

# Book Reviews

*Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ.* By Thomas R. Schreiner. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001, 504 pp., \$30.00.

In his previous works on the exegesis of Paul's letters, the Paul and the Law debate, and his recent commentary on Romans, Tom Schreiner has distinguished himself as one of the foremost evangelical scholars in the field of Pauline studies. His text on Pauline theology synthesizes the results of his careful exegesis of Paul's letters and offers this synthesis to students, pastors, and scholars in a single volume.

The most distinctive feature of Schreiner's text is his recognition of "the glory of God in Christ" as the center of Pauline theology. Against interpreters who view God's salvific work or some aspect of it as the center of Pauline theology, Schreiner offers the logical criticism that this exalts the gift above the Giver. He then traces the theme of God's glory in Christ throughout Paul's epistles, demonstrating convincingly both the prominence and preeminence of this theme. Schreiner highlights the relationship of this central theme to every category of Paul's theology from hamartiology to eschatology.

Schreiner's text is preferable to older evangelical works due to his critical evaluation of current trends in Pauline studies. His text includes a seven-page excursus on universalism in which Schreiner erects a strong biblical defense for Christian exclusivism.

Schreiner also rejects Hays' view that "faith of Christ" means Christ's faithfulness rather than the believer's faith in Jesus. Schreiner dismisses Wright's hypothesis that "righteousness of God" refers to God's covenant faithfulness. He discards Wright's interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:21 as "strange and completely implausible." In contrast to Dunn, Schreiner formulated his view of Pauline theology with the conviction that all thirteen epistles in the traditional Pauline corpus are authentic writings of the Apostle himself. Schreiner's interpretation of Pauline Christology also challenges Dunn's at two crucial points. Contrary to Dunn, Schreiner affirms both the preexistence and deity of Jesus Christ. As one reads Schreiner's thoughtful interaction with the evidence of the Pauline writings, it becomes clear that his rejection of these positions is not prompted by a blind allegiance to the older evangelical tradition but issues from his fidelity to the Apostle himself.

Schreiner argues that while some truth exists in the "New Perspective" and Paul did address ethnocentrism in his epistles, Sanders and Dunn have gone too far in their dismissal of the existence of Jewish legalism in the first century. The author of this book demonstrates that "works of the Law" refers to acts of obedience demanded by the Old Testament law in general and that many Jews did attempt to make themselves righteous before God by these works. Thus the traditional interpretation of Paul's gospel

which views the gospel of grace as countering legalism is legitimate and did not result from imposing the doctrinal disputes of the Protestant reformation on the Pauline material.

Those familiar with Schreiner's other works, particularly his *Romans*, will notice that Schreiner has refined his positions at several points and that *Paul* is the product of more mature reflection. Most importantly, he has abandoned the position of Käsemann and Stuhlmacher that "righteousness" in Paul is both forensic and transforming. He argued that "justify" is "almost invariably forensic." Forensic righteousness and a changed life are not to be identified with one another, but the former is the basis for the latter.

Schreiner's commitment to Reformed theology is apparent in his work. The presentation of "the glory of God" as the central theme of Pauline theology prepares the reader for this since this theme was prominent in the thought of the Protestant reformers. Schreiner finds the major tenets of Reformed soteriology in Paul's writings. Paul saw the sinner as utterly corrupt, in bondage to sin and Satan, and incapable of an independent positive response to the gospel. God pretemporally chose individuals for salvation in Christ based solely on his covenant love. God summons the elect to salvation with a performative call that leads unfailingly to justification and glorification. The death of Christ was not a potential ransom but an actual ransom. While repentance and faith are neces-

sary for conversion, they are themselves gracious gifts imparted by God. Consequently, salvation is for the "praise of the glory of his grace." Such salvation precludes human boasting, promotes thanksgiving and inspires praise, thereby leading back to the central theme.

Schreiner's discussion of these subjects is thoroughly grounded in a careful, reverent and insightful exegesis of Paul's own statements. The Southern Seminary professor derives this theology from Paul and seeks never to impose this theology upon Paul. This exegetical integrity is clear in Schreiner's treatment of 2 Thessalonians 2:13 where he opts for the textual variant that offers less support to his overall view of election despite the fact that good arguments can be made in support of the alternate reading.

Schreiner addresses his text to students at the college and seminary level. He intentionally limits his interaction with other scholars in order to keep the book at a manageable length and to focus more closely on the Pauline corpus itself. However, he does address the difficult issues raised in current Pauline studies and his discussions show that he has carefully examined and critically evaluated the current literature. Since Schreiner skillfully relates his exegesis to the doctrinal, ethical, and practical questions of the contemporary church, pastors will profit greatly from a careful study of this text.

For readers who want a truly evangelical, extensive summary of Pauline theology that is based on sensible exegesis, interacts insightfully with the major currents in Pauline study,

and addresses the practical needs of the modern church, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* is the best choice.

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*The First Epistle to the Corinthians.* NIGTC. By Anthony C. Thiselton. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, xxxiii + 1,446 pp., \$75.00.

Anthony C. Thiselton is professor of Christian theology and head of the Department of Theology at the University of Nottingham, England. He is also Canon Theologian of Leicester Cathedral. He has written extensively in the field of hermeneutics.

This mammoth book consists of a relatively brief (fifty-two pages) introduction, a nine page bibliography of commentaries and general works, and the commentary, which incorporates, section by section, forty additional bibliographies (one hundred nine pages). The total of one hundred eighteen pages of bibliography is comprehensive by any reasonable measure. The bibliographies contain items up through the year 1999 and one listed as forthcoming in 2000. Three detailed indexes (ninety-two pages) cover subjects, modern authors, and ancient sources, the last one being longer than the other two combined. The author provides a new translation of the Greek text for the commentary. Also each section and sub-section is introduced by an essay, sociohistorical background is presented, and the culture of Corinth is explained from many sources. The Greek text is dealt

with carefully in all aspects, including text-critical issues. Documentation throughout the commentary is thorough and many of the notes are exhaustively annotated. The author sees striking parallels between the prevailing culture in Corinth in the first century AD and the postmodern western culture of our time. Paul's message to that culture has power to address the current context as well.

Two other features of the commentary are especially impressive and useful. A "Posthistory, Influence (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), and Reception" of numerous sections of 1 Corinthians traces the history of interpretation through periods of the Apostolic Fathers, the Patristic era, Medieval and Reformation times, and the Modern period. This unusual tool opens up avenues of investigation that are generally hard to discover, and crosses over into related disciplines of hermeneutics, philosophy, and theology that can enrich the study of the text. To deal with related matters numerous "extended notes" on issues and topics which are of current special concern are scattered throughout the text. Almost any impulse the student of 1 Corinthians feels a need to explore is covered in these articles, many of which could easily be published separately. Titles include, "Does Paul the Letter Writer, Theologian, and Pastor Use Rhetorical Forms and Structures?," "The Meaning of 'the Rulers of this World Order,'" "Paul's Use of the Term *teleios*," "Some Misleading Factors in the History of Interpretation of 'Apostle,'" "Paul's Allusion to the Rock Which Went with Them," "*kephale* and Its Multiple Meanings,"

“Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?” “‘Spirit Baptism’ in Relation to 12:13 in Pentecostal Theology,” “‘Tongues’ and Communicative Language,” and “The Nature of the Resurrection ‘Body’ (15:44).”

Virtually all sections of the commentary are thorough to an extreme. It is difficult to single out any as measurably better than the others, but all the support and background material, along with the commentary of the thorny issues of 1 Corinthians 12-14, and the treatment of the “baptism for the dead” in 1 Corinthians 15 are the most thorough and useful this reviewer has ever encountered. Virtually all historical positions and interpretive options are presented in detail and fairly, after which the author indicates his own view. The explication of these two sections is worth the hefty price of the book.

Thiselton is primarily a theologian and an expert in hermeneutical theory, and this shows in the commentary. But because the heart of the commentary is verse by verse, and often word by word, exegesis, his own views do not overpower the reader. The book may be used with profit by readers of any persuasion. The reader is likely to learn more about his or her own view than was previously known and gain an informed appreciation of differing perspectives. One might even be persuaded at points by the careful work of the commentator to modify an understanding here and there. Though it is the lazy man’s way to search for sources, this volume can be used to guide the researcher to more sources than one is ever likely to need for the study of any aspect of 1 Corin-

thians. It was surprising to find a stray typographical error here and there, but I suppose in a tome this size, it is inevitable.

Thiselton has upheld admirably the goals of the NIGTC series, and any short list of the best sources for the study of 1 Corinthians must include this magisterial volume.

Charles W. Draper

*Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*. Edited by Aron Dotan. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001, xxv + 1264 pp., \$49.95.

This new critical edition of the text of the Leningrad Codex (A. D. 1009) was prepared according to the vocalization, accents, and masora of Aaron ben Moses ben Asher. *BHL* is a thorough revision, including new typesetting of the 1973 edition prepared by the School of Jewish Studies of Tel Aviv University. The editor is Aron Dotan of Tel Aviv University. Dr. John F. Kutsko, Senior Academic Editor for Hendrickson Publishers, supervised the production.

According to the Foreword, the compiler of the former *Textus Receptus* of the Hebrew Bible, Jacob ben Hayyim Ibn Adonijah of Tunis (16th century), finding the then current Masoretic text to be unacceptably corrupt, had one major objective—to recover the vocalization, accents, and masora of Aaron ben Moses ben Asher, which were known only through secondary and tertiary sources. With the availability in the mid twentieth century of two codices, the Leningrad and the Aleppo, the ben

Asher text became accessible. The Aleppo Codex was pointed by Aaron ben Asher himself and The Leningrad Codex was pointed and corrected by Samuel ben Jacob from an exemplar pointed and corrected by Aaron ben Asher. Tragically, about one third of the Aleppo was destroyed during anti-Jewish riots in Syria in 1948.

The two manuscripts commend each other and Dotan believes they constitute faithful witnesses to the ben Asher text. The Leningrad has been selected for Hebrew Bible editions (*Biblia Hebraica*), each with a critical apparatus and many notes, because it is complete. Dotan asserted that the latest of these editions (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*) has more numerous mistaken readings and corruptions than its predecessors. This fact, coupled with the lack of a system for synagogue readings, render the *BH* editions unsuitable for Jewish use.

The objective of *BHL* is to provide a complete and accurate Hebrew Bible in a format ideal for scholars, teachers, and students, and suitable for Jewish ritual use. Deviations were made from the Leningrad text for the sake of Jewish traditional use. The editor did not follow the Leningrad “slavishly and blindly nor copy obvious mistakes.” Scribal intention was sought, even when the MS was defective or mistaken. This edition was carefully corrected to remove deficiencies in the 1973 edition. The objective of the pointing is to reproduce as accurately as possible the readings of the Tiberian vocalization. The Leningrad Codex followed a book order now unfamiliar to readers of the Hebrew Bible, so the more modern

order of books was adopted, but as was the ancient custom, the books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah were not divided into two books each.

The Pentateuch was marked by spacing and symbols for synagogue readings of the one year and three year cycles. The system of these *Petuhot* and *Setumot* of the Pentateuch from the Leningrad are listed in Appendix B, as the sections in the Leningrad differ in minor ways from the modern system. The section markings from the rest of the manuscript are preserved in *BHL*. For consistency the Pentateuch text was marked into the open and closed sections according to the halakhic custom seen in Maimonides's work. These *sedarim* were further clarified by the use of accompanying markings indicating when the *sedarim* are restored, or represent a variant, or are questionable. Biblical songs were treated as in the Leningrad Codex except for the Song of Moses (Deut. 32), which was corrected according to halakhic custom. Correction to halakhic custom was made where practicable to the lines following the Song of Moses and the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15). Daily readings for the Pentateuch were marked according to the system of the military Chief Rabbinate of the Israel Defense Force, for whom the 1973 edition was prepared. Departing from the Leningrad Codex, all the *qere* forms were pointed, which necessitated some changes in consonants which could not be properly vocalized as written. The *ktiv* were left unpointed in the text, but with the Leningrad accent marks.

The *BHL* introduced several inno-

vations, one in the form of printed symbols, which more closely approximate the Leningrad Codex. Computer technology made possible more sophisticated variations in their appearance and arrangement. For instance, vowel signs and accents are placed next to each other in their proper places, even under narrow letters. Another innovation is that the pages of the Biblical text are free from all notes and variants, except for the *qere* and *ktiv*, and marginal book titles in the undivided books. The great and small masora (*masorah qatanah* and *masorah gedolah*), which are familiar in *BHS*, are not printed; instead textual variants are in an appendix. One lengthy textual variant (two verses) is printed in the text at Joshua 21, page 348, with the note, "A few other manuscripts add two additional verses after verse 35." I could find no other such instances.

At the end of the Biblical text are several useful features. The Decalogue with "Upper Cantillation" is provided for both Exodus 20:2-13 and Deuteronomy 5:6-17. Appendix A is a list of manuscript variants, those readings or apparent readings of the Leningrad Codex that were not adopted. The reading adopted in the text is accompanied by the siglum of a small capital A which refers the reader to Appendix A. Appendix B contains a list of the *Petuhot* and *Setumot* of the Leningrad for the Torah and Esther. The locations of these readings in the text are indicated by the siglum of a small capital B. Appendix C explains the arrangement of the lines of the Songs of the Sea (Ex. 15) and of Moses (Deut. 32). Appendix D is a scholarly

discussion of stages of development in the Tiberian system of vocalization that may be observed in the Leningrad Codex. Appendix E lists the weekly *Haftarot* (readings from the Prophets), differentiating between the practices of the Ashkenazi communities and those of the Sephardim and Oriental communities. The *Haftarot* for special occasions (Special Sabbaths, Holidays, Fast Days) and Torah readings for special days are also given.

*BHL* is noticeably different from *BHS* in several ways, as noted above. The differences make it easier to cope with for those who do not spend all their time in the Hebrew text. The cleaner look of the pages is more inviting to the eye, more reader friendly, and less intimidating to the beginning student. The clarification of liturgical matters allows Christians to see how the Hebrew Bible is used for worship and private devotion by Jews. *BHL* is an obvious choice for use in Hebrew language classes, particularly for the first year. The front matter is a great assistance in the use of the *BHL*. The size of the book is between that of the large and small editions of the *BHS*, and is preferable to both. The innovations in the type-setting of the vowels and accents produced a text decidedly easier to read with the naked eye. One item not provided that would be very helpful is a table of accents, such as the one provided with *BHS*.

Charles W. Draper

*BibleWorks Version 5.0: Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research*. Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, LLC, \$299.95.



About four years ago, a colleague and I conducted an informal survey of the various Bible software programs available (Gramcord, Logos, BibleWorks, etc.). I had decided to purchase a program and was looking for two things—(1) ease of use and (2) the ability to do complex searches in Greek and Hebrew. BibleWorks was the winner hands-down, and I have personally been using version 3.5 for the past several years. When the SBJT book review editor asked me to review BibleWorks 5, I welcomed the opportunity to see if BibleWorks was still the best.

To make a long story short, BibleWorks remains the best Bible research software available. The latest version has made significant improvements by making the program accessible to virtually any level of user and adding various additional texts and reference works. Just to list the contents of the program would exceed the word limit for this review, so I can only briefly highlight the program's most significant offerings: more than 90 Bible translations, nine original language texts, seven morphological databases, five Greek lexicons, three Hebrew lexicons (now including BDB), and eight practical reference works.

Though the price for BibleWorks is a bit steep (\$300), this is a program which the busy pastor, missionary, student or scholar will easily end up using on a daily basis. Below, I briefly sketch out how various persons might find the program useful:

*For pastors and students*—BibleWorks provides an efficient way to compare various translations of the

Bible, add personal notes to any verse or chapter of the Bible in a savable database, and research the original Greek and Hebrew texts. The Greek/Hebrew texts and various English texts can be displayed side-by-side. As the mouse cursor moves over Greek and Hebrew words, full lexical and parsing information appears in a small window in the lower left-hand corner. The program functions like a library of Bible translations, a concordance, an interlinear text, a parsing guide, a Bible dictionary, and a verse-keyed journal of personal notations.

*For missionaries*—BibleWorks includes more than 90 Bible translations in 28 different languages. Bible translators can create a searchable database of their own working version of a new language text that they are producing.

*For scholars*—To my knowledge, BibleWorks 5 is the only Bible research program to offer the electronic versions of BDAG3 (*the Greek lexicon for NT scholars*) and HALOT (*the Hebrew/Aramaic Lexicon for OT scholars*—sometimes called “Koehler-Baumgartner-Stamm”). These two lexicons must be purchased as “add-on modules,” and are the only items not included in the program's base price of \$300.

BibleWorks' only drawback, as far as I can see, is that its more complex functions can only be learned through study and experimentation. A detailed manual and four-hour instructional video (computer CD) accompany the software. A person considering purchasing BibleWorks should own a relatively recent computer (minimum of 32 MB RAM) and be willing to sac-

rifice at least 200 MB of space on the hard drive (1.4 GB if the program is fully installed).

For a more detailed introduction to BibleWorks and a comparison with other software programs, the reader is referred to BibleWorks's website: [www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com). The company offers a ninety-day money-back guarantee.

Robert L. Plummer

*Paul, the Law, and the Covenant.* By Andrew Das. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001, xix + 342 pp., \$24.95 paper.

The new perspective on Paul initiated by E. P. Sanders's 1977 tome, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, has set the agenda for discussion on Paul and the law for the last twenty-five years. Indeed, it seems that the new perspective is now the consensus in NT scholarship. Andrew Das, in what appears to be a revision of his dissertation at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, joins the significant chorus of dissenting scholars by providing a fresh interpretation of the role of the law in second temple Jewish literature and major Pauline texts.

Das argues that a tension between a rigorous and perfect obedience of the law and Israel's elect status is evident in Jubilees, the Qumran literature, Philo, and the Tannaim. The demand for perfect obedience is featured, and yet atonement is available for sin. Sometimes the Tannaim emphasize God's grace in electing Israel, while on other occasions they argue that God

chose Israel because of the merits of the fathers. Das maintains that the tension between obedience and covenant is relaxed in *Fourth Ezra*, *2 Enoch*, *2 and 3 Baruch*, and the *Testament of Abraham*. In these writings the necessity of strict obedience to the law comes to the forefront, and the covenantal mercy of God fades from view.

Das's conclusions on Judaism fit with newer research that emphasizes the diversity of second temple Judaism (e.g., the work of Friedrich Avemarie and the first volume of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*). Sanders's claim that second temple nomism was characterized by obedience to the law that is a response to God's grace appears to be too simplistic. The evidence is more complex and "variegated"; in some Jewish documents the demand for perfect obedience is asserted, and the centrality of the covenant seems to be pushed aside.

The majority of Das's book contains a careful and insightful interpretation of central Pauline texts on the law. The exegesis is lucid, well-argued, and wonderfully conversant with modern scholarship. Das is not satisfied with traditional or newer conclusions, but re-examines the textual evidence carefully to discern what Paul says. Even those who disagree with Das will have to reckon with and respond to his reading of the evidence.

In the space of this review, we should call attention to some of the major conclusions defended by Das. He argues that Paul rejects covenantal nomism in Galatians 3-4 and 2 Corinthians 3. The old covenant is not a gracious framework for the law. It

seems, though, that he should emphasize more clearly here the salvation-historical disjunction between the old and new covenant. Still, Das rightly maintains that Paul denies any atoning function for OT sacrifices (though he wrongly, in my judgment, underplays the theme of Christ's death as a sacrifice). If OT sacrifices do not atone for sin now that Christ has come, it follows that perfect obedience is required of those who place themselves under the law, for they can no longer offer sacrifices to atone for their transgressions. The centrality of Jesus Christ as the mediator of salvation rules out any atoning function for OT offerings and sacrifices.

The notion that Paul believed perfect obedience was required is then defended from Galatians 3:10. Das demonstrates that the text cannot be restricted to Israel's corporate sin but also indicts *individuals* for their sin (contra those like Wright and Scott who restrict the text to the exile theme). The term "works of the law" is defined as the commands of the law in general without any special focus on the identity markers that distinguish Jews from Gentiles (contra Dunn). Das rightly says that in Romans 4:1-8 the issue is *both* Jewish exclusivism and a critique against works-righteousness. We should not opt for an either-or answer in this case. Paul thinks works of law are now merely works of human achievement because atonement is only in Christ (cf. also Rom 9:30-10:8). Hence, from the Jewish standpoint such works were not legalistic, but Paul reckoned them as such because of his christological framework. Das is probably

correct that Paul and his Jewish opponents would conceive of works differently, but as believers we "privilege" Paul's estimate as God's view of reality.

Philippians 3:6 has been central to the discussion of Paul's view of the law since Paul claims to be blameless in his keeping of the law. Das rightly says that Torah obedience is not the same thing as sinlessness, and that Paul refers to his verifiable and public obedience here. Still, Paul's extraordinary devotion to the Torah is futile because atonement is no longer available through the sacrificial cult of the OT. This last insight is one of the most valuable in the entire book, as noted earlier, but Das does not integrate Philippians 3:6 well with Philippians 3:9 where Paul rejects his own righteousness and clings to the righteousness of God (cf. Phil 3:2-3). Das rightly spies the salvation-historical character of Paul's argument but seems to minimize its anthropological character in this text.

Das's book is full of careful exegetical argumentation and fascinating insights. He rightly notes that Ephesians 2:8-9 rejects works because they lead to boasting. Hence, the "earliest Pauline interpreter" (or a later genuine Pauline epistle in my view) understands Paul as Augustine and Luther did later! He closes his book by noting that Sanders has helped us see the ethnic character of the Pauline texts, but has unfortunately excluded the Pauline critique of human achievement. Both themes are present in the text, and hence Das closes with a call for a "newer perspective." His summons should be heeded, and he has

helped us remarkably in the quest to do so.

Thomas R. Schreiner

*Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary, volume 46. By William D. Mounce. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000, cxxxvi + 641 pp., \$34.99.

One of the most anticipated volumes in the Word Biblical Commentary series has been the volume on the Pastoral Epistles, both because there has until recently been a dearth of serious commentaries on these New Testament writings (see also the recent volume by Knight in the NIGTC series) and because evangelicals have been lately debating with great intensity the interpretation of some passages in these letters. The volume by Mounce, then, is timely.

Mounce begins with a very detailed Introduction (over a hundred pages) and covers every significant issue. He concludes that Paul is the author and that Luke may have been the amanuensis. One of the best features of the Introduction is its reconstruction of Paul's life from Acts and the epistles and the place the Pastorals fit into all of that.

The author demonstrates a deft hand in interpreting controversial texts. When interpreting 1 Timothy 2:8-15, he carefully handles all of the proposed interpretations, concluding that, though men and women are coequal before God, that equality does not entail the same roles, any more than the equality of the Father, Son, and Spirit entails that they serve the same roles. "If role and worth are

equated, then one must necessarily conclude that God the Son is of less worth than God the Father because he performs a different, subservient role" (p. 148). Mounce also has a helpful discussion of "husband of one wife" (1 Tim 3:2). He concludes, as do Knight in the NIGTC and MacArthur in his expositional commentary on the text, that the phrase "one-woman man" entails not a prohibition of polygamy (though he gives more credibility to this view than does Knight) or divorce (necessarily), but that it is an injunction to sexual fidelity and moral purity on the part of the overseer. Not only is this good commentary work, but it is also an important word for the contemporary church.

Mounce does a fine job of explaining the application of Granville Sharp's rule in Titus 2:13, countering objections which have been raised to the applicability (grammatically and theologically) of the rule from some quarters. He refutes the notion that 2 Timothy 2:2 entails any concept of apostolic succession. He also has a very helpful discussion of the power and authority of the Word of God in his discussion of 2 Timothy 3:16.

Preachers today are truly blessed to have both the commentary by Knight and this volume by Mounce in dealing with these crucial letters by the Apostle to the Gentiles. One is hard pressed to decide which of the two is the better. Perhaps the wise student of God's Word should buy them both.

Chad Owen Brand

*Paul Ricoeur: His Life and His Work*. By Charles E Reagan. Chicago: Univer-

sity of Chicago Press, 1996, 150 pp., \$13.00 paper.

*Identifying Selfhood: Imagination, Narrative, and Hermeneutics in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur*. By Henry Isaac Venema. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000, 206 pp., \$21.95 paper.

There are only a few twentieth century philosophers who can legitimately be regarded to be as important to the agenda of Christian philosophy and scholarship as is Paul Ricoeur. Though not having as fertile a mind as Heidegger, not as influential as Wittgenstein, and frankly not as orthodox as Plantinga, Ricoeur warrants our attention for a number of reasons. As an active French philosopher from before the Second World War into the 'Nineties, Ricoeur lived in one of the most important philosophical milieus of this period, from the early days of French existentialism, through structuralism, to the post-structuralism of Foucault and the deconstructionism of Derrida. And though not as notorious as some of his countrymen, his own contributions to philosophy were enormously wide-ranging and substantial. Moreover, his own philosophical pilgrimage is itself a fascinating account of the changes that have occurred in continental philosophy over these years. Lastly, he was reared within the Reformed community and has always counted himself a Christian believer, a commitment evident in his ongoing reflections on religious topics, including the Bible, evil, sin, and the place of faith in

contemporary life. In fact, it is hard to think of another figure in twentieth century philosophy of comparable stature who has written more about religion. So, Ricoeur's potential value to Christians is considerable.

Either of these two books would help someone interested in Ricoeur gain a better understanding of his significance and the scope of his contributions. However, the books are written at very different levels. Reagan's book is far and away the easier book. As its title might suggest, the first section of the book begins with a forty-six page biography of Ricoeur that helps the reader place him in reference to cultural events and personal events that make his work more understandable and reveal the struggles of his own life (e.g., his administrative responsibilities during the student revolution of the 'Sixties and the suicide of his son in the 'Eighties). The second section of the book presents a more personal view of Ricoeur through the author's memoir of his esteemed teacher (at first, beginning in 1962) and eventual friend. The third section consists of a clearly written and instructive overview of Ricoeur's philosophical thought. The book concludes with transcriptions of four interviews with Ricoeur that Reagan conducted between 1982 and 1991 that explore the philosopher's opinions on a range of fascinating topics. Together, these different perspectives on the man and his work provide an extremely valuable and accessible digest of the significance of Ricoeur for contemporary thought.

Venema's book provides a much more thorough analysis of Ricoeur's

thought, but also a much denser summary of it, written on about the same level as Ricoeur's own opaque discourse. However, Venema, a philosophy professor at Messiah College, shows a thorough grasp of the main features of Ricoeur's thought and helpfully guides the reader through the long, winding road of Ricoeur's philosophical journey from a phenomenology of action, studies on evil and guilt, psychoanalytic explorations of the unconscious and its symbolism, hermeneutics (where he made perhaps his most important contributions), literary and philosophical studies in metaphor and narrative, and his final work on moral thought and social relations. Venema shows that throughout his journey, Ricoeur's main aim was to explicate the human condition, with an eye on God and human guilt, but focusing primarily on the epistemological and temporal conditions within which humans live and must understand themselves.

And therein lies the great limitation of Ricoeur. For, while he dealt with topics of great importance to Christians when virtually no similar figure would touch them at the time he was writing on them (evil, guilt, and God in the 'Fifties and 'Sixties) and explored themes central to the Christian faith more thoroughly and richly than anyone else was doing when others were studying them (hermeneutics and narrative in the 'Sixties and 'Eighties), he was deeply committed to a post-Kantian critical epistemology. Though more "conservative" than Derrida and Foucault (and hence less popular!; he is no post-modernist), he was no less affected by

Kant than they. While he believed that the symbols of the Christian faith pointed towards ultimate reality, he also believed we have no final access to that reality, so his work never succeeds in breaking out of an exploration of the conditions of human thought to get to the "thing-in-itself." As a result, evangelicals cannot be fully satisfied reading Ricoeur, though Vanhoozer has shown how much evangelicals can benefit from him (see his *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*). Ricoeur has described many phenomena Christian scholars need to think about, but he is unable to comment on their ontological features and reality, a stance that just doesn't go far enough to transcend the asphyxiating limitations of modernism and does not reflect the stance taken by the authors of the Bible, which Ricoeur so highly regarded.

Eric L. Johnson

*The Healthy Marriage Handbook*. General Editor, Louise A. Ferrebee. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001, 339 pp., \$14.99 paper.

The book notes on its cover, "solid answers to more than 200 questions that will strengthen and enhance your marriage." The book is divided into 7 major chapters or sections: 1) Communicating with Confidence; 2) Working through Conflict; 3) Sex: The Way God Designed It; 4) Intimacy: Growing Closer Together; 5) Growing in Spiritual Oneness; 6) Parenting as a Team; and 7) Making Sense of Money matters. There is also a helpful 14-page topic index. Contributors



of the short, sometimes entertaining, and usually helpful articles include the Arps, Ron Blue, Jerry Bridges, Mark Galli, the Garlands, Kent Hughes, Bill Hybels, Jerry Jenkins, Jay Kesler, the Parrotts, the Penners, Lewis Smedes, Scott Stanley, Charles Swindoll, John Trent, Ed Wheat, and Norman Wright. The contributor(s) of each article are noted at the article's end.

This is not a textbook for seminary. However, the advice throughout the book is usually clear, concise, and helpful. The wide variety of topics handled in itself makes this a valuable resource tool. How to deal with "a spouse who yells," "reducing vulnerability to affairs," "the less spiritually interested spouse," and "getting out of debt" is just a sampling of the issues addressed. I do not always agree with the strategies and conclusions of some articles, and I would have liked to have seen more biblical interaction and integration. There was too little scriptural instruction in too many of the articles. This is probably why the editors sought to compensate for this deficiency with an introduction to each section addressing the topic from a biblical perspective. These introductions are helpful but not sufficient. Still this is a book that can provide guidance as we navigate the wonderful adventure called marriage. I am happy to encourage its use.

Daniel L. Akin

*A Scientific Theology—Volume One: Nature.* By Alister E. McGrath. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, 325 pp., \$40.00.

Alister McGrath, professor at Oxford University and principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, has produced an important work which, as he explains in his preface, had its origins nearly a quarter century ago. Dr. McGrath is unusually qualified to write a book (or as intended, a trilogy) on scientific theology since he possesses doctorates in natural science and in theology. McGrath is a world-class scholar whose foray into the melding of science and theology is most welcome. The author is by his own admission greatly reliant on the important work of Thomas F. Torrance in this area but brings to bear his considerable knowledge of theology and science.

McGrath's volume on Nature is the first in a trilogy, the following two to be on Reality and Theory. The dust jacket states, "The first volume in the series sets out a vision for a 'scientific theology,' in which the working assumptions of the natural sciences are critically appropriated as a theological resource." The second volume, he explains, deals with the issue of realism in science and theology, critiquing anti- and non-realism, and argues on behalf of a realist position. The third volume will set forth how reality is represented, paralleling theological doctrines and scientific theories, including parallels between the scientific and theological communities.

In contrast to the increasing perspective that nature is a socially mediated concept, McGrath argues that nature may be explained in theological terms. Whereas formerly theology was viewed as queen of the

sciences, the change of usage of the word "science" has restricted its meaning essentially to the natural sciences. McGrath challenges this assumption, though, setting forth a vision that science might work alongside (*ancillae*) theology in the quest of truth and God, even as does philosophy (and to McGrath even more so than does philosophy). Both science and philosophy serve as handmaidens to theology, but science and theology, he believes, are more suited partners since they are both realist, whereas philosophy often brings metaphysical presuppositions which "denature" the theological endeavor.

McGrath sees the legitimacy of scientific theology in his view of the incarnation of Jesus. Jesus, the Logos, is the ground of creation, the same Logos embedded within creation, the rationality which makes science even possible. Consequently, the doctrine of creation, relating to this Logos, makes necessary a positive working relationship between Christian theology and natural science. One danger that McGrath avoids is requiring Christian theology to be ultimately dependent on science, for scientific views are ever shifting; theology must possess a firmer footing. Theology must engage science but never ground itself in science.

Having dealt with meaning of nature, McGrath then interacts with the Christian doctrine of creation, distinguishing understandings of creation found in Genesis, the Prophets, and the Writings of the Hebrew Scriptures. He then discusses the New Testament idea of *ex nihilo*, seeing the New Testament affirming the

Christological basis of the creation while denying Gnostic dualism.

In his fifth chapter, McGrath interacts with the negative impact of the Fall on knowledge of God, specifically challenging the thinking of Feuerbach that our knowledge of God is no more than human projection and that mathematics is the language of the universe. In the final chapter, Dr. McGrath, heavily relying on T. F. Torrance and Karl Barth, rejects any natural theology that does not “know its place” in operating within the knowledge of God. Natural theology does not stand alone or rival revealed theology. “If nature is to reveal the Christian God, it must be regarded as creation—that is, as bearing some relation to God, in order that this God may somehow be disclosed through it” (p. 296).

Though McGrath rejects autonomous natural theology, or for that matter naturalistic science, he believes that properly configured, natural theology may serve as the basis of a theological engagement with “both the world and the sciences which see to give an account of it” (p. 296). I am somewhat troubled by the seemingly low account that McGrath has of philosophy’s contribution to the discussion at hand, both its contribution to theology and to scientific theology, but will have to wait until the remaining volumes are published to see how he develops this.

McGrath’s book (and eventually the entire trilogy) will be important for theologians and scientists to read. These two fields, cleaved asunder unnaturally by the Enlightenment and its aftermath, hopefully may learn to

dwell together, both to declare the true God. McGrath’s work is an important effort toward that end.

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*Christianity and Western Thought: A History of Philosophers, Ideas, and Movements.* Volume 2. By Steve Wilkens and Alan G. Padgett. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000, 436 pp., \$30.00.

In the preface to the first volume of this series published in 1990, Colin Brown noted that in a sense that book was the previously unwritten “Volume 1” to his old standard, *Philosophy & the Christian Faith* (1968). That statement still rings true: the present Wilkens and Padgett work seems less related to the first volume in the series than Brown’s work of more than two decades earlier. When Brown decided not to complete the series, IVP turned to Steve Wilkens and Alan Padgett, who were on the faculty of Azusa Pacific University at the time. Wilkens remains there as professor of philosophy and ethics, and Padgett is now professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The two volumes in the *Christianity & Western Thought* series are about the same size and have similar bindings and dust jackets. But the similarities do not run as deep in their contents. In the first volume Brown covered more than two millennia, while the present volume covers the nineteenth century. The disparity does not make for a matched series.

Moreover, Wilkens and Padgett tend to be less specific in spelling out the implications of the philosophies of their period for the Christian faith than Brown had been (or like Gordon Clark in *Thales to Dewey*). But in fairness to Wilkens and Padgett, this was not their goal. They state in their preface that the volume “does not have as its primary function the criticism of ideas and systems that are contrary to the Christian faith. Rather, we seek to fairly explain the philosophical arguments and conclusions of great thinkers that have influenced our culture. . . . To write this from a Christian perspective means that we are Christianly interested in the work of these thinkers, their view of God and religion, and their impact upon theology as well as philosophy and culture.”

Volume two has notable strengths. As it should with its narrower period focus, this second volume provides more in-depth treatment of its philosophers than Brown’s earlier work. This fact alone makes the work more useful in introducing a period of philosophy to students. Having a theologian (Wilkens) and a philosopher (Padgett) writing together also has furnished more range in the thinkers treated than in a traditional history of philosophy text, including David Strauss, John Henry Newman, and Charles Darwin.

In an IVP interview, the authors noted that Wilkens wrote the lion’s share of this volume, and Padgett will be responsible for most of volume three, which they hope to have finished by the end of the year. This final volume will be subtitled *Journey to*

*Postmodernity in the Twentieth Century*. Seminary students looking for introductory help with the welter of ideas in the modern period will no doubt be turning to the two Wilkens and Padgett volumes for a long time.

Ted Cabal

*Understanding Early Christian Art*. By Robin Margaret Jensen. New York: Routledge, 2000, 221 pp., \$25.99 paper.

In this day in which so many contemporary church buildings suffer from a poverty of Christian art and symbols, it is interesting to examine the rich Christian symbolism utilized by the early church. *Understanding Early Christian Art* is an excellent place to start in rediscovering the rich use of symbol by the early Christian church.

Robin Margaret Jensen, Associate Professor of the History of Christianity at Andover Newton Theological School, draws from her encyclopedic knowledge of early Christian art in this helpful survey of the of the style, function, and meaning of art used in the service of the early church. She not only introduces the reader to numerous extant art objects of the early church, but also masterfully guides the reader through an informative and rich analysis of the various interpretive traditions within art history of early Christian art. By emphasizing interpretive theories as illustrated in individual expressions, Jensen deftly balances the treatment of overarching themes and individual artifacts.

The book traces several interesting themes in the early church's use of art.

The early Christians sometimes borrowed or adapted symbols that were common in Greco-Roman culture, perhaps adding a new layer of Christian meaning to the symbol. This uncomfortable interaction with pagan culture paralleled the church's struggle with church-world issues in its early history. Sometimes the early church addressed theological themes through somewhat indirect typological symbols. For example, the cross was often symbolized through anchors, boat masts, trees, plows, and axes, as well as through other scriptural narratives and images such as Abraham offering Isaac, Jesus as the Lamb of God, and the bronze serpent in the wilderness. The resurrection was symbolized with symbols such as a dolphin, phoenix, and peacock, as well as through biblical narratives including Adam and Eve (and Paradise Regained), the translation of Elijah and Elisha, Jonah and the fish, the trials of Daniel and his three friends, Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, the healing of Lazarus, Jesus' transfiguration and ascension. Some of the symbols reflect the christological controversies of the early church, especially in confronting docetic and adoptionistic Christology.

The introduction and first chapter contain a fascinating apology for according greater significance to art history and visual art in writing the church history and theology. Jensen's thesis is that visual art is no less valuable than written documents as the foundational data for church history, and thus visual art should not be seen as inferior or subservient to written texts. She denies that early Christian

art voices the unofficial, popular faith affirmations of the laity, while written documents express the official theology of the orthodox church. In particular, she denies the stereotype that early Christian art was simply a visual portrayal of the Bible to illumine uneducated parishioners.

Jensen makes a good case that the early Christian art is an important piece of the puzzle in reconstructing the history and theology of the early church, a tool that is neglected by many church historians. The study of early Christian art can complement and supplement the study of official church documents. Although some art may be merely decorative or illuminative, Jensen is correct in asserting that the very selection of various symbols and biblical themes is itself the application of a rudimentary hermeneutic. The selection of some images and themes over others provides a hint of the prominent theological emphases of the day.

It would be a mistake, however, for church historians to elevate the value of Christian art to equality with the written record of the church. It would be a mistake of categories to attempt to make art function as a theological treatise. When we want to know the theology of Barth or Tillich, we do not examine their art collections. We read their written works on systematic theology, and then interpret their art collections in the light of these written documents.

As an art historian, Jensen may be too optimistic about the purchase that art has in writing church history. While Jensen aptly surveys various competing theories that offer hypoth-

eses to account for the artistic phenomena, there often seems to be insufficient evidence to establish one approach over its competitors. The task of interpreting symbols is necessarily tentative and subjective, and thus the evidence from art history is less objective and authoritative as an interpretive tool for church history than are written documents. There are no canonical pictures, but there are canonical texts; there are no pictorial creeds, but there are written creeds.

The value of art for the craft of writing church history is limited by the number of extant art objects we have from the early church. Art from Christian churches and basilicas is largely absent from the archaeological record for the first few centuries of the church. Since the overwhelming majority of the earliest Christian artifacts came from cemeteries, the function of this art virtually determines the choice of symbols and themes that were utilized, and thus the interpreter is in danger of one-sided analysis. The difficulty of overly relying on art artifacts for writing church history is that they provide at best weak inductive evidence for church history, and at worst an argument from silence. Again, this is not to say that art cannot enrich the study of church history. The study of early Christian art not only illustrates the theological commitments and struggles of the early church, but it also helps fill in the picture of popular piety and the devotional faith of the church at the parish level.

This book offers the reader a helpful and intriguing study of early Christian art. It will be of interest to church

historians, archaeologists, and those who are interested in the interaction of Christian faith and the arts.

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