

# Book Reviews

*40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law.* By Thomas R. Schreiner. Edited by Benjamin L. Merkle. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010, 256 pp., \$17.99 paper.

Most serious students of the Bible would jump at the chance to spend a day or two in personal conversation with a distinguished Bible scholar peppering him with questions about the most important theological issues. Sadly, few ever have anything close to such an opportunity, that is, until now. Merkle's *40 Questions* series allows students to eavesdrop on a conversation in which an imaginary student poses question after question to a top scholar on some of the topics that matter most.

The series offers particular advantages to the reader that the average student interrogator would probably lack. First, though the student might gain access to a respected scholar, he might pose questions that were outside of the scholar's true area of expertise. Schreiner, on the other hand, is uniquely qualified to address questions related to the Christian and biblical law. He is the author

of *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law*, an advanced commentary on Romans, an intermediate-level commentary on Galatians, a Pauline theology, a New Testament theology, and most recently, an impressive whole-Bible biblical theology. Schreiner's discussions of the believer's relationship to the law are by no means the musings of a novice. These conversations are the product of careful reflection spanning over a quarter of a century by a respected specialist.

Second, even if a student had access to a scholar one-on-one for hours to discuss important theological issues, most students, without first conducting extensive research in the field, would squander some of their rare opportunity. They would likely spend a good bit of their time asking the wrong questions, questions that address peripheral issues of varying importance but do not actually get to the heart of the matter. The student knows what questions he would like to ask. The scholar knows what questions he should be asking. Recognizing this, the *40 Question* series permitted the scholar to furnish the questions to the student

and then provide helpful answers. This ensures that the reader gains the maximum benefit from the theological dialogue.

Schreiner divided his questions into five major parts: the law in the Old Testament; the law in Paul; the law in the Gospels and Acts; the law in the General Epistles; and the law and contemporary issues. Not surprisingly, he devoted just over half of the questions to issues related to the law in Paul. He subdivided the treatment of the law in Paul into three sets of questions relating to a) the New Perspective, b) the role of the law in the Christian life, and c) justification.

In the space allowed here, one cannot summarize or interact with each of Schreiner's forty questions and responses. However, several sections treat matters so significant for one's view of "the Christian and Biblical Law" that they deserve special mention.

Question 12 relates to the purpose of the law. Schreiner argues that the law was given to provoke transgression and expose human sinfulness so that sinners would despair of any hope of earning God's favor through personal obedience. The law demonstrates "that salvation is available only through faith in Christ" (83).

Question 14 queries whether Paul distinguished between the moral, ceremonial, and civil law. Schreiner begins by citing the *Westminster Confession of Faith's* discussion on the matter. The confession claims that ceremonial laws and judicial laws are abrogated under the New Testament, but that "the moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof." Schreiner counters that although the distinction is partially true, "it does not sufficiently capture Paul's stance toward the law" (89-90). He adds, "To say that the 'moral' elements of the law continue to be authoritative blunts the truth that the entire Mosaic covenant is no longer in force for believers" (90). The law still has an important message for the church today because it fulfills a revelatory and pedagogical function. The moral norms of the law express the character of God and still express God's will for believers since they are

repeated as moral norms in the New Testament.

Question 15 treats the "third use" of the law in which the law provides moral guidance and instruction to believers. Calvin and the *Westminster Confession* affirm this third use, but Luther firmly rejected it. Although he admitted that one should not overestimate the difference between Calvin and Luther, Schreiner concludes that "Luther is closer to the truth on this matter than Calvin, for he sees more clearly that the Old Testament law is not normative for believers, and that believers are no longer under the Mosaic covenant" (99). Nevertheless, Schreiner affirms that the Old Testament offers instruction for believers today and fulfills a vital role in Christian ethics.

On Question 16, "What is the 'Law of Christ,'" Schreiner argues persuasively that the law of Christ is the principle of Christ-like love. Such love constitutes the primary moral norm of the believer. The response to Question 17, "Is the Law Fulfilled Through Love?" shows that this love serves as a broad moral principle from which more specific norms issue. Adultery, murder, theft, and covetousness are contrary to the law of love. Thus Christ-like sacrificial love prevents freedom from the law from degenerating into libertinism.

Finally, Question 40, "What Role Does the Law Have In Preaching," seeks to understand how pastors should handle the law in proclamation. The author urges pastors to consider carefully the placement of any text in the movement of redemptive history. Pastors cannot simply draw a commandment from the Old Testament and preach it as binding on believers now without justification from the whole canon of scripture. Furthermore, pastors should avoid preaching moral lessons that turn the gospel in "a self-help program so that radical forgiveness of sins is replaced by ethics, as if our goodness qualifies us to obtain eternal life." Pastors avoid this by recognizing that the moral norms of the law have a convicting function that drives sinners to Christ. Finally, elements of the law that are utilized in moral exhortations in the New Testament should be used to call believers

to personal obedience as well. Schreiner notes, “Certainly the apostle Paul, whose letters are filled with moral exhortations, believed that such exhortations are helpful in one’s spiritual life and can drive believers to trust in the power of the Spirit and to live in a way that is pleasing to God” (229).

The relationship of the believer to biblical law is one of the most complex issues of biblical theology. Nearly three centuries ago, Jonathan Edwards noted that no topic received such careful study and generated such sharp disagreement among faithful divines as the “precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ.” His observation is as true now as then.

Schreiner has carefully navigated this complex issue, avoiding both the Scylla of legalism and the Charybdis of antinomianism. Schreiner’s years of study have taken him from a traditional Reformed view of the law to what one might classify as a modified-Lutheran view. The book reveals his mature reflections and most recent opinions on the topic, sometimes qualifying or even correcting views expressed in earlier works. Schreiner’s work is marked by the scholarly acumen, brevity and clarity, and pastoral concern that one seeks in a work of this nature. This is likely the single best introduction to this difficult issue for church members, students, and pastors.

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*Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction.* By Jonathan T. Pennington. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012, 268 pp., \$24.99 paper.

Intended as a companion to more traditional introductory texts on the Gospels, *Reading the Gospels Wisely* focuses on the nature and necessity of the Gospels within scripture and provides

theoretical and practical guidance for how to read them well as disciples of Christ. Jonathan Pennington identifies among evangelicals a neglect of the Gospels within local church life in favor of the Pauline epistles and propositional doctrine, a neglect he aims to counteract by “ignit[ing] a flame of interest in studying and preaching from the Gospels and reading them well as Holy scripture” (38). Seeking to instruct his readers in how to read the Gospels wisely, Pennington divides the book into three parts, organized around the metaphor of a wise builder drawn from Jesus’ parable in Matthew 7:24-27. The wise reader first prepares a good foundation, addressing presuppositional issues such as genre, proper hermeneutics, and the relationship between history and theology. The wise reader then builds the house through wise reading, for which Pennington supplies an eight-step narrative model to assist the reader in analyzing and interpreting the Gospels. Finally, the wise reader lives in the four-roomed Gospel house by proclaiming and applying their message.

Among the contributions the book makes is a helpful discussion of the Gospels’ genre, including a well-crafted definition which provides the reader with proper genre expectations. In particular, the definition highlights the “aretological” or virtue-forming purpose of the Gospels as instruments of transforming disciples as they emulate Christ (35). Pennington also gives a cogent overview of the debate within biblical studies concerning the relationship between history and theology. He comes to a balanced conclusion, on the one hand upholding the importance of historical studies for their apologetic value and their ability to provide a “thick” understanding of the historical context of scripture’s composition. On the other hand, he recognizes the full legitimacy of a theological reading of the Bible which presupposes its status as credible historical testimony, apart from any historical-critical tests of verifiability. In balancing these two concerns, Pennington recognizes both the necessity of efforts to harmonize the Gospels along with embracing the diversity and individual

integrity of each canonical Gospel.

In discussing the four Gospels' status as "testimony," Pennington astutely identifies the epistemic root of the debate over the relationship between history and theology. The question is not fundamentally a choice between doing history or theology, but a question of what is "the true nature of (historical and other) knowledge and how we apprehend it" (101). Following Richard Bauckham, Pennington argues that knowledge is received "through evaluating and trusting testimony" (101). Understanding the Gospels as testimony therefore provides a category which maintains for the Gospels a dual identity as both history and theology, a genre which is "simultaneously making theological and historical claims" (104). Since the Gospels are making theological claims, the wise reader must approach them with an attitudinal posture in keeping with those claims. Pennington rightly contends for the high importance of a reader's posture, even while promoting a "beautiful balance" between the reader's exegetical skill and heart attitude (141). But within this balance, Pennington claims that "the priority is posture" (138). One question is whether this claim of priority best represents Paul's attitude in Philippians 1:14-18, where he seems to give some measure of priority to the accurate proclamation of the gospel over the proper motivations for proclaiming it. Nonetheless, Pennington's larger point is a crucial one—the wise reader is not a mere technician who lords it over the text but a humble believer who sits under the text.

When discussing proper interpretive presuppositions for reading the Gospels wisely, Pennington argues that the reader must consider three avenues: the history behind the text, what is written in the text, and aspects of the reader's response in front of the text, including both the history of interpretation and facets of meaning which go beyond human authorial intent. An area for further clarification is Pennington's use of "authorial intent." He uses the phrase to refer to both what was in the mind of the author at the time of composition and what the author actually explicitly stated in the text, without always making a clear distinction between

these two aspects of authorial intent. Pennington distinguishes them when he says, "not to say that we can recover the psychological intentions an author may have had, but we can describe what an author *did* say by using certain words in a certain way" (126). But at other times Pennington seems to equate "authorial intent" with the author's unexpressed intentions. Perhaps a helpful way to maintain this necessary distinction would be to differentiate between "author-intended meaning" and "author-encoded meaning." Another aspect of Pennington's use of authorial intent that invites debate is his assigning of biblical theology, figural (typological) readings, and intertextuality solely to the category "in front of" the text, beyond human authorial intent. But an argument can be made that at least some aspects of these three are properly in the realm of human authorial intent.

Like his use of "authorial intent," Pennington's use of "textual meaning" could use further clarification. On the one hand, he recognizes that making a distinction between textual meaning and significance (or application) is "helpful conceptually and heuristically" (216). On the other hand, he rejects this distinction as "more convenient than accurate" (130, n. 21) and as "a late modern reaction to the crumbling edifice of the Enlightenment" (132). One of the reasons Pennington rejects this distinction are the insights of speech-act theory which posit that a text's propositional meaning (locution) cannot be separated from the text's "call for action, response, change of view, and commitment (illocution)"—in other words, textual meaning cannot be separated from significance (132). But speech-act theory also distinguishes between illocution and perlocution. If illocution is understood as the "author-intended significance" and perlocution is understood as the "reader-responded significance," then locution and illocution can be rightly held together as expressions of the author's intent even while making a necessary distinction between illocution and perlocution. Following this line of reasoning, a distinction between author-intended meaning/significance and reader-responded sig-

nificance is still a legitimate one to make. Pennington also seems to correlate the making of a meaning/significance distinction with a reductionistic approach to interpreting the text (132, 136). In any case, one can agree wholeheartedly with Pennington in rejecting “thin” readings of the text without also rejecting the meaning/significance distinction as a legitimate and useful concept.

In seeking to re-establish the importance of the Gospels, Pennington also is careful to uphold the “abiding canonical value of the epistles” (42) and commitment to “propositional doctrine,” (44) since both narrative and propositions are valid and necessary “maps or discourses of truth” (45). At the same time, Pennington also argues that Gospel narratives are a “more comprehensive and paradigmatic type of map,” which communicate truth “most comprehensively and transformatively” and “most powerful[ly]” (46). According to Pennington, “story, even more than propositions, communicates the most foundational kind of truth: worldview” (48). But even while agreeing with Pennington concerning the unique power of stories and the importance of the Gospels, one may also wonder whether he overstates his case. Pennington is right to recognize the virtues of the Gospels and some of the limitations of the Epistles, but the full picture should also recognize the virtues of the Epistles and the limitations of the Gospels. So when Pennington argues that the Gospels on their own “provide a well-rounded picture of the Christian faith” (248), even though in their narrative setting the Spirit was not yet poured out, New Testament church life had yet to begin, and the mission to the Gentiles was still future, Pennington seems to claim too much. But even if at times he seems to overstate his case or require further clarification, Pennington has presented an eloquent and persuasive case for the Gospels to reclaim a central place in the life of the church.

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*Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically.* By Gordon J. Wenham. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012, xvi + 233pp., \$22.99.

Gordon J. Wenham, tutor in Old Testament at Trinity College, Bristol, and professor emeritus of Old Testament at the University of Gloucestershire, has written numerous works on the Pentateuch, as well as a related work on the ethical reading of narrative. The book currently under review, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically*, is the first of two monographs he has produced on the Psalter. His most recent work is entitled *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms* (Crossway, 2013). According to Wenham, *Psalms as Torah* is a “sequel to the earlier volume,” *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically* (Baker Academic, 2000). He states that, like the earlier work, *Psalms as Torah* has arisen because the “failure to recognize the influence of the Psalms on the ethics of both Jews and Christians” is another area neglected by scholars (xi).

In chapter one, Wenham examines the use of the Psalms in the worship of the church and the synagogue throughout the centuries. Specifically, Wenham examines what the “canonical texts say about the use of the Psalms in Old Testament times” as well as “the use of the Psalms in subsequent eras” (11). He first suggests that the Psalms were sung during the offering of sacrifices and battle. Secondly, in the second temple and synagogue there were also specified Psalms that were sung daily, on the Sabbath, and during festivals. Finally, he argues that in the early church the Psalter was used for public and private prayer as well as for worship.

In his second chapter, Wenham considers the various views of the modern era on the origin of each specific Psalm, as well as the collection of the Psalms into the Psalter. However, he makes it clear that it is not his intention to “enter into the main debates but simply to highlight some of the implications of different approaches for the interpretation of the ethics of the Psalms” (27). Wenham mentions three main views: (1) the Talmud’s view,



in which no Psalms were written after David's death, and all Psalms were written by David or the ten elders; (2) the Reformers' view, which accepts the reliability of the titles, and in which the Psalter was created after the time of David, possibly by Ezra; (3) the modern view, which questions traditional authorship and the reliability of the titles, and which has established a wide scholarly consensus that the bulk of the Psalms were composed after the exile and edited in the Maccabean period for use in Israel's worship (28–32). Moreover, he discusses canonical criticism, defining it as that which "focuses on the editing process of the Psalter and the interpretation of the final form of the text" (32). The point Wenham makes is that the main distinction between canonical criticism and modern form criticism is that the former attempts to interpret the Psalter as a unified book, whereas the latter insists that each Psalm must be interpreted as a self-contained unit, since Psalms is not a unified book.

In chapter three, Wenham seeks to refine the canonical critics' approach by arguing that the Psalms "were intended to be memorized, with a view to being publicly recited for the purpose of inculcating the nation's values" (46). He defends his thesis by interacting with and building upon the work of David Carr and Paul Griffiths, who called for a "reexamination of the way sacred texts were viewed and used in antiquity, before the advent of printing" (41). He acknowledges that the literacy rate in the ancient world is one major difficulty in applying this thesis to the general populace. However, he aptly responds to this question by drawing attention to the importance of oral learning in the ancient world (46–49). Further, he points to three features of the Psalms that aid in memorization: poetic form, musical accompaniment, and thematic macrostructures (49–52). Wenham concludes by stating that the impact of memorization is that one "becomes textualized; that is, he embodies the work that he has committed to memory" (53).

In the fourth chapter, Wenham considers how

prayer affects a worshipper's ethics. He argues that what makes the claim of prayer on the ethics of the worshiper unique from other ethical discourse is not simply memorization, for other texts were likely memorized. Rather, it is their use in worship as hymns and prayers, since by praying the Psalms one is actively committing oneself to its values and standards (57–58, 75–77). In other words, the Psalms actively commit the worshiper to this ethic by encouraging him to embrace the standards of life set forth in the Psalms and by obligating the worshiper to describe the actions he will embrace and avoid (65). Thus, when one prays, it is like making a vow or an oath (65). He defends this by applying reader-response criticism and speech act theories to numerous texts. Wenham concludes by stating that his objective for this chapter is simply "to draw out some of the similarities between taking an oath, making a vow, confessing faith, and praying the Psalms" (75–76).

In chapter five, Wenham examines the concept of the law in the Psalms, with the intention to "look at what the Psalms have to say about the law and, in particular, their attitude toward the law as an idea and as an institution" (78). He argues that the law holds a primary place in the Psalter, that the concept of law is the totality of God's revelation, and that the psalmists were not "legalists." He seeks to accomplish this by examining the importance of the law in the Psalter as a whole and then examining the psalmists' attitude toward the law in two Psalms in which the law is the focus, Psalm 119 and 19. Wenham's final conclusion concerning the concept of the law in the Psalter, therefore, is that it is the whole of God's revelation and the attitude of the psalmist toward the law is an acknowledgement of the psalmist's love for God's law in conjunction with his recognition of his inability to fulfill it (95).

In the sixth chapter of the book, Wenham seeks to qualify his assertion made in the previous chapter that the law is the whole of God's revelation. He supports this with two arguments: (1) The ethic taught by the Psalter is dependent upon the revela-

tion at Sinai and the Mosaic sermons about the law in Deuteronomy (he maintains that the giving of the law is omitted because Zion is the new Sinai in Psalms and the event was presupposed); and (2) the psalmists use the Pentateuchal narratives for ethical instruction by affirming the ultimate destruction of the wicked and the final vindication of the just (97-110).

In chapter seven, Wenham argues that the Psalms are heavily dependent upon the Pentateuch and that they teach two lessons. The first lesson is the national tendency to sin and the disasters that ensue. Two Psalms with which he interacts to support this are Psalm 14 and 53, arguing that they are “a theological reflection on the three stories of universal judgment in the book of Genesis: the flood, the tower of Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah” (121). The second lesson is the long-suffering mercy of God. Wenham cites a thematic shift between books three and four, from a theme of despair to an assurance of God’s reign and steadfast love despite their sin. Therefore, he examines various Psalms from the Pentateuch and demonstrates how they either echo narratives concerning rebellion against God and the ensuing judgment or speak of God’s *hesed* (120–137).

In the eighth chapter, Wenham claims that the psalmists compare the wicked to the righteous in order to discourage the imitation of the vices of the wicked and encourage the replication of the virtues of the righteous. He maintains this based on how the descriptions, conduct, and outcome of these two groups incline the worshippers to embrace the virtues of the righteous and reject the vices of the wicked.

In chapter nine, Wenham addresses the topic of laments or imprecatory Psalms, the most common type of Psalm, which is regularly found on the lips of the righteous. The reason he addresses this topic is because this type of Psalm receives very harsh criticism from modern readers because of the “savage” way it prays for the destruction of the psalmists’ enemies (167). Wenham argues that these Psalms are not merely curses parad-

ing as prayers but expressions of the psalmists’ conviction that since God is sovereign and just, he cares about the injustice suffered by the poor and downtrodden. Wenham then examines three of the harshest imprecatory Psalms (Pss. 35, 69, 109), and he offers three points of justification: The psalmist is (1) praying out of a concern for the vindication of the power and character of God; (2) he asks only that God judge in accordance with the talionic principle; and (3) he leaves all vindication to God (170–71).

In the tenth chapter, Wenham considers the influence of the Psalms on ethical teachings found within the New Testament. He seeks to demonstrate the influence of the Psalter in shaping the ethical framework of the New Testament writers by providing an examination of select passages from Romans, Hebrews, and Revelation. For instance, in Romans he shows that Paul develops at least three ethical issues from the Psalter: (1) his teaching on the universal reign of sin in Romans 1–3 (Pss. 71; 98; 14/53, 62); (2) his teaching on suffering in Romans 8 (Pss. 118:6; 44:22); and (3) his teaching on the issue of retaliation in Romans 12 from Ps. 94:1 (189–94). Wenham concludes the chapter by stating that while this study is not exhaustive, it is sufficient to support his thesis (202).

Wenham’s book *Psalms as Torah* is a helpful addition to the study of the Psalter, and it adds to the discussion in a unique and insightful manner. Specifically, Wenham offers the reader a compelling, well-developed, and well-researched argument that the Psalms were a significant means by which ethical instruction was given in Judaism as well as the early church. Moreover, it is a helpful example of how the New Testament authors integrated the Psalms into their writings, thus opening new avenues for the study of the Psalter from both an Old Testament and New Testament perspective.

While there are many other areas of Wenham’s work that are worthy of commendation, I have two minor critiques. The first critique concerns his statement made in the second chapter, “It probably is not of great moment whether one adopts

a form-critical or a canonical approach, for both agree that throughout their usage the Psalms have been a vehicle of prayer both public and private” (40). This statement seems rather surprising, since in the next chapter Wenham appeals to recent work in canonical readings as a point of support for his thesis. These two methods of interpreting the Psalter approach it in vastly different ways.

The second critique concerns Wenham’s claim that singing the Psalms is the most powerful instructor, because unlike listening to stories, commands, or wisdom sayings which is passive, singing the Psalms is active, involving the whole person and necessitating commitment to what is being said or sung if it is to be done honestly (55). While Wenham’s stress on the active nature of singing the Psalms is helpful and a much needed emphasis, the question that must be asked is, does this preclude active learning from other genres such as the reading of narratives at religious festivals? That is, in light of the increasing discussion on performance criticism (see David Rhoads, “Biblical Theology Bulletin” Vol. 36, Part I, II)—an interpretive method which recognizes the oral culture of the biblical world, and a point Wenham also recognizes in chapter three—his conclusions on the inactive nature of listening may need to be more nuanced.

Nonetheless, despite these small critiques, *Psalms as Torah* is a well-crafted work that blazes a new trail in the study of the Psalter. Further, Wenham masterfully composes this monograph in such a way that it may benefit both the specialist and non-specialist. Finally, in comparison to other similar works on the Psalter, Wenham’s work is unique in that he is the first to specifically examine how the Psalms were used to inculcate the ethics of both Jews and Christians.

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*Reading the Christian Spiritual Classics: A Guide for Evangelicals*. Ed. by Jamin Goggin and Kyle Strobel. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013, 332 pp., \$24.00.

Evangelicals seem more interested than ever in reading spiritual classics, those long-standing Christian writings that have enjoyed broad and enduring appeal, yet evangelical readers seem to be of two minds with regard to the classics. Some readers are concerned with affording non-biblical works too high a place in the Christian life, while other readers seem never to have met a “classic” they didn’t like (10). The contributors to this volume hope to help both groups by “developing a robust hermeneutic grounded in markedly evangelical spiritual and theological commitments” (11). The book is divided into four parts that seek to answer such questions as why (Part 1) and how (Part 2) evangelicals ought to read the classics, what constitutes a classic (Part 3), and who wrote many of these works (Part 4).

The book’s contributors include James Houston, Evan Howard, Timothy George, and Tom Schwanda. About half of the contributors have some affiliation with Biola University or its Talbot School of Theology, either as faculty (Betsy Barber, John Coe, Greg Peters, Steve Porter, and Fred Sanders) or alumni (Jamin Goggin and Kyle Strobel).

Rather than summarize each chapter, the following review will interact with some of the book’s high points (there are many) as well as some of its not-so-high points. The first chapter provides the foundation for the rest of the book, so this chapter will receive significant attention.

Steve Porter’s introductory essay on why evangelicals should read the spiritual classics offers an interesting definition of a Christian classic as a “writing that (1) is clearly attributable to a reborn follower of Jesus, (2) focuses on a biblical understanding of sanctification, and (3) a multitude of voices across Church history attest to its value for Christian living” (16). I found his definition commendable in principle but difficult in practice. Who



arbitrates an author's spiritual standing and who defines a "biblical" understanding of sanctification? Based on some of the classics recommended by Porter's fellow contributors, they found it difficult to follow these two guidelines as well.

Porter offers three theological rationales for reading the classics. First, he proposes a pneumatological rationale: since the Spirit applies and illumines "God's truth to a receptive heart," and since the Spirit utilizes a variety of "extrabiblical means to prepare the soil and even implant the meaning" of God's presence and word, "then it is evident that one fitting means would be the writings of other Christ followers regarding a biblical understanding of the way of holiness" (21-23). Next, Porter suggests an incarnational rationale drawn from Paul's imitation references in 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, Philippians 3:17 and 4:9, as well as 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9. Porter argues that if the early church could imitate Paul, Timothy, or other unspecified believers (cf. Philippians 3:17), then later Christians could serve as similar exemplars (25). Finally, he argues for an ecclesiological rationale for reading Christian classics: since the body of Christ is essential in spiritual formation, and since the Spirit uses other believers for our sanctification, then reading the spiritual classics could be a helpful, and sometimes the only effective way, "to embed ourselves in a properly functioning church body" (29). Porter concludes that reading the classics is more than "permissible"—rather Christians "ought" to read spiritual literature (19, 30).

Porter's arguments are generally sound, but don't necessitate his conclusion. Can the Spirit utilize spiritual classics to prepare one's heart for significant spiritual changes? If we are to believe Augustine's testimony about the role which Athanasius's *Life of Antony* played in his conversion, or to listen to late eighteenth-century Baptist missionaries who had read Edwards's *Diary of David Brainerd*, then we must agree that such works can indeed be used by God in shaping the heart. The Spirit's normal work of illumination, however, seems biblically to be tied to the mystery and

wisdom of the Gospel (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-13). While devotional classics may be a useful means, it seems a stretch to call them a necessary means.

Porter's second argument is his strongest, for "observing good theology lived out in concrete situations" is indeed a clearly articulated New Testament principle. Yet incarnation and ecclesiology are more closely linked than Porter recognizes. Porter's ecclesiological rationale begins on a solid premise, namely that true, biblical sanctification cannot occur in isolation, but rather in body life (27). Furthermore, he believes that "written materials mediate the ministry of the body of Christ" (28). He then envisions a scenario in which a Christian's membership in a deficient congregation might lead one to turn to the classics "to embed ourselves in a properly functioning church body" (29). This conclusion is problematic. First, this cannot constitute a New Testament church in any sense. Second, such an arrangement would be a one-way venture: I might learn great truths from reading the classics, but I can never fellowship with a book, which I can put safely away on my shelf when I find its demands too convicting or its insights too penetrating, so that the author cannot hold me accountable for walking consistently anymore than I can require authors to reconsider their doctrine. Then, what is to keep me from fashioning a church body in my own image and likeness when I control its membership? One of the beauties of genuine biblical ecclesiology is the tangible and mutual interactivity of fellowship, community, and discipline with living people. All of the biblical "one another" passages envision relationships with living people. Reading good books may inform one's ecclesiology but cannot replace the brothers and sisters whom the scriptures command us to love, serve, and forbear. Fellow contributor John Coe addresses this last criticism helpfully in his "Temptations in Reading Spiritual Classics." Coe warns against allowing reading spiritual classics to replace "the risk and messiness of love and community" (42).

Evan Howard's survey of various "Schools of Christian Spirituality" provides a useful sum-

mary of historical spirituality and is among the best chapters in the book. Howard strikes a good balance of summarizing historical emphases and pointing readers to important primary and secondary sources. His section summarizing Reformed and Puritan spirituality (72–73) would be helped by more extensive secondary sources such as Kavic and Gleason’s *The Devoted Live* or Charles Hambrick-Stowe’s *Practice of Piety*. Other high points include Greg Peters’s chapter on “Spiritual Theology,” James Houston on “Engaging Classic Literature,” James Payton’s guide to “Reading Orthodox Spirituality,” and Gerald Sittser’s exploration on the spiritual classics of “The Desert Fathers.” I’ll admit that I felt most at home when reading Tom Schwanda’s chapter on reading classics from the Puritan and Pietistic (both German and Dutch) traditions. Peters, Payton, George, and Sittser’s chapters were excellent models of clear writing, solid scholarship, and pastoral sensitivity. Peters raised one of the most important questions of all of the contributors: When reading a spiritual classic, what does the author view as the goal of the Christian life (80)? This question is critical for evangelicals to ask when reading any spiritual classic, especially several of the classics recommended by Barber and Demarest.

Bruce Demarest is a fine evangelical theologian who has been very open about the place which Catholic spiritual writings have played in his own path of discipleship. Demarest rightly notes two problems many evangelicals have with Catholic spiritual works, some rejecting them outright, thus missing occasional insights, and others accepting them uncritically and embracing “unbiblical assertions” (128–29). To be sure, he devotes considerable space in his chapter to warning evangelicals about many of these theological problems—more than twice as many pages as he gives to describing the spiritual benefits of Catholic classics. He concludes that “as [evangelicals] read Catholic spirituality we are likely to find greater agreement spiritually than theologically” (129). Yet theology and spirituality are inseparable; what one believes

about God, justification, revelation, or the Eucharist will have practical implications for piety. I wish Demarest would have made this link clear. For example, Demarest commends Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* as a model of spiritual direction. Later, Demarest warns readers to be wary of writers that confused the grounds of justification and that promoted severe asceticism, but fails to mention that Ignatius viewed his *Exercises* as meritorious and commended self-flagellation and other self-tortures to atone for one’s sin.

I profited from Betsy Barber’s chapter on the classics and soul care and found her insights on how the classics address suffering very thoughtful (56). I appreciated her concept of utilizing developmentally-keyed classics in discipleship (50–52), a theme shared by other contributors. Barber acknowledges the difference between historic Protestant and more mystical conceptions of sanctification (53), but many of the authors she suggests as helpful guides (Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, Benedict of Nursia, and Francis of Assisi) blurred distinctions between sanctification and justification. I don’t think that Barber intends to call evangelicals to follow the mystical three-fold pattern so much as to recognize that Christians are often at different places of maturity, but I do question how helpful it is to direct evangelicals to authors whose writings seriously distort the gospel and biblical concepts of holiness.

*Reading the Christian Spiritual Classics* is intended to help evangelicals become informed and wise readers of a large and varied body of spiritual literature and I think the book accomplishes this goal. Although I can’t recommend every “classic” suggested, I believe this collection of essays will serve as an important introduction for many years to come.

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*Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem.* By Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013, 128 pp., \$11.99 paper.

Chronic busyness is a significant problem for an increasing number of Christians, and Kevin DeYoung has written “a mercifully short book” that addresses “the frenetic pace” of life which consumes the lives of many and “poses a serious threat to our physical, social, and even spiritual well-being.” DeYoung believes that busyness has become an increasingly serious problem in the West in part because of the expanded opportunities and complexities of modern life (23-25). In his words, “because we *can* do so much, we *do* do so much” (24). While the busyness of modern life takes its mental and physical toll on us, DeYoung encourages readers to consider the great spiritual dangers which result from busyness and “put our souls at risk” (26). Because busyness is something that can “ruin our joy,” “rob our hearts,” and “cover up the rot in our souls” (26-32), DeYoung likens it to sin, in terms of its destructive effects, and counsels that we must “kill it [busyness], or it will be killing you” (28).

In his analysis of busyness, DeYoung rightly states that much of modern busyness is self-inflicted. While the world draws us toward certain lifestyles and a certain pace, the problem is not so much with modern culture as it is a problem of our own hearts. DeYoung diagnoses seven specific problems that lie at the root of self-inflicted busyness, and this material makes up the bulk of the book. First, DeYoung points to the many manifestations of pride that drive people into a lifestyle of busyness, including people-pleasing, perfectionism, and self-promotion (33-41). We often make decisions that are self-serving, and we resist saying no to others because of pride. Such prideful choices are often at the root of self-inflicted busyness. Second, DeYoung cites his own experience of busyness as at times being rooted in an overly sensitive conscience and a misplaced desire to please God by taking on more work and service

than we are able to bear (43-51). DeYoung notes that we must understand our own individual calling and not succumb to any form of Messiah-complex which drives us to do more than we are able. Third, DeYoung notes that much busyness comes from failing to have clear priorities for one’s life and the self-discipline to do only what one should be doing (53-64). This chapter highlights the need for ruthless self-discipline in the management of one’s life. Fourth, DeYoung criticizes what he calls “kindergarchy,” or the overly anxious approach of hyper-parenting which drives some parents to put almost obsessive demands upon themselves and what they are able to do for their children (65-75). Fifth, DeYoung insightfully addresses the strangling effects of internet over-use and addiction, the concomitant sloth (or “acedia”) that accompanies it, and the constant noise and distractedness that it brings to our hearts, our relationships, and our minds (79-85). DeYoung gives wise counsel in his discussion of technology, such as: “cultivate a healthy suspicion toward technology and ‘progress,’” “be more thoughtful and understanding in your connectedness with others,” “deliberately use ‘old’ technology,” “make boundaries,” and “bring our Christian theology to bear on these dangers of the digital age” (85-88). Sixth, DeYoung highlights the need for rest and the faith that such rest presupposes (101-108). Finally, DeYoung points to the need to distinguish between the good busyness that we are called to embrace and endure as a part of our submission to Christ, and the self-inflicted busyness that we are called to fight and resist (101-108).

What solution is there to the pervasive and soul-killing threat of self-made busyness? DeYoung closes *Crazy Busy* by arguing that there is one thing that individuals must prioritize if they are to appropriately deal with busyness in their lives, and that is to “spend time everyday in the Word of God and prayer” (113). Drawing from the story of Mary and Martha, DeYoung states that “we must make learning from him [Christ] and taking time to be with him a priority” and that “being with Jesus is

the only thing strong enough to pull us away from busyness” (113, 117). The answer to the problem of busyness is Jesus and in daily saying yes to him, disciplining the rhythm of one’s life around the daily disciplines of the Bible and prayer.

By addressing the problem of self-inflicted busyness in a short, concise, and entertaining way, DeYoung has provided the Church with a very helpful tool for self-reflection and group discussion. DeYoung rightly sees the biblical connection between busyness and Christ’s teaching on the “thorns” in the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-20), that is, covetousness, the love of money. Other root causes of self-inflicted busyness such as lust, greed, and heart-idolatry receive less attention. DeYoung’s chapters on “kindergarchy” rightly criticize neurotic and obsessive hyper-parenting, child-centrism, and parental determinism, but some of his statements seem to minimize the importance of wise, diligent, and intentional parenting. Godly parenting calls for a particular kind of sanctified busyness (which DeYoung certainly agrees with), and this point should not be lost in any criticism of hyper-parenting. DeYoung’s section on “the screen” is especially insightful and practical, outlining the kind of specific practical counsel that pastors need to give their people regarding the use and misuse of technology and social media.

If evangelical spirituality is going to be cultivated in our churches, the issues that DeYoung addresses in this book are the kinds of issues that need to be addressed head-on. Wise pastors must give specific pastoral counsel and advice to address the specific spiritual pitfalls of our day, self-imposed busyness being one of them. For those wanting to live spiritually healthy and godly lives in a busy world and to help others to do the same, this book is a real gift and deserves a wide reading.

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*Theology of the Reformers*. Revised Edition. By Timothy George. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013, 394 pp., \$29.99.

Timothy George, dean of the Beeson Divinity School and professor of Church History and Doctrine, first published the *Theology of the Reformers* in 1988. Since that time it has maintained a reputation as an excellent introduction to the history and theology of the reformers. This twenty-fifth anniversary edition provides an opportunity for George’s work to be highlighted, expanded, and re-introduced to current students of theology. In this revised edition, George includes a new chapter on the life and theology of William Tyndale, the great English reformer. The inclusion of Tyndale expands the breadth of George’s work to now include representatives of the magisterial Reformation, the Anabaptist movement, and the English Reformation.

George sets each reformer within his historical context and considers the issues to which each responds. The Reformation in some ways was a response to late medieval Europeans’ deep anxieties, which included, George writes, guilt, fear of death, and loss of meaning. George explains the critical trends of the late medieval era that proved to be fertile ground for the Reformation: conciliarism, the ministries of Wyclif and Hus, the Waldensian movement, and above all, the rise of humanism. George argues that “humanism, like mysticism, was part of the scaffolding that enabled the reformers to question certain assumptions of the received tradition but which in itself was not sufficient to provide an enduring response to the haunting questions of the age” (48).

With clarity and grace George insightfully explains the life and thought of the three main magisterial reformers: Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. Luther is the obvious starting point when discussing the Reformation. His posting of the *Ninety-five Theses* set off a firestorm of responses and launched Luther to the forefront of the movement that became the Protestant Reformation. Although

Luther initiated a reform movement that produced vast consequences, what drove Luther was not a desire to lead this movement but rather a desire to save his soul and a commitment to the supremacy of the word of God. George wrote that Luther “listened to the Word because it was his job to do so and because he had come to believe his soul’s salvation depended upon it” (55). George explains well Luther’s emphasis on the gracious mercy of Christ and his absolute devotion to the scriptures.

George explains clearly Zwingli’s somewhat different vision for reforming the church. While Zwingli and Luther had much in common and were in most respects allies during the Reformation, their strong disagreement concerning the Lord’s Supper kept them divided. What they held in common above all else was devotion to the sole authority of the scriptures. But as George points out, they shared also the courage to “do something bold for God’s sake.”

While Luther and Zwingli were the first major proponents of the Reformation, Calvin extended its reach and lasting impact. George writes that “Calvin’s great achievement was to take the classic insights of the Reformation and give them a clear, systematic exposition, which neither Luther nor Zwingli ever did” (174). Because of his influence in giving full shape and powerful expression to Reformation thought, Calvin is often the figure who elicits the most dramatic responses of either praise or denigration. Regardless of one’s evaluation of Calvin’s theology, Calvin’s courageous commitment to faithful service of the Word of God by seeking to point men to its revelation of Jesus Christ and to their obligation to submit to his mercy and rule, was extraordinary.

George explains the life and thought of Menno Simons as the representative of the Anabaptist movement. Anabaptists were a diverse lot, but Simons stood at the forefront of the continuing tradition. The Anabaptist movement was the most important part of what is now called the Radical Reformation. It took a decidedly different approach to the church, insisting that the church

was independent of the authority of the magistrate. Theologically Simons disagreed with the magisterial Reformers on a number of other important issues, most visibly on baptism. Anabaptists experienced violent persecution and extraordinary suffering. Simons was not as brilliant a theologian Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, but he was no less faithful as a servant of the scriptures.

Finally, this revised edition includes a most welcome addition, a chapter on William Tyndale as a representative of the English Reformation. Tyndale’s life ended violently. His devotion to the sole authority of the scripture and to its divine power to save and sanctify sinners, led him to seek to provide access to the Bible for the common people. He translated the Bible into English and published it without the authorization of the king. English authorities searched out copies of Tyndale’s translation to destroy them, and they sought him with the same end in mind. They finally succeeded. Tyndale suffered martyrdom but helped establish the Reformation in England.

Each of these reformers recognized their duty under God to extend his kingdom. They differed substantially on some matters. What made them great was their common conviction that the Bible alone was God’s word, and that he called them to sacrifice all things for the sake and service of Jesus, who died for them. This was the foundational element of the “theology of the Reformers,” for it alone could sustain the Bible’s central place. George summarized their vision of a true Christianity, which was this, that “the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the only foundation, the only compelling and exclusive criterion, for Christian life and Christian theology” (383).

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