

# Book Reviews

*Real Marriage: The Truth about Sex, Friendship, and Life Together.* By Mark and Grace Driscoll. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012. 249 pp., \$22.99 cloth.

I am no connoisseur of marriage manuals, but Mark and Grace Driscoll's recent contribution to the genre has to be one of the most provocative treatments ever penned for and by evangelicals. In *Real Marriage: The Truth about Sex, Friendship, and Life Together*, Mark and Grace share candidly about the significant sexual brokenness that afflicted the early years of their own marriage and about how the Lord delivered them from it. They also discuss in graphic detail the questions that couples frequently ask them about the marital bed. The two-hundred plus pages of this book focus on personal testimony and practical teaching so that readers might walk in biblical holiness and avoid the pitfalls experienced by the Driscolls. *Real Marriage* reads like a marriage seminar that has been put into book form, and there are hints throughout that this is exactly what the book actually is (e.g., p. xiii). *Real Marriage* has eleven chapters that are

divided into three major sections: Part 1, "Marriage"; Part 2, "Sex"; and Part 3, "The Last Day."

## SUMMARY

Part 1, "Marriage": Chapter 1 begins with Mark and Grace's story, in which Mark and Grace appear first as an unmarried, sexually active couple; second as an unhappily married, sexually dysfunctional couple; and third as restored and reconciled husband and wife. Their story is as gut-wrenching as it is honest. Chapter 2, "Friends with Benefits" instructs readers about the necessity of being best friends with one's spouse. Chapter 3, "Men and Marriage," is Mark's effort to exhort men to grow up, take responsibility, and be the godly servant leaders that God has called them to be in their homes. Chapter 4, "The Respectful Wife," is the corresponding exhortation to women to respect and to submit to their husbands. Chapter 5, "Taking out the Trash," addresses conflict between spouses and instructs spouses to fight fair and to be quick to forgive and reconcile through disagreements.

Part 2, “Sex”: Chapter 6 instructs spouses not to regard sex as “God” (which is idolatry) nor as “gross” (which is prudishness) but as “gift” (which is God’s intention). Chapter 7 narrates Grace’s story as a sexual assault victim and offers some practical guidance to others who bear the scars of sexual abuse. Chapter 8 addresses the pervasive problem of pornography and its devastating impact on both the individuals who produce it and those who consume it. Chapter 9 instructs spouses on how not to be “selfish lovers” but “servant lovers” to their spouses. Chapter 10—which is probably the most controversial in the book—assesses the morality of a variety of sexual activities that spouses might engage in.

Part 3, “The Last Day”: The final chapter of the book contemplates concrete steps that couples might take to intentionally plan for successful marriages. It is less of a chapter *per se* than it is a workbook for a kind of self-directed marriage retreat.

### **SOME AREAS OF APPRECIATION**

Even though I have some theological and pastoral disagreements with this book, I am grateful for some significant common ground.

First, the book is unashamedly complementarian. Mark’s challenge to men in chapter 3 is one of the strongest exhortations to biblical manhood that I have ever read. Mark is particularly strong in admonishing men who prolong adolescence into their adult years: “There’s nothing wrong with being a boy, so long as you are a boy. But there is a lot wrong with being a boy when you are supposed to be a man” (43). Mark challenges men to grow up, to take responsibility, and to lead their families. He encourages them to be producers not consumers, to be students of Scripture, and to be faithful churchmen. Above all, he encourages husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. This part of the book is countercultural in the best kind of way.

Grace’s chapter on “The Respectful Wife” is likewise helpful. She encourages women to respect their husbands with their head, heart, and hands.

She also gives practical advice to women about how they can disagree, counsel, encourage, and submit in a respectful way with their husbands. The Driscolls argue that the only way to experience marriage to its fullest is to embrace manhood and womanhood as the Bible defines it and to live out the roles that are prescribed in Scripture. This is all to be commended.

Second, *Real Marriage* has a gospel-focus and argues that the gospel gives us the only path toward wholeness in marriage. The Driscolls give healthy counsel when they say that spouses should be best friends (ch. 2). Yet they also acknowledge that sometimes spouses find it difficult to maintain this kind of intimate personal connection (ch. 5). Falling out of love usually means that spouses have fallen out of repentance (90). Yet the gospel helps us to have realistic expectations about marriage. It also gives us the resources to deal with the conflict that inevitably comes when two sinners come into close proximity with one another. The Driscolls present repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation as gospel graces and as a necessity for healthy Christian marriages.

Third, the authors open up their own lives in ways that are uncommon. This actually has both negative and positive aspects in my view, but I am grateful to read a testimony that gives evidence of the redeeming grace of God in some difficult years of marriage. Neither Mark nor Grace have pristine sexual histories, and the baggage they brought with them into their marriage caused significant problems for many years. Theirs is a risky story to tell, but you have to appreciate their willingness to share it. Their testimony could encourage other couples to be more honest with each other about the foxes that are ruining the vineyard.

Having said all of that, my theological and pastoral concerns with this book are considerable, and I will begin with chapter 10. Before I do that, I should warn you that some of the material you are about to read is of a sexual nature and may be offensive. I have tried to summarize and critique as discreetly as possible, but I think that there are

still some things here that might raise eyebrows. *Caveat lector.*

### THE “CAN WE \_\_\_\_\_?” CHAPTER

Chapter 10 of *Real Marriage* will most certainly prove to be the most controversial chapter of the book. It has the simple title “Can We \_\_\_\_\_?” and the Driscolls fill-in the blank of the chapter title with a variety of sexual activities that are sometimes considered taboo. The chapter goes on to describe these activities in explicit detail, and then the authors give an ethical assessment of each activity for Christians.

The problems begin at the beginning of the chapter where the Driscolls try to pre-empt critics: “If you are older, from a highly conservative religious background, live far away from a major city, do not spend much time on the internet, or do not have cable television, the odds are that you will want to read this chapter while sitting down, with the medics ready on speed dial. If you are one of those people who do not know that the world has changed sexually, read this chapter not to argue or fight, but rather to learn about how to be a good missionary in this sexualized culture, able to answer people’s questions without blushing” (177).

In my view, these remarks start the whole conversation off on the wrong foot. The authors know that the explicit nature of this chapter will be offensive to some readers. But they address offended readers not by allaying their concerns but by suggesting that anyone uncomfortable with the content must be either a rube or uninterested in reaching the culture for Christ. To those with legitimate concerns, these remarks come across as dismissive at best and patronizing at worst.

The bulk of the chapter gives an ethical assessment of a variety of sexual activities. The Driscolls invoke 1 Corinthians 6:12 as the basis for the evaluation, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.” From this text, the Driscolls propose a “taxonomy” of questions to assess the different activities: (1) Is

it lawful? (2) Is it helpful? (3) Is it enslaving? If one judges a given behavior to be biblically lawful, relationally helpful, and non-addictive, then it is permissible for Christians to participate in that activity. Among the activities that the authors deem permissible within this taxonomy are masturbation, felatio/cunnilingus, sodomy (on both spouses), menstrual sex, role-playing, sex toys, birth control, cosmetic surgery, cybersex, and sexual medication. The Driscolls are careful to stipulate that these are activities spouses *may* participate in by mutual agreement, but not that they *must* participate in (180). No spouse should be manipulated into doing anything that violates his or her conscience (178). The only item in the list deemed impermissible in every circumstance is sexual assault.

The value of the Driscolls’ taxonomy is only as good as the exegesis that it is based on, but in this case their reading of 1 Corinthians 6:12 is fundamentally flawed. The Driscolls read “all things are lawful” as if the phrase were Paul’s own declaration of Christian freedom, but that is mistaken. Almost every modern translation<sup>1</sup> and a near consensus of commentators<sup>2</sup> treat “all things are lawful” not as Paul’s words but as a slogan that Corinthian men used to justify their visits to prostitutes (cf. 1 Cor 6:15). The NIV captures the correct interpretation: “‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’—but I will not be mastered by anything” (1 Cor 6:12).

The Corinthians may have been riffing on themes they had heard from Paul (cf. Rom 6:14; 7:4, 6). But they had twisted Paul’s law-free gospel into a justification for bad behavior. Thus the phrase “all things are lawful” is not an expression of Christian freedom from the apostle Paul, but rather an expression of antinomianism from fornicators! Paul’s aim in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 is to correct the Corinthians’ misunderstanding. One of the reasons for the Corinthian error was the fact that they viewed the physical body as inconsequential in God’s moral economy (cf. 1 Cor 6:13b).

Yet Paul refutes the Corinthians on this point and gives them an ultimate ethical norm with respect to their bodies: “You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your body” (1 Cor 6:20).

Driscoll begins his ethical assessment with “Is it lawful?” and he answers the question based on whether or not there is an explicit prohibition of the behavior in Scripture. As we have seen, this is a misapplication of Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 6. Paul’s question is not “Is it lawful?” but “Does it glorify God with my body?” To miss this is to miss the entire point of the text. Sex exists for the glory of God, and Paul only commends activities that glorify God with the body. In order to answer the question “Does it glorify God?,” one has to have an understanding of the purposes that God has given for sex and whether or not a given activity fits with those purposes (more on this below). This kind of reflection is absent from chapter 10.

To be sure, the Driscolls are not the only persons who have ever misread 1 Corinthians 6:12. Nor are they the only ones to use a taxonomy like this one.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the Driscolls’ questions are almost identical to the ones that John and Paul Feinberg use to judge the limits of Christian liberty in their book *Ethics for a Brave New World*.<sup>4</sup> Yet the Driscolls’ use of the questions is reductionistic. Whereas the Feinbergs have eight questions, the Driscolls only have three. Consequently, the truncated assessment tool leaves out questions that would have mitigated the impact of the Driscolls’s misreading of verse 12. The Feinberg’s questions are: “(1) Am I fully persuaded that it is right? (2) Can I do it as unto the Lord? (3) Can I do it without being a stumbling block to my brother or sister in Christ (4) Does it bring peace? (5) Does it edify my brother? (6) Is it profitable (7) Does it enslave me? (8) Does it bring glory to God?” Had the Driscolls used all eight of these questions in their taxonomy (especially number 8), their assessments might have been different.<sup>5</sup>

The problems with the Driscolls’ advice, how-

ever, are not merely exegetical. They are also pastoral. Although some Christian authors comment on the ethics of a husband sodomizing his wife,<sup>6</sup> I have yet to find any who contemplate the reverse. Yet the Driscolls give explicit instructions to wives about how they might sodomize their husbands in a pleasurable way (188). Yet where in the Bible is such an activity ever commended? The Bible only contemplates such activities in the context of homosexual relationships. The Bible condemns the “unnatural” use of bodies between persons of the same-sex (Rom 1:26-27). Why would Christian couples emulate that unnatural use in the marital bed? What about a husband for whom such an activity might stir up homosexual desires that he has never experienced before engaging in this activity with his wife? I do not think that the Driscolls have reckoned with the view that says “immorality” (*porneia*) is possible within the marital bed. The Driscolls may disagree with this point of view, but they should at least engage biblical commentators who understand sodomy as a defilement of marriage.<sup>7</sup>

I can think of a whole range of other pastoral problems that might be provoked by chapter 10. Is sexual holiness really upheld while engaging in cybersex with one’s spouse over the internet (184)? Does anyone really think it wise for Christians to upload digital, sexual images of themselves to the internet even if it is only intended for a spouse? What if a third party were to intercept such an image and make it available to everyone with an internet connection? How the cause of Christ would be shamed by such a result! But the Driscolls give little consideration to the potential consequences of making private pornography even though they admit that keeping such images private “can be nearly impossible” (200)!

Or what about the endorsement of “Sex Toys”? The Driscolls recommend purchasing them “from one of the more discreet Web sites” (193), but this seems to me a precarious proposition. How does a Christian go about finding a “discreet” seller of sex toys? The authors give no specific vendor for such

objects. Specific rather than vague guidance might be better here, since a search for “sex toys” is just as likely to connect Christians to pornography as it is to “discreet Web sites.”

Finally, I question the wisdom of addressing sexual topics in such explicit detail. I understand that the authors view their approach as contextualizing the Bible’s teaching to reach modern people who are sexually broken (177). Yet I wonder about how this book will land on Christians whose social context has been one of innocence. I have been far from innocent in my own experience and enculturation, yet there are perversions that even I have never heard of before reading about them in chapter 10 of Pastor Driscoll’s book. It seems to me that there is something wrong with that.

I can only imagine how chapter 10 might land on someone whose experience has actually been one of sexual innocence. I work with college students who tend to get married at a very young age. I meet students who come from sexually broken backgrounds and others who come from sexually innocent backgrounds. Sometimes these students marry each other. I think chapter 10 has the potential to wreak havoc in such marriages where one spouse will feel a whole range of taboos to be “permissible” if he can convince his spouse to participate. This to me seems like a recipe for marital disaster, and I do not think the Driscolls’ requirement of “helpfulness” mitigates the difficulty.

### **PURPOSES OF SEX**

One of the great weaknesses of *Real Marriage* is its failure to set forth a biblical theology of marriage and sex. There is no other text in the whole Bible that goes to heart of the issue like Ephesians 5, yet there is no sustained reflection on Ephesians 5 anywhere in *Real Marriage*. This is more than just an oversight, for it affects the entire framework our thinking on marriage and sex. Paul argues that the deepest meaning of marriage and indeed of the sexual union is to signify another marriage—Christ’s marriage to his church (Eph 5:32). In Ephesians 5, we learn that every marriage

from Adam and Eve until now exists ultimately to give an enacted parable of Christ’s covenant love for his bride. In other words, the purpose of marriage is to glorify Christ—to shine a light on his redemptive love for his people.

It is only within that framework that we can understand the ultimate meaning of the marital act. That is why Paul can command believers in other texts to “glorify God with your body” (1 Cor 6:20). In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul specifically has in mind the use of the body for sex, and he still says that the purpose of the union is the glory of God. The glory of the marital act is in the gospel union that it signifies. All the other “purposes” for the sexual union are subordinate to the ultimate end of glorifying God. Where this biblical teaching is absent, so is the framework for putting together ethical standards for sexual behavior within marriage (as chapter 10 purports to do). Again, the fundamental question is not “Is it lawful?” but “Does it glorify Christ?”

### **DIRECT REVELATIONS FROM GOD**

Much of *Real Marriage* contains personal testimony from the Driscolls, and this is especially the case in chapter 1. The most critical turning-points in Mark’s testimony come from direct revelatory experiences from God, some of which are quite bizarre. After Mark’s conversion, he describes going for a walk and asking God for direction in what to do with the rest of his life: “I was basically just walking along a river in the Idaho woods, talking aloud to God, when He spoke to me. I had never experienced anything like that moment. God told me to devote my life to four things. He told me to marry Grace, preach the Bible, train men, and plant churches” (8).

This direct revelation would later be the basis for Mark’s continued commitment to the marriage, even though he no longer wished to be married to Grace. Grace writes: “All we knew was that we had made a covenant before God in 1992 to stay married for better and for worse ... and God had told Mark very clearly to marry me—it

was all we had to hold on to” (12).

Do the Driscolls really wish to communicate that direct revelations from God were the basis of their staying together? Should not the Bible’s clear prohibitions on divorce have been enough to bind Mark’s conscience to his marriage?

The interpretation of Mark’s experience, of course, is entirely dependent upon one’s view of the Bible’s teaching on the revelatory gifts. Those of us who understand the Scripture to teach a cessationist perspective are not going to be compelled by claims that God spoke to Mark like he spoke to Jeremiah or other prophets, nor are we going to feel comfortable setting forth such revelatory experiences as an authoritative norm alongside of Scripture. But in some ways, that is exactly how these experiences are presented in the book.

At least one of Driscoll’s direct revelations from God looks unbiblical even if one holds that the revelatory gifts are still valid today. Mark writes: “One night, as we approached the birth of our first child, Ashley, and the launch of our church, I had a dream in which I saw some things that shook me to my core. I saw in painful detail Grace sinning sexually during a senior trip she took after high school when we had just started dating. It was so clear it was like watching a film—something I cannot really explain but the kind of revelation I sometimes receive. I awoke, threw up, and spent the rest of the night sitting on our couch, praying, hoping it was untrue, and waiting for her to wake up so I could ask her. I asked her if it was true, fearing the answer. Yes, she confessed, it was. Grace started weeping and trying to apologize for lying to me, but I honestly don’t remember the details of the conversation, as I was shell-shocked. Had I known about this sin, I would not have married her.”

Mark describes a revelation from God on the order of what we find God giving to the prophets of the Old Testament or to John the Revelator. Yet Mark describes his vision as pornographic in nature. Is this really a faithful depiction of the scriptural gifts of prophecy or discernment? Mark’s visions seem a far cry from Peter’s vision

of the sheet descending from heaven in Acts 10 or from Daniel’s vision of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7. I am not gainsaying Mark’s experience. But I am questioning his interpretation of it and the implication that other Christians might expect to have similar experiences.

### **SALACIOUS SPEECH AND THE SONG OF SOLOMON**

The Driscolls argue that a prudish impulse in the history of the church has led some Christians to regard sex as “gross”—a necessary evil for the propagation of the race. According to the Driscolls, it was in fact this very impulse that has distorted the Bible’s true teaching on marital love. This fact is clearly seen in the history of interpretation of the Song of Solomon. The Driscolls write: “Early in the history of the Christian church, as allegorical methods of Bible interpretation became fashionable, the Song of Songs was explained as being about our relationship with God instead of being a passionate poem about a husband-and-wife relationship. ... Those who consider, to varying degrees, sex as gross drive this misuse of Scripture. And rather than renewing their minds to agree with the Bible, they instead change the meaning of the Bible to fit their own error, as they simply cannot fathom that God would speak in detail positively about sexual pleasure” (117).

I agree with the Driscolls that the Song of Solomon is mainly about marital love. I disagree, however, with the notion that the content of the Song might be used to excuse sexually provocative speech. The Song of Solomon should not be used as the Bible’s permission-slip to speak salacious words about sex. Pastors and authors would do well to explain what the Bible says using the same level of discretion that the Bible itself uses. The Song of Solomon gives us a poetic depiction of the marital act that is cloaked in symbolic language. Should not Christians exhibit similar discretion when speaking about the marital act? Shouldn’t our speech about sex be more discreet and indirect than it is provocative and explicit?

## CONCLUSION

I love and appreciate the Driscolls, and I am really grateful for the testimony that they share about their own marriage. I was genuinely helped by many of the practical exhortations in this book. I think many marriages would be strengthened by the Driscolls' advice on becoming a friend to your spouse. Men would benefit from hearing Mark's powerful call for husbands to grow up, take responsibility, and lead their families. Women would be edified to hear Grace's testimony and passionate call for wives to follow the leadership of their husbands. At the end of the day however, the shortcomings I have identified above keep me from giving *Real Marriage* an unqualified endorsement. Indeed the theological and pastoral errors of chapter 10 alone are weighty, and they are the primary reason that I would not recommend this book for marriage counseling. There are other books that have many of the strengths of *Real Marriage* without all the weaknesses.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>ESV, HCSB, NET, NIV, NLT, NAB, NJB, RSV, NRSV.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 251; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1997), 101; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, The Anchor Yale Bible 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 263; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 460; Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 125-26; C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1968), 144; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 62; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Corinthian slogans in 1 Cor 6:12-20," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1978): 396; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, New Testament Message 10 (Wilm-

ington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979), 49-52.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 83-84; Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus, *Intimate Issues: 21 Questions Christian Women Ask About Sex*, (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 1999), 203-204.

<sup>4</sup>John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, (2nd ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). Driscoll does not attribute his taxonomy to the Feinbergs.

<sup>5</sup>On the question of limits, I have found a disturbing trend in the literature, and the Driscolls fit in to that trend. Upon finding no specific biblical prohibition of an activity, authors are quick to categorize a given sexual activity as a matter of Christian freedom. But this approach is reductionistic. The Bible has much to say about God's purposes for the sexual union, and those purposes can be used to assess the morality of sexual behaviors. For example, Dennis Hollinger identifies four scriptural purposes for sexual intimacy in marriage: consummation, procreation, love, and pleasure. He then argues that the ethics of any sexual act should be measured by its ability to encompass those four ends. See Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 95. Christian ethical reflection has to take into account the whole counsel of God. Ethical decision making can fall short of that ideal when Christians are quick to label something a matter of Christian freedom simply because there is no explicit prohibition in Scripture. An act may fall short of the glory of God because it does not achieve His purposes for human sexuality.

<sup>6</sup>Even those who allow for sodomy within marriage often do so with extreme caution, both for marital and medical reasons. For instance, William Cutrer writes, "In my years of practicing medicine, I have never met a woman who engaged in anal sex because she thought it was 'the best thing going.' Most were doing it because their partners were pressuring them.... If couples wish to engage

in this practice, they should know that at first it can be somewhat painful, cleanliness is important, anal contact followed by vaginal contact can cause infection, and anal sex carries with it the potential for damage to the sphincter” (William Cutrer and Sandra Glahn, *Sexual Intimacy in Marriage* [1st ed.; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998], 87).

<sup>7</sup>It seems to me that the Driscolls need to engage interpretations of the biblical text that disagree with their own before declaring sodomy lawful. F. F. Bruce, for instance, thinks that Hebrews 13:4 has a bearing on this question, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral [ *pornos*] and adulterous.” Bruce comments, “Fornication and adultery are not synonymous in the New Testament: adultery implies unfaithfulness by either party to the marriage vow, while the word translated ‘fornication’ covers a wide range of sexual irregularities, including unions within the bounds prohibited by law” (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [revised ed.; New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 373). One early Jewish commentator remarks on Leviticus 18:22, “Outrage not your wife for shameful ways of intercourse. Transgress not for unlawful sex the natural limits of sexuality. For even animals are not pleased by intercourse of male with male. And let not women imitate the sexual role of men” (Pseudo-Phocylides, lines 189-92 in Pieter Willem van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides: With Introduction and Commentary* [Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha 4; Leiden: Brill, 1978], 101). Such commentators are not inerrant, but their views have a long history in the Christian church. Christians have long studied what comprises an “unnatural” sex act, and the Driscolls need to give a better defense of the idea that sodomizing a husband fits within God’s aims for human sexuality.

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*Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books.* By Michael J. Kruger. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012, 362 pp., \$30.00.

Sometimes a book comes along that is required reading, and such is the case with Michael Kruger’s work on canon. This is the most important and insightful book on the canon of the New Testament in recent times and one that evangelical teachers and pastors should read and share with others. I don’t have any significant disagreements with the work, and hence will sketch out briefly in my review the main argument of the book.

Kruger’s aim is not to *prove* that the canon is from God but to show that our belief in the New Testament canon as Christians is intellectually defensible. The book begins with two different canonical models. First, the canon is often said to be determined by the community. According to the historical critical view, the canon accepted by the church is solely a historical phenomenon. That is, “the canon is an entirely human creation” (32), and “can be adequately accounted for in purely natural terms” (32). Kruger agrees that human beings played a vital role, but he points out the flaw in the historical critical position. To say that human beings played a role in establishing the canon does not demonstrate that the canon is solely or exclusively the work of human beings. Historical critical scholars bracket God out of the canonical process, but they do so for philosophical reasons which are assumed instead of defended.

Roman Catholicism also maintains that the canon is ultimately determined by human beings, i.e., the church. Kruger is nuanced in his response, agreeing that the reception of the canonical books by the church “plays an important role in our conviction that they are from God” (41). The problem with the Catholic view is it does not pay “adequate attention to the intrinsic authority built into these books” (43). Ephesians 2:20 demonstrates that the church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, not vice-versa. Roman Catholics



are fond of saying that the authority of Scripture must be supported by some authority. Otherwise, how do we know it is truly divine? But Kruger rightly points out that the Roman Catholic claim of intrinsic authority fails on the same grounds. On what basis does the Catholic Church claim authority? Who or what authenticates it? There are no external grounds that justify Rome's claim to be self-authenticating. Kruger also discusses both the canonical-criticism and existential models, maintaining that they are also deficient, for in the end they both fall prey to subjectivity.

Others attempt to establish the canon on *historical* grounds. One way of doing this is by establishing a canon within the canon, i.e., finding the real Jesus of history or making themes like justification by faith or that which presents Christ the arbiter of all else. Such themes become the *de facto* canon. The flaw in such theories is that human beings end up determining what is authoritative and canonical. The authority shifts from objective Scripture to the human subject who identifies what is truly canonical in the New Testament.

Evangelicals also apply a historical approach from a very different angle, defending the canon based on apostolicity, use in the church, and orthodoxy. In other words, historical evidence is sufficient, according to some scholars, to establish the canon of the New Testament. Kruger agrees that these criteria are useful. Still, many who use this approach seem to think that we can derive the canon solely on historical grounds, as if "neutral historical arguments" can "authenticate the canon" (79). Kruger rightly argues that human criteria based on historical scholarship can't be the ultimate standard of truth. Kruger maintains that the historical evidence is helpful, but it is not "self-interpreting" and "cannot stand alone" (81). "It authenticates the twenty-seven book canon only when it is understood correctly—that is, when it is given a *Christian* interpretation" (81). Ultimately, the Scriptures are self-authenticating, and the criteria "are best understood as the way in which the Scripture sets the terms for how its own origins are

to be investigated and explored" (85).

What Kruger means by self-authenticating is that the canon "itself provides the necessary direction and guidance about how it is to be authenticated" (91), and "It sets the terms for its own validation and investigation" (91). The canon as the ultimate and final authority can't be validated on the basis of another authority. "If we try to validate an ultimate authority by appealing to some other authority, then we have shown that it is not really the ultimate authority" (91).

Kruger argues that "God has created the proper epistemic environment wherein belief in the New Testament canon can be reliably formed" (94). That environment has three dimensions which mutually reinforce one another. First, the church has been providentially exposed to canonical books, so we know, e.g., that lost books are not canonical. Second, canonical books are set apart by their "divine qualities," their reception by the church, and their apostolic character. Third, the Holy Spirit testifies to the church corporately that the canonical books are from God.

The testimony of the Spirit is not the *grounds* for recognizing the authority of the canon but the *means*. Similarly, the reception of the canon by the church does not demonstrate the church's authority in determining the canon. Rather, it shows "the authority, power, and impact of the self-authenticating Scriptures to elicit a corporate response from the church" (106). Kruger goes on to explain that "the role of the church is like a thermometer, not a thermostat" (106). The apostolic character of the Scriptures does not alone point to its canonicity, though the apostolic nature of the documents plays an important role when it "is interpreted and understood by the norm of Scripture" (111).

Kruger also has an intriguing answer about when books become canonical. He answers that it depends upon what we are asking. Ontologically, they are canonical right when they are written. Functionally, we have a canon by the mid-second century when the books are used as Scripture. Exclusively, the canon is established in the fourth

century, when the church recognizes and reaches a consensus over what is canonical. The three dimensions are not contradictory but complementary. They should not be played off against each other. Instead, they enrich and fill in our understanding of the canon.

In the second section of the book Kruger expands upon and defends the self-authenticating model he proposes, investigating in more detail the divine qualities in Scripture, its apostolic origins, and its corporate reception. In considering the apostolic character, he usefully joins such with covenant and redemption. Apostolic tradition does not necessarily mean a document was written by an apostle, but it was written during the apostolic age and by someone who derived his teaching from an apostle.

Kruger devotes three chapters to the reception of the canon. He argues that diversity and disagreement over what was canonical does not falsify belief in the canon, for the Scriptures themselves indicate there would be false teachings and false claims, and hence we should not be surprised by historical disagreements. Furthermore, the extent of disagreement is often exaggerated. We have solid historical evidence for a functioning canon by A.D. 200, and the historical evidence actually shows more unity than disagreement. Kruger conducts a careful tour of the New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers, and other second-century sources. Reception of the canon is also confirmed by the quantity of the manuscripts preserved from the canon, which far exceeds the manuscripts of apocryphal writings. Indeed, the use of the codex shows that early Christian writings (like the Gospels and Paul's epistles) were bound together, which is an indication of their unique authority. There are also scribal features that support the notion that the canonical books were used as Scripture in corporate worship.

Kruger adduces many historical arguments to support the canonical nature of the New Testament documents which can't be rehearsed here. What makes the book distinctive, however, is the

theological evaluation of the canon, the recognition that the canon is self-authenticating. Kruger places the historical data about the canon in a theological context, showing that it is intellectually defensible to believe that the New Testament books are truly the word of God.

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*Codex Sinaiticus: A Full Color Facsimile*. London: The British Library; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010, 347 pp., \$799.00.

Nearly all the sacred words are in these full color photos of the pounced parchment scribed with the ancient ink. Living words copied by three maybe four careful hands. God-breathed words, every one true, every thought from man and from God, every utterance worthy of trust. These leaves in these photos passed under no press but were prepared by living hands. Letters embossed by the living, for the living, from the living. This is a book written by hands to be written on hearts.

How many such manuscripts contain both Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible? Not many. Even fewer as early as the 300s AD. With Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus is one of the two most important manuscripts of the whole Bible in Greek. Codex Sinaiticus is a wonder of the world, a priceless treasure. More than an artifact, though, this book preserves the word of God, presenting an ancient Greek translation from the Old Testament's Hebrew and the New Testament in its original Greek.

Unless God reveals himself, as this book claims he has, we cannot know him. Without the manuscripts that preserve God's revelation of himself in the writings of the biblical authors, we have no access to the sacred texts. Is there anything in the world more needed than the word of God? And as one of the most ancient presentations of the word

of God in Greek, what can have more value than a witness to the word such as Codex Sinaiticus?

High quality photographs of Codex Sinaiticus are being made available online, and now the British Library and Hendrickson Publishers have brought out a full-size, full-color facsimile of the whole manuscript. They are selling them. You can buy one. Examine it for yourself. Astonishing. Perhaps you would like to rethink whether there are more important things for you to do than examine the word of God as presented by an ancient manuscript?

The book is handsomely made and finely bound. Lovely in appearance, hefty in weight, imposing in size. The photographs are clear and the text is there for close reading. Lunate sigmas and ligatures, strikethroughs and spelling anomalies, running headers, red ink in places, binding notations from ancient craftsmen, pumice marks from the scribes who scrubbed the hide, follicles from the hair of the goats who gave their skin, tears visible where the parchment was too thin or the scribe too rough, corrections from the very scribe who made the mistake. Everything there to be seen on the thick pages with the color photos in full size.

The new full color facsimile is a vast improvement of the facsimile brought out a century ago by Helen and Kirsopp Lake. No more must a man travel to London, Leipzig, and Mount Sinai to see the whole thing. You can spread this full color facsimile of the thing on the table in front of you—you'll need a big table.

Who should care most about such a treasure, such a privilege? Should it not be those who most love the words, those for whom these words are sweeter than honey from the comb, those who would heed the call to meditate on them day and night, build their house on the rock foundation they lay, view their world through the lens they grind, and live on the hope that rises in the east. This is our story, our book—Codex Sinaiticus our treasure. On its testimony our faith rests. These are the words

that make the foolish wise unto salvation. Why not learn Greek? Why not examine the Codex?

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*Scripture: A Very Theological Proposal.* By Angus Paddison. New York: T&T Clark International, 2009, 184 pp., \$39.95 paper.

This book consists of five loosely connected essays on the nature and theology of Scripture, four of which are revised journal articles. The first essay sets forth a theological framework for Scripture by enlisting P. T. Forsyth and Stanley Hauerwas to locate Scripture within the economy of salvation and the church. The second chapter addresses how Scripture is not to be “used” for ethics, but rather is to be reasoned with in an ethical manner, drawing upon John Howard Yoder as an example. The third essay advocates a distinction between theological exegesis and doctrine, albeit one marked by mutual interrelation and dependence. He does this by critiquing recent approaches to Christology for not being engaged enough in the twin tasks of exegesis and ontology before offering an example of how he thinks these should be juxtaposed. Paddison’s fourth essay admirably correlates Scripture, preaching, and the church, theologically locating preaching within the ascended Christ’s self-proclamation through the Spirit. The final essay critiques Philip Davies’s vision of a strict separation between academic biblical studies and the study of “scripture” and instead argues for a vision of theologians as witnesses in a “decentred” university that allows for genuine plurality without the stricture of an overarching norm for reasoning. Throughout all these essays is a discernible desire to locate Scripture within God’s salvific economy and an emphasis on the church as the supreme locus of understanding.

Readers will find here plenty of grist for the theological interpretation mill and an impres-

sive command of the secondary literature on the topic at hand. There are also a number of highs throughout Paddison's volume with which evangelicals in particular will resonate. Carrying out the first chapter's emphasis on locating Scripture within the economy of salvation, Paddison helpfully reminds us that Scripture's purpose is not primarily to "prove" doctrine but to lead us to Christ (67). His emphasis on the virtue of patience in the church's handling of disputes and her reading is also a very welcome exhortation (59). Further, evangelicals enthralled with biblical theology would do well to heed Paddison's warning that christological considerations cannot be had apart from ontological considerations (chapter 3). Certainly ignoring ontology is a very real danger for evangelicals integrating biblical theology into systematic theology, where the temptation is to stop at mere description (as if the biblical narrative were the doctrine itself). Such practices are in danger of devolving into biblically attentive forms of throat clearing.

While the author's many insights are helpful, the book will prompt significant disagreement with some readers. Most obvious to evangelicals will be Paddison's highly mediated doctrine of revelation and his take on inspiration, which rely most heavily on P. T. Forsyth. Some of these arguments are aimed toward straw men, like his complaint that "typical" treatments of verbal inspiration risk ignoring or downplaying the Spirit's "present action upon Scripture" (11). Yet "typical" sources such as John Owen, Francis Turretin, and Charles Hodge all emphasize the Spirit's illuminating work in our reading. More concrete foils would serve the author's arguments here.

Paddison also adopts Forsyth's psychological distinction between revelation and its effect on the consciousness of the apostles and prophets who consequently produce fallible writings. But where is the criterion for this disjunction between revelation and the apostle Paul's writings, for example? As Kevin Vanhoozer (whose work is sorely ignored in this volume) has argued, the category of commu-

nicative agency draws together both Paul's subjective agency (consciousness, thoughts, etc.) and his objective action (life, witness, writing Scripture) together under the rubric of communication. Paddison's historicized notion of revelation stops short of a coherent account of action's communicative aspects and fails to demonstrate how we can stop the buck at the level of apostolic consciousness. This has major implications for Paddison's unfortunate construal of interpretation: "The correct attitude to Scripture will mean that we strain the writings written by inspired authors for the revelation that lies within" (12, n. 36). The complete absence of Vanhoozer's *Drama of Doctrine* is especially puzzling considering Paddison's stated desire to correlate God's use of the text of Scripture with a people whose life reflects this use (32).

I also remain unconvinced by the author's commendable attempt at relating time to reading Scripture because it *functionally* relocates revelation within the "politics" of the church (ecclesial practices). Theologically, the problem is primarily in how he understands time with reference to the church rather than God. In other words, while he can quote John Webster to the effect that we should define time with reference to Jesus' history (25), Paddison's hermeneutical emphasis on liturgical practices functionally collapses Jesus' history into the church's history. This is a fine line and Paddison is careful to assert that time should be understood with reference to God. Nevertheless, he undermines this assertion to an extent when he prioritizes our understanding of this gifted time with reference to the church first. This is an area where Paddison's admitted ecclesiocentrism is on full display, owing to his appropriation of Hauerwas, and a more thorough engagement with these issues would take us into the realms of ecclesiology and cosmology. These criticisms are all drawn from one chapter but serve to highlight inevitable disagreements that crop up throughout the volume. One could just as easily take issue with the picture of a "decentred university" that he envisions or with *how* he

derives ontological implications from Scripture.

As with many books on Scripture the reader will find much with which to agree and disagree, but none of these disagreements should discourage engagement with this book. Current work on the doctrine of Scripture and theological interpretation by theologians such as Vanhoozer, Webster, Daniel Treier, Timothy Ward, and Scott Swain may have more to offer evangelicals, but this is no reason to ignore Paddison's thoughtful contribution. Despite its faults Paddison is to be commended for a collection of essays full of keen insights, questions, and provocations well worth considering.

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*Theodorus Frelinghuysen's Evangelism: Catalyst to the First Great Awakening.* By Scott Maze. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2011, viii + 220 pp., \$25.00 paper.

In this book adapted from his doctoral dissertation, Scott Maze argues that Theodore Frelinghuysen's Dutch-inspired evangelistic methods served as a catalyst to the First Great Awakening and upholds Frelinghuysen as an exemplar pastor-evangelist. Maze constructs a convincing case for the former argument and provides a valuable contribution to the historiography of the First Great Awakening. However, his high-praise for Frelinghuysen as a pastor-evangelist fails to convince.

Maze adds to our current understanding of the First Great Awakening by showing that the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie* provided the backdrop for Frelinghuysen's evangelistic method. Numerous studies trace the roots of the colonial revivals to New England Puritanism, English Methodism, German Pietism, and Ulster Presbyterianism. Now, Maze makes a compelling case to add Dutch Pietism to this list. Maze particularly highlights the importance of two Dutch pietists, Jean de Labadie, and Jacobus Koelman, both of whom skirted

the extreme fringe of the Dutch Further Reformation movement. From the influence of Labadie and Koelman, Frelinghuysen considered the children of believers as unregenerate, expected an especially fervent form of piety, rejected formality in worship, and utilized small groups as an avenue for the truly converted to gather and study Scripture. From these principles and practices, Frelinghuysen developed a Dutch pietist-inspired evangelistic method that served as a catalyst to the First Great Awakening and that makes him as dangerous as he is exemplary for contemporary pastors.

Frelinghuysen prompted the awakening because his evangelistic methodology shaped and inspired the colonies' two grand itinerants, George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent. This contagious methodology comprised a particular form of preaching, church discipline, and rejection of old world liturgical forms. Frelinghuysen embraced the idea popular among Puritans and Pietists that true conversion follows a certain order: conviction, conversion, and holiness. According to this construction, a person must undergo a preparatory conviction of sin that awakens him to his lost estate apart from Christ. Following this step, the awakened person experiences a joyous conversion as he finds peace through faith in Christ. Finally, a person formerly convicted and newly converted expresses this radical heart change through a distinguishably holy life. For Frelinghuysen, this *ordo salutis* required a certain style of preaching, church discipline, and worship. Since conversion involves despair over sin and the subsequent joys of salvation, Frelinghuysen preached the terrors of the law and warned his parishioners that if they relied on their baptism and religious education and had not experienced preparatory convictions, they remained under God's wrath and needed to experience conversion. With regard to church discipline, Frelinghuysen turned away from the Lord's Table those professing Christians who could not convince him that they had truly undergone the torment of conviction and the ecstasy of conver-

sion. Frelinghuysen also rejected set prayers and other religious formalities connected to the old world liturgy. He advocated the meeting of conventicles or small groups where true Christians could meet outside the mixed gathering of formal church services. From his perspective, formality led to a dead orthodoxy rather than the fervent piety that stemmed from conversion. This tripartite evangelistic methodology rooted in preaching, church discipline, and rejection of old world formality shaped the ministries of Gilbert Tennent and George Whitefield and thus served as a catalyst to the First Great Awakening. However, Frelinghuysen's evangelism, notwithstanding the immediate results, does not make him as exemplary a pastor-evangelist as Maze suggests.

Frelinghuysen set too high a bar when measuring the genuineness of a person's Christian profession and did not follow Jesus' tender care for bruised reeds and smoldering wicks. As a radical Dutch pietist, Frelinghuysen required people not only to have been converted, but also to have *experienced* conversion through a set narrative accompanied by the crisis of conviction and the rapture of regeneration. He expected these converted persons not only to attend the means of grace and live a quiet, God-fearing, and moral life, but also to live a strict life of holiness and external good works that could verify the authenticity of their experiential conversion narrative. Such a standard leaves no place for a person converted quietly as a child through the faithful instruction of Christian parents and the routine exposure to the gospel message through a gospel-centered liturgy. While converted no less supernaturally than individuals exposed to revivalism, such persons rarely remember their conversion and are unable to identify a conversion narrative that follows the pattern of conviction, conversion, and holiness. Frelinghuysen's standard for genuine Christianity also ignores the fact that the differences between the converted and the unconverted are often more subtle than obvious. For some, victory in the Christian life and

growth in grace manifests itself through their ability to hold a steady job and to struggle repeatedly against the temptations of old sins. Others possess the ability to mask the hypocrisy of an unregenerate heart amid living the disciplined life of the fervently pious. For these reasons, contemporary pastors would be unwise to believe that they can fully unravel the mystery of conversion or measure the genuineness of a person's professed faith by a rehearsal of their conversion narrative or an examination of their devotional life. The charity and patience that Jesus showed to bruised reeds ought to inform pastors more than the rashness and presumption that Frelinghuysen exercised toward his congregants.

In sum, Scott Maze's work provides a valuable resource for those wanting a fuller understanding of the roots of the First Great Awakening and thus the rise of American evangelicalism. He shows convincingly that Frelinghuysen's evangelism served as a catalyst to the First Great Awakening. However, pastors should recognize that some of Frelinghuysen's methods are better studied than imitated.

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*Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father.* By David M. Gwynn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, xiv + 230 pp., \$35.00.

The church in every generation suffers controversy and conflict. The controversies and afflictions of the church in the fourth century were especially challenging. One man bears responsibility above all others for leading the church through these conflicts—Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria.

David Gwynn, on the faculty of the University of London, has produced a very fine introduction to Athanasius's life and thought. Gwynn

naturally gives careful attention to the shape and development of Athanasius's theology, and he explains well the sufferings and successes of Athanasius's campaign for the church's recognition of the full deity of Jesus Christ. Gwynn's achievement however is that he has developed a fuller portrait of Athanasius's life and influence by explaining how Athanasius's devotion to the monastic life and how his practice of pastoral soul-care characterized his career and contributed to his ultimate success as a bishop and theologian in the embattled fourth-century church. Clear, scholarly, and thorough, this is the best general introduction available to this critically important figure.

Athanasius engaged in one of history's most famous conflicts when he stood against combined antagonism of emperors and bishops to defend the doctrine of Christ's essential deity. His predecessor, bishop Alexander, led the Council of Nicea in 325 to condemn the doctrine of Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter, who taught that although Jesus was divine, he was created by the Father and was not eternal—he had a beginning. The council also adopted a confession of faith that declared Jesus to be of the same nature (*homoousios*) with the Father. But almost immediately, a party of “semi-Arians” arose—they rejected Arius's most objectionable views but objected also to Nicea's declaration that the Son's deity was *homoousios* with the Father's. They gained ascendancy in the church and generally gained the support of the emperors.

Athanasius was their most formidable foe. The semi-Arian party convinced emperors by various means that Athanasius was a heretic, a criminal, or an enemy of the public good, and imperial antagonism forced Athanasius into exile from Alexandria five different times between 335 and 366. Athanasius however was irrepressible. He wrote extensively in favor of the Nicene Christology, and gradually convinced a rising generation of Christian leaders of its correctness. After some fifty years of anti-Nicene dominance, Athanasius's

views finally prevailed, and the Council of Constantinople affirmed them in 381. Gwynn introduces the course of Athanasius's career in chapter one, explains his challenges and successes as a bishop in chapter two, and very helpfully explains his theological arguments and development in chapter three.

In one of the strongest elements of the book, and what helps make this book distinctive, Gwynn demonstrates that the story is much more complex than the familiar narrative of the triumph of truth through Athanasius's persuasiveness and perseverance under persecution. The success of Athanasius's arguments depended also on his success in consolidating his support among the Christians of Egypt, especially among the Egyptian monks. In chapters four and five, Gwynn shows how he accomplished this by promoting and supporting monastic spirituality, while at the same time encouraging other Christians to pursue the elements of monastic spirituality that were within their reach, and by promoting the love and mutual regard of monks and ordinary Christians within the church. These efforts in turn brought Athanasius's influence to bear far beyond theology—his vision helped shape the church's spirituality, helped establish its unity, and set precedents for the productive relationship of the bishop with both monks and laity.

Even in its more familiar form it is a great story. But the story's very power to captivate and charm has obscured other important elements of the history. In chapter six Gwynn insightfully describes the various ways in which Athanasius was remembered. He explains carefully that the most influential source, Gregory of Nazianzus's *Oration XXI*, is selective and serves an important purpose in Gregory's own circumstances. Gregory largely ignores the contested aspects of Athanasius's life, and invents his unanimous election and the fiction that Athanasius himself led the anti-Arian forces at the Council of Nicea.

Gwynn contrasts Gregory's account to the equally partisan history of the neo-Arian Philos-

torgius, who portrayed Athanasius as a violent and ambitious man who coerced his own election as bishop and who regularly resorted to bribery and threats of violence to advance his theological agenda. Gwynn correctly criticizes this portrayal, but at the same time draws forth the elements of historical fact within them. Gwynn explains also how Athanasius was remembered in the Latin-speaking churches for his promotion of monastic spirituality, since Athanasius's *Life of Anthony* was widely read in the western church, but his theological works were little read. Gwynn compares also the accounts of Athanasius in the Syriac, Armenian, and Coptic churches.

Athanasius comes to us as a hero of the faith and we cannot help feeling that he cannot fail to overcome the enemies of the faith. Gwynn helps us see that there was no historical inevitability at work. Athanasius took great risks and spent himself in his cause because the victory was not inevitable.

From the very start and until the end of Athanasius's career as bishop of Alexandria, he struggled against opposition to his views and policies. The church in Alexandria and in Egypt was divided when he was elected bishop in 328. Coalitions and parties had naturally formed around various responses to the questions raised by Arius's teachings and by the response of the Council of Nicea. In Egypt, the church was more thoroughly divided however over questions of church discipline and standards of holiness. Many Egyptian Christians protested what they viewed as lax standards in the church—revealed most prominently in leniency toward persons who in various ways denied the faith during the severe persecutions of the early fourth century. Many refused to recognize the ordinations of presbyters and bishops who approved such lenient standards. They established rival churches and ordained rival presbyters and bishops. Athanasius concluded that these Meletians, as they were known, disrupted the unity of the church in Egypt. He opposed recognizing them as in communion with the church and demanded that they submit to his authority. Meletians therefore actively opposed Athanasius

and made common cause against him with Athanasius's other opponents, including the semi-Arians. His failure to reconcile the Meletian churches to his leadership caused him considerable trouble throughout his career.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that even after the triumph of his orthodox views, Athanasius on a number of issues adamantly refused his endorsement of the views and policies of the other orthodox bishops. Athanasius's unyielding policy toward the Meletians put him at odds with the other bishops of the eastern church. The bishops at the Council of Nicea in 325 affirmed communion with Meletian churches and clergy, and made provisions for the gradual reintegration of the rival churches and clergy. Athanasius did not accept this policy.

Athanasius stood against the rest of the church on other matters as well. Basil of Caesarea, the great leader of the Cappadocian Fathers, urged Athanasius to join the other bishops of the eastern churches, endorsing their proposed resolution to the divisions in the church at Antioch and recognizing communion with Meletius as bishop of Antioch (not the Meletius who led the Egyptian movement), but Athanasius refused. Basil also urged Athanasius to break his communion with Marcellus of Ancyra, since the other eastern bishops did not recognize communion with Marcellus, since his teachings were effectively Sabellian. Again, Athanasius could not be persuaded.

Gwynn seeks to avoid imposing his own interpretation on the life of Athanasius and urges readers to draw their own opinions. For this reason Gwynn helpfully dwells at length on the precise nature of the textual evidence concerning the various issues. Gwynn nevertheless clearly admires Athanasius's biblical thought and courageous life. And who can demur? May God raise up pastors and teachers of like sound faith and courage in every generation.

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