

Book Reviews

No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. By John S. Feinberg. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001, 879 pp., \$35.00 paper.

Anyone who sets out to write a doctrine of God in our day undertakes both an important and enormous task. Over the last couple of centuries the church has faced incredible challenges from philosophy, science, and theology that have led many, both outside and within evangelicalism, to revise and reformulate traditional understandings of Christian theism, as evidenced by such movements as process and open theism. Into such a setting, John Feinberg, professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, presents his mammoth volume, *No One Like Him*. His work is part of the Foundations of Evangelical Theology series that Crossway has launched, the second of three volumes now published, with more still to come, that attempts to address the main *loci* of systematic theology for today's church. Feinberg's contribution to the series will certainly be welcomed since it delivers what the series promises: a biblically faithful, theologically sound, and philosophically astute presentation of the doctrine of God, while avoiding the pressure that so many have succumbed to, namely to compromise the glory, beauty, and truth of the God of Scripture.

The overall theme by which Feinberg presents the doctrine of God

may be summarized by the phrase, "the king who cares." By this Feinberg is attempting to walk a middle path between classical theism and current views such as open and process theism. He admits that not all the formulations of classical theism, often associated with such individuals as Anselm and Thomas Aquinas as well as the medieval tradition, are correct. In fact, he admits that some of the criticisms of process and open theists are not all wrong, especially those criticisms directed against the tradition's understanding of divine immutability, impassibility, and God's relationship to time. However, Feinberg is also convinced that process and open theism are hardly the best alternative for evangelicals today. Thus, one of Feinberg's main goals in his work is not to bury God, but to reconstruct him—at least to refashion the idea of God from an evangelical perspective, "I intend to offer an account of God which is sensitive to process and open view concerns without altogether abandoning the best insights of the classical conception. And I intend to ground that conception in Scripture" (p 32). In the end, Feinberg wants to present God as "absolutely sovereign, but he is no tyrant, nor is he the remote and unrelated God of classical theism. He is instead the king who cares!" How does Feinberg organize his work? He divides it into three main sections.

In section one, which is broken down into three chapters, Feinberg places his discussion of the doctrine of God into the arena of current

thought, both philosophical and theological (37-179). As in ancient biblical times, so in our own day, there are many false gods that vie for our attention. In order to understand more accurately the distinctness of the Christian God, Feinberg places him alongside what he calls, "the pantheon of pretenders." His goal in doing so is not only to underscore the uniqueness of the God of Scripture, but also to help illustrate what is on the minds of people today as they think about God. This, hopefully, will enable evangelicals to understand better and appreciate more fully why so many non-evangelicals as well as evangelicals want to revise their understanding of God. As Feinberg navigates the last three centuries of western intellectual history, he not only brings a rare conceptual clarity to the contemporary non-evangelical discussion regarding the very idea of God, but he also helps the reader appreciate the current challenges any doctrine of God must face.

In chapter two, he discusses the "idea of God." How exactly do people understand the meaning of "God" in our contemporary, pluralistic culture? In order to answer this question he breaks it down into three separate questions: first, what sort of reality does God have? Here Feinberg discusses the ontological question as to what God is—is he merely a mental projection, a being, or is he beyond being? Second, Feinberg asks: what kind of role(s) does God play in the universe? Here he discusses compet-

ing models of God as diverse as deism to pantheism, as well as various Christian models as diverse as classical, open, and process theism. Lastly, he briefly tackles the question of theological language about God. Is it univocal, equivocal, or analogical? Feinberg adopts the view of William Alston, who argues for a modification of analogical discourse that attempts to navigate the reductionism of either a mere univocal or equivocal understanding of language about God.

In chapter three, Feinberg further outlines the contemporary scene by succinctly cutting through the jungle of what has been dubbed “modernism” and “postmodernism.” He summarizes and describes what has happened to thought about God in such diverse philosophers/theologians and theological movements as: Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher and classic liberal theology, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, the death of God theologies from the 1960s, as well as such current figures and movements as Jürgen Moltmann, liberation and feminist theology, new age thought, the pluralism of John Hick, and the atheology of such deconstructionists as Mark Taylor. In chapter four, Feinberg finishes his discussion of contemporary thought by devoting time to process theism’s view of God. Process theology, Feinberg rightly acknowledges, is a major alternative to traditional Christian theism, and as such, it needs to be properly evaluated by evangelicals. Feinberg does an excellent job of not only describing the main contours of the view, but also of helpfully and cogently critiquing it.

In the second section, which is comprised of six chapters, Feinberg turns his attention to unfolding a specifically Christian view of God in light of all the alternatives of our day (183-498). Here he focuses on the being and nature of God, particularly the divine attributes. In chapter five, after a short summary of the theistic proofs for God’s existence, Feinberg addresses the subject of the Christian “idea of God” in light of some of the thought he had previously discussed in chapter two. He argues well that God is not only a being but also that he is best viewed, both biblically and theologically, as the most perfect being, who is, in theological language—necessary, infinite, spiritual, and personal. Then in chapters six to eight, Feinberg discusses the attributes of God following the classification of non-moral versus moral attributes. Under the category of non-moral attributes, Feinberg discusses such perfections as: aseity, infinity, omnipresence, eternity, immutability, omnipotence, sovereignty, omniscience, wisdom, unity, and simplicity. Under the category of moral attributes, he discusses such perfections as: holiness, righteousness, love, grace, mercy, longsuffering, goodness, lovingkindness, and truth. In chapters nine and ten, Feinberg takes up the question of God’s relationship to time as well as a biblical-theological exposition and defense of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Most of what Feinberg says in the second section is fairly standard for evangelical treatments of the attributes of God. However, there are a few exceptions, particularly his treatment of divine immutability and eternity.

Feinberg, in contrast to open theism and process thought, maintains both a strong view of God’s sovereignty and personal relations with his creatures and world. Anyone familiar with the current literature knows how rare this is, yet Feinberg is convinced that it is an utterly crucial and biblical balance to maintain. Thus, in regard to divine immutability, Feinberg argues for a nuanced understanding of it, namely that God does not change in his person, will, or purposes, but that this does not preclude him from having real relationships with his creatures in time (264-76). Feinberg’s view is underscored further by his rejection of an atemporal understanding of God’s relationship to time for a temporal one (375-436). Feinberg is not alone in maintaining this view, but his treatment of these issues is certainly one of the best to date, especially by those who, like Feinberg, argue for a strong view of divine sovereignty.

In the third and last section, which is comprised of six chapters, Feinberg turns his attention from who God is in his being and nature to the subject of divine action (501-802). The actions that Feinberg is most concerned to address are those of creation and providence. In chapter eleven, he lays out various views as to the divine decree, eventually arguing for a Calvinist understanding of it, in contrast to process and open theism. Chapter twelve addresses the issue of God’s acts in creation. This chapter, like the other ones, is a model of both exegesis and theological argument. In a very succinct and clear manner, Feinberg summarizes the major views of origins, various interpretations of Gen-

esis 1-2 including the debate over the length of days, in which he opts for a twenty-four hour interpretation of *yom*, and then turns to provide a mini-critique of the naturalistic theory of evolution! Then in chapters thirteen through fifteen, which take us to the heart of the book, Feinberg discusses in great depth the divine sovereignty-omniscience and human freedom relationship. In these chapters, Feinberg not only lays out alternative viewpoints in a fair and judicious manner, but he argues well for his own compatibilistic understanding of divine sovereignty and human freedom and defends it against current arguments, both biblically and philosophically. Then in chapter sixteen, he tackles, as he has done elsewhere in writing, how a compatibilist would handle the issue of suffering and the problem of evil.

Overall, Feinberg's work is an important one and a must-read for pastors, students, and teachers. In my view, the evangelical church is greatly indebted to John Feinberg for this fine work. Obviously not everyone will be convinced by all of his arguments, but his treatment of the doctrine of God in light of the issues of our day is a significant achievement. I also think, for the most part, that it is a biblically faithful treatment as well. Feinberg's work is especially important today for evangelicals in light of the debate surrounding open theism. Those who want to think deeply about God in light of current thought will avoid reading this work to their own loss. The major drawback of the book is probably its size and depth of discussion. But hopefully many will look

beyond these factors and wrestle with the content of this work with the goal of understanding our times better and knowing the glorious God of Scripture more deeply and faithfully.

Stephen J. Wellum

Down by the Riverside: A Brief History of Baptist Faith. By Everett C. Goodwin. Valley Forge: Judson, 2002, 134 pp., \$13.00 paper.

Our churches need a short, user-friendly guide to the history and identity of the Baptist movement. Indeed, there is a growing audience for a winsomely presented and historically accurate book that pastors can give to church members and professors can assign to students. This is not that book.

The author of this volume has a long and distinguished career of service in Baptist churches, most notably the historic First Baptist Church of Washington, D.C. Goodwin interprets the span of four centuries of Baptist history through the prism of a uniquely liberal understanding of Baptist individualism. He traces the Baptist movement from its origins among English dissenters John Smyth and Thomas Helwys through the colonial American quest for religious liberty to the established structures of contemporary Baptist groups. Goodwin then examines what he considers to be distinctive elements of Baptist theological commitments on Scripture, authority, the church, "soul freedom," and mission.

Goodwin focuses his historical accounts on the controversies that

shaped Baptist life, while offering only the most perfunctory of looks at the confessional commitments that informed these controversies. While Goodwin will comment on the existence of such documents as the London, Philadelphia, and New Hampshire confessions of faith, he does little to examine their content—a project that might prove uncomfortable since he will later label virtually identical views on biblical authority and the gospel to be "fundamentalist."

Goodwin's treatment of the various controversies over biblical authority proves quite revealing. He notes that most Baptists stood theologically with the conservatives in the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy of the early twentieth century. This is because, however, "most Baptists had only recently been exposed to intellectual debates that undergirded the liberal position." He offers a similar explanation for the populist appeal of conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention: "Because modern biblical interpretation increasingly relies on knowledge of a wide, complex body of information regarding history, archaeology, textual analysis, and other disciplines, the message of television educators and evangelists exerted a strong appeal in its simple, more easily understood approach." Thus, moderate and liberal Baptists "found themselves increasingly misunderstood." Here Goodwin is in line with an entire generation of the twentieth century Baptist left, an ideological elitism in which PhDs schooled in German higher criticism see themselves functioning as a gnostic Magisterium, knowing what

the Bible “really is” in ways that Baptist church members are too ignorant to understand. One might argue that this attitude was pivotal in fueling Southern Baptist churches to retake their denomination in the 1970s and 1980s.

It is Goodwin’s treatment of “basic Baptist beliefs,” that is the fatal error of this volume. Goodwin argues that some Baptists have held to an Adamic Fall, while others have seen the Genesis 3 account as merely “an example” of human sin. He argues that, for most Baptists, “not all Scripture is regarded with equal weight,” thus diminishing the authority of the Old Testament or, as he prefers to call it, “the Hebrew Scriptures.” Goodwin argues that “biblical literalism” and “absolutist views of faith” will have little future in postmodern America after the September 11 terrorist attacks since such “fundamentalism” is “commonly perceived to lead to conflict or violence.”

Goodwin argues that Baptists have been “non-creedal,” thus experiencing a great deal of diversity among individual Baptists, until the “authoritative biblicism” of SBC conservatism that exalts “the Bible as an authority even above Jesus Christ.” “Common issues of disagreement” among Baptists, for Goodwin, have included the following questions: “Was humankind created completely or exclusively in Adam and Eve, or were there others? Was humankind created in its present form, or did it evolve, as Darwin theorized? Were the great biblical stories about Moses, David, Elijah and the people of Israel literally and historically true, or were they mythological (i.e., partly fabricated or

embellished stories told to demonstrate a particular truth or purpose)? Were the Bible’s assertions about the nature of sin and separation from God accurate, or were they simply ancient insights into human character, as psychology claimed? Was the Bible divinely inspired in some direct and personal way by God, or was it simply the product of human hands and therefore greatly diminished in authority, however inspired it might seem to be?”

For example, Goodwin dismisses Baptist commitment to the reality of the eternal state. “Generally, when Baptists have spoken of heaven and hell it has been to distinguish between God’s kingdom and the realm of evil,” he writes. Goodwin points to a Baptist “optimism” in contradistinction to the idea of eternal judgment. Asserting that most Baptists have not emphasized hell, Goodwin contends that is because “early Baptists lived under conditions in which threats of one sort or another had been used to coerce their faithfulness or obedience to a creed or code. Thus, understandably they were averse to the use of dire threats in theological language of their own.” Thus, Goodwin argues, “Baptists individually may believe in heaven or hell, and may from time to time have conceptions of Christ’s return in millennial circumstances” but “most Baptists have been much more focused on the evidence of faith in life as it is lived in the present.”

One is at a loss to wonder about whom Goodwin is writing. Such a revisionist understanding of Christian hope is completely absent from the Baptist confessional tradition and

from the preaching of the early generations of Baptists—most especially from the Baptist pioneers for religious liberty in the United States. Indeed, the few Baptists who have embraced such thought openly—Harry Emerson Fosdick or Carlyle Marney, for example—have done so from an ecumenical platform because their ideas found so little resonance among Baptists. Others, such as the old guard of the twentieth-century SBC resorted to “double-speak” precisely because they knew such views would be soundly rejected in the churches.

In short, Goodwin is writing about an alternative universe—a Baptist history he wishes had happened, and a liberal theology he wishes he could call mainstream Baptist thought. Most Baptist churches, however, do not live in this universe. These churches need a short, contemporary, popular treatment of Baptist history and identity. Perhaps the outrageous theological and historical revisionism of the Goodwin volume might prompt an evangelical Baptist historian such as Gregory Wills to write the kind of concise Baptist history book our churches can really use.

Russell D. Moore

The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 19: Sermons and Discourses 1734-1738. Edited by M. X. Lesser. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, xiv + 849 pp., \$95.00.

The production of the works of Edwards marches on with this volume of his sermons from the key period of the beginning of the revival

and its immediate aftermath. The editor does a fine job of setting the sermons in the historical context in which they were preached, and of introducing the reader to Edwards's own understanding of his task as a preacher of the gospel to his people (see especially pp. 28-35). Not all of the sermon manuscripts from this time are included in this volume, and, of course, one might quibble over whether some ought to have been included and others omitted.

Here is experimental Reformed preaching at its best. Every student of revival and every student of preaching ought to read at least some of these great sermons. The first sermon in the volume, "Heeding the Word, and Losing It," (37-57) is a marvelous presentation of the necessity for congregations to hear from God. The message on "Justification by Faith Alone" (143-242) is a classic, and was used mightily to spark the Great Awakening in the church at Northampton. It has, thus, historical value, as well as being an excellent doctrinal sermon. In addition, the sermon on "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners" (336-76) is a timely (both then and now) word about a troubling issue for many in contemporary theology.

The reader of these sermons will be exposed to Edwards's hermeneutical style, which is a combination of syntactical/theological exposition with typological exegesis. There is both much of value and much that could be improved on here. It will be valuable to compare and contrast Edwards with later expositors and their approach to the hermeneutical task.

Some, like Spurgeon, are closer to the New England divines in methodology; others, like Maclaren, are more consistently committed to the syntactical/theological approach, minus the heavy-handed typological hermeneutic, which is a better model for consistent expository preaching.

Still, these sermons are of great value to both the young and the seasoned expositor. Edwards believed that the words of the preacher are like hammers in the hand of the Holy Spirit. That conviction is easily seen in these expositions, where it is often clear that the words were chosen with great care and commitment to the task.

These volumes are now appearing with some regularity. This reviewer would hope that more and more readers would purchase them and read them consistently. Edwards is America's greatest theologian/preacher, and we ought to read "the good stuff," rather than the fluff that is often the fodder for American pulpits. The prices of these volumes is somewhat daunting, but if a pastor forgoes four or five volumes of powder-puff, popcorn expositions and instead opts for one of Edwards's volumes, well, the math will work out and the congregation where that pastor preaches will find itself dining on meat rather than on junk food.

Chad Owen Brand

Authentic Spirituality: Moving Beyond Mere Religion. By Barry L. Callen. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001, 271 pp., \$18.99 paper.

What distinguishes authentic spiri-

tuality from mere religion? Barry Callen, Professor of Christian Studies at Anderson University, attempts to answer this question from his Wesleyan/holiness perspective. He presents a Trinitarian theological foundation for Christian spirituality, arguing for a living faith rather than a stultified orthodoxy. This book is somewhat unique in that it is more theologically astute than the typical devotional book, and more devotional than the typical theology text.

Callen structures the book according to various activities of the Spirit in the life of the believer. The middle six chapters are framed by an introductory chapter and a closing chapter on sanctification. Each of the six core chapters addresses a key response of the Christian to the activity of the Holy Spirit - being summoned into his presence, amazed by his extravagance, belonging by his action, knowing through his eyes, living in his way, and abiding in his assurance. The chapter on the extravagant love of God is particularly compelling. Each of the six core chapters includes a section entitled "The Wonderful Bible Word," a helpful biblical word study relating to the concern of the chapter. Each of the chapters also includes a section entitled "The Rich Christian Tradition" (except chapter seven, in which the heading is omitted on p. 193). Each "Rich Christian Tradition" section applies three elements to the topic of the chapter: (a) the significance of the church year, (b) one of Richard Foster's six Christian traditions of spirituality (evangelical, charismatic, contemplative, holiness, incarnational, and social justice), and

(c) some aspect of the Apostles' Creed. Each chapter includes a useful list of questions for individual thought or group discussion.

The book is enhanced with a helpful glossary, indexes, and a list of spiritual leaders throughout church history. The list of spiritual leaders is unfortunately rather imbalanced and limited. The only Baptists included were John Bunyan, Howard Thurman, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Clark Pinnock. Many Baptists would have listed Charles Haddon Spurgeon, George W. Truett, and Billy Graham as making a larger contribution to Christian spirituality than several on Callen's list.

The placement of these Christian traditions of spirituality seems mismatched at times with the topic of the various chapters. The evangelical tradition would have fit more appropriately with the emphasis in chapter four on adoption into the Christian community than does the charismatic tradition, especially since the charismatic movement has been one of the most divisive movements within the body of Christ in church history. The social justice tradition seems oddly paired with the chapter on assurance of salvation, and the contemplative tradition would have seemed to fit better with the chapter on knowledge of the holy than does the holiness tradition.

While Callen repeatedly affirms the importance of doctrinal orthodoxy, he also repeatedly discounts distinctive denominational beliefs and eschews theological nit picking. He draws an overly-sharp distinction between a dull orthodoxy and an

authentic, living faith, almost as if the link between doctrinal orthodoxy and spiritual vitality were rather accidental, creating a false antithesis between sound doctrine and vital spirituality. Callen argues that Christians should not press beyond a lowest common denominator confession such as the Apostles' Creed. One would be wise to be cautious when presented with such arguments for ecumenicity couched in appeals to Christlike love. These appeals sometimes turn out in fact to be Trojan horses utilized to advance a particular agenda. While Callen does not seem to be consciously pushing such an agenda, there are many aspects of his theology that many evangelicals would find unpalatable or unacceptable – his grounding in openness of God theology (23-27), his assertion that the modern reader is equally as inspired as the biblical author (137), his sacramental view of the church ordinances (176), his denial of the eternal security of the believer (192), and his affirmation that people can be saved without explicit faith commitment to Jesus Christ (201). The reader may feel at times that the doctrinal orthodoxy to which Callen objects, and which he declares unspiritual or unauthentic, is any doctrinal position with which he disagrees.

The living orthodoxy with spiritual vitality that Callen purports to endorse is indeed a worthy goal of the Christian life. While it is true that orthodoxy without spiritual vitality is mere religion or pharisaism, vitality without orthodoxy is heresy. Those who have heat without light often get burned. Authentic Christian spiritual-

ity only emerges from sound doctrine.

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The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith. Overtures To Biblical Theology. By Walter Brueggemann. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002, xxvii + 225 pp., \$18.00 paper.

The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives. By Philip Johnston and Peter Walker (eds.). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000, 240 pp., \$20.00 paper.

In the current Christian community, the concept of land is either attributed to dispensational premillennialism (although the focus is not so much the land as it is the people of Israel) or stewardship and environmentalism as it applies to the care of the earth. "The Land" as a material component of the concept of Covenant is not an influential concept in Protestant theology. Since it is such an integral part of the covenant in the Hebrew Bible and Judaism, there is a need to present a thorough analysis of this theological concept.

Both of the books discuss the topic and concept of *The Land* from a theological perspective but each one has a different emphasis and framework in how they approach the subject. Brueggemann focuses on the *Land* as an integral part of the covenant between God and His people. Johnston and Walker show how the *Land* has been interpreted or viewed by the

people of the covenant. Another difference is that *The Land of Promise* is an edited book while Brueggemann's monograph is a synthetic work. Both works present their topic within a chronological framework. Brueggemann's discussion encompasses the concept in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Johnston and Walker expand beyond the canon and include the modern period in their discussion of the theology of land. Brueggemann's book is a revised edition of his original work published in 1977. Although this work is dated by his methodological focus on theological themes, it continues to be a classic.

Johnston and Walker's book is a well-edited and designed book. The book contains six major chapters with a total of thirteen essays, most by contributors from the Continent. The book is intended to address the contemporary question of the relation between the land of Israel today and God's covenant. The first three chapters contain essays that deal with the concept of land in the Old and New Testament. The last three chapters discuss the concept of land in Christian theology, Christian stewardship, and a chapter that contains essays from an Israeli believer and a Palestinian Christian.

Both of these books are valuable resources that introduce the conceptual framework of Land/Covenant. The authors focus their discussion on the concept of land and covenant based on the biblical text without political overtones that would distort the discussion. These books are important works, particularly for the contemporary theological issue concern-

ing the modern State of Israel. Brueggemann's classic work is a must read for anyone who works within Old Testament Theology.

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The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker. By John Polkinghorne. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, 211 pp., \$18.00 paper.

Having read Barbour, Peacocke, and others, I must admit I expected more of the same from Polkinghorne. I was wrong. Polkinghorne's "bottom-up" approach (an empirical methodology) accepts Big Bang cosmology, evolutionary development, and standard conclusions of modern biblical criticism, but this theoretical physicist (President of Queens College, Cambridge) affirms the Nicene Creed as his own, and he organizes his chapters around key phrases from the creed. He wants to affirm the uniqueness of the incarnation (including the virgin birth). He believes that *ex nihilo* creation is the ultimate reality behind all the modern cosmologies. Polkinghorne also affirms a literal and historical resurrection of Jesus as the bedrock of Christian faith.

Polkinghorne is witty and insightful as he addresses Barbour and his view that Christ is an evolutionary continuation of God's work (Christ as a new stage of human evolution). Polkinghorne muses over "whether the next stage in evolution will regularly produce beings who rise from the dead?" Without doubt, Polkinghorne

affirms that "Jesus rose from the dead in such a fashion . . . that it is true to say that he is alive today, glorified and exalted but still continuously related in a mysterious but real way with the historical figure who lived and died in first-century Palestine."

Polkinghorne correctly recognizes that theodicy is at the heart of many modern theories of divine foreknowledge and divine agency. He holds, however, that God does not know the unformed future since the future is not there to be known. This is a radical view of divine temporality, but it does not fall into the open theism trap that has God knowing all of the irrelevant infinite possibilities of the merely hypothetical future.

Polkinghorne wants to argue for an inclusive approach (as opposed to an exclusive or a pluralist view) with regard to world religions and thus for the possible salvation of all people. He provides a very insightful critique of the major non-Christian traditions of the world, but his problem with orthodox eschatology is the old question of infinite punishment for finite wrongs. His proposal is a demythologized purgatory for everyone.

These ten chapters were the 1993-1994 Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh. I found something interesting, insightful, and challenging on almost every page of this volume. It is not for new Christians, but for the mature evangelical who can rejoice in the good and overlook the wrong, this is an important lecture series.

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Jesus according to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels. By Darrell L. Bock. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002, 704 pp., \$39.99.

John Ciardi wrote in the preface to his translation of Dante's *Inferno*, "I should acknowledge a debt of borrowed courage to all other translators of Dante; without their failures I should never have attempted my own." With these words Ciardi recognizes that his translation, which has been hailed as a spectacular achievement, in fact fails to capture the sublimity of Dante's poetry. If all translations of Dante's poem are failures, how much more so all books on Jesus. Since so many cherish Jesus (and their own understandings of what the Gospels indicate), anything short of his very presence is bound to disappoint. We can thank Bock for his courage in undertaking this task.

We begin with three questions: for whom is this book written? What is this book's thesis? And what kind of book is this? In answer to the first question, Bock writes for students and pastors (p. 15). Answering the second, and hinting at the third, Bock states, "This book is not a technical historical Jesus study. It seeks rather to argue that a coherent portrait of Jesus emerges from the canonical Gospels . . ." (17). Bock helpfully restates and reinforces his thesis, that the picture of Jesus in the Gospels is coherent, throughout the book. For instance, he writes, "My basic contention is that the coherence of this portrait emerges and commends itself as one that gives unique insight into who Jesus is and was" (48).

Answering the question of what kind of book this is transitions us into description of the book's plan and contents. Bock assures the reader that "this approach is not strictly like a harmony, which seeks to reconstruct a chronological flow to Jesus' ministry. Nor is it like a typical 'life of Christ,' which often builds off of a harmony" (46). What, then, is this book? It seems to be primarily a commentary on the Synopses.

The book has four parts. The first briefly overviews each Gospel, providing an outline of each Gospel, highlighting the major themes, and touching on the introductory questions of authorship, date, and so forth (44 pp.). The second part amounts to a commentary on every incident in the Synoptic Gospels (360 pp.). The third part is a look at "Jesus according to John" (150 pp.) and part four presents "A Theological Portrait of Jesus" (90 pp.).

The basic thesis of the book, then, seems to be that the Gospels present a coherent portrait of Jesus. The length of the book results from Bock's desire to cover all of the Gospel material. This feature is both the book's strength and its weakness. The strong point is that here in one volume is a defense of the coherence of the portrait of Jesus found in the four Gospels, and every incident the Gospels record is covered. The weak point is that covering every incident limits the detail into which Bock can go, making the book more useful for those being introduced to academic study of the Gospels. Further, since the book covers *all* of the Gospels, some points are redundant. The author is strongest when dealing

with Luke, since he obviously knows that material best. The book is well indexed, and so will readily serve as a reference work on the Gospels.

Bock constantly alludes to, summarizes, or directly quotes the Gospel accounts he is dealing with. This is a good practice when writing a book entitled, *Jesus according to Scripture*, but, more often than not, the Dallas professor neglects to give the verse references for the statements cited.

Bock states, "None of the Gospels names its author" (24). This is technically true, in that none of the Gospels explicitly states its author in the body of its narrative (though John comes close). Bock later wrongly cites Martin Hengel on the point that the roots of the Gospel superscriptions (According to Matthew, According to Mark, etc.) "go back to the early-to-mid-second century" (29). In fact, in the article Bock cites, Hengel argues against a second century date for the superscriptions, placing them firmly in the first century. Hengel writes, "The titles of the Gospels are by no means late products from the second century but must be very old. With a considerable degree of probability they can be traced back to the time of the origin of the four Gospels between 69 and 100 and are connected with their circulation in the communities" ("The Titles of the Gospels and the Gospel of Mark," in *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, trans. J. Bowden [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], p. 84).

If the reader is looking for a more evangelical version of N. T. Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God*, this is not the book to read. Nor is this the book to read if the reader is looking for

something focused on Jesus, like R. H. Stein's *Jesus the Messiah*; and if the reader is looking for technical, exegetical discussion of the Gospels, better conservative commentaries on each Gospel are available. If, however, the reader is looking for a book that walks through the Synopsis arguing that a coherent picture of Jesus emerges from the four Gospels, *Jesus according to Scripture* is that book.

Jim Hamilton

Strangers in Zion: Fundamentalists in the South, 1900-1950. By William R. Glass. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001, xxiv + 309 pp., \$39.95.

Scholars often note that "fundamentalism" made its earliest impact in the North, since it was in that part of the country that liberalism flourished in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Northern Baptist conservatives sought to implement a confession of faith in 1924, but were defeated by the moderates in their attempt. Liberal seminary professors such as William Newton Clarke and Shailer Matthews were thus allowed to continue teaching their views unimpeded by the denomination. Similar trends of distinction between North and South, though not so marked, prevailed among Presbyterians, so the claim that fundamentalism was centered in the North is largely true, but it is not all of the truth. Previous studies on fundamentalism, such as those by Marsden and Sandeen, have neglected the early rise of Southern fundamentalism. This book by William Glass fills the

lacuna left by others.

Glass recognizes that fundamentalism had a slow start in the South, partly for the theological reasons mentioned above, and partly for sociological reasons. At the end of the Great War, the South was still ensconced in Victorian values. This was largely due to the conservative cast of mind of Southerners, and also to the kind of intellectual life that is endemic to the agrarian lifestyle, especially the agrarian lifestyle of the nineteenth century. Further, Southern race relations prevented modernist ideas from taking hold. "The necessity of maintaining Jim Crow gave a conservative cast to Southern culture, as almost any change, unless controlled and directed by the white elite, could be charged with threatening the Southern system of race relations and hence the basis of the Southern social order" (p. xvi). Finally, modernism had a slow start in the South because church leaders saw themselves as moral guardians of society more so than did their Northern counterparts, according to Glass, encouraging the popular perception of the South as Zion (xvii). Though one might quibble over the degree of influence Glass attributes to these factors, it would seem that he is broadly correct in his assessment.

After a chapter in which he defines fundamentalism, mainly along the lines drawn up previously by Marsden, Glass writes about itinerant and interdenominational fundamentalists, then addresses Presbyterians and Baptists in separate chapters, concluding with a look at Separatist fundamentalism. Itinerant fundamentalist speakers were crucial to the growth

of the movement. Leonard Broughton, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Atlanta, sought to introduce the city of Atlanta to the chief fundamentalist preachers and teachers from the North by hosting annual conferences to which he would invite C. I. Scofield, R. A. Torrey, James Gray, Robert Dick Wilson, and many others as guest speakers (42-46). Conferences such as these made it clear to many Southerners that most fundamentalist teaching (with the exception in some cases of the pretribulation rapture doctrine) was not as novel as they had been led to believe.

In the chapter on Baptists, Glass presents an interesting contrast between J. Frank Norris and E. P. Allredge. Norris left the Convention and formed the Baptist Bible Union in the early "Twenties, but Allredge had been a loyal "stay-in-er" the entire time. Norris had given up on reversing the trend toward liberalism which he thought he perceived in the SBC, but Allredge did not, and committed himself to preventing the SBC from drifting left (183-189). He founded what was probably the first Southwide Baptist fundamentalist periodical, *The Baptist Challenge*. Allredge believed that interdenominational fundamentalists (he called them "undenominationalists") constituted the real hurdle to the development of a strong fundamentalist movement in the SBC (192). Lewis Sperry Chafer of Dallas Seminary, for instance, made the observation that the hand of the Southern Baptists was "somewhat against our men because they are trained in an undenominational seminary" (193). Early criticism

of Alldredge and other fundamentalists who were SBC loyalists came from O. W. Taylor, editor of the *Baptist and Reflector*. Taylor agreed with the denominational fundamentalists, though, that modernism was a serious and viable threat to the SBC (209), and went so far as to print a letter by Fosdick to demonstrate the New York pastor's infidelity, urging Southern Baptists to be wary of his writings (211). Would that more contemporary Baptist paper editors might take a page out of his book!

Glass also gives considerable attention to the work of Luther Peak in Dallas and I. W. Rogers in Kentucky. Peak was early on influenced by Norris, but later broke with him over the Ft. Worth pastor's domineering spirit, even publishing several scathing critiques of Norris in the *Baptist Standard*. Rogers was also a denominational fundamentalist, and agitated especially for changes in the way the Kentucky Baptist convention went about its work. Rogers was joined in Kentucky by Clarence Walker, pastor of Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, who, out of concerns for the state Baptist colleges, founded a Bible institute in his church, later known as Lexington Baptist College.

William Glass has written a very fair and even-handed treatment of early Southern fundamentalism. It seems that his interpretation of fundamentalism has been influenced by Marsden, and there are good reasons to criticize Marsden's model on several grounds. But this book is very commendable. Glass avoids the pitfalls into which so many have stumbled of identifying Southern fun-

damentalism with J. Frank Norris (279). He shows clearly that this is wrong, and that the figure of Norris, attracting attention like the proverbial bull in the china closet, has deceived many contemporary interpreters into thinking that he was representative of Southern fundamentalism, especially of Southern Baptist fundamentalism. He was not—then or now. For those interested in learning about the early development of fundamentalism especially among Southern independents, Presbyterians, and Baptists, this book is a must-read.

Chad Own Brand

I & II Timothy and Titus: A Commentary. The New Testament Library. By Raymond F. Collins. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002, 408 pp., \$34.95.

This is the highly publicized first volume of The New Testament Library series and is written by an established scholar with previous helpful contributions to the field. As one would expect from the Old Testament counterpart series, the publisher, and the author, this commentary takes a more critical approach to the Pastorals. Thus, Collins considers it almost patently obvious that Paul did not write these letters and that the letters could not be true personal letters – “In no case can any one of the Pastoral Epistles be considered a truly personal letter” (p. 7). While this does not seem to take seriously enough significant research to the contrary, it must be said that Collins is more positive towards the Pastorals than a previ-

ous generation of critical commentators (e.g. Hanson).

The commentary focuses more on background (largely Hellenistic) and form than on theology. Given that emphasis, one would expect more interaction with significant research on the letter form which is more positive for the Pastorals. Also Mounce's recent important commentary is not listed in the bibliography, and even though some of Towner's work is listed it is not discussed in key places such as when Collins simply reaffirms the view of a waning eschatological urgency in the letters.

In short, if one is doing academic research on the Pastoral Epistles consult this commentary in a library after examining works such as Marshall, Mounce, Quinn/Quinn-Wacker, Knight, etc. If one is preaching on the Pastorals, one can safely skip this commentary as the technical issues are covered better elsewhere and other works (e.g. Marshall, Mounce, Stott, Towner) will be more helpful in theology and application.

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The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. By Richard A. Muller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, xii + 308 pp., \$65.00.

One would think that in a time when historical methodology has become *sine qua non* for biblical research at the highest academic levels that the same approach would prevail in producing

works in historical theology. According to Richard Muller, P.J. Zondervan Professor of Historical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, this is not the case, at least not with most studies on Calvin. This book is his attempt to remediate that situation.

Muller contends that most works on Calvin's theology do not interpret him in his own historical context, but rather seek to enlist him as a support for some contemporary tradition. He criticizes all of the Barthian interpreters, for instance, noting that any attempt to read the Genevan Reformer in a neoorthodox manner is just the worst kind of anachronism. He also criticizes Gerrish's attempts to give a Schleiermacherian reading, Reist's efforts to interpret Calvin through the lens of Derrida, and the attempts of some well-meaning Dortian Calvinists for attempting to find explicit teaching on limited atonement in Calvin. According to Muller, this issue, whether to affirm or deny limited atonement, simply was not on Calvin's radar (pp. 6-11).

The correct approach, says Muller, is to read Calvin in his own context, both as to his antecedent theological heritage, and in the socio-historical context of his own place and time. One wonders why it has taken so long for someone to issue such a clarion call. The author of this book contends that Calvin was unoriginal in his theology, contrary to much of the polemics about the man from both sides. Calvin's great contribution lies, rather, in the manner in which he synthesized the humanist philological tradition with scholastic methodology, while at the same time rejecting the humanis-

tic love of pagan virtue and avoiding the excesses of medieval scholastic theology (175). His other significant gift to the church was the remarkable clarity that he brought to most issues that he addressed. It is probably this clarity that has elicited the claims to (and accusations of) originality, since the later Reformed tradition often pointed back to Calvin as its primary source of inspiration, when, in fact, the contributions of Bullinger, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Musculus, and Vermigli were also profound. But no one today is accused of being a (or of claiming the eponym) "Vermigliite."

Muller's primary goal in this volume is to assess the *Institutes* and to determine just what it was that Calvin was trying to accomplish. He agrees with historians like Dillenberger that the *Institutes* is not a systematic theology in the vein of, say, Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* or Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, since, unlike those works, "it does not move deductively from premises to their logical conclusions or inductively from evidences to general principles and does not have a 'central dogma'" (178). Rather, Calvin's *opus* follows a catechetical pattern or even a history of salvation pattern that flows from the biblical narrative—creation, fall, redemption. Even the claim that the *Institutes* represents a theological system is itself an anachronism, since, according to Muller, the first use of the phrase, "theological system," was in Bartholomaeus Keckermann's *Systema sacrosanctae theologiae* in 1602. At the same time, the book is a systematic exposition of biblical teaching and so can be seen as a theological system in the con-

text of what that meant in the sixteenth century, standing alongside such works as Melancthon's *Loci communes*, though Calvin's method of presentation differed from most of the *loci* works of his time (180).

I think it is safe to say that anyone attempting to do serious study of Calvin's theology in our day will have to read Muller's volume. It is a *tour de force* in historical theology and a needed corrective to much gibberish that has been penned about the Genevan Reformer, especially in the twentieth century.

Chad Owen Brand

An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics: A Guide to the History and Practice of Biblical Interpretation. By Mal Couch, general editor. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000, 371 pp., \$15.99 paper.

The reader who would expect from its title that this book surveys the broad field of evangelical hermeneutics will find the title to be something of a misnomer. All the contributors in this volume write from and about a dispensationalist perspective, and thus the book would be more aptly given a narrower title such as *An Introduction to Classical Dispensational Hermeneutics*.

The contributors include Mal Couch, Larry Crutchfield, Thomas Figart, Bobby Hayes, Ron Johnson, Russell Penney, and Paul Lee Tan. However, about half of the chapters in the book have no stated individual author or authors; the authorship is attributed to a collaborative effort of

several contributors. Even chapters attributed to an author bear the mark of ghost writing. For example, a chapter attributed to Couch refers to Couch in third person (p. 171).

Most of the chapters are not original to this volume, but are adaptations from other already published works. Six of the chapters were previously published in recent issues of *The Conservative Theological Journal*; four of the chapters were previously published in *A Biblical Theology of the Church*, also edited by Couch; two chapters were drawn from material in Paul Lee Tan's *The Interpretation of Prophecy*; and one chapter utilizes over thirty articles from the *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, also edited by Couch. The originality of the volume is further hindered by the overuse of lengthy block quotations from other works. One result of this somewhat cut-and-paste collection is that this volume lacks the cohesiveness of other volumes edited by Couch such as *A Biblical Theology of the Church*. Several topics are annoyingly addressed repeatedly in various chapters.

An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics is divided into four sections. The first chapter surveys issues of biblical inspiration and basic hermeneutical principles; the second surveys the interpretive traditions of classical (essentialist) dispensationalism and covenant theology; the third overviews the doctrine of the church in dispensationalism, and the fourth addresses the interpretation of prophecy. Unfortunately, the book has little to say about the interpretation of other genres of Scripture.

The book is not without its positive

contributions. It offers a strong defense of a high view of biblical inspiration and of utilizing the plain sense meaning of the text. It provides a survey of the history of dispensational hermeneutics. It affords a useful comparison between the hermeneutics of covenant theology and dispensationalism, especially in how these approaches would handle key biblical texts. It addresses straightforwardly and rather effectively some of the common objections raised against dispensationalism. A useful index of Scripture references and subjects addressed is included.

Unfortunately, even some of these contributions have limitations. The defense of the plain sense interpretation of Scripture is weakened by a tendency to conflate Origen's allegorical interpretations with almost any use of symbolic meanings, even in apocalyptic literature. The careful focus on covenant theology and classical dispensationalism not only ignores the many other evangelical hermeneutical approaches, but appears to be unaware of other premillennial and dispensationalist approaches. The single-minded obsession on criticizing covenant theology is evidenced by the fact that over thirty references to Louis Berkhof's works are included in the course of pointing out weaknesses in his hermeneutical approaches, but few other non-dispensationalist evangelicals are mentioned.

Those who are interested in the debate between classical dispensationalism and covenant theology in past decades will find this volume to be helpful, but most evangelical readers will find it to be out of date and out of

touch with the issues being addressed in contemporary hermeneutics.

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John Stott: The Making of a Leader. By Timothy Dudley-Smith. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999, 526 pp., \$25.00.

John Stott: A Global Ministry. By Timothy Dudley-Smith. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001, 538 pp., \$25.00.

"You need to read biographies." The advice came from a trusted friend, so I decided to listen. Timothy Dudley-Smith's two-volume set, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* (covering the decades of the 1920's through the 1950's), and *John Stott: A Global Ministry* (covering the 1960's through the 1990's) is a quite lengthy, but worth the time and effort it takes to work through the material. This biography is one of those that will make a difference in the life of anyone who reads it.

John R.W. Stott is not a typical author. Most of the more serious theological works (including commentaries) come from the hands of professors and full-time scholars these days. Books written by pastors are usually less academic. Stott, on the other hand, has written extensively in many areas. His books include commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount and the letters of John, *Between Two Worlds* (a preaching textbook), *The Cross of Christ* (a theological work on the atonement),

and *Human Rights and Human Wrongs* and *Our Social and Sexual Revolution* (two books that deal with very complex and current ethical and social issues from a biblical standpoint). He epitomizes the phrase, scholar-pastor.

Dudley-Smith's books include many quotations and letters that might have been excluded from a biography. But the more one reads, the more one realizes that this is more than simply the biography of a single man. This work really helps to summarize the evangelical movement in the last fifty years, especially within the Anglican Church.

John Stott has often been the lone voice crying in the wilderness, longing to bring his fellow Anglicans back to their biblical roots. From the beginning of his ministry as assistant curate at All Souls Church in London, Stott believed in and practiced expository preaching. Dudley-Smith points out that Stott often failed to make relevant application in his early years, but that he made the Bible his source for all teaching and theology.

Stott became Rector at All Souls in 1950, and has served in and from that church his entire ministry. He served as an effective pastor for many years, and has also traveled extensively in different capacities. One of his most passionate pursuits has been in what Dudley-Smith calls college missions. Stott has preached and taught on many college and university campuses all over the world, seeking to challenge students, faculty and administration alike that biblical Christianity is both reasonable and relevant, and that one can live the Christian life in modern (and post-

modern) times. Stott has worked with evangelicals from other denominations (most notably Billy Graham), and has been a leader in evangelical circles for the better part of the last forty years.

Throughout his ministry the Anglican pastor has been a prolific author. The books mentioned above are only a partial listing of his work. Dudley-Smith points out that the fact that Stott is a bachelor has given him the freedom to pursue many of his passions. But he also tells us that Stott is an extremely hard worker. Most of his much younger ministry assistants have not been able to keep pace with him.

Two things were quite apparent in these books. The first is of great importance. John Stott did not pursue a terminal degree. He was an excellent student in both his college and seminary days, but does not have an earned doctorate. Yet he is clearly a scholar by any definition. His writings are on par with any other writer. Throughout his ministry he has kept abreast of the latest in theology and biblical studies. He has taken the time and made the effort to be the best he can be.

That is a challenge to all of us. There are many shortcuts to ministry. Too many pastors are willing to let others do their research. We have all heard pastors say, "Now, I'm not a theologian." If you are not a theologian (one who studies theology), then what are you doing preaching? There is no excuse for the pastor who is not still learning. Even in his eighties, John Stott continues to read and learn. My prayer is that I will do the same.

The second point is that there are

interesting parallels between Stott's work in his denomination, and what has happened within my own denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention. Stott has consistently sought to keep his ministry lashed to the Scriptures, and has tried to draw the Anglican Church in that direction. He has not been as successful as the conservative leadership within the SBC, but he has made the commitment to do all he can to make the Bible the supreme source for faith and life. He may not have been successful in every way, but he has been faithful. Southern Baptist pastors ought to be grateful that their denomination has stayed by its biblical roots. The conservative resurgence in the SBC has enabled it to keep from drifting in the direction the Anglican Church has gone. There have been many John Stott's in our midst; we owe them all a debt of gratitude.

I highly recommend this set to anyone interested in learning more about ministry from one whom God has blessed and used for more than half a century. You will find the blessing worth the time and effort.

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