of the Pentateuch, touching upon the themes of promise and blessing (419–59), as well as Messiah (460–536). One chapter approaches the topic of Mosaic law by asking what the Christian’s relationship to that law might be (537). Sailhamer’s answer comes by first making a distinction between the law and the Pentateuch (e.g., 552), in order to counter the commonly held opinion that the Mosaic law and the Pentateuch are virtually identical. Secondly, God intends the Pentateuch (with the law as only one part of the whole) “to be the object of meditation and reflection” that results in the imprinting of justice on the heart (562). The law supplements the New Covenant focus by providing both “concrete and qualified situations” (562) for instructing believers in obedience to a holy and righteous God.

The final chapter deals with the theme of salvation within the Pentateuch (563–601). Although Sailhamer has touched upon unwritten (or primeval) revelation a number of times throughout the volume (e.g., 137, 184–97), he returns to it in discussing salvation, because God cannot have failed to communicate with fallen mankind concerning the solution to sin’s problem (566–70). Setting the matter of unwritten revelation to the side, the author narrows the question to what the Pentateuch tells its readers about salvation (570). Sailhamer argues that the Pentateuch identifies the power of sacrifice to break the curse resulting from the fall (596–97). In so doing, the sacrifice opens a way for a new life that might receive God’s blessing (601).

Whether or not the reader agrees with everything within this volume, Sailhamer’s detailed study of the Pentateuch has much to commend it. Anyone interested in identifying the content of messianic revelation in the OT should not ignore this volume and its significant contribution to the topic. The reader will come away with a larger view of the Pentateuch, even if he cannot accept its two-Pentateuch model. No study of the Pentateuch should omit this volume from its sources.

Alexander Strauch. *If You Bite & Devour One Another: Biblical Principles for Handling Conflict*. Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 2011. 177 pp. (paper), \$14.99.

Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Some of the cruelest acts ever done to me, or the meanest things said to or about me have come from Christians—not by the unsaved. Sadly, if you are like me, generally we are more prone to guard our own hurt in such cases than to even begin to consider or admit that we, too, may very well be on someone else’s list(s) of the cruelest things done and the meanest things said to them. Even though saved, even if we love the Lord, we are repeatedly placed in situations where conflict arises, and usually we need help in dealing with such problems and returning to a proper biblical focus.

Based on the keynote verse of Gal 5:15, Strauch’s work is wise, godly, biblical counsel that is so desperately needed today. When writing this review, I began thinking of who would benefit from this book: beginning with me and working outward to my family, my church, my friends, associates—and on it goes. Strauch writes with biblical authority, godly humility, and always points the reader to the person of Jesus Christ and to biblical principles, and he does so in a masterful way. Although the material itself is easy to read, the content of this book takes long to digest (in the best sense of the term) because it forces us to deal with our own areas of weakness, something which most of us are not prone to do on our own.

When I first started reading this book and taking notes for the review, I saw this would not be the normal way of writing a book review. If I wrote all I learned from Strauch’s wise counsel, I would turn in around a 30-page review. So let me see if I can condense this and point people in the right direction beginning with the Introduction.

After Adam and Eve sinned, the unity of paradise was lost, and conflict immediately arose and continues to arise in every area of life—including the church (1). Accordingly Strauch writes,

My intent through this book is to explore God’s way of handling conflict so that other congregations may also experience peace and unity. This study will draw out from Scripture key principles for handling conflict *with special emphasis on biblical attitudes and behaviors*. . . All Christian believers need to know and practice these biblical principles because we all face controversies and relational disagreements. Church leaders especially need to understand the biblical principles for dealing with conflict because leaders greatly influence how conflict is handled in the local church” (4, emphasis in the original).

Continuing the same line of reason, Strauch adds, “Churches would help themselves significantly by teaching Christian people how to behave biblically when conflict strikes and by holding one another accountable for sinful behaviors and attitudes. Faithful adherence to biblical principles is the best policy when it

comes to preventing damaged relationships and discrediting the witness of the gospel” (4).

Strauch writes that the aim of his book is to provide a better understanding of what the Bible teaches about conflict and to help believers implement such biblical teaching. It is not so much a book about mediation or arbitration as it is a biblical approach to resolving conflict. Each chapter is thus a biblical exposition on pertinent passages. The first three chapters lay down the foundational biblical principles about addressing conflict: (1) Act in the Spirit, (2) Act in Love, and (3) Act in Humility. The remaining seven chapters deal with specific principles for handling conflict: (4) Control the Anger, (5) Control the Tongue, (6) Control the Criticism, (7) Pursue Reconciliation, (8) Pursue Peace, (9) Face False Teachers, and (10) Face Controversy. Each chapter ends with 3–4 “Key Principles to Remember.” A free study guide is available from the publisher’s website for group or individual study. Also, a helpful Appendix is included at the back of the book entitled “Understand the Word *Flesh*.”

Each chapter contains easy to follow subheading and highlighted bullet points along the way. For instance the chapter, “Act in the Spirit,” has this thought so set forth: “Nothing but the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to enable believers to resist the flesh and to live the Christian life” (15). This bullet point in the chapter “Act in Love” is so wisely profound: “Love lowers the temperature of most conflicts by refusing to engage in retaliation.” And as the writers of the gospels and epistles did, Strauch repeatedly points to the person and work of Jesus as the primary example for us to follow as the One who modeled for the world what true biblical humility entails.

This is a wonderful, profound resource for the Body of Christ. After much thought, I cannot think of a group of believers from the youngest all the way up to the elderly saints who would not benefit from this godly biblical counsel. It will be a much-used resource in my own life, home, and church.

Emanuel Tov. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 3rd ed., revised and expanded. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012. lviii + 481 pp. (cloth), \$90.00.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

In the realm of OT textual criticism, Emanuel Tov holds the status of an ultimate virtuoso or supreme maven. As J. L. Magnes Professor of Bible at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Editor in Chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project he continues to train students in the finer arts of the Hebrew Bible and to ensure that all Hebrew scholars have access to the latest primary materials from the Judean Desert. His publications include *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem Biblical Studies, Simor 1981, 2nd ed. 1997); *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (VTSup 72, Brill 1999); *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (STDJ 54, Brill 2004); *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays* (TSAJ 121, Mohr Siebeck 2008); and *Revised Lists of the Texts from the Judean Desert* (Brill 2010).

The first English edition of Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (TCHB) was published in 1992 (the Hebrew had been published in 1989). His second revised edition came out in 2001. Thus, he has updated this volume decade by decade, rather than waiting until a quarter century or more has passed. This pattern of editions displays the author's pursuit of excellence and his love of accuracy in presenting the evidences for the Hebrew Bible. From the very start, Tov revised each edition. He added, omitted, or changed examples and even revised some of his views. At each stage he brought the data up to date—a prime example being his statistical analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls (94–98 and 107–10; cp. 2nd ed., 101–5 and 114–17). In his preparation of the second English edition he was somewhat restricted by sticking to the camera-ready page format, not allowing the revision to be as extensive as he desired (xvii). Such a restriction is absent for the preparation of this third edition. Prior to this third edition he also published a German edition (Kohlhammer 1997) and a Russian edition (Bibisko-Bagaslovski Institut Sv. Apostola Andrijeja 2001)—both of them prior to the second English edition (Fortress 2001).

This edition includes the addition of a “Brief Didactic Guide” (lvii–lviii). Additions to Chapter 1 (“Introduction,” 1–22) include “Text, Canon, and Sacred Status” (20–21, identifying the presence of scribal processes prior to final canonization and a brief discussion of the authority of non-Masoretic sources) and “Subjectivity of This Book” (22, rightly warning readers that some material is, by necessity, subjective). Tov rewrote and re-organized “Development of the Consonantal Text” (27–36; cp. 2nd ed., 22–36) in Chapter 2, updating the discussion and providing additional data pertinent to the topic. It is at this point that the author adds a new siglum (+) to refer to the combined evidence of the Masoretic Text (MT), Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate (29). In Chapter 2 he also adds “Non-Biblical Sources: Quotations and ‘Rewritten Scripture’ Texts” (114) comparing quotations of biblical text in rabbinical sources with quotations in nonbiblical Qumran materials. Students and professors alike will appreciate the more straightforward labeling of Tov's five factors for evaluating differences between an ancient translation and the MT (123–24; cp. 2nd ed., 130).

It comes as no surprise, given Tov's obvious interest in Septuagintal studies, that he has expanded his treatment of the Greek sources from fourteen pages in the second edition (134–48) to twenty-one pages in this third edition (127–47). Among the benefits of the expansion is a far more complete comparative analysis of the text-critical value of the Septuagint by means of a survey of the books in the Septuagint that differ significantly from the MT (136–39).

Chapter 3 (“History of the Biblical Text,” 155–90) has been rewritten (esp., 161–90) with two additions: “Central Position of M in Tradition and Research” (160–61) and “The Myth of the Stabilization of the Text of Hebrew Scripture” (174–80). Tov alters his focus on the MT in this same chapter (“Shape of the Biblical Text in Early Periods,” 161–69), as well as in Chapter 7 (“Evidence,” 286–324) by including witnesses later than the MT in textual-literary analysis. Chapter 9 (“Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Editions,” 341–76) grew from nine pages in the second edition to its current thirty-five pages. One of the most helpful of the major revisions for this age of computers and internet access is the addition of Chapter 10 (“Computer-Assisted Tools for Textual Criticism,” 377–82). In keeping

with the content of the tenth chapter, bibliographies within each of Chapters 1–8 include an expansion providing “Electronic tools” (e.g., 1, 24, 40). Lastly, the addition of a “Glossary” (417–23) provides readers with handy access to the author’s definitions for key terms.

Other slight changes in the material include a renewed stress on the textual proximity of the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch (82, 136). Also, Tov supplies more detailed evidence for discussion of issues like the comparison of the MT and the Septuagint texts in Joshua (297–98; cp. 2nd ed., 330–31). New photos replace most of those that were present in the second edition (e.g., 384–86, 390; 2nd ed., 380–82, 386). There are also some alterations in the labeling of some of the plates. The sample plate for the Samaritan Pentateuch had been from the Sadaqa edition (2nd ed., 398), but the third edition presents a sample from the Tal-Florentin edition (402). Tov also inserts a sample plate from *BHQ* (412).

Without doubt, the third edition of *TCHB* will find immediate acceptance and adoption as the primary textbook for all graduate-level courses on OT textual criticism. One does not have to agree with every aspect of Tov’s views or his methodology in order to appreciate the value of his work as represented by this volume. If the growth of discoveries, materials, and new hypotheses continues, we can only hope that Tov lives long enough to see the book into its fourth edition.