

## REVIEWS

William D. Barrick. *Ecclesiastes: The Philippians of the Old Testament*. Focus on the Bible. Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2011. 240 pp. (paper) \$15.99.

Reviewed by Bryan Murphy, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

William Barrick is a gifted and stellar translator of the Bible. He spent fifteen years in Bangladesh translating the biblical text from both Hebrew and Greek into six different languages. He has published a number of essays related to OT studies, including: “Noah’s Flood and Its Geological Implications,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, ed. by Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury (Master Books, 2008), and “Psalm 130: A Plea for Grace,” in *Interpreting the Psalms for Teaching & Preaching* (Chalice Press, 2010). He is also the OT editor for the *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Logos). Add to this his more than twenty years of investment in seminarians coupled with his faithful pastoral ministry and eldership service throughout that period, and it becomes clear that he is imminently qualified to write an expositional commentary—not just on any OT book, but on one that addresses the significance and meaning of life under the sun.

Barrick’s latest work is an expositional commentary on Ecclesiastes. The exposition itself encompasses 211 pages of text. It contains a number of useful tables that portray textual comparatives, cross-references, or illustrate the text in ways that should assist both the reader and the teacher or preacher of Ecclesiastes (e.g., 11–13, 104, 161–62, 203–08). Barrick’s extensive time in the classroom shines forth via the provision of these kinds of visual teaching aids. There are lists throughout the exposition that summarize key interpretive issues or thematic teaching points that could readily be incorporated into a sermon outline or teaching notes (e.g., 24–25, 94–95). This, coupled with regular historical references typically beyond the scope of most expositional commentaries, should prove very beneficial to the expositor. The text also includes a substantial bibliography of works cited (221–29). This is a very helpful asset to the expositor that is rare in the *Focus on the Bible* series. There is an exhaustive “Scripture Index” referencing every text cited within the commentary. Most helpful for the preacher or Sunday School teacher is the five-page “Subject Index,” which points the reader back to key topics

not only within the biblical text itself, but also the extra-biblical citations and references the author makes throughout the work (235–40). Finally, study questions are supplied at the end of each narrative chapter throughout the book, which make this a ready tool for use in a group study session (e.g., 27–28, 47).

Concerning the exposition itself, it must be kept in mind that this is an expositional rather than exegetical commentary. As such, it contains a paragraph-by-paragraph exposition of the entire book, rather than verse-by-verse. That said, the author does an admirable job of developing the Solomonic theme of the book throughout while at the same time interacting on both a practical and theological level. Within this basic framework, he addresses the key interpretive issues—often bringing significant historical, linguistic, comparative philological and grammatical arguments to the table in those discussions that even some exegetical commentaries lack. Barrick does not hesitate to enter into technical exegetical discussions, even in this format (see for example, 14–15, his explanation of the book's title; or, 18–20, his discussion on the Aramaisms found in the text). In each case, the reader will find the author has supplied both the English word and the Greek or Hebrew transliteration. The author struck a nice balance in this commentary, adequately allowing many scholarly interactions to take place in a format that those less familiar with the original languages can follow and also benefit from the discussions.

As mentioned, the author rightly affirms and demonstrates Solomonic authorship of this Spirit-inspired book (17–23). He maintains this position and wonderfully develops it through the course of the exposition. Many of the insights he shares come directly from relating the exposition to key periods or challenges in Solomon's life (e.g., the many wives discussion, 135–36). In this vein, Barrick identifies the primary purpose of the book of Ecclesiastes as “didactic” or instructive (13). In tandem with this, he takes an optimistic approach to the book's lessons at large. This is evidenced in his exposition when he understands the chiasmic poetry of Ecclesiastes 3 as a reflection on divine sovereignty and control that lays the foundation for the ultimate point Solomon will be making throughout (62–65). The *carpe diem* passages are likewise understood as thematic elements which reflect Solomon's call to his readers to enjoy life as God's gift while avoiding the pursuit of finding lasting satisfaction in this life (58–59, 99, 149–50). These passages then fit into the larger context of the book which calls for a life lived under the sun that maintains a focus on one's ultimate accountability before God in eternity. The message of Ecclesiastes, then, is “Enjoy life ‘under the sun,’ but prepare for life beyond the sun” (220). The author does a consistent and faithful job of developing this theme throughout the exposition.

Overall, Barrick provides today's expository preacher with a sound biblical exposition of an often neglected but very relevant OT book. He supplements the exposition with helpful key references to Rabbinic writings (15), ancient historical figures (50–52) and contexts (40, 80, 161–62) in ways that will both inform and arm today's preacher for pulpit ministry. At the same time, there is consistent interaction (especially in the context of dealing with themes and problem solutions) with contemporary scholarship from the exegetical realm.

Darrell L. Bock, *Who is Jesus? Linking the Historical Jesus with the Christ of Faith*. New York: Howard Books, 2012. 238 pp. (paper) \$19.97.

Reviewed by F. David Farnell, Professor of New Testament.

This book's operating assumption is the promotion of the historical-critical distinction between the Christ of faith (Jesus as He is presented in the Gospels/*geschichte*) and that of the Jesus as He actually was in history (history/*historie*). Bock argues that you can abide by historical Jesus study rules and still move toward a better historical understanding of Jesus that also explains the faith of His earliest followers. There is no chasm between the historical Jesus and the Jesus we worship today.

This book grows out of a ten-year study where an international group of Jesus scholars met for one weekend each summer, taking a close look at twelve core events in the life of Jesus. These scholars argue that a person can play by many of the historical rules and still appreciate that the gist of these events has been rendered in our earliest sources. *Who is Jesus?* is a treatment of the technical study that can be appreciated by non-scholars.

Bock takes the reader through the rules of historical Jesus study and then states the key rules used in this study. He then takes us through twelve events of Jesus' life with the following structure: considering the rules to see if they open the door for seeing the event as authentic, examining the objections, and considering how the relevant background opens up the event and what it means for understanding Jesus.

The events examined include John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus, the choosing of the Twelve, Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus and the Sabbath, Jesus and exorcism, Peter's declaration at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus' triumphal entry, Jesus' temple act, the Last Supper, the examination by Jewish leadership, the examination by Pilate and crucifixion, and the women discovering the empty tomb.

After applying the rules of historical Jesus study to the twelve events, Bock concludes, "They affirm to us that the Jesus of history links to and discloses the Christ of faith" (214).

Several replies to this positive view draw a much more sober and startling reality. The reader is urged to search for further information including this reviewer's two-part series in *The Master's Seminary Journal* on "Evangelicals and the Search for the 'Historical Jesus'" (22:2 [Spring 2012]; part two forthcoming, Spring 2013) for much greater scope of information. Some things, however, can be noted on this book. First, little to celebrate exists in this book. Instead, it is clear, demonstrable proof that *The Jesus Crisis* (Kregel, 1998; hereafter *TJC*) was prescient in its prediction that a horrific crisis regarding the inerrancy-reliability of the Gospel documents exists among European and British-trained evangelical scholars who differ little from New Testament critical scholarship as a whole. While Bock issued a scathing review against *TJC* (*BSac* 157 [April-June 2000], 232–36), this latest book demonstrates that the book was very accurate as to the state of vast sections of evangelical scholarship. Bock has now admitted that they use the same rules to "search" for Jesus as the critical scholars do. This is *proof*

*positive* that the *TJC* sounded the correct warning. Evangelical scholars no longer accept the Gospels at face value; they now must apply rules of critical scholarship to demonstrate “probability” (i.e. post-modernistic historiography) that the Gospels might have a core of historicity in them (see also Bock/Webb, *Twelve Key Events—2010*).

Second, the term “historical Jesus” is an historical-critical fiction as well as aberration that is now being normalized among these evangelicals. It posits a heretical position that the Jesus of the Gospels and the Jesus of history are somehow different—*they are not*. It is best perhaps termed the “existential Jesus.” A close examination of the questing reveals that the “historical Jesus” is whatever the quester *a priori* determines Jesus to be or wants Him as somehow significantly in distinction from the biblical documents. After an arbitrary *a priori* decision has been made on a preconceived concept of Jesus, criteria of authenticity, stemming from tradition criticism, can be applied to the Gospels and that concept of Jesus affirmed. Since the criteria are subjective and conflicting, other criteria can be invented and applied to ensure the desired outcome. The critical weakness, as well as subjectivity, of these criteria lies in the fact that the same criteria can be applied or countered with different criteria to ensure whatever view has already been assumed.

Third, a close corollary is “questing” or searching for the historical Jesus and may be defined as a *philosophically-motivated historical-critical* construct that the Jesus as presented in the Gospels is not the same or is not to be identified fully with the Jesus who actually lived in history. Underlying the questing is the assumption that “scientific” research showed that the Jesus of history was different from the Christ of Scripture, the creeds, orthodox theology, and Christian piety. These evangelicals have bought into philosophical systems that are inherently hostile to God’s Word without due consideration of their destructive nature.

Fourth, one cannot overstate that the rise of modern *philosophical* ideologies inherent in historical criticism generates such distinctions between Jesus as He is presented in the canonical Gospels and conceptualizations of how He is alleged to have been actually in history. Hostile philosophical underpinnings of the ideology in terms of a virulent *anti-supernaturalism* create these hypothetical distinctions. *The overarching intent in these searches is the destruction of the influence of the Gospels, as well as the church, over society.* Evangelicals now are unwittingly participating in the Gospels’ destruction by normalizing such principles in research.

Fifth, critical scholarship can take these *very same arguments* or criteria of authenticity used by Bock and negate the Gospels. What is “probability” for Bock is not to critical scholarship who would merely say that Bock has in a *a priori* fashion imposed his evangelical beliefs on the Gospel texts. The clear loser in this is now the Gospels. A simple question would be asked: Whom have these evangelicals convinced of the wisdom of their approach beyond themselves? I would doubt that any opponents of the Gospels are convinced. What has resulted is that the Gospels are now subject for their historicity or reliability upon the shifting sands of “one-up-man-ship” of who can beg the question in applying these principles, i.e. assume what they are trying to prove. In reality, these evangelicals have proved nothing. Somewhat like jujitsu, their critical counterparts can apply equally negating

arguments to fend off any evangelical assertions. The loser again, however, is the Gospels and their integrity.

Sixth, this book is in clear violation of the ICBI 1978 and 1982 inerrancy statements that affirm “grammatico-historical” rather than “historical-critical” hermeneutics employed by Bock in this work. If this continues, these British and European evangelicals involved in this endeavor will have effectively eviscerated these two hard won documents because they have forgotten history:

Article XVIII:

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Bock and those involved in searching now imitate critical scholarship with their historical-critical, post-modernistic historiography. The loser is the Gospels.

This book is demonstrable proof that the Gospels are safer in the hands of lay people in church pews than in the hands of evangelical critical scholarship who diligently must search for the “historical Jesus” and contemplate “Who is Jesus?” This reviewer would urge these evangelicals to open up their Bibles to God’s record in the Gospels rather than concentrating on this Spinozan, philosophical tragedy purposely designed by the father of historical criticism to destroy them.

Finally, this book, as well as *Key Events* (2012) and the ten long years of their efforts, is all for naught. All the efforts of these evangelicals are now dubious. Recent British-influenced scholars are now calling for the rejection of these criteria so diligently used by Bock, Webb, et. al. Chris Keith, echoing the earlier warning of Morna Hooker, says about these criteria, “they cannot deliver” what they are designed to do (*Theology* 75 [1972], 570). Keith argues instead that scholars need “to set these particular tools down and find other means of searching” such as “memory” theories (*Jesus, Criteria and the Demise of the Authenticity*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2012. 48). Bottom line: all of these evangelical efforts are and will be futile, founded on the constantly shifting sands of the whim of scholarly arrogance. The scholarly whims have shifted. The losers will always be God’s Word as well as any evangelicals who subject the Word to these useless endeavors. Bottom line, this book accomplishes *nothing* except to add unnecessary doubt to the Gospels. It also serves to show how pathetically desperate these evangelicals are in portraying themselves as British-influenced critical scholars, all at the cost of the integrity of God’s Word.

Daniel Boyarin. *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*. New York: The New Press, 2012. 224 pp. (cloth) \$21.96.

Reviewed by William Varner, Professor of Bible, *The Master's College*.

Because of my age, there are few books anymore that really challenge my thinking. *The Jewish Gospels* by Daniel Boyarin is one that does. Boyarin is Professor of Talmud at the UC, Berkeley, and considered one of greatest rabbinic scholars in the world. Despite the title, this book has nothing at all to do with the apocryphal Gospels that emerged in the second and third centuries. Boyarin never explains the title, but what I think he means is that our canonical Gospels are far more Jewish in their theology than how Jewish scholars and laymen have viewed them for many centuries. So what does that mean? His main argument is that Jews in the time of Jesus were looking for a divine messiah, who also would suffer for Israel's sins. These ideas challenge some very basic assumptions that have prevailed in Jewish circles for centuries. He elaborates the following points:

- Jews in the time of Jesus were expecting a divine-man messiah figure and many Jews already believed in something very much like what Christians call the Son and Father.
- The title “Son of God” originally meant the human Davidic ruler, while “Son of Man” originally was a divine figure equal with God though submitted to Him.
- There was a history of faith in a suffering messiah (Isaiah 53 style) before Jesus, and the usual debate about whether Isaiah 53 concerns Israel or Messiah is a moot argument. The liberal Christian notion that the church developed the suffering messiah idea by misinterpreting the Hebrew Bible is false.
- The root of Jesus' saying “the Son of Man” must suffer is Dan 7:25–27, which Jesus read as the Son of Man (himself) suffering for Israel as the Ideal Israel, and this is true also about the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. Boyarin is the first Talmudic scholar I have ever read who argues convincingly that Jews from ancient times until the last few centuries believed Isaiah 53 describes the Messiah.
- Early Messianic Jews (Jewish believers in Jesus) called Nazarenes were a sizable group even into the fourth century AD.

The radical implications of Boyarin's proposals are that they remove some standard Jewish objections to Jesus, namely that He could not have been the Messiah because both His claim to deity and His suffering were foreign ideas to ancient (and modern) Judaism. Along with the “Son of God” and “suffering Messiah” texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls, this neglected literature (Daniel 7, Enoch, 4 Ezra) must now be considered afresh in studies of what first-century Jews thought about the Messiah.

*The Jewish Gospels* is a short, approachable book of 160 pages. Even people who don't read academic literature can enjoy it and understand most of it, and

Boyarin goes out of his way to define terms in simple language. This book is a mind-opener worthy of being considered by both Jewish and Christian readers. I must say that not all of Boyarin's ideas will set well with evangelical readers. It is the areas where he agrees with us that offer some ideas that we can use in our witness to Jewish people.

Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle, *Erasing Hell: What God Said about Eternity and the Things We Made Up*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2011. 176 pp. (paper) \$14.99.

Reviewed by Matt Waymeyer, Instructor of New Testament and Bible Exposition.

C.S. Lewis once confessed that there was no doctrine he would more willingly remove from Christianity than the doctrine of eternal punishment. In *Erasing Hell*, author Francis Chan makes a similar confession, admitting that he would love to erase hell from the pages of Scripture because part of him simply doesn't want to believe in it (14–15). But like Lewis before him, Chan recognizes that this increasingly unpopular doctrine has the clear support of Scripture and therefore must be embraced and proclaimed by the people of God. This is the subject of Chan's latest book, subtitled *What God Said about Eternity, and the Things We Made Up*.

Chan, founder of Eternity Bible College in Simi Valley, California, explains in the preface to *Erasing Hell* that he recruited colleague Preston Sprinkle (Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at EBC) to co-author the book because of Sprinkle's expertise in biblical history and the biblical languages. The unique blend of Chan's writing and Sprinkle's research results in a very readable yet scholarly work suitable for leader and layman alike.

One of the primary purposes of *Erasing Hell* is to respond to those who deny the biblical doctrine of divine punishment, most notably Rob Bell who promoted a form of self-styled universalism in his 2011 best-seller *Love Wins*. In this way, Chan provides a helpful and much-needed corrective to those who compromise the Bible's teaching. But *Erasing Hell* is more than just an effective refutation of Rob Bell—it is a sensitively written biblical primer on the doctrine of hell, which consistently models both compassion for the lost and fidelity to Scripture.

In the introduction to *Erasing Hell*, Chan emphasizes the seriousness of the subject, reminding his readers that hell is not simply a *doctrine* but a *destiny* (16–17). This, says Chan, should purge the soul of complacency and move the heart to compassion (16–17). In chapter 1, Chan raises the foundational question of whether everyone goes to heaven. After defining universalism and providing a brief survey of its various forms (23–25), Chan addresses the biblical passages most often cited in favor of it, showing from the original contexts that these passages do not teach that everyone will be saved (25–35). He concludes the chapter by arguing from Luke 13:22-30 that there will be no post-mortem second chance for the one who dies apart from Christ (35–38).

Chan sets the historical context in chapter 2 by exploring the various beliefs common in first-century Judaism. According to Chan, the ancient Jews affirmed the

existence of hell as a place of divine punishment, describing it with the imagery of fire and darkness (49–54). Some of the first-century Jews believed that the wicked would be annihilated in hell, says Chan, whereas others believed that the punishment there was never-ending (54–56). Chan concludes the chapter by arguing persuasively against the commonly held belief that *gehenna*—the Greek word for “hell” in the Gospels—referred to a garbage dump where trash was burned outside the city, asserting instead that it was a common Old Testament metaphor for the fiery place of judgment in the end times (56–61).

In chapter 3, Chan focuses on the teaching of Jesus and confronts the view that hell is primarily the suffering experienced in the here-and-now. According to Chan, Jesus spoke of hell as a real place of divine punishment in the afterlife, “a horrifying place, characterized by suffering, fire, darkness, and lamentation” (86). Chan refutes the notion that the Greek word for “punishment” (*kolasis*) refers to a process of pruning designed to lead to the sinner’s post-mortem salvation (83–85), and he argues from Matthew 25:46 that the duration of punishment in hell is never-ending (85–86). Although one could quibble at times with Chan’s exegesis—for example, with his conclusion that the point of Jesus’ parable in Luke 16:19–30 was “to confront the social structures of the day” (90)—this chapter very effectively sets forth the teaching of Christ on the subject of hell.

Chapter 4 shows that the remainder of the New Testament reaffirms the teaching of Jesus by speaking boldly about the punishment of the wicked in hell, a practice that Christians must continue today (97–108). According to Chan, warning unbelievers of the coming judgment is not simply *compatible* with love for them but actually an *expression* of it (100).

Chapter 5 consists of a brief discussion of several passages describing those whose destiny is divine judgment. According to Chan, sinners are damned to hell by racism, greed, misplaced assurance, false teaching, misuse of wealth, and harsh words (118–24). For some reason, Chan omits, at least in this context, the ultimate dividing line between heaven and hell—whether or not someone has believed in Christ (John 3:18; Rev 20:15).

In chapter 6, Chan returns to a theme that weaves its way through the entire book: letting God be God by submitting to the One who has the right to do whatever He pleases (Ps 115:3). According to Chan, it is arrogant for the clay to stand in judgment of the Potter’s actions (129–41); furthermore, the objection that hell is unfair should be attributed to “an underdeveloped sense of justice” (141). Chapter 7 emphasizes the implications of hell’s reality by urging the unbeliever to repent and exhorting the believer to rejoice in the salvation that comes through Christ. Chan writes: “Hell is the backdrop that reveals the profound and unbelievable grace of the cross. It brings to light the enormity of our sin and therefore portrays the undeserved favor of God in full color. Christ freely chose to bear the wrath that I deserve so that I can experience life in the presence of God. How can I keep from singing, crying, and proclaiming His indescribable love?” (148)

In the appendix, Chan answers a series of commonly asked questions, asserting that the imagery of fire is metaphorical rather than literal (153–55); that the Old Testament word *sheol* is a synonym for death rather than a reference to hell (157–

58); that there is no indication in Scripture of salvation apart from faith in Christ (158–61); and that the doctrine of hell is perfectly compatible with the love of God (162–63). The end result is a foundational presentation of what Scripture teaches about hell and a heartfelt explanation of why it matters.

Like any book, *Erasing Hell* is not without weaknesses. Its primary shortcoming is Chan's occasional reluctance to be dogmatic about truths taught clearly in Scripture. For example, after interacting with biblical passages often cited in favor of universalism, Chan states that these passages "probably" do not mean that everyone will be saved (34). It is difficult to imagine that Chan's certainty on the question of universalism extends no further than "probably"—especially in light of how strongly he argues against it—and yet he sees fit to qualify his conclusion.

Similarly, after stating that no passage of Scripture even *hints* at the possibility of a second chance to believe in Christ after death (35), Chan concludes his discussion of post-mortem salvation by writing that "the Bible doesn't *seem* to hold out hope for a second chance" (38; emphasis added). But again, why the language of uncertainty? Why the need for a qualifier, which leaves open even the remotest possibility that everyone might be saved in the end? In light of the widespread compromise in the church—a compromise that Chan recognizes and addresses effectively in *Erasing Hell*—why dull the edge of Scripture's clarity on a crucial issue like the doctrine of divine punishment?

This apparent reluctance to be dogmatic also shows up in Chan's discussion of the duration of the punishment in hell, an issue Chan describes as "much more complex than I first assumed" (86). On one hand Chan argues strongly that the punishment of hell is everlasting (80–94, 104, 106–07, 110–13), and yet he also expresses openness to the possibility of annihilationism, the view that this punishment is finite in duration because unbelievers will eventually be annihilated (80–82, 86). "While I lean heavily on the side that says it is everlasting," Chan writes, "I am not ready to claim that with complete certainty" (86). In contrast, many would argue that the Bible teaches everlasting punishment with a clarity not reflected in Chan's conclusion, even though he argues well for the biblical position.

Chan cautions against letting the debate over hell's duration distract Christians from "the main point" (104) and "the heart of Christ's message" (86), and appropriately so. But from any perspective—whether a believer contemplating the death of a loved one or an unbeliever contemplating his own destiny—the eternity of hell is hardly a peripheral issue. One could even argue that annihilationism is a greater threat to the evangelical church than universalism because of how it offers an attractive half-step in that direction for those who would never consider embracing something as radical as the teaching of Rob Bell. *Erasing Hell* does not appear to share this concern.

A final weakness is the book's failure to make a clearer connection between the doctrine of hell and the glory of God, perhaps in part because Chan views Paul's question in Rom 9:22–23 as merely a hypothetical possibility (131). The existence of hell is indeed an emotionally difficult concept for the finite minds of fallen believers, but the righteous judgment of God will ultimately bring forth both praise from His people and glory to His name. A more explicit focus on how the doctrine of hell magnifies the various attributes of God—making Him praiseworthy for *all* that He does—would have made a good book even better.

Paul Copan. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011. 252 pp. (paper) \$14.99.

Reviewed by Jonathan Moorhead, Samara Center for Biblical Training (Samara, Russia).

Paul Copan is the Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University. He has authored numerous books on apologetics and philosophy such as *That's Just Your Interpretation* (Baker, 2001), *When God Goes to Starbucks* (Baker, 2008), and *True for You, but Not for Me* (Bethany House, 2009). Copan is also the current president of the Evangelical Philosophical Society.

In his Introduction, Copan describes the purpose of his book, "My chief point is this: I am basing my work on thoughtful, credible scholarship that offers plausible, sober-minded explanations and angles that present helpful resolutions and responses to perplexing Old Testament ethics questions" (11). In particular, he addresses criticisms of New Atheists such as Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens. The author delivers his answers in four major sections. First, "Neo-Atheism" defines leading figures in the New Atheist movement and their charges against the God of the Old Testament. Second, "God: Gracious Master or Moral Monster?" attempts to defend God as loving, humble, and other-centered rather than egotistic. Third, "Life in the Ancient Near East and in Israel" describes the progressive nature of Israel's laws in comparison with the surrounding culture. This is the most extensive chapter that deals with food laws, punishments, treatment of women, slavery, and ethnic cleansing. Fourth, the author concludes with thoughts on atheistic morality and Christian contributions to society.

The author gives many insightful and helpful explanations of difficult Old Testament texts. His discussion of broader ancient Near East laws helps in understanding that the Law of Moses was quite progressive in its time, particularly in its discussion of slaves, women, and punishment for crime. Also, examining the broader culture gives insight into why God caused the Israelites to be distinct by giving them kosher laws. At the end of the book, the author offers a helpful critique regarding the problem of morality in an atheistic worldview. While exposing some of the philosophical flaws of atheistic morality, the author may have further served his readers by discussing Romans 2 as a bridge for evangelism. Additional positive notes are that Copan writes in an accessible way, often defining difficult terms, and even offers study questions for small groups (it would have been helpful to have a Bible reference section to quickly locate passages of interest).

Despite the strengths of the book, there are significant weaknesses to address. In his attempt to describe the nature of the Trinity, he uses "the mythological three-headed dog Cerberus" as an analogy (32). This unfortunate picture has been used by anti-Trinitarians to mock the Trinity throughout history. Instead of providing a more theocentric foundation by defending the Triune God's holiness, honor, and right to value that which is most valuable, Copan describes God as an "other-centered Being" (27). Furthermore, to deflect the charge that God is zealous for His own glory, the author claims, "Actually, in the Bible, God isn't the one commanding us to praise him" (31). As for the charge of jealousy, Copan shifts the

biblical focus of God seeking His own glory to describing his actions as that of a “God who is a concerned lover” with his bride, Israel (35). In other words, “God is jealous for our best interests,” “to protect his *creatures* from profound self-harm,” because “God’s jealousy is other-centered” (39). In a statement of his anthropocentric approach, Copan cites Thomas Torrance, “God loves us more than he loves himself” (52).

Based upon this faulty foundation, the reader anticipates that the author will attempt to defend God from moral culpability as judged by contemporary Western standards. This is seen in the case of *lex talionis* where the author asserts that it was never taken literally, except in the case of murder (94). While a case can be made for this according to Exod 21:26–27, the reader may question why the author disallows a scenario which he states was common in the broader culture. While arguing against such mutilation, he does not mention cases in Scripture which do involve mutilation (Judg 1:6–7; 2 Sam 4:12). In the case of God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Copan suggests that this was so difficult that Abraham could have rejected it without sin. He approvingly cites a commentator who states, “if Abraham couldn’t see God’s broader purposes and so couldn’t bring himself to [sacrifice Isaac], he wouldn’t ‘incur any guilt’ in declining God’s pleas” (48).

In his section that compares Israelite law with the broader culture, he draws upon the “redemptive movement” approach of William Webb’s, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* (InterVarsity, 2001). On the one hand, this discussion is very helpful to have historical perspective in order to avoid anachronistic judgments. On the other hand, the flaw with Copan’s approach, as was with Webb’s, is that there is no discussion of the deadness of the law from a New Testament perspective. Numerous times the author describes the law of Moses as morally inferior, temporary, and non-binding on all times and cultures, but gives no warrant for this claim. The closest answer given is that the “theocracy gave way to a new covenant community” which began in AD 70, “signaling the demise of national ethnic Israel as the people of God” (74). Moving this redemptive movement of slavery to the New Testament, the author will not allow for God to endorse slavery. In the case of Onesimus, the author suggests that Philemon and Onesimus were biological brothers, and that the slavery language implies estrangement among brothers. He writes, “Paul wanted to help heal the rift so that Onesimus (not an actual slave) would be received back as a beloved brother in the Lord, not even simply as a biological brother” (154).

Copan’s discussion of the killing of the Canaanites correctly focuses on their wickedness, but again states, “God’s call to battle was unique to Israel’s situation. Such a call, though, isn’t an enduring, universally binding standard for all time and all cultures” (161). When it comes to devoting certain cities to destruction (Jericho, Ai, and Hazor), the author inaccurately claims that “all the archaeological evidence indicates that no civilian populations existed at Jericho, Ai, and other cities mentioned in Joshua” (176). Concerning the mention of civilians in these contexts, Copan writes, “The use of “women” and “young and old” was merely stock ancient Near Eastern language that could be used even if women and young and old weren’t living there. . . . The text doesn’t require that women and young and old must have been in these cities” (176). Furthermore, “the biblical text gives no indication that the justified wars of Joshua were against noncombatants” (182).

Ultimately, the author ascribes harsh language of total destruction to hyperbole. He writes, “. . . clearly Moses himself didn't intend a literal, comprehensive Canaanite destruction. He, like Joshua, was merely following the literary convention of the day” (182).

It is this use of selective evidence that leaves the reader open to being challenged by texts such as Ps 137:9, which speaks of God's blessing for destroying noncombatant little ones against the rock. Also, 1 Samuel 15 is not compatible with Copan's claims because Saul has his kingdom stripped from him for not destroying noncombatant sheep. If this was to be followed literally, then surely the other groups mentioned in the text were to be destroyed literally (“Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey” [15:3]). Furthermore, one wonders how the author might explain the mass death that will occur in the future judgment on the earth.

Also of concern are some of the author's interpretations concerning women. From the beginning of creation, he states, “Eve herself had a priestly role in Eden's garden” (108). To justify the fact that women were not allowed to be priests, he posits that God prohibited this because of the example of the culture that allowed women prostitutes as priestesses. Disregarding the fact that there were also male prostitutes in Israel's culture, Copan states, “It wasn't a slam against women. It was a matter of preserving religious purity and the sanctity of sex within marriage” (109). Even God's prohibition to have sex during a woman's menstrual cycle “was to help give women a greater measure of independence” (85). As for punishing women by cutting off their hands for seizing a man's genitals (Deut 25:11–12), the author argues from linguistic considerations, “A more plausible interpretation of this passage is the punishment of *depilation* (‘you shall shave [the hair of] her groin’), not *mutilation*” (121). According to the author, “no mercy was to be shown” in this trimming (122).

In his final three chapters, Copan turns to foundational issues such as God's right as Creator over His creatures and the right of God to punish sinful humanity. At this point he deviates from his previous approach in making the Old Testament palatable to modern sensitivities, and he rightly blames Western culture for not accepting the hard sayings of Scripture concerning God's wrath. However, God cannot be charged with punishing people in hell, according to Copan. As he writes, “Hell isn't a torture chamber of everlasting fire. Hell is ultimately a realm of self-separation and quarantine from God's presence (2 Thess 1:9)” (202).

In conclusion, the major flaws of the book are threefold. First, the most serious flaw is his characterization of the nature of God as an other-centered Being that is not zealous for His glory. Second, the book does not emphasize strongly enough the depravity of man, that none are innocent (49), and that all deserve death and hell. Third, Copan uses evidence selectively to support his view that God is other-centered, that mutilation did not occur, that noncombatants were not killed in the Conquest, that slavery was not forced, etc. For every claim, there are other passages of Scripture that provide counter arguments (some from other time periods), which could set up his readers for an embarrassing encounter with critics. Ultimately, these answers will not be satisfying to the atheist/agnostic, regardless of whether or

not Old Testament ethics were as bad as the atheists imagined. This is where the foundational theocentric answer is needed most, but absent. These deficiencies make the book difficult to recommend to a broader audience.

Peter H. Davids. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006. xxii + 348 pp. (cloth), \$38.00.

Reviewed by Dennis A. Hutchison, Professor of Biblical Studies, The Master's College.

*The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* by Peter H. Davids is another volume in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series. Davids has served at a number of prestigious Christian institutions and is presently the Visiting Professor of Christianity at Houston Baptist University. He is also well known for his previous commentaries on James and 1 Peter. In addition, he was the co-editor of the *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* and one of the co-authors of the *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. More recently he has further contributed to the study of 2 Peter and Jude with *2 Peter and Jude: A Handbook on the Greek Text (Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament)*.

*The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* is a well-written and thorough commentary and Davids offers his reasoning as to why he wrote it:

A person could think of a number of reasons for writing a commentary on 2 Peter and Jude. One reason might be, to put it crassly, that they are there. That is, they are in the canon of the NT, for better or worse, so one must write on them if one is to have a commentary series on the NT. . . . A second reason might be to counterbalance Paul. The overwhelming focus in NT studies has clearly been on the four Gospels and Paul's letters. For many since the Reformation Paul's letters have been more central than the Gospels. They have been a canon within the canon. By focusing on 2 Peter and Jude (and along with them on James and perhaps 1 Peter) one shows that Paul was not the only voice in the earliest phases of the Jesus movement. There were other voices and other theologies, even if their output was not so prolific (or, perhaps, not so well preserved). . . . Thus a third reason for writing on these letters would be that they are so fascinating and make a significant contribution to the NT (1).

The strengths of the work are many, but this reviewer was impressed with how thoroughly Davids treats background information and the text. He is not afraid of interacting with the difficult issues, usually setting forth differing interpretive solutions and the "pros" and "cons" relating to them. In so doing, he deals not only with the vocabulary, grammar, and style of the New Testament text, but also interacts with material from the Old Testament, history, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature, rabbinical thought, and church fathers.

Nevertheless, Davids will stir controversy among some evangelical scholars. First, he introduces into the discussion the concept of literary dependence. After considerable discussion he concludes that not only was Jude written prior to 2 Peter, but that Peter borrowed or copied from Jude much of the material found in 2 Peter 2–3. He states, “2 Peter has not simply patched Jude on, but rather has utilized Jude as part of an ongoing argument” (145). Davids admits that this conclusion does affect his interpretation of 2 Peter 2–3:

It is not that 2 Peter 2:1–3:3 is simply a copy of Jude, but that 2 Peter has taken Jude and adapted his material to the situation and the audience that 2 Peter is addressing (which is also the reason for his being able to divide the material and include it in two parts of his letter). This editorial work will become evident as we discuss the passage in detail (216).

Second, even after arguing for dating 2 Peter prior to the death of Nero, Davids still allows for the possibility that 2 Peter could have been written later, stating, “Thus we have the period A.D. 64–110 as the range within which the work was probably written, whatever one holds about its authorship” (131).

With respect to some of the general issues set forth in the commentary, Davids argues for Petrine authorship of 2 Peter (although he does allow for the possibility of a later date and thus a different author), and that the author of Jude was the half-brother of our Lord. He points out that the change in verb tenses (future in 2 Peter and past in Jude) would only be significant to determining the times of writing if the epistles were addressed to the same audience. He argues that Jude most likely wrote from Palestine and to believers living east of the Mediterranean. He supports this conclusion by pointing out that there is little or no evidence that the relatives of Jesus were revered outside of Palestine and Jude’s use of pseudepigraphal literature would only be useful to people who were familiar with it. As to the destination of 2 Peter, Davids is somewhat agnostic. He rejects the idea that 2 Pet 3:1 is referring back to 1 Peter. However, he also rejects the position that holds that the epistle was addressed to the audience of Jude. He bases this conclusion on the facts that the recipients of Jude were Jewish believers, while those of Peter were Gentile believers.

As mentioned above, Davids is very thorough in his discussion of the style and vocabulary of the two epistles. He not only compares and contrasts the two, but goes into detail about the use of deliberative rhetoric by both authors. In addition, concerning the style of 2 Peter, he notes that it is “at root a speech” (145). He also deals with the biblical theology set forth in the two epistles. He lists and discusses the fact that both authors deal with theology as it relates to the Father, Son, and angels. In contrast to Jude, 2 Peter also deals with the Holy Spirit, eschatology, and the Scripture.

All in all, as previously stated, this is a well-written and thorough commentary that will provide much help and insight to the interpreter. This is certainly a valuable addition to the Pillar commentary series.

Wayne C. Grudem, John Collins, Thomas R. Schreiner, eds. *Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible: A Guide to Reading the Bible Well*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. 160 pp. \$14.99 (paper).

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

I am always excited to see a book written by solid scholars that seeks to present the big picture of the Bible, especially one that includes the Old Testament in its consideration. Grudem, Collins, and Schreiner, the editors, have done a great service in putting this volume together. Two of the editors, Collins and Schreiner, join eleven other scholars in writing essays on different sections of the Bible.

Vern Poythress introduces the volume with an essay focusing on the big picture, an overview of the Bible's storyline. The remaining essays are divided into three sections: Old Testament (56 pages; five essays), background to the New Testament (30 pages; three essays), and New Testament (40 pages; four essays). The volume concludes with three helpful timelines dealing with the periods covered by the major sections of the volume. The book has no index. Although the book has no preface that gives the purpose of the volume, the back cover states that the volume will help its readers to see the storyline of the Bible, understand the theology of both testaments, read the different sections of the Bible effectively, and know what happened between the testaments. The below review will not give attention to every essay, but select key issues for summary and evaluation.

Poythress effectively demonstrates that "God has a unified plan for all of history" (7). He correctly points out that Christ's work on earth, especially His crucifixion and resurrection, provides the climax of history. Christ's return in the future will serve as the consummation of Christ's work. He introduces an important idea of his in the first section of his essay, that sometimes OT promises take *symbolic* form in their fulfillment (8; emphasis his). He points to the fact that animal sacrifices find their fulfillment in Christ's "once for all" sacrifice at Calvary. I will come back to this later, but keep in mind that the animal sacrifices are not presented as promises or predictions. Their reality as requirements of the Mosaic covenant pave the way for the realization of God's ultimate purposes in Christ's redemptive death. Among Poythress' helpful overview of numerous key themes that span the Bible, he never gives any attention to Old Testament promises concerning the nation of Israel or their promised restoration to the land of promise. Later, in his section on "Shadows, Prefigures, and Types," he correctly points out that the Old Testament temple prefigured Christ's role as the final dwelling place of God and as the high priest. Once again, no reference is made to the nine chapters in Ezekiel given over to a detailed, non-figurative prediction of a future temple (Ezekiel 40–48).

Both essays on biblical theology (Collins and Schreiner) provide a clear summary of key theological themes in the Old and New Testaments. Schreiner introduces the "already, not yet" theme that compares what happened in NT times with what is yet to find fulfillment. Schreiner's essay concludes with a timeline showing the already, not yet of the last days. Both essays say nothing about any future for the nation of Israel or the Old Testament land promises.

All the essays on the various sections of both testaments offer numerous helpful observations as well as a clear overview of their content. Here are a few nuggets from those chapters (many others could be cited). In his essay on the historical books, Howard presents five overarching themes that pervade these books: God's sovereignty—over Israel and the nations, God's presence—near and far, God's promises—present and future, God's kingdom—both human and divine, and God's covenant—reward and punishment. After providing a helpful overview of the Old Testament prophets, House ends his essay with a chart that places the Old Testament place in parallel with an Old Testament timeline (75). One drawback with the chart is its omission of the prophet Joel from its listing. Out of all the things that could receive attention in his essay on Old Testament prophetic books, it does seem odd that he focuses on the role of personal pronouns in prophetic passages. Although pronouns are an important part of interpreting a passage correctly, it would seem that numerous other important issues could have received attention.

The three essays that deal with the inter-testamental period are concise and clear, providing any reader an accessible overview of key events, people, and groups that pave the way for the New Testament. Bock's and Schreiner's essays on the Gospels and Acts and the Epistles provide a brief, but solid synthesis of those sections of NT books. At the end of his essay, Schreiner includes a beneficial chart showing the author, date, recipients, and place of writing for each epistle.

In the last essay, Dennis Johnson considers Revelation and provides an accessible survey of four common interpretive approaches to the book: historicism, futurism, preterism, and idealism. He also summarizes the three major millennial views: premillennialism (classic and pre-trib), postmillennialism, and amillennialism. He cites a few passages from Revelation to illustrate the different ways each approach or eschatological position might explain those verses, but does not ever advocate a given position or approach.

This relatively short volume provides a nice, accessible, and clear overview of the storyline of the Bible. It does not offer innovative or new insights, but provides a beneficial overview of the biblical message. In light of the widespread lack of biblical literacy, i.e., the prevalence of only knowing a passage here or there, this volume serves a useful purpose. Since only one of the authors approaches their assignment with dispensational lenses, any attention to God's future plan for the nation of Israel or the land of promise is lacking. That reality does not, however, take away the value of this book. It does make me long for a clear overview of the biblical storyline that includes a future for the nation of Israel in the land of promise.

James M. Houston and Michael Parker. *A Vision for the Aging Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011. 224 pp. \$24.00 (paper).

Reviewed by Rick McLean, Special Ministry Pastor, Grace Community Church.

The issues dealt with in this book, *A Vision for the Aging Church* are that American churches need to be more involved in the caring and planning process of making decisions for seniors. The question is, “Are the churches today meeting the growing needs of seniors and their caregivers?” The book states the reasons why the church is not more involved in helping the aging and why the church thinks that older persons can be a burden. The book also investigates the historical, cultural, and biblical roots behind the loss of status for elders and discusses the consequences of these themes. The book desires to answer, “How do we as Christians respond to late life issues associated with caregiving, poverty, disability, chronic disease, immobility, isolation, depression, dementia, and death?” Also, “Are we acting as salt in preserving the value of all older persons irrespective of their health status?” The book tries to explain what part today’s churches should play in trying to meet the demands and embrace the opportunities of senior living. The book is not about what is wrong with the methods of our churches today but to be thankful that our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents are living twenty years longer than those at the beginning of the twentieth century. This book seeks to help by presenting practical guidelines that will attract and engage our seniors on a local level.

The authors are James M. Houston, who is the founding Chancellor and Emeritus Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Michael Parker, a Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army Retired who is Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and at the Center for Mental Health and Aging at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Adjunct Professor in the Division of Geriatric Medicine & Palliative Care and Center for Aging, also at the University of Alabama. Dr. Houston is a man who lives out his age with grace and love and is still active and writing books at the age of eighty-eight. Dr. Houston and Michael Parker probe the most pressing and vital dilemmas facing today’s church: how to encourage and use the elderly population. They draw out from the latest research from scholars past and present and what the Scriptures have to say about how the church has arrived at the current stage of her development with regard to older persons. They believe that the church must avail itself of information about seniors both from the biblical and scientific approach that can be used by church leaders to challenge seniors to greater ministry and health. Michael Parker, while serving in white and African-American churches in the South, became connected with elderly mentors and underserved elderly men and women who helped face the collective challenges associated with developing religious-academic partnerships. As he experienced the love and mentorship of many senior saints, he came to see their great needs and the exciting potential for today’s elders. The writers’ desire in this book is that the seniors should minister to those who are younger. This is because these older saints of the faith have years of experiencing the love of Christ and can share and teach what that is like. These authors hope this book will help all senior saints to rediscover the adventurous spirit

that can define their final season of life and that the church will place value in their older saints and give them opportunities to serve.

The book is divided up into five parts. The first part, “An Ageist Zeitgeist,” talks of how we live in a world that is aging and living longer. It discusses the fact we live in a selfish society and we need to get back to loving and caring for one another as the Bible commands (45–46).

Part Two in the book, “The Biblical and Historical Themes of Aging,” talks of what the Bible has to say about the senior population. We also learn about the roles the elderly had in biblical times and how seniors in our church have a lived-out life of wisdom and experience that we can learn from.

Part Three, “Solutions for An Aging Church,” talks of ways the church can minister to their seniors. We learn six myths or false stereotypes of the aging population. The six are: (1) they are sick; (2) they can’t learn anymore; (3) it is too late for them to improve their health; (4) genetics play too large a part on becoming old; (5) older people suffer from inadequate physical and mental capacities; and (6) seniors can’t work and serve in society (112–19). Part Three also tells us of the importance of spiritually encouraging the elderly as well as coming alongside to help in the caregiving process. Family caregivers, a majority of them women, can experience adverse physical, mental, and financial burdens. The authors feel that the military parent-care program is a great model to follow. All who enter the military are required to complete a family care plan which helps to provide medical, legal, and spiritual welfare for surviving family members. Lastly, in Part Three, Parker feels it is important that churches work with outside organizations for support and help, and he believes that using technology can help connect with the community (150–52). Small group Bible studies can be a great help in getting to know these special people better (156–57).

Part Four, “Late Life Significant Living,” addresses the problem of depression with seniors. Loneliness and sadness can be a pervasive problem. Part Four also talks about dementia and Alzheimer’s and how we, the church, can minister to those who are suffering with this as well as their families. Statistics tell us that one of two people will suffer from dementia. Two-thirds of those with dementia will suffer from Alzheimer’s (193–94). The church has a great opportunity to help its members lovingly prepare for the care of aging parents, rather than simply reacting in crisis. Five basic needs are discussed: the need for comfort, attachment; a bonding among the seniors in the church, inclusion; as a sense of belonging occupation; seniors need to find things to do; and lastly identity—when those with dementia lose or forget their identity, that they need to know they won’t be forgotten. We need to know their stories and history (197–200).

Lastly, Part Five is “Finishing Well.” We live in a world that is afraid of dying and many refuse to even talk about it. Discussion here includes protecting the elderly from medically assisted suicides and mercy killings. We can learn much from those who have faithfully served the Lord till the end. The Bible talks much about how to finish well.

The authors, James Houston and Michael Parker, have written a book which challenges and encourages the church leaders today to minister to their seniors. They share a fact that older people are living longer to where this population is

exploding. This book brings a renewed attitude toward our elderly and a much-needed insight how to provide help and care for these special people. This book gives us the biblical mandate to not exclude our seniors but to value them as treasures who have much wisdom and knowledge to give to the church. The authors give us up to date research on aging as well as a detailed indictment of the Western culture and the church for their lack of care, respect, and overall concern for our seniors. This book drives home the importance the church has much more to offer than the secular world, and that it can come alongside to help the elderly grow spiritually. The authors state, “Strong spirituality will cause improvement in their psychological well-being, reduced depression, more freedom, less dependence, and a greater sense of meaning and purpose” (121–22). This is not a book that is filled with Scripture. It is not a deep theological book. It is a practical book with the purpose to challenge and encourage the church to be more proactive in its approach and ministry to our senior saints. This book can be a good resource for pastors as well as laypersons.

Ian Ker. *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography*. Oxford University Press: 2012. xxi + 757 pp. (cloth), \$65.00.

Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Vice-President for Library and Educational Assessment.

One of the single most fascinating Christian apologists in the modern era, like C. S. Lewis (1898–1963), was not a trained theologian, but rather a man of letters, or as Gilbert Keith (G. K.) Chesterton (1874–1936), often referred to himself, “a journalist.” His chief secular antagonist (and good friend) George Bernard Shaw called him an individual of “colossal genius.” Known as a Roman Catholic apologist (although he did not convert to Catholicism until 1922), his works have been reprinted by several evangelical publishers and perhaps his most influential work, *The Everlasting Man* (1925), was identified by C. S. Lewis as a significant contribution to his own conversion, and one of the books that shaped his “vocational attitude and philosophy of life” (*Christian Century*, 79, no. 23 [6 June 1962], 719).

Although interest in Chesterton and his works never really waned since his death in 1936, in recent years interest in “GK” has steadily risen. In the last ten years there have been over 50 books produced with Chesterton as the central subject. Of all of these new volumes, the subject of this review stands out as a singular contribution.

Ian Ker is Senior Research Fellow in Theology at St. Benet’s Hall, Oxford University. He states in the preface that his goal is to “help establish his [Chesterton’s] rightful position as the successor of the great Victorian ‘sages’, and particularly [John Henry] Newman” (xi). For Ker to seek to place Chesterton alongside Cardinal Newman is no flight of fancy, as he is one of the most noted living authorities on Newman and author of the formidable biography, *John Henry Newman* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

This volume is “the first full-length intellectual and literary life of Chesterton” (viii, xi) incorporating many heretofore little-known or unpublished letters and other materials. The final product is a singular accomplishment, integrating insights into Chesterton’s contributions to multiple genres as well as his theological, socio-economic, and philosophic thoughts into a biographic *tour de force*.

Ker follows chronological style with allowances for the thematic approach he mentions in the preface. Straying from pure chronology was also somewhat forced upon Ker by his subject since Chesterton “never dated” (viii) letters which he personally wrote. Ker devotes entire chapters to *Orthodoxy* (195–232) and *The Everlasting Man* (487–538). There is a listing of plates (xxi) and an abbreviation key to Chesterton’s works (xvii–xx). The index (731–47) is largely a name index, with subjects only being listed in relation to Chesterton himself and his wife Frances (née Blogg) Chesterton (1871–1938). The index is adequate, but only barely so, and with a book that runs to nearly 800 pages, one could have wished that the publisher had expended a little more effort toward the exhaustive index which this volume deserves.

In exploring this “literary life of Chesterton” (xi), Ker examines the creation of Chesterton’s major polemic and apologetic works, detailing the background and the personal context of Chesterton’s personal life at the time of writing. Ker also spends a good deal of time on his major novels, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (127ff) and his most enduring novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (187ff). *The Man Who Was Thursday*, is the Chesterton novel Ker states, “will continue to be read” (125, 127). *Thursday* was Chesterton’s reaction against the pessimism of the 1890s. Chesterton later contrasted this pessimism with the societal pessimism that enveloped England after World War I, as “the sad souls of the nineties lost hope because they had taken to much absinthe; our young men lost hope because a friend died with a bullet in his head” (192). It was a typical contrastive device of Chesterton, viewing the pessimism caused by dwelling in self-induced unreality as opposed to the pessimism caused by the tragedies of real life. This reviewer would take some issue with the assertion by Ker that only these two novels will continue to be read. Both *The Flying Inn* (345–47) and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (487) are novels that readers continue to enjoy.

Chesterton’s most “remembered” books are, of course, the Father Brown mysteries. The stories were highly profitable. When his bank account would run low, he was reported to have said, “Oh well, we must write another Father Brown story” (283). Ker’s discussion of the origination and development of Father Brown (282–90) is excellent. The examination and solving of crimes by an otherwise non-descript Roman Catholic priest combines Chesterton’s twin passions of the common man and the singular importance of Christian theology in everyday life.

*Orthodoxy* and *The Everlasting Man* are Chesterton’s two main theological works and they, perhaps as clearly as anything written, detail his view of Christianity and Catholicism. In *Orthodoxy*, which was actually published 14 years before he entered the Catholic Church, he stated, “Christianity even when watered down is hot enough to boil all modern society to rags. The mere mention of the Church would be a deadly ultimatum to the world” (London: Bogley Head, 1908), 218–19). Ker’s analysis of these volumes is worth the price of the entire book. For

Chesterton, Christianity, and the visible church, was a living and vital reality. He stated, "Plato has told you a truth, but Plato is dead. Shakespeare has startled you with an image; but Shakespeare will not startle you any more" (228). "The Christian Church in its practical relation to my soul is a living teacher, not a dead one. It not only taught me yesterday, but will almost certainly teach me tomorrow" (ibid). In *The Everlasting Man*, Chesterton was dealing with a "post-Christian" society. Ker helpfully notes:

By pointing out that in a post-Christian age it is very difficult to see Christianity for what it is: post-Christians 'still live in the shadow of the faith and have lost the light of the faith.' They are in a state of 'reaction': 'They cannot be Christians and they cannot leave off being Anti-Christians.' They are not 'far enough away not to hate' Christianity, nor are they near enough to love it' (516).

Ker develops the theme of Chesterton's humor in greater depth than any other biographical work and makes significant use of Chesterton's *Autobiography* (published shortly after his death in 1936). Ker states:

The unfailing humour that was so significant an aspect of Chesterton's personal life has its parallel in the enormous importance he attached in his writings to humour as a medium for comprehending and interpreting life, regarding comedy as he did as an art form at least as serious as tragedy (xi).

In this approach Ker demonstrates the singular skein that runs through Chesterton's life and works, the difference from being serious about life, yet approaching it with humor and being solemnly humorless whereby one loses the joy of living life (506–07). Humor was so thoroughly entwined in his writings Chesterton remarked that he feared, "his humorous books were taken seriously and his serious books humorously" (550).

The literary device Chesterton is best known for is the use of paradox. Chesterton himself came to believe when he saw that "the paradoxes of Christianity are true to life" (150). Ker's discussion of Chesterton and paradox is woven throughout the work, as it was in Chesterton's life itself. Ker notes that Chesterton explained every aspect of Christianity and the Christian life by means of paradox. He summarizes Chesterton's view of the pagan and Christian view of self by stating:

The pagans had set out to enjoy themselves but in the end made 'the great psychological discovery' that 'a man cannot enjoy himself and continue to enjoy anything else', and that, 'whereas it had been supposed that the fullest possible enjoyment is to be found by extending our ego to the infinity, the truth is that the fullest possible enjoyment is to be found by reducing our ego to zero' (151).

Chesterton remains one of the most fascinating Christian apologists/philosophers of the modern era. He straddled the eras between Queen Victorian and the opening curtain of World War II. He wrote significant critiques of poets like Robert Browning and Robert Lewis Stevenson and also warned the world about the horrors that, left unchecked, Hitler and Nazism would certainly unleash on the world. He was a giant in the English literary world when Fleet Street was in its golden age. He saw the introduction of the telephone (which he personally was averse to using) and in 1932 became a successful radio personality for the BBC. His radio success foreshadowed the broadcasts of C. S. Lewis during World War II, from whence *Mere Christianity* (1945) would derive.

For evangelicals, of whom Chesterton was often critical, he is a writer, apologist, and thinker of the first rank who remains vital to interact with today. While one may be disappointed that the final destination in his spiritual journal was the Catholic Church, if one reads Chesterton without profit it is not the fault of the writer. Ker has produced one of those rare biographies that is full of detailed information and personal anecdotes while never losing the author's original goal. We cannot recommend this volume too highly.

Arie C. Leder *Waiting for the Land: The Story Line of the Pentateuch*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010. xii + 238 pp. (paper) \$17.99.

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

Leder holds the position of Martin J. Wyngaarden Senior Professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, where he has been teaching Old Testament studies since 1987. His career began as a pastor in Ontario, Canada. For eight years he served as a missionary with Christian Reformed World Missions in Puerto Rico and Costa Rica. He edited *Reading and Hearing the Word from Text to Sermon: Essays in Honor of John H. Stek* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary and CBC Publications, 1998) and *For God So Loved the World: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Roger S. Greenway* (La Vergne, TN: Lightning Source, 2006).

*Waiting for the Land* provides Leder's view of the Pentateuch's meta-narrative. He introduces his analysis with a twofold retelling of the Pentateuch's narrative: (1) employing the Pentateuch's own vocabulary (6–16) and (2) using the typical vocabulary of the Christian church (19–20). Throughout the Pentateuch Leder observes a theme of waiting for the land in God's presence (22).

Following this overview, Leder embarks upon a description of the plot, scope, and structure of the Pentateuch (23–41). His conclusion is that "Exile from the presence of God, then, forms the boundaries of the entire biblical narrative, as well as of its various subunits" (25). Mankind and Israel's histories focus on narrating how disobedience distances people from the presence of God (27). The Pentateuch merely transports its readers "from the expulsion from one place to the waiting for entry into another" (28). For the Pentateuch's structure Leder posits a chiasmic arrangement (35, Table 2.2) whereby Genesis and Deuteronomy comprise the outer

framework focusing on separation from the nations, blessing, seeing the land, and descendants in the land. Exodus and Numbers then present Israel's desert journeys, apostasy and plagues, key protagonists (Pharaoh and the magicians in Exodus; Balak and Balaam in Numbers), and the first-born/Levites. At the center of this chiasmic structure sits the book of Leviticus with its emphasis on sacrifices, cleanliness, and holiness. The author proposes that Bible scholars have obscured the central role of Leviticus because of over-attention to the mighty acts of God in history and a dislike for ritual (36). Since God chose Israel to be essentially a priestly people, Leviticus provides a focus on the necessity of being holy in order to abide in God's presence.

Next, Leder delves into the Pentateuch's narrative coherence and conceptual pattern (43–58). He perceives a pervasive royal metaphor depicting a king who seeks out the cause of disorder in his kingdom, defeats the enemy, and then returns to his capital to construct a commemorative structure of his victory (43–44). Without arguing for material literary dependence, Leder surveys the epics of Enuma Elish and Baal vs. Yam to identify the elements of such a royal metaphor (45). Then he fits the Pentateuch's narrative into that framework of key elements (47). As part of his examination, he compares key texts within the Genesis creation narrative and the Exodus tabernacle narrative (55), concluding that Exodus "cannot be properly understood without its antecedent, Genesis" (56).

The bulk of the volume treats each of the five books of Moses separately in order to develop these observations regarding theme, structure, and royal metaphor: Genesis (59–91), Exodus (93–114), Leviticus (115–39), Numbers (141–64), and Deuteronomy (165–84). This core continues Leder's analysis and filling out the overall picture regarding each book's contribution and relationship to the other four. Boxed mini-excurses, outlines, and tables make his presentation easy to grasp (e.g., 63, 81, 100). The reader comes away with a better understanding of the Pentateuch, its unity, and its message, no matter the level of agreement or disagreement with Leder's views.

The closing chapter ("Waiting for the Land Today: The Church as a Desert People," 185–212) returns to the second telling of the narrative with which Leder began this volume. First, he contrasts two land-centered theological constructs: classical dispensationalism (187–89) and materialist-liberationism (189–93). Second, he presents his own Reformed approach (193–209), which he later terms "desert theology" (210). This comes as no surprise to the discerning reader, since the author drops clues all along the way that his main purpose in writing this volume is really not about the land at all, but about the spiritual presence of God with His people. In other words, the message of the Pentateuch for the Reformed theologian (at least in Leder's depiction) is "that this world is not the church's home, that she is waiting for the fullness of Christ's presence and the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem" (210).

Throughout the volume Leder stretches the royal metaphor to the point of jeopardizing the reader's confidence. Yes, there is a royal theme or thread in the Pentateuch, as Sailhamer has noted in his *The Meaning of the Pentateuch* (IVP, 2009). But, Leder takes it to a more comprehensive level that seems an imposition on the text. His choices of scholarly works with which to interact are very limited, even in his attempted representations of both the classical dispensationalist and

materialist-liberationist views. The only Genesis commentary he cites is that of Gerhard von Rad; for Exodus he cites only Terence Fretheim and Brevard Childs; only Gordon Wenham and Rolf Rendtorff's commentaries gain mention for Leviticus; the sole commentary he mentions for Numbers is by Gordon Wenham; and Deuteronomy commentaries by Peter Craigie and Patrick Miller make brief appearances. The bulk of the author's sources consist of specialized and theological studies rather than being more dependent upon exegetical sources. This lack of exegetical foundation lends itself to a more spiritualized, metaphorical, and nuanced treatment of the Pentateuchal narratives.

Robert Letham. *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology*. Philipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2011. 208 pp. (Kindle e-book), \$9.99.

Reviewed by Andy Snider, Associate Professor of Theology.

Robert Letham is a familiar name in the field of Reformed theology, having written a number of significant books from that perspective, including works on *The Holy Trinity*, *The Lord's Supper*, and *Eastern Orthodoxy*. This work on the doctrine of union with Christ picks up the theme of Christology, which he addressed more broadly in book-length form in his 1993 contribution to the *Contours of Christian Theology* series, *The Work of Christ*. In view of the recent broader discussions on union with Christ, Letham's work is a welcome contribution with a seasoned and knowledgeable quality.

The book is not as exhaustive as its subtitle might suggest; this appears to be Letham's effort to "hit the highlights" of this key doctrine of the Christian faith. As such, it is both a hit and a miss, although perhaps more of the former than the latter.

The author begins with a broad summary of the biblical centrality of union with Christ, setting his trajectory against, for example, the new perspective on Paul, and aligning it squarely with classical Reformed theology. He proceeds in successive chapters to consider union with Christ and its relationship to creation, incarnation, and Pentecost, then focuses on the soteriology of union with Christ specifically in relation to representation, transformation, and death/resurrection. The book ends with a thorough bibliography, a Scripture index, and a topical index.

Key positive traits of the book include Letham's explicit allegiance to Scripture and its authority for formulating this doctrine precisely. His theological arguments are interwoven with exegetical information that (often, though not always) drives the point home convincingly. Also on the helpful side is his insightful discussion of the incarnation—specifically, the hypostatic union—which shows how union with Christ (in soteriology) depends greatly on a prior understanding of the incarnation (in Christology). We can be one with Christ, first of all because he became one with us in taking on human nature. This element is sometimes missed in discussions of union with Christ.

Letham's discussion of the Holy Spirit's role in union with Christ is also most helpful and is probably the best chapter in the book. A close second is the deeply edifying conclusion to the book, explaining the believer's union with Christ in

relation to his death, resurrection, and ascension. It is appropriate that such a book should end with lifting the reader's eyes and heart in hope toward the return of Christ and the everlasting union that Christ's people will enjoy with him in the *eschaton*.

There are however several drawbacks to the book, especially for one not as embedded in the Reformed Scholastic tradition. Most of Letham's historical arguments emphasize Calvin and his scholastic heirs, although there are periodic appeals to the patristic period. This makes the book feel rather narrow at times and may serve to limit its appeal. Also, there are certain sections of the book that feel like long digressions. For example, in chapter 2 there is a 12-page excursus on early Christological developments leading to the Second Council of Constantinople that is not well connected to the argument of the book (this happens also in chapter 4 where discussions of justification by faith seem to overshadow the topic of union with Christ). Certain exegetical objections could also be raised against portions of Letham's doctrine as well, particularly the near-dominating emphasis on the Reformed principle that all of Christ's life was substitutionary, particularly His obedience to the Law which forms the righteousness which is imputed to the believer (see summary, 82). This principle of the "active obedience" of Christ as comprising the righteousness of justification is exegetically dubious and yet plays an overly weighty role in Letham's discussion.

All things considered, Letham's book is an important contribution to the discussion of union with Christ, and it should take its place as an able statement of the Reformed tradition. It is recommended for pastors or students of theology that are studying the topic, but its helpfulness to others may be limited because of some of the more technical historical discussions, as well as frequent quotations of Scripture and various early Christian writers in Latin and Greek (transliterated).

Robert L. Plummer, ed. *Journeys of Faith: Evangelicalism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Anglicanism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012, 256 pp. (paper) \$18.99.

Reviewed by Jonathan Moorhead, Samara Center for Biblical Training (Samara, Russia).

On May 5, 2007, Dr. Francis Beckwith resigned from the presidency of the *Evangelical Theological Society* to be received back into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. This caused a firestorm of controversy within evangelicalism, which caused many to ask, "How could this happen?" Because such a theological and confessional movement is not an isolated incident, Robert Plummer (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) provides testimonials of conversions to Orthodoxy (Wilbur Ellsworth), Catholicism (Francis Beckwith), evangelicalism (Chris Castaldo), and Anglicanism (Lyle W. Dorsett). Following each testimony is a response and then a brief rejoinder.

As the former pastor of First Baptist Church in Wheaton (IL), Wilbur Ellsworth explains that his disenchantment with evangelicalism began with irreverence in worship. Influenced by the "seeker sensitive," "market driven"

message of Willow Creek Community Church, Ellsworth's dissatisfaction led him and his wife to sense that they "needed to discover and grow into something more, something greater, richer, and more compelling" (24). Through a series of events, the author was introduced to the Eastern Orthodox Church (EOC) where he was eventually ordained as priest. Although the article is a testimonial, the author gives little attention to distinctive EOC doctrines such as icons (one sentence), and he does not address the priority of the pope, clerical marriage, *theosis*, or the *filioque*. In an ecumenical tone, he regards evangelicals as "beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord," but describes his decision to leave the movement because "the history of the Church has convinced me of the place of the Orthodox Church in the world" (45).

Craig Blaising (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) responds to Ellsworth by noting the typical EOC understanding (and persecution) of evangelicalism, the downsides to scripted liturgy, and the dangers of giving tradition priority over Scripture. Blaising then provides a critique of the history of the liturgy, icons, Eucharist, the atonement, and Mariology. A significant element omitted from Blaising's response, however, is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Ellsworth's rejoinder shows sympathy toward EOC persecution of non-EOC. He affirms, "I vigorously affirm that both Evangelicals and the Orthodox embrace and proclaim what Saint Paul called the core of the gospel . . ." (68). He then answers the following questions: "Does Orthodoxy Tradition Oppose the Authority of Scripture?", "Is the Orthodox Church Idolatrous in Its Use of Material Things in Worship?", and "Is There Any Relationship between Worship on Earth and Worship in Heaven?"

"What if someone reads your book and converts to Catholicism?" is the question that Plummer recalls from his wife in the Conclusion of the book (223). This concern is not without warrant when one reads Francis J. Beckwith's journey from Catholicism to evangelicalism, and back to Catholicism. In what is the best written and most scholarly of the testimonials, the author focuses on evangelical concerns and attempts to support his beliefs with Scripture and tradition. The turning point of Beckwith's conversion occurred when he gave a paper on the importance of tradition and someone asked, based upon Beckwith's own conclusions, why he was not Catholic (87). This caused Beckwith to return to reevaluate fundamental doctrines in which he discusses at length: "The Doctrine of Justification," "The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist," "The Sacrament of Penance," and "Apostolic Succession."

The response by Gregg Allison (Southern Theological Seminary) does not mention Beckwith or his article (except in two endnotes); rather, Allison focuses on general commonalities and divergences between Catholicism and evangelicalism. Regarding divergences, he discusses the role of Scripture and tradition, justification by faith alone, the role of Mary, and purgatory. In Beckwith's rejoinder, he further supports the Catholic view of the development of doctrine, justification, the perspicuity of Scripture, tradition, and the scope of the canon.

Chris Castaldo (Director of Ministry for Gospel Renewal at the Billy Graham Center) chronicles his journey to evangelicalism from Catholicism. Although he was a cradle Catholic, Castaldo explains he lacked hope and certainty in his

Catholic faith. Not finding answers in various religions or philosophies, the turning point came when he heard an evangelical sermon from John 15:5–6. Castaldo writes, “I finally understood the meaning of Jesus’ cross and resurrection . . . not simply as an offering for ‘sin’ in a general sense but for me personally. Not Christ accruing superabundant merits to be stored in a heavenly treasury and dispensed to me as I participated in religious rites but the complete satisfaction of God’s wrath and forgiveness of my sins” (143). In the remainder of his article, the author explains the main reasons why people leave Catholicism: (1) clerical elitism, (2) legalistic rules, (3) the Church as the dispenser of grace, (4) veneration of saints, and (5) religious guilt. In a helpful section, he anticipates the following Catholic objections: (1) Protestantism leads to chaotic sectarianism; (2) the Church canonized the Scripture and thus has authority to interpret them; (3) *Sola scriptura* separates faith from reason; and (4) *Sola scriptura* neglects the contributions of church history. Although the author has a helpful section on hope in salvation, which includes an explanation of the nature of the atonement in Catholic theology, he never explains the foundational doctrine of the Reformation: justification by faith alone.

The response by Brad S. Gregory (University of Notre Dame), which provides an extensive footnote section, heavily depends upon the authority of church tradition. For this reason, it is understandable he cares little for “tit-for-tat biblical prooftexts [which] were all well-known centuries ago . . .” (165). Attempting “to be not only civil but also friendly, and indeed to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ despite ecclesial divisions” (166), Gregory focuses on the amorphous, confused nature of Protestantism to show the need for trusting the Church’s teachings. This state of affairs, according to the author, creates the confusion where no one recognizes primary and secondary doctrines. Castaldo’s rejoinder focuses on attacking Gregory’s confidence in the stability of Catholic tradition over the testimony of Scripture. It is disappointing, however, that Castaldo does not appeal to the doctrine of justification by faith alone in response to Gregory’s challenge for the essence of the gospel.

Lyle W. Dorsett (Pastor of Christ the King Anglican Church [Birmingham, AL] and Professor of Evangelism at Beeson Divinity School) begins his article by expressing admiration for Malcolm Muggeridge’s explanation of the various religious traditions of his family (Brethren, Dutch Reformed, Anglican, and Catholic): “They serve in different regiments of the same army, my man” (187). Dismayed over the fact that these regiments have often fought one another, Dorsett gives the disclaimer, “we neither think we are in the only true room nor think we are necessarily in the best one. Instead we are in the room where we find fellowship that best suits us” (188). Similar to Ellsworth’s sentiments, the author expresses, “folks like me are longing for *something more* and are finding it in the Anglican tradition . . .” (188). Having been baptized in the Lutheran church as an infant, he was converted at the age of fifteen by the preaching of a Baptist revivalist during a tent meeting and committed himself to preach the gospel. Following the rigors and challenges of university studies, he became agnostic and fell into alcoholism. Dorsett describes what happened next: “I cried out while awakening from a drinking binge, ‘God, if you are there, will you help me?’ A presence came to me . . . I knew that the Lord Jesus was with me and that he loved me” (193). It is

interesting to note how the author describes this experience: “Gradually, in the aftermath of this conversion experience or explosive understanding of what God had done for me through infant baptism, confirmation, and the mystical experience under the Baptist big-tent revival meeting, the Lord gracefully restored the call to preach” (194). Following the study of various evangelical traditions, he served at College Church in Wheaton, IL for twelve years. Yet, he and his wife “longed for ‘something more’” (200). In particular, “Much of our longing found fulfillment in the ‘real presence’ of Holy Communion as taught and celebrated by Anglicans” (206). They were attracted to the Anglican Church because they “saw themselves in apostolic succession and as part of *one*, holy, catholic, or universal, church” (201). Furthermore, “I feel at home in the Anglican tradition because historically it has been the *via media* [middle road] that emerged from the English Reformation” (208).

Robert A. Peterson (Covenant Theological Seminary) has many positive things to say about Anglicanism but primarily critiques its doctrinal latitudinarianism for allowing heretical bishops that deny the resurrection (David Jenkins and John Shelby Spong) and the ordination of women. Also of concern for Peterson is the exclusivity of the Anglican bishopric to serve the Eucharist. Dorsett’s answer is the most brief of all rejoinders, which simply exposes similar heresies in the variegated forms of Presbyterianism.

*Journeys of Faith* provides an interesting narrative of conversion to alternative Christian traditions. The reader senses the *Anfechtungen* involved in making these decisions, which evokes sympathy for each man. Responders had the difficult task of critiquing these testimonies but did so in charity. The genre of the book purposely emphasizes “the journey,” which naturally involves less of an emphasis on in-depth exegetical, theological, and historical distinctions. Who, for example, has the rightful claim to tradition since the Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican authors appeal to tradition as the basis for their conversions (Beckwith briefly mentions this [111–12])? Since justification by faith alone was absent from most discussions, is the doctrine that important? Combining the general treatment of these profound issues, an irenic tone that avoids anathemas, and emotional empathy for the authors, results in making this book a subtle, but potent tool for ecumenism. This is even more significant when one considers that the editor is from the conservative Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. When explaining the goals of his book, Plummer states that he seeks to produce sympathy among each tradition and to give caution among those who wish to leave their tradition. He encourages his readers to be “a model of peaceable ecumenical dialogue.”

“People who claim Jesus as Lord should be able to disagree before a non-believing world without denying the love for others we profess marks us as Christians (John 13:34–35)” (224). While Plummer is not explicit that he believes all contributors are brothers in Christ, the idea is confirmed by many of the authors and denied by none. Also of concern is how this book will affect the evangelical understanding of evangelism among Catholics and Orthodox. Although this genre of testimonials has its place, the history of Christianity has taught us that this debate demands more substance. As a result, this book is only recommended for those who have strong biblical discernment.

Eric D Reymond. *New Idioms Within Old: Poetry and Parallelism in the Non Masoretic Poems of 11Q5 (=11QPs<sup>a</sup>)*. Early Judaism and Its Literature 31. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011. xiv, 228 pp. (paper) \$29.95.

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

Eric D. Reymond is a lector in Hebrew Bible, Dead Sea Scrolls, Judaism, and Jewish History at Yale Divinity School. He is the author of *Innovations in Hebrew Poetry: Parallelism and the Poems of Sirach* (SBL, 2004). In this volume, the author explores the linguistic and literary idioms and structures of the seven non-Masoretic poems preserved in the Dead Sea Scroll labeled 11Q5 (or 11QPsalms<sup>a</sup>) and first published by James A. Sanders in *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>)*, DJD 4 (Clarendon, 1965). Sanders also published a popular edition, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1967). The seven poems consist of Sirach 51:13–30, Psalm 151A, Psalm 154, Psalm 155, Apostrophe to Zion, Plea for Deliverance, and Hymn to the Creator—all linking wisdom to praise of God. Brill has simultaneously published a more expensive (\$135) hardback edition of *New Idioms Within Old*.

Reymond introduces the volume by describing the scroll (which also contains portions of biblical texts such as Pss 93, 101–5, 109, 118, 119, 121–50, and 2 Sam 23:1–7), previous scholarly studies of the scroll, as well as explaining his goals and methodology (1–20). In the body of the book (21–183), he stresses the poems' structural and conceptual coherence and incorporates insights obtained from the scholarship of recent decades. Each chapter addresses a single poem and discusses its interpretational difficulties, a detailed chart of its parallelistic structures, a translation, philological notes, explanation of the poem's theme, and then a summary of line length, parallelistic patterns, and allusions or echoes to Scripture. Reymond's work provides readers with the best commentary currently available.

In the concluding chapter (185–98), Reymond considers these poems in relation to what they reveal about the development of Hebrew poetry in the late Second Temple period. He commences with a summary of the seven poems' relationships to one another with regard to line length, parallelism, allusion to Scripture, and other features. Then he compares the poems with biblical poetry. Finally, he examines the poems' theological ideas and their bearing on the structural and rhetorical features of the poems. The volume closes with a thorough bibliography (199–214) and functional indexes for modern authors (215–17) and passages from ancient texts (219–28).

Students of Psalms, Hebrew poetry, and the Dead Sea Scrolls will gain much from this volume. Reymond makes a significant contribution to the ongoing discussions involved with these areas of study and the debates over parallelism and literary structures.

Randall Price. *Rose Guide to the Temple*. Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2012. 144 pp. (cloth) \$19.79.

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

The Temple occurs so much in Scripture, yet it is often neglected or misunderstood by many Christians because much of it seems to be so alien to our culture. Yet you cannot study the Bible much without having to study things related to God's Temple. Randall Price has written a superb work on the Temple in the *Rose Guide to the Temple* that is easy to read, full of wonderfully colored pictures, and includes timelines and helpful asides on related topics in each chapter. The book begins with an excellent foldout from National Geographic that shows the development of the Temple from its start up to the present day. There are occasions where an overlay is provided so that the reader can see what the outside looked like, pull back the overlay, and see inside the Temple in relation to its outside. This is very helpful in seeing the big picture and the smaller picture. As before, anytime we can drop down into the world of the biblical narrative to "see it as they saw it," we are better for it. *Rose Guide to the Temple* does just that and does so beautifully. Also, this book is spiral bound, which makes it particularly useful as a study text.

The book divides into five sections with each section having subsequent subheadings. Section 1 is "God's Sanctuary Before the Temple," and includes such subheadings as "What Does 'Temple' Mean?" and "How Do We Know About the Temple?" Section 2: "God's Permanent Sanctuary: The First Temple" shows a very detailed layout of the Temple that Solomon built and gives helpful insights into how the Temple played such an important part in the lives of the Jews. This section goes up through the destruction of the first Temple. Contained within in this section is an explanation of the various priestly and Levitical rolls and functions, as well as a calendar of the feasts of the Jewish year.

Section 3: "God's Permanent Sanctuary Rebuilt: The Second Temple," goes from the rebuilding of the Temple up through the life of Jesus and concluding with the destruction of the second Temple by the Romans. As with the other chapters, very clear timelines are used, along with very clear writing of the text. For those who may not be as conversant with history, Price leads the readers through so that what is going on historically and biblically can be easily comprehended. This section concludes with a subheading noting some of the archaeological discoveries (including pictures) that support the biblical claims regarding the Temple. Also, as with the other sections, the book presents ample footnotes of the sources used.

The fourth and final section, "The Modern Temple Mount and the Future Temple," traces its history up through the Crusades. The second subheading in this section is "The Temple Mount Today." The Crusades and what is currently transpiring on the Temple Mount are two extremely important sections because this helps to explain much of what is happening in the Muslim world politically as it relates to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The section "Islamic Denial of the Temple's Existence" traces the relatively new teaching by some Muslims that in spite of the multitude of evidence to the contrary, some Islamic teachers teach that no such Temple of God ever existed in Jerusalem (116–17). The far-reaching

ramifications of this are tremendous, and as before, these two sections offer sound insights into the development of the problem of whose holy ground is this, with Jews and Muslims, and to a degree Christians, and all laying claim to it.

The final subheading of the fourth section is “The Future Temple.” Price offers a chart of reasons for those who see Ezekiel 40–48 as symbolic as well as a column on why some people understand a literal temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom (132). Fittingly, Price concludes the book with a reference to New Jerusalem and shows some of its connections with the previous temple designs.

This was an enjoyable book to go through. For those who have never studied the Temple of God in detail, this is a very good place to start and to continue. For those who have not been able to visit Jerusalem, this should be very beneficial because you certainly see the layout of the land. You should be able to follow somewhat as a tour guide leads one along the study. This resource would be helpful for pastors or other teachers within the church. Although not set up this way, the book would be a rich study for adult or college age Sunday School classes to go through. I highly recommend this God-honoring book for anyone who wants to drop down into the biblical world and not only read—but even clearly see—God’s design for His very own abode, until the new heavens and earth come in.

Allen P. Ross. *A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 1 (1–41)*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011. 887 pp. (cloth) \$59.99.

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), *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Kregel 2006), and the Genesis portion of *Genesis, Exodus*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Tyndale, 2008).

Although associated in his early background with Baptist and Presbyterian churches, since 1979 Ross has been active in the Episcopal Church.

This first of three projected volumes provides the reader with a clear idea of what this commentary on Psalms will accomplish. Ross identifies his purpose in writing the commentary as “the chief aim of exegesis, the exposition of the text” (11). He successfully achieves that purpose in this volume. He covers the entirety of each psalm, explaining each verse, and demonstrates how each psalm’s message unfolds section-by-section. Ross promises that the third volume will contain a lengthy bibliography keyed to relevant psalms (12). The commentary reads with ease and includes technical material in a user-friendly fashion. Selected technical discussions avoid bogging the reader down in matters which do not materially

affect the exposition of the text. The author provides his own conservative translation in modernized English. Textually, he resists rewriting the text to make better sense to himself (14)—something this reviewer applauds.

A key element this commentary represents better than any other Psalms commentary consists of its word studies. Ross relegates such studies to the footnotes and cross-references the same Hebrew word elsewhere to the occurrence of its discussion. For example, the study of  $\eta\eta\eta$  (*hāsā*), meaning “to take refuge,” appears in footnote 26 on page 279. Where the same word occurs in Psalms 2:12 and 16:1, a parenthetical reference to the word says “s.v. Ps. 7:1” (213, 402). An index to these word studies will occur at the end of the third volume.

Unfortunately, Ross does not consider the psalm inscriptions to be original, even though he admits that the traditions that the inscriptions provide “cannot simply be discarded” (16). Such a view results in Ross questioning the Davidic authorship of some psalms despite inscriptional attribution (17). Perhaps the greatest gap in the coverage of Psalms involves ignoring the theory proposed by James Thirtle in *The Titles of the Psalms: Their Nature and Meaning Explained* (Henry Frowde, 1904), even though Ross does list Bruce K. Waltke’s “Superscripts, Postscripts, or Both,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 4 (1991): 583–96 in his “Selected Bibliography” (77).

In his introduction to the book of Psalms, Ross covers the following pertinent topics: “Value of the Psalms” (25–30), “Text and Ancient Versions of the Psalms” (31–37), “Titles and Headings of the Psalms” (39–63, see comment above regarding the inscriptions), “History of the Interpretation of the Psalms” (65–71) concluding with a “Selected Bibliography” (71–80), “Interpreting Biblical Poetry” (81–109), “Literary Forms and Functions in the Psalms” (111–45), “Psalms in Worship” (147–54), “Theology of the Psalms” (155–68), and “Exposition of the Psalms” (169–79). The last of these topics deals with the focus of the commentary, providing readers with a helpful explanation Ross’s expository method.

Each individual psalm commentary commences with an “Introduction” containing an annotated translation with footnotes regarding textual variants, a brief discussion of the psalm’s composition and context, and Ross’s “Exegetical Analysis” with a concise summary and a full-sentence exegetical outline. The “Exposition in Commentary Form” follows a section-by-section homiletical outline. The third and final section of the individual psalm commentary is “Message and Application” with the expository idea printed in italics to highlight it. Throughout this first volume, Ross displays a conservative evangelical treatment of the text. There are occasional inconsistencies (e.g., translating only the first of the continuous participles in Ps 19:1 [Heb., 2] as continuous, but the second as a characteristic present along with the two imperfects of 19:2 [Heb., 3]; 465, cp. 473), omissions (ignoring the tricolons and their contribution to the structure of Ps 19), and mistakes (“verse 2” should be “Psalm 18:2”; 485). Readers, however, will be satisfied with the commentary’s solid contribution to the study and exposition of the Psalter.

This commentary does not provide an extensive theological excursus like that which Geoffrey Grogan supplies in the Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Eerdmans, 2008), but far exceeds Grogan’s work in expositional value due to its

much greater length and depth. His treatment of expository application surpasses the selected applications of Gerald Wilson in the NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan, 2002), because Wilson's purpose was to provide one or two key applications to illustrate how to derive applications from the text. Ross provides a much more conservative and less questionable translation than John Goldingay's three-volume commentary in the Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Baker, 2006, 2007, 2008). In addition, Ross's theological interpretation is more conservative.

In short, if God allows the next two volumes to be published, Ross's *A Commentary on the Psalms* will become the commentary of evangelicals' choice when preaching and teaching the Psalms. Even though this commentary is part of *Kregel Exegetical Library*, it most certainly exhibits the expository result of exegesis, not the full exegetical analysis itself. One can only hope that someday someone will publish an equally conservative, detailed exegetical commentary on the Psalms.

Hugh Ross. *Hidden Treasures in the Book of Job*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011. 238 pp. (cloth) \$17.99.

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

Founder and president of *Reasons To Believe*, astronomer, and pastor, Hugh Ross, has authored a number of books including *The Fingerprint of God* (rev. ed., Whitaker House, 2000), *The Genesis Question*, 2nd ed. (Navpress, 2001), *Creation as Science: A Testable Model Approach to End the Creation/Evolution Wars* (Navpress, 2006), *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is* (Baker, 2008), *More Than a Theory: Revealing a Testable Model for Creation* (Baker, 2009), and *Beyond the Cosmos*, 3rd ed. (Signalman, 2010). In the current volume the author defends intelligent design by surveying the contributions of the book of Job to the believer's understanding of science and creation. He claims that Job, as perhaps the Bible's most ancient book, provides more information on the topics of both science and creation than any other biblical book (18–19). He argues “believers need never be fearful of ‘irreconcilable differences’ between the book of nature and the book of Scripture” (13).

After dating the book of Job to the patriarchal period, Ross concludes that the discussion of creation and evolution must begin with Job, rather than Genesis (33). The author of the book of Job is anonymous, but Ross suggests several details that support the identification of Elihu as “recorder-in-chief” (29–30), an intriguing possibility. He believes that Job 38–39 helps to fill in gaps in the Genesis 1 account of creation (72). Elsewhere in Job, Ross indicates that Job 9:8 reveals what God was doing between the beginning of the universe and the foundation of the earth: “Instead of napping, God was carefully, exquisitely, and patiently ‘engineering’ the universe. . . . Meanwhile, the angelic host looks on and learns (Job 38:4–7)” (75). In fact, he says that laws of physics and space-time dimensions “explain why God took so much time between creating the cosmos and laying down Earth's foundations” (76), appearing to question God's omnipotent capability of

establishing such laws instantaneously. None of the creation miracles that he lists from Job 37–39 requires millions or billions of years for God to produce (85). If God could not produce these miracles instantaneously, Ross's definition of miracle raises questions.

One of the major issues involved in this volume rests with Ross's dates for the earth and for the universe. Without a shred of biblical evidence he claims "angels have existed for the past 3.8 billion years or more" (48). He identifies a sudden leap from nonlife to life at that point in time, with a second leap occurring 150 million years ago (at the end of the fifth and sixth days of creation), and a third leap 50,000–90,000 years ago at the end of the sixth day (123). In addition, he cites scientists who believe that "an explosive appearance of abundant photosynthetic communities on the continents approximately 850 million years ago" (79). In regard to the universe, Ross declares "God has crafted and shaped the universe on our behalf for some 13.7 billion years" (189). Therefore, his interpretation of the six days of creation in Genesis 1 amounts to a direct denial of texts like Exod 20:8–11 and 31:15–17, which reveal that God created both the heavens and earth, as well as all of their occupants, in six literal days. With such a prolonged dating for the creation of the first heavens and earth, readers might well ask how many billions of years God will take to produce the new creation of which Ross writes (92, 100, 193). If God can and will create the new heavens and new earth instantaneously, why could He not do so with the first heavens and first earth?

Death before mankind's existence occupies Ross's discussion when he appeals to descriptions of animal life in Job 38–39 as referring to creation on the fifth day, rather than being observations of animal life in Job's own day (101). No indication appears in the text to cause the reader to think that God is limiting His statements to the days of creation. Ross argues that pre-Adamic carnivores require a benevolent occurrence of death prior to God's creation of mankind (101–02).

The author rejects the Scripture's depiction of the Flood of Noah's day being global, supposedly on the basis of Job 38:8, 10–11, since he believes that those verses describe a permanent boundary for the waters that God established at creation (93). He also argues that the ungodly (2 Pet 2:5) had not yet inhabited Antarctica, Greenland, Australia, and North and South America, so a global flood was not necessary to wipe out all mankind (94, 96). An additional argument arises in Ross's refusal to accept "all the surface of the earth," "under the entire heavens," and "the whole world" as literal phrases to be taken at face value. Instead, he believes that "earth" and "world" carry meaning related to the context of people rather than the planet and "under the entire heavens" merely means "from one horizon to the other" (94). Repeated references to the annihilation of all birds (Gen 6:7; 7:21, 23) and the necessity of bringing birds onto the ark for preservation (Gen 6:20; 7:3, 8, 14, 17, 19) provide a strong counter-argument to Ross's limited flood view, since birds can escape flood waters to find land that has not been inundated. The reader is left to wonder what kind of physics Ross teaches that would allow the waters of the Flood to cover the highest mountains, surpassing their height by over twenty-two feet (Gen 7:19–20) without spreading out over the whole surface of the earth. His conclusion is that the "flood is both biblically and scientifically defensible as an inundation much larger than Mesopotamia, as some have proposed,

and yet significantly more limited than global in extent” (97). His conclusion requires a special hermeneutic for interpreting Scripture as well as a suspension of the laws of physics, making his view neither biblical nor scientific.

In spite of his old universe-old earth viewpoint, Ross does manage to bring out a large number of fascinating facts regarding intelligent (divine) design. He itemizes the benefits which the earth’s environment gains from hurricanes (51), the fact that the human heart efficiently sustains nearly three billion beats in a person’s lifetime (more than any other creature; 115), and the functional superiority the human body possesses for hot climates (143). A fascinating study of the “top ten *nephesh*” as described in the book of Job provides a look at God’s design in providing animals that minister to mankind’s many needs (149–65). Interestingly, Ross claims that global warming can actually be a good thing designed by God and related to natural, created processes pre-dating the Industrial Revolution or even mankind (63–68; see also, 158–59).

Occasionally, Ross gives evidence of an incomplete knowledge of biblical studies. For example, he speaks of the book of Job as being the oldest of the poetic books because it is placed first in the poetry section (30). He must be referring to the English Bible, which is based upon the Latin Vulgate. In the Hebrew Bible Job comes after Psalms, which appears to have been the first book of the Writings, thus representing that third section of the Hebrew canon even in the time of Christ (cp. Luke 24:44). He also lacks an adequate grasp of biblical Hebrew. The Hebrew participle can be either characteristic or continuous. Its use in Job 9:8 for God “stretching out the heavens” does not necessarily imply “an ongoing, continual expansion” (56). Indeed, the uses of the surrounding participles indicate that the usage actually equates with the typical hymnic use of the characteristic participle. Likewise, he demonstrates an inaccurate understanding of Hebrew verb forms in his brief discussion of Gen 1:16 (82). In making the meanings of the Hebrew verbs *bārā’* and *’āsā* distinct (123), Ross ignores the synonymous parallel usages as in Genesis 2:4 and 5:1 as well as the syntactical realities of Hebrew sentences like the one in Genesis 2:3 which includes “making” within the scope of “create.”

While this book certainly fails to provide a sound biblical view of either creation or the Flood, Ross’s salvific intent for agnostics and atheists results in a viable set of arguments from the book of Job that give reason to believe the Word of God in its message of salvation from sin and forgiveness. His charts depicting “Job’s Discernment of God’s Redemptive Plan” (206–07) and “Elihu’s Discernment of God’s Redemptive Offer” (210–11) merit careful consideration. However, just as the reader thinks that Ross has finally yielded to the superior authority of Scripture over science, he reveals an over-dependence upon human experience and logic in his view of the message of Scripture (213).

In the final analysis, Ross gives evidence of an elevation of human reasoning, human experience, and human science over Scripture. This is the ultimate debate: Which authority should determine what we believe about creation and the Flood? The authority of God and His inerrant Word? The authority of the church and her “infallible pope(s)”? Or, man’s reason and its self-styled sovereignty? When the last contradicts the first, Ross appears all too ready and willing to go with the last, rather than the first. Thus, in his opinion, believers need never fear irreconcilable differences between the book of nature and the book of Scripture, because all they

need do is reinterpret and revise Scripture by means of the book of nature, which he assumes that he and other scientists have correctly interpreted.

Diana Lynn Severance. *Feminine Threads: Women in the Tapestry of Christian History*. Scotland: Christian Focus, 2011. 336 pp. (paper) \$15.99.

Reviewed by Jonathan Moorhead, Samara Center for Biblical Training (Samara, Russia).

Diana Lynn Severance has a Ph.D. from Rice University and is promoted by the publisher as a historian with a rich background of teaching in various universities and seminaries. She has written, *A Cord of Three Strands* (Xulon, 2004) and co-authored *Against the Gates of Hell: The Life & Times of Henry Perry* (UPA, 2003) with her husband, Gordon. In this volume, she has ambitiously assumed the task of examining the contributions of women through the church's history. In the Preface, the author identifies her objective: "While primarily being a narrative history of women in the church, this work also aims to equip the reader to refute the distortions of women in Christian history which are often being made in academia and the wider culture" (12).

In her treatment of the New Testament, Severance elaborates upon the roles and contributions of women in the early church. She addresses controversial topics such as the Protevangelium of James, Junia's name, and head-coverings; yet, the author does not discuss the debated nature of Mary Magdalene's relationship to Jesus as suggested by Dan Brown's, *The DaVinci Code*. Contrary to feminist critiques of the New Testament, the author identifies the high honor biblical authors bestowed upon women, which would have been revolutionary in antiquity. Examples of such honor are the instruction regarding singleness, commands for husbands to honor their wives, and the admonition for women to be educated in the faith. It would have been helpful at this point, however, for the author to have interacted with works such as William Webb's, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* (IVP, 2001) in defending the complementarian view.

Beginning with the early church, Severance chronicles the role of women, particularly as martyrs. Of the 950 known martyrs before Constantine's reign, 170 were women such as Blandina and Perpetua (38). The author's treatment of the role of virgins, widows, and deaconesses was very helpful, as well as the author's critical analysis of Gnostic writings which have influenced the modern feminist movement. Moreover, Severance celebrates the contributions of Constantine's and Augustine's mothers in addition to lesser known women of the Medieval period. Furthermore, the author elucidates upon the vital role played by several Christian women of high position in exposing their husbands to Christianity, which, by consequence, changed the courses of countries. The author also discusses several women in this period that contributed to the mystical movement, such as Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, and Joan of Arc.

Speaking of sixteenth-century influences upon women, Severance writes, "Nowhere did the Reformation produce greater societal change than in the position

of women” (135). Describing the renewed understanding of women, sex, and gender roles, the author supports her claim that the Reformers not only produced theological change but also brought about cultural change. Societal changes in the lives of Anna Zwingli, Katharina Luther, Anna Bullinger, and Idelette Calvin are treated as well as many Anabaptist women and their writings. While much attention is given to the English Reformation, Severance surprisingly provides little information pertaining to the personal life and reign of Elizabeth I.

Furthermore, Severance addresses numerous developments occurring between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Women were further educated, and they began to assume greater responsibility in the ministry of the church. The author exposes the reader to many women involved in publishing, education, missions, and social societies. In keeping with her book’s objective, Severance chronicles the history of the feminist movement and provides a trenchant critique of the movement’s presuppositions, hermeneutics, and rejection of the inerrancy of Scripture. Speaking of the relationship between the Bible and the feminist mindset, the author writes, “As seen from earlier times, the different perspectives on women’s roles were in part determined by one’s attitude towards Scripture” (286).

Diana Severance is to be commended for writing a thorough yet concise narrative of women in Christian history that is both engaging and readable. It is written in a popular style that includes website addresses for many references and has helpful highlight boxes with interesting topics such as “Mary Magdalene—Fact and Fiction” (20–21), “Was Perpetua a Montanist?” (41), “Were Women Priests?” (62–64), “Did Helena Discover the True Cross?” (68), and “Those Salem Witches” (193).

Though the author’s survey has much to be commended, there are significant lapses in scholarship that should be addressed. First, appropriate citation for others’ scholarship is missing. For example, the author employs detailed statistics concerning Jonathan Edwards’ descendants but provides no credit for this research. These statistics were originally compiled by Albert E. Winship in 1900 and have been cited in various works on Edwards (*Jukes-Edwards: A Study in Education and Heredity* [Myers and Co.]). Second, there are numerous factual errors: Phillis Wheatley as “America’s first published black poet” (227), Charles Finney originating the altar call (244), King Uzziah keeping the ark from falling in 2 Chronicles 26 (276), Antoinette Brown as the “first ordained woman minister in the United States” (284), and Jonathan Edwards becoming “pastor in Northampton, Massachusetts, in the 1730s” (221). Third, there are imprecise statements needing clarification. For example, the only description that is given of Arianism is that it was a “tradition that denied Jesus as the Son of God as equal with God” (93). Moreover, Severance states that “the rise of nation states” occurred during the Middle Ages (113; cf. Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies* [Crossway, 2010], 111). Fourth, while citing online sources may be helpful to the popular culture of 2011, websites quickly become dated. As a result, citing original, hardcopy resources is necessary. Additionally, the author cites secondary resources when the originals are readily available.

It is doubtful that there is another volume that so clearly, concisely, and comprehensively describes the contributions of women throughout church history. The reader is left with a wonderful picture of how God has used women in mighty

ways for His kingdom. However, the lapses in scholarship will cause the reader to question the veracity of what is written. This volume is recommended with proviso that all facts be compared to original resource material.

William Varner. *Awake O Harp: A Devotional Commentary on the Psalms*. The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2011. 402 pp. (paper), \$21.99

Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Executive Vice President and Dean.

William Varner, Professor of Bible and Greek at The Master's College, has produced a superb devotional guide through the entire Psalter. All 150 psalms receive attention, using three different Bible translations:

- Psalms 1–50 use the English Standard Version (ESV)
- Psalms 51–100 use the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
- Psalms 101–150 use the New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Each psalm receives a section with psalms being extended to two sections each (Pss 22, 27, 37, 39, 40, 42–43, 100, 105, 118). As might be expected, he treats Psalm 119 in sections. Being devotional, each section contains an appropriate concluding prayer.

A significant number of helpful features enrich this well-crafted volume.

- Messianic References to Christ in the Psalms (3)
- Helpful Resources (8–10)
- How to Use This Commentary (10)
- Theme of the Psalms (162–63)
- Introduction to the Psalms of Ascent (321)
- What I've Learned (386–87)

While the author's Introduction (1–10) is brief, it is both spiritual and instructional in nature. Spiritual in that it outlines five major personal lessons to be learned and practiced from the Psalms that will cause a Christian to be more like Christ (1–4). Instructional in that it summarizes Types of Psalms, Title, Authorship, Divisions, Superscriptions, Selah Psalms, and Types of Poetry (4–8).

Dr. Varner's devotional guide is for both young and mature believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the "medicine chest" of the Bible, the Psalms are opened in such a way that they minister to a wide range of life's issues. This reviewer plans to use it as a helpful guide to journey through the Psalms twice a year.

By the way, if you are still wondering about the title, you will have to get the book. The background to *Awake O Harp* will be found on page 10 of this most interesting and readable spiritual tool. If you are a preacher looking for excellent expositional "grist for the mill" to provoke your thinking about the Psalms, this book is a "must buy."