Old Testament Ethics: A Guided Tour. By John Goldingay. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 278 pp. $28.00.

Some of the finest books written by biblical scholars on ethics have been thematic in approach. The themes are often those of interest and concern to contemporary readers. In his book *Old Testament Ethics: A Guided Tour*, John Goldingay has broken the mold in several surprising ways. Among them are his choice of topics, the brevity of the chapters, his translations and brief summaries of biblical texts, his presentation of the significance of the texts to the original audience, his insightful comments on cultures and characters, his thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter, and his personable interaction with the contemporary reader. After each translation of a longer passage, Goldingay takes a paragraph to refer back to the quoted text, explaining simply what the teaching of the passage is and identifying each verse within parentheses.

The genesis of the book helps to explain the uniqueness and popular approach of Goldingay's *Ethics*. After he finished his multi-volume short commentary series on the Old Testament, *The Old Testament for Everyone*, he was encouraged to write a few books on topics derived from the Old Testament. This book is one of those companion volumes. His translations throughout *Old Testament Ethics* are from drafts of another of his books, *The First Testament: A New Translation*. Along with suggestions for further readings for those who think his presentation is either too conservative or too liberal, Goldingay suggests that readers who want more of ethics from the angle of the book read volume 3 of his *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Life*.

The author introduces the book with a brief summary of the questions he is convinced ethics asks (what sort of people we are; how we think; what sort of thing we do; and what sort of thing we don't do), and of the angles from which he explains the views of those questions in the Old Testament. The book is divided into five major subject areas, each area consisting of a different theme or choice of source material for ethical consideration: Qualities; Aspects of life; Relationships; [selected biblical] Texts; and People [selected biblical characters]. The book includes a

conclusion in which the author makes a plea for Christian believers to go back to the Old Testament to see how it confronts us to teach, rebuke, correct and train today. There is also a Subject List and Scripture Index.

Goldingay does not leave out an examination of the "tricky issues." For example, in a postscript he gives a brief response to the question "What about the Canaanites?"; in Part Three he deals with Migrants; and in Parts Three and Four he presents the subjects of sex and divorce. Throughout the book, he is very straightforward about the viewpoints of God, the human authors of the Scriptures, and his own views. For instance, in Chapter 33, he briefly discusses the theological concept of "just war." Using Deuteronomy 20 as an example of the strangely different presentation of war in the Old Testament, Goldingay concludes that neither the Old nor New Testament support the Just War theory as it is usually defended.

Readers will not always agree with Goldingay when he introduces or concludes his chosen topics with personal, contemporary illustrations, but they may be won over as they see how he derived his conclusions from the Scriptures. Goldingay's approach to ethics is like a biblical approach to theology that views doctrine as being taught to and through the lives and circumstances of the biblical characters. It is refreshing, stimulating, thought provoking and informative. The book is recommended reading for every teacher and student of ethics or Old Testament; and for pastors, teachers, and mature readers in local churches. It could serve as a text or discussion guide for an adult Bible class.

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Joshua **(The Story of God Bible Commentary).** By Lissa M. Wray Beal. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 464 pp. $39.99.

The Story of God Bible Commentary Series is a new commentary series that seeks to explain and to illuminate each passage of Scripture

in consideration of the entire storyline of Scripture. This commentary series "is designed to speak to this generation with the same word of God." Each author explains "what the Bible says to the sorts of readers who pick up commentaries so they can understand not only what Scripture says but what it means for today" (13). While the OT world is foreign to those living in the Western world of the 21st century, the Story of God Bible Commentary Series is convinced that "we hear God's voice today in the Old Testament" and "In its pages he reveals himself to us and also his will for how we should live in a way that is pleasing to him" (14). Each commentary in the series contains three sections for each chapter that help each reader live out God's story. The three sections are:

(1) LISTEN to the STORY: This section presents the primary text and a list of other texts so that the reader can understand the text as part of the whole of Scripture.
(2) EXPLAIN the STORY: This section presents the text in its canonical and historical setting.
(3) LIVE the STORY: This section reflects on current application and includes contemporary stories and illustrations to help the reader apply the text.

Lissa M. Wray Beal, Professor of Old Testament at Providence Theological Seminary in Otterburne, Manitoba (Canada), contributes to the series through her work on the book of Joshua. She takes the role of Joshua in the OT canon seriously. She writes,

> The importance of the book of Joshua is often reflected on its status as a 'hinge' book in Genesis-Kings. It stands as the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham, for in Joshua, Israel receives the long-promised land. Joshua starts again the narrative action of Numbers, which was put on hold for Moses' last sermon in Deuteronomy; the sermon changed Joshua. Joshua also stands at the start of Joshua-Kings, setting down a paradigm for life in the land that governs the story that concludes with Israel's exile in 2 Kings 25. (20)

Beal's primary purpose is to engage "Joshua to ask how it prepares for Christ and informs the church" (20). One point that obviously needs to be examined in detail is the warfare presented by

the text. Aware of the challenges Joshua presents to a contemporary Western worldview, Beal presents a twofold solution.

First, she challenges the idea that the conquest involved a complete genocide of the people. She writes,

> It is inaccurate, then, to charge the text with describing genocide, for neither the text's claims nor the ancient Near Eastern context supports such a conclusion. Warfare in Joshua, even with the *herem* command, does not empty the land completely or destroy all the inhabitants. God went ahead of Israel to drive out the inhabitants, and Israelite action was directed against the cities. Not all the inhabitants were killed, and even in the face of 'utter destruction' of cities, survivors remained. (38-39)

Second, she argues that one's starting point is indicative of one's perspective of the text. Beal concludes,

> If it is assumed that humans are good and deserving, then the command, as well as God's decision to remove the inhabitants from the land, seems arbitrary and unfair. But if one's starting point is that all humans are sinful and under judgement, then judgment against the Canaanites is within God's just acts. (39-40)

When seen in the perspective of redemptive history, the conquest served as a part of God's plan to restore humanity to himself, and that required dealing with the sinful people of Canaan (40). While Beal admits that her solutions "may not satisfy all readers," it does allow for one reading of the text that rejects an indiscriminate genocide of the people of Canaan, a common caricaturizing of Joshua.

Joshua has been well researched, is well written, and makes many interesting observations about the text. It is easy to read, use, and is very detailed. This commentary will serve pastors, students, Sunday school teachers, and lay people alike.

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***Habakkuk: An Exegetical-Theological Commentary* (Teleioteti Old Testament Commentary).** By J. Alexander Rutherford. Vancouver, British Columbia: Teleioteti, 2019. 330 pp. $30.00.

James Alexander Rutherford, a Ph.D. student at Moore Theological College, has recently released his commentary on Habakkuk, published by Teleioteti Publishing. Rutherford is concerned by the many commentaries on Habakkuk that focus primarily upon critical issues or that tend to find meaning in Habakkuk by allegorizing the text. In contrast to these emphases, Rutherford's commentary aims to present both a sound exegesis of the text as is and explain how Habakkuk relates to redemptive history and theology/application (xvi). To accomplish this task, Rutherford presents and justifies his own translation of the text, provides textual notes following each verse or set of verses (as necessary), and concludes each major section with an exposition intending to "draw out the meaning of the text in application to our day" (78n1). Rutherford rounds-out his commentary on Habakkuk with eight appendixes addressing issues related to the commentary, including the use of historical background in understanding the text (appendix 3), the translation of Habakkuk 2:2C in the LXX (appendix 6), and an expanded treatment of Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17 (appendix 7).

There are many things to commend about *Habakkuk*. For example, Rutherford does a great job handling the issues involved in translating אֱמוּנָה in 2:4 as "faith" rather than "faithfulness." Arguing that אֱמוּנָה can mean "faith" (since Hebrew does not have a noun to distinguish "faith" and "faithfulness"), he points to the Targumic interpretations of Habakkuk and the use of Habakkuk in the New Testament, both of which give evidence for the understanding of אֱמוּנָה as "faith." Furthermore, Rutherford points to the context of 2:3 and chapter 3, both of which involve the righteous "waiting" for God to enact his judgment, thus implying "faith" apart from "fidelity" (129-34). These arguments are clear and helpful in dealing with a difficult exegetical issue.

Rutherford is also not afraid to part ways with the majority of commentaries when he feels that the text demands it. For example, he argues for the eschatological view of 3:3, meaning that 3:3-15 is describing the coming invasion of Judah by the Chaldeans through

God's hand rather than describing God's past actions in bringing Israel into the land of Canaan. This interpretive decision does impact the way one applies and preaches the text (i.e., believers should pray for and have confidence in God's will regardless of how terrifying it is versus believers should trust God in God's faithfulness based upon his mighty works in the past). Rutherford admits that the eschatological view is not the majority view (173-74n1), but provides good exegetical warrant for the position, noting that it fits thematically with the previous section which capstones with God's acts revealing the knowledge of God throughout the earth in 2:5-20 and Habakkuk's call for God to administer his program of justice in 3:1-2 (175). Rutherford explains God's entrance from "Mount Paran" as a theological identification of the Chaldean invasion with the conquest (175). This, coupled with the imperfect form of בּוֹא in 3:2, suggests the eschatological view. The implication is powerful: "It is a fearful thing to face an invasion by the Chaldean army. However, they [believing Jews] express the unbelievable faith to which God has called them: they pray for God to accomplish the very thing they fear" (177). This willingness to challenge current commentaries reveals the important emphasis of faith in the book of Habakkuk and one that is highly relevant for today.

Beyond exegesis, *Habakkuk* lives up to its "theological" emphasis by addressing the important theological issues presented by Habakkuk, including discussions of theodicy (79), compatibilism vs. libertarianism (99), and God's justice (158-61). Furthermore, Rutherford's explanations and applications of the New Testament's quotations of Habakkuk (1:5 in Acts 13:4; 2:4 in Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38) are very insightful. These citations of Habakkuk become an important part of taking the text of Habakkuk, which addressed a very specific moment in the history of Israel, and determining and applying its timeless truths. The Acts 13:41 reference is no doubt the most difficult citation, but Rutherford explains this very clearly, seeing the salvation and judgment of the cross through the mediation of one's faith (or lack thereof) as comparable to Habakkuk's situation. Rutherford concludes, "The Cross and the Resurrection are the pivotal moments in human history; like the critical vision in Habakkuk, those who believe find God to be their savior, but those who reject him face judgment" (32).

At this point, one possible criticism should be mentioned. Rutherford is skeptical of the use historical background in interpreting any particular passage (see especially appendix 3). While he is not completely opposed to its use, Rutherford is primarily concerned with the presentation of the text as it stands. For example, in one place, he asks, "An interpreter must ask if they could make the point for which they are using extra-biblical evidence from the text alone? ... If the historical evidence disappeared, can you convince someone from the data available in the text?" (239) Rutherford's points on this issue are fair, and many of the textual problems in Habakkuk are addressed in this spirit. However, on the other hand, if the reader is looking for a 200-page introduction interacting with everything every critical scholar ever said about Habakkuk, then one will be disappointed.

This quibble aside, *Habakkuk* is a solid commentary. The emphasis upon the text of Habakkuk and its address of key theological issues presented in the text make it a worthy addition to the collection of commentaries on Habakkuk already in print. *Habakkuk* will fit nicely on the bookshelf in the pastor's library.

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Exegetical Gems from Biblical Greek: A Refreshing Guide to Grammar and Interpretation. By Benjamin L. Merkle. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 192 pp. $19.99.

Having spent months memorizing detailed grammatical charts, laboring over syntactical nuances, and toiling over a myriad of vocabulary words, the first-year Greek student is often thrown to the wolves, so to speak. Upon the arrival of summer break, he is tossed into the ocean without a life-preserver and told to swim. He is expected to make use of all the techniques he has learned over the past year in his devotional readings and sermon preparation. Terms he had not previously known and questions he had never thought to ask float around in his imagination. Is this an adverbial or an adjectival participle? What is this *sigma* doing here? What class

conditional statement is this? Not wanting to give up his hard-fought Greek knowledge (which was not cheap, by the way!), yet being unsure of how to move forward, he resorts to what is comfortable and contents himself with basic word studies and the conclusions of commentators, avoiding the difficult and laborious task of actually reading the Greek text himself. Put kindly, he treads water.

To combat this lamentable—though all too common—practice, Benjamin Merkle, professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, authored *Exegetical Gems from Biblical Greek*. Merkle is no stranger to students of NT Greek, having coauthored *Greek for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving New Testament Greek* and *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament*. In *Exegetical Gems*, Merkle takes many of the complex topics typically covered in a second-semester (or second-year) Greek class and seeks to make them practical. Merkle summarizes, "I wrote this book as a tool to help current and former students of New Testament Greek prosper and ultimately succeed in using the Greek they worked so hard to acquire" (vii).

Exegetical Gems is divided into thirty-five brief chapters, each around four or five pages long. The chapters are aptly titled. Take for example, "Textual Criticism," "Genitive Case," "Aorist Indicatives," "The Granville Sharp Rule," or "Adverbs." No one should be confused about what each of these chapters entail. This format allows the book to be of equal value to the reader who chooses to work through the text chapter by chapter, or who turns to it as a reference text and reads only what is necessary to his current study. Although it would be an overstatement to assume one could exchange his first-year course textbook with this volume for his review needs, he may find himself turning to this book more frequently than expected, especially for concise and succinct answers to exegetical questions.

Despite the brevity of Merkle's chapters, this book is by no means for the faint of heart. As Merkle notes, each of these chapters offer "two main things: (1) an exegetical gem from the NT and (2) a review of some aspect of Greek syntax" (viii). It almost goes without saying that this book assumes a working knowledge of the Greek language and a general familiarity with biblical concepts. Merkle is upfront about this expectation, as he comments that this book was

written for college or seminary students, former Greek students, and Greek teachers (ix).

Some chapters of particular interest include: 2. "Textual Criticism," which offers a solid discussion of internal and external evidence, using Romans 5:1 as a case-study; 12. "Verbal Aspect," which summarizes well this rather complex topic in a surprisingly brief manner; 33. "Exegetical Fallacies," which is essentially a five-page summary of D. A. Carson's book by the same title; and 35. "Diagramming," which offers a valuable demonstration of the importance of diagramming by using Hebrews 6:4–6 as an example. Overall, this book covers just about all the topics typically found in a first-year textbook.

Upon first learning about the publication of *Exegetical Gems*, I was thrilled with the prospect of what it could offer. One frustration in my own experience of teaching first-year Greek is the lack of available devotional books on the Greek NT. While there is great value in resources such as the *Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament* series and B&H's *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* series, neither of these provide guided and devotional readings suitable for intermediate Greek students. At first I approached *Exegetical Gems* with this expectation—in part due to the subtitle's claim that it is "*A* Refreshing *Guide*." While this book certainly is *academically* refreshing and an exceptional reference resource, it was not as *spiritually* refreshing as I had anticipated. Perhaps more clearly, it is not a Greek devotional book. Although I was initially disappointed at this—as I had hoped to be able to recommend it to my students as a practical and devotional "next step"—I would certainly still recommend it, just for a different purpose than I had at first assumed. It is an academic refresher on the basics of Koine Greek.

So, should you purchase this book? If you find yourself treading water in your Greek studies, I could not think of a better resource to assist you in moving forward and renewing your Greek abilities.

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Reading Mark's Christology Under Caesar: Jesus the Messiah and Roman Imperial Ideology. By Adam Winn. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. 204 pp. $24.00.

Adam Winn provides a scholarly, insightful overview of the Gospel of Mark with primary consideration given to its historical, cultural, and political context of the latter first-century Roman Empire. His basic premise is that Mark's Gospel was written post AD 70, following the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, to Gentile believers living under Roman rule. These believers were victims of the propaganda of Flavian, which pitted the Roman emperors, and in particular Vespasian, against Jesus Christ. Flavian's purpose was to prove the superiority of Vespasian to Jesus, and thus defend the deification of Caesar and those emperors who followed him, while debunking Jesus as the promised Messiah. Winn contends that Mark's purpose was to present the life of Christ in the context of Roman culture, proving the superiority of Christ over all human rulers and declaring Jesus as the true God and the only one worthy of worship. In a sense, Winn portrays Mark's gospel as an apologetic for the deity of Jesus Christ while not losing sight of the humanity of Jesus by emphasizing Mark's favorite title for Christ, the Son of Man. To that extent, Mark reveals Jesus as the God-man, without rival in authority, greatness, power, suffering, and sovereignty.

In chapter one, "Reconstructing Mark's Historical Setting," Winn states his thesis, "For the purpose of this project it is only necessary to demonstrate the existence of strong evidence for a Roman provenance and thus establish Rome as a historically plausible provenance for the composition of Mark's Gospel" (29). In other words, Winn is proposing a Roman provenance as opposed to either a Galilean or Syrian provenance. The author cites two internal evidences of Roman provenance: Mark's numerous Latinisms—Caesar, census, denarius—and the Markan motif of suffering disciples due to Neronian persecution and its continuing effects (30-31). Winn does provide a compelling argument for the origin point of Mark's Gospel being Rome through his method which he describes as "historical-narratival" (24). He explains this method as focusing "on the final form of Mark's Gospel—specifically, the Gospel as a unified narrative from beginning to end, with the commitment that it was intended to be read as such" (24). Furthermore, he states, "my

work is distinct from narrative critics in at least one crucial way—it seeks to read Mark's narrative from a particular sociocultural and historical setting" (24). Thus, the book unfolds in a purposeful fashion with each chapter building on and complementing the previous one(s), while maintaining the author's commitment to his "historical-narratival" method.

In the introduction, Winn addresses what he calls, "the diverse pieces of Mark's Christological puzzle" (2). He identifies the pieces as titles, power, suffering, power and suffering, and secrecy (2-8). Then, he promotes narrative criticism as the only way the pieces makes sense (14-22). Winn proves his point in successfully putting the pieces of the Christological puzzle together through this preferred method. By the end of the book, the puzzle is complete without one piece missing.

Perhaps Winn's strongest argument for Roman provenance is the impact of Vespasian and Flavian propaganda on Roman Christians, referenced throughout the book. He states,

> Over the past two decades of New Testament scholarship, there has been a growing recognition of the Roman imperial world as an important foreground for reading New Testament texts, and that New Testament authors were quite intentional about responding to the realities of the Roman Empire that challenged Christian commitments and practices (47).

In particular, Winn cites two challenges to Christian faith commitments by the propaganda of Vespasian. First, the implications of Vespasian's defeat of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple which testified of divine support. Second, the superiority of Roman gods over the God of Israel. This second challenge strikes even closer to the heart of Christian faith. If this be true, then the Christian claim that Jesus was the prophesied Jewish Messiah is false. Thus, Winn contends that Mark's Gospel was "a strong pastoral response that undermined Flavian propaganda and made a convincing case that Jesus was God's Messiah and the true ruler of the world" (48).

Winn demonstrates that the Markan Gospel effectively counters Flavian propaganda by documenting Jesus' superior power over nature, demons, and disease. Winn asserts, "Mark offers a counter-résumé to that of Vespasian, including Jesus as a superior healer,

benefactor, commander of legions, and master of the winds and waves" (164). In addition, Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection present a unity, not a tension between the powerful Jesus, God's ruler of the world, and the suffering Jesus who experienced pain, shame, and death (153). Even as Jesus was dying, he evidenced signs of greatness and power by his cry with great strength from the cross and his giving up his own life in a relatively short six hours. The author sets forth Markan Christology as bent on countering the Roman culture and emperor worship by documenting the life and public ministry of Christ, as well as by the names or titles used of Jesus, such as Christ/Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man (the main identity), Son of David, and Lord, all of which substantiate the deity, authority, and superiority of Jesus (51-68).

Winn states another convincing testimony to the deity and superiority of Jesus Christ, the Roman centurion's confession at the cross (160-61). The centurion's confession came after he saw Jesus take his last breath. Winn states, "The debate as to whether or not he offered a genuine confession reflecting Christian faith (the Son of God) or a generic confession of Jesus' greatness (a son of god) misses the confession's narrative function entirely" (161). Consistent with Markan Christology, the confession was one offering allegiance normally reserved for Caesar to Christ. To the Roman reader, the centurion's declaration would have represented a change in allegiance. Winn states, "The climactic declaration of the Roman centurion parallels the incipit and declares Jesus, rather than Rome's emperor, to be the Son of God" (164). I found this interpretation to be especially insightful and another "feather in the cap" for Adam Winn's thesis.

In his conclusion, Winn declares, "From the outset of this book my goal has been to assemble into a coherent whole the Christological pieces found within and shaped by the Markan narrative" (163). It is my opinion that he accomplished this goal quite convincingly.

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***Philippians: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching* (Kerux Commentaries).** By Thomas Moore and Timothy D. Sprankle. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2019. 256 pp. $27.99.

To assist the pastor in preaching biblically-faithful sermons that effectively speak to those in the 21st century world, Kregel Ministry has released a new commentary series under the name Kerux (meaning "herald"). According to Kregal, "Kerux commentaries are written for trained pastors and teachers who speak regularly, who have some knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and who spend a significant amount of time preparing to preach and teach God's word" (7). Each commentary presents a solid exegetical analysis of every verse, summarizes the timeless theological truth of every major expository unit, and concludes with communication strategies to help the preacher apply the text in the contemporary world. A unique approach of the Kerux series is the use of the two authors, the first a biblical scholar and the second a working pastor or homiletics scholar, to help the pastor exegete the text faithfully while also addressing insights that would be important for sermon preparation and delivery.

The first commentary in the Kerux series is *Philippians*, authored by Thomas Moore (pastor at Fellowship Church Knoxville and president of Didache, Inc.) and Timothy D. Sprankle (senior pastor at Leesburg Grace Brethren Church in northern Indiana). Working together, the authors present an exegetical analysis, theological focus, and preaching strategies of the eighteen major expository units of Philippians. They also include a short introduction which summarizes the general introductory issues (authorship, date, prominence, etc.).

There is much about *Philippians* to commend. First, Moore and Sprankle organize the expository units of Philippians well. Developing thematically-organized preaching units that do justice to the author's literary flow of thought is always a struggle for pastors, and they will definitely appreciate Moore and Sprankle's outline of Philippians. Some of the preaching units could be broken down into smaller units (for example, while the authors list 1:12-18a as one expository unit, 1:12-14 and 1:15-18a are thematically distinct enough that they could warrant their own sermons), but overall the units are well-organized.

Second, the authors handle the significant interpretive and theological issues well without overwhelming the reader with extensive scholarly discussion. The two major interpretive issues are the prominence of Philippians and the identity of the "enemies of the cross" in 3:18-19. Although the authors argue that "a good case can be made for Rome (the traditional view) or for Ephesus" as the place of writing, they assume the Roman view. Although the distance from Philippi to Ephesus is shorter, Moore and Sprankle conclude that "the distance between Rome and Philippi does not seem to be a problem if Paul was imprisoned for two years" (33). As for the "enemies of the cross," the authors identify them as a distinct group from the false teachers of 3:2, insisting that they were "outsiders, for Paul warning all of the Philippians about them.… If they were present in the church, Paul would hardly emphasize that he gave thanks for *all* the Philippians (1:4, 7)" (212-13). Likewise, Philippians contains some significant theological issues, and the authors handle these adequately as well. They take a metaphorical view of the Kenosis, citing other uses of κενόω by the Apostle (Rom. 4:14; 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:15; 2 Cor. 9:3) (127) and Paul's rhetorical purpose in 2:3-4 (128) as defense. They further respond simply to the infamous "work out your salvation" imperative of 2:12, arguing that "The 'working out' did not rest on believers' ability and efforts, but on God's work in them that he would complete (1:6)" (148-49). The average evangelical reader will have no concern with these conclusions.

Third, pastors will especially appreciate the preaching pointers of each section. Although every congregation has different needs, Moore and Sprankle present solid application points for each expository unit that can aid the pastor in developing relevant application regardless of one's preaching context. The authors are especially good at relating the biblical text to contemporary culture. One example will serve the point well. Addressing the application of 2:1-4, the authors, comparing the degradation of humility in the Roman world, lament,

> Similarly, in the Western world,… most of our modern success stories lionize men with giant egos and women with tremendous ambition. Humility receives less praise than high self-esteem.... In such a world, others become an object or obstacle to personal goals, not partners pursuing the advance of God's kingdom. (113)

This critique of contemporary culture is definitely needed and is normative for the preaching strategies in *Philippians*. There is no doubt that the application suggestions will pack a punch come Sunday morning.

If there is any criticism of *Philippians*, it might be found in the "Creativity in Presentation" sections. These sections include illustrations to help the preacher or teacher visualize the major theological point of the expository unit. Examples include "decorating the church podium with flags, pendants, posters, and swag from a recent championship team" to illustrate a celebration akin to Christ's enthronement and victory in 2:9-11 (143-144), and "wearing a track suit" or "setting a treadmill on the stage to reiterate the point of taking one more step" to present Paul's pursuit of the "upward call of God" in 3:12-16 (207). While the use of object lessons has become popular in modern preaching, not every pastor will feel comfortable presenting biblical truth in this way. Perhaps these illustrations would do better in a teaching setting than a preaching setting.

It is also worth pointing out that *Philippians* is not a heavily technical commentary. While it does address the meaning of important Greek terms as they become essential to interpretation, the purpose of the Kerux series is to help pastors preach the text, not to evaluate every textual issue in Philippians. Preachers looking for extensive discussions of these issues will need to look elsewhere.

Criticism aside, *Philippians* is a worthy addition to the collection of works on Paul's beloved epistle. Its outlining of the text, clear addressing of the text's interpretive and theological challenges, and preaching ideas that are faithful to its major theological themes make it worth a place alongside a preacher's go-to commentaries for Philippians.

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Investing in Eternity: What the Bible Really Teaches about Rewards. By Douglas C. Bozung. Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2019. 326 pages. Softcover $19.49.

Readers of Douglas C. Bozung's *Investing in Eternity: What the Bible Really Says about Rewards* will find it both generally accessible as well as comprehensive. This book is an adaptation of his 2008 Ph.D. dissertation in which he argues that the Bible teaches degrees of eternal rewards for the Christian based upon his present earthly life. I believe the author has done reasonably well in bringing a highly scholarly product to a generally accessible level that will likely satisfy both the advanced general Christian public as well as the academician. Academicians will find it methodical and systematic with ample scholarly footnotes as well as inclusion of the original Greek and Hebrew. Laymen will appreciate the author's fluent writing style along with his sound logic and reasoning, as he moves methodically from point to point.

The book is 326 pages in length. The front matter includes endorsements, a list of abbreviations, and a preface. The back matter includes two appendices and a segmented scripture index. As for the layout of the book proper, the author provides a ten-page introduction explaining his approach to the topic and also underscoring the importance of the study (not to be confused with Appendix 2: "The Need for This Study"). He brings it all together in his concluding chapter ("What Does It All Mean?"). The intervening chapters divide somewhat evenly between an exegetical investigation (Chapters 1–4) and an assessment of arguments for various positions (Chapters 5–8).

In chapter 1, Bozung's first line of investigation is the teachings of Jesus. Except for one segment (Luke 19:11–27, the Parable of the Minas), he limits himself to five partial chapters of the Gospel of Matthew (viz., 5–7, Sermon on the Mount; 20, Parable of the Vineyard; 25, Parable of the Talents). He concludes that while there are passages that seem to point toward all Christians receiving the same eternal reward irrespective of their behavior on earth, there are "many texts, including some of Jesus' parables, which affirm the concept of degrees of rewards...[and wherein Jesus] demonstrates a clear link between faithful service *now* and reward in *eternity*" (41, emphasis original).

Bozung devotes two chapters to the Apostle Paul's writings. In Chapter 2, he addresses Paul's several references to the Bema Seat (Rom 14:10–12; 1 Cor 3:10–15; 2 Cor 5:10), and then in Chapter 3, he investigates his various references to believers' "crowns" (1 Cor 9:25; Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Tim 4:8). In both chapters, he concludes that Paul consistently presents his doctrine of rewards as by degree based upon the believer's faithfulness of service.

In Chapter 4, the author addresses the remaining biblical texts which touch upon the issue (Jas 1:12, 1 Pet 5:4, Rev 2:10; 3:11). After a careful investigation, he sees two passages (viz., Jas 1:12 and Rev 2:10) as appositional statements wherein the reference to "crown of life" as equivalent to eternal life itself, something that every true believer receives due to his standing in Christ based entirely on the merits of Christ. He shows that the other two passages (viz., 1 Pet 5:4, Rev 3:11) support the doctrine of degrees of rewards for the believer based upon some aspect of the believer's present earthly ministry.

In the remaining chapters of the book, Bozung works through various arguments for or against the doctrine of degrees of the believer's rewards. In Chapter 5, he presents the two opposing views on the identity of the "Overcomer" (Rev 2–3). He concludes that the evidence best supports the notion that all true believers are overcomers and thus these chapters do not support the idea of degrees of punishment. Yet he is careful to point out that the notion of crowns does imply degrees of reward. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 are dedicated to fielding and answering opposing objections against the author's primary thesis. He interacts cogently against previously published works by authors who make opposing claims (e.g., Craig Blomberg, Joseph Dillow, Thomas Schreiner, et al., albeit, each opponent nuances his own view differently).

Bozung's concluding chapter offers a succinct and helpful summary of the foregoing material. He concludes that the New Testament teaching on the doctrine of rewards suggests that, first, there will be "future heavenly *consequences* for the present earthly activity of followers of Jesus" (249, emphasis original); second, these consequences are *eternal*; third, there are various criteria such as *purity of motives*, *faithfulness of service*, and *perseverance in persecution*; fourth, the rewards involve variegated *responsibilities* in the millennial kingdom, as well as *praise* from God; and fifth, all

rewards are based in *God's graciousness* in that they far outweigh whatever aspect of faithful service was rendered.

I am thankful for Bozung's book, *Investing in Eternity*, and I believe he has made a significant contribution to the Church. There are only two minor observations that perhaps hinder its accessibility to the general Christian public. The first is the lack of transliteration of Greek and Hebrew words. Readers with no knowledge of original languages will consistently stumble over these, even though he provides an accompanying definition or translation. Granted, although they may also stumble over the transliterations, they will, at least, be able to pronounce them. The second is there are a few typographical errors and one layout error (e.g., the concluding chapter is listed as "Chapter 9" in the Table of Contents" but it is not enumerated as such in the chapter itself). Despite these very minor points, I found the book quite edifying myself and believe it would be a useful title for professors and instructors to add to their required reading or recommended reading for theology courses or even Biblical Counseling courses at either the graduate or undergraduate level. Pastors and churches would do well to make it a choice resource for believers who are evidencing a seriousness toward their faith and for counselees struggling to overcome or lagging in biblical hope. In fact, the author closes the book proper by making a strong appeal to its relevance for biblical counseling (254–55), something with which I heartily concur.

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Five Half-Truths: Addressing the Most Common Misconceptions of Christianity. By Flip Michaels. Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2018. 158 pp. $12.99.

A half-truth is a deliberate imitation of truth and a falsehood. It is designed to have the appearance of truthfulness and credibility while undermining, obscuring, and/or contradicting the real truth. Half-truths can be even more deadly than blatant lies because they deny the truth with such sinister subtlety. The key danger of half-

truths is that they tend to make lies and errors appear good or sound appealing. We live in an era when multitudes–including countless professing Christians–are perfectly willing to accept half-truths, especially in the realm of biblical doctrine and gospel preaching.

Flip Michaels, Associate Pastor at GraceLife Church outside of Hershey, Pennsylvania, has produced an incredibly helpful resource to aid readers untangle truth from error. In *Five Half-Truths*, Michaels responds to five major half-truths commonly used to deflect any consideration from the validity of the Bible, Christianity, God, Christ, and faith. These five half-truths have been administered to persuade people to discount and disregard the truth of the gospel by accepting too much error with too little discernment.

In chapter one, Michaels discusses the half-truth, "The Bible was written by man." Although a true statement, it is frequently used to propose that the Bible is an assortment of fairytales bound together over the millennia (23-24). Michaels responds that the whole truth is that the Bible was written by men and inspired by God. Not only did men write the words, but it was God who gave his word to them to write with perfect precision (24-25). The whole meaning is that God spoke his divine will to and through men to be written down, and thus the writing was an activity of special revelation (25-26). For this reason, the Bible is authentic (29-32), accurate (32-38), and authoritative (38-41).

In chapter two, Michaels confronts the half-truth, "All religions are the same." Although religions do share similarities, this statement alleges that the God of the Bible is simply another god among mankind and that all religions are on an equal footing (47-50). Michaels responds that the whole truth is that all religions are the same except Christianity (50-52). The four major witnesses of the Christian faith: John the Baptist, the person and works of Christ, God the Father, and the Scriptures (52-60) make it absolutely clear that Christianity as revealed in God's word cannot reconcile with the religions of the world (61-62).

In chapter three, Michaels addresses the half-truth, "God is love." It is a phrase that insinuates that a loving God could never be a judging God, or that the NT God is incompatible with the OT God (71-73). Michaels responds that the whole truth is that God is both loving and holy. This is demonstrated in God's common grace which

touches all men, and in God's saving grace, which is rooted in both God's love and holiness (73-78).

In chapter four, Michaels confronts the half-truth, "Jesus is truly a man." Most individuals, even unbelievers, would not dispute that Jesus existed. However, this is only half the truth. Michaels responds that the whole truth is that Jesus is both truly man and truly God, having both human and divine natures. According to Scripture, Jesus was human like all men but did not sin. Furthermore, he had the same attributes of the Father, including omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence (97-111).

In chapter five, Michaels discusses the half-truth, "Our good deeds matter." Our good deeds do matter, but good deeds will never merit salvation. Sadly, man has devised a vast number of religious and secular ways to save himself (123-25). Michaels responds that the whole truth is that our good deeds matter, but when preceded by faith. The believer's life in Christ should yield good works that glorify God, but these follow faith (141-44).

In chapter six, Michaels presents a discussion of his journey to the whole truth (147-50). This inclusion of his heart and life experiences adds to the sincerity and authenticity of his responses. Michaels also includes a challenge to unbelieving readers to believe on Jesus and a challenge to believers to move towards spiritual maturity based upon the content of the book (151-58). This further adds genuineness to a discussion of difficult and urgent issues.

Five Half-Truths is well-written, readable, interesting, and devoted to Biblical truth. The book is nothing short of outstanding, and I am in agreement with everything Michaels wrote in this book. I would recommend it to every pastor and teacher, as well as to both believer and unbeliever alike. *Five Half-Truths* is a much-needed work in our day of doctrinal confusion and relativism.

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Contemporary Theology: An Introduction. By Kirk R. MacGregor. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019. 416 pp. $24.49.

Very few books are a delight to the mind like MacGregor's *Contemporary Theology*. Designed as an introduction to hermeneutical, philosophical, and theological developments starting with the nineteenth century, it can serve as an excellent textbook in a seminary class on contemporary theology and issues. Several positive features of the work lead to this conclusion.

First, the writing style makes the discussions readily accessible to those who have no background in the various areas. Oftentimes, books on contemporary theology get bogged down with hyper-technical language that often loses and discourages the conservative reader who is not used to the terminology common to the less traditional views. The clear and explanatory writing style helps the reader conquer, so to speak, the material of less currency in his own usual field of study.

Second, there is a wide selection of viewpoints covering the last two hundred years. After a chapter on philosophical backgrounds, MacGregor reviews 37 different individual contributors or movements that affect theology. Each of those chapters is around eight pages long, which is sufficient to do justice to the survey but not overbearing. It is a benefit that MacGregor deals with evangelical movements like early dispensationalism, Princeton theology, Spurgeon's practical biblical theology, Christian fundamentalism, and the rise of neo-evangelicalism within the scope of contemporary theology. Oftentimes, in studies on contemporary theology, the more conservative theological movements get short-changed.[1] Students need to be aware of the variations of conservative theological thought as influences on contemporary theological discourse. MacGregor adds the usual presentations on Schleiermacher's liberal theology, Hegel's dialectical theology, Kierkegaard's existentialism, and Wittgenstein's picture theory and language games approaches. One can also find individual chapters on the Niebuhr's "Christian

[1] One such example is the existentialist John Macquarrie. In his monumental and useful work *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*, conservative contributions are largely absent.

Realism," Barth's neo-orthodox presentations, Bultmann's demythologizing of the Bible, and Tillich's theology of culture.

One useful feature is the examination of Vatican I and the eighteenth-century opposition among Roman Catholics to its tone. MacGregor follows that up by a later chapter on Vatican II and its influence in the late twentieth century as Roman Catholicism grapples with modernity. Although all the viewpoints represented cannot be mentioned here, a pleasant surprise is the review of unexpected areas like Chinese eschatology, the recent movement of "theology and the arts," the contributions of African Christology, and the Reformed epistemology of Alvin Plantinga. Hermeneutical discussions abound throughout MacGregor's skillful expositions, but especially helpful are those dealing with postliberal and postconservative theologies, the New Perspective on Paul, the evolutionary creation approach of John Walton, and the recent movement known as theological interpretation of Scripture.

A third strength of MacGregor's work stems from its highly descriptive method of presentation. While occasionally MacGregor's opinions sneak out (how could they not?), such thoughts are more often couched in what others have said than MacGregor's personal, prescriptive assessment. In summary, he does an excellent job of letting people and movements speak on their own terms. In fact, it is difficult to tell where MacGregor's theological sympathies lie. This produces an irenic tone to the book that puts the reader at ease.

In spite of these excellent qualities, MacGregor's work does have some shortcomings that can be mentioned briefly. First, there is the occasional misunderstanding of a view which he is describing. Since the current reviewer comes from the dispensational tradition, a short analysis of the chapter on dispensationalism is instructive. MacGregor gets many things right in discussing John Nelson Darby, but there are a few concerns with MacGregor's evaluation.

One, he overstates when he refers to Darby's "rigidly 'literal' reading" of Scripture (55). Such a statement does not do justice to the robust typological interpretations (both good and bad) that can be found in Darby and later dispensationalists of the nineteenth century.

Two, MacGregor also missteps when he accuses Darby as treating the church as secondary and Israel as primary in his theological system (57). Such an assessment of dispensationalism is prominent among nondispensational evangelicals but misses the

mark. Arno Gaebelein, greatly influenced by Darby's followers, noted that the truth given to the church in the book of Ephesians is "by far the greatest revelation."[2] Along the same lines, dispensationalists are accused on the other side of treating the church as "too special" due to a belief in the pretribulational rapture in which the church is exempt from the tribulation period while Israel must endure the affliction of that time. Many dispensationalists believe it is unfair to characterize their theology as Israel over the church.

Three, perhaps the most significant incorrect analysis of Darby is the affirmation that Darby held to two new covenants, one for Israel and a separate one for the church (60). To be sure, this is the later view of Lewis Sperry Chafer, but it is not the view of Darby. Darby held that the church today experiences the spiritual blessings of the same new covenant promised to Israel in Jeremiah, but such experience is not the fulfillment of the promise to Israel.[3] MacGregor's presentation on this issue does not do justice to the nuances of dispensational views and is, in fact, inaccurate when it comes to John Nelson Darby.

A few other areas exist where accuracy needs to increase. For example, MacGregor identifies the Princetonian Charles Hodge as an amillennialist when his viewpoint is more properly associated with postmillennialism (69). To be sure there is some fogginess in Hodge on the issue, but he appears to support the idea that there is a time in which the Church experiences a glorious state on earth before the Second Advent.[4] Another example would be MacGregor's assertion that R. A. Torrey and A. C. Dixon were two businessmen who underwrote the twelve volumes of articles which launched the

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[2] Arno C. Gaebelein, *God's Masterpiece: An Analytical Exposition of Ephesians I-III* (New York: Our Hope Publication Office, 1913), 3; Michael D. Stallard, *The Early Twentieth-Century Dispensationalism of Arno C. Gaebelein* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 127-33.

[3] Rodney Decker, "New Covenant, Dispensational Views of the" in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 280-83; Mike Stallard, "The Interpretation of the New Covenant in the History of Traditional Dispensationalism" in *Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant*, ed. Mike Stallard (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist P, 2012), 73-78.

[4] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 858-59.

fundamentalist movement (113). Torrey and Dixon were ministers, not businessmen. The California businessmen Lyman and Milton Stewart paid for the publication of the writings. In areas like this, MacGregor needs to pay more attention to detail although his overall summary of beliefs and impact are fairly accurate.

One final thought is that the work would benefit from a final, epilogue chapter bringing everything together in some way. Perhaps an editor's decision, such a wrap-up, would serve the readers in a helpful way. However, in spite of the criticisms just cited, MacGregor's work will become the favorite work on contemporary theology in many personal libraries.

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Five Views on the Extent of the Atonement. Ed. Adam J. Johnson Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 256 pp. $22.99.

This work represents yet another contribution from Zondervan's Counterpoints series. What is somewhat intriguing in this case is the inclusion of five perspectives on a topic that traditionally is understood in terms of two. As Johnson states, "We are asking who Christ died for, whether for all or for the elect" (10). In this regard, besides a "limited" or Reformed perspective (Michael Horton, Westminster Seminary, California) and an "unlimited" or Wesleyan perspective (Fred Sanders, Biola University), the editor provides an Eastern Orthodox perspective (Andrew Louth, Durham University), a Roman Catholic perspective (Matthew Levering, Mundelein Seminary), and a Christian Universalist perspective (Tom Greggs, University of Aberdeen). Unfortunately, no contributor from a Calvinistic but unlimited perspective, such as myself and many readers of *JMAT*, is included.

Space does not permit more than a cursory overview of each presentation, but what is striking about all of the presentations is how little discussion there is of the key biblical references that are historically adduced in support of one viewpoint or another. Rather far more space is given to quoting or citing theologians both ancient

and contemporary. To be sure, as Johnson points out in his introduction, "To come to grips with this doctrine is no mere wrestling with one or two passages of Scripture" (12). Yet, one would expect at least *some* wrestling with Scripture beyond a mere recitation of verses, which is too often the case in this work.

As the Eastern Orthodox representative, Louth is uncomfortable with the question itself: "I found myself entering territory largely unknown to me" (90). After a series of contrasts between the historical trajectories and emphases of "Eastern" and "Western" theology, he protests that

> the suggestion that salvation is to be understood in terms of making amends, satisfaction and expiation ... narrows down the myriad ways in which the saving work of Christ is understood in the biblical and patristic tradition. (42)

But as Horton responds, though the West may be guilty at times of downplaying other aspects of Christ's work in favor of the forensic, Orthodox presentations tend to dispense with such concepts altogether (52). And Sanders observes, "At some points, Louth seems to presuppose a dichotomy between the forensic and the transformative, as if we had to choose between the legal and the actual" (60). In the end, Louth opts for a qualified "unlimited" atonement in view of the unlimited mercy and love of God for mankind (38).

Levering's presentation is noteworthy for the evangelical feel of its theological assertions and proof texts, not surprising in light of his longtime participation in "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (7). Indeed, in Levering's discussion, Aquinas comes across as rather "Calvinistic," even to the point of endorsing double predestination (82). Though he channels most of his arguments through Aquinas and Augustine, Levering makes no mention of the Roman Catholic system of sacramentalism and its vital role in the understanding of what Christ actually accomplished on the cross. In line with the Church, he also supports an unlimited atonement.

Horton begins by disabusing his readers of popular but "simplistic" portraits of Reformed theology that reduce it to the TULIP acronym or view it as a system largely governed by the doctrine of predestination (112f). On the contrary, he insists

predestination and unconditional election were taught by many in Calvin's day and affirmed by many confessions outside of Reformed theology. Furthermore, "particular redemption is not deduced from predestination as a necessary logical entailment. Rather, Reformed theology maintains that it is a truth taught explicitly in Scripture" (121). But even though Horton affirms that Christ's death was "sufficient … for a thousand worlds" (127), he responds to objections to his limited atonement view in a mere three pages and without ever discussing the many texts traditionally cited in support of an unlimited atonement.

Despite his Wesleyan affinities, Sanders often sounds like a Calvinist, even citing several Puritan sources to buttress his arguments. A large portion of his initial presentation spells out the distinctions affirmed by the greater part of Christendom between the persons of the Trinity (159–65), which are the basis of his subsequent differentiation between what he calls salvation *accomplished* and salvation *applied.* This differentiation in turn becomes the basis for arguing for a universal or unlimited atonement that has limited effect (166–71). Personally, I resonated most with this presentation, though I would digress from his "corporate election" view of Romans 9 and his adherence to libertarian freewill (some of his Wesleyan distinctives).

Finally, Gregg's "Christian Universalist" presentation purports to combine "the Arminian position that God *wills* the salvation of all people with the Calvinist position that God's sovereign will cannot be resisted" (197; emphasis original). Essentially, because God is loving and omnipotent, he is compelled to save all human beings. But as Horton observes, "[This] is not *merciful* love. By definition, mercy must be free" (229). Elsewhere Gregg is more circumspect, calling his view a "daring hope" (63, 111, 153, 154, 195). Though his universalism is well outside the fold of orthodox Christianity, he nevertheless identifies as an "evangelical Methodist" (154) and disavows "pluralistic universalism" (e.g., John Hick), which downplays the significance of Christ. Not surprisingly, Karl Barth figures prominently in both Gregg's arguments and responses. In the end, his presentation is a classic example of the selective (ab)use of Scripture.

In summary, if someone is seeking a robust examination of the pertinent biblical texts on the extent of the atonement, they should

look elsewhere. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson's (eds.) *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective* (2013) or David L. Allen's equally weighty response to this work, *The Extent of the Atonement: A Historical and Critical Review* (2016) would be far better choices on this particular issue. But as a general overview of the topic, especially as it is viewed by non-Protestant traditions, the book could be useful, such as a supplemental text for a soteriology class.

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For Thou Art With Me: Biblical Help for the Terminally Ill and Those Who Love Them. By Bruce A. Baker. Larkspur, CO: Grace Acres Press, 2019. 118 pp. $11.95.

Baker's first paragraph is only three words, "I am dying" (1). This reality makes it tough to continue. While it is true, as Baker points out, that we will all die, seeing his confession in print is personally difficult. Bruce and I were in the Doctor of Philosophy program together at Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, PA, and as trying times have a way of forging friendships, ours was forged in the classroom, dining hall, and dorm room when we came to campus. Bruce has a sharp mind and maybe a sharper wit. In the classroom he was quick to share his theological insights and Texas humor. I enjoyed both.

For the past years Bruce has been a medical enigma. Bruce and the medical community knew he wasn't well but there was no definite diagnosis and certainly no "you have x amount of time to live." However, in August 2017 he was diagnosed with ALS and given the often dreaded "you could live a year, eighteen months at the outside" (1). While he has "outlived" the initial timeframe, he understands this disease will be his death.

It is from this place that Bruce writes: he is dying and he knows it. And as a pastor who is always teaching and preaching, he employs his unique "ALS pulpit" "to provide biblical help for the terminally

ill" (75). This help comes from the place in which he lives and studies—the Bible.

In fifteen short chapters each with its own set of reflective questions, Bruce shares biblical hope for the terminally ill. He observes how a terminal diagnosis is a gift of time to think about death (chap. 2). He talks about the fear of death (chapter 3) and the antidote to fear: the gospel (chap. 4). The rest of the sections deal with why Christians suffer (chap 5), the questions they naturally ask in their suffering (chaps. 6-8), death and resurrection (chaps. 9-11), assisted suicide (chap. 12), and living for the glory of God (chap. 13). Reflections on suffering and death by Charles Spurgeon and Matthew Henry respectively conclude the book (chaps. 14-15).

Knowing Bruce, I wished that he would have at times fleshed out and illustrated with his own story the biblical truths he shared so clearly. While it may seem heartless to point out, his negative critique of the added fifteen years to Hezekiah's life says more of how the Judean king used this gift than the gracious gift itself. Not everyone who was granted more time abused it (52, cf. Lazarus, John 11). Also, Bruce's use of a nineteenth-century missionary anthropologist seems dated (11). It must have been his ALS that moved him to use the dreaded endnotes, which gratefully are few.

For the believer who has received the fearful terminal diagnosis, Bruce's book is a reminder for the believer how to live at peace and in comfort in light of eternity's gateway, death. For those who do not know Christ, his insights are gentle and point to their greatest need before they die and stand before God.

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Encountering World Religions: A Christian Introduction. By Irving Hexham. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 223 pp. $16.99.

Irving Hexham is professor of religious studies at the University of Calgary and adjunct professor of world Christianity at Liverpool Hope University. He has published nearly thirty academic books, most of them on religious topics, and a multitude of articles. His new

work, *Encountering World Religions: A Christian Introduction*, was written to help Christians to live out and spread the gospel to those around them in pluralistic societies.

To this end, he begins with a brief journey back to first century, and some of the biblical principles for dealing with non-Christian religions given at the time of the origin of church. He then briefly summarizes the development of religious ideas in the West, providing a picture of the context of pluralism faced by Christians today, including the increasingly negative views of Christianity that have accompanied increasingly positive views of Eastern religions.

Instead of an encyclopedic presentation of many of the thousands of religions in the world today, Hexham provides helpful descriptions of several groupings of religions. The first of these is that of "traditional" or "primal" religions (or those which lack written holy texts). African traditional religions are highlighted in this group. Wisely, the author warns Westerners not to accept generalizations about "African Religions," due to their geographical and content diversity. At the end of his description of the experiences and worldview of primal religions, Hexham takes the time to remind contemporary Christian readers of Africa's "forgotten" Christian heritage. This highly readable essay (Chapter Four), is worth the price of the book.

Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and related religions are grouped as Yogic religions, based upon their core practice of various forms of yoga. Hexham warns the reader that most textbooks describing world religions have followed a traditional standard account of Yogic religions developed by British scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries whose motives were usually not altruistic. In Hexham's descriptions of the religions, their practices and cultural influences are emphasized. Yet he stops to take the time to remind the reader that the most fruitful approach to witnessing to followers of religious or philosophical systems is that of testing whether the belief system "holds together in a coherent way" and whether the coherence "fits the facts of life" (96). Although the former might be true, for example in Buddhism, its premises do not match human experience.

The final group is the Abrahamic tradition, which encompasses Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Because the book is written for Christians, Hexham does not include a chapter on Christianity. He

moves instead into a description of the things that should be held in common among the Abrahamic religions, and the ways in which they are not. As he moves to a concise description of the history of Judaism, he helpfully explains why basically Jews are neither grateful for the interest of Christians in the Old Testament, nor trusting of Christians because of the treatment Jews have received from Christendom in the past. His careful presentation of Islam also includes some helpful insights that will prepare the Christian to understand and live as a witness before Muslim neighbors.

Hexham concludes the book by encouraging Christians to be aware of the good things in the history of the church, including its embracing of truth, care for others, rational arguments for Christianity, worshipping God, and living Christlike lives as practical demonstrations before the world.

It is difficult to find any complaints against this book. *Encountering World Religions* is deceptively brief. However, its status as an introduction is where the genius of the book appears, and thus it is reasonable to encourage all Christians, beginning with teenagers, to read this book. It is the kind of summary of what we need to know about world religions to form relationships with non-Christian people that is desperately needed today.

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Shepherding God's People: A Guide to Faithful and Fruitful Pastoral Ministry. By Siang-Yang Tan. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 272 pp. $22.99.

Serving as a pastor of a local church is an awesome opportunity as well as a grave responsibility. Among other things, it requires a calling, courage, commitment, and character. A person who is contemplating the call to pastoral ministry must understand that this is a high calling that bears great rewards but must be embraced with gravity. The task of obtaining information and direction for the many facets of ministry should not be one that is considered complete when one finishes seminary, but rather it must be an engagement of lifelong learning.

Siang-Yang Tan has assembled a 'library' of information that can be of great assistance in that learning and growing experience every pastor should be enjoying. *Shepherding God's People: A Guide to Faithful and Fruitful Pastoral Ministry* covers many essential topics that a pastor needs to be aware of and continuously learning about. It is obvious that the book is not an attempt to cover every issue that a pastor will face in a lifetime of service, but one that will greatly assist a new or a seasoned pastor with refreshing guidance on various ways that many of the common issues or needs should be approached.

The first part of Tan's book is devoted to the biblical and theological foundations of pastoral ministry, with a close look at how pastoral ministry is aligned with the duties and responsibilities of the local church as a body of believers. Although it may seem that a pastor ought to firmly understand these responsibilities during his seminary or Bible school training, unfortunately not all pastors have had extensive training in ministry and many have had their theological and pastoral training at a school that has been somewhat weak in ecclesiology. Therefore, at the beginning of the book, it may be a temptation for the reader who feels that he has a solid grasp on pastoral theology and ecclesiology to move quickly through these pages, but Tan gives a quick compilation of information to consider, setting the stage for the remainder of the book. Another significant contribution the first part of the book provides before moving into the various components of pastoral ministry is a hard but necessary evaluation that a person must take into account of one's personal life, family life, and spiritual vitality. As Siang-Yang Tan is also a psychologist and counselor as well as a pastor, his emphasis on self-care that is sprinkled throughout the book is advice that should not be overlooked. Also included in Part 1 is a reminder that successful pastoral ministry must be done in power of the Holy Spirit who alone is the one who brings about successful pastoral ministry from heaven's perspective.

In "Part 2" of the book, Tan shares a wealth of information from his extensive reading and research on numerous topics of pastoral ministry. This section spans a broad spectrum of subjects, from the commonly understood and education-prepared responsibilities of preaching and teaching to the less commonly considered subjects of leaving a church and retirement. What is especially appreciated in the author's coverage of these many topics is the plethora of ways in

which various biblically sound pastors and leaders have navigated these areas. Tan's effort to synthesize much material offered by others into succinct pages plus sharing from his own twenty-year experience of how he has personally approached the issues helps to launch the reader into fruitful guided research.

Relatively speaking, this book is brief in that much content is condensed into less than 300 pages. Therefore, it is not comprehensive on any one subject. Nevertheless, it is not a text that should be picked up and read one time. Rather, the book lends itself to being one that should be referred to often as a place to look at new and existing aspects of ministry from various angles and provoke the reader to pursue path that has been birthed in wisdom.

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Preaching to Be Heard: Delivering Sermons That Command Attention. By Lucas O'Neill. Bellingham, WA: Lexham P, 2019. 241 pp. $13.99.

Many preachers feel the tension of being true to the biblical text yet engaging to their audience, facing the pressure of not only finding the "big idea" of the passage but also capturing attention with stories, illustrations, and examples. In *Preaching to Be Heard*, Senior Pastor and Homiletics Professor Lucas O'Neill combines those seemingly divergent goals by calling pastors to capture attention with the biblical text. Rather than relying on homiletical technique, preachers should "lean into the text of Scripture" (12) to earn the attention of their hearers.

Preaching to Be Heard is a succinct five-chapter guide to preaching biblically focused engaging sermons. In chapter one, O'Neill introduces the concept of tension as "desire for resolution" (18). Rather than adding tension to the sermon, the preacher is to capitalize on the inherent tension of the biblical text. Building off 2 Timothy 3:16-17, O'Neill reminds the reader that each biblical text is designed by God to equip and complete his people. The goal of the preacher is then to discover God's design for the particular text under

study and show people their need of it. Chapter two guides the reader in the discovery process to find the text's problem and solution. O'Neill strongly recommends that pastors find the one "big idea" of each text. This approach honors the text, makes for clear and memorable communication, and builds on the anticipation already in the text. Chapter three provides four structural templates for sermons depending on the shape of the biblical text. O'Neill provides helpful examples for each of the four structures.

Chapter four, entitled "Disclose the Ultimate Solution," is O'Neill's plea for Christ-centered preaching. Whether in the OT or NT, Christ is the only and ultimate source of change that God's people need. The last chapter returns to the more practical considerations of how to introduce and conclude sermons. The book also contains two sets of helpful exercises to practice finding the "big idea" and determining the best structure depending on the text. O'Neill also provides appendices on the case for expositional preaching along with sample sermon series and outlines.

The greatest strength of the book is the author's conviction that the Scripture needs to be the center of attention in preaching. Each passage reveals a vital need and the preacher's job is to make his hearer aware of that vital need and design the sermon to address that need with the text. O'Neill also provides numerous examples along the way and gives the reader opportunity to work with the text along with the author. It is an ideal textbook for a Bible college, seminary, or church leadership class.

The most debated part of the book is surely to be the chapter on Christ-centeredness as the ultimate solution for every sermon. O'Neill, following in the footsteps of Clowney, Goldsworthy, and Greidanus, will likely rub some readers the wrong way. The question that naturally arises as a result of O'Neill's own emphasis on authorial intent is how that intent, which produces the problem-solution for the sermon, relates to his ultimate intent of getting to Christ. Are there two intents for the sermon? Is the thrust of the sermon delivering on the author's intent or on preaching the gospel? Interestingly, the inclusion of the chapter on Christ-centeredness illustrates the issue in O'Neill's own book. Without the chapter, his book reads as a focused, succinct, and purposeful book on engaging biblical preaching. With the chapter, the book feels a little disjointed by addressing two important but seemingly different issues.

This difficulty aside, *Preaching to Be Heard* is an incredible resource for preachers. Whether just starting out in seminary or having preached for years, the reader is sure to find the book convicting, encouraging, and exceptionally practical. It is reminiscent of the best parts of Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching* and Jay Adams' *Preaching with Purpose*. It is highly recommended.

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A Little Book for New Preachers: Why and How to Study Homiletics. By Matthew D. Kim. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. 128 pp. $12.00.

Matthew D. Kim, associate professor of preaching and ministry and the director of the Haddon W. Robinson Center for Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has authored a new work in homiletics titled, *A Little Book for New Preachers: Why and How to Study Homiletics*. He identifies his text as "a primer or introduction to preaching focusing on the characteristics of what makes for effective sermons and faithful preachers" (14). Stating the purpose of the text, Kim writes, "My hope and prayer you is twofold: that your reservations about preaching and being a preacher will be mitigated and that your interest in and even enthusiasm for preaching will be kindled" (15). To encourage readers to pursue the study of homiletics, he first addresses the importance of faithful preaching for the church today (Part I). He then presents and explains the three characteristics of faithful preaching: faithful exegesis and interpretation, cultural exegesis, and application (Part II). Finally, he examines the three characteristics of faithful preachers: benevolence, integrity, and being prayerful (Part III).

It should be stated up front that *A Little Book for New Preachers* is not a guide to homiletical method. In other words, Kim does not walk the reader through the process of selecting an expository unit, accurately exegeting the text, developing biblical consistent illustrations and relevant application, and presenting the sermon. Kim

admits as much (13-14). Instead, the work serves as an introduction to homiletics. It presents important topics new and experienced preachers must know about the practice in order to effectively and faithfully proclaim God's word.

There is much to commend in *A Little Book for New Preachers*. First, Kim effectively presents his case for the importance of biblically faithful preaching in today's churches. Without just a little noticeable irony, while the academy, popular culture, and even the church, have neglected and ridiculed the practice of preaching (19-21), solid and relevant preaching is still the primary draw of believers to a particular church. With Gallup survey research in support, Kim argues that "people in the pews still hunger for faithful exposition of Scripture" (26). If that is not convincing enough, Kim reminds his readers that "the tradition of the church's preaching has been one of God's chosen vehicles to change lives" (42). According to Kim, "We preach because our preaching seeks to increase discipleship, and a significant part of that discipleship process is loving God through our obedience, becoming more Christlike, and changing what we love" (52). Ultimately, the faithful proclamation of God's word is an incredible opportunity for the growth and spiritual health of the church, and Kim helpfully reminds preachers of the impact of their calling.

Second, Kim addresses the importance of preaching for the student of theology. According to Kim, preaching is the "capstone of biblical studies and theology" and "is the very cross section and consummation of all other theological disciplines" (29). Proclaiming the word of God boldly and accurately is the highest calling of the minister and the end goal of all one's biblical and theological studies. Kim's words stand as a healthy reminder of this fact. This proclamation is an important reminder for seminary students who may believe that teaching in the academy and academic research is more glorious and less "troublesome" than the work of the pastor.

Third, Kim skillfully balances the authority of God's word with the importance of cultural exegesis in preaching. According to Kim, "preaching also requires specialized knowledge of one's congregational culture" (72) because this culture can impact the way people receive the message (e.g., a decline in culture's biblical literacy might impact the biblical knowledge of the congregation, which can impact the reception of any given sermon). In other words,

preachers need to recognize who they are preaching to and shape their sermons accordingly. However, at the same time, Kim rightly warns his readers that

> whenever race, ethnicity, or culture becomes the primary agenda and the primary lens through which to read the text rather than advancing God's kingdom and declaring the good news of Jesus Christ, we become less faithful interpreters of the text (62).

As our culture becomes more secular, diverse, and reaps the harvest of postmodern thought, Kim's words stand as an important reminder for all preachers as they seek to faithfully proclaim God's word.

Finally, Kim rightly addresses the importance of character for the preacher. Kim reminds his readers that "preaching ability and charisma are inadequate to sustain a long-term, fruit-yielding ministry" (106). Instead, "a central pillar for faithful and effective preaching entails being a person of character and integrity" (113). Interestingly enough, one of Kim's best tips to safeguarding one's character is "to be who you are and like who you are instead of trying to be someone else or liking who someone else is" (112). While that advice might come across as self-help when taken out of context, it is valuable wisdom in a culture that glorifies celebrity preachers and ministerial fame (cf. 107-108). Being happy with God's calling upon one's life and recognizing the seriousness of one's calling to preach the word is the greatest deterrent to spiritual failure in ministry.

If there was one critique of the text, it would be found in Kim's comments regarding the Antiochian and Alexandrian schools of interpretation. He concludes his discussion on this topic by writing, "In order to deliver the message today, one must be a faithful interpreter of Scripture whether one ascribes to the Antiochian or Alexandrian philosophy" (60). The reader will likely question how a preacher could be a faithful interpreter of Scripture using an allegorical method of interpretation, or discovering meaning behind the text that is not stated by the text. Some clarification here is needed. On another note, some readers might get uncomfortable with his references to "her" when referencing the practice of preaching (e.g., 78).

Criticisms aside, *A Little Book for New Preachers* is a solid introduction to homiletics. While the text is not long, Kim's address

of critical issues in preaching makes it a worthwhile read for any preacher, whether in seminary or seasoned. I highly recommend this work for both the preacher in ministry and the seminary classroom.

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