

## REVIEWS

J. Andrew Dearman. *The Book of Hosea*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010. xiv + 408 pp. (cloth) \$45.00.

Reviewed by Irvin A. Busenitz, Vice President for Academic Administration and Professor of Bible and Old Testament.

Andrew Dearman is professor of Old Testament at the regional campus of Fuller Theological Seminary in Houston, Texas. His contribution adds another helpful volume to the growing NICOT series. In spite of the fact that Hosea displays some of “the most obscure passages of the entire Hebrew Bible” (9), explained in part by Hosea’s poetic style, penchant for wordplay and formidable vocabulary, Dearman provides both a translation and a detailed historical-theological commentary.

Standing at the head of the Minor Prophets, this Old Testament book sets forth Yahweh’s prophecy through this remarkable prophet, making it anything but minor. The message provides, by means of poetry, prophetic oracles, and family circumstances, a major and at times rather dramatic vista into the northern ten tribes. Throughout the volume, Dearman makes a valiant effort to elucidate the marriage of the prophet to Gomer and the marriage of Yahweh to Israel.

In his discussion of the origins and transmission of the text, Dearman “accept[s] some examples of editorial updating” (6) and acknowledges, “anonymous disciples had a role in collecting and editing what became of the book of Hosea” (4). Nevertheless, he argues that the book is a unified product (5–6) dating to the middle to latter part of the eighth century BC (21–22; 77–79). His treatment of literary features and composition is excellent, devoting an extensive section (11–21) to similes and metaphors.

The author gives considerable attention to how one is to understand chapters 1–3. Was Gomer a harlot before marrying Hosea? Are three different women depicted in chapters 1–3, or are they the same? Following the conclusions of H. H. Rowley’s earlier work (*Men of God* [London: Nelson, 1963]), Dearman contends that Gomer is in view throughout and that the third chapter should be taken as a sequel to chapters one and two (80–88, 133–34).

Regarding the cryptic phrase in 6:2, “He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day,” Dearman admits that it is difficult to know if it is a

reference to recovery from sickness or resurrection from death. Ultimately, he concludes, “Hosea’s own poetic allusiveness may intentionally include both” (194). He goes on to add that “interpreters have rightly asked whether Hos 6:2 is one of the texts in the mind of Paul when he claims that the resurrection of Christ on the third day is in accord with the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:4)” (195).

In his discussion of Hos 11:1 (“out of Egypt I called My son”), he believes that its use by Matthew (2:15) “is best understood as an example of typology..., portraying a different significance for 11:1 than that intended by Hosea for his generation, but demonstrating a coherence to divine activity in the historical process. Matthew seeks to show that eschatological and messianic aspects of Israelite history are revealed in God’s Son Jesus and that this is in accord with Scripture and God’s prior activity in and through his corporate son Israel” (280).

Multiple excurses punctuate the book, providing an in-depth treatment of issues including “YHWH’s Goodness” in 3:5 (141–42), “David Their King” in 3:5 (142–45), “Hosea and the Decalogue” in 4:1–3 (150–52), “Geography of Sacrifice” in 4:13–14 (164–65), “Being Raised on the Third Day” in 6:2 (193–95), and “Israel and Sonship” in 11:1 (278–80). At the close of the book (349–82), the author provides a series of ten very helpful appendices, highlighting topics pertinent to Hosea such as Baal worship, love, infidelity, and election. Indexes of subjects, authors, Scriptures, and other ancient texts close out the volume.

The author’s adherence to higher critical perspectives requires caution on the part of the reader. Nevertheless, his commitment to the MT makes this commentary a very helpful addition to understanding the prophecy of Hosea.

Gregg L. Frazer. *The Religious Beliefs of America’s Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2012. xii + 299 pp. (cloth) \$34.95.

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

In the 1970s the emerging neoconservative political movement found a ready ally in the also emerging Christian Right (particularly in such organizations as Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority and James Dobson’s Focus on the Family). So thorough was the alliance, that evangelical Christianity in the United States became, sadly enough, almost synonymous with conservative and Republican politics in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

One of the rallying cries of the Christian Right was the return to the values of the so-called “Christian America,” which portrays the Founding Fathers, almost to the man, as “born again Christians” with evangelical ideals for ruling the new country. The counter movement, most popularly articulated by Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, postulated a nearly opposite view, that the Founding Fathers were essentially Lockean secularists who designed government and religion to function in complete isolation from one another.

Gregg L. Frazer, Professor of History and Political Studies at The Master's College, has sought to bring a fresh perspective to the subject of the "Christian" origins of both the Founding Fathers and the country that they pledged, "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor" to birth. Frazer states, "I saw both sides as clearly wrong and as interested parties who were willing to manipulate the historical record in support of their agendas" (ix). Frazer's goal is lofty as he seeks to pull apart the tar baby that the triad of history, politics, and theology often create. He states,

My purpose in writing this book spans both disciplines and includes both motives. I want to get the history right. More than that, though, I want to force extremists on the Left and on the Right to make the case for their vision of what American should be on its own merits, without hijacking the fame of the Founders and without holding their reputations hostage to causes of which they would not approve (ix).

In this work Frazer demonstrates that neither view appropriately belongs to the Founders of America, and the most influential of them (along with a significant number of the influential pastors and thinkers of the day) were neither Deists nor Christians; but rather, theistic rationalists. Frazer states, "What, exactly, was this new belief system at the center of the American Founding? Theistic rationalism was a hybrid belief system mixing elements of natural religion, Christianity, and rationalism, with rationalism as the predominant element" (14). Frazer presents a detailed explanation of this hybrid that "was not really a religion or denomination *per se* rather a religious belief system and an approach to religious belief" (ibid).

As Frazer notes, "one of the prevailing views today of the political theology of the Founding era is that most of the Founders were deists" (15). Frazer discusses Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), the "Father of English Deism" and his work *De Veritate* and examines what exactly Deism, as a religious system in the eighteenth century, consisted of. Frazer later builds on this discussion and thoroughly discusses the religious beliefs of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson (125–63). He concludes, "although Jefferson and Franklin are routinely identified as deists, investigations into what they actually said that they believed reveals that they did not hold to the most fundamental beliefs of deism (161).

One of the key discussions by Frazer is that of the American pulpit in the pre-revolutionary era. He notes that, "none of the political theologies of the religious groups in America were particularly friendly to liberal democratic thought or republican governments" (69). He notes that the "main obstacle to an acceptance of democratic theory in American churches was Calvinism" (ibid). Several aspects of Calvinistic theology were viewed increasingly as "undemocratic," particularly the constructs of predestination and limited atonement (70). As a result he concludes that preachers in the pre-revolutionary pulpits were leading a "revolt against Calvinism, which was abandoned by many at the time of the Revolution because it was viewed as inconsistent with the Revolutionary emphasis on liberty" (6).

A significant strength of Frazer's work is the discussion of the important "divines" as the "theologians and clergymen were called at that time" (23). Starting with the English nobleman and philosopher, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of

Shaftesbury (1671–1713) he moves onto detailed discussions of the central theological contributors to theistic rationalism, particularly Joseph Priestley (27–30); John Witherspoon (39–46); Samuel Clarke (47–51); Charles Chauncy (52–58); and Jonathan Mayhew (59–68). The influence of Priestley on Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin is particularly noted (28ff). As Frazer notes, “it would be difficult to overstate the importance of Priestley to the development of the political theology of the American Founding” (28).

One key component to the success of “theistic rationalism” as a system was that while it remained a creation of the elite political thinkers of the era, it did not offend the masses in the process. Frazer notes:

Theistic rationalism was an elite understanding of the eighteenth century, shared by the key Founders and many preachers. A gentle, hopeful, and nondenominational belief system that borrowed from Christianity and from deism, but it never became the property of the masses. But it equipped elites to describe the projects of the Revolution and the Founding in terms that did not offend popular religion (22).

The Founders, as generally loyal church members, were rightly viewed as promoting religion, particularly a Christian-oriented religion, as a “necessary support for a free society” (234). In this they were not being duplicitous, but rather consistent with their own theistic rationalism. As Frazer notes, “by making their own reason the final determinant on what counted as legitimate revelation and the final determinant of the meaning of revelation, the theistic rationalists essentially defined away any independent divine influence on their own religion and politics” (235).

Frazer’s chapter on “The Theistic Rationalism of George Washington” (197–213) is a singularly significant contribution. His discussion of Washington, whom he notes was “famously taciturn about his religious beliefs” (29), in relation to theistic rationalism is perhaps the high-water mark of the book. Frazer discusses and disassembles the hagiographic work on Washington by Mason Locke Weems (203–05). The discussion of Washington’s affiliation with and affinity for the Freemasons (208–10) is also thorough and well accomplished. After quoting several contemporary sources that deny Washington was in any manner a “Christian,” Frazer states that for Washington,

Religion, regardless of specifics, was vital as a pillar of a free society because of the moralizing effect it had on the people. Personally, Washington believed in a wise and good God to whom all roads led, an active and particular Providence, prayers, some miracles and revelation, and the central part played by morality. Those were the beliefs that seemed to him to be rational (212).

As Frazer concludes, theistic rationalism was a system, particularly for Washington, in which “God became whoever they preferred Him to be and made only those demands they wished Him to make. They had truly created a god in their own image” (236).

Frazer's bibliography (281–91) is thorough and his notations (237–80) are extensive. Given the nature and detail of this work one could have wished that the publisher had committed more effort to the index (293–99) and provided more than the barebones listing that is made. Table 1.1 "Christianity in Eighteenth-Century in America" (19) is not particularly helpful, and the author's notation on why he included Catholics as affirming "justification by faith," while correct, probably should have been lengthened to beyond a single sentence to provide more clarity. In the same chart the denominational statistics could have been improved if Methodism, although during the Revolutionary era still officially part of the Anglican/Episcopal church, had been separated out (especially to note its growth after the Revolution).

These, however, are quibbles in an overall excellent work. Frazer has provided an important study that deserves a wide reading. We highly recommend this work as a clear, well-researched, and persuasive argument for the actual belief system of the Founders and founding of the United States, *theistic rationalism*, which in large part remains today as the foundation of what Robert Bellah and others have called "America's Civil Religion."

Mark D. Futato and George M. Schwab. *The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs*. Cornerstone Biblical Commentary. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009. viii + 359 pp. (paper) \$32.00.

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

Futato is Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando, FL). He is best known for his user-friendly *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* (Eisenbrauns, 2003). His studies on the Psalms include *Transformed by Praise: The Purpose and Message of the Psalms* (P&R, 2002), *Joy Comes in the Morning: Psalms for All Seasons* (P&R, 2004), and *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis; Kregel, 2007).

Schwab is Professor of Old Testament at Erskine Theological Seminary (Due West, NC). His published books include two volumes in The Gospel According to the Old Testament series (P&R Publishers): *Hope in the Midst of a Hostile World: The Gospel According to Daniel* (2006) and *Right in Their Own Eyes: The Gospel According to Judges* (2011), as well as *The Song of Songs' Cautionary Message Concerning Human Love* (Studies in Biblical Literature; Peter Lang, 2002).

The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (gen. ed. Philip W. Comfort) bases its commentary upon the translation of the second edition of the New Living Translation (NLT). Nearly one hundred biblical scholars of various evangelical church backgrounds from the United States, Canada, England, and Australia have participated in the writing of this series. Each commentary commences with an "Introduction" ("Psalms," 3–29; "Proverbs," 453–70). The main body of each commentary then provides the full NLT text for each text unit, followed by "Notes" (dealing with the Hebrew text) and "Commentary" interpreting that text unit. At the end of each commentary, the volume includes a brief "Bibliography" ("Psalms," 442–50; "Proverbs," 662–69).

These commentaries include minimal direct interaction with other commentaries or with journal literature (Futato has less interaction with such sources than Schwab). Such interaction occurs primarily in the introductions to each commentary where the authors identify sources by means of a reference to the surname and date of publication for references. Occasional references to sources other than lexicons (e.g., *HALOT*), theological dictionaries (e.g., *NIDOTTE*), and grammars (e.g., GKC) occur in the “Notes” following the translation (e.g., 114–15 regarding Ps 27:12) and less often in the “Commentary” itself (e.g., 321 regarding Ps 101). No footnotes appear anywhere—presumably to display a clean text—but the “Introduction” for Psalms does close with endnotes (28–29) and an occasional commentary for a text unit concludes with endnotes (75, 107, 325). Cross-references by means of a word-study numbering system connect readers to tools like *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible* (xiv). This reviewer found such references distracting and disruptive to the flow of the commentary, but some readers will find them helpful.

Futato believes that the psalm titles are canonical and authentic (5), although he does not indicate whether he thinks that they are inspired. He does not refer to James Thirtle's *The Titles of the Psalms: Their Nature and Meaning Explained* (Henry Frowde, 1904) either in the introduction or in his bibliography. In regard to the authorship of individual psalms, Futato accepts the view that the Hebrew *lamed*-preposition indicates authorship (5–6). His “Introduction” is brief but helpful to most readers without any technical background. The Psalms commentary provides readers with a concise, evangelical commentary that pays attention to significant grammatical, literary, and lexical details. His theological insight and explanations are also well-written and beneficial for understanding a psalm's interpretation and theological and/or practical implications (e.g., 79 regarding Ps 16; and, 269 regarding Ps 81). Treatment of some psalms could have been more informative and constructive had Futato paid more attention to the proper division of the headings in accord with Thirtle's theory (e.g., Ps 87's message ties in quite well with the musical heading currently attached erroneously to the start of the literary heading for Ps 88). However, he still manages to present a valuable commentary on Psalm 87 (282–84). Regrettably, his commentary on Psalm 119 suffers from being overly brief (372–74).

Futato's “Introduction” provides only very minimal exposure to poetic devices (8–10), since he chooses to focus more on the genres (10–16). Schwab, however, presents a more practical introduction to poetics (459–63). Proverbs, for Schwab, “is first of all instruction material for young people to help guard them from beguiling influences and point them in the right direction for life” (471). He does advise the exegete to give proper attention to the potential for at least some portions of Proverbs serving as training for court officials (456). His explanation of the nature of the “naïve” helps readers to rightly understand the meaning of the term in Hebrew (473, 474). Occasional diagrams and charts help to reinforce the interpretation of the biblical text (461, 518, 591). His notes following the translation are often more extensive than his commentary section for the same text unit. For example, for 17:7–18:7 the “Notes” take up two full pages (568–70) while the “Commentary” barely fills a single page (570–71). His greatest omission comes

with ignoring the invaluable work of Ted Hildebrandt regarding strings and clusters in the Book of Proverbs: “Proverbial Strings: Cohesion in Proverbs 10,” (*Grace Theological Journal* 11, No. 2 [1990]: 171–85); “Proverbial Pairs: Compositional Units in Proverbs 10–29,” (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 107, No. 2 [1988]: 207–24). The advantage of Schwab’s commentary is that he deals with the text in the order in which it appears, rather than rearranging it thematically.

Both of these commentaries will prove beneficial to students of Scripture studying Psalms and Proverbs. Futato’s commentary is more detailed in its interpretation than Geoffrey W. Grogan’s *Psalms* (Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary; Eerdmans, 2008), although Grogan’s significant advantage comes in the second half of his commentary, which comprises an excellent theology of the Psalms. Schwab’s commentary falls short of the exegetical scholarship of Bruce K. Waltke’s magisterial work, *The Book of Proverbs* (2 vols., NICOT; Eerdmans, 2004–2005), and Tremper Longman’s significant volume on *Proverbs* in the Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Baker Academic, 2006). It also does not match up to the development of practical and theological implications offered by Paul E. Koptak in his *Proverbs* (NIV Application Commentary; Zondervan, 2003). Nonetheless, readers will find Schwab’s commentary a sound addition to their libraries and will gain valuable insights from it.

Donald W. Hagner. *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012. xxiv + 896pp. (cloth) \$49.95.

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

The work is praised as follows on the Amazon website, reflecting similar wording on its jacket cover: “This capstone work from widely respected senior evangelical scholar Donald Hagner offers a substantial introduction to the New Testament. Hagner deals with the New Testament both historically and theologically, employing the framework of salvation history. He treats the New Testament as a coherent body of texts and stresses the unity of the New Testament without neglecting its variety. Although the volume covers typical questions of introduction, such as author, date, background, and sources, it focuses primarily on understanding the theological content and meaning of the texts, putting students in a position to understand the origins of Christianity and its canonical writings.” The book includes summary tables, diagrams, maps, and extensive bibliographies. Such scholars as James D. G. Dunn, I. Howard Marshall, Craig Keener and Thomas Schreiner also praise it.

One may note two strategic factors regarding Hagner’s New Testament introduction: First, his work represents the cutting edge of evangelical, British-influenced and trained critical scholarship who are currently teaching the next generation of preachers and scholars in the United States, both on a college and seminary level. Second, Hagner’s work will most likely replace the late Donald Guthrie’s *New Testament Introduction*, which was last revised in 1990, as the

standard seminary-level text. If one wants to know where evangelical critical scholarship is moving, Hagner's work provides that trajectory.

These two strategic factors are also the work's gravest weaknesses. The work attributes the word "inspired" to the New Testament Scripture (4). Yet, Hagner maintains, "the inspired word of God comes to us through the medium of history, through the agency of writers who lived in history and were a part of history" which "*necessitate the historical and critical study of Scripture.*" (ibid). He says that the use of the word "critical" does not mean "tearing it down or demeaning it—but rather to exercising judgment or discernment concerning every aspect of it" (5). Therefore, Hagner asserts that "[w]e must engage in historical criticism, in the sense of thoughtful interpretation of the Bible" and "the historical method is indispensable precisely because the Bible is the story of God's act in history" (ibid). What Hagner means is there is a need for historical critical ideologies rather than grammatico-historical criticism. This is the first signal that British-influenced evangelical scholars are shifting markedly away from the Reformation tradition of grammatico-historical criticism. The training of the next generation of preacher's in historical-criticism is troublesome since this methodology markedly differs in approach in terms of presuppositions and historicity; as well as the qualitative kind of conclusions such an ideology reaches.

Like many British-influenced evangelical critical scholars, he believes that he can use historical-criticism and be immune from its more negative elements: "The critical method therefore needs to be tempered so that rather than being used against the Bible, it is open to the possibility of the transcendent or miraculous within the historical process and thus is used to provide better understanding of the Bible" (7). This latter admission is telling, since it is an admission, no matter how indirect, of the dangers of historical criticism. Hagner argues that "[k]eeping an open mind concerning the possibility of the transcendent in history does not entail the suspension of critical judgment. There is no need for a naïve credulity and acceptance of anything and everything simply because one's worldview is amenable to the supernatural" (7). Hagner apparently believes that he has discovered the proper balance of presuppositions and practice in the historical-critical method displayed in this work,

It must be stressed once again that the critical method is indispensable to the study of Scripture. It is the *sine qua non* of responsible interpretation of God's word. The believer need have no fear of the method itself, but need only be on guard against the employment of improper presuppositions (11).

An old pithy saying, however, is that the "devil is in the details." Hagner's argument here ignores the marked evidence or proof from history of the presuppositions and damage that historical criticism has caused by even well-intentioned scholars who have eviscerated the Scripture through such an ideology. History constitutes a monumental testimony against Hagner's embracing of the ideologies of historical criticism as well as the damage that it has caused the church.

Hagner excoriates "very conservative scholars" and "obscurantist fundamentalism" (10) that refused to embrace some form of moderated historical

critical ideology. Hagner commends Hengel's belief that "fundamentalism" and its accepting belief in the full trustworthiness in Scripture is actually a form of atheism (Martin Hengel, "Eye-witness Memory and the Writing of the Gospels: Form Criticism, Community Tradition and the Authority of the Authors," in *The Written Gospel* [Cambridge, 2005] 70–96), quoting and affirming Hengel's position that "Fundamentalism is a form of 'unbelief' that closes itself to the—God intended—historical reality" (Hengel, 94, n100). Hagner insists "repudiation of the critical Study of Scripture amounts to a gnostic-like denial of the historical character of the Christian faith" (10). Hagner agrees with Hengel that a "Fundamentalist polemic against the 'historical-critical method' does not understand historical perception" (ibid) and that "Fundamentalism is a form of 'unbelief' that closes itself to the—God intended—historical reality" (10, n17). Apparently, Hagner (and Hengel) believes that since the Scriptures were mediated through history and human agency, this opens the documents up to being fallible human products. Because of the Scripture being based in historical knowledge, one cannot use the word "certain" but only "probable," for Hagner insists that the "word 'prove,' although perhaps appropriate in mathematics and science, is out of place when it comes to historical knowledge" (9).

In studying Scripture, compelling proof will always be lacking (9). Hagner's assertion is a non-sequitur because fundamentalism or conservative evangelicalism (e.g. *The Jesus Crisis*) never argued against criticism but only the kind of criticism utilized and the philosophical principle involved in such criticism that closed off the study of Scripture *a priori* before any analysis could be done, (i.e., historical-critical ideologies). Historical criticism is a purposeful, psychological operation designed to silence Scripture and deflect away from its plain, normal sense implications, (i.e., to dethrone it from influence in church and society). While left-wing critical scholarship will openly admit this, "moderate" evangelicals like Hagner choose to ignore the intent of historical criticism.

With this operating assumption about understanding Scripture, some sampling highlights of Hagner's "balanced" approach to historical-critical ideologies: First, "we have no reliable chronology of Jesus ministry" in the Gospels (63). Since the Gospels are "historical narratives" they involve "interpretation" by the evangelists and that "level of interpretation can be high" (63). Since the gospel writers largely (but not completely) reflect ancient Roman *bioi* as the "closest analogy" from antiquity" and since *bioi* were not necessarily always without interpretation (61), "[t]he Evangelists compare well with the secular historians of their own day, and their narratives remain basically trustworthy" (65).

Second, like other critically-trained European scholars, Hagner accepts Lessing's "ugly ditch" and the German/British concept of *historie*- (actual verifiable events) vs. *geschichte*—(faith interpretations of events) as a dichotomy between the Jesus of the Gospels and the "historical Jesus" (83–104). Although critical of some historical Jesus research, Hagner concedes that "the Jesus of history was to some extent different from the Gospels' portrayal of him" and "if we cannot look for a one-to-one correspondence between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of the early church's faith, we can at least establish a degree of continuity between the two" (97). Furthermore, "we are in no position to write a biography of Jesus" based

in the information from the New Testament since the gospels are “kerygmatic portrayals of the story of Jesus” (98).

Third, Hagner embraces the idea that a book can be “pseudonymity” as acceptable in the New Testament canon. Hagner argues, “We have very little to lose in allowing the category of Deutero-Pauline letters. If it happens that some other person may have written these four, or even six documents [e.g. Ephesians, Pastorals] in the name of Paul, we are not talking about forgery or deception” (429). Hagner asserts, “The ancient world on the whole did not have the same kind of sensitivity to pseudonymity that is typical in the modern world, with its concern for careful attribution and copyright.” (ibid). “The authority and canonicity of the material is in no way affected by books put into final shape by disciples of the prophets” (ibid). He continues, “The fact is that the Pauline corpus, with deuteron-letters as well as without them, stands under the banner of the authoritative Paul” (ibid). Hagner supports the late British scholar I. Howard Marshall’s view on “pseudonymous” writings in the New Testament: “In order to avoid the idea of deceit, Howard Marshall has coined the words ‘allonymity’ and ‘allepigraphy’ in which the prefix *pseudos* (‘false’) is replaced with *allos* (‘other’) which gives a more positive concept to the writing of a work in the name of another person” (431).

Hagner notes that another British scholar, James Dunn, has come to a similar conclusion (see I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 84). Hagner says, “We do not know beyond a shadow of a doubt that there are Deutero-Pauline letters in the Pauline corpus, but if in the weighing of historical probabilities it seems to us that there are, we can freely admit that this too is a way in which God has mediated Scripture to us” (432). Apparently, to Hagner and others, God uses false attribution to accomplish His purpose of communication of His Word that encourages the highest ethical standards upon men! Thus, for Hagner, Paul most likely did not write Ephesians as well as the Pastoral Epistles (1–2 Timothy and Titus) (428). They should be viewed in the category of Deutero-Pauline letters (429). Hagner even devotes a whole section of his Introduction to this category of Deutero-Pauline letters (585–642). He regards the book of James as possibly not written by James: “we cannot completely exclude the alternative possibility that the book is pseudonymous. Already in the time of Jerome it was regarded as such . . . Least likely of all, but again not impossible, the letter could have been written by another, little known or unknown, person named ‘James’” (675). Second Peter is “Almost certainly not by Peter. Very probably written by a disciple of Peter or a member of the Petrine circle” (714). The author of Revelation is “Almost certainly not by the Apostle John. Possibly, by John ‘The Elder,’ but more probably by another John, otherwise unknown to us, who may have been a member of the Johannine circle” (761).

In sum, Hagner’s work represents what may well replace Guthrie’s *New Testament Introduction*. One can only imagine the impact that British and European evangelical critical scholarship represented by Hagner’s assertions regarding his “balanced” use of historical-critical presuppositions will have on the next generation of God’s preachers and teachers! As Machen said long ago, “as go the theological seminaries, so go the churches” (J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, 65).

Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007. xvi+156 pp. (paper) \$17.99.

Reviewed by Jeff Crotts, TMS Alumnus (M.Div., D.Min.) and Leo Masters, TMS alumus (M.Div.).

In an attempt to address what he sees as a deficiency in the majority of homiletical books, Greg Heisler wrote *Spirit-Led Preaching* to address that lack. He is presently senior pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Boone, North Carolina. He previously was assistant professor of preaching at Southeastern Seminary.

Heisler perceives a failure in much sermon preparation and delivery to promote the “theological fusion of the Word and Spirit” (3). This book is not a “how-to” manual for Spirit-led sermons. Rather, the author wants to convey an approach to preaching in which the preacher is led by the Holy Spirit in his personal sanctification, sermon preparation, and delivery in order to develop “a heightened sensitivity to the Spirit’s leadership” (6). In chapters 1–5 he addresses Spirit-led preaching in terms of its theological and theoretical dimensions, offering an overview from both the Old and New Testaments. The remaining four chapters of the book address the practical out-workings of Spirit-led preaching. In essence, the first half challenges preachers to redefine preaching to include the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the second half applies this new definition.

Two different models of expository preaching are presented. The first, “Text-Driven Preaching,” is portrayed as a train “driven by the text” with the destination being a “proper presentation of the Word of God” (18). In this model the Holy Spirit’s role is merely implied. The second model, “Spirit-Driven Preaching,” is portrayed as a train “driven along by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the biblical text” (18). In this version, “the preacher’s responsibility is to keep the train on the tracks” as he is propelled by the Spirit’s power (18–19). The goal for this model of preaching is “Christological witness and Spirit-filled living” (19). Based on the work of NT scholar Robert Stein, Heisler defines illumination as “the process whereby the Holy Spirit so impresses, convinces, and convicts the believer as to the truthfulness and significance of the author’s intended meaning in the text that a change in action, attitude, or belief occurs, resulting in a more transformed, Spirit-filled life” (43–44). This reality enables Spirit-led preaching to be the connection between what transpires in the preacher’s study and the preaching event.

Heisler clearly shows the link between the preacher’s personal holiness and empowered preaching. He emphasizes the preacher’s pursuit of having a “vital relationship . . . with the Spirit” (68) over against “following a mechanical process” (76). From Heisler’s perspective, the audience “can discern our authenticity as preachers. Any breakdown in that dynamic [between Spirit and preacher] severely hinders the process of communication” (83). He also calls preachers not to be exegetically lazy—never to see the Spirit’s empowerment as an excuse to be lax in prayerful study of the text (93–94). His call for Spirit-led, illumined preaching is not designed to create “sensational experiences,” but a “humble and obedient attitude toward the Word of God” (94).

Unique among books on preaching, Heisler introduces the concept of “sermonic indeterminacy,” the subjective dimension of preaching which responds to and interacts with the preaching environment (107). In describing the spontaneous editing that the preacher does based on his audience in any particular preaching event, Heisler envisions a three-way “conversation” or “trialogue” between the preacher, the audience, and the Holy Spirit (114).

Heisler’s final chapter stands alone. Recognizing that the topic of the “anointing” of the preacher is “confusing and controversial” (127), he sees the “anointing” as “the Spirit’s supernatural power attending the proclamation of the Word of God” (129). He understands the Spirit’s empowerment to be primarily “manifest in both faithful and consistent dependency,” but also allows for the “unusual and dramatic” times where the “anointing” is experienced in preaching (142–43).

*Spirit-Led Preaching* is a niche book. It is rare to find a work that so concisely captures the theology of the Holy Spirit and the implications for expository preaching. Heisler answers the dilemma that today’s typical evangelical “Spirit-shy Christians” face (13). Many contemporary preachers may fear being labeled “unbiblical” for considering the need to surrender to the control of the Spirit because of how the church has attributed crazy experiences to the ministry of the Spirit in preaching (16). Heisler values expository preaching as that which “holds the powerful combination of Word and Spirit together” (23). While Heisler acknowledges the “subjective aspect” found in Spirit-led preaching, he affirms it is “governed by the grammatical-historical method” (39). Heisler emphasizes this point throughout his work by marking the “benefits of the revealing ministry of the Holy Spirit” that come from preaching “within the bounds of the biblical text” (58).

Heisler’s definition of illumination is the theological thread that ties together his emphasis of Word and Spirit in both preparation and delivery. He writes, “What is bright light in the study will be white hot in the sanctuary” (51). For Heisler, this plays practically into what the preacher chooses to edit out or keep in his sermon notes, and how he animates his preaching points and biblical narratives (49). With this doctrine Heisler challenges preachers to practice the spiritual disciplines as part of their sermon preparation (50). Citing Paul’s example, he calls preachers to preach in weakness and dependence upon the Spirit, spending more time “pleading with God to open the eyes of our listeners and less time worrying about remembering our illustrations” (34). He sees depth in study and personal holiness as what adds depth to sermons (86).

Heisler’s emphasis on preaching Christ and the cross is much needed. He makes the clear connection between the preacher’s effectiveness and the preacher’s willingness to exalt Christ in his sermons. He states, “So much of what is done in the name of the Holy Spirit today is not of the Spirit because Jesus is never mentioned or glorified” (57). He maintains that without Christ at the center of sermons “the Spirit’s power will have nothing to do with them” (57). Throughout, Heisler points to the way Paul located the power of his preaching not in “human wisdom” but in “the cross of Jesus” (1 Cor 1:17).

Regarding the preacher’s holiness, Heisler neglects to mention God’s sovereign prerogative to bless in spite of the preacher (e.g., Phil 1:15–18). Heisler sees the

Spirit's involvement in a sermon to be determined by the preacher's and the audience's willingness to involve the Spirit in a "trialogue" (114). This concept ought to be harmonized with the Spirit's freedom to blow where he wills (John 3:8).

Functionally, Heisler attributes the preacher's decision to leave material in or take it out as the Spirit's prompting (78). He uses this idea of prompting in sermon selection as well. He refers to a time when he preached on the transition from Moses to Joshua when he was candidating for an interim pastorate. Heisler attributes both his text selection and his points to the prompting of the Holy Spirit: "the Spirit prompted me to talk about the doubts Israel may have experienced" (92). Surely this message was providentially timed, but his bold affirmation that the Spirit prompted his sermon's inferences seems out of keeping with the rest of his book.

The extent a preacher faithfully expounds the biblical text is the extent to which he may boldly affirm that what he said was from the Holy Spirit. The most dramatic representation of Heisler stepping outside his own definition of Spirit-led preaching is found in the personal testimonies of preachers "anointed" during their sermons (142). With deep respect to the men Heisler quotes in the following excerpts, these testimonies read more as existential than theological examples of what it means to be anointed when preaching: "The words are his but the facility with which they come compels him to realize that the source is beyond himself" (138); "You are a man 'possessed,' you are taken hold of, and taken up. . . . [You] have a feeling that you are not actually doing the preaching, you are looking on at yourself in amazement as this is happening" (140); "I don't want this to sound spooky—but there are times I feel almost outside myself . . . [thinking,] 'I could not have arranged these thoughts this well'" (141).

Although Heisler seems to overstep his own definition in some of his applications, overall the theological precision of this book and the desperate need for the Holy Spirit to be emphasized in preaching makes it a must-read for all biblical expositors. Heisler's desire is to influence expositors in an area that has been markedly deficient in expository preaching and to bring "a fresh and continual dependence upon the Holy Spirit" (153). This dependence on the Spirit will indeed promote Spirit-led preaching.

James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary, eds. *Do Historical Matters Matter To Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Post Modern Approaches to Scripture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2012. 544 pp. (paper) \$24.95.

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

Do historical matters matter to faith? In the foreword for *Do Historical Matters Matter?* John D. Woodbridge states that the purpose of the book is to demonstrate that "the Bible's historical narratives are trustworthy" (13). It also purports to be a "fresh" look at the Bible's (OT and NT) historical reliability: "the Bible's historical narratives are indeed trustworthy" (ibid).

The two editors of the volume, Hoffmeier and Magary, assert, "During the past thirty years biblical and theological scholarship has had to cope with many serious

challenges to orthodox and evangelical understanding of Scripture” (9). It seeks to counter modernist and postmodernist impacts upon the understanding of the historical trustworthiness of the OT and NT. The work is a “collaborative book” as “an outgrowth of panel discussion by faculty members of the Department of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at *Trinity Evangelical Divinity School* in February 2009” (21).

The book expands the discussion to New Testament subjects as well (210). Peter Enns’ work, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, as well as Kenton Sparks’s, *God’s Word in Human Words*, provide the stimulus for these articles. In the “Preface,” the editors “offer this book to help address some of the questions raised about the historicity, accuracy, and inerrancy of the Bible by colleagues within our faith community, as well as those outside of it” (23). “There will be a special emphasis placed on matters of history and the historicity of biblical narratives, both Old and New Testaments, as this seems presently to be a burning issue for theology and faith. Hence, we begin with a group of essays that deal with theological matters before moving on to topics in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and archaeology” (21).

Significant evangelical scholars, including, John D. Woodbridge, Ravi Zacharias, D. A. Carson, and Timothy George wrote endorsements for this volume, leading this reviewer to anticipate a high quality book defending the trustworthiness of Scripture. Unfortunately, that was not the case. If the presentations in this work are accepted as representing the state of evangelicalism regarding OT and NT trustworthiness, then both the 1978 and 1982 ICBI statements are now null and void among the younger generation of evangelical scholars.

After reading this work, the answer to the question the work poses, “do historical matters matter?” the answer must be in the negative, at least not to these scholars. The fresh solutions that they offer are worse than the disease that they purport to be curing. This reviewer was left wondering if all the endorsers of this work truly, really read the contents of this work. Because of the length limitations, this reviewer can only review a few salient highlights of this work.

In Chapter One, “Religious Epistemology, Theological Interpretation of Scripture, and Critical Biblical Scholarship,” Thomas McCall sets forth philosophy of biblical scholarship for the group. McCall advocates a type of “methodological naturalism”: “MN holds only that the method of CBS [critical biblical scholarship] ‘can be followed and may be valuable for historians’ but do not give the only or final word on all matters (historical or otherwise)” (52). What McCall fails to consider in his discussion is that often a “methodology” is really an ideology that has an underlying agenda in its presuppositional bases (Col 2:8; 2 Cor 10:5). This chapter suggests a Hegelian/Fichtian dialectic: Fundamentalism (i.e. Reformed Epistemology) is too dismissive or critical of critical biblical scholarship (thesis), critical biblical scholarship in its historic form is too “binding and obligatory” (antithesis), with the synthesis expressed by evangelicals who use critical methods to engage in dialogue: “critical biblical scholarship can be ‘appropriated’ in a way that is both intellectually and spiritually healthy” (54). Acceptance of critical biblical scholarship in various, limited ways is the only way to have influence in the larger market place of ideas in biblical criticism.

McCall's idea of influencing, however, is negated by 1 Cor 1:18–2:14 where Paul sets forth the myth of influence, i.e. the fact that the default response of anyone who does not have the Spirit of God (i.e. unbelievers) is to conclude that the things of God are “foolishness” or “an offense” (1 Cor 1:23) and that God deliberately has planned that wisdom of unsaved men is inherently unable to arrive at a true understanding of the truth of God's Word (1 Cor 2:8–14). This places “critical biblical scholarship” (CBS) in a tenuous light, for it operates decidedly on foundational unbelief. Only those with the Spirit of God can understand the thoughts of God, for no one will boast before God concerning his own wisdom (1 Cor 1:30).

In Chapter 3, “The Divine Investment in Truth, Toward a Theological Account of Biblical Inerrancy,” Mark Thompson asserts a belief in inerrancy but argues strongly that suspicion regarding inerrancy “stems from the way that some have used assent to this doctrine [inerrancy] as a shibboleth. Individuals and institutions have been black-listed for raising doubts about the way the doctrine has been construed in the past. Only those who are able to affirm biblical inerrancy without qualification are to be trusted.” Thompson singles out Harold Lindsell as “one of the most conspicuous examples” of those who cause this distrust (71, n2). For Thompson, the greatest suspicion against inerrancy “[m]ost serious of all . . . is the way still others, reared on the strictest form of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, have abandoned the faith under the intense questioning of biblical criticism. Forced to choose between a perfect, unblemished text and seemingly incontrovertible evidence of error in Scripture, such people begin to lose confidence in the gospel proclaimed throughout Scripture. In light of such cases, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy might even be deemed dangerous” (72). These evangelicals have apparently forgotten that it was Harold Lindsell who was a great impetus in the ICBI discussion of both 1978 and 1982. History is now being forgotten. He blames people who hold to a strong view of inerrancy for causing people to depart from the faith. Apparently, for Thompson, inerrancy is a cause of defection, especially if one holds to it strongly.

Thompson argues that, instead, “the doctrine should not be judged by the abuse of it or by inadequate explanations. He argues for a solution in the following terms: “Strong convictions about the inerrancy of Scripture need not mean that his aspect of the of Scripture is elevated above all others in importance. Biblical inerrancy need not entail literalism and a failure to take seriously the various literary forms in which God's words come to us, nor need it repudiate genuine human authorship in a Docetic fashion” (72). Such a statement clearly indicates that Thompson places Scripture on the same level as any other book, subject to the same assault that historical-critical ideologies, far from neutral, have perpetrated upon it. Thompson concludes that a solution toward resolving any distortions in the doctrine of inerrancy is as follows: “the doctrine of inerrancy almost inevitably becomes distorted when it becomes the most important thing we want to say about Scripture.” (97). He affirms Timothy Ward's solution, “Timothy Ward's assessment that inerrancy is ‘a true statement to make about the Bible but is not in the top rank of significant things to assert about the Bible’ is timely” (97). Thus, Thompson's solution appears to downplay the significance of inerrancy for biblical issues as a way of overcoming difficulties regarding the doctrine as well as

recognizing not all statements in the Bible are to be taken as literal in terms of genre.

In Chapter 14, Robert W. Yarbrough wrote “God’s Word in Human Words—Form-Critical Reflections,” argues for seeing a value to historical critical approaches such as form critical studies by evangelicals even if in a limited way: “Form criticism did call attention to the important point that the Gospels comprise units of expression that may be sorted into discernible categories. Admittedly, form critics approached Gospel sources with premises and convictions that created blind spots in their observations. Limitations to the method as typically practiced amounted to built-in obsolescence that would eventually doom it to irrelevancy in the estimation of Gospels [sic] interpreters today” (328). However, Yarbrough argues that “to study works from the form-critical era is to be reminded that literary sub-units—even sacred sources—can be grouped and analyzed according to the type of discourse they enshrine and the clues to the cultural surroundings that may yield” (328). He acknowledges that Eta Linnemann “renounced her lifelong professional and personal commitment to what she called historical-critical theology . . . she tested the claims of historical-critical views that she had been taught as a student and then as a professor had inflicted on hapless university undergraduates in an attempt to disabuse them of their Christian faith in Jesus and the Bible, the better to equip them for service in enlightened post-Christian German society” (332).

Yet, Yarbrough, delving into his perceived psycho-analysis of Linnemann’s perceptions of biblical scholarship, labels her as someone among evangelicals who overreacted to the historical-critical approaches. He noted that “In academic mode, whether lecturing or writing, Linnemann tended toward overstatement and polemics. It is as if a couple of decades of vehement rejection of the Gospels’ trustworthiness created a corresponding zeal for their defense once she rejected the ‘critical’ paradigm she embraced in Bultmann’s heyday and under the spell of her identity as one of his students. Her scholarly pro-Bible writings are not a model of balanced scholarship, cautious investigation, and measured, gracious interaction with those she viewed as soft on the question of the Bible’s inaccuracy” (332).

However, Yarbrough’s psycho-analysis of Linnemann is directly challenged by Linnemann’s own story as a former post-Bultmann who witnessed first-hand the dangerous nature of historical criticism, for she based it on a thorough understanding and analysis of the approach as an ideological approach. Eta Linnemann, herself a student of Rudolf Bultmann, the renown *formgeschichtliche* critic, and also of Ernst Fuchs, the outstanding proponent of the New Hermeneutic, notes regarding historical criticism,

[I]nstead of being based on God’s Word . . . it [historical criticism] had its foundations in philosophies which made bold to define truth so that God’s Word was excluded as the source of truth. These philosophies simply presupposed that man could have no valid knowledge of the God of the Bible, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ” (Linnemann, *Historical Criticism* (Baker, 2001] 17–18).

She stresses that the Enlightenment laid the atheistic starting point of the sciences but that of biblical criticism as a whole (ibid, 29). One comment is especially insightful that in the practice of the historical-critical methods, “What is concealed from the student is the fact that science itself, including and especially theological science, is by no means unbiased and presuppositionless. The presuppositions which determine the way work is carried on in each of its disciplines are at work behind the scenes and are not openly set forth” (ibid, 107). Linnemann notes, “a more intensive investigation [of historical criticism] would show that underlying the historical-critical approach is a series of prejudgments which are not themselves the result of scientific investigation. They are rather dogmatic premises, statements of faith, whose foundation is the absolutizing of human reason as a controlling apparatus” (ibid, 111). Her rejection stemmed not from psychological motives but years of academic research into its dangers.

In Chapter 15, “A Constructive Traditional Response to New Testament Criticism,” Craig Blomberg sets forth “constructive” solutions to problems in the New Testament text that he believes would be in line with inerrancy to solve difficulties that evangelicals face. In Blomberg’s article, he decries the Evangelical Theological Society’s dismissal of Robert H. Gundry from the society and reaffirms his support for Gundry to be allowed to make a midrashic approach to dehistoricizing (i.e. allegorizing) the story of the Herod’s killing of babies in Bethlehem in Matthew 2 as consistent with a belief in inerrancy.

For Gundry, inerrancy would only be called into question only if Matthew were making truth claims that were false. But if Matthew were employing a different style, form of genre that was not making truth claims about what happened historically when he added to his sources, then he could not be charged with falsifying the truth. Preachers throughout church history have similarly added speculative detail, local color, possible historical reconstruction, and theological commentary to their retelling of biblical stories. As long as their audiences know the text of Scripture well enough to distinguish between the Bible and the preacher’s additions, they typically recognize what the preacher is doing and do not impugn his or her trustworthiness.

A substantial number of voting members of the Evangelical Theological Society present at the annual business meeting of its annual conference in 1983 disagreed that Gundry’s views were consistent with inerrancy, at that time the sole tenet in the Society’s doctrinal statement, and requested his resignation from the society. I voted with the minority. Following the papers and writings of my own professors from seminary, especially D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, I believed Gundry had shown how his view could be consistent with inerrancy, even though I did not find his actually approach to Matthew convincing. In other words, the issue was a hermeneutical one, not a theological one. The trustees of Westmont College, where Gundry taught, agreed, and he continued his illustrious teaching and writing career there until his retirement” (349).

In accordance with Gundry, one of Blomberg's solutions for difficult problems in New Testament in relationship to inerrancy is to allow for a genre of non-historicity to be considered: "Though not a panacea for every conceivable debate, much more sensitive reflection over the implications of the various literary and rhetorical genres in the Bible would seem an important first step that is not often taken enough . . . in some contexts it may take some careful hermeneutical discernment to determine just what a text is or is not affirming. Style, figures of speech, species of rhetorical and literary form and genre all go a long way toward disclosing those affirmations." (351). For Blomberg, difficulties can be resolved at times by realizing the non-historical nature of some portions of the New Testament.

In a 1984 article, Blomberg uses this as an explanation of the story of the coin in the fish's mouth in Matt 17:21–24: "Is it possible, even inherently probable, that the NT writers at least in part never intended to have their miracle stories taken as historical or factual and that their original audiences probably recognized this? If this sounds like the identical reasoning that enabled Robert Gundry to adopt his midrashic interpretation of Matthew while still affirming inerrancy, that is because it is the same. The problem will not disappear simply because one author [Gundry] is dealt with *ad hominem* . . . how should evangelicals react? Dismissing the sociological view on the grounds that the NT miracles present themselves as historical gets us nowhere. So do almost all the other miracle stories of antiquity. Are we to believe them all?" (Blomberg, "New Testament Miracles," *JETS*, 27, No. 4 [Dec 1984]: 436).

Blomberg noted, "It is often not noticed that the so-called miracle of the fish with the coin in its mouth (Matt. 17:27) is not even a narrative; it is merely a command from Jesus to go to the lake and catch such a fish. We don't even know if Peter obeyed the command. Here is a good reminder to pay careful attention to the literary form" (354, n32). Unfortunately, this solution would seem to be at odds with the ICBI statement on hermeneutics when it states in Article XIII: "generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual."

Blomberg offers another solution toward solving problems surrounding pseudonymity in relation to some New Testament books whereby the "critical consensus approach could . . . be consistent with inerrancy, "benign pseudonymity" (353, 360). Blomberg also uses the term "ghost-writer" to describe this activity. (*ibid*). Another name for this would be pseudepigraphy (e.g. Ephesians, Colossians, Pastorals).

A *methodology* consistent with evangelical convictions might argue that there was an accepted literary convention that allowed a follower, say, of Paul, in the generation after his martyrdom, to write a letter in Paul's name to one of the churches that had come under his sphere of influence. The church would have recognized that it could not have come from an apostle they knew had died two or three decades earlier, and they would have realized that the true author was writing thoughts indebted to the earlier teaching of Paul. In a world without footnotes or bibliographies, this was one way of giving credit where credit was due. Modesty prevented the real author from using his own name, so he wrote in ways he could easily have envisioned Paul writing were the apostle still alive today. *Whether or*

*not this is what actually happened*, such a hypothesis is thoroughly consistent with a high view of Scripture and an inerrant Bible. We simply have to recognize what is and is not being claimed by the use of the name “Paul” in that given letter (352).

For Blomberg, the key to pseudonymity would also lie in motive behind the writing. Blomberg argues that “One’s acceptance or rejection of the overall theory of authorship should then depend on the answers to these kinds of questions, not on some *a priori* determination that pseudonymity is in every instance compatible or incompatible with evangelicalism.” (353). He argues, “[i]t is not the conclusion one comes to on the issue [pseudonymity] that determines whether one can still fairly claim to be evangelical, or even inerrantist, how one arrives at that conclusion” (352). Yet, how could one ever know the motive of such ghostwriters? Would not such a false writer go against all moral standards of Christianity? Under Blomberg’s logic, Bart Ehrman’s work, *Forged* (HarperOne, 2011) only differs in one respect: Blomberg attributes good motives to forgers, while Ehrman is honest enough to admit that these “benign” writings are really what they would be in such circumstances. Are apparently both of these scholars able to read the proverbial “tea leaves” and divine the motives behind such perpetrations. That is highly unlikely.

He also carries this logic to the idea of “historical reliability more broadly.” He relates, “Might some passages in the Gospels and Acts traditionally thought of as historical actually be mythical or legendary? I see no way to exclude the answer *a priori*. The question would be whether any given proposal to that effect demonstrated the existence of an accepted literary form likely known to the Evangelists’ audiences, establishes as a legitimate device for communicating theological truth through historical fiction. In each case it is not the proposal itself that should be off limits for the evangelical. The important question is whether any given proposal has actually made its case” (354).

Finally, Blomberg, seemingly anticipating objections to his ideas, issues a stern warning to those who would oppose such proposals that he has discussed,

[L]et those on the ‘far right’ neither anathematize those who do explore and defend new options nor immediately seek to ban them from organizations or institutions to which they belong. If new proposals . . . cannot withstand scholarly rigor, then let their refutations proceed at that level, with convincing scholarship, rather than with the kind of censorship that makes one wonder whether those who object have no persuasive reply and so have to resort simply to demonizing and/or silencing the voices with which they disagree. If evangelical scholarship proceeded in this more measured fashion, neither inherently favoring nor inherently resisting ‘critical’ conclusions, whether or not they form a consensus, then it might fairly be said to be both traditional *and* constructive (364).

Blomberg once received strong criticism due to his involvement co-authoring a book with Stephen E. Robinson, a New Testament professor at Brigham Young University entitled, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (IVP, 1997). As a result, he states, “Many of us who were trained at seminaries that were vigorously engaged in labeling (rightly or wrongly) other historically evangelical seminaries as no longer evangelical and who then came to

the UK for doctoral study found the breadth of British definitions of evangelicalism and the comparative lack of a polemical environment like a breath of fresh air” (Trueman, Gray, Blomberg, *Solid Ground: 25 Years of Evangelical Theology* [IVP, 2000] 315). Yet, this desire for lack of criticism and just an irenic spirit in Christian academics hardly finds legitimacy in terms of the biblical model displayed in the OT and NT. Much of the OT castigated God’s people for their compromising on belief or behavior (e.g. Numbers 11–14; Psalm 95). Under today’s sentiments, the OT might be labeled anti-Semitic due to its criticism of Jewish people. In the New Testament, whole books were composed to criticize false teaching and wrong behavior on the part of God’s people (Gal, 1–2 Cor, Pastorals, 1–3 John, Rev 2–3). Jesus himself fearlessly castigated powerful groups of important people (Matt 21–23). One is reminded of the satirical pieces that have been done on the fact that if Paul wrote Galatians today, he likely would have been vilified in many popular Christian magazines today.

In Chapter 16, “Precision and Accuracy,” Bock asserts that the genre of the gospels is a form of ancient Greco-Roman biography known as *bios*: “[w]hen we think about the Gospels, there sometimes is a debate about the genre of this material. There was a time when this material was considered unique in its literary orientation. However, recently a consensus has emerged that the Gospels are a form of ancient *bios*” (368). He echoes the thinking of Charles Talbert and British theologian Richard Burridge who popularized this view (Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* [Cambridge, 2004] and Talbert, *What is a Gospel?* [Fortress, 1977]). Yet, this assertion that the gospels being a form of ancient *bios* is fraught with dangers for historical matters surrounding the Gospels since it can lead readily to de-emphasizing the Gospels as historical documents. For example, this opinion of the gospels as *bios* has recently created a storm of controversy with Michael Licona’s work, *The Resurrection of Jesus, A New Historiographical Approach* (IVP, 2010) where he uses *bios* as a means of dehistoricizing parts of the Gospel (i.e. Matt 27:51–53 with the resurrection of the saints after Jesus crucifixion). Licona argued “*Bioi* offered the ancient biographer great flexibility for rearranging material and inventing speeches . . . and they often included legend. Because *bios* was a flexible genre, it is often difficult to determine where history ends and legend begins” (ibid, 34).

Bock argues, “[i]n ancient biography actions and sayings are the focus of the portrayal. The timing of the events is of less concern than the fact that they happened. Sometimes figures from distinct periods can be juxtaposed in ways that compare how they acted. The model of the figure that explains his greatness and presents him as one worthy of imitation stands at the core of the presentation. The central figure in a *bios* often is inspiring. The presentation of Jesus in the Gospels fits this general goal . . . This genre background is our starting point” (368).

Operating from this consensus of the gospel as *bios*, Bock argues that the Olivet Discourse may have an “updated” saying. Comparing the disciples’ question in Mark 13:4 (“Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”) as well as Luke 21:7 (“Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?”) with Matt 24:3 (“Tell us, when will these things be, and what

will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”). Bock notes, “something is going on between the versions in Mark and Luke in comparison to Matthew.” Bock continues,

Matthew has taken the question as it was in Mark and Luke and has presented what the disciples essentially were asking, even if they did not appreciate all the implications in the question at the time . . . . Whether the disciples say the end is in view or Matthew is drawing that out as inherent in the question asked, the point is that Matthew has made the focus of the question clearer than the more ambiguous way it is asked in Mark and Luke” (372).

Bock asserts that “Matthew may actually be giving us the more precise force and point of the question, now paraphrased in light of a fuller understanding of what Jesus’s career was to look like.”

Apparently, Bock allows for the possibility that the disciples may not have asked the question as is set forth in Matt 24:3 but that Matthew updated the question by adding this comment to the lips of the disciples regarding the end of the age: “Matthew has simply updated the force of the question, introducing the idea of the end [of the age] as the topic Jesus implied by his remark about the temple” (ibid). One is left wondering with Bock’s postulation whether the disciples actually asked the question as Matthew presented (“end of the age”) or did Matthew add words to their lips that they did not say? Bock’s approach here is essentially a subtle form of dehistoricizing the Gospels at this point. Equally plausible, however, is that the disciples did ask the question in the way in which Matthew phrased it and that a harmonization of the passage could be postulated that would not require such creative invention on the part of Matthew.

In answering the question, *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?*, an alarming trend has been noticed among these evangelicals who pursue such a *modus operandi* based in historical-critical ideologies as delineated above. A subtle, and at times, not so subtle dehistoricization of the Gospels is taking place. Such an evangelical trend dangerously impacts the ICBI statements forged in 1978 (Inerrancy) and 1982 (Hermeneutics) for views of the inerrancy and interpretation of the Gospels as well as the entire OT and NT. While these evangelicals involved are to be commended for their assertion that they affirm a belief in inerrancy, their practice seems to be at odds with such an assertion. This question of historical matters mattering would seem to need a negative answer in many instances. Because these evangelicals have a problematic view of the historical basis of the Gospels, many of them have joined together in the pursuit of what is termed “searching for the ‘historical Jesus,’” which is based in a philosophically driven postmodernistic historiography.

Andreas J. Köstenberger and L. Scott Kellum, and Charles M. Quarles. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009. xxi + 954 pp. (cloth) \$59.99.

Reviewed by Keith Essex, Associate Professor of Bible Exposition.

A volume that begins with a chapter entitled “The Nature and Scope of Scripture” and concludes with one on “Unity and Diversity in the New Testament” is a unique NT Introduction. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* is a NT introduction, NT survey, and NT theology all in one book. Charles Quarles of Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana joined with Andreas Köstenberger and L. Scott Kellum of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina in authoring this work.

This work is addressed to “the serious student of the NT” (xiv). It is written within a definite framework of NT (even whole Bible) theology. The authors write, “We advocate a holistic reading of the NT, and of the entire body of Scripture, along the lines of a salvation historical framework that traces the story of God’s progressive revelation and provision of redemption in the promised Messiah and Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ” (xiv). The first two chapters lay a foundation for the ensuing examination of the NT by discussing two topics usually neglected in NT Introductions. The first chapter deals with “The Nature and Scope of Scripture” (2–57). Here, the formation of the NT canon, its inspiration, inerrancy, preservation, and transmission, along with issues pertaining to the translation of the Scripture are discussed. The authors point out, “Unfortunately, this kind of doctrinal instruction is increasingly neglected in many publications on the topic [NT Introduction] in our day” (xiv). They add, “But we judge it absolutely vital because only by understanding Scripture as divine revelation, in keeping with its own claim, will we be able to pursue our study all the way to its intended goal: the application of the ‘word of truth’ to our personal lives and our relationships with others” (xiv). The second chapter, “The Political and Religious Background of the NT” (58–99), is vital because the authors have discovered that today’s students are not adequately prepared for entering the world of the NT since they lack a basic understanding of the historical context of the NT (xv). This, too, is a topic usually missing from other NT introductions.

Once the foundation has been laid, the authors proceed to analyze each NT book using a pattern that is called a “hermeneutical triad” in *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* by Köstenberger and Patterson (see *MSJ* 23, No. 1 [Spring, 2012]: 146–48). This threefold presentation includes: “(1) *history* (including a book’s authorship, date, provenance, destination, etc.); (2) *literature* (genre, literary plan, outline, unit-by-unit discussion); and (3) *theology* (theological themes, contribution to the canon)” (xv). These three discussions have traditionally been divided into three different but overlapping NT textbooks, (1) NT introductions (for example, conservative works by Zahn, Guthrie, or Carson & Moo, and critical works by Kummel, or Brown); (2) NT surveys (for example, the texts by Tenney, Gromacki, Gundry, or Elwell & Yarbrough); and (3) NT theologies (for example, the volumes by Ladd, Marshall, Theilman, or Schreiner). Chapters four to eight and ten through

twenty proceed through the NT books corpus by corpus. Chapter three is devoted to “Jesus and the Relationship between the Gospels” and chapter nine to “Paul: the Man and His Message.”

The authors list six distinctive features that they aimed for in writing this text:

1. *User-friendly*. This has been achieved by introducing each chapter with a listing of Basic (for beginning students), Intermediate (for seminary students), and Advanced (for particularly motivated academic students) Knowledge that should be gained and Study Questions and Resources for Further Study at the conclusion of each chapter. An extensive glossary of terms is found at the back of the volume (897–928).
2. *Comprehensive*. The volume covers the entire NT corpus.
3. *Conservative*. The writers have defended the biblical ascriptions of authorship, destination, and dating. For a fuller overview of the positions taken in this work, see the review in *JETS*, 55, No. 2 (June 2012): 414–17.
4. *Balanced*. Each NT book has been developed according to its historical, literary, and theological context.
5. *Up-to-date*. The discussions interact with both older and more recent scholarship.
6. *Spiritually nurturing and application oriented*. Both the style of writing and the Something to Think About sidebars have been utilized to achieve this aim.

In the main, the authors have fulfilled each distinctive in their work.

*The Cradle, the Crown, and the Cross* should be in every preacher’s library. Along with multiple readings of the NT text itself, this book should be the expositor’s first port of entry before sailing out into the more detailed surveys, introductions, theologies, and commentaries of the NT as he embarks on the preaching of a NT book.

Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott. *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 757 pp. (cloth) \$52.49.

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

Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott are two of the world’s leading scholars on Jonathan Edwards. McClymond is Associate Professor of Theological Studies at Saint Louis University, and McDermott is Jordan-Trexler Professor of Religion at Roanoke College. They have both written extensively on Edwards, and are qualified to write such a groundbreaking work. Although Yale is partnering with the William Eerdmans Publishing Company to produce an encyclopedia on Jonathan Edwards, comprising of 450 entries, *The Theology of*

*Jonathan Edwards* is the most comprehensive treatment of Edwards's theology currently available in one volume.

The book is comprised of three parts: (1) "Introduction: Historical, Cultural, and Social Contexts;" (2) "Topics in Edwards's Theology" (with sections on "Methods and Strategies;" "The Triune God, the Angels, and Heaven;" "Theological Anthropology and Divine Grace;" and "Church, Ethics, Eschatology, and Society"); and (3) "Legacies and Affinities: Edwards's Disciples and Interpreters." Throughout the work, the authors identify five driving forces behind the theology of Edwards: trinitarian communication, creaturely participation, necessitarian dispositionalism, divine priority, and harmonious constitutionalism (4–6). Behind these five constituent forces lie two of his chief intellectual strategies: (1) "concatenation," or the search for the interconnectedness of metaphysics, and (2) "subsumption," in which Edwards's theology trickled down into all other aspects of theology (11–12).

Taken as a whole, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* is a significant contribution to Edwardsean studies. Whereas detailed treatments of his works have been isolated to disparate books, articles, and introductions to the Yale editions of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, this volume contains a detailed treatment of all the significant areas of Edwards's thought. It also takes advantage of Yale University Press' 73-volume edition of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*.

Of particular interest is how the authors discuss Edwards in relation to the history of Catholic and Orthodox thought. Comparing Edwards' writings on the sacraments and justification to Catholicism, or his thought on divinization with that of the Eastern tradition is thought provoking. However, herein lies a point of caution concerning the book. By imposing these concepts onto Edwards, the reader could interpret Edwards as promoting that which he categorically denied. For example, Edwards was a champion of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which was the subject of his *Quaestio*, his first published treatise, and the impetus of the initial phase of the First Great Awakening. Yet, Edwards's stress on works and perseverance as the great sign of regeneration cause the authors to assert, "Edwards seems to have rejected or significantly qualified *sola fide* . . ." and instead maintained "conditions" for salvation that were analogous to Catholic views on "merit" (696; cf. 81–82; 392–404; and 722). While Edwards's use of words such as "condition" and "infusion" are understandable with definition in a Protestant context, the authors chose to push for Edwards being a bridge to Catholicism by employing a questionable semantic strategy. A similar course was used for interpreting Edwards's compatibility with the Orthodox view of "divinization." Although the authors note that Edwards never used the term, and likely never read authors espousing the unique qualities of divinization in the Eastern paradigm, they justify Edwards as a bridge to Orthodoxy (albeit under the guise of early modern Neoplatonism; 413, 423). One may imagine that suggesting Edwards was a bridge to Arminianism would be just as palatable to him as that of Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy.

Edwards, as a bridge to the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements, was also discussed, with the conclusion that Edwards "would likely have found much to affirm in this global [Pentecostal-Charismatic] movement, as well as much to

criticize” (725). Considering the theological basis upon which Edwards evaluated such movements (cf. *Distinguishing Marks and Religious Affections*), it is difficult to imagine him responding to these movements with anything but displeasure.

The authors push the limits of Edwards’s thought by affirming his openness to world religions and comparing his thought to Neo-Orthodox and Liberal authors such as Karl Barth and Friedrich Schleiermacher. The authors write, “Edwards’s writings are a challenge for contemporary Christian thinkers to reexamine non-Christian religions and to do so without the presumption that this line of inquiry requires them to abandon Christian truth claims or affirmations of Christianity’s distinctiveness” (726).

While a majority of the book is stellar in its representation of Edwards’s thought, the reader discovers the constituent factors behind the authors’ narrative of Edwards’s writings by making him a theological bridge to other belief systems. For example, the book concludes with the following scenario: “Imagine a Christian dialogue today that included adherents of ancient churches—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Coptic—with various modern church bodies—Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Disciples of Christ—as well as an ample representation from the newer evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic congregations from around the world. If one had to choose one modern thinker, and only one, to function as a point of reference for theological interchange and dialogue, then who might one choose? Our answer should be clear” (728). If one understands Edwards’s Puritan heritage, and reads extensively from his theological treatises, Miscellanies, letters and sermons, this claim is difficult to accept. In short, this is a reinvention of Edwards. One must consider the authors’ own warning, “Studies of Edwards thus reveal as much or more about the interpreter as they do about the interpreted” (720).

Despite the above listed shortcomings, the 45 chapters of this volume provide the reader with a wealth of information on the staples of Edwards’s theology, such as theocentrism, divine beauty, the sovereignty of God and the nature of revival. Being the most comprehensive, in-depth, one-volume work on Jonathan Edwards’s theology, it is essential reading for any serious student of Edwards (notwithstanding its size and cost). It is not for the uninitiated, however, as it contains the intricate depths of Edwards’s theology and philosophy.

Martin McNamara. *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010. viii+359pp. (paper) \$32.00.

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

McNamara previously published *The Psalms in the Early Irish Church*, Library Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (T & T Clark, 2000), which contains eight studies on the Latin biblical texts of the Psalter and Irish commentaries on the Psalms from A.D. 600 onward. He is professor emeritus of Sacred Scripture at Milltown Institute of Theology in Dublin, Ireland. The first edition of *Targum and Testament* appeared in 1972. Significant developments in the field of targums and Aramaic produced a need for a re-examination of the topics previously published.

The introductory chapter provides a historical overview of scholarly research on the Targums from the thirteenth through twenty-first centuries (1–16). McNamara observes that scholars are pretty much agreed that the New Testament (NT) writers were not dependent on the Targums, but provides an equal witness to early Jewish traditions (10). One of the purposes of the current volume remains an examination of potential relationships between the Targums and the NT (16).

Chapter 1 (“Ancient Jewish Writings,” 17–38) presents an introduction to rabbinic literature. McNamara closes the chapter with a brief comparison of a few Gospel texts (Mark 7:1–13 and 2:23–28, respectively) with the rabbinic tradition (35–38). Following this first chapter, Part One of the volume looks at the “Formation of Targumic Tradition” (39–138), while Part Two delves into the main purpose of the volume (“The Palestinian Targum and New Testament Studies,” 139–252).

McNamara views the Targums and rabbinic writings as elements of oral law (41). Since the Targums depend upon a biblical text as their foundation, the integrity of the biblical text takes on a significant role. The author states that the Masoretic Text and the biblical texts from the region of the Dead Sea prove to be virtually identical (51), even though three different types of textual traditions appear to have existed (52). In McNamara’s opinion, scribes originally wrote glosses in the margins, which have somehow become part of the biblical text itself (55–58). Furthermore, Jewish updating of the biblical text during the post-exilic period reveals a Judaic tradition of interpreting the biblical text (58–62). Such updating appears, in McNamara’s opinion, to be mainly the effects of rabbinic Judaism. If this is accurate, current evangelical views of textual updating run a risk of following the practice and results of unbelieving rabbinic scholars.

The synagogue acted as the center of Jewish life, scholarship, and worship. It became, then, the primary force in the development of the rabbinic and targumic traditions. After his brief discussion of the role of the synagogue (63–84), McNamara spends several chapters describing the history of the various dialects of Aramaic (85–138). The early church in Jerusalem appears to have been bilingual (speaking either Aramaic or Hebrew as well as Greek), which probably resulted in the transmission of teachings in one or more of these languages (91–92). A careful analysis of the early written Targums demonstrates that, in the main, both the Aramaic Targums and the Syriac Peshitta depended on Jewish interpretative traditions, not on each other (100).

Targumic paraphrases adhered closely to the biblical text, paying attention to the details of the Hebrew (103–4). The attempts to bring out the full meaning of the Hebrew text resulted in the provision of multiple meanings for Hebrew words, an examination of *gematria*, employment of double translation (doublets), development of stylistic translations of key phrases, and rendering one biblical text in the light of other texts in associative or complementary translation (105–7). An additional characteristic of the targumic translation involves a concern that even the unlearned might understand the text. In order to facilitate such understanding, the targumists explain difficulties and contradictions, inculcate a reverential way of speaking about God, pursue a respectful attitude toward the elders of Israel, provide

a homiletic approach to the text, and insert updated terms (107–19). Two chapters regarding the Palestinian Targum round out Part One (120–38).

In Part Two McNamara demonstrates that the characteristics observed in the targumic traditions of the post-exilic rabbis find equivalent translational and interpretive techniques in the NT. Their common traditions provide illumination for numerous NT texts. The author first discusses the reverential manner in which both Targums and NT speak of God (141–45). Next, McNamara examines the way that the Targums and the NT describe creation as the act of the divine Word (Aramaic *Memra* and the Greek *Logos*; 146–66). Even the NT doctrine of the Holy Spirit finds a counterpart in post-exilic Judaism (167–76). Coming to the First Person of the Trinity, McNamara discusses the Gospel use of “Father in heaven” and its ties to the Palestinian Targums and rabbinic Judaism (177–86). The volume continues with chapters on “Sin and Virtue” (187–99) and “Eschatology” (200–12). After dealing with the topic of “The Targums and Johannine Literature” (213–27), Chapter 16 looks at “Other Passages and Concluding Remarks” (228–52).

An appendix provides readers with a helpful, descriptive survey of all extant Targums (253–83). Chapter 18 presents a geographical gazette of names in the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch (284–309). Chapters 19 and 20 supply introductions to the “Targum of the Prophets” (310–15) and “Targums of the Hagiographa” (316–29). Practical indexes close the volume (332–59), making it a handy reference source for further study.

David G. Peterson. *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009. lv + 790 pp. (cloth) \$65.00.

Reviewed by Keith Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition.

The Pillar New Testament Commentaries, under the editorship of D. A. Carson, continue to produce excellent commentaries for “serious pastors and teachers of the Bible,” seeking “above all to make clear the text of Scripture as we have it” (xix). This work by David G. Peterson on the book of Acts is a superb addition to the series. The author writes of the genesis of this work:

My most recent journey with Acts has lasted more than fifteen years. After teaching the book to a generation of theological students in Sydney, I was encouraged by the editor of this series to begin work on a commentary. Coincidentally, I was invited to contribute to the first volume of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (1993–96). In a rewarding partnership with Howard Marshall, I then became the editor of a book of essays of the theology of Acts, entitled *Witness to the Gospel* (1998). Working with Howard and the gifted contributors to that volume forced me to think in new ways about Luke’s theological method and intentions. The writing of the commentary slowed down as I engaged in these tasks, though inevitably the whole project was enriched by such opportunities for scholarly encounter (xvi).

In 1996, Peterson left Australia to become Principal of Oak Hill Theological College in London. After eleven years in England, he returned to Sydney where he now serves as senior research fellow in NT at Moore Theological College.

With such a rich heritage in Acts studies, the reader comes to Peterson's commentary with high expectations, and those expectations are richly met. There are five strengths to this work. First, the introduction presents a good overview of the contemporary discussion concerning the authorship, dating, genre, historical reliability, structure, purpose, literary techniques, and textual matters of the book (1–52). Second, there is an extensive essay on the theology of Acts (53–97). The theological topics covered are God and His Plan, Jesus as Messiah and Lord, the Holy Spirit, Salvation, the Gospel, the Atoning Work of Jesus, Witness and Mission, Miracles, Magic and the Demonic, and the Church. The author notes that this “is not a comprehensive approach, since certain themes are not explored. There is limited interaction with alternate views and no examination of theories about the evolution of Luke's theology” (54). Throughout the exposition proper, Peterson cross-references his discussion to the theological essay by means of footnotes. Third, the commentary on the text of Acts is clear, detailed, and well documented (99–725). Peterson balances well his literary, historical, and exegetical material. Variant interpretations are sometimes discussed in the main text, at other times in footnotes. Fourth, many previous works on Acts are referenced in the footnotes. One benefit for preachers is the many salient quotes gleaned by Peterson from these sources. Fifth, the volume concludes with extensive indexes on subjects, authors, scripture references, and extrabiblical literature cited in the work (726–90).

The one major drawback of this commentary for many readers of this journal is the fulfillment of the promises to Israel in the Church perspective (supersessionism) from which Peterson interprets Acts. He quotes with approval P. E. Satterwaite who suggested that Luke's aim in Acts was to show, “that Jesus and the church he founded were God's fulfillment of his promises to Israel, thereby assuring both Jewish and Gentile believers of the reliability of the message they have heard, and of God's faithfulness” (53). While Peterson parts company with those interpreters who see the disciples' question concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6) to be misguided because Jesus did not deny their expectation (1:7), he asserts that the restoration of Israel to which Jesus referred began in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost (109-10). He entitles Acts 2:1–40 as “The Restoration of Israel Begins” in his outline (129). The blessings offered in 3:19–12 “are the definitive forgiveness of sins, spiritual refreshment through the Holy Spirit, and ultimately a share in the restoration of all things. These blessings are made possible by the suffering, heavenly exaltation, and return of Messiah Jesus” (183). Michael J. Vlach gives a description and biblical critique of supersessionism in “Various Forms of Replacement Theology,” *MSJ* 20, No. 1 (Spring 2009): 57–69. Stanley F. Toussaint, “Acts” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 349–432, states a dispensational understanding of Israel in the early chapters of Acts. These resources will give the reader discernment in the reading of Peterson on this topic.

Despite these concerns, Peterson's *The Acts of the Apostles* is an excellent commentary on the book of Acts. All expositors of Acts should make use of this valuable resource.

Andreas Schuele. *An Introduction to Biblical Aramaic*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2012. xii + 145 pp. (paper) \$30.00.

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

Schuele serves as the Aubrey Lee Brooks Professor of Biblical Theology at Union Presbyterian Seminary. His academic background includes doctoral degrees in Ancient Near Eastern Studies and Old Testament from the University of Heidelberg. He is also the author of *Der Prolog der hebräischen Bibel: Der literar- und theologiegeschichtliche Diskurs der Urgeschichte [Genesis 1–11]*, ATANT (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2006). Together with Günter Thomas, Schuele edited *Who Is Jesus Christ for Us Today?: Pathways to Contemporary Christology* (Westminster John Knox, 2009).

For this volume, the author depends heavily upon the seminal *Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* by Franz Rosenthal (Harrassowitz, 2006). He intends this grammar for use in the classroom. The opening section (“What Is ‘Biblical Aramaic?’”) provides the student with a good, concise description of the history and role of biblical Aramaic (1–2). As Schuele points out, the Masoretes actually spoke Aramaic, so they most likely vocalized biblical Aramaic with the pronunciation of their time (10). Throughout the grammatical sections, Schuele identifies similarities and dissimilarities between biblical Hebrew and biblical Aramaic, assuming, as most Aramaic grammars do, that students have a foundational knowledge of biblical Hebrew.

In his discussion of the Aramaic noun, Schuele instructs readers to parse and translate examples “with the help of a dictionary” (22). However, he does not provide the reader with a recommendation. There are at least a half dozen lexicons available, but they are not co-equal. Students need some direction at this point, so that they obtain and use a practical lexicon. The word lists (84–94) in the closing material of the volume do not cover many of the words employed in the exercises (e.g., seven out of sixteen in Exercise 4 on p. 27). Thankfully, the “Answers to Exercises” (107–19) proves to be at least a partial remedy to this problem.

In his treatment of the jussive (39), Schuele does not vary from the use of “let” for translating these modal verb forms. What the students are not told is that helping verbs like “may,” “could,” “would,” and “might” can also be used to bring out the contextual meaning of the jussive verbs. Controversy dominates the treatment of the verb in Semitic studies. Schuele notes this fact (67) and proceeds to identify verbs primarily by means of aspect theory (the perfect as referring to completed and the imperfect to incomplete action; 68, 70). He rightly reveals the significant role of the participle in biblical Aramaic (68–70), but fails to identify the use of forms of “be” plus the participle as periphrastic participles (merely referring to them as a “combined tense,” 69). One of the strengths of this grammar involves its simple, but helpful, descriptions of various particles and their usages (77–81).

In the back materials for this volume, Schuele provides a handy listing of idiomatic expressions found in Daniel and Ezra (95–97). An appendix introduces students to the Zakkur inscription from the eighth century B.C. by means of a brief description, a transcription, general comments, notes, and translation (98–100). Another appendix contains samples of Aramaic from the Dead Sea scroll finds at Qumran (101–4). A third appendix looks briefly at two sayings from the extrabiblical “Wisdom of Ahiqar” (105–6). Tables of paradigms complete the volume (120–45). These are arranged by verb form and conjugation (e.g., perfect Pe‘al). The first set of tables are for the perfect, followed by sets of tables for imperfect, imperative, jussive, participle, and infinitive, respectively. All types of verb patterns are combined together in each respective table—in other words, there are no separate tables for each pattern of weak verb. Such a mixing of patterns can be helpful for comparative purposes, but can also produce confusion and an impression of information overload in tables that could be more effectively presented. Unfortunately, the Aramaic font is too small for comfortable reading anywhere in the entire volume. This also contributes to difficulty in reading the paradigms.

For professors and students, Rosenthal’s volume will most likely remain the grammar of choice, though some might select the more recent *Basics of Biblical Aramaic* by Miles V. Van Pelt (Zondervan, 2011). The price of Schuele’s grammar (\$30.00) may be less than Rosenthal’s (\$38.00 or more for new condition) or Van Pelt’s (\$44.99), but it lacks appeal due to the font size, the arrangement of verb paradigms, and its sometimes overly brief descriptions. Van Pelt’s volume, in addition to its treatment of grammar, also provides students with an annotated discussion for all of the Biblical Aramaic corpus in Daniel and Ezra, as well as a fairly complete lexical list with basic glosses founded upon Koehler and Baumgartner, eds., *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Brill, 1994–2000).

Marion Ann Taylor (editor). *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012. xvii + 585pp. (cloth) \$44.95.

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

In the current generation the involvement of women at every level of biblical and theological studies is widely accepted, particularly in academic settings. Apart from limitations on ecclesiastical participation by women (as determined from normative readings of the biblical texts themselves), especially in Catholic and evangelical settings, women currently enjoy the greatest freedom of participation and ability to contribute than at any time in history. Of course, this was not always the case. With a few notable exceptions, women were generally excluded from ecclesiastical, academic, and even popular contributions to biblical interpretation.

The volume under review is a significant contribution, highlighting those notable exceptions and offering biographical/literary introductions to a number of women in church history who contributed to the discipline of biblical interpretation.

The editor of this work, Marion Ann Taylor, is Professor of Old Testament at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto. She correctly notes that the inclusion of the contributions of women in the standard reference works (McKim, *Major Biblical Interpreters* [IVP, 2007] and Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* [IVP, 2000]) is sparse and that, “some exceptional women deserved inclusion in ‘traditional’ histories of the interpretation of the Bible” (2, n9).

In her Introduction (1–22), Taylor details her goals and provides an overview of the purposes of this work. She states,

This volume continues the task of recovering and analyzing the writings of women interpreters of the Bible. It offers scholars and graduate students the challenge mentioned in many entries that the interpretative work of a particular female interpreter has not been fully studied. It provides a resource for those who wanted to include the writings of women in courses on Scripture, theology, history, religious formation, and preaching (3).

The immediate problem the reader is faced with is an exceptionally arcane description of exactly who is, and who is not to be represented in this volume (3–7). She limits the “post-nineteenth-century” women to those who are deceased (5) and, a rather subjective concept, of those whose work was “representative” (ibid). She chose to not include “contemporary biblical scholars” (6) in a sweeping array of important areas of biblical interpretation where women have made notable contributions. For instance, Eta Linnemann (1926–2009) the formidable New Testament and Bultmannian scholar, who at the peak of her career moved to a more evangelical position, is unmentioned. A deeper methodological issue for the work is that Taylor never really defines what she understands a “biblical interpreter” to actually be.

These criticisms aside, her introduction dealing with the history of women interpreters is a helpful contribution. She thoroughly details the specific problems women experienced up through the nineteenth century in relation to acceptance in a male-dominated sphere (although the marginalization of women in biblical and theological studies was often no more or less than other arenas in the academic and professional world). She perhaps makes too much of the often anonymous or pseudonymous works by women, as this was common among male writers as well. Nineteenth-century Plymouth Brethren writers often omitted their names or listed only their initials. Taylor makes reference to women such as Bathsua Makin, who adopted a “male persona” (16–17) for some of her writings. But this also was not an uncommon phenomenon. At a young age Benjamin Franklin adopted the female persona of “Silence Dogood” in order to get published.

The entries are typical for a high quality reference work. They are both signed and often have a useful introductory bibliography. The entries are alphabetically arranged but there is also a helpful chronological listing of the article subjects (557–61). There is a helpful subject index (563–78) and Scripture index (579–85).

One of the strengths of this work is exposing the reader to a host of women interpreters who are largely unknown or to more well-known women whose writings perhaps are not as widely known. As an example, the entry for “Katherine Parr” (393–99), Henry VIII’s sixth wife, is excellently researched and written. Parr’s written works, including her English translation of Thomas a’ Kempis’ *De imitatione Christi*, offers a fascinating study of her transition from Catholicism to Protestantism, which paralleled England in the Reformation. The entry for “Anne Hutchinson” (277–79), provides useful perspective, especially related to her importance in the Antinomian controversies in Puritan America.

Other strong articles are “Christina Georgina Rossetti” (425–29); the staunch defender of Martin Luther, “Argula von Grumbach” (221–23); “Jane T. Stoddart” (477–82); and an excellent article on “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (482–87) are also significant contributions. The article on “Antoinette Louisa Brown Blackwell” (79–82), which details her writing the seminal articles on the exegesis of 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12, published in the *Oberlin Quarterly Review* in 1849 (which serve as foundational works in the modern evangelical egalitarian movement) is also excellent.

The overall quality and style of the articles cover a wide spectrum. Occasionally, articles suffer from zealotry on the part of the contributor that makes their entry read more like a press release. The entry for “Dorothy L. Sayers” (434–36), while highly informative, perhaps is the most glaring example of that tendency. On the opposite end, some articles, while also informative, are tediously detailed, bordering on pedantic (e.g. “Kathleen M. Kenyon,” 306–10). A stronger editorial hand would not have been remiss in more than a few articles.

Sometimes the entries are simply mystifying. For instance in the entry for “Jane Anger” (39–40), the contributor acknowledges that “it might be stretching a point to say ‘Jane Anger’ was a significant interpreter of the Bible” (39). That seems to be an understatement. There is only one work extant and outside a few biblical allusions and indirect references to Scripture, there isn’t anything to suggest any contribution to biblical interpretation or that Anger was even attempting to present an argument based on Scripture.

As a work of reference this volume is certainly a significant contribution. The collection of references and bibliographic detail on obscure or otherwise unknown women who influenced Christianity and the larger culture admirably fulfills the stated purpose to encourage future study on women biblical interpreters.

Peter T. Vogt. *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2009. 214 pp. (paper) \$21.99.

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

Kregel’s Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis, edited by David M. Howard, Jr., continue to focus on the presentation of principles for understanding the variety of genres and strategies for preaching and teaching such text types (15). A review

for Mark D. Futato's *Interpreting the Psalms* appeared in this journal's Spring 2008 issue (19, No. 1: 118–21). Vogt, an associate professor of Old Testament at Bethel Seminary (St. Paul, MN), has also written *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah: A Reappraisal* (Eisenbrauns, 2006). Vogt's volume is the third to be published in the series. Forthcoming volumes include *Interpreting the Wisdom Literature* by Richard L. Schultz, *Interpreting the Prophets* by Michael A. Grisanti (TMS professor), and *Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature* by Richard A. Taylor.

This volume's six chapters deal with "The Genres of the Pentateuch" (25–60), "Major Themes of the Pentateuch" (61–91), "Getting Started" (93–127, focusing on preliminary aspects of interpretation), "Interpreting the Pentateuch" (129–55), "Communicating the Genres of the Pentateuch" (157–78), and "Putting It All Together" (179–209). The end material consists only of a "Glossary" (211–14). The series, though intended for the use of seminarians and pastors, still refuses to include indexes for the retrieval of information. This lack of indexing makes the series impractical for classroom use unless readers can obtain the series in digital format, which has not yet been made available.

The first chapter discusses the genres of law and narrative alone, ignoring the portions of the Pentateuch that are poetry (e.g., Gen 49, Exod 15, Num 23:7–10, 18–24; 24:3–9, 15–24; Deut 32–33). The Pentateuch contains additional poetic text units besides those major portions (e.g., Gen 2:23; 3:14–16; Num 12:6–8; 21:14–15, 17–18, 27–30). Vogt recognizes the existence of poetry in the Pentateuch as well as genealogies, but does not provide guidance for these genres (25). Although the treatment of historical approaches to the interpretation of law makes interesting reading (32–42), the same space could be more profitable to seminarians by discussing the role of poetry and songs in the Pentateuch and giving guidelines as to how to interpret those major contributions to that corpus. Vogt's treatment of the genre of law touches upon some significant topics that readers will find quite valuable. For example, he argues against the usual division of the law into three categories (civil, ceremonial, and moral; 43–44). His paradigmatic approach looks at how the law functioned as Israel's witness to the nations concerning a proper relationship to God (45). The discussion of narrative and its features presents a straightforward and normal introduction that can be found elsewhere in greater detail (as he himself notes; 48, n61).

In his chapter on major themes, Vogt assumes that the primary purpose of the creation account relates to a vigorous polemic against the ancient Near Eastern understanding of origins (62). By taking this approach, he minimizes the revelatory significance of the account in Genesis 1–2. While Vogt correctly focuses on a theocentric theme in the creation account, he undermines divine authority by treating the text of the creation account as merely a vehicle of theology rather than of history. By interpreting Gen 3:8 as "the cool of the day" (72), the author's own interpretative methodology manifests its flaws in a failure to pay attention to detail. In an unfallen, pre-flood world the "wind of the day" (a literal translation of the Hebrew) could be very different than in a post-flood world. It could have been a warm wind. The point is that "the cool of the day" is an imposition of a later environment on the reading of the text. Besides the themes of the sovereignty and supremacy of Yahweh (62–71) and the seriousness of sin (71–79), Vogt provides a

significant contribution regarding the grace of Yahweh in the Pentateuch (79–85). Finally, he examines the metanarrative, which correlates the other themes into the concept of a “restoration project” (85–91), which returns to his paradigmatic approach to the interpretation of law.

Textual criticism (93–99), comparative analysis of ancient Near Eastern materials (99–117), and a recommended bibliography of source materials (117–27) occupy the third chapter. Vogt seems to have an overly-ready willingness to abandon the Masoretic Text in favor of other versions (esp., 94). One would need to examine more than just the two examples he provides in order to determine exactly how ready he is to replace the traditional Hebrew text. Similarities between ancient Near Eastern parallels and the biblical text “can be *vastly* over-stated” (112, emphasis Vogt’s). Vogt rightly warns readers of making too much of the similarities and too little of the obvious dissimilarities. However, his discussion falls short of fully and clearly answering his own questions: “Should we conclude that the biblical texts simply have adopted the ancient Near Eastern texts and modified them slightly to fit ancient Israelite sensibilities? Or is there another possibility?” (112). John N. Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Zondervan, 2009) offers a much clearer and more straightforward understanding of this matter—see the review in this journal’s Spring 2010 issue (21, No. 1: 125–27). Unfortunately, Vogt does not even mention Oswalt’s volume.

When Vogt moves on to the specifics for interpreting the Pentateuch, he reveals a bit more of his own set of assumptions. For example, he holds to an essentially Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, while allowing for later textual insertions and updating (134–36). This reviewer finds the examples of insertions and updating unconvincing and lacking adequate explanation. They appear to be but one more example of inadequate exegetical analysis of particular texts like Num 12:3 (134). The guidelines Vogt presents for interpreting both law (136–46) and narrative (146–55) explain his methodology well. These thirty pages act merely as preparation for the final chapter of the volume, which interprets Lev 19:28 as the sample legal text (179–94) and Genesis 39 as the sample narrative text (194–209). Readers would benefit from the addition of a sample treatment of a crux like Num 12:3 or Genesis 1, but such texts might unveil some of the apparent weaknesses in Vogt’s methodology.

How can the teacher or preacher best communicate the genres of Pentateuchal law and history, so that his hearers rightly understand the biblical text? Vogt offers some well-worded advice in the fifth chapter prefaced by an analysis of the normal mindset of the modern reader to the Old Testament and the Pentateuch (158–64).

Overall, this reviewer remains unimpressed and dissatisfied with the Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis series. In seeking to be broadly evangelical, they avoid key issues and give too much credence to marginal issues. The volumes remain virtually unusable for the seminary courses in exegesis due to the lack of indexes to provide students with the ability to search for specific texts and issues. Vogt’s most valuable contribution consists of his paradigmatic approach to law and its illustration. But, is that alone worth the price of a book, which discourages readers from repeated use as a handy reference volume?

Daniel B. Wallace, ed. *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic and Apocryphal Evidence*. Text and Canon of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2011. 284 pp. (paper) \$29.99.

Reviewed by Kelly T. Osborne, Associate Professor of New Testament.

Since the publication of his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1996), Daniel B. Wallace (hereafter DW), has become a household, or perhaps a “seminary-hold,” name to a whole generation of theological students. He is professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary, as well as the director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts.

In *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic and Apocryphal Evidence* (RCN), DW brings his expertise in textual criticism to bear both as editor of the book and a new series entitled Text and Canon of the New Testament, for which this is the inaugural volume. The series and its first entry (RCN) are meant to tackle such questions as, “[C]an we recover . . . through rigorous analysis of surviving manuscripts and scribal methods, what [the autographic text of the NT] . . . looked like?” and “[S]hould these twenty-seven [NT] books be treated with more authority than the myriad of [non-canonical] books written by Christians in the early centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus?” (13). In other words, what is the precise wording of the NT writings, and are Christians right to regard them as authoritative for belief and practice? Although most Bible-believing Christians of any era would, I suspect, almost instinctively affirm the authority of the NT writings, these same believers could be somewhat less sure of their exact wording in every detail. An example of a NT textual variation, which might give many faithful pause as to which reading is correct based on the evidence we currently possess, is the Gospel of Mark and whether it should end at 16:8 or 16:20? Thus, the book and series have the laudable goal of providing their readers with evidentiary support for the authority and accuracy of Christianity’s “founding documents.”

Lest anyone regard this as an exercise in proving the obvious, it must be pointed out that in just the last decade the reception of such runaway bestsellers as Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* (Doubleday, 2003) and Bart Ehrman’s *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (HarperCollins, 2005) has revealed a growing interest of the general reading public in claims that the NT documents are neither unique nor authoritative, so challenging what most Bible-believing Christians accept as both clear and settled. To this historical revisionism and its widespread effects, various evangelical authors, such as Ben Witherington, Craig Evans and Timothy Jones, have not been slow to offer reasoned answers accessible to the general reader.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Ben Witherington, *The Gospel Code: Novel Claims about Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Da Vinci* (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity, 2004); Craig Evans, *Fabricating Jesus How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL, IVP, 2006); and Timothy Jones, *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman’s Misquoting Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL, IVP, 2007). Cf. also

RCN, however, was designed for a more scholarly readership than the books just mentioned and specifically interacts with Ehrman's *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford, 1993), the book upon which his *Misquoting Jesus* relied heavily. In order to formulate a reasoned reply to Ehrman's work, especially *Orthodox Corruption*, DW has enlisted the help of five of his former students.

The book is divided into six chapters (19–266), each by a different author, beginning with DW's contribution, "Lost in Transmission: How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?" (19–55), followed by chapter 2, "The Least Orthodox Reading Is to be Preferred: A New Canon for New Testament Textual Criticism?" by Philip M. Miller (57–89), chapter 3, "The Legacy of a Letter: Sabellianism or Scribal Blunder in John 1.1c" by Matthew P. Morgan (91–126), chapter 4, "Patristic Theology and Recension in Matthew 24.36: An Evaluation of Ehrman's Text-Critical Methodology" by Adam G. Messer (127–88), chapter 5, "Tracking Thomas: A Text-Critical Look at the Transmission of the Gospel of Thomas" by Tim Ricchuiti (189–228), and finally, chapter 6, "Jesus as ΘΕΟΣ [God]: A Textual Examination" by Brian J. Wright. Three indexes of Scripture (267–72), Ancient Sources (273–77) and Author/Subject (278–84) conclude the volume.

DW's chapter, "Lost in Transmission: How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?" expands the discussion featured in "The Textual Reliability of the New Testament: A Dialogue" published earlier by Fortress Press.<sup>2</sup> He gives the reader the "big picture" of what is happening in the field of NT textual criticism. He observes that Ehrman has been at the forefront of a group of scholars who attack the NT's reliability with the claim that its "text is in such bad repair that we must abandon all hope of recovering anything close to the original wording" (19). Nevertheless, DW stakes out common ground with Ehrman, noting their agreement about the large number of variant readings in surviving Greek manuscripts (MSS) of the NT (300,000–400,000), that the vast majority of these do not affect the meaning of the text, that some passages (e.g., Mark 16:9–20, John 7:53–8:11, 1 John 5:7) were not part of the writings as they came from their respective authors, and that later scribes occasionally deliberately changed the NT text (20–21).

The disagreements between DW and Ehrman follow (22–25). After listing their different attitudes, DW responds by posing and answering three questions about ". . . the number of variants—how many scribal changes are there? . . . the nature of the variants—what kinds of textual variants are there? . . ." and "the theological issues . . . at stake" (26). What do such large numbers of variants actually mean? After all, statistics can be misleading. A better perspective is gained, DW maintains, by contrasting NT MSS with the MS tradition of classical Greek or Roman authors, because these have only a fraction of the variants found in the NT textual tradition. But this small number occurs mainly because so few MSS of

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James Garlow and Peter Jones, *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* (Colorado Springs, Victor, 2004); J. Ed Komiszewski, et al., *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Robert B. Stewart, *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart D. Ehrman and Daniel B. Wallace in Dialogue* (Fortress, 2011).

classical authors' works survive. In addition, there are numerous MSS extant within 200 years of the writing of the NT, whereas the smallest time gap between any classical author and the first surviving copy of his or her work (complete or fragmentary) is at least 300 years. Indeed the abundance of evidence for the text of the NT is overwhelming (26–30).

The large number of variant readings for the NT also demonstrates openness in the process of textual transmission, which contrasts sharply with that of, for example, the Qur'an. This is significant because Ehrman argues (or at least implies) that only after doctrinal orthodoxy had won the day did the text of the NT become standardized, essentially conforming the text's wording to the theological positions considered orthodox. DW points out that although this clearly happened with the Qur'an, there is no evidence for such a process in the NT MSS (34–40).

DW then addresses the question of the nature of the variants in the NT MSS. The answer is clear. Only a tiny number of variants are what he terms "both meaningful and viable," and certainly far less than the impression created by Ehrman (40–43). The third question is the kind of theological issue involved in those places in the NT MSS where orthodox scribes (or those directing them) have introduced "major changes" into the text, including specifically Matt 24:36. Here the words οὐδὲ τὸν υἱόν ("nor the Son") are absent from some MSS. Does this indicate that orthodox scribes omitted them so as to strengthen the case for Jesus' deity? Ehrman not only argues thus, but also that this omission constitutes the most damning evidence in his case against the reliability of the NT text. DW goes on to show, however, that Ehrman's skepticism is unwarranted and that there are other just as good or even better explanations for the absence of these words (43–49).

DW concludes his chapter with three reasons for the "essential reliability" of the NT text in the Greek MSS. First, since Matthew's and Luke's literary dependence on Mark shows only modest changes from the latter's text, it follows that scribes tasked with "merely" copying the text of Mark (or any part of the NT) would have been even more careful to reproduce accurately what they read. Second, different NT MSS give evidence of both careless and careful copying, which argues against any conspiracy by misguided believers to change the text of the NT in favor of readings that were more Christologically orthodox. Finally, more influential in textual changes was the scribal tendency of harmonizing Gospel accounts, mostly in places whose wording has little or nothing to do with orthodox doctrine (49–55). The overall result is that, according to DW, we can have complete confidence in the reliability of over 99 percent of the text of the NT (43).

In chapter 2 (57–89), Philip Miller asks whether Bart Ehrman has added another canon of criticism to textual-critical methodology, namely, "*the least orthodox reading is to be preferred*" (58; italics original). He reviews Patristic evidence and the modern era of textual-critical scholarship, observing a general recognition in both periods that orthodox scribes occasionally altered texts for theological reasons and noting that Ehrman's contributions have taken "the 'canon of unorthodoxy'... to a new level" (59–67). From Ehrman's own writings Miller shows how he applies the canon to Christologically significant texts in Matthew (24:36), John (1:18), Hebrews (2:9) and a number of other passages (67–84). In the end, Miller argues,

Ehrman's conclusions extend beyond the evidence and may have distorted his perspective of the textual transmission. In addition, the canon of unorthodoxy itself appears to be inadequate due to the lack of evidence supporting it and the distorting force it appears to apply to textual analysis.... [W]e can conclude that the least orthodox reading, by itself, is not a viable canon for determining the preferred reading [of the NT text] (88–89).

By contrast to the breadth of Miller's work, Matthew Morgan's chapter (91–126) focuses on only one part of one verse (John 1.1c) by investigating whether its text should, with the eighth-century codices Regius (L, 019) and Freerianus (W<sup>S</sup>, 032-S), insert the Greek (definite) article before θεός (καὶ ὁ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος, "the Word was the God"), or rather omit it, as *all* of the remaining NT Greek MS tradition testifies (καὶ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος, "the Word was God"; 91–95). The first option, read by L and W<sup>S</sup>, supports Sabellianism (Modalism, or, modalistic Monarchianism, the heresy that the persons of the Godhead have "no independent subsistence" as individual persons, but are only differentiated by "three operations"),<sup>3</sup> and if traceable to earlier MS *testimonia* could be evidence that L and W<sup>S</sup> retain the original reading of John 1:1. The second option is found in all other Greek MSS and supports the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity (92–102). Morgan then examines in detail the scribal activity in these two codices, in addition to considering the "grammatical viability" of the unique reading of L and W<sup>S</sup> to see whether there are legitimate signs of a concerted orthodox effort to eliminate from the text of the NT a heretical doctrine which could claim to be more original than the orthodox reading (102–23). His conclusion? L and W<sup>S</sup> include the extra article because of careless scribal tendencies, not because all other MSS have been conspiratorially conformed to orthodox doctrine (123–24).

Adam Messer evaluates Bart Ehrman's text-critical methodology in chapter 4 (127–88) by an in-depth investigation of whether or not the words οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός ("nor the Son") belong to the original text of Matt 24:36. Ehrman claims that they were indeed original (⋈<sup>\*.2vid</sup> B D Θ Ⓣ *f*<sup>13</sup> 28, etc., according to UBS 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. apparatus),<sup>4</sup> and that later pious scribes, alarmed by the idea of the second person of the Trinity professing ignorance, omitted the phrase (*omit* ⋈<sup>1</sup>L W Δ<sup>d</sup> 33... Byz [E F G H Σ] *Lect*, etc.) in a deliberate attempt to conform all texts to orthodox doctrine at the expense of the true original reading of the first Gospel (130–45). Messer then surveys the Church Fathers to see at what point historically the ignorance of the Son seems to have become enough of a difficulty that scribes may have tended to omit the phrase (145–69). The evidence, according to Messer, rather than supporting Ehrman's conspiracy theory, suggests that the phrase was original in Matthew's Gospel, but that elsewhere omissions probably occurred as a result of a

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<sup>3</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London and New York, Continuum, 1977), 121, citing Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.*, 5.1 (*Sed quia duos unum volant esse, ut idem pater et filius habeatur...*).

<sup>4</sup> MSS witnesses are cited from K. Aland, *et al.*, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed., 9<sup>th</sup> prt. (Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 2005). See p. 95 for the full listing of witnesses.

common tendency of later scribes to harmonize to the wording of Mark's text (169–79). In his concluding thoughts, Messer notes the disingenuousness of a method such as Ehrman's which constantly looks for "orthodox corruption" wherever there are variant readings in Christologically significant passages (179–82). Two appendices summarizing the Patristic evidence on Matt 24:36 and outlining how accidental orthographic corruptions occur bring the chapter to an end (183–88).

Chapter 5 (189–228) has Tim Ricchuiti comparing the three Greek text fragments of the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt (P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655) with the more substantial remains of the Gospel in Coptic, discovered at Nag Hammadi (NHC II 2.51.32–51). His purpose is to determine, based on "universally recognized principles of textual criticism" whether the Greek or Coptic is more likely to represent faithfully the original text and whether scholars are right to describe the text of Thomas as "fluid," and furthermore what such fluidity entails (189–91). He describes the method and limitations of his study as well as the MS attestation to the Gospel (192–97) before embarking on a line by line comparison of the Coptic and Greek fragments (198–226). He draws the conclusion that the Coptic preserves a more original text than P. Oxy. 1 (*logia* 27–33), while P. Oxy. 654 and 655 are likely more original as compared with the parallel *logia* ("sayings") in the Coptic MS (226–227). In addition, Ricchuiti contends, "it does indeed appear that the Coptic scribe altered [the text of] Thomas in such a way as to make it more amenable to the community that eventually decided to include it in the Nag Hammadi writings" (228).

Finally, in chapter 6 (229–66), Brian Wright guides the reader through the seventeen NT passages, which are regarded by the preponderance of scholars as giving clear evidence that Jesus was explicitly called θεός ("God"). After eliminating ten of these passages (Rom 9:5, Col 2:2, Matt 1:23, John 17:3, Eph 5:5, 2 Thess 1:12, 1 Tim 3:16, Titus 2:13, 1 John 5:20, and Jude 4), mostly because there is debate regarding the exegetical understanding of these verses, Wright continues by evaluating the textual certainty of the remaining seven verses, John 1:1, 1:18, 20:28, Acts 20:28, Gal 2:20, Heb 1:8, and 2 Pet 1:1 (235–64). In all but one instance, Wright concludes, it is either certain or extremely probable that the authors are clearly ascribing deity to Jesus (264–65). A convenient chart summarizes the results of this study (266).

In general, Bible-believing Christians everywhere owe a debt of gratitude to *RCN*'s publisher, editor and authors for the service they have rendered to the Christian reading public in producing this work. The challenge posed by the lobby of thoroughly skeptical scholars like Bart Ehrman needs a detailed and articulate response, if, as a community, evangelical Christians are to be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks [them] to give an account for the hope that is in [them], ... with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet 3:15, NAS<sup>95</sup>). Not only have the various authors of *RCN* vigorously and cogently defended the reliability of 99 percent of the Greek text of the NT even down to the retention or omission of a single letter (chapters 1 and 3), but they have shown convincingly that, contrary to the desperate skepticism of a Bart Ehrman, there is no warrant for seeing a vast orthodox conspiracy cynically expurgating MSS of theologically unacceptable wording (chapter 2 and 4). In fact, the text of the Gospel of Thomas seems to suggest just such editorial tendencies for a non-canonical writing (chapter 5). On

the other hand, there is unmistakable evidence that the NT affirms the deity of Christ in numerous places (chapter 6).

A few cautionary notes need to be sounded, however. First, DW and Messer assume the literary connection between the Synoptic Gospels with Markan priority as the best way to explain that relationship (50, 53 and 127). Although this point does not figure prominently throughout his chapter or the rest of *RCN*, it is a salutary warning that one must read with discernment. Solid reason exists for questioning both the accuracy and usefulness of the Two Document Hypothesis.<sup>5</sup> That DW uses it in his case for the accuracy of scribal transmission of MSS actually weakens his argument, because if Matthew and Luke changed the text of Mark for theological reasons in their writings, does it not at least raise the possibility that later scribes could have thought the same way?

While largely agreeing with the majority of the argumentation and the results of the different authors, this reviewer found several features of the work to be either irritating or badly in need of better editing. Typographical errors appear frequently enough that the publisher needs to give much more thorough attention to it, whether they prepare to publish further volumes in this series or they decide to reprint *RCN*. For example, page 55, n. 93 should read 94, page 112 second line from the bottom of the text (*Neor?*), page 170, line 11, read Petersen, page 177, line 16, read “an” for “and,” page 179, n. 185, for “were” read “where,” page 237, last line, the remainder of the word “be-” is not continued on the next page [-havior?]. In addition, italics are lacking twice on page 58, n. 5.

If *RCN* is meant to be scholarly in nature, then it would surely be necessary to include the full Greek text of the verses which form the context of the variants under discussion. Since this is actually provided on page 256 with Heb 1:8-9, why was it not done on pages 68 (Matt 24:36), 69 (Mark 13:32), 72 (John 1:18), 77 (Heb. 2:9b), 121 (Rev 18:23), 235 (John 1:1), 241 (John 1:18), 249 (John 20:28) and 254 (Gal 2:20)?

In some places English usage tries one's patience. It is possible to forego the detailing of such business jargon neologisms as “to reference” and “to source,” but one cannot overlook the last line on page 106, where one should read “lies” for “lays,” a common infelicity these days. Constant use of metaphor becomes distracting, e.g., page 124, where in ten lines one endures “the halls of history,” “unchartered [*sic*; properly, “uncharted”] territory” and “unsightly myth.” On the matter of clarity, it would be helpful to know what is meant by “diminutive notions of the Son” (144), “politically unfeasible” (160), or whether such a notion as “the modern Christian conception of Christ” even exists (197; do all modern Christians regard Christ in the same way?!).

It is anachronistic to speak of Irenaeus and Hilary writing in France (167; read “Gaul”). Is it too much to ask for definitions of technical terms like *Vorlage* (112, 240) and *Ausgangstexte* (229, 236)? Page numbers belong to the cross-references within *RCN* on pages 54, n. 92 and 238, n. 42. A complete list of the seventeen references in the NT which Brian Wright notes as affirming the deity of Christ

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<sup>5</sup> Cf., for example, R. L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, eds., *The Jesus Crisis: The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1998).

would have helped the reader (232), even if he only discusses seven of them. On page 176, the date of the council of Nicea (AD 325) is needed for clarifying the chronology, while it is questionable whether many readers would know without any prompting that it is also the first ecumenical council (231). Is it appropriate to omit documentation when referring to Ehrman's work "elsewhere" (75, 130–31)? Moreover, a publication of this nature really merits a comprehensive bibliography.

Finally, I find the various dedications to detract from the overall scholarly tone of the book. They become what one might call *pro homine* arguments, which, like all *ad hominem* remarks, do not belong in scholarly discourse.

In spite of these criticisms, however, I would urge the readers of this journal to take the time and make the effort to work through the details of *RCN*. It would be a mistake for anyone to think that the kind of work on textual criticism represented by *RCN* is irrelevant to the average Christian. Some well-meaning believers might have the attitude of "Why bother with such trivial details in 1,000 (or 1,500) year old manuscripts, since after all, don't we really all just need to love Jesus?" But how do we know clearly who Jesus is and what He has done, if the NT does not provide a reliable record of Him? And how can we be sure that the NT provides a reliable record if the Greek MSS that have survived cannot be trusted to give us an accurate account of the original eyewitness testimony to this Jesus whom we worship? If we cannot trust the Greek MSS or the testimony that they report, how can we tell whether or not we have followed what the apostle Peter called "cleverly devised tales" (2 Pet 1:16)? In fact the only way to know if we have followed the truth is if we today possess thoroughly trustworthy accounts of who Jesus was (and is) and what He actually did. That is why it is so important for a book like *RCN* to be published, to be read, and to be understood, not just by a handful of academically-minded scholars, but by as many as possible of those who seek to be faithful followers of our Savior today.