

# Book Reviews

*Logos Bible Software Series X - Scholar's Library* (Bellingham, WA: Logos), \$599.95; and *BibleWorks 6.0* (Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, LLC), \$295.00.

This is a comparative review of the two most widely used Bible software programs in use today. Because of my interest in biblical language software, I regularly have both professors and students ask my advice about which program to purchase. Persons take such care in their decisions because of the expensive price tag on such programs (anywhere from \$100 to more than \$600). For a person with a PC who intends to work in the original Greek and Hebrew texts, I think there are only two options: *Logos* ([www.logos.com](http://www.logos.com)) or *BibleWorks* ([www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com)).

Before discussing *Logos* and *BibleWorks*, one other program must be mentioned. The non-profit organization *Gramcord* produces a powerful and inexpensive program (see [www.gramcord.org](http://www.gramcord.org)). Yet, I do not think *Gramcord's* user-interface is as intuitively-based as *Logos* or *BibleWorks*. A perusal of *Gramcord's* print and Internet advertising literature will demonstrate a similar plethora of information without adequate organization. Ultimately, a software program is only valuable if one actually uses it. I prefer programs that "raise the valleys up and bring the mountains and hills low"—thus my focus on *Logos* and *BibleWorks* in this review.

If you prefer digital versions of

biblical reference books to their traditional print format, there is only one program for you—the *Libronix Digital Library System* (formerly the *Logos Library System*). The *Libronix* system can be purchased at several levels. As one goes up the tiers, the price increases, but so does the level of access to resources and tools. In this review, I will focus on the top-of-the-line product, *Logos Bible Software Series X - Scholar's Library*.

The base program comes with more than 230 Bibles and Bible reference titles, which, if purchased in equivalent print editions would cost more than \$5,000. In addition to many Christian classics, popular works, and standard reference titles (e.g., Calvin's *Institutes*, Warren Wiersbe's "Be" Series, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*), the *Scholar's Library* comes with a solid collection of original language texts (Nestle-Aland's 27<sup>th</sup> edition Greek New Testament, the Hebrew Old Testament [BHS], Rahlfs's edition of the Septuagint, the *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, and others).

Depending on the size of one's hard drive and how much money one is willing to spend, the *Libronix Digital Library* can be expanded almost endlessly. Many theological books and journals that are currently being published are available for purchase in digital format for access through *Libronix*. For a missionary, a person with limited shelf space, or a person of limited mobility, there is little doubt that this program would prove especially useful. At the same time,

one should note that some publishers, such as Zondervan, have their own proprietary format for electronic publishing. Similarly, Ages software offers numerous titles in PDF format. While *Libronix* is an obvious leader in digital publishing, it does not have a monopoly.

One thing that *Scholar's Library* and similar programs cannot provide the user, however, is the wisdom to know which reference works are worth accessing. Thus, while a user of *Scholar's Library* may simply type in a Scripture reference or topic and have at his immediate disposal dozens of digital books turned to just the right page (similar to a *Google* Internet search), the more difficult task is having the experience and wisdom to evaluate critically these voices. For a pastor who does not know the titles or authors of many of these books, his uncritical use of everything the library search engine pulls up will result in a sermon of unpredictable accuracy. With digital books, like print books, comes the responsibility of critical thought. Unfortunately, the ease of accessing digital works can sometimes produce an intoxicating and unreflective imbibing of data. Even with this caveat, for a theologian or minister, there is no other digital library system worth purchasing, in my opinion. *Libronix* is the standard by which all other digital library programs will be judged.

For persons who intend to use the program primarily for access to original language texts and language

reference works, my endorsement is more guarded. Admittedly, the program is good and powerful. As in other excellent biblical software programs, one can search quickly on words, display lexicon entries, and view parsing information as the cursor moves over words in the text. As a Greek teacher, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the *Scholar's Library* employs *Gramcord's* morphological tagging system and that the unabridged *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT or Kittel) comes as standard. The educated pastor or ministerial student who uses the *Scholars' Library* for work in the original Greek and Hebrew texts will not be disappointed. Yet, after spending some time with this program and a few others, it seems to me that *BibleWorks* still has the advantage. *BibleWorks* has a more intuitively-based interface. In other words, when one wants to do something in the program and does not know how, one can figure it out more quickly and naturally without reference to "help" functions or manuals. Also, *BibleWorks* is amazingly faster in searches. (This speed comparison is well-documented in a September, 2003 article of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*.)

From my interaction with *BibleWorks* employees, I have to admit that I have a bias for their "small company" feel. In addition, I know they are active in providing their software at low or no costs to pastors in impoverished countries.

I have heard criticisms of *BibleWorks'* morphological databases, but it seems to me that those criticisms

are unfounded. It is true that searches in the original language texts are only as reliable as the morphological taggings in the databases that underlie them. In other words, if the computer programmers that created the database missed tagging a few of the infinitive forms of the Greek verb *luō*, then your search for all of these forms of the verb will turn up inaccurate results. While *Scholar's Library* and *BibleWorks* both rely on very reputable databases, some persons have claimed that the *Gramcord* database is the most reliable (and the *Libronix* system now comes with the *Gramcord* database). *BibleWorks*, however, contests this claim—offering both the Friberg database and their own *BibleWorks* NT morphology. According to the owner of *BibleWorks*, Mike Bushnell, he cannot remember the last time an error was reported in the *BibleWorks* NT morphology. And, there is also a companion *BibleWorks* LXX morphology, which makes searching the LXX and NT together easier.

The new Version 6.0 of *BibleWorks* comes with some nice additional features. I will list the ones I find most useful, both personally and as a professor: a diagramming program, an interactive Hebrew tutorial, Greek texts of the Apostolic Fathers, a morphologically-tagged Greek version of Josephus, the Peshitta, the Targums, morphologically-tagged Qumran sectarian documents (with unlock code), customized Hebrew and Greek vocabulary flashcards, and expanded "mouse right click" options to lexical and grammatical resources. As with older versions of *BibleWorks*, numer-

ous versions of the biblical text can be placed alongside each other for comparison and original language helps appear in a small box at the bottom of the screen as the cursor is placed over the Greek and Hebrew texts. Statistics and word lists are displayed on the upper right and a digital notepad is found on the bottom right. Screen formatting, along with most other options, can be changed. One thing I especially like about *BibleWorks* is the detailed print instruction manual and free demonstration videos that come with the program. Whatever others say, in my opinion, "help functions" simply do not compare to a hard copy manual. And, I personally do not want to take several hours to print out a manual on my ink jet printer.

A salesman at *Logos Research Systems* admitted to me that *BibleWorks* is better than the base *Scholar's Library* at detailed and complex searches in the original language, which is why, he said, *Logos* just came out with the *Biblical Languages Supplement* (BLS – [www.logos.com/bls](http://www.logos.com/bls)). However, after buying the *Scholar's Library* for \$599, few people want to pay an additional \$159.95 to upgrade the original language functions. Admittedly, the BLS comes with some helpful tools—for example, a fantastic diagramming program, but the extra cost is hard to justify when the *BibleWorks* package is only \$299. Of course, with the *Scholar's Library*, one has access to many books and reference works with are not available with other programs (e.g., TDNT or—for additional purchase—the entire *Word Biblical Commentary* series).

The breadth of resources available in digital format can begin to cloud one's vision—similar to “new car fever”—if one is not careful. You must honestly ask yourself some questions: Do I use digital versions of books now? If not, would you find it enjoyable or even preferable to begin reading your books from the computer screen? What will happen to your expensive digital collection of books if future technology makes their current format obsolete? At your death, will a hard drive rather than shelves of books be passed along to your children?

If price were no issue, I would recommend owning a copy of the *Scholar's Library* to access digital books, journals, and commentaries and a copy of *BibleWorks* for original language work. Also, if I owned both programs, I would occasionally run an original language search on both, since they use different morphological tagging. I would also possibly employ some of the graphical features in the *Scholar's Library*. Version 6.0 of *BibleWorks* has a diagramming feature, but it does not have the flexibility of the *Scholar's Library*—where Greek, English, and blank diagrams can be interchanged at the click of a button.

In the end, the question is—do you want a digital library or do you want a software tool to access the original language texts? If you do not care about books and journals in digital format (excluding original language reference works), buy *BibleWorks*. ([www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com)). If a digital library is essential, then buy the *Scholar's Library* ([www.logos.com/](http://www.logos.com/)

scholars); you can add the *Biblical Languages Supplement* if you find the additional need for complex original language searches.

Robert L. Plummer

*Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. By Larry W. Hurtado. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, xxii + 746 pp., \$55.00.

Larry Hurtado remarks in the preface that his work is not a NT Christology but represents an attempt to analyze “the beliefs and religious practices that constituted devotion to Jesus as a divine figure in earliest Christianity” (p. xiii). In this monumental study Hurtado challenges the view that has enjoyed significant influence in NT studies since the publication of Bousset's *Kyrios Christos* (1913). Hurtado defends three theses in the book: (1) devotion to Jesus emerged remarkably early among Jesus' followers; (2) such devotion with all its intensity and diversity was unparalleled in the religious milieu of the Greco-Roman world; and (3) Jesus was revered as divine by his early followers and yet such worship of Jesus occurred within a monotheistic framework.

Hurtado sketches in the context in which devotion to Christ blossomed, ably defending the notion that the Jewish religion was indeed monotheistic, that Jesus' ministry played a crucial role in the reverence given to him, that early Christians had powerful religious experiences of Jesus Christ, including experiences of Jesus as the resurrected Lord, and that the

distinctive Christian understanding of Jesus emerged as a result of intra-Jewish polemics and over against Greco-Roman paganism.

In the heart of the book Hurtado surveys the historical evidence to verify his thesis, and he considers in order: early Pauline Christianity, Judean Jewish Christianity, Q and early devotion to Jesus, Jesus books (by which he means the Synoptic Gospels), Johannine Christianity, other Jesus books outside the canon (including the Gospel of Peter, infancy gospels, and the Gospel of Thomas), second century evidence (though he includes here some influences from the first century including Hebrews and later Pauline texts), the contribution of Valentinus and Marcion, and the proto-orthodox view.

It seems to me that the main thesis propounded by Hurtado is correct, and hence his work functions as a much-needed corrective to Bousset's view, though many others, of course, have registered disagreement with Bousset before Hurtado. For the remainder of the review, I will make a few comments (since the size of the book precludes detailed interaction) beginning with his section on Paul, which is one of the most helpful sections in the book. Hurtado demonstrates from Paul's letters that Paul's Christology finds its roots in the earliest Jewish Christian churches and cannot be assigned to Hellenistic Christianity as Bousset argued. We should note in addition that the neat distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity has been demolished by the work of Hengel, with which, Hurtado, not surpris-

ingly, agrees. Hurtado also argues effectively against Dunn that Paul taught Jesus' pre-existence. The high status of Jesus is evident in that he was worshiped. That Jesus was worshiped is clear by prayers to Jesus, the invocation of Jesus and confession of him as Lord, baptism in his name, the Lord's supper, and hymns that celebrate Jesus Christ. The high status afforded to Jesus did not compromise monotheism, but was understood to bring glory to God the Father.

One of the less convincing features of Hurtado's book is his tendency to accept critical orthodoxy throughout. For instance, he includes his chapter on Q before consulting the Synoptic Gospels. Placing Q before the Synoptics is a rather strange procedure since the nature of Q is keenly debated, and some scholars question whether it even existed. Even if Q did exist, the document (or oral tradition) has never been unearthed, and so we do not know (contrary to the confident assertions of some!) what was actually contained in the alleged document. Therefore, it is rather speculative to write about the Christology found in Q to say the least. Perhaps Hurtado's purpose is to demonstrate the plausibility of his theory even if one adopts a Q hypothesis, since he argues that even Q does not point to variant form of Christian belief regarding Jesus Christ. In any case, reading this chapter on Q reminded me that biblical scholars who complain that those who do systematics are guilty of too much speculation should look carefully in the mirror.

In the chapter on the Synoptic Gospels Hurtado intriguingly argues

that Son of Man is not a title in the Synoptics or John. But Hurtado's view fails to convince, for he underemphasizes the role of Daniel 7:13-14 by limiting the allusion to Daniel 7 at Jesus' trial to a literary device and by arguing that texts that refer to Daniel 7:13-14 are late. He concludes, therefore, that the link to Daniel 7 is not central. Hurtado's position collapses if the events at Jesus' trial do not represent a later reflection but portray Jesus' actual citation of the Danielic text at his trial. Furthermore, the rendering of Son of Man as *huios tou anthrōpou* (with the article) consistently in the Gospels suggests that the Gospel writers view the term as a title. Having said this, readers will profit much from the christological discussion in both the Synoptics and John provided by Hurtado.

Hurtado's careful discussion of writings outside the canon from the first and second centuries is also useful and informed. He considers the role of Jesus in both heterodox and what he calls proto-orthodox writings. One of the interesting features of Hurtado's book is that he often speaks of the binitarian character of early Christian worship. He notes occasionally the trinitarian character of some texts, but does not probe how this fits his emphasis on the binitarian character of early Christianity. Perhaps Hurtado excludes the Spirit because his aim is to establish a critically assured minimum relative to Jesus. Still, he fails to qualify his study with any caveats regarding the Spirit, and such an oversight is rather astonishing for a historical study since there is significant evidence in the NT

supporting the trinitarian character of early Christianity. This review should not end on a negative note since Hurtado's book is an erudite and mammoth study demonstrating that Jesus was worshiped as God in earliest Christianity without compromising monotheism. Perhaps the views of Bousset and his ilk have received a death-blow from Hurtado.

Thomas R. Schreiner

*Ascent to Love: A Guide to Dante's Divine Comedy.* By Peter J. Leithart. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 183 pp., \$12.00 paper.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* is without doubt one of the great classics of world literature, and is regarded by some to be the greatest Christian allegory ever written. While I disagree that it is the greatest Christian allegory (for me, *Pilgrim's Progress* takes that honor), it is an amazing work that is impressive on many levels. In order to fully appreciate the genius of the work, however, it will be necessary for most twenty-first century readers to secure the assistance of a guide. Peter Leithart is a fine guide and he offers his services in *Ascent to Love*.

There are five chapters in Leithart's book. The first two are introduction to Dante's ideas and poetry, and the last three are a brief commentary on each of the three books that make up the *Divine Comedy*. In the first chapter he introduces readers to the medieval concept of *courtly love*, which is one of the controlling motifs of the *Divine Comedy*, and which, furthermore, has



been highly influential in our own ideas on the meaning of love. The commentary is very helpful. Leithart points out a multitude of interesting features and ideas that the average reader would be likely to miss on reading Dante for the first time.

I found *Ascent to Love* to be helpful, and I would advise a first time reader of Dante to read *Ascent to Love* prior to starting on the *Divine Comedy*. It will enrich the experience.

Jim Orrick

*Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry.* By John Piper. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002, 286 pp., \$14.99 paper.

In this book Piper turns his passionate voice to address pastoral ministry, an area desperately needing reappraisal today. This book is a collection of thirty brief (typically six pages) exhortations originally written to his fellow elders at Bethlehem Baptist Church or for his denominational magazine. The essays are not intended to develop in any certain order and the book is not intended as a comprehensive introduction to pastoral ministry. Rather, it is a collection of bold meditations and exhortations on various facets of pastoral ministry and Christian living. The title, "Brothers, We Are Not Professionals," comes from the lead essay but does also establish the viewpoint of ministry found throughout the rest of the essays. In his preface, Piper explains his choice of title:

The title of this book is meant

to shake us loose from the pressure to fit into the cultural expectations of professionalism. It is meant to sound an alarm against the expectations of parity in pay and against the borrowing of paradigms from the professional world. Oh, for radically Bible-saturated, God-centered, Christ-exalting, self-sacrificing, mission-mobilizing, soul-saving, culture-confronting pastors! . . . For every sick shepherd who offends unnecessarily, a hundred are so frightened to offend that the sword of the Spirit has become rubber in their mouths and the mighty biblical mingling of severity and kindness has vanished from their ministry. (xii)

This sort of exhortation needs to be heard widely if we are to return to New Testament church vitality.

Among the essays a few stood out as particularly good to me. In "Brothers, Fight for Your Life" Piper issues a moving, strong and encouraging exhortation to good reading, suggesting that it is essential for ministerial vitality in a hurried culture. "Brothers, Let Us Query the Text" and "Brothers, Bitzer Was a Banker" (both available on the website of Union University's Center for Biblical Studies, [www.uu.edu/centers/biblical](http://www.uu.edu/centers/biblical)) are stirring calls on the value and necessity of diligent biblical study. "Query the Text" calls for "headache causing" wrestling with the biblical text rather than the superficial fluff which usually passes muster today. The essay on Bitzer is a clarion call on the value of knowing the biblical languages. In a day when pastors and seminaries alike devalue the study of biblical languages (e.g., "you won't really have time for them in *real* ministry"), this call is sorely

needed. Piper also gives a profound discussion of the evangelistic value of laboring for the perseverance of the congregation ("Save the Saints"), the need for preaching on hell ("We Must Feel the Truth of Hell"), and a rebuke of the materialistic approach we often have to church ("Tell Them Copper Will Do").

There is much more worthy of comment than there is space to comment. This book deserves wide circulation among our churches—among pastors, so they will be challenged to fulfill their calling; among laity, so they will see what the calling of their pastors really is. Buy a copy for yourself. Buy a copy for your pastor or a seminary student. Donate some copies to others in your area. And may God grant us a revival of pastors such as are described here.

Ray Van Neste  
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*The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon.* By Martin Hengel. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004, xvi + 153 pp., \$24.99 paper.

The renowned Tübingen scholar Martin Hengel asks the question, "how did it come about that the collection of Jewish writings in the Greek language, significantly larger than the scope of the Hebrew Bible, become, under the designation 'the Seventy,' the authoritative 'Holy Scriptures' of the Old Testament in the Christian church?" (22).

The assumption behind this ques-

tion—that the early church accepted the LXX along with its apocryphal documents—is what Hengel sets out to prove in chapter two, “The LXX as a Collection of Writings Claimed by Christians.” In this discussion Hengel investigates the way that the “translation legend” arising from the *Letter of Aristeas* was apparently embellished by Philo and then the early Christian apologists. While the *Letter of Aristeas* recounts the way that seventy-two elders from Israel translated the law of Moses in seventy-two days, Philo indicates that the translation was inspired and suggests that the translators, working as individuals, all arrived independently at the same translation (25–26). In Justin’s attempts to persuade his Jewish contemporaries, Hengel argues that he expanded the work of the seventy to the whole of the OT—not just the Pentateuch (27). Hengel then shows how Irenaeus used the notion that the seventy translators had individually arrived independently at the same translation to argue for the inspiration of the LXX (38–39). Having pointed to similar statements in Clement and Tertullian, Hengel suggests that Origen and Jerome are exceptions in making recourse to the Hebrew canon, a decision that excludes the apocrypha and looks to the Hebrew as the inspired text (41). Augustine attempted to regard both the Greek and the Hebrew OT as inspired, but eventually “Jerome’s new Latin translation found acceptance in the church” (53).

Chapter three is a consideration of “The Later Consolidation of the

Christian ‘Septuagint Canon.’” Here Hengel discusses the books included in “the three great codices of the fourth and fifth centuries: Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus,” noting that “All exceeded the scope of the Hebrew Bible by including Judith, Tobit, Sirach and Wisdom, as well as the expanded books of Daniel, Esther and Psalm 151” (57). He then treats the earliest lists of canonical books. It is unclear to me why Hengel suggests that Melito of Sardis (c. AD 170) is the first to use the term “Old Testament” when Paul used the same Greek phrase in 2 Corinthians 3:14. The “‘second class’ character of the writings not contained in the Hebrew canon” (66) is then discussed, as are the apocryphal documents that were rejected altogether (70–74).

Hengel comes to “The Origin of the Jewish LXX” in chapter 4. In this chapter he treats the initial translation of the Torah, followed by a discussion of what is known about how the rest of the OT came to be translated into Greek. Hengel’s handling of the historical evidence is fascinating, characterized by his usual erudition. The chapter includes a section on the writings included in the LXX which are not found in the Hebrew canon, followed by a section on what Hengel thinks the Prologue of Jesus ben Sirach, Philo, and Josephus tell us about the extent of the OT canon.

Hengel’s fifth and concluding chapter is on “The Origin of the ‘Christian Septuagint’ and Its Additional Writings” (105). Here the focus is first on the way that the NT refers to the OT, and then on how early

Christians regarded books that were outside the Hebrew canon.

Having indicated throughout the book that he sees little evidence for the closure of the OT canon, Hengel concludes with a shocking question. He writes, “As a New Testament scholar and Christian theologian, I would like to pose a question in view of the problem emerging here. Does the church still need a clearly demarcated, strictly closed Old Testament canon, since the New Testament is, after all, the ‘conclusion,’ the goal and the fulfillment of the Old?” (125–26). The slim volume then concludes on page 127, followed by some twenty pages of handy indexes.

Perhaps because of the brevity of the book, it is prefaced by a seventeen-page “Introduction” written by Robert Hanhart. The inclusion of this essay on the “Problems in the History of the LXX Text from Its Beginnings to Origen” is a testimony to Hengel’s intellectual generosity, for as Hanhart relates, Hengel first suggested that he write the piece because “you see many things differently” (1). Indeed. Before Hengel presents his argument, Hanhart argues in the introduction against a central prong of Hengel’s thesis, namely, the claim that the OT canon was not closed. Against this Hanhart writes, “We can see that Hellenistic Judaism had a relatively well defined canon of ‘Holy Scripture’ already in the second century BC” (2). Hanhart discusses much of the same evidence Hengel will treat later in the volume (and some Hengel does not treat) from the perspective that these are indications that the OT canon was

recognizably closed, which lays bare the fact that Hengel's conclusion that the OT canon was not closed—and might not need to be (!)—is not the only legitimate conclusion afforded by the evidence.

This is not a book for beginners. At points Latin and Greek texts are not translated; more significantly, a considerable familiarity with the broader scholarly discussion is assumed. Further, Hengel's choice to build his argument into the order of the material—beginning with the church fathers rather than moving chronologically from the formation of the LXX to its appropriation by the church—adds somewhat to the demand on the reader. Scholars and Ph.D. students, however, will benefit from this thorough interaction with the OT in Greek, second temple Judaism, and the early church into the fathers. Hengel's facility with this massive body of material is astounding. Those seeking an introduction to the LXX would do well to first consult a volume such as Jobes and Silva's *Invitation to the Septuagint*.

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*Christology: A Global Introduction; An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*. By Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000, 300 pp., \$19.95 paper.

Due to the current postmodern climate, systemic approaches to a holistic *Christology* continue to be exchanged for a collage of cultural

*Christologies*, thus making the subject notoriously difficult to master. Yet one recent work that does a commendable job of surveying the complex landscape of this doctrine is by associate professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. The book, which is entitled *Christology: A Global Introduction*, provides a concise overview of christological thought by discussing four major segments of inquiry.

The first section begins with an assessment of the most common titles that Scripture frequently attributes to Christ and then gives subsequent attention to the rudimentary christological emphases found in the works of the gospel writers and the apostle Paul.

The second section then interacts with two segments of time that Kärkkäinen deems most germane to the historical development of Christology; namely, the first five centuries of the early church and the Enlightenment as it evolved during the eighteenth century. The former is highlighted because the initial ontological questions regarding the humanity and deity of Jesus established the preliminary foundations for orthodox Christology while the latter is emphasized because of the impact that Classical Liberalism and the related quests for the historical Jesus had on the future of christological studies.

From here, the third section deals with how Christology developed in western thought during the twentieth century. Kärkkäinen begins by examining the theological alterna-

tives that Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich formulated in response to their German predecessors and then offers summaries of proposals that have been made regarding Christology by prominent thinkers in diverse Christian traditions including John Zizioulas, Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Norman Kraus, Stanley Grenz, and John Hick.

Finally, the fourth section analyzes several contemporary approaches to Christology that do not necessarily reflect significant continuity with any orthodox traditions such as Process Theism, Feminism, Black theology, Postmodern thought, and third world perspectives as represented in Latin, African, and Asian theology.

Moreover, in summary, Kärkkäinen offers judicious summaries and successfully covers an enormous amount of material with a reader-friendly style. However, some will be cautious when reading occasional comments that could potentially cast doubts on biblical inerrancy and others may possibly be left wondering at the end if evangelicals can only describe how *Christologies* are being done as opposed to prescribing a way *Christology* should be done.

Everett Berry  
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*Faith in the Medieval World*. By G. R. Evans. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002, 160 pp., \$14.95 paper.

InterVarsity Press continues its series of short, readable and visually stimulating volumes on various aspects of

church history with this excellent little book by G. R. Evans. This is a period of church history with which many students are unfamiliar, so it is a good thing to have an affordable volume to recommend to students who are needing to flesh out their knowledge of the growth of the university system, the development of medieval monastic orders, or the nature of the laity in the church of this time. Filled with photos, maps, and charts, this book truly fits a niche.

Chad Owen Brand

*St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography*, by Philip Freeman. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004, 216 pp, \$23.00.

To our shame, most evangelical Protestants tend to think of Saint Patrick as a leprechaun. As we watch the annual drunken parades and pop-culture consumerism of the March holiday, no one could seem more removed from biblical Christianity than Patrick. And yet, as this biography shows in vivid detail, Patrick's life was closer to a Southern Baptist revival meeting than to a shamrock-decorated drinking party named in his honor.

In this volume, Philip Freeman, a professor of classics at Washington University in St. Louis, lays out a compelling portrait of Patrick, the theologian-evangelist. In accomplishing this, Freeman attempts to reconstruct Patrick's cultural milieu—that of a world that had “ended” with the fall of Rome in A.D. 410. This collapse of Roman power had unleashed sav-

agery in the British Isles, as thieves and slave-traders were unhinged from the restraining power of Caesar's sword. Patrick's ministry was shaped by this new world, not least of which by Patrick's capture and escape from slavery.

Freeman helpfully retells Patrick's conversion story, one of a mocking young hedonist to a repentant evangelist. The story sounds remarkably similar to that of Augustine—and, in the most significant of ways, both mirror the first-century conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Freeman helpfully reconstructs the context of local religion as a “business relationship” in which sacrifice to pagan gods was seen as a transaction for the material prosperity of the worshippers. Against this, Patrick's conversion to Christianity was noticed quickly, when his prayers of devotion—then almost always articulated out loud—were overheard by his neighbors.

The rest of the narrative demonstrates the ways in which Patrick carried the Christian mission into the frontiers of the British Isles—confronting a hostile culture and institutionalized heresy along the way. With this the case, the life of Patrick is a testimony to Great Commission fervor, not to the Irish nationalism most often associated with the saint. As a matter of fact, Freeman points out that Patrick's love for the Irish was an act of obedience to Jesus' command to love enemies and to pray for persecutors.

This biography gives contemporary evangelicals more than a pious evangelist to emulate. It also reconstructs a Christian engage-

ment with a pagan culture in ways that are strikingly contemporary to evangelicals seeking to engage a post-Christian America. Patrick's context was a Celtic culture deeply entrenched in paganism, led by the native earth religion of the Druid priests. This is especially relevant in an era when pseudo-Celtic paganism is increasingly en vogue in American and European pagan movements. Freeman sweeps away the revisionist historical claims of the Druid revivalists: there was no “golden age” of equality among the sexes within the Druid cult, for example. Instead, Freeman shows that Patrick's Christianity actually brought harmony among the genders with his teaching that women were joint-heirs with Christ.

Any evangelical seeking to kindle a love for missions among the people of God will benefit from this volume's demonstration that the Great Commission did not lie dormant between the apostle Paul and William Carey. Patrick's love and zeal for the Irish may also inspire American evangelicals to repent of our hopelessness for the conversion of, say, the radical Islamic world—which is, after all, no more “hopeless” than the Irish barbarians of Patrick's era.

Russell D. Moore

*God on Sex: The Creator's Ideas About Love, Intimacy and Marriage*. By Daniel Akin. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003, 291 pp., \$17.99 paper.



Many today believe that the Christian view of sex is not only antiquated, but that Christians think that it is not something we should talk about, that it is shameful, and so on. What is more, Christians are pitied for a view of sexual purity and abstinence outside of marriage that makes sex boring. Daniel Akin is intent on changing such misconceptions.

*God on Sex* is a provocative title for an engaging book on the Song of Solomon, written by the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Like the biblical book that it explicates, it is a celebration of marriage and sexual intimacy within marriage. It is something of a popular commentary on the Song of Solomon, including exposition of the text, as well as plenty of illustrations and application to contemporary marriages.

Much conventional “wisdom” presumes that marriage, given time, will remove romance, excitement, sexual desire, and delight from even the best of relationships. To the contrary, Akin shows both biblical and sociological evidence that supports what so many happily married people already know: married people are the ones who actually enjoy more frequent and satisfying sex and joyful intimacy. That satisfaction and excitement can only be heightened as we begin to realize God’s plan for marriage.

The material in this book comes from experience that Akin has had giving seminars and family life conferences for many years. He is passionate about what God has designed marriage to be, and he draws on the

Song of Solomon to provide spiritual insight and to talk about what it takes to make marriage work, including practical application. He offers stories and statistics that he has collected over the years, including humorous anecdotes and reflections on the relationship between men and women, and ideas on what to do (and what *not* to do) to make a successful marriage. Readers will want to share many of these, though some of them misfire (e.g., 231).

This book is not meant to be a scholarly commentary. Yet it provides insight into the Song of Solomon, explaining and simplifying some of its strange phrases and references, and therefore it will be useful for personal study and for sermon preparation. Further, it will be a helpful resource for pastors and others who provide pre-marital and marriage counseling.

*God on Sex* should be read not only by pastors and counselors, however, but by all who desire to understand the purpose for which God gave us marriage and sexual intimacy. Akin dispels any notion that the Bible presents a negative perspective on sexual desire and intimacy. Indeed, within marriage these things are celebrated as wonderful gifts of a gracious Creator. Through his study on the Song of Solomon, Akin makes it clear that God intends for us to delight in our spouse and in the intimacy that is provided for in marriage.

K. T. Magnuson

*Backgrounds of Early Christianity.* Third edition. By Everett Ferguson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, xxii + 648, \$36.00 paper.

Among the minimum of books on the New Testament that each student of theology should have I would count (in addition to a scholarly edition of the text—preferably a study Bible edition—and a concordance) a Bible dictionary, a one volume commentary on the NT or the whole Bible, a solid NT introduction, and a theology of the New Testament. I would definitely also include one good survey of the background of the NT, because so much in interpretation depends on the background against which certain statements are made and are to be understood and because many students (and scholars alike!) are all too prone to presume that the world they know is also the world of the NT.

One of these good surveys in English is the present volume by Everett Ferguson in its third edition (1st ed. in 1987; 2nd ed. in 1993). Ferguson writes in the preface, “A comprehensive guide will help the student to attain a grasp of the field more quickly than would be possible without an introduction. The introductory nature of the presentation often calls for generalizations to be made: it is hoped that these will aid students; specialists can make the necessary adjustments” (xvi). He notes further, on the arrangement of the material, “The reader should not confuse the analytical approach in the presentation with the reality of time. The approach adopted may give

a false sense of compartmentalization—for example between Hellenism and Judaism—when in fact there was much interaction between the influences discussed separately in this book.” Ferguson attempts not only to provide the background to the NT but also to the early centuries of Christianity when it moved further away from its Jewish roots to the wider Hellenistic-Roman world.

After a preface and a balanced general bibliography (xx-xxii), Ferguson starts with a short introductory essay entitled “Perspectives on Parallels” (1-4) which provides helpful guidelines in dealing with the differences and similarities between Christianity and its background. In view of the overall length of the volume this introductory essay could have been longer (e.g., guidelines on when and how to employ background knowledge in NT studies).

Ferguson’s first part paints in broad strokes the political history of the Eastern Mediterranean from the Near East before Alexander the Great to the Later Roman Empire (5-40). This is followed by a section on the administration of the Empire (cities, provinces and client kingdoms) and reference to the political connections of the NT (46f).

The second part is devoted to society and culture (48-147) and covers the Roman military (the legions, emblems, weapons and dress, auxiliaries, Praetorian guard and other units), social classes (the senatorial order, the equestrian order, municipal aristocracies, Plebeian and other free persons, freedmen), slavery, Roman citizenship and Roman Law,

and social relationships (including patron-client relationships, friendship, social networks and aspects of honour and shame). Ferguson moves on to “Social Morality” (marriage and the family, the place of women and children; this is not what I would have expected under that heading or where I would have searched for this information), the economic life (trade and travel, coinage and taxation), clothing and appearance, entertainment (theatres, athletics, arenas, circuses, gymnasia and baths, banquets, music), education, literature and language (authors, rhetoric, literary forms and genres—biographies, histories and novels, letters, making of books, reading and studying books, inscriptions and papyri, language; in view of the significance of ancient rhetoric in current NT scholarship the treatment on one good page is very brief indeed!), art and architecture and clubs and associations (Greek clubs, “Roman colleges”—while reflecting the Latin *collegia* I wonder whether this the best word for undergraduate students - Egyptian associations and the status of associations).

Part three presents Hellenistic-Roman religions (148-318), starting with ancient Greek religion (the epic age: Homer, Hesiod, the archaic period, signs of dissolution in the Classical age) and ancient Roman religion (deities, religious personnel and observances, soul and the dead, characteristics of Roman religion). A short section sketches the general characteristics of “Religion in Hellenistic-Roman Times” (173-77). Then Ferguson turns to domestic and rural

religion (Greek and Roman), civic cults (priesthood, ritual perceptions, sacrifice, votive offerings, prayers and hymns, festivals, other features and a sample of a civic cult: Ephesus and Artemis), ruler cult (antecedents and presuppositions, historical development and forms of the Imperial cult), personal religion (oracles, dreams and divination, healing cults, magic and maledictions, imprecations and oaths, demons and superstition, astrology, astral religion and fate, death and afterlife), Greek mysteries and Eastern religions (Egyptian deities: Isis, Osiris, and Sarapis, Phoenician deities: Astarte and Adonis, Syrian Deities: Atargatis and others, Phrygian deities: Cybele and Attis, Mithras, a Persian deity, and reflections of mystery religions and Christianity), Gnosticism (sources for study and origin of Gnosticism, characteristic features, Gnosticism in the NT), Hermetic literature and Chaldean oracles and a final section on later developments (monotheism and sun worship).

With this field covered Ferguson moves in the fourth part on to Hellenistic-Roman philosophies (319-95). The introductory chapter discusses the nature of this philosophy as religion and as ethics, popular philosophy, the relationship between philosophy and individualism and sketches ancient philosophy in its social setting. This is followed by a survey of the various schools (Sophists and Socrates, Plato and the Academy to the first century, Aristotle and the Peripatetics, Skepticism, Cynicism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Eclecticism, Neopythagoreanism,

Middle Platonism and Plotinus and Neoplatonism).

The fifth and longest part ("the principal context of early Christianity", xvii), is a succinct summary of Second Temple Judaism (396-582). Ferguson surveys Jewish history from 538 B.C. to A.D. 200 (the Persian, Greek, Maccabean or Hasmonean and the Roman period) and the Jews in the Early Roman Empire (427-30). In view of the significance of Diaspora Judaism in the NT (in Acts and many of the NT epistles) and of the role it has played in NT studies in the past two hundred years, this section is all too short. In Ferguson's defence it must be mentioned that much of the section on the synagogue would also apply to the Diaspora situation (573-82), and there is a separate treatment of proselytes and Godfearers (546-51).

Ferguson moves on to describe Jewish literature and other sources in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (LXX, the fragments of Jewish literature in Greek, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocalyptic writings, Philo, Josephus, Rabbinic literature, Jewish mysticism, archaeological sources and a survey of pagan references to Jews), the various parties and sects of Judaism (Pharisees, Sadducees, Qumran Community, Essenes, Therapeutae, Zealots, Herodians and Samaritans), beliefs and practices (one God, Israel, the chosen people, Torah, tradition, and Scripture, proselytes and Godfearers, Messianism and the glorious destiny, afterlife, festivals and holy days, daily devotions). This is followed by treatment of organiza-

tion and institutions (temple and priesthood, Sanhedrin, community organization, Rabbis and synagogue), though the organization and institutions cannot and probably should not be separated from the beliefs and practices associated with them.

The last part, "Christianity in the Ancient World" (583-620), is somewhat surprising in a book on NT backgrounds, yet nevertheless very useful. At the outset Ferguson gathers the literary references to Christianity in non-Christian sources, the archaeological remains bearing on Early Christian history (inscriptions, papyri and coins), discusses some claimed archaeological remains of Early Christianity (the *Rotas-Sator* word square, the "cross" at Herculaneum, ossuaries and the alleged tomb of Peter). Ferguson further treats the attitudes of pagans toward Christians, the legal status of Christianity, the various hindrances to the acceptance of Christianity and finally its religious rivals (Judaism, pagan religion and philosophy, Gnosticism and other rival versions of Christianity and Jewish Christianity). Ferguson then lists the factors favorable to the spread of Christianity (external circumstances, Hellenistic Judaism, and religious quest and contents) and raises the question of what was unique in Christianity: "That which is truly unique to Christianity is Jesus Christ. He was what was essential to its beginning and remains central to what it is. This is so in a historical sense. However much of his life and teachings might be paralleled from one part of the ancient world or another, Jesus—his person and

work—are what was unique to Christianity," (619f). A detailed index of subjects and of Scripture references closes the volume (621-42). The map on the last page is basic.

On each section Ferguson aims to introduce as many primary sources as possible ("five words in an original source are worth a thousand words in a secondary source," xvi; unfortunately there is no index for non-Biblical references). He includes references to NT texts to make evident the relevance of the material discussed (though warning his readers: "The student will be in a stronger position by coming to the NT and other early Christian literature from a broad acquaintance with its surrounding world than by simply making excursions into the non-Christian sources in search of parallels to Scripture," xvii). He also includes a good number of charts and black and white pictures, a general bibliography at the beginning, and references to original sources and specialised studies at the end.

It would be easy (but unfair) to point to many recent and more detailed treatments of all the individual aspects covered by Ferguson. While one would obviously disagree on this or that detail, on more basic issues or on the amount of space devoted to the various aspects and subdivisions, all in all Ferguson is to be congratulated for a balanced survey of a vast field, that one scholar can hardly master these days. This is a helpful no-nonsense textbook for undergraduate students and will also serve as a quick reference tool for advanced students (perhaps in com-

bination with one of the multi volume Bible dictionaries such as the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* or the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*).

Good companion volumes would be the South African volume *The New Testament Milieu*, which offers an excellent introductory section dealing with the function and value of studying the NT milieu and a helpful orientation entitled "Getting to know the geography, topography and archaeology of the Bible lands in NT times" (32-85). Attention should also be drawn to a new German joint project by NT scholars and ancient historians entitled *Neues Testament und Antike Kultur*, projected for three volumes and an index volume. The first volume appeared in 2004.

The final words belong to Ferguson:

The purpose of this textbook on the backgrounds of Early Christianity is to illumine the historical setting in as many of its ramifications as feasible so as better to understand the real world in which people lived. The student then can use the available materials to determine what Christianity was in its early days. The better one sees and knows the background, the more clearly that person can see the cutting edge of Christianity (4).

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