

Book Reviews

40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible. By Robert L. Plummer. 40 Questions Series, edited by Benjamin L. Merkle. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010, 347 pp., \$17.99 paper.

Robert Plummer is Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This is not a book about hermeneutics in the generally accepted technical sense of the word, but a guide to biblical interpretation written for any who want to improve their Bible-reading skills. It is immensely practical and written at a level that does not require technical theological or philosophical training, and is thus accessible to the ordinary Christian. Of course, such an ordinary Christian will need to be prepared from time to time to venture into uncharted waters or, as the saying goes, to think outside the box.

40 Questions is arranged in four parts. Part 1 is "Getting Started: Text, Canon, and Translation," a section that explores the matter of what the Bible is and how we have come to get it in the form we have. "Part 2: Approaching the Bible Generally," is further divided into two sections: "Questions Related to Interpretation," and "Questions Related to Meaning." "Part 3: Approaching Specific Texts" seeks to give guidance in approaching some of the various literary genres of both Old and New Testa-

ments. "Part 4: Issues in Recent Discussion" takes up some matters that have caused controversy or which represent recent developments in the theory of interpretation.

First of all, what does this book not set out to do? It does not claim to deal with all the matters that modern interpreters or Bible-readers might be concerned with. Nor does it aim to give any more than a brief survey of the history of biblical interpretation. It does not primarily aim to refute the claims and counter-claims of non-evangelical positions in interpretation. It does not set out to give exhaustive treatments of the matters it deals with.

So what does it do, and how does it do it? *Forty* questions is an arbitrary number imposed by the series of which this book is a part. The author, therefore, cannot deal with every significant issue that evangelical Christians may be concerned about when it comes to interpreting the Bible. Furthermore, those matters that are covered are not necessarily explained with as much detail as some might like. Plummer, however, at the conclusion of each chapter, does give guidance for further reading. Also, each chapter (*Question*) concludes with a few reflection questions that might well be used either by the individual reader or in a group study.

Many Christians are prepared to take the canon of Scripture on trust simply because that is

what they are brought up to do in their respective churches or sub-cultural Christian groups. Part 1 would repay careful study by such people. Section A of Part 2 (*Questions Related to Interpretation*) is likewise probably new ground for many Christians, although much of the content deals with things that, for many, are intuitive though best not left to chance. There are also practical issues of becoming better interpreters and reference to helps that are available.

Section B of Part 2 (*Questions Related to Meaning*) deals with some vital issues, both practical and theoretical, in determining the meaning of a text. These include: "Can a text have more than one meaning?"; "What is the overarching message of the Bible?"; and "Is the Bible really all about Jesus?" These are crucial questions since they relate to the whole task of understanding the Bible as God's word to us Christians in the here and now.

Part 3 takes us to the practical matters of dealing with different kinds of texts in the Bible. This part, as far as it goes, is full of useful helps to reading the Bible. Plummer takes us through some of the various genres found in both Testaments, such as narrative, prophecy, and apocalyptic. The treatment of genres found mainly in one or other Testament include proverbs, poetry, psalms, parables, and epistles. Each *Question* is provided with well thought-out answers that point up the characteristics of each genre so that they are not read as something that they are not intended to be.

It is this section that I feel lacks an important dimension. Notwithstanding the questions already dealt with in Part 2, Section B, a reader wanting to know how to deal with the Old Testament genres such as proverbs or prophecy may still well ask, after reading the relevant chapters, "What do I do now?" Even though these chapters follow one on "Is the whole Bible about Jesus?" (to which the answer is an unequivocal "yes"), how one makes the link between narrative, or wisdom texts, and Jesus is not, in my opinion, at all clear. A preacher, a Sunday School teacher, or

even a Christian parent, all wanting to point their respective audiences to Christ from, say, an Old Testament narrative or prophecy, might feel that little guidance is given as to how one gets from the text to a Christian application that honors Christ. Genre identification is crucial. But, understanding the characteristics of, say, proverbial literature is only the first part of interpretation of the relevant biblical texts.

Of course, it is unfair to criticize a book for not doing what it was never intended to do. Biblical interpretation is such an important issue that in places can be rather involved. Perhaps it needs more than one volume in this series to do it justice, even at the level of the non-technical reader. How many readers are going to follow up on the suggested readings to find answers to their further questions? Probably not many. Given the artificial constraints of the "40 Questions" format, this book does succeed in anticipating and asking a number of pertinent questions (FAQs) about biblical interpretation, and then in providing much useful information about them. It simply cannot deal in depth with the issues of interpreting texts, especially from the Old Testament, in a way that relates them to the New Testament's claims that Jesus is subject matter of all Scripture. While providing a good introduction to the non-technically trained, its value for preachers and the theologically literate is, to some extent, limited.

—Graeme Goldsworthy

Visiting Lecturer in Hermeneutics

Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia

Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation. By J. Nelson Kraybill. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010, 224 pp., \$21.99 paper.

J. Nelson Kraybill received his Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. He has served as president of the Associated Mennonite Bibli-

cal Seminary. The Book of Revelation has been a topic of teaching and learning for the author for more than twenty years. He is also the author of *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*.

When I approach a book on John's Revelation I'm always cautious. I don't know if I'm going to be engrossed into so much contextual detail that I'm stuck in the past with no relevance for today or if I'm going to be surrounded by a hyper-sensational televangelist view that has only a slight relevance to the text. To my delight, this book was neither. In addition, the usual end-time structures are not here. Kraybill creates a refreshing structure that communicates what he believes is the essential message of John's letter. His unique approach lends itself to Kraybill's purpose of identifying the key political systems of emperor worship, the kingdom of God, and how they are influencing people in both John's day and ours. The author has struck a great balance in his work. Kraybill's cultural understanding of first century Rome will give any reader a clearer view of the political structure of John's day, which will be the type in the end of the present age.

John's letter clearly paints a portrait of two kingdoms at war. As indicated by the title of this book, Kraybill believes the main emphasis in Revelation is worship and understanding worship intertwined in the political and spiritual forces in the current and future age. Kraybill interprets the emperor worship of John's day as the type that will encompass men in the end to demand worship. At the same time, he rightly points to the Revelation as a letter which opens up the heavens and gives the reader a vision of the true/loving/just God who is in control, no matter what circumstances may surround a believer—even martyrdom.

This text is recommended for two specific purposes. The author's exegetical and cultural information on the Roman Empire is outstanding. This book will lend itself to the any student as an aide to understand the culture of the New Testament in general. Kraybill's information expands beyond the Book of Revelation to help every Christian

understand Jesus' words to followers, words such as "count the cost," or "take up your cross and follow me." Kraybill clearly defines the political and social pressure Rome placed the early church under and the cost to follow Christ.

Second, the judgment of God and the wrath of Satan in Revelation are extremely violent. It was a curiosity of mine to how a Mennonite would approach John's Revelation, as Mennonites are traditionally pacifists. Kraybill's insight into the use of violence, its place and understanding in Scripture, and the proper Christian response are admirable.

—Gary D. Almon

Assistant Professor of Christian Education
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew. By Jonathan T. Pennington. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009, xv + 399 pp., \$42.99 paper.

This book is a revised version of the doctoral dissertation of Jonathan Pennington submitted to St. Andrews University in Scotland and originally published by Brill in the Netherlands as the *Novum Testamentum Supplements Series*. Pennington currently teaches New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Before I started reading this book I had simply assumed that Matthew's preference for "Kingdom of Heaven" instead of "Kingdom of God" was due to the Hebraic character of Matthew. The Evangelist used "Heaven" as a circumlocution for "God" and employed it in order to avoid writing the divine name for God due to his Jewish sensitivities. I thought it was rather akin to modern rabbinic authors who write "G-d" for "God." I am quite happy to say that Pennington has sowed seeds of doubt in my mind on this topic. In a thorough and robust study of the topic, Pennington successfully shows that "Kingdom of Heaven" is not merely a circumlocution for "King-

dom of God”—rather, it is part of a highly developed cosmological discourse about the heavens and the earth in relation to God, Jesus, and the Church. Pennington maintains that “Kingdom of Heaven” highlights a particular spatial understanding of the universe as well as of God’s reign. Pennington’s thesis is based on his observation of four distinctive aspects of Matthew’s use of heavenly language in the Beatitudes, Lord’s Prayer, ecclesiological passages, Great Commission, and “Kingdom” references: (1) Matthew’s intentional distinction between the singular and plural uses of the Greek *ouranos/ouranoi* and his preference for the latter; (2) the frequent use of the binary pairing of heaven and earth; (3) the use of “heavenly father” and “Father in heaven”; and (4) the frequent use of the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven.”

The path that the book takes is by critiquing the consensus built on G. Dalman’s earlier work that “heaven” is used as a circumlocution for God in Second Temple Jewish literature and the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 1). He then proceeds to conduct a general survey about “heaven” in the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish literature (chapter 2) and also in the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 3). Pennington then shows how this heavenly theme interacts with an array of other topics in Matthew (chapter 4). Thereafter, Pennington examines several topics in the Old Testament, Second Temple literature, and Matthew including *ouranos/ouranoi* (chapters 5 and 6), heaven and earth (chapters 7 and 8), God as Father (chapters 9 and 10), the kingdom of God in the Old Testament and Second Temple literature (chapter 11), and Matthew’s usage of “Kingdom of Heaven” (chapter 12).

In the conclusion, Pennington explores the way that Kingdom of Heaven relates to Matthew’s dualistic worldview and his symbolic universe. He also provides an interestingly brief survey of the reception of “Kingdom of Heaven” in the early church whereby Christians were not looking for a political kingdom on earth, but for a transcendent one. In sum, Pennington believes

that understanding “Kingdom of Heaven” in a cosmological/worldview framework has the following implications: (1) it emphasizes the universality of God’s dominion; (2) it makes a clear biblical-theological connection with the Old Testament; (3) it strengthens the Christological claims of the Gospel; (4) undergirds the ethical teaching of Jesus; and (5) legitimates and encourages Matthew’s readers as the true people of God. Pennington successfully shows how Matthew intended to reconfigure the worldview of the readers so that they would align their behavior, beliefs, and values with the God who dwells in heaven.

The other interesting thing about this book is that it taught me a new word, “cornucopia,” which means “abundance.” May Pennington’s work on Matthew receive a cornucopia of attention.

—Michael F. Bird
Lecturer in Theological Studies
Crossway College

The Hebrew Bible: A Comparative Approach. By Christopher D. Stanley. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010, xvi + 544 pp., \$42.00 paper.

Christopher Stanley is a Pauline scholar at St. Bonaventure University and even though Stanley ventured outside his primary field of study in producing this volume he exhibits a keen grasp of the history, debates, and current trends of thought within Old Testament studies.

This textbook is designed to appeal to a range of opinions by claiming to interpret topics from the perspectives of three groups of scholars: “conservatives” which “adhere to traditional ideas about the divine inspiration of the Bible and therefore believe that the Bible should be trusted as a historical source;” “maximalists” which do not let religious beliefs “interfere with historical research” yet believe that the “majority of the stories are based on earlier oral or written traditions that contained significant amounts of historically

trustworthy data;" and "minimalists" that "regard the biblical narratives as largely fictional works composed in the postexilic period" (121).

The interpretive sections are only included within the conclusions of selected chapters while the bulk of the material is presented in a narrative that accords with the standard conclusions of more-or-less contemporary critical consensus. Stanley frames his textbook as an objective description along with three separate interpretive perspectives, but, along with his unspoken assumption of critical consensus, at times he is openly dismissive of the "conservative" position. For example, within the body of chapter 36 he says, "While many conservatives accept the book's claim that Daniel's visions represent genuine predictions of future events . . . the real author of this vision was not a Jewish member of the Babylonian court named Daniel who lived in the sixth century B.C.E. but an unknown resident of Palestine in the second century B.C.E." (489-90). Furthermore, Stanley often places traditional interpretations alongside fanciful revisionist ones in ways that imply parity. For instance, he says that Genesis 2-3 could be interpreted to make "the humans emerge as heroes . . . while Yahweh comes across as a liar and bully" (208). He concludes that this view might "offend many religious believers, but it finds support in many of the details of the narrative" and both the traditional interpretation and this new approach "represent selective readings of the text" so they are a wash and no better interpretation is presented (208).

Lastly, Stanley's depth of treatment is often unbalanced. For instance, he devotes roughly the same amount of space (1.5 pages) to a discussion concerning the calendrical conventions B.C. vs. B.C.E. (22-23) as he does the book of Judges (264-65). Stanley does a good job introducing students to a wide variety of topics that aid in comprehending the Old Testament such as sociology, comparative religions, and ritual studies; however, the book would be better without its pretense of objectivity and patronizing tone.

—Charles Halton

Instructor of Old Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

1-3 John. By Robert W. Yarbrough. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008, xx + 434 pp., \$39.99.

Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein are the editors of the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, and they have now each contributed stellar volumes to the series. This series has established itself as a top tier set of commentaries on the New Testament, and Yarbrough's volume on the Johannine epistles is a credit to the others. This brief review will focus on the treatment of 1 John, but Yarbrough's treatment of the two shorter epistles is as strong as his treatment of the longer.

In his preface, Yarbrough identifies six emphases that distinguish his work on these letters of John. I condense them as follows: (1) reliance on the Gospels as true and influencing the Johannine letters, especially the Gospel of John; (2) use of computer aids to explore linguistic ties with the LXX; (3) attention given to each textual variant noted in NA²⁷; (4) use of recent scholarship; (5) use of historic Christian scholarship from the Fathers to the Reformers; and (6) an attempt to bear in mind international contexts, whether Muslim, post-Marxist, Asian, or persecuted.

The introduction to the commentary offers a thoroughgoing defense of the idea that John the son of Zebedee was the author of both the Fourth Gospel and 1-3 John, convincingly demonstrating the implausibility of Richard Bauckham's reliance on Eusebius's dubious introduction of a second John in addition to the son of Zebedee. Yarbrough maintains that 1 John is a letter on the basis of ancient testimony and certain epistolary features it bears, and he surveys the evidence for the setting of Ephesus and Asia Minor in the last few decades of the first century. Yarbrough then traces

intriguing connections between the letters of John and the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. In view of the lack of consensus regarding 1 John's organization, he relies on divisions that became standard among scribal copyists, which are reflected in the inner marginal numbers of NA²⁷. These are the basis for his detailed exegetical outline of 1 John. Yarbrough's discussion of the theology of John concludes that the center of John's thought is the same as the center of Paul's, as argued by Thomas Schreiner: "the grandeur and centrality of God" (27).

Here I can only survey some conclusions espoused in the commentary, but the evidence adduced for them is of the highest quality. Readers will want to avail themselves of these arguments. As the commentary unfolds, Yarbrough helpfully identifies John's focus on believing, doing, and loving. On 1 John 2:2, he explains that "Jesus did not suffer for every individual indiscriminately but particularly for those whom God knew he would save," agreeing with Calvin on the point that "'the whole world' refers to believers scattered everywhere and in all times" (80). This does not keep him from adding in the next sentence: "And yet none of this rules out certain positive benefits—God's common grace to humans generally . . . that are spin-offs of the central redeeming benefit proper of the cross" (81). He also affirms that the gospel can be offered to all in good faith. On 2:12-13, Yarbrough takes "little children" to refer to the whole audience, which is then divided into older and younger with the address to fathers and young men. The lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life in 2:16 are aptly explained as "what the body hankers for and the eyes itch to see and what people toil to acquire" (134). The coming antichrist in 2:18 seems to be an individual, while the antichrists are ringleaders of doctrinal aberration or ethical laxity. The sense in which Christians do not sin (e.g., 3:6) is that they do not strike "an advanced or confirmed posture of non-compliance with John's message" (185). The water and blood by which Jesus came in 5:6 refer to his

baptism and death (282). The sin unto death in 5:16 "is simply violation of the fundamental terms of relationship with God that Jesus Christ mediates" (310), and this is "to have a heart unchanged by God's love in Christ and so persist in convictions and acts and commitments" that betray unbelief (311).

Robert Yarbrough has given us what is, in my opinion, the best commentary on the Johannine epistles available. Slightly more detailed than Daniel L. Akin's excellent volume (2001, NAC), this will be the first one I turn to and the first I recommend.

—James M. Hamilton, Jr.

Associate Professor of Biblical Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Encounters with Biblical Theology. By John J. Collins. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005, 243 pp., \$26.00 paper.

John J. Collins of Yale is not to be confused with C. John Collins of Covenant Seminary. This volume is a collection of essays published over the course of 30 years. These essays "attempt to address biblical theology consistently from the perspective of historical criticism" (1). Collins rejects irrelevance and orthodox Christianity, refusing to bracket "out all questions of the significance of the text for the modern world" as well as "a view of biblical theology as a confessional enterprise" (1-2).

Collins believes that history has shown the Bible to be erroneous (4), that archaeology "is often at odds with the biblical account of early Israelite history" (5), and that "The testimony about the conquest of Canaan by divine command runs afoul of modern sensibilities about the morality of genocide. No one in modern pluralist society can live in a world that is shaped by the Bible" (5). Collins evaluates the Bible's historical, ethical, and theological claims from

a position of superiority. He writes, "Think, for example, of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, depicted as a heroic act of faith, of the command to slaughter the Canaanites, the laws about slavery, or the treatment of women. . . . Any attempt to apply [the Bible] to a modern situation, or to deduce ethical principles from it, must be approached with caution. . . . It is also too dangerous to be removed from public discussion and relegated to the realm of unquestioned belief and acceptance" (7).

Considering the last century of discussion, Collins explains, "There have always been attempts by religious conservatives to evade the consequences of historical criticism for biblical theology," but Brevard Childs has sought to move beyond the problems not by rejecting or disputing historical criticism but by granting it "no theological importance." Collins writes that Childs failed because of inconsistency, because there never has been any normative canon like Childs's, because Childs's approach lacks "explanatory power," lacks a hermeneutic like Bultmann's that would "provide the common ground necessary for intelligibility," and because Childs's proposal isolates "biblical theology from much of what is vital and interesting in biblical studies today." Collins concludes that Childs's approach is "self-defeating" (15).

Collins rightly points out that "Historical criticism, consistently understood, is not compatible with a confessional theology that is committed to specific doctrines on the basis of faith." He insists, "It is, however, quite compatible with theology, understood as an open-ended and critical inquiry into the meaning and function of God-language." Collins holds that historical criticism is thus the best framework for doing biblical theology because "it provides a broad framework for scholarly dialogue"—with everyone except orthodox Christians—and in this case the "main contribution of the biblical theologian is to clarify the genre of the biblical material in the broad sense of the way in which it should be read and the expectations that are appropriate to it" (22).

For Collins, theology should be "an academic discipline, which is analytical rather than confessional," and provides the valid contribution of "the analysis of biblical God-language." He explains that "This model is designed for the academy rather than for the church, but its practical value should not be underestimated" (27). Biblical theology contributes to the history of religions.

Knowing as he does that the book of Daniel was written after the events it prophesies and was falsely attributed to Daniel, Collins explores how, "as Childs observes, 'the issue continues to trouble the average lay reader'"—the issue that "The writer, were he not Daniel, must have lied on a most frightful scale" (28). As mentioned above, Collins embraces a belief system he finds superior to the Bible's on historical, theological, and ethical levels, so he is able to see that in the case of Daniel, while "the common people accepted the attribution [to Daniel], or the message would lose much of its effect," the "circle of authors . . . In view of the urgency of the message . . . considered the literary fiction justified and that it did not detract from the religious value of the revelation" (29). So Collins can see from his perspective that the ends justify the means, but what he does not explore is the way that—if he is correct about what they did—the ends of these authors are betrayed and undermined by the means they used.

For the present reviewer, this collection of essays contributes little to the discussion of biblical theology, because Collins is not actually writing about biblical theology. This collection of essays presents the attempt of a learned man to argue that even though he has rejected the Bible, what he says about the Bible remains relevant for ethics and theology. There is a remarkable tension in the pages of this volume as Collins seems to recognize as he tries to explain away the reality that he has replaced what he sees as the exclusive, intolerant, faith based claims of those who believe the Bible with his own set of faith based claims that exclude and refuse to tolerate those who believe the Bible. In the process of excluding and

refusing to tolerate those who believe the Bible, Collins wants to write in such a way that what he says about the Bible remains relevant to those who care about the Bible. Such an approach seems doomed to fail since it is internally inconsistent.

—James M. Hamilton, Jr.

Associate Professor of Biblical Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Holy Spirit. By F. LeRon Shults and Andrea Hollingsworth. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008, viii + 156 pp., \$16.00 paper.

It used to be said, and with good reason, that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was “the Cinderella of theology,” but such cannot be said now. Books on the Spirit have multiplied dramatically in the past forty years or so, due to the emergence of the Charismatic movement and the worldwide spread of Pentecostalism, as well as the re-discovery of the Trinity by scholars and church leaders alike. In this current wave of interest in the Spirit, this recent study by F. LeRon Shults, professor of theology at the University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway, and Andrea Hollingsworth, a Ph.D. candidate at Loyola University, is one of the better studies of the historical development of Christian thinking about the Spirit.

The authors see two main sources shaping this development—Scripture and “the cultural context of the Church” (17). With regard to the latter, they are alert, for example, to the influence of Middle Platonism on such second and third century Christian authors as Justin Martyr and Origen (18–23) and that of Aristotelianism on Thomas Aquinas (42). The authors also point out the pastoral concerns that guided much of the patristic pneumatological reflection (25–29, 32), and rightly note the vital role played by the Cappadocians in the advance of this reflection (25). The key leader opposing the Cappadocians, however, was not the somewhat shadowy Macedonius as Shults and

Hollingsworth claim, but Basil of Caesarea’s one-time mentor and friend Eustathius of Sebaste (25). Augustine’s interpretation of the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, the *filioque*, is seen as having roots in Scripture (35), but also anthropological presuppositions (33–34). Differing from the authors, however, this reviewer would tend to view scriptural concerns as being the more dominant influence (33).

After a very helpful review of the medieval scene—both East and West—as it relates to the Spirit (38–44), the authors deal with the Reformers. Regin Prenter’s seminal work on Luther’s pneumatology, *Spiritus Creator* (1953), rightly orients their discussion of Luther. The treatment of Calvin, though, is not as helpful. His influential formulation of the inner witness of the Spirit is overlooked entirely, while his struggle to affirm the rectitude of classical patristic terminology as it relates to the Trinity—the use of terms such as *ousia* and *hypostasis*—is not fully recognized.

The tradition that comes from Calvin and fellow Reformed theologians, what is called “Reformed scholasticism” (59), is depicted as one that hardly mentions the Spirit (though, cp. 49). What the authors do not consider, however, is the tremendous contribution made by the Reformed tradition in the British Isles, namely, Puritanism. In a major lacuna, none of the great Puritan divines who wrote extensively on the Spirit—Richard Sibbes, John Owen, John Flavel, Thomas Goodwin, or John Howe—is referenced, let alone discussed. In fact, whatever else the Puritans may have been—social, political, and ecclesiastical Reformers—they were primarily men and women intensely passionate about piety and Christian experience. By and large united in their Calvinism, the Puritans believed that every aspect of their spiritual lives came from the work of the Holy Spirit.

Another great era of interest in the Spirit, the eighteenth century, is focused in three pages (60–62) and on three figures: Nicholas von Zinzendorf (his middle name, Ludwig, is used instead of the

more normal Nicholas in the book [60]), Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley. Zinzendorf is understandably included because of his unique—at least for the eighteenth century—description of the Spirit as “Mother.” Edwards’s Trinitarianism is seen as critical to understanding the American theologian, while the links of Wesley with patristic streams of pneumatology and his lifelong concern to link pneumatology and ethics are highlighted.

In their treatment of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the authors point to the enormous influence exercised by Charles Hodge over Reformed thought in North America, as well as upon twentieth century fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Interest in the Spirit’s work was narrowed to his inspiration of the Scriptures and his sanctification of believers (68). There seems little doubt that it was this legacy in part that prevented Reformed, fundamentalist, and evangelical theologians from adequately responding to Pentecostalism as it emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century (68-72). The treatment of twentieth century authors from the ecumenical, feminist, and liberation theology traditions is helpful in making sense of these different traditions as they relate to pneumatology (72-82). This is followed by a superb overview of such twentieth century theologians as Karl Barth (who, it is argued, played a key role in reviving interest in the Trinity), Karl Rahner, Sergius Bulgakov, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, David Coffey, and Robert Jenson (82-88).

The final section of the essay portion of the book is a provocative look at the future shape of pneumatology. There have been significant shifts in philosophical perspectives in the course of the last one hundred years, and the authors are desirous of seeing these shifts reflected in the way we conceive of the Holy Spirit. Shifts in the way we think about the concepts of person, matter, and force, Shults and Hollingsworth believe, should open up new vistas (93-94), though they are not without an awareness of the way each of

these new vistas also brings challenges—dangers such as pantheism, tritheism (a danger faced by proponents of the social analogy of the Trinity), and an imbalance when it comes to the relationship between divine sovereignty and human voluntarism.

The final third of the book (99-150) is a superb “Annotated Bibliography” that could easily be published as a stand-alone piece.

—Michael A. G. Haykin
Professor of Church History and
Biblical Spirituality
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906-1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance. By Ferdinand Schlingensiepen. Translated by Isabel Best. New York: T&T Clark, 2010, xxx + 439 pp., \$29.95.

Although Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45) only lived for the first half of the twentieth century, the German theologian is one of the most influential Christian thinkers of that entire century. There is, of course, a deep level of interest generated in a life like his that was lived in such world-shaking circumstances. The unrelenting stream of books on his contemporary, Winston Churchill, is evidence of the same. But there is no doubt that his profound existential reflections on the question of what it means to be a Christian in our modern world—reflections that were lived out in the horrors of the Nazi regime—are a key reason for the attraction of this German theologian. Whatever one’s belief about the rectitude of Bonhoeffer’s decision to be actively involved in the July 1944 plot to kill Hitler, there is, without a shadow of a doubt, much to be learned from this remarkable man about Christian discipleship.

This new biography of Bonhoeffer by pastor-theologian Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, whose father was involved in the Confessing Church and who is himself a close friend of Eberhard

Bethge—Bonhoeffer’s colleague and first biographer—originally appeared in German on the centenary of Bonhoeffer’s birth (2006). With profound historical reflection and an eye for detail that comes from long acquaintance with the primary sources, Schlingensiepen takes us through Bonhoeffer’s upbringing, his brilliant academic career prior to the appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor (Prime Minister), his active opposition to the Nazi regime, and his embrace of violence as his only possible course of action. The genesis of this biography goes back to the late 1960s when Bethge asked Schlingensiepen to write a shorter version of his massive biography (well over 1,000 pages). As Schlingensiepen notes, though, this is not that book. In light of new material about Bonhoeffer and the Third Reich, as well as a much more positive perspective in Germany itself about the attempted coup of July 20, 1944, a new work was needed (xvi–xvii). There is no doubt in the mind of this reviewer that this work does for our generation what Bethge’s massive biography did for his in the late 1960s.

What comes through loud and clear is Bonhoeffer’s wisdom in living a truly Christian life in the worst of times—ultimately, a product of divine grace, as he himself would admit. Unlike many of his contemporary theologians, Bonhoeffer, “an inconvenient Cassandra” (127), had the foresight to see through Hitler’s political use of Christian jargon and committed himself to oppose the Nazis, especially with regard to their position on the Jews. As Schlingensiepen notes, “Bonhoeffer’s early rejection of Nazism had much to do with the Jewish question” (127). In fact, Bonhoeffer’s clear theological foundation to his political decision to join the Resistance to Hitler leads Schlingensiepen to describe his subject as a “Christian martyr” (xvii), a description that some may well question. What, however, I think cannot be questioned is Bonhoeffer’s vital insight that theology and political action are ultimately inseparable (xvii).

Although Bonhoeffer knew that the decision

to actively plot the assassination of Hitler was a decision that would put him at odds with many of his fellow Christians, the *sanctorum communion* (the fellowship of the saints) was central to both his thought and life as a Christian believer (75). Bonhoeffer was deeply critical of the failure of the German Church of his day to live prophetically because of its naive embrace of German culture, yet he was also very conscious that belonging to the Church was central to the experience of salvation. It was this conviction that informed his deeply controversial remark that “whoever knowingly separates himself from the Confessing Church separates himself from salvation” (189), a variant of the patristic adage that there is no salvation *extra ecclesiam*. In fact, one of the most profound studies that I have ever read of this central Christian reality is Bonhoeffer’s, *Life Together* (Schlingensiepen has but one brief paragraph on this tremendous work, on page 182), written in 1937. And almost the final scene of his life is his leading a worship service in the prison of Flossenbürg (377).

If you plan on reading only one biography this fall, then make it this one.

—Michael A. G. Haykin
Professor of Church History and
Biblical Spirituality
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Baptist Confession of Faith & The Baptist Catechism. Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books/Carlisle, PN: Reformed Baptist Publications, 2010, xvi + 123 pp.

Historically Baptists have been, and thankfully many still are, a confessional people. Yes, they are supremely a people of the Book, the Holy Scriptures. But confessions have been central to their experience of the Christian life. The twentieth-century attempt to explain Baptist life and thought primarily in terms of soul-liberty seri-

ously skews the evidence. Of course, freedom from external coercion has always been a major concern of Baptist apologetics. But up until the twentieth century, this emphasis has generally never been at the expense of a clear and explicit confessionalism.

Of the many confessions of faith that Baptists have produced—and they have produced a goodly number—none has been more influential than the *Second London Confession*, popularly known as the *1689 Confession*. It was not only the confession of faith adopted by the majority of Baptists in the British Isles and Ireland from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, but it was also the major confessional document on the American Baptist scene, where it was known as the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (1742) and which added an article on the laying on of hands and also one on the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Among Southern Baptists this confession played an influential role as *The Charleston Confession* (1767),¹ which became the basis of *The Abstract of Principles*, the statement of faith of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.²

This new leather-bound edition of the *Second London Confession* is indeed welcome. There were a number of editions in the twentieth century,³ but the advantage of this edition is not only the beautiful format in which it has been produced, but also its having James Renihan as the editor and the inclusion of the original letter to the reader and the addendum on baptism that accompanied the 1688 publication.⁴ Renihan is currently one of the most diligent and careful scholars of seventeenth-century Calvinistic Baptist life and his “Foreword” provides an extremely helpful introduction to the *Confession*, detailing both its provenance and its importance. The inclusion of the original letter to the reader and the addendum on baptism are also very welcome since they deepen the twenty-first century reader’s understanding of both the irenicism and rock-like convictions of the men who signed the *Confession*.⁵

The list of the original signatories of the *Con-*

fession is also included (69-70). It is quite a list of Baptist worthies. Among them are the two great pioneers of Baptist life, Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin; the most important Baptist theologian of the seventeenth century, Benjamin Keach; and those remarkable preachers Hercules Collins and Andrew Gifford, Sr. There is a typographical error on page 70 in this list of signatories: Christopher Price was from Abergavenny, not Abergayenny.

An added bonus to this edition is the inclusion of what is known as *Keach’s Catechism*, though Benjamin Keach actually had nothing to do with the writing and publication of this catechism. In the minds of seventeenth-century Protestants, and Baptists are typical in this regard, confession and catechism went together. It too is nicely introduced by Renihan.

ENDNOTES

¹The sole area of difference between the *Philadelphia Confession* and the *Charleston Confession* was the latter’s omission of the article on the laying on of hands. The 1767 *Charleston Confession* was reprinted in 1813, 1831, and 1850.

²For details of the links between the *Charleston Confession* and the *Abstract of Principles*, see Michael A. G. Haykin, Roger D. Duke, and A. James Fuller, *Soldiers of Christ: Selections from the Writings of Basil Manly, Sr., & Basil Manly, Jr.* (Cape Coral, Florida: Founders Press, 2009), 36–40.

³See *Things Most Surely Believed Among Us: The Baptist Confession of Faith* (London: Evangelical Press, 1958)—this edition of the *Confession* has been published in North America by Gospel Mission, Choteau, Montana, and Valley Gospel Missions, Langley, British Columbia; *A Faith to Confess: The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689* (Haywards Heath, Sussex: Carey Publications, 1975 and 1977); *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689*, ed. Peter Masters (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1981). See also *A Confession of Faith* (1677 ed. repr. in a facsimile edition; Auburn, Massachusetts: B&R Press, 2000).

⁴For an exposition of the *Confession*, see Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist*

Confession of Faith (Darlington, Co. Durham: Evangelical Press, 1989).

⁵The *Confession* was published in 1677, 1688, and 1699, but apparently not in 1689. That was the year it was adopted at the General Assembly of the Particular Baptists in London (ix).

—Michael A. G. Haykin
Professor of Church History and
Biblical Spirituality
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Why We're All Romans: The Roman Contribution to the Western World. By Carl J. Richard. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, xviii + 301 pp., \$26.95.

A number of recent books have reminded modern men and women that they are deeply in the debt of various peoples of the past. According to the titles of two such books, it was the Irish who saved civilization and the Scots who built the modern world (Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* [1995]; and Arthur Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* [2001]). Any such reminder is salutary, for as a rule, moderns tend to think of themselves as self-made men and women. This new work by Carl Richard, professor of history at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, picks up this same sort of theme, but with a difference: this book is essentially an overview of the entirety of Roman civilization. After a concise summary of Roman history from the early days of the Republic to the fall of the Empire in the fifth century (chapter 1), Richard examines such things as administration and law (chapter 2), engineering and architecture (chapter 3)—an area in which, due to men like Sextus Julius Frontinus (35-103AD), the water commissioner of Rome, Roman genius shone (59)—poetry (chapter 4), philosophy and historical works (chapters 6-7), in order to demonstrate that while the Greeks are rightly accorded a key place in the edifice of Occi-

dental culture (see his comments in chapter 9), Rome needs to be recognized as having far more influence. By and large, Richard, who has specialized in writing works relating to the influence of classical civilization on the West, is able to sustain his thesis.

In the final chapter—"The Rise and Romanization of Christianity" (chapter 10)—Richard examines the emergence of Christianity in the Roman world, its rise to dominance in that world under Constantine and Theodosius I in the fourth century, and the way in which Christianity was to some degree Romanized in the process. Richard helpfully lays out the main reasons for the success of Christianity (260-69), even noting such things as the difference between pagan and Christian views of humility (268). He argues that the Christian focus on love was central to the triumph of the Christian faith. As he notes, "no other religion had made it the chief obligation of its adherents" (266). Surprisingly, he comments that without Paul Christianity probably would have perished (256). There is no doubt that Paul was a key figure in the advance of the Faith. Luke's repetition of the narrative of his conversion in the Book of Acts no less than three times certainly indicates that the New Testament historian saw it that way. But no early Christian would ever have argued that Paul was so indispensable that without him Christianity would have disappeared.

It is also noteworthy that Richard has some strong words for what he calls "replacement theology," namely, the idea that the prophecies of the Old Testament that refer to Israel are actually to be fulfilled in the realm of the Church, not national Israel. In a word, such a view is "nonsensical" (272). Here, Richard fails to take into consideration the way in which the New Testament itself interprets some of these prophecies and so sets a pattern for later patristic exegetes.

Overall, though, this is an excellent study that could be used to great advantage in survey courses of the Roman world and would be very helpful in orienting students of the New Testament and

early Christianity to the matrix of the Ancient Church.

—Michael A. G. Haykin
Professor of Church History and
Biblical Spirituality
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Out of My Bone: The Letters of Joy Davidman.
Edited by Don W. King. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009, 387 pp., \$28.00.

It may be that the best known utterance of Joy Davidman, recorded by Warnie Lewis on her first and rather shocking visit to Magdalen College, is, “Is there anywhere in this monastic establishment where a lady can relieve herself?” It was this rather shocking woman, however, of whom C. S. Lewis wrote this epitaph:

Here the whole world (stars, water, air,
And field, and forest, as they were
Reflected in a single mind)
Like cast off clothes was left behind
In ashes, yet with hope that she,
Re-born from holy poverty,
In lenten lands, hereafter may
Resume them on her Easter Day.

What human mind, however poor and cramped, cannot help but reflect the whole world? This is what the mind is made for, and what it does for no other reason that it has two eyes and stands upon two legs. But that is not, of course, what Joy’s husband wished to have the reader understand about her. He wanted to explain as best he could why he loved her as the last and greatest gift, the comprehending gift, of the world he had gratefully received from its Creator—not simply stars, water, air, field and forest simply considered, but as the cataphatic emblems of Deep Meaning and Sweet Desire for which he had no words. Even in his own world, he had a living Narnian star

explain to young Eustace, flaming gas is only what stars are made of, not what they are.

Joy told a correspondent that of her writing Jack liked the poetry best, and it is there, not in her correspondence, one discovers her mind, “panther-like,” as a fitting companion for his—how she could be his intellectual and spiritual peer. Neither do her letters go far in explaining his fascination with her, why she came to fill a remarkably Joy-shaped space in his heart as the last stroke of a great artwork painted on the canvas of Jack Lewis, whose removal by the same Artist was his great trial of faith, and which marked the beginning of the end of his life on earth. The epitaph was also his own, for the words were of Joy, but the stone on which they were graven was his own heart.

If the sort of correspondence found here doesn’t touch the poetical depths, it does exhibit the framework of character from which the poetry was suspended, apart from which the poet cannot be known. Although there is only minor evidence here of a pantherine mind, there is plenty of the leonine character in which it crouched. Containing Joy’s known extant correspondence from the age of 26 to her death in 1960 at 45, of its 170-odd letters, 100 are to her husband—eventually, ex-husband—William (Bill) Lindsay Gresham. The second largest number went to Chad and/or Eva Walsh (14), and the third were of the young Joy to the poet and novelist Stephen Vincent Benét (8). There is one to her son, David, and one to C. S. Lewis. The letters to Bill nearly all concern monies he had promised to send to England for the support of her and their two sons—monies which he hadn’t sent or were in very serious arrears, so that Joy, in the days before she was supported by Lewis, and whose priority was first to pay for the best educations she could afford for the boys, often lived in severe poverty.

It is in those letters to the ever-improvident, sexually unfaithful, and occasionally religious Bill, however, in which the framing of her character can be most clearly seen. They are an interesting tightrope act that required a great deal of literary

skill and emotional self-control. On one hand, she naturally did not wish to anger the very provoking person responsible for most of her support, but on the other, she wished to let him know in the most emphatic terms that she and the boys were in desperate need of what he had promised. Bill was intelligent and perceptive, not the sort who could be wheedled or manipulated by theatrics—and while he was an alcoholic, weak and subject to his most destructive passions, there is evidence in his letters, some of which are excerpted here, that he meant well, felt real affection for Joy and his sons, and was not altogether bad. The correspondence indicates that Joy took careful account of all these factors in an immensely complex relationship, here as maintained at long distance and awkward intervals.

What shines through them perhaps best of all is her courage and charity: her desire to forgive, concretely expressed in her willingness to help and encourage those who had hurt her, even when her circumstances had improved and prudence no longer required it, and her extraordinary boldness in (yes, this metaphor does come to mind) boldly seizing an indifferent world by the throat in her struggle to be, above all things, a Christian wife and mother.

“Now you are a lioness,” said Aslan to Lucy, clearly Lewis’s favorite among the Pevensies, “And now all Narnia will be renewed.” It was this lionish sort of women, bright and brave, full of gloriously feminine, passionate, and often strongly insistent energy, that Lewis had always liked best. They march across his life as the poetry upon his page from Lady Reason to Janie Moore to Peregrina to Sarah Smith to Margery Dimble to Lucy to Oruel to Joy as their culmination and end. What some have mistaken for feminist sympathy was in fact his love for the terrible strength of womanhood, lost when it degenerated into either the weak and silly, as it did in Susan, or cut itself off from its masculine source, as Jane and Tinidril almost did, and as, in his story, Psyche did in fact. One does wonder whether the ridiculous Uncle

Andrew might have been Lewis muttering behind his handkerchief that even the witch terrorizing London was in her own way a “dem fine woman.”

Out of My Bone is heavily and helpfully footnoted, contains Joy’s account of her conversion, “The Longest Way Round,” and a good set of photographs, including a panoramic view of The Kilns property which by itself sheds a good amount of light on the Lewis family’s home life, including the necessary range of Joy’s varmint rifle and “Just how large is that pond?”

—S. M. Hutchens
Senior Editor
Touchstone

The Literary Study Bible. Edited by Leland Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007, 1,913 pp., \$49.99.

It is an obvious fact that the Bible is not a systematic theology book. Instead, God has given us his revelation in a vast and beautiful collection of writings that are literary in form. A large percentage of the Bible is poetry. There is a huge amount of narrative. There are apocalyptic literature and epithalamia. There are hero stories and love stories. There are allegories, acrostics, odes, oracles, and soliloquies. Similes and metaphors abound. If we are going to be faithful teachers and preachers of God’s Word, we must know something about literature and how to interpret it. As a young pastor, I was convicted of my need to learn Greek when a friend asked me, “You would expect a teacher of French literature to know French, wouldn’t you?” A similar question is appropriate: “A teacher of biblical literature ought to know something about literature, shouldn’t he?”

For most of the past year I have been reading *The Literary Study Bible*, and I am convinced that it would be an extraordinarily useful tool for all serious students of the Bible, but especially for every preacher and teacher of the Bible. Since so

few of us have educational backgrounds that are strong in literary studies, we need help in seeing and appreciating literary conventions we might otherwise not even know are present in the text. *The Literary Study Bible* can help readers to see literary motifs and developments in the Bible and to understand how literary form affects theological meaning. With the possible exception of proverbial literature, virtually all other literary genres require the reader to see individual passages as part of a larger, usually organic, context. One of the greatest potential benefits of *The Literary Study Bible* is that it can assist readers in grasping the big picture of the Bible and the way that big picture affects the interpretation of individual passages of Scripture.

Each book of the Bible is prefaced with an introduction that points out the literary features found in that book. For example, the introduction to Genesis has sections devoted to genres, the literary concept of a hero, the storylines, the cast of characters, unifying motifs, inferred literary intentions, theological themes, and Genesis as a chapter in the master story of the Bible. The entire Bible is divided into small readable units, and each unit is headed by a literary introduction. There are no footnotes other than the textual notes accompanying the English Standard Version translation.

The note that introduces Genesis 24, "Isaac Gets a Wife," is a happy example of how literary considerations enable the reader to see elements of truth in the narrative that he might otherwise overlook.

Chapter 24 is a love story, and we can note at the outset that the storyteller satisfies the human interest in love stories by devoting a whopping sixty-seven verses to the episode in which Isaac conducts the courtship of his wife by proxy. Even though the story may seem to belong to Isaac rather than Abraham, it is actually an extension of Abraham's domestic role, since it was his responsibility to find a wife for his son. The spirit in which Abraham undertakes the

quest for Isaac's wife surrounds it with religious significance (vv. 5-8). We are to understand that Abraham was concerned to protect the covenant line, which stipulated that the covenant would be perpetuated through his family. The two lead characters in the romance drama are the servant who undertakes the journey and Rebekah, the bride of choice. One way to bring the servant in to focus is to ponder the litany of things that make him one of the most attractive minor characters in the Bible. We can get a grip on Rebekah's characterization by scrutinizing the story for details that would commend her as a future wife. The story has a nice abundance of suspense, and it is a drama in miniature with speeches and dialogue fully reported. The first meeting of Isaac and Rebekah (vv. 62-67) is a masterpiece of atmosphere, tenderness, and understated emotion.

While the notes are often academic, they are liberally sprinkled with thought provoking, spiritual observations that are readily applied. For example, in the note introducing the destruction of Sodom, the editors write concerning Lot, "The man who had reached for the stars in terms of success, prosperity, and affluence ends up as a cave man. . . . We also learn in Lot's later life that it is easier to get the family out of Sodom than it is to get Sodom out of the family."

There is a significant amount of material from the editors—I would estimate that around twenty to twenty-five percent of *The Literary Study Bible* consists of editorial remarks. Unlike other study Bibles where the reader may consult the notes only when puzzled or when especially interested in a topic, the editors apparently expect us to read all that they have written. Granted, it is usually advantageous to do so, especially when literary ignorance is so rampant, but still, the persevering reader must be committed to the editors' fundamental premise: literary considerations are crucial to understanding the Bible. They admirably establish this fundamental premise in the editors' pref-

ace and introduction, which, regrettably, many readers may neglect to read.

The Literary Study Bible is an excellent resource, even for the reader who uses it only as a reference, but a more thorough reading will pay rich dividends. A guide for reading the entire Bible through in a year is appended, and if the discerning reader reads every note for every reading through the year, he or she will gain a vast treasure of literary sensibilities and skills that will greatly increase understanding of and appreciation for God's literary masterpiece, the Bible.

—Jim Orrick

Professor of Literature and Culture
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later. Edited by Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell. New York: T&T Clark, 2009, 175 pp., \$29.95 paper.

The contents of this book were derived from a two-day symposium held in September 2008 to reassess the contributions made to New Testament studies since the 1983 publication of *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, by Wayne A. Meeks. The editors collaborated together, with six scholars (including Meeks), with the hope "that this work will serve not only to introduce a new generation of students to Meeks's book but also to provide an outline of current discussion and debate in the various areas addressed in *The First Urban Christians*" (preface).

Meeks's landmark work, *The First Urban Christians*, was comprised of six chapters where he addressed issues such as the first-century urban environment, social stratification, how the societies influenced the formation of local churches, how conflict was handled, rituals, and patterns of belief and life. He wrote from the presupposition that when it comes to studying the Apostolic Church, "If we do not ever see their world, we can-

not claim to understand early Christianity" (*The First Urban Christians*, 2nd ed., 2). In a renewed attempt to describe the social history of early Christianity, Meeks continued the process (which had started in the 1970s) of moving New Testament scholarship into a more interdisciplinary direction, wedding literary analysis with theological reflection, historical studies, and sociological, anthropological, and psychological theories.

The contributors to *After the First Urban Christians* work diligently to fulfill the hope stated above and in numerous ways advocate this continued direction articulated by Meeks. David Horrell responds to some common critiques to Meek's methodology, while arguing for the ongoing development of the social-scientific study of the New Testament. Peter Oaks argues for using Pompeii as a model in which to understand better the urban environments of the Pauline churches. Bruce W. Longenecker addresses socio-economic profiling of the first-century believers. Edward Adams examines many of the scholarly developments since Meeks. Todd D. Still includes a chapter on the establishment and exercise of authority in the first churches. Louise J. Lawrence writes on ritual related to life and death. Dale B. Martin examines the correlations between the patterns of belief and life. Wayne A. Meeks concludes the work by reflecting on the various chapters and his own views since the publication of his book under consideration.

The academic nature of this book and the perspectives of various contributors make for a challenging read. While it is not necessary to have read *The First Urban Christians* before reading Still and Horrell's work, I would strongly encourage the reader to do so. While the various authors of this book provide some excellent summarizations of Meeks's book, most of the time they assume the reader's familiarity with his original work. There is also the natural assumption that readers are familiar with weighty concepts such as ritual, symbol, symbolic realities, organizational structures, social structures, discourse analysis, structural-

ism, post-structuralism, and the thoughts of the fathers of classical sociology, Durkheim, Weber, and Marx. Regardless of these challenges, Still and Horrell have provided us a glimpse into the world of praise and criticisms that have followed Meeks's 1983 publication.

—J. D. Payne
Associate Professor of Church Planting
and Evangelism
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation. By Robert H. Gundry. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010, 1,072 pp., \$49.95.

Wouldn't it be great if anytime you had a question about a particular text you could call your old Bible professor from seminary and get a brief, homiletically-oriented summary of the text's meaning? Robert H. Gundry's, *Commentary on the New Testament* provides just this sort of information in one published volume. Scholar-in-residence and professor emeritus at Westmont College, Gundry discusses every verse in the New Testament in this 1,072-page *magnum opus*. Well-known for his commentaries on Matthew and Mark and his widely-used, *Survey of the New Testament*, Gundry distills decades of scholarly experience in working paragraph-by-paragraph through the New Testament—focusing on the divinely inspired human author's meaning with an eye to modern-day explication of the passage. As an interesting additional feature, the English version of the biblical text quoted throughout this volume is a formally equivalent (word-for-word) translation done by Gundry himself.

In reviewing this text, I did not read the entire volume, but sampled various texts throughout the New Testament. Gundry writes in a clear, engaging style and demonstrates a wealth of knowledge. I think it very likely that I will refer to this book

in the future—especially when I am looking for a respected New Testament scholar's concise opinion on a thorny text. That being said, I must also express three reservations about this book.

First, as with any book of this length, I differ with the author on some interpretations. For example, in Gundry's discussion of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, he asserts that the names of the immediate ancestors of Joseph are highly symbolic names. Though he does not explicitly deny that such names correspond to historical persons, he fails to comment on that issue, nor does he attempt to reconcile the list with the corresponding genealogy in Luke. (Here, I prefer the treatment of Matthew's Gospel by the early church father Julius Africanus, who asserts that Matthew gives us Joseph's biological lineage, while Luke gives us Joseph's legal lineage via Levirate marriage.) Gundry's brevity of discussion highlights an accompanying problem—1,072 pages (the length of this book) sounds like a massive tome until you consider the complex debates that rage over numerous texts in the New Testament. At several places, I hoped for a bit more explanation (e.g., in the discussion of the millennium in Revelation 20).

Another hesitation I have with Gundry's commentary is his rigid application of an almost "classroom style" word-for-word approach to translation. This method results in not a few idiosyncratic renderings (e.g., "Our God is an incinerating fire" [Heb 12:28]). I also wonder if this approach does not illegitimately imply superiority to formally-equivalent translation theory. I fear that repeated appeals to such overly-literal renderings will wrongly result in some readers feeling uneasy about the many good, readable Bible translations we have in English.

A final hesitation I have with Gundry's commentary is his stated resistance to providing theological synthesis for apparently divergent biblical assertions (e.g., the Bible's warnings against falling away alongside biblical assurances of believers' perseverance). Yes, we need to allow biblical texts to function in their stark forms—whether as com-

forts or warnings. Yet, in the end, a person in the pew is going to ask questions such as, “Can I lose my salvation?” I would argue that biblical scholars cannot simply leave theological integration to systematic theologians.

Few persons have the expertise to produce a one-volume tour-de-force of this sort. Gundry clearly does. Even with the reservations I express above, I commend this work as containing many helpful reflections on the New Testament from a highly respected scholar.

—Robert L. Plummer
Associate Professor of
New Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Psychology in the Spirit: Contours of a Transformational Psychology. By John H. Coe and Todd W. Hall. Downers Grove, IL. Intervarsity Press, 2010, 422 pp., \$22.00 paper.

Psychology in the Spirit by John Coe and Todd Hall is a 422-page book that seeks to bring a “new” perspective to the Christian counseling table. That perspective is the “transformational psychology view.” This view is seen as formidable enough and different enough to be added to what used to be, *Psychology & Christianity: Four Views* to make up the fifth official view of the new publication, *Christianity & Psychology: Five Views*. There are some differences, but when all is said and done, perhaps this “transformational view” is not different enough. By their own admission the authors seek to “show how it accommodates the other approaches, avoiding their weaknesses”—but in actuality they don’t avoid a few of the key weaknesses of the Christian integrationist’s approach (200). Even though there are some well stated motivational differences and some uniqueness in how their functional perspective is communicated, this “new” view, at its heart, in a very real sense is not so new at all.

The book is laid out in five sections: foundations, methodology, content, the praxis of soul care, and the ultimate goal. While these major headings seem clear cut, the book is not by any means a straight forward or easy read and therefore must have one’s full attention and careful evaluation to determine what is actually being proposed. With phrases like, “a *true* psychologist,” “high-road head knowledge,” “low-road, gut level knowledge,” “*attachment filters*,” and Kierkegaard’s “*I-ness*,” the reader must stay his evaluation until these things are fully unfolded. There is so much that could be addressed in this book (both positive and negative) but there is not space enough here to do justice to all of them.

Perhaps the most troubling presupposition that becomes apparent in the transformational view of counseling is too high a view of the “truth” gleaned from the “science” of psychology and its too low a view of Scripture. Coe and Hall use “truth” and “reality” interchangeably and hold up the “realities of creation” or “natural realities” (truth discovered by the observation and interpretation from man’s study of man) as the missing “truth” for the needs and troubles of man. They write about the need for the Christian psychologist to do psychology “*anew*,” themselves, with a *wholistic* approach to what is known as faith and science; to see *both* as science (natural realities) and *both* as faith (God’s will and revelation). This approach is fraught with subjectivity and the same old misconception that the different levels of knowledge are equal in certitude. It is the long-standing error of equalizing God’s Word and natural observations by saying, “all truth is God’s truth.” The familiar mistake of lumping soft “science” of psychology in with the hard science of empirical and un-theorized data is clearly a contributing factor. Leaning too heavily on the reason of fallen man to determine “truth” or “reality” is another. Nowhere in the book is there any claim of Scripture (the infallible truth) itself being the foundation for their model; neither do they outline the important use of Scripture to evaluate said “realities.”

In a discussion of “doing psychology as a unified vision of reality in faith” it is said, “It [the term ‘Christian realities’] is not meant to arbitrarily dichotomize religious and secular realities. Both are realities in God’s world” (Synopsis 206 and page 83). What is even more startling is that the authors would seem to lift “science” above God’s written revelation when they say, “this psychology does not merely have as its data the natural phenomena of the person, but includes ‘Christian realities’ as a legitimate datum of science,” and “psychology needs to give its ‘truth’ to the church,” and “the scriptures . . . are important to help frame and give insight to our natural law reflections on life [rather than to evaluate them]” (83; 206; 338; 204). At the very least, it is clear that these authors see the natural “realities” on a functional par with Scripture, and possess a mystical (rather than Word-based) approach to the Spirit that doesn’t help their view of truth either. These things are further revealed in other statements the authors make:

[O]ur transformational approach is a mandate to do psychology in faith anew: to do the first hand work of discovering a psychology of a person that is science; open to the experience of the Spirit and open to the truths from Scripture, as well as open to truths from observation and reflection on ourselves, on other human beings and on what others have thought about human nature (Synopsis 202).

Psychologists who have experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in prayer will be more sensitive to understand and explore the experience in their theory and research (90).

We do not know these Christian tenants to be true because we suppose them. Rather, they are true because they correspond to or are born out in the *experience* of reality . . . they are as certain as the knowing of my own existence and of other objects (82, emphasis added).

Coe and Hall use the idea of the Old Testament sage and the Proverbs to make the case that “truths” discovered by the discipline of psychology are just as much God’s truth as His written Word, and just as much needed. This also allows them to “reject the idea that Scripture is the only place for finding [truly needed] wisdom or prescriptions for living well in God and that psychology and its [softly] scientific methodology should be only descriptive in nature” at best (208). The authors present the Old Testament sage of the Proverbs as the truest and oldest version of a psychologist doing psychology as God intended, in that he looks to nature and the observation of man to determine truth to live by. This is a strange twisting of scriptural truth. In actuality the Proverbs (as is all of Scripture) are the written revelation of God, given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as the very words of God (though many of the proverbs are clearly conveyed as general truisms rather than intended to apply in all situations). They are not wisdom discovered by the writer’s own observation and interpretation for prescription. The author of Proverbs looks to (and the Holy Spirit uses) what he knows of nature, man’s actions, and his own experience to illustrate God’s truth that is supernaturally given to him (often an application of the Torah).

On a positive note, this transformation view does indeed seem somewhat different from other Christian psychology views in its communicated emphasis on the character and spirituality of the psychologist himself and in the stated motivation of all of his efforts as a “good” or transformed psychologist. Even the needed character and spirituality of the psychologist is fundamentally linked to the ultimate motivation the authors initially lift up as the very purpose for the existence of man: to love God and neighbor, like Christ, for the glory of God. At the very crux of their perspective is their capitalization on the fact that man is fundamentally created relational in nature in order to flourish in his union with God in an un-bifurcated manner and thereby affect his Christ-likeness and

other relationships.

This was a worthy encouragement and a quite commendable perspective. However, where the spotlight or focus really lands and how affected by secular thought their methodology and content is concerning it, is not so commendable. As a result of a consuming goal to help others be the relational beings they were created to be, this in itself is what their counseling becomes all about. Hall explains that his own counseling is “relational psychoanalytic and attachment based approach to therapy” that employs several of the traditional relational therapeutic techniques (339).

In other words, after an apparent recognition of man’s *most* ultimate motivation (the glory of God), the rest of their discussion, methodology, and content is unmistakably void of the “glory of God” part. Furthermore, well into the book it is clear that the transformation referred to is mostly the transformation of the psychologist into a relationally “open” individual himself and the transformation of the client’s “attachment filters and their capacity to love” (350). It is proposed that relational blocks and intuitive relational responses, the subject of which “are the core of a relational view of human nature and development,” stand in the way of their relationship with God and others (240). These negative filters are presented as a result of ruling, gut-level, unconscious knowledge or deep intuitive beliefs that that cannot be easily known or helped by cognitive means (this is Freudian). I see this as in direct opposition to what God tells us about our transformation, that it is accomplished by the renewing of our mind—our thoughts, beliefs, and desires—by the Spirit of God using His Word (Rom 12:2, and described in Phil 4:6-8).

It also is proposed by Coe and Hall that psychotherapy that employs many traditional modalities is what it takes to facilitate the transformation that is necessary to help troubled Christians grow in their union with God and in their responses to people and events. Most assuredly this idea is not new. What is being said and has been said

in many other ways is that 1. *Salvation* (a fundamentally changed heart through forgiveness), 2. *the indwelling of the Holy Spirit* (His work and our dependence on His power), 3. *an increasing recognition of the supreme value of Christ and knowing Him* (and the inferiority of all else), 4. *sin confessed and turning from it* (repentance), 5. *the written Word of God recognized, agreed with and intentionally applied to thoughts, beliefs, desires, and actions* (God’s character, teachings, and promises), 6. *the Body of Christ’s involvement*, 7. *alertness to the spiritual battle that rages* and a *looking forward to our hope* (Christ’s return, dwelling with Him and the absence of sin and suffering) are not sufficient to grow us in our relationship with God, to transform us into Christ-likeness, and to help us bring more and more glory to God. God’s Word tells very differently! It teaches us that these truly inspired realities employed are the needed and sufficient elements of change according to God. Each and every one of these things is so intricately linked to the personal application of the written Word of God that truly sanctifies us (John 17:17).

Other issues that need addressing or further addressing in this book are the idea of the subconscious, the knowledge spiral of science values, contingent communication or reflective self-functioning, human attachment, the realized self, the place of reason and intellect, the purpose and use of general revelation, and the proper view of the social sciences and how to interact with them. What I gained from reading this book is a renewed fervor just to be a *Bible-wise* counselor who is certainly willing to explore some of the more “hard science” data and non-interpreted observations of the field of psychology, but in a very critical manner (with the Word of God) and only for the purpose of seeing if it can shed practical light on God’s written revelation or its application (not the other way around). The Apostle Paul aptly warns us about the dangers of teachings that are outside of Scripture and how we build on the foundation of Christ (Col 2:8, 16-19, 23, 1 Cor 3:10-14). These teachings often give the appearance of wisdom

but don't meet the litmus test of God's Word. I leave you with these passages to consider about transformation: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 2 Peter 1:3; Psalm 19:7-11.

—Stuart W. Scott

Associate Professor of Biblical Counseling
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Congregation and Campus: North American Baptists in Higher Education. By William H. Brackney. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009, 499 pp., \$49.00.

From the prolific pen of William H. Brackney comes another helpful study in American Baptist life. Similar to his efforts to unite the wide diversity of Baptist theology under a single title in *The Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (MUP, 2004), Brackney once again casts a broad net in an effort to tell as a single story the diverse, and at times controversial, developments of education among Baptists of North America.

He introduces the study with a consideration of Baptist identity. Baptists began as a diverse group with no united theological position. Hence, it should come as no surprise that this “highly variegated religious tradition” has produced a complex network of educational traditions. While the earliest schools were organized by Baptist groups primarily for their own constituencies, neither those who attended the schools nor even those who were allowed to teach were limited to the Baptist family. It was this inclusiveness that Brackney identifies as the first of three chief characteristics of Baptist education. Second, no religious tests were required for students or faculty, at least for most of the Baptist schools. Students came from diverse religious traditions—post-Reformation Protestantism, generally—and were allowed to remain as they came. Moreover, professors teaching in the schools also could hold to non-Baptist religious sentiments such as Presbyterianism or

Methodism. Finally, there was “a broad intellectual and cultural understanding of training for ministry” not merely focusing on the Bible but on broad areas of education.

Brackney traces his history through the various categories of educational efforts that Baptists attempted from manual labors schools to colleges to seminaries for the training of the ministry. As he recounts this complex story, he introduces the readers to an enormous amount of research into dozens and dozens of schools, many of which hardly had the momentum to commence and failed nearly as quickly as they began. The history includes brief stories of schools long forgotten. This is the work's most important contribution. The collection of materials is simply amazing and one comes to realize that Baptists took education seriously, raising up new schools at every opportunity. Having worked among the Baptists in several Canadian provinces, Brackney is also able to tell insightfully the contribution that Canadian Baptists made to higher education. Brackney also includes an important discussion on the contributions of Baptists not affiliated with major Baptist groups. These independent Baptists have arisen largely in the twentieth century in response to theological liberalism in the older Baptist associations. They too have made numerous attempts, successful and otherwise, at providing diverse educational opportunities to their respective constituencies. All in all, the collection of data is so vast that only a seasoned and accomplished historian could have attempted it. Baptists owe to the author a debt of gratitude for charting the variegated landscape of Baptist education.

As Brackney ends the story, he concludes that Baptist identity has devolved over its history. He suggests that numerous issues contributed to this devolution including financial pressures and denominational affiliation. But it was the naked challenge of liberalism, which Brackney fails to identify clearly, that brought the most significant challenges in Baptist educational life. Theological liberalism sought hegemony between Baptists

north and south. Historically, Baptist schools like Brown University and the University of Chicago, two of his exemplars, eventually moved well beyond their Baptist roots and embraced secularism. It is here that the analysis falls short. Northern Baptist education has been hit especially hard by the devolution of Baptist identity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, on the eve of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, Northern Baptists had six major seminaries (Newton, Colgate, Rochester, Crozer, Chicago, and Berkeley) and numerous colleges with which they partnered who turned out ministers for the Convention. By the end of the twentieth century, those six had been reduced to two that are still meaningfully identified as part of the Baptist tradition. The prospects for these two schools look rather bleak. Recently those seminaries, Andover Newton Theological Seminary and Colgate-Rochester-Crozer Divinity School (CRCDS), considered a merger that would have reduced that number to just one school. While these seminaries are not the only schools that currently serve the American Baptist Churches USA, these historic institutions that were the nurseries of Baptist ministry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, today do little to serve their founding tradition. The University of Chicago Divinity School, started by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. and his associates, was largely a Baptist effort, but has long since had any real Baptist identity. CRCDS has fallen on such hard times in recent years that it was forced to divest itself of the bulk of its stellar library. The American Baptist Historical Archives that used to be housed in its grand building was moved to Atlanta, GA, because of denominational budgetary concerns and because CRCDS could not contribute to its maintenance. In its recent history, CRCDS even had a retired Presbyterian minister as its president.

Brackney sees the broad diversity in Baptist life often as a good thing, a part of the polygenetic nature of Baptist identity. However, it was this misguided diversity that allowed the board of Brown University under the leadership of William

H. P. Faunce, an avowed liberal, to change the policy that saw Brown completely lost to Baptist identity. Until Faunce, a Baptist was required to serve as Brown's president. Brown is chief among numerous colleges and universities that have little or no connection today with the Baptist faith that brought them to life and whose devoted followers built and endowed them. These schools were lost simply because there was no doctrinal basis upon which they could be retained. The tradition of doctrinal conformity has been more robust in Southern Baptist education, especially in its lead seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. As a result of the conservative resurgence (1979-2000), Southern Baptists began to take their theological identity more seriously. The denomination in general and its seminaries in particular have embraced a more consistent doctrinal standard. While it is true that Brown and many other schools did not have narrow Baptist creeds, it is hard to imagine that its early Baptist leaders envisioned the possibility of such a wide diversity, quite detached from biblical orthodoxy, which came to dominate these schools. The nineteenth century saw the gradual dissipation of theological belief and witnessed a slow departure from biblical religion among Baptists and other groups. By the time the Divinity School of the University of Chicago was a decade old, few of its faculty held to anything remotely resembling historic Christianity. It is regrettable that the author did not probe this angle of the story more fully so that other Baptists today who still retain a biblical form of Christianity which our Baptist forebears all embraced, whether they were Calvinists or Arminians, might be warned against repeating the mistakes of our forbearers.

Still, the work is a very helpful and widely researched study that deserves a careful read by all Baptists who love their heritage and long to see their youth trained in the Baptist way. It is a welcome and needed addition to the history of education among the people called Baptists.

—Jeffrey Paul Straub
Professor of Historical Theology
Central Baptist Theological Seminary,
Minneapolis, MN

Liberalism without Illusions: Renewing an American Christian Tradition. By Christopher H. Evans. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010, ix + 207 pp., \$24.95 paper.

Can religious liberalism be renewed? Liberalism was a powerful movement for most of the twentieth century, possessing broad popular support and extensive cultural and political influence. But since the 1970s liberalism's popular base in the churches has withered considerably, its cultural and political leadership has waned, and its institutional strength is increasingly isolated to universities and seminaries.

In this book, Christopher Evans, professor of church history at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, summons his fellow liberals to a concerted effort to save liberalism from its current malaise. Evans does not expect liberalism to regain its former glory. He believes however that liberalism can be restored to health and influence.

Renewing liberalism will require it to dispense with some of the "illusions" of its glory days. Above all it must dispense with its preoccupation with establishing Christendom. Liberals sought to Christianize America and the world, and they believed that the church's labors would establish democratic societies characterized by justice, equality, and goodness—they would inaugurate the promised kingdom of God. Contemporary liberals, Evans says, must settle for something less. They must labor for a just society but recognize that this is an unattainable ideal.

Renewing liberalism will also require that it restore an emphasis on personal piety. Personal faith and piety constitute the fundamental source of powerful religious movements. Christianity's social power thus depends largely on its power

to heal the heart and to provide meaning and purpose to individuals. American evangelicalism succeeds here, Evans says, and for this reason has achieved considerable social power.

Liberalism must learn from evangelicalism at this point, Evans urges. If liberalism will only tap into the Bible's deeper themes of love, redemption, and reconciliation, it can be renewed. Liberals must therefore wrestle with "the meaning of Christ and of salvation", and take seriously the question of what it means to follow Christ. Evans recognizes that this requires liberalism to reconnect with the faith traditions of historic Christianity.

This, I believe, is the very thing that liberalism cannot accomplish. Liberal thinkers have been trying to find their way back to the precritical, premodern faith of the church since at least the 1970s. But the way is blocked by criticism. Liberalism's commitment to a naturalistic biblical criticism makes any straightforward acceptance of the first-century gospel impossible.

The personal faith that gives meaning and power to individual Christians hinges on confidence in the Bible's gospel message that the solution to personal guilt, alienation, and fear is faith in Jesus Christ, who was crucified and rose again from the dead that all who believe in him might not perish but have eternal life. Criticism destroys confidence in the truthfulness of this gospel. Liberalism cannot expect to achieve real gospel power without a return to the ancient gospel.

Liberalism's commitment to criticism has cut the movement from the taproot of the Christian gospel—the truthfulness of scriptures. The withering of its churches and its isolation in the academy will continue until it abandons naturalistic criticism for faith in the supernatural inspiration of the scriptures. But then it will not be liberalism.

—Gregory A. Wills
Professor of Church History
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary