

Galatians: Freedom through God's Grace. By Phillip J. Long.
Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019. 156 pp. Softcover \$22.

Philip J. Long (Ph.D.) currently serves as Dean at Grace Christian University in addition to editor of the *Journal of Grace Theology*. Long has written extensively on the Synoptic Gospels, most notably *Jesus the Bridegroom* (Pickwick, 2013). He has also contributed several scholarly essays on Paul such as his recent “The Potter and the Clay” presented at the 2019 SBL Midwest Regional Conference. Long regularly contributes to Reading Acts (readingacts.com), a blog dedicated to NT studies.

Paul’s letter to the Galatians represents a tension between freedom and law. Exposing and balancing this duality is the goal to which Long has committed in *Galatians: Freedom Through God’s Grace*. The broad theme that is woven throughout the book is the subtitle: “freedom through God’s grace.” More specifically, Long details three reasons to study the book of Galatians that serve as a catalyst for the study of the book and its themes: since it is the earliest NT writing, it allows us to understand Acts (and in particular chapter 15) in a “behind the scenes” fashion; second, it deals with the first major problem of the adolescent church; and finally, it addresses the question of freedom in Christ. This reasoning coalesces into a description of the main themes, which Long sees as central to the main “story” of Galatians. The first is the question of the Gentile believers into the Jewish community. He states, “The main problem Paul addresses in the book of Galatians is the status of Gentiles in the church” (4). Building off this is a second theme: Paul’s authority; specifically, Paul’s authority “to declare Gentiles free from the law” (5). A third theme is the status of the law in the new age (e.g., the question of circumcision in chapter 3). And finally, the relationship between law-keeping and ethics (i.e., how can one not keep the law and still be moral?). Many of these subthemes can be subsumed under the grand heading of “Freedom Through God’s Grace.”

Long makes clear that his contribution is not meant to be a technical or exegetical commentary, but rather for lay people, pastors, and Bible teachers who “need an overview of the main issues in the book of Galatians” (ii) without being bogged down in the mud of scholarly opinion.

The book could be broken down in the following way: chapters 1–3 (1–26): one gospel and the tension of law; chapters 4–6 (27–59): establishing Paul’s apostleship and being crucified with Christ apart from the law of works; chapters 7–8 (60–83): the purpose of the law in a new age; chapters 9–11 (84–109): slavery and the promise of freedom; chapters 12–15 (110–154): law-free Gospel. Long writes each chapter in a predicable but effective manner: an introduction, exegesis, and conclusion. Additionally, these chapters are broken down into mini-themes of the selected passage reflected in the title (e.g., Galatians 2:15–21 under the sub theme of “Crucified with Christ”). The exegesis is backed up by mostly current research, word studies, and various interpretive methodologies and why they may be insufficient.

The obvious interpretative framework in which Long sees Galatians is dispensational. This is clear, for instance, in the rejection of replacement theology in chapter 8, which discusses the interpretive decisions in Galatians 3:15–22. Long tends to the discussion in a way that does not alienate his intended audience. In other words, he is not mired down by technical explanations of covenant theology versus dispensationalism. Rather, he meekly explains what a covenant is and how his interpretive framework best supports the view of the writer, i.e., Paul. To these ends, Long presents many satisfying answers that will please fellow dispensationalists without alienating others with a reformed view of these passages. Rarely does Long dwell much on the verbiage of this system, nor does he engage in combat with other views contrary to his own.

There is much to enjoy about Long’s treatment of Galatians. One decisive element that other commentaries tend to lack is the addition of Second Temple culture, literature, and worldview within the context of the NT. By contrast, Long’s work leaves the impression that it is hardly possible to understand Paul without placing him in a proper, thoroughly Jewish context. This place setting occurs consistently throughout the book and is helpful in the finer points of his argument. Furthermore, Long presents the information in an unassuming way that laypeople, pastors, and scholars can approach and appreciate. Particularly helpful are the discussion questions at the end of each chapter so that this book can be read on its own or in a group setting. Overall, Long’s volume on Galatians accomplishes the

goal of presenting the information in a highly condensed fashion (with the “busy pastor” in mind) that is neither overtly technical nor too amateur. The three themes listed at the beginning mostly shine through throughout the book, presenting a cohesive front on which build his analysis. He frequently returns to these ideas in the first three chapters. Furthermore, the consistency with which Long weaves these themes throughout has to be commended as it provides a logical flow from one point to the next. Although this book was written to appeal to laypeople, it can still be useful for those who need a quick summation of the scholarly work on the epistle without stumbling through every controversy. Without a doubt, this work seems to be suited for Bible studies through the book of Galatians; the bite-sized chapters could span nearly 16 weeks and would not represent an overly taxing addition to busy lives.

Despite these praises, there are a few critiques as well. For one, the theme “freedom through God’s grace” sometimes leaves the reader wanting. It seems as if there are peaks and valleys where this theme shines through clearly at times and at other points is obscured (cf. chapters 2 and 14). Additionally, the first several chapters incorporate an abundance of extracurricular information that walk along Long’s tertiary purpose: how Galatians resonates with Acts. As the book reads down the stretch, this, too, becomes an afterthought (this may be because the epistle moves from a more narrative form with many allusions to contemporary events of Acts to didactic. In this case, it seems that the thematic material should be altered in order to showcase the narrative and the didacticism instead of attempting to unionize what was meant to be separate).

Finally, while the volume’s targeted audience seems to be mostly laypeople, some arguments could have benefitted from additional explanations. This is particularly true of chapters 11 and 12 where an extended scholarly analysis would have clarified Long’s own interpretive approach and why it is superior to other interpretations. With Long’s own teaching pedigree and careful analysis, this seems like it could have been done without alienating his lay audience, but also provide answers to wondering parishioners.

Nevertheless, Long has written an approachable and extremely valuable addition to Galatians commentaries. Questions remain if this commentary will be useful for those who hold perspectives opposing

Long and to what extent the work will benefit the academy. However, there can be little doubt that this treatment has a multiplicity of reminders, tools, and hermeneutical answers for those engaged in church ministry, lay ministry, and for pastors and Bible teachers. And because of that, one is sure to find valuable insights from Long's commentary that will help shed light on Paul's letter to the Galatians.

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The Last Things (Contours of Christian Theology). By David A. Höhne. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 344 pp. Softcover \$30.00.

David Höhne, from Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia, presents an erudite work in *The Last Things* where he attempts to present a theological interpretation of eschatology using primarily biblical categories and touchpoints. The viewpoint is amillennial and demonstrates an acceptance of NT priority for textual interpretation. In contrast to the outline of most general eschatologies, Höhne adopts the Lord's Prayer as the starting point for integrating his discussion of many biblical texts pertaining to a discussion of last things (xv). By doing this, the author hopes to develop eschatology using theological themes that are not "alien to the Scriptures themselves" and to provide a discussion of the topics in a way that growth in the Lord and responsive prayer emerge in Christian life (xv–xvi).

In addition, Höhne explains that use of the Lord's prayer grounds his system in apostolic reflection. Unfortunately, he believes this to harmonize with "rereading the Old Testament in the light of the person and work of Jesus Christ." While Jesus is the fulfillment of many OT predictions and promises, it is not at all certain that the word *rereading* is the best term to describe what is essentially NT use of the OT. Often this refers to an interpretation of the OT that has diminished connection to the OT text itself as it changes or removes the literal meaning. This approach jeopardizes the autonomy of the OT text for itself so that eschatological texts in the Old Testament do

not stand on their own and are not always brought over appropriately into eschatological themes.

In spite of potential problems in the overall approach, the work is refreshing in many respects. The presentation does not come across like most eschatology books because of its creative use of the Lord's Prayer for much of the book's outline. After an introductory chapter, chapter one entitled "Life in the Middle?" sets out the primary practical agenda of the book. "Life in the middle" refers to the time between the resurrection and ascension of Christ and the second coming (the time of the millennium to most amillennialists). The individual Christian living during this timeframe must learn to live in light of the proper understanding of the Bible's teaching about eschatology. Thus, eschatology is not just pie in the sky but matters to everyday life at the present time. All interpreters should agree with this aspect of eschatology regardless of overall position. In chapter three ("The Name Above All Names"), the opening words of the Lord's Prayer—"Our Father, hallowed be your name"—are integrated with a biblical theology of the name of God including both OT and NT texts. This pushes forward to Jesus as the one who has been exalted with the name above all names. The volume of information in this category is exemplary and helpful for biblical integration. However, the next chapters—on God's kingdom and God's will following the Lord's Prayer—while continuing a creative presentation of the material, are less helpful (see below). The last three chapters follow the prayer for God to preserve, forgive, and deliver us. The main takeaway here is the conservative affirmation of the physical resurrection of Jesus.

Naturally, a traditional dispensationalist like this author will have some specific issues with *The Last Things* since it comes from a different tradition. First, Höhne follows the popular evangelical view of inaugurated eschatology relative to the Messianic kingdom (172–73). Second, while the work gives proper place to the nation of Israel in past history, it has no place for the future of Israel as a nation in its land. Höhne, to his credit, does address OT texts that deal with Israel. For example, in chapter five ("The Father's Will for One and All"), he uses much OT Scripture and deals with the history and promises to David, Israel, Abraham, Noah, and Adam (in that order). While the order does not follow the progress of revelation, it is a somewhat

positive retracing of God's intentions throughout OT history. In fact, the prediction of Daniel 7:10–14 is viewed correctly as related to the end times even if the details of Israel's future based on the context are not considered (177). The promises appear to be viewed only in a spiritual sense. One particular example is the handling of Ezekiel 36:27 & 37:14—"I will place my Spirit within you"—as a fulfillment beginning on the Day of Pentecost (10). The context of Ezekiel's promises to the nation of Israel are overlooked, especially in chapter 37. The text actually reads "I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land." Contextually, the prediction is about Israel becoming a nation again through the power of the Spirit. None of this makes it into Höhne's analysis. This absence of national aspects for Israel's place in God's coming kingdom on earth with specific land allotments in fulfillment of OT pledges from God is consistent with Höhne's amillennial position.

Third, *The Last Things* does not present a robust exegetical analysis of the standard millennial positions. There is no major discussion of the various passages that are marshalled by proponents of each view. A brief review is presented (242–244), although the understanding of dispensational premillennialism contains some outdated information. In particular, Höhne follows the well-worn view that John Nelson Darby invented the doctrine of the pretribulational rapture in the early nineteenth century. He appears to be unaware that historical studies in the last thirty years have shown that such an understanding can no longer be credibly maintained.¹ The quick review of millennial positions is followed by a theological discussion that centers mostly on Moltmann's label of historical millenarianism which includes both premillennialism and postmillennialism (244–251). Höhne interacts mostly with Moltmann's criticism of amillennialism. Exegetical considerations do not play a major role in this interaction. The author can be granted a measure of grace on this point since the series preface states, "The series [Contours of Christian Theology] offers a systematic presentation of most of the major doctrines in a way which

¹Especially in view here is William Watson's study *Dispensationalism Before Darby*.

complements the traditional textbooks but does not copy them” (ix). Nonetheless, substantive interaction with Scripture at this point would have been more helpful considering its significance.

Fourth, there are a couple of questions that arise concerning Hühne’s approach to the book of Revelation, one general and one specific. First, he adopts the view that Revelation is an example of apocalyptic genre. This conclusion is an overstatement. Most exegetical commentaries on the Apocalypse suggest that it is prophetic literature given in an epistolary framework while containing within it some elements of apocalyptic genre. The difference is not a nuance of minor importance. Second, and more specifically, Hühne, while acknowledging that millennial positions depend upon many different texts, teaches (like most amillennialists do) that Revelation 20:1–10 is the most important text for understanding the millennium. Dispensationalists view this differently. The basis for understanding the outline of God’s coming kingdom is established in the OT well before one comes to any of the NT. The teaching of the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, etc.) leads to the conclusion that Messiah is coming to the earth in the end time days to establish his earthly kingdom over Israel and the entire world. Revelation 20 adds the additional information that there is a one-thousand-year inauguration of that kingdom with the framing of certain events like the binding of Satan and the Great White Throne judgment. The information from the Apocalypse is not necessary to establish the basic outline of what is called premillennialism.

In conclusion, this scholarly work by Hühne is not a work to be recommended for the average person in a local church. It is best to be used by seminary students, pastors, and scholars. In fact, it provides a refreshing approach to an amillennial view of the end times that complements my collection of works by other amillennial scholars. However, it is not a convincing defense of that position although it reminds us of the importance of Christian living in the here and now.

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Sanctification: God's Passion for His People. By John MacArthur. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020. 80 pp. Softcover \$11.99.

As a boy, I was reminded more than once that often big things come in small packages. John MacArthur's, book, *Sanctification: God's Passion for His People*, is small, but big. It's a short book that is long on content. In less than sixty pages, MacArthur effectively and concisely addresses God's passion for his people and their sanctification, suggesting that God's passion ought to be a pastor's passion for those he shepherds. MacArthur writes, "Despite the diversity of so many responsibilities, all those pastoral duties ultimately point to one clear and singular goal: the sanctification of God's people.... It is a fine summation of every pastor's ministry purpose: to see that Christ is formed in his people" (14). Selah!

The seven chapter titles telegraph the priority MacArthur places on sanctification as the primary goal of a pastor for those entrusted to his shepherding care. They are "The Prize of the Upward Call"; "In Defense of the Gospel"; "The Heart of a True Shepherd"; "Christ, the Embodiment of True Sanctification"; "The Missing Note"; "Authenticity and Antinomianism"; and "What Grace Teaches." MacArthur features the role of the pastor as the shepherd of God's sheep, who like real sheep need and require personal, pastoral care. He contends that the pastor should follow the example of Paul whose task was "to participate in leading believers to Christlikeness," which "is what he was most passionate about" (33). MacArthur asserts that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of true sanctification who personally disciplined Paul (Gal 1:12). According to MacArthur, "Jesus is the one who taught Paul to pursue sanctification in the power of the Spirit in order that he might be an example and an instrument for the sanctification of the people given to his care" (42). MacArthur proposes that Christ's passion for his people's sanctification sets the compass for sound, biblical philosophy of ministry (43). This passion was caught by Paul and must be the passion of pastors today who must neither be indifferent about holiness nor ignore to instruct their people in a whole-hearted pursuit of sanctification or Christlikeness.

According to MacArthur, Jesus' passion for the sanctification of his people was evident in his prayers and preaching. Jesus desired to

see his followers not simply appear to be holy, but to be Christlike. Likewise, the goal of sanctification is that Christ be formed in those shepherded by local church pastors who preach the Word and pray for God's people under their care. MacArthur asserts that too much preaching today is designed to make people feel good while practically nothing is said about sanctification (54). Thus, he stresses that Christlike, Spirit-empowered sanctification is needed. Bottom line? A godly pastor must not be satisfied with anything less than the sanctification of God's people.

Sanctification: God's Passion for His People is a primer for every pastor on the priority of teaching, preaching, modeling, and praying for personal, practical sanctification in his own life as well as in those he shepherds. In the last chapter, "What Grace Teaches," MacArthur clearly articulates that grace teaches discipline, correction, and power. In his own words, MacArthur states, "Can I say it simply? Sanctification is a process of fighting for full joy and not selling out for a cheap substitute along the way" (68). Amen!

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The Lord's Prayer: A Guide to Praying to Our Father. By Wesley Hill. Bellingham, WA: Lexham P, 2019. 144 pp. Hardcover \$15.99.

Wesley Hill skillfully unpacks the Lord's Prayer, one statement at a time. He begins with the invocation, "Our Father in heaven," followed by the seven specific petitions, and concludes with the doxology, "For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen." Using the New Revised Standard Version as his English translation, Hill methodically and effectively moves through this familiar prayer that is the prayer primer for followers or disciples of Jesus Christ. But in the introduction, Hill clearly asserts his purpose for writing this book: "Above all, I want to show that the Lord's Prayer is first and foremost about Jesus Himself ... each petition is a window into Jesus' own life of prayer.... The Lord's Prayer is a portrait of Jesus Christ.... Jesus is 'the invisible

background of every one of [the Lord's Prayer] petitions'—all of them are arrows that point toward Him..." (4–5). Thus, what often is called, "the disciples' prayer"—because Jesus spoke it in response to the disciples' plea to be taught how to pray—is in fact, the Lord's Prayer. It is for us, but about him.

In the invocation, Hill marks the strong contrast between the fifteen references to God as Father in the OT and the 170 times Jesus refers to God as Father by the end of the Gospel of John. Addressing God as "Our Father in heaven" launches the child of God into prayer as "we are invited to address God in the same way Jesus does" (13). The distinction between heavenly and earthly Father cannot be missed as through prayer we acknowledge "God's nearness and availability without pinning Him down to a specific geographical address" (15).

In the next seven chapters, Hill addresses each of the specific requests in the prayer, detailing the significance of each one. The first three petitions focus on the Father and the last four on his children. The "always and already holy" name of God is to be acknowledged, though it is holy whether or not we acknowledge it. His view of the kingdom on earth is more mystical than literal as he equates it with God's rule and the person of Jesus Christ reigning in the hearts of men. There's no mention of this petition being fulfilled ultimately when Jesus returns to establish his millennial kingdom on earth. Furthermore, Hill states that to pray, "Your will be done," is to "adopt an appropriate distress over the world as it exists now and to hold on to the conviction that God will even now begin to change the world" (42).

Hill espouses that the next four petitions model the posture of dependence on God of Jesus himself that he commands to his followers. Or as Hill put it, "Each petition of the Lord's Prayer is a window onto Jesus's character and actions before it is instruction to us" (52). For example, Hill states that Jesus sees himself as the daily bread he encourages us to pray for (54). He develops this theme throughout the rest of the book portraying Jesus as the sinless forgiver of sins, the one who was saved from the greatest of all trials, and the one who was delivered from the evil (one). Hill then states, "There is coming a time when we will have no more need to ask God for bread, for absolution, or for rescue.... Petitions will not be necessary in

God's future. We will cease asking God to supply our needs, since we will be entirely satisfied" (94). Amen!

Although Wesley Hill has not written a comprehensive commentary on the Lord's Prayer, his perspective that it is a portrait of Jesus Christ and each petition points us toward him is insightful and makes this book a value-add to one's study of this prayer and library.

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Redemptive Reversals and the Ironic Overturning of Human Wisdom (Short Studies in Biblical Theology). By G. K. Beale. Edited by Miles Van Pelt and Dane Ortlund. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 202 pp. Softcover \$14.99.

Redemptive Reversals and the Ironic Overturning of Human Wisdom by G. K. Beale is the latest in the Short Studies in Biblical Theology series edited by Dane Ortlund and Miles Van Pelt. The goal of the series is to "connect the resurgence of biblical theology at the academic level with everyday believers" (19). These short books take a biblical theme and demonstrate how that theme pervades Scripture, ultimately for the sake of glorifying Christ and building up his church (20).

G. K. Beale, a celebrated and fascinating NT scholar, writes to show the reader that the theme of irony pervades the Scriptures as God interacts with man. He writes, "This book is about the notion that God deals with humans in primarily ironic ways" (21). In his introduction, Beale distinguishes between *retributive irony* and *redemptive irony*. Retributive irony (chapters 1–2) occurs when "God punishes people by the very means of their own sin" (21), while redemptive irony (chapters 3–6) occurs when the faithful are actually blessed through what appears at first to be a curse. Beale also intends to demonstrate that retributive irony is ultimately seen through Satan and redemptive irony is ultimately seen through Christ.

Chapter one, “God Judges People by their Own Sin,” focuses on retributive irony in the OT. Beale uses examples such as Hamman being judged by what he intended for Mordecai, David being punished for his sin against Uriah, and the Egyptian Pharaoh’s claim to be a god turned against him through the plagues, to show that God often uses the very sin that one chooses in judgment against that person. After many historical examples and demonstrating that the same theme pervades the Psalms and Proverbs, Beale points out that this manner of God’s dealing is not the exception, but the rule, and concludes with some practical suggestions to avoid ironic judgment.

Chapter two, “People Resemble the Idols they Worship,” builds on some of Beale’s earlier work and argues that Scripture teaches that we become like what we worship—an example of retributive irony.

Chapter three moves to redemptive irony by considering “The Irony of Salvation.” Beale shows that, though Christians often experience hardship now, the tears will be turned to joy because the Christian will receive eternal salvation. This irony is seen in the gospel when the judgment a person was to receive is overturned by Christ’s work on the cross and a blessing is received in its place. Furthermore, Christ was the supreme example of this irony, taking the punishment on himself for the sake of a future reward.

Chapter four, “The Christian Life: Power is Perfected in the Powerless,” examines the truth found in Romans 8:28, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God” (115). Beale points to the example of Joseph in the OT, whom God blessed through the evil choices of his brothers and points again to Christ—who suffered but received a reward. The Christian who is struggling through suffering can find hope only in the word of God.

Chapter five, “Faith in Unseen Realities Contradicts Trust in Superficial Appearances,” focuses on the many examples of Hebrews chapter eleven. All the faithful saints in that chapter experienced suffering and hardship and yet had faith in the unseen blessing to come—had faith in the redemptive reversal.

The final chapter is entitled “The Irony of Eschatology.” Beale points out that Christ ironically began to fulfill the prophecy in Daniel chapter 7 and how Christ ironically has begun to reign invisibly now, with a full physical reign to come. Jesus’ reign will ironically be one

of both mercy and grace (to those who believe) and judgment (to those who reject him).

Beale's book has many strengths. First, the book is faithful to the series goal of connecting academic biblical theology with the everyday believer. The book is short (202 pages) and very readable with many contemporary examples that most people will be able to relate to. At the same time, Beale seriously deals with the theme in an academically reputable way that while not comprehensive, is certainly thorough.

Second, *Redemptive Reversals* is immensely practical. Beale includes practical suggestions in most of his chapters (see 48–50 or 132–134 for example). These suggestions are meaningful and demonstrate how serious theology can impact life.

Finally, Beale does a fantastic job at demonstrating one of the many ways that a particular theme ties Scripture together. He accomplishes his goal of demonstrating that irony is a pervading theme in a way that is meaningful for every Christian.

I heartily recommend this book for Christians who want to better understand their Bible. It is accessible for all Christians and will deepen their knowledge of Scripture while also deepening their walk with Christ. Beale's book is also beneficial for seminarians as a launching pad into greater study.

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Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons. By Graham A. Cole. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 270 pp. Hardcover \$40.00.

Graham Cole, Dean and Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, contributes the latest work in the highly esteemed Foundations of Evangelical Theology series titled *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons*. In writing this work, Cole desires to present a biblical and historical study of the doctrine of the supernatural world

while addressing contemporary concerns and sound application (21) while also placing the doctrine within the broader framework of a complete systematic theology (28). Following an introduction (chapter 1), Cole addresses the nature and activity of angels (chapters 2–3). He then moves to address the nature of Satan and his demons (chapters 4–5). This follows with a series on the defeat of these evil powers, beginning with Christ’s victory over demonic powers at the cross (chapter 6), the believer’s spiritual warfare over these powers (chapter 7), and the final destiny of these powers (chapter 8). Cole ends *Against the Darkness* with a conclusion explaining the relationship of angelology to other categories of systematic theology (chapter 9) and three short appendixes addressing topics as the metaphysical relationship between angels and humans (appendix 1), angels in Islamic thought (appendix 2), and angels in important articles of faith (appendix 3).

Against the Darkness does a solid job presenting the major biblical texts and topics in angelology to help the student understand the doctrine. Cole engages some unique theological topics in angelology, including the validity of the substantive view of the image of God in light of the rational nature of angels (42, 228), the Barthian thesis that Satan and demons are not fallen angels (101–102), the various models of spiritual warfare (172–187), the doctrine of testing the spirits (197–201), and Michael as the possible restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 (223–226). One issue I would have like to have seen discussed is the development of Satan in the biblical text, as this is a common target of anti-apologists who contest that Satan was developed late in Israel’s history as a theodicy. This aside, the array of topics will keep the interest of the seasoned theologian. However, perhaps the greatest strength of *Against the Darkness* is Cole’s address of important contemporary issues. Some of these issues include the praying for angelic assistance (70–71), the validity of angel stories (75–76), exorcisms (131–133), and the relationship of the demonic to mental illness (135–137). The addressing of these issues shows the breadth of *Against the Darkness*, which makes the text a handy reference work, and especially for the church, which is Cole’s primary audience (13).

On the other hand, there are some areas of *Against the Darkness* that could benefit from a more robust discussion. This might be best

seen in Cole's discussion of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 and their relationship to the fall of Satan. Cole defends the "double reference" view, which understands that these passages describe both the fall of the historic kings of Babylon and Tyre and the fall of Satan simultaneously (90–94). Cole explains the major views on the passages well and clearly contrasts them with the major evidence for the "double reference" view, which includes the exaggerated language of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, Satan's fall as described in 1 Timothy 3:6, and the testimony of the church fathers (93). However, a more complete exegesis on both passage in the original languages would have been helpful to show how these texts defend the "double reference" view, and especially in how the "exaggerated language" refers to Satan rather than irony against boastful historic kings. Another area that some readers might find disappointing is Cole's interaction with Second Temple literature. This interaction is noticeably limited in *Against the Darkness* per Cole's methodology (cf. 258), as he adheres to a more cautious approach to these uninspired texts (118–120), concluding that the systematic theologian should only "draw on background studies insofar as the biblical text is illuminated by them" (119). His interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4 becomes a case study of this methodology (138–140), as he understands the sons of God as "godly Sethites" rather than angels based upon "comparative difficulties," meaning that Cole finds the angels view more difficult to accept (139–140) even though it is the historic view per Second Temple literature (118–119). However, even if Cole is skeptical of the value of Second Temple literature (a view which is not entirely unreasonable considering the fanciful content of some of these works), it would have been helpful to include a fuller discussion of these texts and their merits or faults, as this literature contains important historical positions and is a significant area of biblical studies. There is also no interaction with ANE literature, an extrabiblical area of study that has become increasing important in the discussion of the supernatural world (for example, see Michael Heiser's recent works). Again, while Cole might find these extrabiblical sources suspect (and again, not without merit), it would be helpful to include a discussion of them and how they relate to Scripture, and especially in regard to the so-called "Divine Counsel" view, which has grown in popularity in OT studies. As a

final point of critique, Cole makes much of the fact that the Western world has ignored angelology due to its secular trending and that the majority world should be consulted more on the issue (22), and yet there is little citation of sources from the majority world, save a reference to demonic deception from an African perspective (201n159). Some development in this area would have enhanced the text.

These issues aside, *Against the Darkness* is a solid theological text on angels. While the text could have included fuller discussions on certain issues and extrabiblical literature, it presents the key passages and positions on the various subtopics within angelology with clarity and graciousness. Its discussion of important current issues makes the text even more valuable. I highly recommend it for pastors, students, and teachers as an important reference work.

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Church Leadership and Strategy for the Care of Souls. By Harold L. Senkbeil and Lucas V. Woodford. Bellingham, WA: Lexham P, 2019. 84 pp. Softcover \$9.99. Digital (Logos edition) \$6.99.

The two authors of this slim volume, Harold L. Senkbeil and Lucas V. Woodford, write from a combined ministry experience of more than seven decades, all within the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) context. Both men served as parish overseers prior to their current ministries, with Woodford serving nearly 20 years and Senkbeil more than 30 years. Currently, Woodford is the President of the Minnesota South District branch of the Lutheran Church, while Senkbeil serves as Executive Director of Spiritual Care at Doxology: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel. He also serves as adjunct professor at Columbia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

This little book is attractive in many ways. The first is its size. It is a trim 5x8 and consists of only 84 pages proper (with 18 pages of

Front matter). The reason this is attractive, in my opinion, is because of the crisis among pastoral leadership where men in ministry are dropping out at a rate of 50% within five years and 80% within 10 years (xiii). The ministry demands on these men undoubtedly seem overwhelming such that any hope of seeking help from a hefty tome might simply be too discouraging. But a trim volume like this is inviting in and of itself. But its tone and approach are also attractive. The authors are seasoned in ministry and are frank about their own mistakes and share freely and humbly about that. In fact, the first two chapters by Woodford are entitled “Learning from Experience: Leadership Woes” (chapter 1) and “The Good, the Necessary, and the Ugly Sides of Leadership—How It Nearly Ended My Ministry” (chapter 2). The authors also repeatedly underscore that pastoral leadership is subservient to the care of souls. Whatever pastoral leadership is, true biblical leadership will enhance the ministry of the Word from the pastor to the people and not detract from it.

The last two chapters (from a total of four chapters) are by Senkbeil: Chapter 3, “Leading Your Sheep—Administration and Strategic Planning”; and Chapter 4, “Pastoral Depletion Syndrome.” In the third chapter, Senkbeil teases out a difference between limited power and unlimited authority. The former is a cumulative commodity of the whole church, making it a finite resource, but the latter is resourced in God and is thus unlimited. Thus, he encourages pastors to lead and minister on the basis of Christ’s authority and not their own power. In a similar fashion, Senkbeil observes the distinction between *administration* and *ministry*. The former is essential to efficient ministry, but it is subservient to ministry. Thus, he both encourages and cautions pastors to strike the right balance without becoming dismissive of administration as something bothersome and burdensome, nor at the other extreme of seeing it as something preeminent. In a similar vein, he discusses the importance of adapting to the times (“Then and Now”), managing in such a way that pastors keep the central thing central and being thoughtful enough to plan ahead to provide sufficient time for people to adjust to the leadership direction the pastor hopes to take the church. Senkbeil concludes the chapter with an eight-fold strategic planning session that offers very helpful and pragmatic ideas.

On the last chapter by Senkbeil (“Pastoral Depletion Syndrome”), most directly addresses the hurting hearts of pastors who may be on the verge of throwing in the towel. He observes three downward steps for pastors that are rapidly approaching burnout: (1) *confusion*, (2) *desperation*, (3) *capitulation/hyperactivity*. That third step down he sees as having two possible manifestation. When some men reach this third step, they throw in the towel and capitulate to the pressures. Others, however, go into a hyperactivity mode. Both, he argues, lead to ineffectiveness and burnout. But he ends the chapter on the high note that there is help and hope for anyone at any point along the way.

I do heartily recommend this book as a valuable resource for the topic it addresses. Those readers who are not of Lutheran persuasion will note occasional references to “sacraments” and even “a Real Presence” in observing the Lord’s table. But these are incidental references that, in my opinion, do not detract from the larger topic of pastoral leadership. For its minimal price and potentially helpful and pragmatic content, this is a worthy addition to one’s library.

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The Lost Discipline of Conversation: Surprising Lessons in Spiritual Formation Drawn from the English Puritans. By Joanne J. Jung. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 224 pp. Softcover \$16.99.

The author of *The Lost Discipline of Conversation* is Joanne J. Jung. She is an Associate Professor at Biola University, holding a Ph.D. from Fuller Theological Seminary (2007). Her credentials suggest she is well-qualified for the topic of spiritual formation in general and with regard to the English Puritans in particular.

The book itself is laid out in three main parts. In Part 1, Jung presents what she calls *Rediscovering of a Lost Means of Grace*. This section is subdivided into five chapters wherein she makes the case that it is innate within God’s image bearers that they all crave

intimacy both with God and with each other (chapter 1: “Our Viral Hunger for Sacred Community”). In chapter 2 (“What the Means of Grace Means”) she explains the “means of grace” as a variety of ways of *conferencing* with others as exemplified among the English Puritans. She implies that this discipline was “lost” because one cannot find it in any contemporary list of spiritual disciplines, but 450 years ago was fairly common. In chapter 3 (“The Word Heard, Read, and Remembered”), Jung observes that Puritan parishioners regularly took notes on sermons and purposely set out to engage in “godly conversations” over these notes with others throughout the week. The purpose behind this intentional activity was to use it as a means of grace to deepen spiritual knowledge and “to confer over the spiritual state of their souls.” In chapter four (““A Kind of Paradise’: When Souls Were Refreshed”), she seeks to show the biblical basis of Puritan *conferencing*. She appeals to Malachi 3:16, which says, “At that time those who feared the LORD spoke to one another.” She also appeals to Psalm 66:16, “Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.” A ready-made time to do this is mealtime where one can eat and drink to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). In the final chapter of Part 1 (chapter 5: “Peek to Pique: Features of Conference”), she outlines what she sees as the primary aspects of *conferencing* as practiced by the Puritans. She identifies seven such features, all which are aimed a “soul care,” which then become the structure of Part 2.

The title of Part 2 is *Conference in Various Life Contexts* and essentially comprises the core of the book. It consists of six chapters. Each chapter has the same sevenfold structure as Jung outlines on page 49:

- Soul-to-Soul Purpose—Conference in context
- Soul-to-Soul Perspective—Updating conference for today
- Soul-to-Soul Participants—Conference participants
- Soul-to-Soul Perks—Advantages of exercising conference
- Soul-to-Soul Paucity—Losses by the absence of conference

- Soul-to-Soul Preparation—Alerts to consider when conferencing
- Soul-to-Soul Prompts—Tiered questions, prompts, and considerations that stimulate conference at these levels:
 - Informational
 - Transitional
 - Transformational

Chapter 6 (“Small [and Deeper] Group Conferences”) makes the case that small group community is a “nonnegotiable” with regard to effecting spiritual change and properly attending to the soul-care of oneself and another. She recognizes the innate weaknesses of small groups (viz., biblical and theological illiteracy) if they are not carefully managed. But these weaknesses must not prevent the small group conferences for the sake of soul care. She offers helpful practical suggestions that one can apply to today’s small groups.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on conferencing in the family. First, she addresses the family unit as a whole (chapter 7: “Family Conferences of the Conversational Kind”), where she observes that the head of the household’s primary responsibility for the care of all the souls under his stewardship. In chapter 8 (“Marriage Conferences of the Conversational Kind”) she focuses on the importance of husband-and-wife conferencing together involving intimate and spiritual conversation by husband and wife—the kind of conversation that references each other’s identity in Christ with the aim of advancing each other’s growth in grace. These two chapters are rich with insight and suggestion, which, if carefully and prayerfully followed, could profoundly improve marriage intimacy.

Chapters 9 and 10 concentrate on the importance of conferencing from a perspective of the church organizationally. In chapter 9 (“From Pastor to Pew and Back Again”), Jung underscores the importance of preaching, but then immediately emphasizes that all preaching must be followed up with personal engagement to discuss issues of the soul so as to gently lead the individual into God’s abundant blessings designed for that believer. In chapter 10 (“Not Your Typical Pastor’s Conference”), Jung underscores the importance of the pastor’s own soul care. She observes that often

pastors stay “on guard” around their people, lest their own weaknesses become exposed. But the wise pastor will cultivate a few relationships with “a trusted spiritual friend, peer mentor, or older mentor” so as to engage in the spiritual grace of conferencing for the benefit of his own soul.

Chapter 11 (“Distance Conferencing: From Signed Letters to Streaming Sunday Services”) is the last chapter in this section. The title is fairly descriptive of its content. Even the English Puritans back in the 1600s engaged in “distance learning” and “distance mentoring,” which Jung refers to as *conferencing*. Jung provides ample application for today’s electronic world that today’s church broadcaster would be wise to consider.

The final section of the book, Part 3 (*Soul-to-Soul Bible Studies: Conferencing through God’s Word*), consists of one chapter, and basically serves as a model or “How to” manual. She provides detailed suggestions for seven different passages of Scripture: (1) Matthew 1:1–16; (2) 12:29–32 and 13:22–32; (3) Matthew 13:1–23; (4) John 15:1–12; (5) Philippians 4:1–3; (6) Colossians 3:1–17; and (7) Hebrews 12:1–3. Each “Bible Conferencing” section is comprised of “Ground Rules” (dealing with the genre of the text); “Background” (highlighting the historical context); the “Ground Work” (the first application of the text to the heart of the hearer); and “Holy Ground” (a deeper penetration of God’s word into one’s life and ministry context).

The frontmatter and backmatter of the book should not go unacknowledged. There is a Foreword, a Word from the Author, Acknowledgments, and an Introduction. All helpfully angle the reader toward the following content. As for the backmatter, there are seven practical appendices (technically six, but the second appendix is subdivided into 2A and 2B) that help direct the reader and practitioner into hands-on application of biblical conferencing.

This was a delight to read, both from its historical perspective, but also from its timely relevance for the need for community in a day when community relationships have been challenged to a degree unseen in probably all of our lifetimes—though written prior to the COVID-19. The only constructive criticism I might make is perhaps in a future edition, Jung could add an example of Bible conferencing from a few of the Psalms, since these are ready-made for soul-care

application. As a biblical counselor, I plan to access this book and possibly even assign portions of it as homework assignments.

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Assessment for Counseling in Christian Perspective. By Stephen Greggo. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 345 pp. Hardcover \$40.00.

From the very first paragraph of the book *Assessment for Counseling in Christian Perspective*, the author catches readers' attention on why helping people is both challenging and satisfying all at the same time. We assess as we listen to the cry of a person's heart and then let assessment guide our journey alongside of them. Those who are in the people-helping professions must process an enormous amount of information in providing services if they are to be genuinely competent. As each person and circumstance is faced, four key questions ought to be asked: (1) Where is this person at? (2) Where does this person want/need to be? (3) How am I going to help this person get there? and (4) How will I know whether my helping has been effective (reached the goal)?

Assessment for Counseling in Christian Perspective is a timely and valuable addition to the library of a professional Christian counselor or pastor who wants to answer those four questions. Assessment is the daily routine of a counselor as the ethical delivery of appropriate services cannot begin to occur until one is fully aware of the concerns or issues that need attention. But assessment should also be a high priority for the pastor as well, even if counseling services are not generally a frequent activity. Those that come to counselors and pastors for assistance should have the confidence that we are persons who are aware of the nuances of humanity's biological, psychological, social, and spiritual landscape. Not everyone is qualified to navigate the deep waters of all those five domains effectively. But a healthy respect for the limitations that all

people-helpers have and making the appropriate referrals or treatment decisions is serving the person in need with respect and godliness.

In *Assessment for Counseling in Christian Perspective*, Stephen Greggo's command of theology as well as clinical psychology is refreshing as he takes into careful consideration how assessment ought to be significantly guided by God's word. As both an ordained minister and a licensed psychologist, Greggo weaves into the pages of this book the joy that is ours as believers to see through a lens that has greater clarity than a secular approach alone. The assistance that we can provide as we counsel in Christian perspective is rooted in biblical wisdom and honors the discoveries of general revelation.

Although a brief review of *Assessment for Counseling in Christian Perspective* cannot give justice to the benefits of each chapter, the fourth chapter on "Forming a Theological Foundation" is indeed refreshing. Greggo notes that wisdom cannot be easily defined and should be discerned in layers. He shares that these five layers of a wisdom search that we would benefit contemplating are Posture: submissive to triune God; Product: recognition of Scripture as authoritative; Process: dialogue with Christian community and doctrine; Person: reflecting Jesus Christ as wisdom incarnate; and Potential: eschatological purpose, a restored human soul. Although these layers are explicitly explained in this fourth chapter, they are also five threads that together form the cord that laces the entire book together. The challenge for Christians in the people-helping professions is to bravely and lovingly embrace this opportunity to seek God's wisdom through these five layers as we utilize assessment to serve him in this life-changing work.

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A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity's Global Identity. By Vince L. Bantu. Missiological Engagements. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. 239 pp. Softcover \$35.00.

Dr. Vince Bantu has served as Assistant Professor of Church History and Black Church studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is also the Ohene (Chief) at the Meacham School of Haymanot (theology) in Saint Louis, Missouri.

This addition to the Missiological Engagements series reveals both the exceptional capability of Bantu as a church historian and his burden for indigenous leaders to serve their people within the contexts of their cultures. The book is a carefully developed description of the global growth of the church through the ages. Ultimately, this project demonstrates that the concept of the arrival of Christianity through Christian missions in the Middle East, Africa, India, Central Asia, and Asia from the sixteenth century on is inaccurate.

The growth of the church of Jesus Christ has often been viewed primarily as the growth of the Hellenistic and Roman influences in the known world and Europe. The history of the development of the various branches of the Eastern church has also been generally discussed, especially up to the time of the East-West schism. What is often lacking is a detailed description of how churches were established in countries outside of the Roman Empire.

These churches were started in Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia, Nubia), Syria, Arabia, Armenia, Persia, India, Central Asia, Mongolia, Western China, and in other places along the way, over the space of seven centuries. Often these churches were started by people who strongly believed that the unity of Christ's divinity and humanity was betrayed by Chalcedonians. During the early centuries after Christ, Christians often persecuted those whose doctrinal beliefs were different than their own. After the rise of Islam, believers were in gradually expanding areas where they had to maintain and proclaim their faith under the control of Islamic leaders, often well-treated because of their care in presenting the doctrine of the Trinity and because they were not directly related to the church of Rome.

Bantu is not the first church historian to provide these insights. It has been the burden of late 20th and early 21st century scholars (Irvin and Sunquist, Adrian Hastings, et. al.) along with many historians of missions, to broaden the picture of the expansion of the early church to include countries, places, and people groups where Christianity took root much earlier than the periods of Catholic and Protestant world missionary movements.

The thing that makes Bantu's account unique is that he deftly moves from great, meticulous detail to broader strokes as he traces the doctrinal and ecclesiastical complexities of the first four centuries to the more rarified air of the movements along the Silk Road, using a great number of lesser-known sources along the way and weaving helpful illustrations through the text.

Bantu occasionally pauses to make a connection between historical problems and contemporary issues in missions and the church. For example, on page 170 he points out the implications for "contemporary matters of race, ethnicity, and Christian identity" of the identity politics that resulted for Persian Christians from the Christianization of Rome." The problem is that Christianity is viewed as a "white/Western" religion by non-Western and non-white people. Bantu's book is useful to help to dispel that fallacious point of view. Before the timeline, image credits, and indices of the book, the author includes a conclusion. In that chapter, Bantu warns that "if it is the desire of the church to exist deeply rooted for the long term among all nations, tribes, and tongues, it is necessary for the gospel to be stripped of any geocultural association and contextualized to particular milieu" (255).

In that a recurring theme in the book is that missionaries and local believers contextualized their beliefs in order to disciple and live peaceably, the question of how much compromise was necessary over time will come to mind, with its companion question, "were they still Christians?" As a historian, the author usually does not, cannot, answer that question. In truth, only God knows. The final chapter will cause some readers to struggle in that Bantu makes a plea that is vital for missionaries, regardless of their home country, to understand, but one that requires some thought.

The last section of the concluding chapter, "Missions as Cultural Sanctification," will probably be the most troubling in that it

encourages a discipling of “ethnic identities and value systems.” The concept is difficult in that it joins gospel, discipling, and sanctification to cultural transformation in a way that changes the usual theological use of the words. In reading this, it will be helpful to remember that a culture will be changed by the presence of those who have believed the gospel, been discipled, and as members of the culture accept, resist, or change aspects of the culture according to their walk with Christ and truth.

This book would be an excellent text for church history or history of missions courses. It will also be a good but challenging read for any thinking Christian who wants to have a deeper understanding of how, and how far, the church grew in the first few centuries of its existence.

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Questions of Context: Reading a Century of German Mission Theology. By John G. Flett and Henning Wrogemann. Missiological Engagements. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. 233 pp. Softcover \$40.00.

The compilers and editors of this volume are John G. Flett, lecturer in intercultural theology and mission studies at Pilgrim Theological College, part of the University of Divinity in Melbourne, Australia; and Henning Wrogemann, who holds the chair for mission studies, comparative religion, and ecumenics at the Protestant University Wuppertal/Bethel in Germany. Wrogemann is also head of the Institute for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies. Both authors have published extensively in these fields. Karl E. Böhmer is credited with having translated most of the texts.

This academic work surveys the modern history of the study of missiology in Germany through presenting a series of texts written from 1897 (Gustav Warneck) to 2015 (editor Henning Wrogemann). Many of these texts are presented in English for the first time, and the

editors should be congratulated for making these writings available to those who do not read German fluently and who would otherwise not have access to them. IVP's Missiological Engagements series continues to provide academically rich volumes on sometimes difficult, but necessary, subjects.

Through the introduction of the book, the introductory portions of each of the six chapters of the book, and the analyses at the ends of the chapters, the authors assist the reader in understanding the contexts of the readings, and the arguments of the authors of the readings. In the final chapter, the authors of the book reflect on the "proper" complexities of the concept of context as reflected in German missiology.

Since context is used in the title, this reviewer will describe three issues of context that will be helpful to a reader of this interesting but difficult book. First, the book is written to illustrate diachronically the changes in perspective on cultural issues within German missiological schools of thought. The fact that the emphasis is on Germany should alert the reader to the fact that missiologists were always accepting or countering the various developments during Germany's history over the century-plus period mentioned above. Second, some of the essays were written by missiologists who were active on the world stage through their involvement with such organizations as the World Council of Churches (WCC). As a result, the evangelical reader who has had little or no background in issues of interest and concern to members of the WCC will find these essays to be difficult and theologically challenging. More than once "the end of Christian missions" (not the end of Christian mission, *per se*, but the end of "Western Christian mission") is explained or countered. Third, such issues as the establishment of churches, the forms of churches, the relationship of church to culture, and mission to church, are generally discussed within the context of the church in Germany.

Redefinition is the struggle for most of the authors of the quoted articles. What is the church? What are missions, and what is mission? What is culture? What is religion? What is the gospel? What is mission-*Dei*? What is dialog? What is the significance of hermeneutics? What is intercultural theology? Because many of the

articles reproduced reference writers of the other articles, there is provided for the reader a conversation about these issues.

Let me emphasize that the introduction and analysis portions of each chapter and its set of writings are necessary to help the reader to understand the drift and language of the writers of the always interesting but sometimes obscure quotations.

This book will be useful for courses on the history of “Western” mission/missiology, theology of missions, intercultural theology, and cultural analysis. It will, of course, be useful for any course on the history of modern German missiological thought. Although many students (and teachers!) will disagree with the conclusions of various authors, lively discussion should result from its use.

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