Book Reviews

How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels. By N. T. Wright. New York: Harper One, 2012, 304 pp., $25.99 cloth.

In this volume, Wright continues his extraordinary publishing record, and does so in his inimitable style. Wright possesses the rigorous academic training, the record of scholarly publication, and a flair for exciting communication, and thus is in a unique place to make substantive contributions to both the academy and the church. This particular book is a combination of biblical theology and gospel studies (the latter being well within Wright's academic training). The basic thesis is simply elucidated in the title, namely that the gospels tell the story of How God Became King. Yet Wright's approach is not as simple as his constructive proposal. In fact, he feels a great deal of deconstruction is necessary before he can proceed with proving his thesis. To this end, he spends three chapters in part one explaining the problem in general, four chapters in part two explaining the problem in particular, three chapters in part three arguing his thesis (in fact his entire constructive program occurs in chapters 9 and 10, only 78 pages), and one part/chapter applying his proposal.

Essentially, Wright demonstrates what went wrong in the church to miss the point of the gospels: "The gospels were all about God becoming king, but the creeds are focused on Jesus being God. It would be truly remarkable if one great truth of early Christian faith and life were actually to displace another, to displace it indeed so thoroughly that people forgot it even existed" (20). The bulk of the book is focused on the forgetting (1–174) rather than the truth forgotten (175–252).

In part one, Wright lays out the false choices that have plagued the church in relation to understanding the gospel and the gospels. In essence, he argues that most of orthodox and conservative Christianity has obsessed over a Pauline euangelion (e.g., incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection). Or, in the case of the early church, on proving the deity of Christ in a Greek philosophical context. As a result, the

early creeds, the reformation catechisms, and modern evangelicalism have missed the bulk of gospel material. This "missing middle" either ignores the so-called "life of Christ" or makes it one proof for his deity. This "death and resurrection" crowd is Wright's primary target throughout but he makes sure to clarify that the liberal option is no option at all. That is, to choose the life of Jesus without his death and resurrection is an even greater injustice to the gospels. As a result, he is seeking an integrated, robust reading of the gospels that combines the central tenets of birth, death, and resurrection with the oft under-emphasized life of Jesus.

Wright's writing is full of helpful illustrations. In this case, the picture of the cloak (i.e., the gospel a la 1 Cor. 15) and the body (i.e., the life of Jesus) shows the need for a holistic reading of the gospel. If one opts for just the cloak (e.g., Reformed tradition, creeds, etc.) or just the body (e.g., liberalism, social gospel, etc.) the picture is incomplete. In this case, he is attempting to integrate the gospel and the gospels. His trademark focus on history, theology, and story (see New Testament and the People of God) is in full effect.

In part two, Wright examines four themes in the Gospels and their Wirkungsgeschichte in the church. He uses the curious illustration of a quadrophonic speaker system (maybe "surround sound" would have been more cultural applicable). In any case, he explains how these four themes need to be balanced correctly (though not necessarily equally). When they are out of balance the resulting message is unclear, distorted, and out of sync. Though four themes are examined, they all return to the neglected role of Israel's story to reading the New Testament (both the Hebrew Bible and second temple Judaism).

The first theme (61) is that the gospels present Jesus as the climax of the story of Israel (65). It is in this argument (and its related themes) that Wright is at his most compelling. Throughout this book he repeatedly traces Old Testament themes to their fulfillment in Jesus. In each instance, he is upholding the best of a biblical-theological method. However, his argument is not limited to fragmentary promise and fulfillment passages but to a holistic reading of the story of Israel. The gospels, he argues, cannot be understood apart from the story of Israel (the Hebrew Bible) and the context of second temple Judaism. However, he argues that this crucial component of understanding the gospels has been minimized to such an extent as to be ignored (65). If the creeds are guilty of skipping right past Jesus' life in their retelling of his birth and death, then they are also guilty of failing to mention Israel at all (67). Old Testament theologians have long emphasized Israel to the exclusion of creation (e.g., Eichrodt, Von Rad, McKenzie, Martens, et al.). However, some modern evangelicals are in danger of emphasizing the beginning of the Hebrew Bible to the exclusion of the rest of the story. The gospel writers make clear that the history of Israel, even the sinful failings from Genesis 4 through Malachi are important (67). To prove the theological necessity of the story of Israel, Wright engages in a theologically rich exposition of the Matthean genealogy and the prophecy of Daniel 9. Ultimately he concludes that in Jesus, the ultimate "jubilee of jubilees" ("greatest 'redemption' of all") has come (70–71). This is Wright's non-traditional take on typology (e.g., Jesus is Moses, David, Jacob, Elijah, etc.). However, such typology is secondary to "the towering sense of a single story now at last reaching its conclusion" (72). The story of Israel and the story of creation are part of the same story and to disconnect them or fail to "hear" them will make the story of Jesus unnecessarily isolated.

The second theme in this part (83) focuses on Jesus as the promise of Israel. This theme has been distorted to focus on the divinity of Jesus. While Wright affirms Jesus' divinity, its disjuncture from Israel negatively affects a fair reading of the Gospels. Jesus is not just 'god' but "Israel's

God" (89). Essentially, in response to atheism and other modern challenges to faith, Christians have been looking for the wrong thing. If the Bible gives not just the answers but also the questions, one can see how modern concepts of divinity can be found but are not central to a biblical portrayal of Jesus. This theme comes back to bear on Wright's thesis — the God of Israel is seen in Jesus (hence how "God became king"). A hermeneutical axiom gleaned from Wright's presentation is this: all of the gospels are written in conscious continuation of the story of the Hebrew Bible from the perspective of first century Jews.

The third theme Wright analyzes is that of God's renewed people (105). For him, this theme (i.e., the church) has unnecessarily dominated. Again, the distortion is not so much due to falsehood but overemphasis. The result is a disconnection of the people of God from the story of Israel. The early church needlessly saw Christianity contra Judaism rather than in continuation of it.

The final theme Wright investigates is the "clash of kingdoms"—God versus Caesar (127). This theme, he contends, has been basically silent. Though the rule of Caesar is the context, the theological foundation is the story of Israel (i.e., God is king). As such, Jesus is challenging the rule of Caesar by claiming rule, power, dominion, and anointing. Jesus is showing that he has come to be the true ruler. This may shed some light on the relationship between Rome and Jesus as mediated through Pilate at his crucifixion.

The final two parts of the book essentially construct and apply what has been hinted at all along. The Gospels are about both kingdom and cross (rather than one or the other). To expand on the title, they tell how the God of Israel through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension has brought his kingdom and rule to his creation. As a result, the Christian community must not reduce creedal formulation, homiletic presentation, corporate worship, or community service to merely kingdom or cross, but embrace a full-orbed understanding of God as saving and reigning king. For Wright, a more robust understanding of kingdom and atonement encapsulates both the cloak and the body of the gospel as presented in the Gospels.

Wright's positive contributions to Gospel studies abound in this volume. First, he presents the material in a way that is accessible beyond the scholarly community (though I suspect that seminarians and scholars will be the most interested in what he has to say). Second, his motivation is exegetical. He sees a gap between the proportion of the gospels devoted to the life of Christ and the weight such material receives in the doctrinal history of the church. Additionally, his work combines method and application. Though it is significantly less thorough and systematic than his more academic tomes, this work attempts to apply the method he is articulating. Wright's New Testament and the People of God is one of the best examples of theory and application combined in one volume. How God Became King follows a similar trajectory with a less exhaustive and systematic result. Due to the audience and nature of this work, much of the exegetical heavy lifting is done in other works (to which he points in footnotes). Will the uninitiated reader delve into the deeper sources? Many will not. However, Wright has, at least, done the work. Finally, Wright's single greatest contribution in this volume is the continued emphasis on Israel (through the Hebrew Bible and second temple context). The Old Testament is cited almost as frequently as the New Testament. In addition, the reader gets the impression that Israel's story is the indispensable hermeneutical key to understanding the gospels (a point that has not been made clear enough or loud enough for most of the church's history).

Despite all of its positive contributions both in substance and style, there are some curious flaws to Wright's work. In particular, some of his claims are overreaching, anecdotal, selective, and unclear. First, his claims are often overdone. Essentially, he claims that the entire church (and all of her theologians) has mis-

read the gospels. He applies this critique to the church fathers, the reformers, and modern theologians. As he puts it, "we have all misunderstood the gospels" (273). I may agree that certain doctrinal emphases have not usually done justice to the full presentation of the gospel material, however, the church fathers, the reformers, and modern theologians have not neglected Israel, theocracy, and the life of Jesus altogether. Such a statement is either made out of ignorance or sensationalism (and Wright is anything but ignorant).

To expound on this point further, at least in the last few decades there has been a wealth of scholarship focused on the use of the Old Testament in the New, the role of a coherent story (e.g., Vanhoozer, Bartholomew, et al.) in the Biblical witness, and the importance of second temple Judaism (e.g., Evans, Köstenberger, Ferguson, et al.). Wright himself offers suggestions for further reading (277–278), indicating that other thinkers have paved the way for his own thought. Yet nowhere in the body of his presentation does it appear that anyone before him has read the gospels even marginally right.

Though his reading list may hint otherwise, his main arguments avoid scholarly influences since Rudolf Bultmann (whose publishing contributions ended in the 1950s). Interaction or at least acknowledgement of recent scholarly contributions in these areas would be helpful (e.g., McKnight, Evans, Blomberg, Bock, et al.). In addition, his focus in Old Testament theology is explicitly on the exodus and kingdom as central motifs. However, many Old Testament and biblical theologians have argued for other themes such as creation, covenant, law, wisdom, and relationship with God (e.g., Dempster, Beale, Von Rad, Eichrodt, et al.).

His arguments are off not always by substance but degree. For example, Wright pejoratively quotes Martin Kähler's famous aphorism that the four gospels are "passion narratives with extended introductions" (63). While Wright generally (and rightly) opposes such a view, he misquotes his opponent. Kähler was specifically referring to the gospel of Mark of which half the chapters are leading up to and including the passion narrative. My point is that Wright's understanding of the Gospels must still do justice to the centrality of the crucifixion and resurrection as the climax of Jesus' "biography" (in the ancient sense).

This brings me to the most clear theological critique of this work. Wright does much to advance the agenda of modern biblical theology with his reading of the unified story of Israel as the backdrop to the gospels. In addition, he argues convincingly for a reading of the gospels that incorporates both kingdom and cross. However, he never directly incorporates Paul's explicit avoidance of the life of Christ in his gospel articulation (e.g., 1 Cor. 15). If Paul's gospel is the same as the gospels, then one must at least agree that Paul elevates the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus above his life. If not the totality, they are the climax of the gospel. Wright seems unwilling to affirm that the creeds and reformers may have actually gotten the emphasis of the gospel essentially right. This anti-Reformation bias in Wright is seen in his discussion of justification as well (21). He argues that the gospels and the creeds (when read against one another) force a choice and "what [he] observes" is that "the church has unhesitatingly privileged the creed" (23). If the New Testament was only the gospels, one could see this bifurcation. However, the New Testament contains a lot more information that seems quite in line with the early church creeds.

In addition, while accepting the basic understanding of traditional atonement theology, Wright minimizes the role of "forgiveness of sins" and "going to heaven" in the Gospel's gospel presentations. While the transformation of God's people into agents of kingdom change is a result of Jesus' inauguration of the kingdom of God, it does not replace or minimize the atonement and eternal life aspects of Jesus' teaching. The social element of the gospel does

not replace the emphasis on "knowing God" (e.g., John 17:3) that is present in the gospels. Wright's emphasis, if not outright explanation, is overly realized. The salvation inaugurated by Jesus is (in some sense) spiritual and will be (upon his return) total (e.g., Romans 8).

Secondly, Wright's understanding of the problem is essentially anecdotal. He argues that the church has gotten the gospels wrong. His description of "the missing middle" is based on "[his] experience" (20) and his observations (23). The sum total of his discussion of the twentieth-century scholarly trends (21) is Rudolf Bultmann. Wright offers no systematic basis for making the assertion that the church has gotten it wrong. The creeds may be deficient (in his view) but the creeds are not the totality of the liturgy or the wider non-liturgical Protestant theological emphasis. Numerous twentieth-century evangelical theologians have been concerned to understand the kingdom of God in a still conservative manner (e.g., Ladd, Henry, et al.). Somewhat related to the anecdotal and popular nature of this book are Wright's tangential statements hardly related to the biblical argument (e.g., Fox News, politics, problem of evil, modern warfare, etc.).

Additionally, the presentation of Wright's evidence is unnecessarily selective. His choice of scholars is selective, as well are the passages he chooses to examine. While most of his exegesis is convincing, he rarely places it into the story of the gospel in which it occurs. As a result, the themes for which Wright argues drive the process. While a full inductive study is impossible for such a work, more narrative explanation would help situate some of his observations. There are no outlines of the gospels showing how they are structured to teach that God became king. There are whole chapters of each gospel that remain uncited. While commentary level exegesis is not expected, if the missing link to reading the gospels is being explained then it must be comprehensive. Wright is putting forth a center of the gospels. A more constructive but cautious approach would treat God becoming king as a central, unifying element of New Testament theology. As a result, the parts that seem on the edge of this scheme still have a place in the narrative structure.

Finally, the main application of Wright's kingdom explanation is a rehabilitation of theocracy. However, the "new theocracy" that Wright advocates is nowhere clearly defined. He convincingly argues that first century Jews had no category separation between religion and politics. In tone, he seems to favor such a setup. However, he hardly explains how such a setup would work in the contemporary world. Jesus and Paul both articulate some separation of spheres between government and religion (e.g., Caesar's realm, those in authority, etc.). Wright is careful to emphasize that Jesus brought the kingdom but does not so carefully explain the current state of the believing community. How does such a community live as if Jesus is king if they are still awaiting the full consummation of his reign? Ladd, Cullman, Beale, and others have more carefully articulated a view of inaugurated eschatology.

Wright has written a lively and provocative book that is accessible to a widespread audience. In it he has made many contributions to biblical theology and New Testament studies. His basic argument that the four gospels were written to show how the God of Israel became king through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is convincingly demonstrated. His tangents are wrought with political overtones, some of his terminology is ambiguous, and his tone is unnecessarily hyperbolic, but the thesis still stands.

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C. S. Lewis—A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet. By Alister McGrath. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013, 431 pp., $24.99 cloth.

I remember the first time I saw someone pick up a new Bible translation and analyze it by turning to key passages. When I asked them what they were doing, they explained the process to me. It was simple enough. They had a short list of verses they considered to be problematic for translators, and they were curious as to how the particular editorial team had dealt with them.

I have read enough biographies on C. S. Lewis that I now have specific passages I look to in a similar way. This is not to say that Lewis or his biographers are inspired, but there are a few controversial passages from Lewis's life that provide a helpful starting point in reviewing a new biography.

While most of C. S. Lewis's adulthood was spent as a bachelor, the three disputed life passages I will examine from McGrath's biography surprisingly all relate to women.

Janie Moore: While serving in World War I, Lewis made a commitment to his fellow soldier "Paddy" Moore. They vowed that if anything should happen to the other, the surviving party would care for the family of the fallen. Both men were wounded, but Paddy fatally so. And Lewis, though not yet a Christian, was true to his word. He took care of Paddy's sister Maureen and his mother for most of his adult life.

Controversy surrounds Lewis's relationship with Paddy's mom, Janie, whom Lewis nicknamed "Minto." This is evidenced by the fact that one of Lewis's former students, and one of his most respected biographers, George Sayer, has changed his mind regarding the nature of Lewis and Minto's relationship. His earlier work Jack, published in 1988, denied claims that they were intimate, but he later revised the introduction to the book and accepted the suggestion that their initial relationship was of a "complex" nature (75).

McGrath accepts this hypothesis. He adds his own speculation that Minto provided both a "mother" and "maid" role in Lewis's life, suggesting that this longing is voiced in the poem "Reason" written by Lewis in the early 1920s. McGrath demonstrates that this complex relationship actually developed in 1917 before Lewis left for war, based on Lewis's personal journal entries. Though McGrath believes that they were initially romantic, like some other biographers, he demonstrates that it was not long before their relationship evolved into a strictly domestic one.

G. E. M. Anscombe: Many writers credit Elizabeth Anscombe for wiping the floor with Lewis's book Miracles at a debate at the Socratic Club in 1948. George Sayer describes the event as a "humiliating experience" for Lewis, stating that he would never write a "book of that sort" again. While McGrath relies heavily upon Sayer's understanding of Lewis and Mrs. Moore's relationship, he arrives at a different position regarding the outcome of the debate with Anscombe.

McGrath acknowledges Anscombe's victory in the debate, but reminds the reader that she agreed with Lewis's conclusion. Like Lewis, she believed naturalism to be untenable. She challenged however the soundness of his argument. McGrath also emphasizes Lewis's familiarity with receiving academic criticism. After all, Lewis spent his free time with such accomplished critics as Charles Williams and J. R. R. Tolkien. McGrath says the Inklings were "primarily concerned with the testing and improvement" of each other's writings, thus illustrating that Lewis was no stranger to debate and searching criticism (328).

The important aspect of the debate is how it seemed to influence Lewis in his subsequent publications. Though there is a distinct transition from this point forward regarding Lewis's increased output in fiction, one cannot attribute it solely to the night at the Socratic. Lewis refined and republished Miracles in 1960, his argument and conclusion nuanced, but substantively unaltered. McGrath points out helpfully that Lewis utilized a similar line of reason in later essays like "Is Theism Important" and "On Obstinacy

in Belief" (255). Though the apologist may have been temporarily knocked back, he was not destroyed, as some have thought.

Helen Joy Davidman: McGrath gives an insightful description of the relationship Lewis shared with the American author Helen Joy Davidman. While some authors focus on the romantic side of their relationship, McGrath examines Joy's reliance upon Lewis for financial stability and her eventual conniving that resulted in a civil marriage and the relocation of her and her boys to the Kilns. Yet, with all of her scheming, McGrath credits Joy as the "midwife to three of Lewis's late books" (328).

McGrath demonstrates that Lewis and Davidman's civil marriage was not the result of romantic feelings on Lewis's part. Particularly through the use of Lewis's correspondence, McGrath shows that Lewis continued to nurture female friendships after his social contract with Joy, specifically with long-time friend Ruth Pitter. He even invited Ruth, instead of Joy, to attend a royal garden party at Buckingham Palace. When Pitter could not join him, Lewis went alone (332).

Lewis's brother Warnie worried that Joy would, in time, demand more. And so she did. McGrath calls Lewis's civil marriage with Joy a "Trojan horse" (332). Joy eventually insisted on her marital rights, moved into the Kilns, and began redecorating. She even insisted that Maureen Moore, now married, defer her legal right to the house so that it could be willed to Joy's two sons (333). Maureen refused. Though one biographer, A. N. Wilson, suggests Lewis patterned the White Witch of Narnia after G. E. M. Anscombe, Joy was turning out to be a better candidate, it seems. But things soon changed.

C. S. Lewis fell in love with Joy the day she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. At least this is the nearly unanimous opinion among Lewis scholars. In contrast to other treatments, however, McGrath focuses not on the romance but on Joy's positive impact on Lewis's later publications.

Joy played a similar supportive role to her former husband, Bill Gresham, an American screenwriter. She now "brought her skills to bear on Lewis" and served as a "midwife" to Lewis's Till We Have Faces, Reflections on the Psalms, and The Four Loves (328). This is an often undervalued aspect of their relationship. Biographers regularly focus, as in the movie Shadowlands, on the love story. McGrath rightly brings out Joy's influence on Lewis's published work. Readers who desire to see the depth to which Lewis loved Joy need look no further than Lewis's A Grief Observed.

Beyond bringing his own insights into difficult passages in Lewis's life, McGrath's work deals with newer developments in Lewis scholarship. He is able to deal with, for instance, Michael Ward's 2010 book The Narnia Code, which offers an interpretative theme for Lewis's Narnia series based on Lewis's alleged use of the seven medieval planets. Though scholars are uncertain of the significance of this discovery, there is a great deal of support for Ward's theory. McGrath incorporates this development into his consideration of Narnia, to which he devotes a lengthy section of the book.

C. S. Lewis: A Life is the first major biography able to consider the majority of Lewis's published correspondence, not available in print in their entirety until 2006. McGrath read all of Lewis's letters and publications chronologically in preparation for writing the biography. This possibly explains McGrath's unique opinion regarding what he perceives to be the correct date for Lewis's conversion to Christianity, arguing that even Lewis's recollection of the date was incorrect.

So much has been written about Lewis that anytime a new work comes out, there must be something of a collective sigh among scholars. What more can be said? Are there really any stones left unturned in Lewis's life?

Perhaps the best way to answer such questions is by considering the similarities between the two

men's life experiences. Both Lewis and McGrath were born in Belfast. McGrath actually attended the same school as Lewis's mother Florence. Lewis and McGrath were both graduates and later became dons of Oxford University. They were both atheists in their younger days and converted to Christianity at Oxford. And both used their public platforms to commend and defend the Christian faith. Thus, McGrath provides a fresh insight into the man about whom so much is written.

As one who teaches courses on the life, writings, and influence of C. S. Lewis, I would not say McGrath's work, as excellent as it is, is the definitive resource. I still prefer Walter Hooper's C. S. Lewis: A Complete Guide to His Life and Works because of his detailed summaries and reviews of the Lewis corpus, which provide a more insightful analysis of Lewis's intellectual and literary development. McGrath's volume, however, is a necessary addition to the library of any serious student of C. S. Lewis. I would also recommend it as a great place to start for anyone just beginning to study the life of the "Apostle to the Skeptics," to borrow the title used by Lewis's first biographer, Chad Walsh.

McGrath's edition is timely, published in early 2013, the semicentennial anniversary of Lewis's death in 1963. The publication also anticipates the posthumous achievement of one of Lewis's earliest scholarly ambitions. Lewis's aspiration as a poet will be realized in November 2013 when he will join the company of literary giants like Shakespeare and Chaucer as he is commemorated at the Poet's Corner of the historic Westminster Abbey in London, England. For this reason, among many others, McGrath's biography is not only timely, but I believe will also prove to be timeless.

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Adoniram Judson: A Bicentennial Appreciation of the Pioneer American Missionary. Ed. by Jason Duesing. Studies in Baptist Life and Thought. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012. xxiv + 184 pp., $24.99 paper.

February 19, 2012 marks the bicentennial anniversary of Adoniram and Ann Judson setting sail to Calcutta, India. They were initially commissioned by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in an era when departing from the comforts of Western civilization to the dangers of the ocean and embarking on missionary endeavors were thought of as death warrants for Westerners. In many ways, these newlyweds are rightly commemorated as the missionary icons at the fountainhead of the nineteenth-century missionary movement in United States. However, Jason Duesing of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the editor of this book, reminds readers that such bicentennial celebration can and should be elongated to at least 2013, since it was not until July 13, 1813 that this couple reached their second and final destination in Burma (also known as Myanmar). Two hundred years later, if the goal was to aid the new generation to remember, then the chroniclers of this volume are poised to tell the Judsons' narrative in an inspirational fashion.

This collected work consists of eight chapters plus the foreword, preface, introduction, and conclusion. A helpful chapter-by-chapter summary has been provided in the editor's preface (p. xxiii), so this review will attempt to avoid redundancy. All of the sections are written by some of the finest Southern Baptist historians, missiologists, and leaders, and are of stellar quality. Apart from more traditional essays, the genre also ranges from a personal story on how the Judsons influenced the life of Paige Patterson, to a biographical sermon by Daniel Akin. Immediately, the first thing I noticed was the impressive cloud this book carries bringing in two Southern Baptist Convention seminary presidents as contribu-

tors, as well as having Tom Elliff, President of the International Mission Board, furnish the foreword. In addition, there are a colossal twenty-five endorsements and blurbs for this volume!

Michael Haykin, general editor of the forthcoming critical edition of the works of Andrew Fuller, begins the first chapter by asserting that William Carey, Andrew Fuller, John Ryland, Jr., John Sutcliff, and Samuel Pearce, along with the Serampore trio, laid a solid historical foundation for the Judsons to follow. A skillful historian, Gregory Wills, gives to my knowledge the most in-depth recent account of the familiar story, a conversion narrative about how soul-searching Congregationalists became Baptists en route to India in 1813. Nathan Finn, a Baptist historian and scholar, paints the life of American pioneer Adoniram Judson with vivid color. During his time in Let Ma Yoon ("the death prison"), "Adoniram came close to death on several occasions, sometimes by fever and other times via execution. Only Ann's devotion prevented Adoniram from dying during his months of confinement" (p. 90). This collection as a whole avoids the pitfalls of hagiography, in part through the efforts of historians like Finn, who carefully qualifies in his first footnote seeing an African American (i.e., George Lisle) as an earlier "informal" missionary from America before Judson came on the scene (p. 77). This type of detailed and critical approach produced by Haykin, Wills, and Finn is the type of scholarship that makes the book's historiography academic and prevents it from becoming another missionary hagiography, which Carl Trueman warns against in the editor's preface (p. xxii).

Given the fact that Judson was a missionary, Keith Eitel's evaluation of Judson's ministry through the eyes of missiologist is vital, and lends a helpful assessment on issues like contextualization, providing a window into the practices of two hundred years ago. This collection, however, would not have been complete without Candi Finch's work on Adoniram's three wives: Ann Hasseltine, Sarah Boardman, and Emily Chubbuck. Although his wives are mentioned in the chapters of Finn and Wills, Finch's lucid and thorough treatments filled what otherwise would have been a large gap.

Having published a new book on Jonathan Edwards's legacy myself, I read Robert Caldwell's chapter on Judson's missionary preparation with great interest. Caldwell's mature research and novel historical findings illuminate Adoniram's family background and link his upbringing to the wider nineteenth century context, where New England divines were portrayed as influential forces to be reckoned with. Caldwell carefully argues his case with attention to insightful details into this epoch. As the new missionary movement began in the United States, "Edwardsean leaders, institutions, and ideals were central to it" (p. 41). In my assessment, Caldwell mounts a persuasive case in seeing Adoniram Judson as part of the broader New Divinity era.

Should there be any criticism of this splendid volume, it is twofold: there is no doubt that all of the contributors have impeccable credentials, yet, they are all Southern Baptists. If Judson indeed represents the official beginning of plenary missionary enterprise in America, not just limited to the Baptist movement, then perhaps it would have been more honoring of Judson's legacy if the contributors represented wider denominational backgrounds. This would convey the universal appeal of the pivotal name in Protestant missionary history, a celebrity figure not limited to like-minded Baptists, but also accessible to Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian, Pentecostal, and various Reformed or Presbyterian admirers. On a similar note, this collection could have profited from inviting at least one Burmese scholar who could speak from a native perspective—in particular, the manner in which Judson's ministry was received by the very people to whom

the missionary endeavors were directed. That said, this book was published by B&H, and I am aware that the targeted audience of readers was probably the broader Baptist community, and Southern Baptists in particular.

In the final analysis, to remember this bicentennial landmark of the launching of the missionary enterprise in North America, this collected effort pays more than lip service to Judson. In his quest to find the Judson memorial and gigantic stone in modern-day Myanmar, Duesing tells a moving story about his personal encounter with an old Burmese man who made him promise to "come and dig up the stone" so that Burmese people will, once again, rediscover Judson's legacy. It is to that end that Duesing writes, "the purpose of this volume has been to unearth this metaphorical stone," and dig up Judson for the new generation (pp. 180-181). And digging this book did accomplish! The sheer amount and depth of the contributors' knowledge, especially considering the staggering number of research citations (550 footnotes), particularly for a paperback of under two hundred pages, makes this work certainly worthy of being in the B&H Academic series "Studies in Baptist Life and Thought," and will serve as a useful resource for scholars and research libraries. But it does not stop there. Adoniram Judson: A Bicentennial Appreciation of the Pioneer American Missionary has an inspirational and practical side that can benefit readers right across the board, whether they be missionaries, pastors, seminary students, or any interested person in the pew. Kudos to Jason Duesing for publishing a timely collection of essays in such exceptional manner, which, I believe, will benefit readers of various stripes, both in the church and the academy.

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Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration, and Mission. By J. D. Payne. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012, 206 pp., $15 paper.

Apart from the contentious issue of illegal immigration, most evangelicals in the United States give minimal attention to the reality that many of the unreached people groups to which we are sending missionaries overseas are also simultaneously migrating in significant numbers to our own shores. In Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration, and Mission, former Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor and pastor of church multiplication for the Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, J. D. Payne seeks to educate evangelicals concerning the statistical reality of these unreached people groups who are making their homes among us and to challenge the church to engage them with the gospel. For example, in contrast to the missiological focus of recent decades on researching unreached people groups outside of North America, the church has done only minimal research on unreached people groups living in North America. According to Payne, "we have better data on a unreached people group living on the backside of the Himalayas than we do on that same people group living across the street from us in New York, Toronto, Chicago, or Montreal" (62). Filled with numerous anecdotal illustrations and backed by extensive statistical data, Strangers Next Door also seeks to cast a vision for focused church planting among these immigrant unreached people groups in North America. Beyond this, the book aims toward the larger goal of partnering with these new churches in taking the gospel back to their homelands through their existing social networks.

Payne's book is one example of "diaspora missiology," a recently coined term referring to missions as it is uniquely practiced among the migrating and immigrating peoples of the

world. The key theological truth which Payne highlights is God's sovereign orchestration of all things, including his purposes in the migratory movements of people. Payne provides a thought-provoking overview of migration within canonical history, demonstrating how commonly God accomplished his plan in salvation history by means of sovereignly ordained migration. Payne also includes a brief history of migration to the West (Western Europe and the Anglosphere) since the start of the Age of Exploration. Along with these biblical and historical foundations to "diaspora missiology," Payne examines the phenomena of international students and refugees as two contemporary manifestations of migration, further opportunities for U.S. evangelicals to reach the unreached people groups in our own backyard. In each case, recognizing the presence of these least reached among us must then lead to the conviction that "now is the time to cross the street and meet the strangers next door" (17). Not to do so, would be "missiologically malignant" (33). In order to help churches engage the "strangers next door," Payne suggests some basic missiological guidelines and a simple strategy geared toward three stages of diaspora missions: missions to, through, and beyond the diaspora, through and beyond describing partnerships with new diaspora-churches for the purpose of reaching back to their countries of origin with the gospel as well as beyond their own people to other people groups of the world. In fact, immigrants as a group may tend to possess a unique ability because of their bicultural identity to relate effectively to other people groups, a characteristic leading some to label immigrants as "bridge people" (157).

One objection to this vision of diaspora missions, which Payne himself acknowledges (147-148), is the question of how ready and willing recently immigrated people will be to return to their countries of origin as missionaries. As well, the longer immigrants live in their new home, the more cultural distance develops between them and the people of their homeland. Proclaiming the gospel to the unreached people groups among us is perhaps the obvious (and neglected) first step. But as existing churches in the United States embrace Payne's vision to partner with these new church plants on missions through and beyond, they must see such mission partnership not as the latest fad providing a technique to reach the unreached people groups at warp speed, but instead as a long-term strategy of investing in new immigrant churches to help them develop their own cross-cultural missions burden. As missions history and experience demonstrate, cross-cultural missions has always been messy and complicated, even when it has ultimately been very successful. So churches in the United States should heed Payne's call with balanced expectations and a readiness to persevere in diaspora missions, even when they meet the inevitable disappointments and challenges.

One area where further clarity in Strangers Next Door is needed is in Payne's fairly frequent use of "kingdom" as an adjective—"kingdom citizens" (21), "kingdom perspective" (25), "kingdom expansion" (67). While Payne's use seems mainly to refer to a biblical perspective in which God is sovereignly working toward the full manifestation of his eschatological kingdom and Christians are faithfully carrying out the Great Commission in service of that goal, "kingdom" is popularly used today with such varying meaning that its use requires care and clarity. For instance, some argue that the "kingdom perspective" on immigration is that Christians should emphasize welcoming illegal immigrants rather than emphasizing enforcement of existing laws, since Christians have primary allegiance to the kingdom of God not the government of

the United States. While Payne judiciously avoids such topics, his frequent use of "kingdom" as an adjective, a use which is consistent with important gospel emphases, nonetheless needs more precise development.

Another area where Strangers Next Door might have said more is on the issue of using simple strategies of church planting when engaging the migrating peoples among us. While Payne is correct that initial strategies of evangelism and church starting should emphasize simplicity and reproducibility, ongoing development of local churches, leadership training, and partnership in cross-cultural mission efforts necessarily requires additional elements of organization, institutionalization, and complexity. This point relates again to the need for churches in the United States to have a long-term vision and commitment to work among immigrant peoples rather than merely a short-term (and at times perhaps naïve) enthusiasm about the reality of what this vision will entail. In like manner, Christians must not see the initial use of simple and reproducible methods as a complete vision of how we will pursue church planting among and mission partnership with immigrant peoples. Payne's work, then, points to the need for more in-depth models for how the church in the United States in particular, but also the churches of the West more broadly, can partner with immigrant churches in helping them develop a mission vision and strategy. Even so, Payne's book is an important and much-needed clarion call for evangelicals first to see the opportunity for missions that the Lord has sovereignly brought to our doorstep and second to engage these unreached people groups among us with a thoughtful, long-term strategy.

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America's Blessings: How Religion Benefits Everyone, Including Atheists. By Rodney Stark. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton, 2012, 197 pp., $24.95 hardcover.

It is fashionable among many in contemporary society to suggest that religion per se, is bad for society. "New atheists" including, but not limited to, Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and Victor Stenger are famous for their pronouncements that religion is destructive to human flourishing and even human life. Rodney Stark has written a well-researched book that rebuts the notion that, as Hitchens affirmed before he died, "religion poisons everything." America's Blessings is a sociological study focusing on the positive effects of religion in America. Stark's work is also comparative, placing America as a tangibly blessed religious people alongside European countries as non-religious and thus, less tangibly blessed. Stark never directly addressed the objections of Hitchens, et al., but the book's arguments ring in the ears of anyone who has read their works or heard them speak. Specifically, Stark considered how religion positively affects the rate of crime, family life, sexual behavior, mental and physical well-being, overall generosity, trends in achievement and success, and the life of the mind. Overall, Americans enjoy a greater degree of satisfaction, success, and flourishing due to the impact of religion on individual and corporate life than do Europeans, who are comparatively less religious.

Stark co-directs the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University and is a member of Baylor's faculty. He is a sociologist of religion, and the author of dozens of books and scores of scholarly articles. Some of his most recent works include The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success (Random House, 2006), God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades (HarperCollins, 2009), and The Triumph

of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the World's Largest Religion (HarperCollins, 2011), which was World magazine's choice for Book of the Year in 2012. Stark's works underscore the enormous contributions made to human flourishing by Christianity. In America's Blessings, Stark articulated how that fact remains, particularly for the benefit of theists and atheists alike.

The major thesis of the work is that, even in the twenty-first century, Americans are a uniquely religious people. Because Americans are uniquely religious, they enjoy important measurable benefits in several aspects of life, and those benefits can be empirically linked to religion. Significantly, those benefits are enjoyed not only by believers, but by unbelievers also. And this perhaps is Stark's most compelling point. Stark argued that religion is underrated as a societal benefit, particularly by academics and members of the news media. Ironically, those who deride religion and religious people would not enjoy the blessings that they have come to take for granted if America were less religious. Stark wrote in his introduction that "it is past time for a full accounting of the tangible human and social benefits of faith in American society and for the recognition that one of our nation's primary advantages over many others lies in the greater strength of religion in American life" (4). The purpose of Stark's work is to set the record straight with regard to the impact of religion on the health of American society.

This is a work of sociology of religion. As a sociologist, Stark relied on a particular research methodology to support his major thesis, which he defined in the introduction to the book. Specifically, Stark rejected any study that uses random sampling. His reason for this is simple: random sampling risks yielding unrelated information. Stark wrote, "I exclude all studies not based on well-selected samples of relevant populations." (8). To be reliable, any study measuring religion's impact on a society must have been based on samples that are germane to the issue being studied. Furthermore, any study must be analyzed appropriately, no matter how relevant the sampling may be. Stark emphasized that he subjected those studies that supported his conclusions to objective and recognized standards of analysis.

Stark's clarification of his methodology is helpful, especially for a lay audience. Not only does he specify his methodology to support his thesis, he also argues that America has historically had a religious environment that is uniquely pious and pluralistic. Because of the disestablishment of religion following the enactment of the Constitution, religious groups found it necessary to compete with one another for adherents if they were going to survive. No longer would denominations such as Congregationalism or Anglicanism enjoy the support of the state for their continuation. But rather than being the death knell of religion, pluralism has historically strengthened it in American society. Rather than destabilizing religion, pluralism enhances and entrenches it. It is a panacea to lethargy in church leadership and apathy in church membership. This is seen when comparing the state of American religion with that of European countries. In chapter 1, Stark compared religious faithfulness in America with that of fourteen Western European countries, finding that church attendance, the importance of God in daily life, and belief in life after death are far more prominent in America than in Europe. He attributed this fact to religious pluralism and competition in America, as compared with the monopolistic environment churches have in Europe.

After providing this justification, Stark argued his thesis in the next seven chapters. Those chapters on crime rates, family life, sexual behavior, health and well-being, giving, achievement, and interest in arts, culture and the life of the mind in society are laden

with data on the direct positive effect of religion. Stark's prose is accessible, his conclusions are well-documented, and his style is direct but not confrontational.

The book makes a significant contribution because there are few, if any, works like it. Stark set out to provide a "full accounting of the tangible ... benefits of faith" (8) because given the anti-religion rhetoric prominent in contemporary dialogue, such an accounting is sorely needed. Furthermore, Stark is the one to present this comprehensive treatment. He is a respected and accomplished authority on the sociological effects of religion serving on the faculty of one of the most prestigious universities in the land. The book itself wastes no time on platitudes, unfounded assertions, or the purely subjective. It is a serious, carefully researched, well justified, and impeccably rational defense of the beneficial role of religion in American society.

Still, there are a few concerns that I would humbly present here. First, concerning the use of terms, when Stark uses the term "religion," he clearly means Judeo-Christianity, with the emphasis on Christianity. This is not necessarily problematic, however, given the plurality of religious commitments represented in both America and Europe in contemporary times, there is a strong need to be clear about what one means when speaking of religion. To be sure, Judeo-Christianity is the prominently held religious belief system in America, despite the wide range of non-Judeo-Christian faith commitments that exist. But when discussing religion in both America and European countries, Stark only spoke of churches and synagogues. What exactly are the statistics on the religious preferences of the American and European populations at this time? Judeo-Christian pluralism is not as salient in Europe as in America, but how prominent a factor is broad religious pluralism there? What effect would these data have shown in comparison with American religious adherence and practice? These questions naturally arise from an ambiguous use of the term "religion." It would have been helpful, when comparing America and Europe, to be more clear that Judeo-Christianity was being considered, rather than other faith systems alongside it.

There is also a practical issue with regard to Stark's use of "religion," which is, what effects do non-Christian religions have on American society? Do non-Christian religions have a similar positive effect on American society that Judeo-Christianity has? What about religion in general? Does religious belief as a whole have a beneficial impact on society? Or is the beneficial impact on society really a matter of Judeo-Christian influences on it? This is important, because if Judeo-Christianity is actually uniquely beneficial, it seems important to emphasize that assertion, rather than to make such assertions about religious belief in general.

Second, while Stark made helpful clarifications about his research method, further explanation on sampling and analysis may have been helpful for his lay audience. For example, what is the particular value of avoiding random samples? Are random samples not more objective than "well selected samples of relevant populations" (8)? Is there a subjective element to deciding what a "well selected sample" is when it comes to any issue being studied? Are there ways to avoid the yield of irrelevant data from random sampling? Also, when Stark claimed, "I only report studies that meet professional standards of analysis" (8), to what standards specifically does he refer? Who sets those standards, and who recognizes them as professional? What would be an example of a study that did not "meet professional standards of analysis"?

Third, there seems to be at least one blessing of religious belief in particular that Stark overlooked—religious freedom. Religious freedom is not an idea borne out of a secular worldview, but rather a religious one, and a Christian

one specifically. Reaching as far back to Jesus' teaching in Mark 12 on the individual duty toward God and the state, through the writings of the early apologists, the thought of the radical reformers, and the work of dissenting groups in Europe and America, to the enactment of the First Amendment, the justification for religious freedom has historically been a theological one. Stark's discussion of the tangible benefits of religion is well presented and thorough. He even placed an estimated cash value on those blessings in his conclusion: $2.67 trillion per year. Much more could have been added to that figure had Stark included the benefit to American believers and non-believers alike of their individual freedom of conscience which is protected by the Constitution.

Stark has produced a timely justification of religion in America. Religion, particularly which is revealed by God in His Word is not, as Schleiermacher asserted, merely a subjective experience. The universe is ordered by God to favor behavior that is based on trust in Him.

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The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters. By Lawrence Feinberg. Second ed. Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010, 490 pp., $34.95 paper.

Lawrence Feinberg, in his Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters, focuses on Aquinas's teachings regarding the supernatural end of man—his desire to see God. In particular, Feinberg seeks to determine whether this desire, which is given to man by God, is innate or elicited.

Aquinas utilizes a claim throughout this works that "every intellectual creature naturally desires to 'see God'—to know the very essence of God"—a claim, Feinberg suggests, that has instigated "lively discussion" in the centuries following Aquinas. Feinberg distinguishes between two senses of "natural:" one can understand this "natural" desire as an elicited desire—one that is conditional upon knowledge of the existence of God—or an innate desire—one that is independent of knowledge (xxiii). In light of the two senses of "natural," Feinberg seeks to show in the Natural Desire to See God that when Aquinas appeals to one's natural desire to see God, he refers to a desire elicited from one's knowledge of God's existence and his effects.

Feinberg devotes the first three chapters to the summary of Aquinas's teaching on the natural desire to see God as found in his works and on the possibility of man knowing the essence of God. The reader is provided with a brief, but thorough, summary of Aquinas's teaching on the natural desire to see God from his major works, supplemented by copious footnotes that alert readers to parallel passages or to commentary provided by contemporary or modern Thomistic scholars. Yet, despite the numerous times Aquinas expounds upon and appeals to the idea of the natural desire to see God, his view is not without its problems—problems that Catholic scholars subsequent to Aquinas sought to remedy.

The remaining thirteen chapters of Feinberg's work is devoted to commenting on key Scholastic scholars and Thomistic commentators (including Duns Scotus, Denis the Carthusian, Cajetan, Cornelius Jansenius, and Henri Cardinal de Lubac, among others) and how they understand the natural desire to see God. While each scholar within Feinberg's scope agrees on the existence such a desire, they generally divide on whether "natural" refers to an elicited desire or an innate desire. Duns Scotus forged the way for the view that the natural desire to see God as an innate desire, which led to a division among commentators until a general consensus began to form for the Thomistic view

by virtue of the works of Medina, Banez, and Suarez. For each commentator, Feinberg provides a summary of the particular commentator's view, followed by his assessment in light of Thomistic thought. Feinberg closes his book by assessing Jansenius's rejection of the development in Thomistic thought on the possibility of a state of pure nature, and a modern Catholic's (de Lubac) rejection of the Thomistic understanding of the natural desire to see God.

While Feinberg's work spans a rather broad period of scholarship, his commentary and assessment provide the reader with a clear picture on the development of thought on the natural desire to see God. This discussion is not to be lost among evangelicals and Protestants as parallels can be found in discussions regarding the sensus divinitatis. For instance, Alvin Plantinga has employed Thomistic thought, along with Calvin's sensus divinitatis, to develop his A/C (Aquinas/Calvin) Model which serves, in part, to support his claim that belief in God is a properly basic belief. At the very least, this book familiarizes the reader with various Scholastic scholars and the extensive footnotes expose the reader to the content of various works of each scholar discussed.

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