

Book Reviews

Editor's Note: In the previous issue of *SBJT* 19.3 (2015), two corrections need to be made regarding book reviewers. Simon Gathercole, *Defending Substitution*, was reviewed by Miguel Echevarria, Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile, and R. Larry Overstreet, *Persuasive Preaching*, was reviewed by Jason Mackey, Adjunct Professor of New Testament and Preaching, Boyce College.

The God of This Age: Satan in the Churches and Letters of the Apostle Paul. By Derek R. Brown. WUNT 2.409. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015. 243 pp., \$105.00 Paperback.

It might be reasonable to assume, while reading about evil powers and figures in the Pauline letters, that Paul does not have a particular understanding of Satan. The references are all too few, and Paul does not offer a theological explanation when referring to Satan; suggesting that Satan is not important for Pauline theology. But the author of this volume proposes a different conclusion. He cogently argues that “Paul fundamentally characterizes Satan in his letters as the apocalyptic adversary who opposes his apostolic labor” (198).

I confess that until reading this work, I had not fully considered the possibility that, in contrast to when Paul mentions evil powers and figures generically and without concrete referents, whenever Paul mentions Satan he does so with respect to Satan's specific actions against either himself or his churches. Take 2 Corinthians 4, where Satan appears as an adversary of Paul and his apostolic ministry, not just as a generic opponent of all God's people. The intriguing question that forms the main thesis of this study—how and why does the Apostle Paul refer to the figure of Satan in his letters—addresses this very notion.

In order to answer this question, the author makes clear that he is only examining ten verses (i.e., Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 4:4; 6:15; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess 2:18; 3:5) from the so-called “undisputed” Pauline letters (i.e. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians,

and Philemon). Consequently, he is not attempting to present a Pauline theology of Satan. Of the 10 passages in these letters, the author tells us that all but three explicitly use the Greek term *σατανᾶς* to refer to Satan. Of the rest, Satan is called “Beliar,” “the god of this age,” and “the tempter.”

With the scope of study in mind (Chapter 1), the author spends the next three chapters surveying what he considers to be the most relevant background information for understanding Paul’s references to Satan, such as the literary descriptions of Satan in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish writings. The author makes the case, among other things, that Satan had become a prominent figure within Jewish writings and theology coterminous with Paul’s religious milieu, and that Satan almost always functions as an opponent of God’s chosen people (not an enemy of all humanity). He highlights the fact that Satan is depicted as an active opponent, who plotted against key Jewish figures, like Moses, Job, and David, at crucial points within Israel’s history, such as the exodus. The author further explains Satan’s role within Paul’s theology by providing a detailed review of Paul’s apocalyptic thought. He maintains, “Paul, according to his apocalyptic theology, perceives his apostolic labor as having apocalyptic significance since it is opposed by the great apocalyptic adversary Satan *and* because the gospel which he announced was, at its core, a proclamation of the defeat of all apocalyptic powers” (71).

Before concluding (Chapter 7), the author spends two chapters utilizing his findings from chapters 2-4 to better evaluate Paul’s references to Satan in the verses mentioned above. The author’s points about Paul’s depiction of Satan’s responsibility for thwarting some of Paul’s efforts, like returning to his church in Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:18), Satan’s ultimate eschatological defeat (Rom 16:20), and Satan’s schemes against Paul’s apostolic labor and the Corinthian congregation as a whole, are all true and important. Moreover, the author does a good job suggesting a few rhetorical reasons why Paul references Satan in his letters: to name Satan’s activity where it had gone undetected, to inform his readers of Satan’s past opposition to his ministry, and to warn his churches of Satan’s constant schemes to take advantage of them for his own evil purposes. Taken together, the author explains, “Paul’s depiction of Satan is far more subtle and deeply rooted in his apostleship than NT scholarship typically suggests” (197).

Overall, this well-researched study—which includes an excellent orientation to the topic—provides more than just a helpful corrective to the

common perception that Paul speaks of Satan only in a generic sense, without concrete referents. It is also a timely reminder of the Apostle Paul's pivotal role in spreading the gospel at a crucial point in salvation-history and his call to establish and nurture communities of faith based on the gospel. As the author concludes, "[A]lthough Paul's notion of Satan is derived from his christologically-modified apocalyptic theology, his portrayal of Satan in his letters to his churches is thoroughly contingent upon his self-understanding as an apostle and church-planter as well as his actual experiences of Satan's opposition to his ministry. This may help account for why Paul mentions Satan within the combative Corinthian correspondence with relative frequency but rarely does so in a more cordial letter such as Philippians. In other words, Paul apparently speaks or warns of Satan's activity in his letters when he has already discerned Satan's work among his respective churches" (200).

"The God of this Age" is a grand addition to New Testament studies. Every theological library should own a copy.

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Interpreting the Prophets: Reading, Understanding and Preaching from the Worlds of the Prophets. By Aaron Chalmers. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015, xiv + 173 pp., \$20.00 paper.

When is the last time you heard a good sermon series on Ezekiel or Zephaniah? Chances are you can count on one hand the *total* messages you have heard from these books. Admittedly, the Prophetic books of the Old Testament can be daunting for preachers and teachers. The world of Israel's prophets seems wholly different from our own. While much time and geography may separate us from this world, Aaron Chalmers seeks to bridge the gap in his book *Interpreting the Prophets: Reading, Understanding and Preaching from the Worlds of the Prophets*.

Unlike other introductory works on the prophets that largely summarize the content of individual prophetic texts, Chalmers seeks to provide a "basic conceptual 'framework' for understanding these books" (1). Rather

than simply handing the fish to the expositor, Chalmers runs a clinic on a hermeneutical methodology of fishing in the deep water of the Prophets. The opening chapter asks an often neglected question: what is a prophet?

Drawing from both the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible, the author provides an accessible entry point for readers. In contrast to what he views as deficient understandings of prophetic characteristics and functions, Chalmers shows the complex nature of the prophetic office. Among other roles, they served as members of the divine council, intercessors, watchmen, and mediators of the divine word. In short, a prophet was an intermediary (32). This stands opposite the notion that the prophets functioned exclusively to predict the future, whether the messiah or the end of the world. They spoke a divine word to their contemporaries, but one with continuing significance for a later Christian audience.

Chalmers additionally discusses the move from prophet to prophetic text. Through a process of inscription, organization and re-contextualization, and final shaping, the words of the prophet were solidified for future generations. In successive stages of this process, later individuals, says Chalmers, supplemented and redacted the material “to meet the needs and questions of later times and different circumstances” (28). Chalmers acknowledges other views, however. He surveys both the traditional evangelical understanding, as well as the standard critical view, to the final shaping of prophetic books. From his discussion, Chalmers would seem to fall somewhere in between. For example, he maintains the multiple authorship of Isaiah, but dissents from a multiple authorship of Zechariah.

Chapters two through four are devoted to understanding the prophets within three distinct contexts: 1) The Historical World; 2) The Theological World; and 3) The Rhetorical World. Each of these sections concludes with potential pitfalls and a brief bibliography for further reading. The first of these sections (Chapter two) looks at the ‘world behind the text.’ Since these books originated in a setting foreign to contemporary readers, interpreters must seek to understand the situation into which the prophets delivered their messages. In essence, Chalmers seeks the original intention of those responsible for the prophetic book. To do this, he details the historical backdrop of the classical prophets from the pre-exilic period to the end of prophecy in the post-exilic period. He concludes the chapter with some guidelines for discovering the historical world of a prophetic book, directing readers to helpful secondary literature.

Chapter three turns to the theological world of the prophets. Chalmers attempts to lay out a theological framework for grappling with these books. Essentially, he highlights the Prophets' worldview, with two traditions as illustrations: 1) Sinai and the covenant with Israel and 2) Zion and the covenant with David. The key to unlock this worldview, says Chalmers, is tradition criticism. This method "essentially enquires into what an author presumes, intends and insinuates through the use of traditional language" (85).

The fourth chapter takes a look at the rhetorical world of the prophets. More than just *what* the prophets said, *how* they said it is of equal significance for interpretation. Chalmers does more than simply outline the mechanics of prophetic communication. He invites the reader to experience the emotive appeal of the prophets. First, he describes the value of discerning the rhetorical structure of a unit, providing practical advice on how readers can themselves identify the structure of a passage. Second, he discusses individual rhetorical features. Here he is interested in what makes the prophet's message uniquely compelling and persuasive.

Chapter five transitions to another relevant area for the study of the prophets, namely, apocalyptic literature. Though Chalmers notes an organic connection between prophecy and apocalyptic, he states that "there seems to be a shift in both the form and content" of the latter (120). As he understands it, apocalyptic literature generally functions to encourage its original audience in the midst of trials (cf. 128). Like the previous chapters, Chalmers offers some guidelines and potential dangers for the interpretation of apocalypticism. The guiding principle, says Chalmers, is to focus on the big picture. When an interpreter becomes obsessive with the details of an apocalyptic text they may very well miss the actual message itself. In short, when reading or preaching apocalyptic, leave your newspaper at home! We cannot forget that though this literature as Scripture continues to speak, it originated in a context far different from our own. As Chalmers concludes, "it is important to recognize that reading apocalyptic is often a sustained lesson in humility" (144).

Building upon the previous sections, the final chapter turns the corner to preaching and teaching from the prophets. Unlike the previous chapters, which focused on hearing the original message of the prophets, this chapter brings the ancient world of Israel's Prophets to the pews. Chalmers puts forward further practical advice on issues such as selecting a text to preach, and the helpful

place of analogies in a sermon. A misstep may be avoided, says Chalmers, if the preacher focuses on the ‘theology of the text,’ over against contingent issues such the ‘moral component’ of the passage. The author acknowledges that theology and morality cannot strictly be separated, but encourages the preacher to uphold what the prophet supposedly held to be primary. To get at the theology of the text, Chalmers advocates for a ‘paradigmatic approach’ to prophetic books. This approach “provides us with recurrent pictures of divine behavior and purpose in the world through which we may catch a glimpse of how God characteristically relates to his people” (151).

Before concluding with the potential dangers in preaching the Prophets, Chalmers includes a section on the New Testament’s role in a sermon on a prophetic passage. After all, “[we] live on the other side of the cross, and this reality must shape the way we read and preach from these texts” (154). Apart from some resources on biblical theology, readers may be disappointed, however, with the lack of depth in the New Testament methodology section.

This summary hopefully captures the great usefulness of this monograph. With each chapter, Chalmers brings the ancient world of the Prophets into the hands of the modern interpreter. The manageable length of the work, frequent summaries, and bibliographies at the conclusion of each chapter make this book accessible to those with even a basic understanding of the Old Testament. But for more serious students of Scripture, namely preachers and teachers, this work affords a reproducible methodology for interpreting a passage in the prophetic corpus.

A point worthy of particular mention is the unique balance Chalmers strikes between an introductory level work and more advanced content. The book is readable, demonstrating Chalmers’ mastery of the field. As such, he includes frequent text-boxes allow readers to go deeper into select topics, often pointing to sources for more detailed study. Yet even in these more advanced sections, Chalmers maintains his consistent accessible style. Numerous pictures and illustrations aid visualizations of many features of the ancient world.

With all of my commendations, there are a couple of items that readers may find unsatisfactory. First, although Chalmers presents both sides of the evangelical/critical approaches to issues Prophetic Literature, readers will detect that he tends to adopt a more critical approach. One example, as stated above, surfaces with his view of the authorship of Isaiah. The significance of this issue is relevant as Chalmers calls for interpretation in the

historical context of the original author. If the book of Isaiah is the product of three separate chronological periods, would it not affect how one would approach preaching the latter sections of the book? Some would also view this as running counter to New Testament attributions of passages from Deutero-Isaiah to the prophet himself (e.g. John 12:38).

A second issue pertinent to an evangelical readership that may be noted is Chalmers approach to preaching. For those committed to an expository ministry in particular, the final chapter of the book may leave much to be desired. For instance, Chalmers cautions against preaching the entirety of a prophetic book, since there is frequent repetition and recurring themes. But the goal of expository preaching is not simply to teach a congregation hermeneutics, but to teach the whole counsel of God in order to present everyone blameless in Christ. This is not “spoon-feeding” a congregation, as Chalmers claims, but giving milk and meat to the hungry. While a sermon is no less than a model of hermeneutics, it is much more than that.

Finally, as noted above, Chalmers pays surprisingly little attention to the role of the New Testament in the proclamation of the Prophets. The brief section on the NT is one of several steps he lists to bridge the gap to the congregation. But with the progression of redemptive history, this step is not tertiary, but rather stands at the center of the endeavor of preaching. Though Chalmers points to other works in the ‘further reading’ section, readers may wish to see more detail on how to appropriate the New Testament data in interpretation of the Prophets.

As should be evident from this review, Chalmers’ contribution is significant. For anyone hesitant to preach the tough prophetic texts, Chalmers provides a good way forward. Preacher and teachers will be better equipped by incorporating this book into their preparation. Though readers may differ in details, they will not regret carefully thinking through this book. It will certainly be listed in the required texts in the syllabi of my own future courses on the Prophets.

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Matthew Levering. *The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. Pp. xviii + 204. \$26.00 Paperback.

Possidius, a life-long friend of Augustine of Hippo, writes the first biography of Augustine. In it he writes,

... so many things were dictated and published by him and so many things were discussed in the church, written down and amended, whether against various heretics or expounded from the canonical books for the edification of the holy sons of the church, that *scarcely any student would be able to read and know them all* (*Life of St. Augustine* 18.9).

Countless works of Augustine may overwhelm any reader of his works, but then comes Matthew Levering's volume, *The Theology of Augustine*. Here, essential works of Augustine are highlighted and given brief summaries to help and assist modern readers of this ancient figure. "My task in this book," notes Levering, "is to present these seven pivotal works of Augustine" (xii).

In a total of seven chapters, Levering devotes sustained attention to particular works of Augustine. The evaluation does not follow, necessarily, the historical order of composition. Rather, it focuses upon seven key works that help form an adequate portrait of Augustine and his theology. Each chapter attends to classical texts or works that reflect upon major disputations—specifically, with the Manichees, Donatists, and Pelagians. Levering begins with *On Christian Doctrine*, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, and *On the Predestination of the Saints*. In Levering's mind, these four works lay a foundation to approach the subsequent three texts (xviii): *Confessions*, *City of God*, and *On the Trinity*.

Levering, beginning with *On Christian Doctrine*, briefly places the text in the context of the life of Augustine—completed by AD 426 (1). Much in concert with other modern evaluations, he summarizes *On Christian Doctrine* as "an account of biblical interpretation and preaching" that is organized around the double-love concept (1–2). Levering's summary of Book 2 is a clear and succinct summary of the virtue-focused interpretation process (8–12). In chapter two, written on *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, Levering chooses to focus on Books 4, 6, 9, 10, 12–19, 22, and 30–32. Albeit limited, then, these

chapters are chosen particularly because they relate to Christian theology and the use of the Old Testament. It is here that Augustine “enriches it [i.e. his theology] through careful reflection on Scripture’s two Testaments as a unified witness to God’s love” (19).

In the assessment of *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, Levering offers a close literary reading of the ten homilies. The homilies can be divided into two sections: Homilies 1–5 and 6–10 (49–50). These homilies focus upon a set of biblical texts that examines “how Scripture and interpreters of Scripture function in building up the Church in love” (49). Even a polemic against a Donatist interpretation can be undertaken without “failing in love” (49).

The final three chapters evaluate classical Augustine texts as well as provide the most amount of attention to secondary scholarship—each chapter containing more than 95 footnotes of comments. On *Confessions*, Levering divides his summary by writing on Book 1, Books 2–6, Books 7–10, and Books 11–13. “The *Confessions*,” Levering helpfully summarizes, “argues that each and every moment of one’s life, and one’s life as a whole, has its true meaning in relation to the eternal living God” (p.110). On *City of God*, Levering divides the work into five parts: Books 1–5, Books 6–10, Books 11–14, Books 15–18, Books 19–22. This five-fold division, as Levering asserts:

... displays Augustine’s achievement in reconfiguring history and its ends. Beginning with the pagan worldview in which strictly immanent gods and ends set the terms for what we can expect from historical existence, Augustine painstakingly transforms it into a biblical understanding of history according to which our lives can only be rightly appreciated in terms of ecclesial participation in the eternal God through Christa and the Holy Spirit (114).

Finally, in *On the Trinity*, Levering begins with a slight critique of Augustine’s self-acclaimed characterization of his work as a “closely-knit development” (151–52). Levering divides his summary by focusing on Books 1–4, Book 5–7, Book 8–11, and Books 12–15. *On the Trinity*, then, seeks “to understand and to model what Christian life is all about” (153). This work is highly valuable to nascent Augustinian readers.

Scholars would be amiss to approach Levering’s volume as an exhaustive study or complete survey of Augustine. He encourages readers to consult the bibliography and footnotes of relevant scholarly literature, as his survey

leaves much out (xviii). The primary helpful feature of this volume is how it helpfully orients readers of Augustine through a mini-commentary of his works. Levering wades through Augustine's literature and summarizes them briefly, succinctly, and constructively. As an aside note, readers have two options when reading his contribution: (1) read Levering's commentary or (2) read through the footnotes and be introduced to relevant modern Augustinian scholarship.

A second helpful feature to this book is the recommended reading list. The final few pages reflect a "Levering's Best" of Augustinian modern texts. Although focusing on English scholarship—which is helpful, considering the intended audience of *The Theology of Augustine*—this list of thirty works reflect Levering's first reads. "If I were stranded on a desert island and could only have thirty items from the works I cited, these recent studies are the ones that I would choose first" (191).

The Theology of Augustine is the product of a brilliant idea: a summary introduction of essential and classical texts from a prominent figure in antiquity. We can only hope that more in the fields of Early Christianity, Patristics, Medieval, and/or Reformation studies could do likewise. This book would be a helpful addition for college, university, and introductory graduate level courses on the early Church or the figure of Augustine. Assigning this textbook along with primary text material could make an easy addition. Even for teaching, the text offers simple and adaptable comments for pedagogy.

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Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology. By Richard Bauckham.
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015, xvii+237, \$24.99 softcover.

Richard Bauckham, the well-respected Johannine scholar and senior scholar at Ridley Hall at Cambridge University, has produced yet another helpful volume in the study of John's gospel. Bauckham's goal is to offer a fresh approach to major Johannine themes that have been neglected or debated

throughout the history of scholarship on his gospel (ix). He identifies eight themes and dedicates a chapter to each.

Chapter 1, “Individualism,” addresses what Bauckham considers one of the most neglected areas of Johannine thought. He builds his argument off a seminal article by C. F. D. Moule, “The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel,” in which Moule emphasized “the relationship of the individual believer to Jesus” (1). Bauckham distinguishes this “individualism” from the Western concept of self-reliance, preferring the term “individuality,” which he defines as, “the individual’s awareness of self as a distinguishable entity, not merely in a physical sense but in terms of subjectivity ... [which] makes introspection and inner dialogue possible” (3). He then broadly applies this concept to “individualistic” and “collective” societies, the latter representing the world of the NT.

Within this framework, Bauckham considers the Johannine evidence along three lines. First, are “aphoristic sayings about the individual’s relationship with Jesus” (4). Here he finds sixty-seven passages that demonstrate Jesus dealing with people as individuals, rather than groups. Thus, “Readers or hearers are simply not allowed to forget that responses to Jesus have to be individual and real” (7). Second, are “In-One-Anotherness’ (Personal Coinherence)” statements that demonstrate the intimate relationship individuals have with one another that flow from their shared life with Jesus, whose “life is the life of God” (10). Bauckham distinguishes this from the Pauline emphasis of being “in Christ” (10), citing the unique “reciprocal” nature of the Johannine concept (12). Surprisingly, Bauckham fails to relate this to the more foundational idea of union with Christ. However, he does affirm the Trinitarian foundation of co-inherence, which the believer participates in only through Christ: “the in-one-anotherness of the Father and the Son becomes the source of the in-one-anotherness of Jesus and the believer” (13). Third, he notes “Jesus in Dialogue with Individual Gospel Characters,” noting Jesus’ conversations with Nathanael (1:47–51), Nicodemus (3:1–21), and the Samaritan woman (4:7–26). Each of these conversations “takes place in private” and allows each individual to incite “greater empathy or identification” (14), as well as to demonstrate how “Jesus deals with each of them differently, according to their individual circumstances” (15–16).

Bauckham concludes that John’s purpose in emphasizing the individual is, first, to encourage them “to step outside the social norms and expectations of their group” to follow Christ (17). Secondly, to emphasize the intimacy

of the individual believer with Christ as the foundation reality of the community's mutual love for one another.

Chapter 2, "Divine and Human Community," addresses unity within the Godhead and Christ and His people. Bauckham briefly considers the Hebrew and Greek terms for "one" and delineates two contextual uses: "one" in the sense of "uniqueness or singularity" and "one" in the sense of "unity" (21–23). On this foundation the idea of unity is traced through the "Early Jewish Background" that moves from the meaning of uniqueness captured in the Shema, unity in Second Temple reunification, then to the unity of both in the late prophets in anticipation of the Messianic kingdom, in which "There is a readily intelligible connection between a *unified* people and their *unique* ruler" (28). John's gospel cements this by connecting "the singularity, the uniqueness of Jesus, the one shepherd, the one man who dies of the people, with the uniting of the people of God" (32). Bauckham then moves to the "Unity of God" drawing on Jesus' statement in 10:30, which reveals that the God of Israel "*consists in* the communion of the Father and Son" (32). In turn, this unity within the Godhead is analogous to the unity of Jesus and His followers (cf. John 17), as shown in John's use of *kathōs* (6:57; 10:14–15; 13:34; 20:21). On this last point, Bauckham is not satisfied with mere analogy, but pushes toward the idea of participation, in which it is the love of the Father and Son that overflows into the disciples of Jesus (36).

Bauckham then moves into the theologically hostile waters regarding the "Social Trinity" (36), which understands divine unity "as actually constituted" by the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit within the Godhead. On this point, Bauckham finds agreement in John, particularly in the gospel's presentation of "in-one-anotherness," which also incorporates the concepts of perichoresis and co-inherence. Interestingly, he suggests the role of the Holy Spirit is by "extension" and not exegesis, noting John's overwhelming emphasis on the binitarian relationship of the Father and Son. However, this point seems to miss the exegetical implications of the Spirit in Jesus' baptism and teaching in 14:17–23 and 16:13–15. Bauckham concludes with an evangelistic tone, for the unity of the Father and Son, reflected in His people, has the ultimate end that the world "will recognize God's love as it is at work and reflected in the Christian community" (41).

"Glory" is the theme of chapter 3. After a review of the relevant terms, Bauckham settles on the ideas of "honor, prestige," and "visible splendor"

(44–45). John’s gospel builds on the OT revelation of God’s glory in His name and character to Moses on Sinai, which “echoed throughout the rest of biblical literature” (49). Significantly, God’s glory was removed from His people in Ezekiel, but reappears in the prologue of John (1:14). However, in contrast to Israelite expectation, the glory of God’s character and name is displayed in the humility of the cross, where “Jesus’ deepest humiliation is, paradoxically, also his glorification” (54) and “reveals God” (58). Glory is completed, however, in the resurrection: “It is the degradation and the death, in the light of the resurrection, that constitute the ultimate manifestation of God’s glory to the world” (61). The takeaway of glory is the self-giving love revealed in the Trinity—Spirit glorifies the Son, who glorifies the Father—and reflected in the redeemed’s love for one another.

Chapter 4, “Cross, Resurrection, and Exaltation,” traces this “very large topic” (63) through its display in four themes: love, life, glory, and truth. “Love” comprises the greatest space and is most clearly expressed in Jesus laying “down His life for His friends. This love is the ultimate display of both Divine and human love and was manifest in every act of Self-sacrifice Jesus manifested in His life. The greatest example of this love is the cross, which also forms the foundation of the “new” standard of love for one another. “Life” is eternal life shown in His death, resurrection, miracles, and “joyful fellowship with God” (72). “Glory” covers much of the material in the last chapter and “Truth” is the “manifold way in which Jesus fulfills Scripture” (74). In this way, it is not truth as opposed to error, as much as Jesus is the “true bread,” “true King,” even “the way, the truth, and the life.”

Bauckham tackles the issue of “Sacraments” in chapter 5. He takes a narrow criteria approach and allows the possibility of sacramental references in three passages: John 3:5; 6:52–58; 19:34. He sees baptism as a possible secondary meaning in 3:5 to the primary meaning of the need to have “faith in Jesus the Savior and reception of eternal life” (107). In John 6:52–58, he allows eucharistic language as a possible secondary meaning to the primary point of a call to faith in Jesus who died a violent death for his people (97–98). However, he does allow that John may have had “the eucharistic words of Jesus in mind when he wrote 6:53–56” (98). While Bauckham rejects the idea of a docetic polemic as the purpose of John (101), it is problematic that he allows the words to be as much John’s as Christ’s whom he is purporting to represent. On John 19:34, “The case for any level of allusion to the Eucharist

and baptism ... is very weak" (106). In the end, Bauckham downplays sacramental references in John and concludes that "this Gospel's contribution to a theology of the sacraments is to prioritize the soteriological realities that are focused on the sacraments but always exceed the sacraments" (107).

In chapter 6, "Dualisms," Bauckham admires and then critiques the demythologizing of Bultmann who claimed John borrowed from a Gnostic framework and employed it for his own purpose. However, while the critique is welcome, it seems he finds too much to admire. For Bauckham, John's dualism must not be over generalized, but seen through five specific categories: "I. Creation and Creator ... II. Evil and Good ... III. Provisional Good and Eschatological Good ... IV. Miscellaneous Dualities" (121–123). However, at the heart of John's dualism is a soteriological concern (129), namely, that he entered the world to save it (126).

In chapter 7, "Dimensions of Meaning in the Gospel's First Week," Bauckham spends the bulk of his time exploring what he calls the particular literary "phenomenon" of John's penchant for "*double entendre*" (141–142). Careful to distinguish this from allegory, or a "two-level" reading of Scripture, he argues for an analogous relationship. He first applies this to the disciples' first week with Jesus and introduces the Jewish exegetical methods of "*gezerah shavah*" in which "passages from different parts of Scripture that use the same words or phrases can be brought together and interpreted in relation to each other" (154) and "*gemetria*" that "allows the exegete to substitute for a word or phrase in the text another word or phrase that has the same numerical value" (178). He then applies this method to John's use of "Lamb of God," Nathanael's mention of Nazareth, the ladder of 1:51, the miracle of 2:1–11, and Jesus' use of the "Son of Man." The net result of Bauckham's exercise is to draw a line from the first to the last week of Jesus' life as anticipation and fulfillment.

In the final chapter, "The Johannine Jesus and the Synoptic Jesus," Bauckham is burdened to show the necessary and harmonious relationship of John to the synoptic gospels. After submitting the dangers of Tatian's *Diatessaron* and the liberal attempt to find the "historical" Jesus, Bauckham argues for the need to let each gospel stand as its own witness and together give a complete picture of Jesus. He assumes the readers of John "know Mark" (188), which accounts for John's unique material. Thus, John could elaborate on such matters as prayer, the Spirit, eternal life, Christological terms and titles, the sent motif, "I have come" sayings, his emotional anguish, as

well as his sovereignty, when facing death. A key theme, however, is John's presentation of the true humanity of Christ through which the Father is revealed. Indeed, at the heart of this revelation is the cross: "What John has done is not to dissolve the passion in glory, but to redefine God's glory by seeing the suffering and the humiliation of the cross as the high point of its revelation" (199). Indeed, the glory of God revealed through His humanity is "essential to his Christological project" (200).

Bauckham's *Gospel of Glory* is an evident fruit of years of deep study and contemplation on the Gospel of John. This mature scholarship keeps him from getting bogged down in overly detailed discussions and allows him to extract the core of John's teaching on these key themes. Indeed, he manages to produce a work that is helpful to scholar and layman alike, while manifesting a tone of worship. This is, in fact, the ultimate goal of John and Bauckham, to read John's unique portrait of Christ as "God with us" (201) to redeem and bring His people eternal life.

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Reviving The Black Church: A Call to Reclaim a Sacred Institution. By Thabiti Anyabwile. The Front Porch in Partnership with Nashville: B&H, 2015, pgs. 269. Cloth

Introduction and Summary

Jarvis J. Williams

Thabiti Anyabwile serves as a pastor with Anacostia River Church in Washington, DC. In his new book *Reviving the Black Church*, Anyabwile offers the following: an appreciation of the role of the black church (TBC) in American history, a critical analysis of the traditional black church, and biblical, theological, and practical reflections as to how to help black churches go forward in gospel faithfulness. Curtis A. Woods and I (Jarvis J. Williams), two different African-Americans with different church backgrounds and with both similar and different academic interests, have partnered to write

this review. As a New Testament scholar of color with a multi-ethnic heritage and committed to the work of racial reconciliation, my analysis of the book will focus on a brief summary and a short critique. Woods will bring his extensive knowledge of the history and theology of the black church, of African-American diasporic literature, his personal experience in both black church and white church contexts, and his passion for reconciliation to bear as he reviews the work. His portion of the review will focus on Anyabwile's historical, theological, and practical analyses.

Anyabwile's basic thesis is that there is a better way forward for the TBC than what was both historically and is currently present in certain black churches. For Anyabwile, this better way forward is the way that borrows from the wisdom of "earlier faithful Christians." Moreover, the way forward is the way outlined in the bible. According to Anyabwile, the bible provides the divine wisdom that TBC needs to see every aspect of church live and thrive again by the power of the Spirit of God (paraphrased from the back of the book).

Anyabwile argues his thesis by organizing the book in three major sections with thirteen chapters. Section 1 (Revive by the Word) focuses on the importance of the bible in TBC. Anyabwile skillfully provided an historical survey of the importance of the bible in healthy black churches, a robust biblical and theological defense of the importance of preaching the bible in TBC, and the importance of worship according to the bible in the TBC (15-82). A particular point of emphasis in this section is highlighting healthy black and reformed models of expositional preaching in black contexts (31-62). Related to preaching, Anyabwile also argues that many in TBC neither have a clear understanding of the purpose of preaching (33-62) nor a clear understanding of the gospel (65-81). These pages drip with the importance of making the bible the centerpiece of every aspect of TBC, from the prayers, to the preaching and teaching, and to the congregational worship.

In section 2 (Revive with Godly Leadership), Anyabwile addresses leadership in TBC. He argues that leadership in TBC is often imbalanced and too much power is wrongly invested into one pastor (97-114). He also argues that TBC often has misunderstood pastoral authority, has wrongly created unbiblical offices of authority (115-136) or has appointed unqualified and ungodly people to serve in leadership in TBC (137-153). Regarding ungodly leadership, Anyabwile urges leaders in TBC with great sensitivity and pastoral concern to remove ungodly leaders from leadership with the intent of leading

them to repentance and restoration (137-153). In this section, Anyabwile also urges TBC to rethink pastoral training (154-170).

In the third and final section (Revive through Membership and Mission), Anyabwile argues that TBC should pursue revival through a biblical understanding of membership and mission (173-245). He challenges TBC to rekindle personal piety and discipleship (173-188), to prioritize a biblical understanding of regenerate church membership (189-208), to prioritize building up black men, to help foster healthy black families, to help black men understand a biblical understanding of manhood (209-226), and to re-engage in missions (227-245). Anyabwile concludes the book with a short afterword (247-249).

As a New Testament scholar and seminary professor, of course, I have some picky disagreements here and there with Anyabwile's exegesis of certain texts and with his applications of certain texts. At times, Anyabwile's exegesis of certain texts seems strained. For example, he follows the popular "as you go" understanding of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 (183). However, the Greek actually supports an alternative reading that Jesus is commanding these Jewish disciples "go and make disciples of all non-Jewish people." He very well might not be saying "as you go."

Furthermore, although Anyabwile thinks seminaries have a role in training ministers (168), he thinks it's a small one. I see the role that seminaries play in the theological and ministerial training of future ministers as more necessary and more important than perhaps Anyabwile (168). I agree that seminaries cannot teach future pastors everything about pastoral ministry—local churches should be the primary place where future pastors learn how to be pastors. But good seminaries have an enormous amount of biblical and theological resources (i.e. specialists who can offer a wealth of grammatical, historical, analytical, and intellectual resources) that they can pour into ministers in training. Local churches, on the other hand, have a limited amount of resources and an even more limited amount of men equipped with high level biblical and theological tools. And not all pastors have the intellectual skills or the learning to educate their ministers in grammatical historical exegesis. Just look, for example, at the few pastors who are able to read Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Once more, there is an entire biblical and theological intellectual history that is necessary for ministerial training that many pastors in local churches are simply unable to provide.

In my view, ministerial training involves more than can be provided by the local church, but certainly not less than what the local church can provide. Without healthy theological seminaries to train pastors, I would argue many pastors would be less equipped for pastoral ministry. Even those pastors who do not have formal theological training from a seminary have benefited tremendously in their ministries from those who have either been seminary trained (e.g., Mark Dever's influence on Anyabwile) or from those who have benefited from those who have benefited firsthand from a seminary education (e.g., Anyabwile's influence on others). Other critics might complain about the title of the book, asserting that it assumes that TBC is mono-lithic or presupposes that all black churches are unhealthy. But those who offer this criticism should be charged with never reading or altogether ignoring the arguments throughout the book.

With these minor complaints aside, *Reviving the Black Church* is a must read for anyone who loves the church, especially TBC. The book reveals the heart of a pastor who deeply loves TBC and who deeply longs to see her become conformed into the image of Christ instead of being conformed into cultural captivity. The author's big vision of God, God's word, preaching, the church, his love for God's people, and his vast knowledge of the plethora of literature about African-American intellectual history are worth the purchase of the book. The book offers a robust biblical and theological exposition of how dead black churches can be made alive in Christ by the power of the Spirit and the preached word, just like those dry bones in Ezekiel. The book also provides a guide as to how vibrant black churches can stay alive, healthy, and vibrant in Christ by the power of the Spirit and the preached word. However, the book is not only for TBC or for black pastors. All churches, all pastors, and all church leaders from a variety of racial stripes and evangelical traditions can benefit and learn from this book. I highly recommend the work! And I will give it to many pastors in TBC!

Historical, Theological, and Practical Critiques

Curtis A. Woods

Proverbs 11:1 says "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight."

Whenever I read a work on the Black Church (TBC), my protective instincts automatically raise in defense of my beloved ecclesiastical tradition.

In a glance, I position myself into a fighting stance ready to raise intellectual arms against any critic who plans to unapologetically soil, or unjustly sanctify her reputation. These unbalanced critiques of TBC are typically wedded to the pens of those who either lack historical and experiential knowledge of TBC or are so committed to the tradition that they only offer *hagiographic* interpretations. In fact, hubristically false evaluations strain relationships between insiders who wipe their relational hands clean, saying, “I find no fault in her” and outsiders whose sullied perspective finds nothing good in her. That is to say, one observer promotes ontological perfection while the other perceives ongoing pestilence. Both postures siphon the strength of TBC.

Thabiti Anyabwile is no parasite. As an acute intellectual and *participant-observer* of the TBC tradition, Anyabwile understands the calamity that created her and confession that sustains her. To my delight, as I thoughtfully read the work through the lens of African diasporic agency and evangelical theology, my guard was lowered because I sensed an evaluation akin to Christ’s interaction with the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev 2-3). There was proper commendation and poised condemnation. I knew I was in conversation with a groomsman who loves the Bride of Christ. So, what makes this work just and balanced?

First, Anyabwile rightly acknowledges the unspoken “cultural rules forbidding public critique of the Black Church” (12). As such, published criticism of TBC will invariably solicit familial scorn. Jemar Tisby, executive director of the Reformed African-American Network (RAAN), makes note of this phenomenon in his helpful review. Nonetheless, I caution readers to withhold judgment until they have thoughtfully engaged the work. In order to measure any work in a Christian manner, readers must understand the author’s thesis and delimitations before brandishing a polemical sword. We cannot disqualify a person’s work simply because we dislike the title or teacher. The battle lines are drawn at argumentation, not appellation or association.

Anyabwile presents a clear thesis: “The only force capable of reviving TBC in whatever area she needs is the Spirit of God animating the Word of God” (247). Anyabwile begins his journey through various sectors of TBC in the antebellum North and South. He explains how racial hierarchy or white supremacy gave rise to the Black Church in early American history. He distills decades of African diasporic dehumanization from the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade until present day. In so doing, Anyabwile

invokes the expertise a kaleidoscope of African-American scholars, which, in my opinion, is one the greatest strengths of the work! Anyabwile, as an African-American evangelical, is unafraid to solicit counsel from Black liberation theologians, including womanist intellectuals, along with faithful African-American evangelical witnesses.

Oftentimes, when intellectuals create such exchanges between opposing theological camps, they succumb to theological syncretism. Anyabwile avoids this blunder. Readers will sense a non-threatening dialectical conversation between black evangelicals and liberationists throughout this work. To Anyabwile's credit, he marshals primary and secondary works in African-American religious thought from individuals who, categorically speaking, were Reformed/Arminian *African diasporic abolitionist intellectuals*, evangelicals, liberationists, and prosperity preachers. Anyabwile does not venerate or vilify any camp. He, for example, illustrates how evangelicals, liberationists, and prosperity adherents all have "contributed to the de-centering of the Bible." He states, "Evangelicals have allowed it [Scripture] to be de-centered through neglect, failing to read it and apply it to life and faith. Liberationists have reveled against it, actually calling for its removal from the dominant place in theology and religion. And prosperity preachers have removed it from the center by misusing and misquoting it, using Biblicism that sounds evangelical while focusing on worldly materialism and success" (25). I enjoyed this section immensely because sometimes "we" (evangelicals) have a hard time with self-critique.

Second, readers should listen closely to Anyabwile's inner dialogue. These dialogues are more than thoughtful anecdotes to pique reading interest. Like the African theologian Augustine, in his *Confessions*, authorial introspection connects well with those who possess common background. For instance, I resonate with Anyabwile's journey from social and spiritual naïveté as a teenager/young adult towards biblical orthodox beliefs and, eventual, behavior. Anyabwile exposes himself with a riveting story of grace and mercy. He weaves his personal narrative into the fabric of TBC, bolstering his love for her, even though, within God's providence, Anyabwile united with a predominantly Anglo church community for a season of discipleship and leadership. Yet, Anyabwile's time in this spiritual setting did not quell his passion for TBC in particular or ameliorating societal ills that hinder African-American progress in general. As such, Anyabwile's provocative query, "When you hear the word pastor, what comes to mind?"

suggests that many pastors burnout because parishioners place inordinate expectations on their shoulders (99). He develops a taxonomy of differing functionalities within pastoral leadership along the lines of “traditional models” (100-102) and “contemporary models” (102-103) in order to lay a foundation for restoring biblical models of pastoral ministry. When Anyabwile discusses pastoral ministry in TBC, he courageously engages the topic of egalitarianism and complementarianism; for anyone familiar with the historic underpinnings of TBC understands this topic cannot be jettisoned (123-136). Anyabwile interacts with some lucid womanist theologians on gender and authority. He offers readers a patiently polemical tone while introducing significant works within the womanist theological corpus. He avoids *ad hominem*s and male privilege. In fact, one could say, Anyabwile appropriately privileges the text above our times.

Third, a work on TBC would be remiss if a writer envisions the well-being of the black family as ancillary to revival. Anyabwile employs a distinctly African diasporic evangelical worldview which repudiates false dichotomies between body and soul or society and spirituality. If the black family suffers, then TBC suffers. With graduate level degrees in social psychology, Anyabwile addresses the common refrain “black men are an endangered species” with clear principles for change. In doing so, he creates needed space for African-American colloquialisms in evangelical literature. I was pleased with his juxtaposition between pain and promise. He states, “No one explained how a statistic [endangered species] could change another statistic, how the collectively ‘endangered’ could change their status. We simply were supposed to. I felt stuck somewhere between *Menace to Society* and *Do the Right Thing*, trying a way to be angry and righteous, all while untutored and confused about true manhood” (210). Biblical manhood, explains Anyabwile, centers on developing men who worship, work, and love “one woman” well (209-213). Moreover, Anyabwile captures the essence of William Julius Wilson’s counsel (213-218). Wilson, framed through Anyabwile’s lens, gives readers the sociological tools to engage black suffering without championing victimization or, to borrow from William Ryan, “blaming the victim.” Anyabwile, once again, offers balanced commentary with Scripture, sound sociological and group psychological suppositions guiding his literary steps. There more to say, but space limitations make it impossible!

Anyabwile provides readers with a full-orbed strategy for reviving certain quarters of the Black Church. He repudiates a “monolithic understanding of

the black experience” since it “crumbled long ago under the shifting weight of African-American progress and hard-earned victories” (40). Therefore, as Anyabwile shows, students of TBC must think biblically in the midst of African-American diversity. One size does not fit all.

I (Curtis) finished the final chapter thinking, “I love learning about TBC, African diasporic evangelical contributions to intellectual history, and more importantly, advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ warms my soul.” Those who read this work will leave hopeful for TBC and, perhaps, gospel-centered racial reconciliation as we better appreciate the untold stories of many African diasporic evangelical pioneers (227-239) and God’s vision for global missions (240-245).

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