

***Life in the Presence of God: Practices for Living in Light of Eternity.***  
**By Kenneth Boa. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017. 256**  
**pp. \$17.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8303-4516-3.**

Following in the mystic lineage of Brother Lawrence, Watchman Nee and Frank Laubach, *Life in the Presence of God* exhorts readers to enjoy abundant life by experiencing the presence of God. Kenneth Boa, who serves as president of Reflection Ministries, needs little introduction within the field of spiritual formation. He speaks regularly as a much sought-after speaker and has authored numerous works, including *Rewriting Your Broken Story* and *Conformed to His Image* (Zondervan, 2001).

Boa begins *Life in the Presence of God* by stating, “My goal is simple: to learn with you how to practice the presence of God better in every facet of our lives. By practice, I mean discerning and developing habits of awareness of God’s presence—if not all day, every day, at least much more often than most of us typically do” (1). With that purpose in mind, he organizes his book into two parts. The first part of the book covers the biblical basis of the topic. Taking up much less space than the second part of the book, this section consists of four chapters. The first chapter begins by asking the reader, “What do you really want?” Boa asks this question to help the reader determine whether he or she wants God or the things that He provides. He summarizes that the secret is life in Christ and then shares ways in which people can come into this mystical union. Chapter two explores the biblical images used to convey the Christian’s union with Christ. These images include: abiding in the vine, setting your mind and heart, walking, running and offering yourself up to God. Building on the exploration of the example of Jesus set forth in chapter three, chapter four considers walking with God. Bible character studies supplement the section by considering the examples of Adam and Eve, Enoch, Abraham, Moses and David. The rudimentary nature of these initial chapters will prove instructive to new believers and provide reminders to seasoned saints.

The second part turns to praxis by informing his audience on how to practice God’s presence. The section starts with exercises and training practices to help readers cultivate their ability to enjoy God. Chapter six delivers the most innovative content found within *Life in the Presence of God*. While investigating the topic of “Rewiring Your Mind,” Boa

introduces his audience to the latest findings on neuroplasticity. This content distinguishes Boa's work from other books on the topic, and particularly the classics in the field. "Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to reorganize itself," explains Boa (113). An individual's brain is "specially wired for ongoing growth," particularly through experience, emotional arousal, repetition and focused attention (112). This can have negative possibilities by engraining bad, persistent habits, but can also be positive in aiding a person's growth in godliness. Regarding this positive aspect, he summarizes, "It's feasible to train our minds to be more open to God. To adapt our thinking to see the world like he sees it. And to reorganize our lives around practices that help us become more aware of his presence" (113). Practitioners can achieve these possibilities regardless of age, intellect or other possible limiting factors.

Chapter seven challenges readers to hone their worldview in order to see the world as God sees. The next chapter tackles the "single greatest threat" to applying the book—busyness. Like chapter six, this content also distinguishes *Life in the Presence of God* from the classics by addressing current activities and devices that steal an individual's time. As Boa offers instruction on reorganizing time, he reminds readers that many of these activities can be limited or even eliminated. He proposes that even in the midst of appointments, interruptions and daily responsibilities, one can still find ample time to experience God.

The next three chapters deal with specific topics that can help a person on his or her journey of enjoying the Lord's company. The first topic is suffering. Without minimizing the subject, he proposes that even suffering can be a means to adore God. Next, he handles "Repenting of Sin" by covering the subjects of identity, dealing with temptation, and making things right with God and others. After this, he dedicates a chapter to the importance of "Remaining in Community" in order to grow and flourish. He concludes the book by inviting readers to reimagine a life with the book's contents put into practice as people prepare for their eternity.

Boa accomplishes his purpose of offering challenging insights and real-world practices that help his audience experience and enjoy God's presence. The simple, yet practical content of each chapter will help inform new believers and offer new guidance and fresh disciplines to those who have long walked with the Lord. The chapters include "Practice Tips" and conclude with doable exercises under the section headings:

“Listen to God in His Word” and “Practice His Presence.” These resources help the reader apply what he or she has learned in each chapter. Along with all of this, the author and publisher make available more practices, exercises, and resources through a free online training guide entitled “A Guide to Practicing God’s Presence.” With over two hundred pages of content, this guide is a terrific means for further growth. The busy and hectic nature of modern life often lulls the believer into an unawareness of God’s abiding presence. *Life in the Presence of God* offers tangible ways to shatter this impoverishing obliviousness.

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***40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline.* By Jeremy M. Kimble. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2017. 272 pp. \$19.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8254-4445-6.**

Church polity is a difficult subject to teach in a seminary. Students often come from a variety of church backgrounds and will serve in many different church traditions. Instructors must tread carefully on these matters and sometimes neglect to teach on it at all, but one of the first lessons that a pastor must learn is the importance of church polity for a healthy church. For many church leaders, this is a subject that they will have to study on the job. For this reason, Jeremy Kimble’s *40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline* is an important resource for students and pastors alike in exploring the Bible’s teaching on the aspects of membership and discipline.

*40 Questions* is organized into forty chapters, divided into four parts. Part One makes a case for the importance of this topic and provides definitions. Kimble observes a growing ambivalence and apathy among Christians towards the institutional church in this day, and his goal is to “refute such thinking and establish the critical importance of church membership and discipline in the life of the Christian” (15-16). After defining the church as the people of God saved by Christ and incorporated by baptism (21), he then defines church membership as the “formal relationship between the church and a Christian” characterized

both by the church's oversight and the individuals' submission to one another (27). Discipline, on the other hand, is the authority given by Christ to the church "to maintain order through the correction of persistently sinning church members" (34).

Part Two works through fifteen questions dealing with church membership, including theological, ministerial, and practical questions. In the first section, Kimble provides the biblical and theological foundations for understanding church membership. While explicit instructions about church membership itself are not found in Scripture, "the concept of... and implications for membership are" (45). One chapter gives an overview of Old Testament trajectories and New Testament instructions (with another chapter devoted to Matthew 16), demonstrating that God's people have always been distinct from the world and in covenant with one another. Kimble also provides a brief overview of church history, showing how regenerate church membership was quickly lost with the rise of paedobaptism and the combination of church and state. It was only with the Reformation and the establishment of Free Church Protestantism that the church recovered a proper understanding of membership, and this recovery continues to this day. The next section continues with questions related to the impact of church membership on a church's ministry, both in promoting discipleship and healthy leadership. It also includes an important chapter on the fact that church membership may look different from church to church, depending on context. The last section addresses practical matters, from common objections to the age of membership to membership removals and beyond.

Part Three follows the same three sections as before, but now dealing with church discipline. In the first section, Kimble explores theological themes of exile and discipline in the OT and then devotes three chapters on NT church discipline texts: Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5, and a variety of other texts. While church discipline "is not as expounded upon as frequently as other doctrines in the NT, it is certainly cited and holds great importance for the doctrine of the church" (165). Kimble also provides a historical overview of church discipline, showing how it was neglected and altered in the early and medieval church, but recovered at the Reformation, though in the Modern Era, it is once again in decline. The next section works through various ministry questions, relating church discipline to discipleship, leadership, restoration,

implementation, and more. Finally, Kimble works through practical questions, once again answering common objections, providing best practices, and presenting the benefits, goals, and limitations of church discipline.

Part Four concludes the book by tying church membership and discipline to the rest of Christian theology and the Christian life: “they serve as a reminder that theology is not merely esoteric; it truly affects the way one lives the Christian life” (262).

While there is much to be commended about this book, a few limitations should be noted first. Kimble’s teaching is more specifically on membership and church discipline in a credobaptist and Congregationalist context. Christians coming from paedobaptist churches or churches with different governing structures (Presbyterian or elder-ruled) will need to consider how to translate certain aspects of his teaching for their contexts. Additionally, this book provides an overview of this subject, but by no means is it a manual for ministry. Those who are looking for answers to specific questions might not find them here. There are many more questions related to these subjects, particularly when it comes to the countless issues and circumstances that can arise during pastoral ministry. The aim of this book is not to provide an exhaustive guide, but an overview and defense of these two doctrines.

In spite of these limitations, this reviewer is glad to recommend this book to church leaders and members alike. Perhaps the greatest strength of this book is Kimble’s biblical defense of membership and discipline. One of the most common objections to these doctrines is, “Where is this in the Bible?” Though Kimble gives an overview of church history, he only uses it to help the reader understand the present context. But in making a case for church membership and discipline, Kimble argues from Scripture, placing it in the larger context of biblical theology and dealing with specific texts. When one connects membership to the theological theme of God’s covenant people being distinct from the world, they will see it not only in a few prooftexts but throughout the storyline of Scripture. For pastors and teachers who are looking to teach their congregations, Kimble provides a convictional, rather than pragmatic, understanding of church polity that is rooted in Scripture.

Additionally, Kimble offers pastoral wisdom for applying membership and discipline in the local church. While he is coming from a Baptist, congregational context, much of his practical teaching will be

applicable in all contexts. For example, as leaders consider how to introduce the practice of church discipline to their churches, Kimble counsels them first to teach on church membership, cultivate a culture of discipleship, and work on their church structures (201-202). Undoubtedly, this is a helpful guard for any zealous pastors who might seek to introduce such a practice too quickly, bringing division to their congregations. While one should not expect this book to answer every question, it does provide a solid starting point for applying these doctrines in the church.

For all of those who are looking for a biblical understanding of the church and a robust vision of ministry, they should read this book and begin putting it into practice in their churches.

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***How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets.* By Peter J. Gentry. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 130 pp. \$17.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1433554032.**

Peter Gentry is the Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His purpose in writing this book is simple and straightforward. He writes, "What I hope and pray is that this book will help *all* believers learn how to read and understand the texts of the biblical prophets on their own" (p. 14). Gentry pursues this goal by describing seven characteristics of the prophetic literature: 1) Exposing Covenant Disloyalty, 2) The Purpose of Announcing Future Events, 3) The Function of Repetition in Hebrew Literature, 4) Why So Many Speeches about Foreign Nations, 5) Where the Past Becomes a Model for the Future, 6) Apocalyptic: The Use of Metaphors and Symbols, and 7) Chronology and Literature That Paint Panoramas (p. 14). These are the topics of the seven chapters of his book. To evaluate the merits of this book, an examination of its positive elements, its negative elements, and a brief, summative review of the book are in order.

Gentry's work covers a significant amount of ground in a short space. He sets the biblical prophets in the context of the biblical covenants (especially the Mosaic covenant) and argues that their primary function was to invite Israel back to covenant faithfulness. He then explains the literary devices that the biblical prophets use (word pairs, chiasm, etc.). Finally, he illuminates the unclear (foreign) elements of the biblical prophets (i.e., oracles concerning the nations and language about the future). He covers such a vast array of material in 115 short pages. Indeed, one of the greatest strengths of Gentry's brief work is its comprehensiveness. This book provides a thorough starting point for anyone who wants to learn how to read the prophetic literature. However, comprehensiveness is not the book's only strength. Gentry's insights into the prophetic literature are fecund. I will outline three of his insights here. First, Gentry describes Hebrew poetry as progressively repetitive (recursive) in nature (pp. 41–42). Hebrew poetry repeats the same idea from different angles to cement the concept in the reader's mind and thereby displays the breadth of the idea. This phenomenon occurs at the micro-level (parallel lines) and macro-level (repeated discourses) in prophetic literature. Among other things, this repetition illuminates many perplexing texts in the prophets. For example, Isaiah 34:5 says that YHWH's sword has drunk its fill in the heavens and that his sword descends for judgment upon Edom. Gentry contends that Isaiah 24:21 explains Isaiah 34:5 when it says, "On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on earth." Isaiah 24:21 shows that YHWH's sword drinks its fill in the heavens by punishing heavenly powers and it descends for judgment on Edom by punishing earthly kings. In this instance, repetition clarifies the meaning of an earlier text in addition to instilling a new idea in the reader's mind. Gentry aptly notes that this is an interpretive benefit of the recursive nature of prophetic literature.

Second, Gentry dispels the popular notion that prophecy is simply prediction about the future (especially the distant future). Instead, prophecy is revelation from God about Israel's and Judah's present and future circumstances. As a divine word about the present, the prophets of Israel and Judah confronted social injustice in their times and called God's people back to covenant faithfulness. As a divine word about the future, the prophets foresaw and predicted pivotal events in the near and distant future. None of this is revolutionary, but Gentry makes the

insightful point that the prophets validated their prophecies about the distant future by their prophecies about the near future. The fulfillment of the “near” prophecies ensured the fulfillment of the “far” prophecies (e.g., Isaiah 7–9). He even argues that this feature governs the macro-structure of some of the prophetic books (e.g., Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah). According to Gentry, these prophets intentionally interweave near prophecy with far prophecy to validate the far prophecy.

Third, Gentry elucidates the prophet’s nuanced depiction of the future. He suggests that the prophets use typology (chapter 5), apocalyptic language (chapter 6), and the already/not-yet paradigm (chapter 7) to describe the future. Again, this analysis is not revolutionary. Nevertheless, Gentry describes these literary devices with clarity, enabling the non-specialist to handle this material. For example, Gentry outlines six common features of apocalyptic literature to aid the interpreter in understanding apocalyptic imagery. Gentry’s adept and user-friendly description of these literary devices is a major strength of this book.

Despite its many strengths, Gentry’s work also contains notable weaknesses. Chapter seven, *Describe the Future, Part 3: The Already and the Not Yet*, is far too short (5 pages). Moreover, in certain places, his writing style is somewhat choppy and hard-to-follow (unlike his other publications). He also includes unnecessary attacks on biblical criticism throughout the work. For example, he says, “Those narratives about the creation story were not composed from different sources, as scholars have mistakenly proposed from the eighteenth century onward...” (p. 44). This sweeping generalization ignores the complexity of this issue and it promotes simplistic thinking about a complicated subject. He could at least show more nuance when discussing this matter. Gentry’s attacks on biblical criticism here (and elsewhere in the book) appear to align with his intention to prove single authorship of Isaiah. This is a noble goal, but since it is tangential to his primary purpose in this volume, it should have been left out. Finally, some of Gentry’s examples throughout the volume are weak. For example, Gentry argues for a chiasm in Isaiah 33:13–24 (pp. 47–50). His assessment is questionable even on a surface-level reading of the text. He also contends that Paul refers directly to Isaiah 27:12–13 in 1 Thessalonians 4 when he envisions a trumpet blast on the final day. However, he does not defend this bold assertion. Such a strong claim should be backed by careful analysis.



In summary, Gentry's work is an accessible introduction to reading the prophetic literature. It would be especially useful in an Old Testament Introduction course at the Bible college or seminary level. Nevertheless, it is too brief. I hope that he will lengthen the material and publish a second edition. Moreover, an academic version of the work (which he is more than qualified to write) is a desideratum.

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***Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study in Augustine.* By John Peter Kenney. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. 191pp. \$35.00, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0198758822.**

John Peter Kenney describes his latest work as a prequel to his 2005 volume, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Re-Reading the Confessions*. In that work, Kenney sought to rescue Augustine's mystical experiences described in *Confessions* from the assumption that such mysticism was of a common variety. Contrary to some interpreters, Augustine's was a much more theologically rich and biblically focused sort of mysticism. In *Contemplation and Classical Christianity*, Kenney focuses on Augustine's earlier works in light of the Platonist tradition which preceded him, the tradition that he subsequently Christianized. Analyzing Augustine's development of contemplation in light of the Platonic tradition (mediated to Augustine via Plotinus) sheds considerable helpful light on the *Confessions*, and demonstrates the "Classical Christian" notion of contemplation aided by grace and mediated by divine revelation.

In chapter 1, Kenney provides a thorough summary of contemplation within pagan monotheism, focusing heavily on Plotinus. In this chapter, Kenney does well to remind readers that Augustine was simply not a baptized Platonist, but rather appropriated the Platonist tradition in a "nuanced and complex" fashion (p. 11). Therefore, Augustine's Platonism is not simply a Christian variant. Though Augustine owed his appreciation of transcendence to the Platonists, his view of contemplation would soon leave behind many elements of the Platonic system. Kenney's main concern is not with this argument so

much as it is to show the central themes that were of interest to Augustine. Such shared interests centered on the question of how humanity acquired knowledge and experience of transcendence, particular as these related to God.

In Chapter 2 and 3, Kenney looks specifically at the early Christian (note pre-baptismal) writings of Augustine at Cassiciacum. In this season of Augustine's reflection, the transcendence of Platonism gave him a greater appreciation and understanding of the Christian religion of his childhood (38). Having rejected Christianity as a dingy and simplistic faith, Platonism broke open the door so as to finally show him the supreme spiritual qualities of Christianity. This was not a syncretism of Plato and Jesus, but simply a selective use of ideas to better appreciate and approach the True Idea, which is Christ. Thus, even at this early stage, Augustine was selectively using Platonic notions while rejecting those that did not square with core Christian teaching. Augustine's "most striking revision of Platonism" was the assertion that God seeks after fallen souls as a personal and present deity, contrary to Platonist thinking or even Manichaeism renderings (54). From here, Kenney lays out in more detail what was unique about Augustine's view of contemplation in chapter 3. Education and the love of Wisdom all contribute to knowing and contemplating God. The early dialogues of Cassiciacum already demonstrated these distinctive themes, which were replicated in *Confessions*, particularly Book 7. As Augustine advanced, he modified his views slightly to more clearly address the nature of man's fallen soul (p.86-92).

In chapter 4, Kenney moves from these early writings to those that were written after baptism and ordination, as Augustine entered a time of concentrated study of Scripture. Augustine continued to focus on the notion of transcendence, yet increasingly asserted man's inability to attain such a state apart from grace. Divine assistance is necessary because every facet of man's constitution, including our reason, is in a fallen state. Both the "beauty of the divine image" and the "scrambled darkness" are present when one embarks on the journey of contemplation (105). Kenney relates Augustine's journey of transcendence not only to Platonic reflection, but also to a desire to address concerns aroused by Manichaeism. In seeking to avoid a radical dualism as proposed by Mani, Augustine argued that the failure of the soul to achieve contemplation is not due to any sort of innate evil caused

by the body, but to the consequences of a rebellious and fallen soul. This said, Augustine's vision included humility and recognition of one's frailties in the task of regular and sustained contemplation. Contemplation was therefore not the "final and sustainable state of spiritual sanctity, but the quotidian task of the fallen soul" (p. 118).

In chapter 5, Kenney moves to Augustine's *Confessions* and the specific ways that he expressed and defended his vision of contemplation. Focusing on books 7, 9, and 12, Kenney highlights Augustine's adherence to God's transcendence and his defense of a form of unmediated contemplation. This contemplation is brief and pursued through a life of faith and virtue, rather than adherence to philosophy or liberal arts. It is also only possible because God is already present in the believer's life, and even then, still offers divine assistance. Augustine's mother, Monica, recognized that such contemplation was Spirit-led and connected to the life of the church (155). Kenney also notes that such contemplation enlightened Augustine and Monica regarding the "exile of their souls" (154). Therefore, contemplation was not the end, but the beginning of a new life seeking after the one true God.

Kenney provides readers with helpful insight in a readable form. This is especially admirable given the complex subject matter at hand. The question of Augustine's relationship with Platonism is an age-old debate, and Kenney proves to be a helpful conversational partner in engaging this topic. With this in mind, readers may notice a lack of interaction with contemporary sources. This is mitigated by his masterful grasp of Augustine's early writings and reflections. Kenney is enjoyable to read and helpful in understanding early Augustine platonic reflection and relating it to the wider devotional life of Augustine. This book is recommended for those seeking to better understand Augustine's earlier writings, as well as those interested in Augustine's reflection on the soul's relationship to God.

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***The Early English Baptists, 1603-1649.* By Stephen Wright. Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2006. 288 pp. \$70.68, Hardback. ISBN 978-1843831952.**

The pantheon of English Baptists claims some of the most foundational and well-known individuals, including Smyth, Helwys, and Bunyan, yet Stephen Wright begins his work with the weighty claim that his research will defy the dominant view of a simple dichotomy of early English Baptist groups between General and Particular. Could there really be any unity in a period wrought with transition, persecution, and absolutism? Giving ready examples from historical events both known and unknown, the book often asks a new question of an old source in the effort to bring back the complicated and nuanced history of a very loose and disjointed movement. While the task of arguing from the simple to the complex is large, Dr. Wright is certainly up to the challenge. He received his Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of London after working on his dissertation, which eventually became this book. If scholars have abandoned the seventeenth-century English Baptists as a mine exhausted of resources, Wright makes the point that there is still much more to learn from this period. This motivates him to provide ample sources at every juncture. By the end of the book, Wright promises to provide new information to even the most seasoned scholar in English Baptist history.

The book begins by introducing the reader to the world of the English church prior to early Baptist emergence. Wright describes the interlocking of the secular and sacred worlds of church and state (3), as well as the difficulty any new or outside religious group faced when all opposing voices were silenced, with the good intention of maintaining political and religious authority. Wright argues that in this climate, men like John Smyth were pushed out of England before they ever encountered Anabaptist movements on the Continent. The example given is Smyth's conversion to believer's baptism and subsequent baptism of both his church members and himself, all of which occurred *before* his merger with the Anabaptist Mennonite church (8). Wright claims this as evidence that Smyth had not yet found a faith group that represented his personal beliefs and teachings, and that the event did not thus signify a new movement as much as it revealed that these groups were not as connected or unified as some might assume. Throughout,

Wright uses this type of analysis to promote a uniquely English Baptist movement that may have borrowed from other groups but nevertheless rose independently of their leadership.

The chapters move chronologically, beginning with the very same man used as an example in the introduction: John Smyth. The biographical material describes him and his setting well and the first chapter tackles the Puritan, Separatists, and Baptists from 1603-10 and makes Smyth the instigator of much turmoil over the autonomy of the local church and the calling of pastor (14).

The book then moves on to look specifically at the Baptist movement in England in the formative years of 1611 to 1638. During this period, Baptists were facing continued opposition from the established church, yet they saw growth and scholarship abound. Wright then presents the “The Restoration of Immersion and Baptist Alignments, 1638-44” in chapter three. The evolution of Baptist theology is kept tethered to the timeframe as rituals and beliefs were developed and adopted by more and more groups. Wright offers the historical narrative, then explains the reasoning behind it.

In one example, many people still struggled to reconcile their new and personal beliefs with the very large decision to completely denounce the officially sanctioned Church of England that had played a significant part in the lives of most Christians in that period. In fact, Wright states that some churches identified as “semi-separatist” – that is, they were not *completely* separate. This caused division in one such church, as Wright notes on page 75: “Several groups of this semi-separatist church left because of its refusal to repudiate the Church of England.” This was a major concern because, while an individual might have been able to uproot and move to the Continent, an entire church could be subject to major penalty for this no-small decision.

This chapter does go on to analyze how and why the practice of immersion came back into prominence. In an earlier chapter, Smyth likely used a basin to self-baptize. Wright describes the Dutch connection and the influence of some Reformed groups that helped bring back the immersion process. This ambiguity and inconsistency is intriguing, and thankfully included in Wright’s account. This chapter also presents some differing views concerning the rise of General Baptists and their emphasis on free will. Interestingly, even some of its founders wrote against Arminian doctrine, causing great controversy (99).

Further chapters include “Internal Discussions and External Alignments, 1642–5,” “The Baptists and Politics, 1645–7,” and “The Army, the Levellers and the Revolution.” These chapters discuss the issues that arose when the new Baptists began to work out how to integrate into society. Would they participate in government? Would they join the military? Such questions frequently settled on the side of non-involvement.

The parameters of Wright’s argument are laid out in the introduction of the book: to add depth to the scholarship on early English Baptists. Yet the book does much more than simply explain the basic divisions and their beliefs. Wright describes the historical background for the Baptist movements, taking them out of a vacuum and explaining the “why” behind each movement. This causes the book to rise far beyond elementary scholarship. Instead, Wright attempts to offer the reader a tour of the early Baptists’ hearts and minds – an attempt that this reviewer believes he accomplishes.

Wright offers a litany of sources and footnotes for further analysis – many of them contemporary to the events unfolding in the text. He returns to some already-parsed Baptist works, but very often delves into underutilized or previously unknown sources. For example, Wright tells the story of how Smyth and Helwys embraced believers’ baptism. He writes: “It is now accepted that he [Smyth] did baptize [sic] himself. Robinson reported this ‘as I have heard from themselves.’ ‘Mr. Smyth anabaptised himself with water,’ says Ainsworth: ‘he and his followers having dischurched themselves and dissolved their communion; yet he in that state, preached, and anabaptised himself and then anabaptised others’” (33).

While many other books on the subject simply state that Smyth baptized himself, Wright offers the same information in the words of multiple sources. The archaic spelling and unusual words like “anabaptised” immerse the reader in the story. Other sources follow this quotation with the same richness and unique honesty.

Academically, Wright is careful. He rarely makes any value statement or judgment without providing an exhaustive anthology of references as to why his statement is valid. This does make the reading laborious at times, yet equally adds to the richness of the content, which borders more on a reference work than a monograph at points.

Wright does not, however, abandon his role as writer and expositor. We often see his own analysis arriving only after he has shared the primary passage, much as a minister might exposit Scripture in a sermon. Wright states only a few paragraphs after the earlier quotation: "The most controversial aspect of Smyth's career was his decision to rebaptise himself" (34). He asks the same questions that most researchers would ask: "Why not find someone else to do it?" And then Wright subsequently uses that as a platform to describe the divisions that were present even in these like-minded groups. Though he would later join with the Mennonites, at this stage, Smyth was still struggling with having his calling recognized and agreeing on "succession in ordination" (34).

That very same honesty with the often-troubling subject matter is another strength of Wright's book. In location after location, the text bluntly gives examples of how hard ministry was during the given time period. Continuing to use Smyth as a case study for this review, Wright states: "In March 1605 Smyth provided more evidence of his difficulties in finding acceptance as a clergyman of the established church" (15). He goes on to describe how Smyth had to respond to unjust accusations against him as a pastor.

Speaking more generally in the same portion of the book, Wright quotes Smyth as he laments that "persecution is a great discouragement to a minister, and it driveth many a godly man to his dumps, and interrupteth his ministry, or at the least, the cheerfulness in his ministry" (15). This offers invaluable perspective on the characters as real people facing the very real struggles of ministry. Once again, a survey text could have reworded these hardships and glorified Smyth as a pioneer, yet here we see him speaking openly of losing cheerfulness and even falling into depression. For all the sources where the subject, or their chronicler, would seem to glorify or even revel in the persecution, Smyth would rather not have experienced it. Wright offers a refreshingly honest approach to historical theology.

The book also benefits greatly from the chronological layout. The theological developments were complicated through this period and can only really be understood as they built on or reacted to other ideas *a priori*. Other books of this genre attempt the same type of work from a topical viewpoint, and while the organization is convenient to study the evolution of a particular belief, it is impossible to maintain any sort of

coherent timeline in the mind of the reader as to what events and personalities were interacting with the ideas themselves.

Wright brings the best of history and theology to the forefront as he offers a friendly, but unapologetic voice. He presents the complexities of the period and its players without sounding as if he is recounting the deeds of great heroes. His own epic is one of nuance, compromise, and struggle – a rare, but real-life opportunity to be transported into the minds of seventeenth-century ancestors of the equally complex modern Baptists we know today.

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***Retrieving Eternal Generation*. Edited by Fred Wanders and Scott R. Swain. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 304pp. \$34.99, Paperback. ISBN 9780310537878.**

In response to the theological conversation that happened online in the summer of 2016 regarding Eternal Functional Subordination, Dr. Stephen Holmes of St. Andrews University said, “It is very hard, probably impossible, to do polemical theology well through the medium of blog posts.”<sup>1</sup> What Holmes was lamenting with this statement was the inability that the blogosphere has to carry nuance and precision in a conversation as meaningful as eternal relations and distinctions of the Godhead. Enter *Retrieving Eternal Generation*.

In *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, editors Fred Sanders and Scott Swain give readers what lacked in much of the online conversation in 2016: nuance, carefulness, and theological charity. Moreover, this work is a demonstration of how interdisciplinary theology should be done with biblical, historical, philosophical, and systematic theology working harmoniously to deliver the reader to a conclusion. In the case of *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, that conclusion is that the doctrine of

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<sup>1</sup> Holmes, Stephen. “Eternal Functional Subordination and Inseparable Operations.” Presentation at The Evangelical Theological Society, San Antonio, 2016.



eternal generation “secures Trinitarian theology against a broad array of disorders, sclerosis, and deflections” (18).

As far as structure, the book has three parts: Biblical Reasoning, Historical Witness, and Contemporary Statements. Each section consists of a collection of contributions by authors that span several denominations and institutions.

In Part One, Biblical Reasoning, each author either introduces a biblical theme and work through a series of pertinent verses, or introduces a particular text and does the exegetical work necessary to deliver the reader to a given conclusion. For the former, see chapters by Swain and Soulen, while Emerson, Gignilliat, Carson, Irons, and Pierce all fit into the latter category.

The second section of the book, Historical Witness, treats individual theologians and eras of theology. In terms of the individual theologians covered, Ayres examines Origen of Alexandria, Johnson works through Augustine, Larsen interacts with Edwards, and finally, Allen concludes the chapter with Barth. Unlike the other contributors in this section, Dixhorn examines an entire era of theology by parsing Trinitarian perspectives of Post-Reformation thinkers.

The third, and final section of the book, Contemporary Statements, consists of three essays that are meant to add to current conversations regarding the doctrine of eternal generation and spans multiple disciplines including philosophy and systematic theology.

There is very little to critique regarding the book by way of content; of course, that depends largely on whether or not the reader agrees with the conclusions drawn in each chapter. It is certainly possible to negatively assess the book for lacking topics that it never set out to address in the first place. However, it is the opinion of this reviewer that the book accomplished what it set out to do. One critique that stands is that of flow.

Like many anthologies, there is an issue of stating the problem. Typically, in constructing a chapter, authors will begin by stating the problem. However, with a collection of essays all from different authors, this becomes either distracting or redundant. At times, *Retrieving Eternal Generation* falls into this error. It could have been more productive to devote a chapter solely to tracing the historical problem of a diminishing doctrine of eternal generation that acted as a unified reference point for the rest of the work.

Moving past this small critique, there is more benefit to this book than a brief review can do justice. Let us begin with the crucial reality that this book is “fair.” The authors are aware of the insufficiencies of their own arguments, as well as each other’s, which they own. For example, Carson critiques Lee Irons’ use of Hebrews 11:17 (89-90), but also does exegetical work to show that there have historically been passages used to defend eternal generation that should not have been (91). Furthermore, Makin admits that his philosophical model of causality is insufficient to make a legitimate case for the aseity of the Son (249).

Second, there is merit in each of the essays in their own right, yet the book is most convincing when viewed in light of its entirety. For example, Emerson cites Kevin Giles’ six reasons to reject eternal generation. The most important of the six is point one, which reads, “[Eternal generation] has no ‘biblical warrant’” (61). Emerson does a fine job demonstrating that readers should doubt this proposition due to Proverbs 8. Yet readers should further doubt the point when Emerson’s exegesis of Proverbs 8 is held together with Carson’s work on John 5, Gignilliat’s case of Micah 5:2, and Pierce’s essay on Hebrews 1.

While this brief review does not do the book justice, it will have to suffice to concisely mention helpful aspects of the book. Readers will benefit from the retrieval of a number of historical arguments for the doctrine of eternal generation, such as Augustine’s assertion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and not the “three brothers” (87), Dixhoorn’s introduction of underplayed theologians (Gataker, Featley, and Cheynell), as well as his captivating storytelling (183-202), the introduction to helpful theological categories that serve as explanation of difficult Trinitarian realities (such as Carson’s “unidirectional obedience”) (96), Emerson’s capable critique of eternal functional subordination and his advocacy for a more mature biblical/systematic hermeneutic (64-65), Sanders’ systematic display of the relationship between soteriology and eternal generation (260), and Makin’s four desiderata for defining eternal generation (247), as well as his three model proposal for philosophically defending the doctrine (248-258). These are but a few beneficial aspects of the work.

While there are sure to be readers who do not find the arguments in this book ultimately convincing, those readers who wish to oppose the arguments presented here should seek to provide answers to at least three questions: (1) What eternally differentiates essence in the Godhead

that does not dissolve into either tri-theism or ontological subordination? (2) What does it mean for Jesus, according to John 5, “to have life in himself” that is simultaneously “granted by the Father”? (3) What are we to make of the divine names that seem to imply familial generation (63)? Moreover, if “Son” is best understood in the economic Trinity only, what are we to make of pre-incarnate uses of the title, such as John 3:17 (86-87)?

In conclusion, *Retrieving Eternal Generation* is a strong biblical, historical, systematic, and philosophical defense of the doctrine of eternal generation. This reviewer recommends this work to any reader seeking an explanation or defense of this underplayed doctrine.

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***Spirituality for the Sent: Casting a New Vision for the Missional Church.* Edited by Nathan A. Finn and Keith S. Whitfield. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 253 pp. \$30.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0830851577.**

A collection of frequently used words often emerges in written resources and conversations among scholars, pastors, ministry leaders, and Christians alike. For example, it is common to hear the descriptor ‘gospel-centered’ to characterize everything from a church’s budget to its small group curriculum. One also sees this in the ubiquitous uses of the homiletical designation of an ‘expository’ preacher. What does that mean, however, when there are such wide-ranging conceptions of biblical exposition? Certainly, few preachers want whatever label qualifies for the opposite of what one means by ‘expository.’ The title of this volume is arresting because the editors and their immensely qualified contributors seek to grasp two buzzwords saturating the Christian academic circles’ landscape and the broad evangelical church scene. In doing so, Nathan Finn and Keith Whitfield provide a clarifying answer concerning what many consider to be a confusing landscape: What does it mean to be missional, and how does missional Christianity relate to spiritual formation?

In their introduction, Finn and Whitfield alert readers to the growing interest in both missional theology and spiritual formation, yet few inquiries probe where these movements converge. One of the many strengths of their book is the intentional exploration into this intersection. Even the best investigative efforts to employ these terms fairly will fail if these terms are not investigated in their natural (and biblical) relationship. The editors “want evangelicals and other Christians to cultivate what we call a ‘spirituality for the sent’ that helps to foster a new vision for the missional church” (3). This goal is both admirable and warranted. Surprisingly, Finn and Whitfield seek this cultivation to materialize primarily from within the Christian academy, with the belief that scholars can create greater infiltration to all who are downstream of their influence. On the one hand, this approach is refreshing, because Christian scholars need the occasional nudge to keep their academic pursuits aligned with the ecclesial connections providing the foundations of their works. On the other hand, this approach requires a broad spectrum of scholars to prevent an unnecessary bifurcation among academic disciplines. In other words, if scholars are going to heed this admirable effort, it must not be restricted to the missions department of the local seminary. Instead, it necessarily requires the concerted efforts of systematic theologians, biblical scholars, practical theologians, church historians, and missiologists banded together. Finn and Whitfield not only recognize the necessity of each discipline having a role, but also wisely include a list of first-rate conversation partners representing these fields and more to situate this volume in a needed space within this subject matter.

In the first chapter, Finn and Whitfield trace the roots and the emergence of crucial terms such as “missional,” “*Missio Dei*,” “Missional Church,” and the influential leaders, organizations, and books associated with their usage. Additionally, they integrate a similar focus on the spiritual formation movement. The importance of the first chapter cannot be overstated. In addition to its acute historical analysis, the sweeping section on the development of the modern spiritual formation movement is the best ten-page summary of this topic in print. Mercifully, the editors rescue the reader from the ambiguities, which often linger in these discussions, by providing explicit definitions of their terms. Finn and Whitfield “propose three statements that will help us understand what it means to use the adjective *missional* to modify our church, life,

vision, network, and so on" (27). To be missional means living directed by the mission of God, living a life shaped by the mission of God, and living sent on the mission of God. Spiritual formation is defined as "the cultivation of grace-motivated spiritual practices and habits, drawn from the authoritative Scriptures and the best of the Christian tradition, which the Holy Spirit uses to foster spiritual maturity in the life of the believer for the glory of God, the health of the church, and the sake of the world" (29). These robust and clear definitions avoid the vague, unfortunate concoctions that all too often hinder substantive dialogue among interested parties.

This book consists of eleven chapters, the first being the editors' unpacking of the missional church and spiritual formation. The remaining chapters bring together a diverse collection of conversation partners for the reader. Some contributors are major voices in missional theology and spiritual formation, while others bring a focused perspective on a critical issue within these subjects. For the former, consider Craig Bartholomew's chapter on "Spirituality, Mission, and the Drama of Scripture," or Anthony Chute's and Christopher Morgan's chapter on "Missional Spirituality as Congregational." Each of these scholars has a footing within biblical and theological studies and provides thoughtful correctives to the discussion. For the latter, consider the provocative chapter, "Missional Spirituality and Justice," by Ma Elise Cannon. Readers have much to glean from her helpful distinctions between acts of service, compassion, mercy, and charity within conservative churches seeking to be more engaged with social justice. Cannon fills her chapter with practical wisdom and concrete suggestions for implementation.

The remaining chapters each have their strengths. Susan Booth issues helpful insights regarding God's presence throughout the biblical narrative and applies her insights to modern missions in her chapter "Missional Spirituality and Global Missions." Timothy Sheridan and Michael Goheen address "Missional Spirituality and Cultural Engagement," a familiar subject for these two established missional theologians. Not surprisingly for those familiar with Goheen, a combination of the Dutch Reformed tradition and keen insights from Lesslie Newbigin's pen linger throughout their critique of common Christian proposals for cultural engagement. Gary Tyra provides his seasoned voice to the subject of "The Contextual Nature of a Missional

Spirituality.” Tyra has written on this subject in other publications, and in this chapter, he exhorts readers to integrate a culturally sensitive spirituality with regard to methodology and contextualization.

Soong-Chan Rah’s chapter “Lament as Appropriate Missional Spirituality” offers a pointed critique of what he calls a “triumphalistic US Christianity,” whereby Americans maintain a “self-perception of privilege and the subsequent assertion as the saviors of the world” (145). As a corrective, missional Christianity seeks to correct many mistakes of the previous generations, but in doing so, it must incorporate a theology of lament, which guards against relapsing back into triumphalism. Diane Chandler addresses “Godly Love: The Primary Missional Virtue” in her chapter, where she highlights the exhortations and implications of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are involved in the *Mission Dei* as they reflect divine love. In Gordon Smith’s outstanding chapter, “Missional Spirituality and Worship,” readers are reminded and encouraged that “the mission of God in the world cannot be understood and appreciated apart from the liturgical life of the church” (182). Smith winsomely weaves together the ecclesial necessities of a liturgical community, a catechetical community, and a missional community. Because of Pentecost, the power behind these pursuits is the Holy Spirit. The final chapter, “Journey in the Spirit” by George Hunsberger, is an excellent concluding chapter to this volume. He brings together some of the themes addressed in earlier chapters and unifies them into a more cohesive paradigm.

Overall, this volume contains considerable strengths. First, the editors are to be commended for their intentional pursuit of clarity regarding this important subject matter. This volume serves those seeking clarity in missional theology and those who seek to inquire more deeply into matters of spiritual formation. Their ability to achieve this combination within this volume rests in their vision and the contributors that they assembled. Second, the contributors provide a diverse voice to the discussion, and the importance of this fact cannot be overstated. This book is not merely an obscure collection of essays pushing a denominational agenda; instead, it is a collection of engaging articles written by men and women representing various strands of contemporary evangelicalism. Within this subject matter, this approach is necessary for inquiring readers. Third, a deep love for the church is

evident throughout each chapter. Even at moments of critique, readers will not lose sight of the goal of strengthening the church as it welds together individual spiritual lives within the whole of the church's mission.

As a matter of critique, an additional chapter would have been helpful for the average pastor who decides to read this book for further growth and ministry effectiveness. How does the pastor theologian of a local church use his weekly preaching time to shepherd his people into a missional spirituality? How does the goal of this book affect preaching? Certainly, this critique is minor, because, in some ways, various authors address aspects of this angle, but a specific chapter restricted to the role of preaching would have been a helpful addition to the local pastor who embraces what this volume encourages. The shortcomings are miniscule when compared to the numerous benefits this volume offers. Consequently, the chapters in this book are best viewed as conversation partners among believers seeking to unpack what it means to live within a spirituality for the sent.

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***Mind the Gap: How the Jewish Writings Between the Old and New Testament Help Us Understand Jesus.* By Matthias Henze. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. 248 pp. \$39.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-5064-0642-8.**

Matthias Henze has produced a helpful introductory text aimed at acquainting readers with some of the lesser-known books from the late Second Temple period and demonstrating their relevance for understanding the life and message of Jesus within first-century Judaism. Unlike other introductory handbooks, the purpose of Henze's book is not to provide a survey of Second Temple history and literature. Instead, he has selected specific "case studies" from the New Testament that exemplify how the Second Temple literature can shed light on Jesus's life and ministry. Henze's main objective is to persuade the reader that "the Old Testament will not give us the context that can explain the

Judaism of Jesus” (34); rather, the proper context for understanding Jesus is found in the Second Temple literature.

In total, *Mind the Gap* consists of seven chapters that are divided into two parts (chapters 1–2 and chapters 3–7). Part One, entitled “Mind the Gap! Reading between the Old and New Testament,” is designed to give the reader a cursory overview of the history and literature of the Second Temple period. Chapter 1 contains a survey of the major historical periods from the Babylonian exile to the Roman era. Henze also briefly discusses the date of composition for most of the Old Testament literature and the canonical arrangement of the books in the Protestant Old Testament. In chapter 2, Henze introduces the reader to some of the non-canonical texts that were written during the late Second Temple period, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, *4 Ezra*, and *2 Baruch*.

Part Two of *Mind the Gap* is entitled, “The Jewish Jesus.” Chapters 3–6 were originally delivered as public lectures at the University of Sydney, Australia, in 2016. These four chapters contain case studies that are meant to demonstrate how the non-canonical Second Temple literature can help us, as modern readers, to understand the Jewish world of Jesus. Chapter 3 discusses messianic expectations in the late Second Temple period. Chapter 4 explains Jewish beliefs about demons and spiritual beings in the time of Jesus. Chapter 5 addresses Jesus’ and Paul’s view of the Jewish law. Chapter 6 looks at the topic of resurrection and the afterlife. The book concludes with an epilogue in chapter 7 that summarizes the relevance of the Second Temple literature for our understanding of Jesus within first-century Judaism. At the end of the book, Henze provides a brief section of suggested further reading and a helpful glossary of technical terms that might be unfamiliar to some readers who are new to this subject matter.

In general, Henze’s overall project is commendable. He has successfully distilled large quantities of history and technical information into an easily digestible text that is accessible to the average interested lay reader. Henze’s style is personable and conversational, and he comes across as knowledgeable without being overly academic. In chapter 1, Henze’s sketch of the history of the Second Temple period is succinct and lucid, although some scholars might take issue with the dates of composition that Henze assigns for some of the biblical books (particularly Daniel and Ecclesiastes). In chapters 3, 4, and 6, Henze



provides compelling examples of how the non-canonical Second Temple literature helps to elucidate our understanding of Jesus and his cultural milieu.

In spite of the strength of these chapters, there are some minor shortcomings. For example, in the discussion of demons and spiritual beings in chapter 4, it is surprising that Henze neglects to connect the Watcher Myth in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* to Jude and 2 Peter. Such a discussion would have been enlightening to the reader and would have strengthened the objective of Henze's project.

Chapter 5 ("Did Jesus Abolish the Law of Moses?") is the least satisfying of the four case studies examined in the book. In this chapter, Henze's goal is to argue that Jesus did not abolish the Jewish law. The problem is that he only spends eight pages out of thirty discussing a few of the Second Temple texts concerned with the law (Ben Sira, the Damascus Document, and 4QMMT), and he does not actually use any of these texts as evidence for his argument. He only mentions these texts because they illustrate the "variety of understandings of the Torah toward the end of the Second Temple period" (133). Henze's argument is entirely based upon his exegesis of Matthew and Romans. This seems to undermine Henze's initial thesis that the Second Temple literature is crucial for a proper understanding of the New Testament. Besides the fact that this was probably not the most suitable example for a case study, there will also be some readers who are disturbed by Henze's interpretation of Paul. Henze, who draws upon the New Perspective on Paul, seems to hold a dichotomous view of God's salvific plan, in which the Gentiles are saved by faith and Israel is saved through the law.

One other significant deficiency in *Mind the Gap* is Henze's ambivalence about the purpose for his book. While Henze states at the beginning that his objective is to help readers see the importance of the non-canonical Second Temple literature for understanding Jesus, he gives an entirely different reason for his book in the epilogue. Here, he explains that his work is driven, in part, by a reaction against theological supersessionism and the anti-Semitism of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century German scholarship. Henze is motivated by a desire to demonstrate that the differences between Jews and Christians are not as great as many people think. This book is an attempt to instill in Christians a greater openness and acceptance of Judaism. Henze's two objectives conflict with each other at various times throughout his

project with the result that the book seems to lack focus. At the end, the reader is left wondering, “Does Henze want me to read these Jewish texts in order to better understand Jesus, or so that I will have a higher estimation of Judaism?”

Notwithstanding these deficiencies, Henze should be commended for his efforts to help people in the church understand Jesus within his first-century Jewish context. While some discernment is necessary, *Mind the Gap* will profitably serve as an *entré* into a deeper study of the Second Temple literature for lay, non-specialist readers who have an interest in the Jewish world of Jesus.

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***Four Views on the Church’s Mission. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology Series.* By Jonathan Leeman, Christopher J.H. Wright, John R. Franke, and Peter Leithart. Edited by Jason S. Sexton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 208 pp. \$16.99, Paperback. ISBN: 978-0310522737.**

Multiview books have become exceedingly popular in the digital age, especially considering that public theological arguments are more accessible than ever before. This is certainly the case with one of the most recent books in the Counterpoints Series, *Four Views on the Church’s Mission*. Sexton sees the church’s mission as “tied to the church’s very *being and constitution* as the people who by the Spirit have dynamically become the body of Christ” (11). In this book, four authors offer their positions and responses to the current debate on the mission (i.e. “being and constitution”) of a church. As for the authors’ qualifications and limitations, Sexton summarizes, “The writers of this volume have real limitations, are each Anglophile males, and possess British PhDs. Yet each in one way or another is connected to the church around the globe” (194). Each of these authors seeks to answer a few fundamental questions: “What *is* the church? What is the church *doing*? What *ought* it to be doing?” (193). At large, the authors provide their understanding of the church’s mission in either prioritist or holistic frameworks. Leeman

is the only one who belongs to the former camp, while the other three authors belong to the latter.

Leeman understands the church's mission to be *soteriological*. Throughout his chapter, he notes both the "broad and narrow terms" of mission (17). The narrow (or priestly) work focuses on *making disciples*, while the broad (or kingly) work focuses on *being disciples*. Leeman is resolute that "we should affirm both a narrow mission and a broad mission" (19). However, his "pastoral and programmatic sympathies liken with the narrow camp" (19). In this, Leeman shows his prioritist leaning. He has a couple of reasons for this. First, he believes the "church as an organized collective" has been authorized with priestly authority to *make disciples* and "every member of the church" has been authorized with a kingly authority to *be disciples* (20). The corporate church's specific job is to make disciples of all nations through "word ministry, like preaching and evangelism" (18). On the other hand, each church member's job is to live as a disciple in a loving, caring way. The second reason for Leeman's prioritist view is his understanding of hell. While the church – in two separate ways – should be concerned with both broad and narrow mission, the "eschatological wrinkle suggests that the narrow mission deserves special attention (i.e. priority)" (34). If hell is eternal suffering, then care for the soul is more important than care for the body or care for the earth. Therefore, the church should be most passionate about the salvation of lost souls. On the whole, Baptists will find themselves most comfortable with Leeman's understanding of the church's mission. Thankfully, he does not neglect either aspect of that mission; he only prioritizes one. However, he seems to lessen the corporate church's responsibility on the "secondary" issues. If one leans too hard toward Leeman's view, one might find oneself labeling churches that advocate for social justice as *culturally Marxist*.

Wright sees the church's mission as *participatory*. Like Leeman, Wright believes the church has both a broad and narrow mission, though he would never use those terms. He does not see one as more important than the other; in no way is he a prioritist. His reasoning is that the Bible does not explicitly make one more essential, and so, he does not want to employ what he sees as a faulty hermeneutic to come to that conclusion. What Leeman sees as two distinct aspects of mission, Wright sees as *one, whole mission*, for they are not "set in competition with each other" (71). He advocates for a "holistic, biblical mission" (75). His holistic view is

overtly and rightly cross-centered. “[The] cross must be as central to our social engagement as it is to our evangelism” (76). He summarizes the church’s “whole mission” into three categories: 1) *cultivating the church* (evangelism, teaching, baptizing, and nurturing), 2) *engaging society* (compassion and justice ministries), and 3) *caring for creation* (helping sustain life on earth). Unfortunately, while Leeman believes priority should be given to the first, Wright believes priority does not exist among the three. This is due to his understatement of hell, which he hardly ever addresses. As a holist, he emphasizes how the gospel affects more than the individual, but eternal perspective is not rightly considered. If hell is real, eternal, and horrific, then the narrow, priestly mission should be the church’s priority.

Franke extends the conversation on the holistic view. He writes on how the church’s mission is *contextual*. He understands God’s mission to be one of love. In like manner, then, the church’s mission should be a loving one. He says that the “mission of God in relation to the world... [is] love and salvation” (112). Franke’s understanding of “salvation” addresses more than the individual. He writes that “this salvation entails the liberation of the created order – humanity and the entire cosmos – from the powers of sin and death” (113). Franke concludes that the church’s mission should, *holistically*, include “liberation, transformation, new creation, peace, reconciliation, and justification” (114). Unlike Leeman, Franke is an annihilationist. This has far-reaching implications for priority in missions. If one believes hell to be *real and eternal*, one will *most seek* the salvation of lost souls. If one believes hell to be *real but temporary*, emphasis on evangelism will be lessened. Furthermore, Franke believes the church’s mission should be “radically contextual,” for the gospel has an “infinite translatability” (130). While this reviewer is thankful for his emphasis on the need for contextualization, Franke compromises the *oneness* of the gospel. In some places, this loving gospel can *mean* and *affect* one thing, while in another, it can mean and affect something else. The major shortcoming of this chapter is that Franke does not understand the gospel as essentially one, singular *story* of good news. His understanding is that “faith is pluralistic” (130). Franke affirms that the gospel is “both a message to be proclaimed... [and] a way of life in the world” (118). On the contrary, Paul’s understanding of the gospel is that it is solely a story of what has been done, and while one can contextualize this story, he cannot change it (Gal 1:8).

Leithart has the most unique contribution. He believes the church's mission should be *sacramental*, giving a greater priority to the role of the ordinances (i.e. baptism and the Lord's Supper). Leithart calls himself a revisionist, or a holist. His essay is an unbalanced one, for he seeks to correct an existing imbalance—that is, the imbalance of conversation on “the role of baptism and the Supper in missions” (156). His chapter is useful in that he focuses on a needed resurgence for the practice of the ordinances in missions. The problem is that, at times, he goes too far. He believes that the ordinances actually affect something, rather than symbolizing that which affects something. He writes, “Baptism and the Supper do not merely announce this fulfillment [of mission] but, as works of Christ's Spirit, *make it happen*” (168). He also says, “Baptism is not a *picture* of the nations being reunited; baptism *reunites* the nations. The Supper is not a *picture* of nations feasting together in the presence of God; it *is* the feast of the nations in the presence of God” (164). Leithart hardly writes at all about the symbolism of the ordinances, and how the conversion they represent is what ultimately has an effect. Furthermore, while he claims that his chapter is about bringing a neglected aspect into the light, he seems to overemphasize the role of the ordinances, even in his concluding definition of the church's mission: “Set up God's table. Invite folks to dinner. Make sure they wash up. Teach them how to eat together” (176). The ordinances surely are great and given *for us*, but they are not greater than the salvation that is symbolized and remembered through them.

As a whole, this book is highly recommended. In particular, each author focuses on the importance of the biblical theology of mission; that is, they provide support for their views from the entire canon of Scripture. For those who have followed this debate, *Four Views on the Church's Mission* will prove most beneficial. The authors interact well with the two most important books in this debate: Wright's *The Mission of God* (IVP Academic, 2013) and Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert's *What is the Mission of the Church?* (Crossway, 2011). Readers can also find pertinent material – in summarized form – in David Hesselgrave's *Paradigms in Conflict* (Kregel, 2005). Readers will find themselves agreeing more with one position than the others, but that furthers the point of this book and this series as well.

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***Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Divine and Human Agency.* By Mark Alan Bowald. Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2015. 263 pp. \$16.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-57799-661-3.**

In his endorsement for Mark Alan Bowald's *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics*, Kevin Vanhoozer writes that "theological hermeneutics has no more avid cartographer than Mark Bowald." This is a fitting description of Bowald and the work that he does in *Rendering the Word*: he takes on the role of theological-hermeneutical cartographer and maps out the state of theological hermeneutics as he saw it in 2007, when he first published this work with Ashgate. In 2015, *Rendering the Word* was picked up by Lexham Press and republished as part of their *Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology* series. Though there have been many developments in the "theological interpretation of Scripture" movement (TIS) since its first publication, *Rendering the Word* continues to make a helpful contribution to the topic by charting its key representatives in relation to one another.

Bowald's primary concern in this volume is to call attention to the role (or lack thereof) that divine agency plays within the systems of TIS's spokesmen. With the question of divine agency in view, Bowald charts these spokesmen in relation to one another within a triangular typology (more on this typology below). According to Bowald, divine agency plays too small a role in the hermeneutical processes of these spokesmen. It is Bowald's contention that the same Kantian ideas of the illegitimacy of antecedent judgments in epistemology, which occasioned the skepticism of higher biblical criticism, have continued to influence the very movement that objects to those ideas. TIS, he argues, is still influenced by Kantian skepticism in its dismissal of divine agency in the hermeneutical process.

Bowald begins his work by describing the stage of contemporary hermeneutics as set by Kantian epistemology. He describes Kant's epistemology and its two limitations that affect hermeneutics: (1) the assumption that "true knowledge" of God is impossible on account of finite man's inability to *experience* the infinite, and (2) the assumed illegitimacy of "other influences" and prior knowledge. Kant's epistemological assumptions therefore necessitate a hermeneutical skepticism with respect to divine agency. To the degree that Kantian

philosophy has influenced theological hermeneutics, Bowald argues, this skepticism remains in the hermeneutical process.

In chapter two, Bowald explains the triangular typology he uses throughout the rest of the volume. The upper plane of the triangle refers to divine speech agency and the bottom to human speech agency. The triangle's bottom-left corner refers to the text, its bottom-right to the reader, and its top to God. Hermeneutical systems that operate toward the far bottom-left side are imminently concerned with what the text's human authors have *written*, and not at all concerned with divine agency (top corner) or the role of reader response (bottom-right corner), et al. The further a system moves into one corner, the further it moves away from the other two. With this framework set in place, the next three chapters are dedicated to examining figures who operate primarily within one of the triangle's three corners.

In his third chapter, Bowald gives an overview of type one by using Hans Frei (particularly his earlier work), Kevin Vanhoozer, and Francis Watson as representatives. According to Bowald, the commonality between these three figures is that they are primarily concerned with discovering meaning by examining the text of Scripture itself, though it is notable that each of these figures undergoes a unique transition of sorts. For example, Frei begins by insisting that meaning is found decisively and solely within the narrative (i.e., *not* from extratextual sources), and eventually makes a drastic move over into type two, where he insists meaning is derived in diachronic conversation between the church and the text. These figures' hermeneutical frameworks are not static, and Bowald makes this point clear.

Chapter four surveys David Kelsey, Hans Frei (focusing on his later work), Werner Jeanrond, and Stephen Fowl to illustrate type two: hermeneutics that focus primarily on the human agency of the reader. This type can be further subdivided between those who emphasize the role of human agency in *diachronic reading* (the interpretation of the reading community throughout the centuries) and *synchronic reading* (the interpretation of each generation's reading community). According to Bowald, Kelsey's and Fowl's hermeneutics are ecclesiastically pragmatic; contemporary Christians determine Scripture's meaning by its use (*synchronic*). As mentioned above, Frei's later hermeneutic sees Scripture's meaning as a product of semi-fluid conversation between the text and its interpretative community (*diachronic*). Jeanrond, an extreme

example of type two, argued that every reading of the text offers a new meaning, since all context and historical intent surrounding a text was lost the moment it materialized (radically *synchronic*).

In chapter five, Bowald surveys the work of Karl Barth, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and James K. A. Smith as representatives of type three. Each of these authors emphasize that the interpretative task ought to be concerned with what God is doing in revelation and in the hermeneutical process. Barth attributed a significant role of divine agency in hermeneutics, going so far as to argue that Scripture, as witness to revelation, *becomes* the word of God when (according to God's activity) it effectively bears witness to Jesus. Barth was a Christ-centered type three. Wolterstorff proposed a very practical type three hermeneutic consisting of two steps: (1) determining what God was saying through the human authors when they wrote, and (2) determining what God is saying through the text now. Smith is very near to type two, insisting that meaning is determined by the interpretative community both in its *synchronic* and *diachronic* reading. According to Smith, the text's ambiguity that requires the communal context (which determines the text's meaning) is intentional on God's part, and it is God's action in the hermeneutical process. In other words, God acts through the community's response to the text's ambiguity.

Bowald concludes *Rending the Word* by summarizing the overall argument of the volume (i.e., that TIS has, by and large, neglected to heed appropriate attention to divine agency in the hermeneutical process), and by offering a proposal for a way forward. Bowald's proposal is a dynamic hermeneutic that he calls "divine-rhetorical hermeneutics." This hermeneutic borrows the Aristotelian rhetorical categories of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. He insists that all three of these aspects of rhetoric inform one another; *ethos* (i.e., the character of the speaking agent) establishes the reliability of—and demands the reception of—*logos* (i.e., the content of the speaking agent's speech act), informing its appropriation in the *pathos* (i.e., the response of the speech act's receivers).

To lay out the hermeneutical distinctives of so many original and prolific thinkers is no small task, and Bowald excels in doing just this. Bowald's ability to condense and describe the unique contributions of these figures is truly impressive, and for that, he ought to be commended. However, there are some important criticisms to raise, beginning with the central triangular typology that he uses. The terms of the triangle are



fairly subjective and are therefore only helpful to those who already agree with Bowald about them. Further, after laboring to fit all of these authors and their hermeneutical processes into this triangular typology, Bowald himself rejects the typology as the ideal context for construing a hermeneutical framework in place of his own proposal (i.e., divine-rhetorical hermeneutics) (238). In this way, Bowald seems to give himself an unwarranted level of privilege that he withholds from the authors he analyzes; they are rigidly forced to occupy a space he is not willing to occupy. Why should Bowald be allowed to leave the triangle?

Further, Bowald's own proposal is counterproductive in its most crucial point. Bowald argues for the primacy of divine *ethos* (i.e., the character of God, the divine agent) and its relation to the *logos* (i.e., the inspired text of Scripture; the communication of the divine agent) and *pathos* (i.e., the reader's reception and application of the *logos*) in his divine-rhetoric hermeneutic. Structurally, this is brilliant and it addresses the need that Bowald highlights all throughout the volume. However, rather than allowing for the divine agent to establish his own *ethos* (that is, through the self-revelation of Scripture), Bowald makes a bizarre turn and *undermines* the perspicuity and authority of Scripture by insisting that non-divinely-inspired sources ought to establish *ethos*: "To begin, this requires not the jettison of one's confession and catechesis: to the contrary, to prepare to listen to the living word of God begins with learning all one can about this God and his Word. So: the study of church history, of dogmatics, of traditions of reading and so on, is prerequisite" (240). This seems to undermine the notion that the divine agent communicates himself directly through the inspired text. Instead, the text is minimized as a divine self-communication, one that is unavoidably misunderstood apart from church history, dogmatics, and traditions of reading. These are "prerequisite" to interpreting Scripture. They are thus elevated to a *de facto* place of authority alongside the revelation itself.

Despite the fact that Bowald succumbs to some of the same pitfalls that he argues that other authors have fallen into, his greatest contribution in *Rendering the Word* is that he highlights two important hermeneutical necessities: (1) the unavoidability of depending on divine agency in theological hermeneutics (consciously or otherwise), and (2) (in a roundabout way) the impossibility of harnessing divine agency into a tidy method. Bowald critiques authors who relegate divine agency into

the background of their hermeneutical task while his own approach amounts to little more than the same relegation, albeit with more explicit and frequent discussion *about* the background. This seems to be the unavoidable conclusion, given the premise of divine agency to begin with: if divine agency in Scripture (both in its genesis and its reception by readers) is God's action, then the reader's relationship to divine agency must be passive. Divine agency, by definition, can only be appropriated into the hermeneutical process through faith—not in the colloquial sense of leaping into the dark, but in the theological sense of looking to God to meet a need. Arguing for the need of such a humble theological-hermeneutical method is Bowald's primary aim in *Rendering the Word*, and qualms about the particularities of his unique proposal notwithstanding, he succeeds in this endeavor.

Because of the shortcomings of Bowald's highly technical, idiosyncratic triangular typology, this work is not recommended to many readers. It is too problematic for the reader who is not already convinced of many of the points for which Bowald argues. It is, however, highly recommended (particularly its middle section) to readers curious about the unique contours of the TIS spokesmen that Bowald analyzes. Such a recommendation, however, comes with two caveats. First, *Rendering the Word* is not user friendly—it is highly technical and difficult to follow. Second, Bowald shines when he is describing the work of others, but dims when prescribing a way forward. In other words, to the inquiring reader: Bowald is a much better cartographer than he is a trailblazer.

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***Karl Barth: An Introductory Biography for Evangelicals.* By Mark Galli. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017. 176 pp. \$18.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8028-6939-5.**

Few theologians greet the academic world with a self-published commentary that is, upon first appearance, a dud. Fewer still go on to titanic levels of influence in their field. And yet, Karl Barth, despite the initial cold reactions to his *Romans* commentary, captured the hearts and

minds of countless twentieth-century Protestants by countering theological liberalism and constructing a unique theological paradigm that provided satisfactory answers in an age of upheaval. His shadow over the previous century is inescapable. But does he have anything to offer modern evangelicals, or is it time to step out of his shadow, to leave it behind as an artifact of a bygone era?

In *Karl Barth: An Introductory Biography for Evangelicals*, Mark Galli, Editor-in-Chief at *Christianity Today*, argues that Barth does indeed have much to offer contemporary evangelicals. In fact, Barth is *precisely* the voice that evangelicals need, not only because of his influence but also because of the particulars of his theological method and vision. Further, because of a resurgence in scholarly engagement with Barth, Galli believes that “Barth’s theology . . . will increasingly make its way into grassroots evangelicalism” (12). Therefore, pastors and scholars need a foundation to engage thoughtfully with Barth’s ideas. Galli offers his volume as an accessible synthesis of Barthian scholarship as well as an apologetic to recapture the usefulness and insight of the Swiss theologian.

Galli’s strategy of weaving Barth’s story with his key contributions gives the reader a compact yet thorough understanding of the man and his work. Galli does not intend his volume to be a detailed biography in the vein of Busch’s *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* nor an advanced treatment of his thought like McCormack’s *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*. Instead, Galli highlights the critical events in Barth’s life and the critical themes in two notable works: *Romans* and *Church Dogmatics*.

The scenes one expects in an introductory biography appear: Barth’s early pastorate, his growing objection to and eventual break from Protestant Liberalism, his disgust with the Nazi regime (and his courage in defying it through the Barmen Declaration), his professorial and writing career, and snippets from his family life. Galli tells Barth’s story in a crisp and compelling fashion—not surprising given Galli’s role at *Christianity Today*. Interspersed throughout the book are vignettes that make the titanic figure more human. This reviewer especially appreciated Galli’s brief reference to Barth’s simple, unrefined, yet beautiful prison sermons—worthwhile reading all too easily lost in the sea of his heady corpus (130-131).

As mentioned, while referencing numerous projects, Galli focuses on *Romans* and *Church Dogmatics* to elucidate Barth's theological themes. Galli uses *Romans* to outline Barth's dialectical theology (43). He uses *Church Dogmatics* to emphasize Barth's understanding of the Word of God and reconciliation, both of which have caused hesitation among evangelicals (108). Nonetheless, Galli draws upon these sources as the primary rationale for the argument that Barth is as relevant as ever. He stresses that these works articulate a faith not defined by internal feeling but by a sovereign God who imparts an alien righteousness. Because of the West's fascination with the individual, Galli believes Barth's theology provides a helpful corrective at this point.

The strengths of Galli's volume lie in his storytelling ability, his compelling argument that Barth is worth engaging today, and his honesty regarding Barth's shortcomings. In fourteen concise chapters, Galli moves between Barth's life, his writings, the philosophical and religious traditions he inherited and augmented, and the socio-political environment he inhabited. But despite the whirlwind that is Barth, Galli's prose remains tight and focused. He makes a credible case as to why Barth's theology is a potential solution to modern evangelicalism's "anthropocentric" tendency (145). Finally, Galli serves readers well by giving his own cautions regarding Karl Barth. He recognizes that Barth "taught some things that create more problems than they solve" (xvi). He does not avoid Barth's domestic failings. Despite an overwhelmingly positive tone, Galli in no way intends to fashion Barth into a "theological savior" (145). His goal is more modest: to show that "the theology Barth eventually found bankrupt, and so ardently battled, is a theology we understand and identify with at some level" (145). Galli is successful in demonstrating why Barth is worth engaging, while also refusing to endorse every jot and tittle from his pen.

The weakness with any introductory biography is its inherent inability to address everything. *Somebody* will find *something* left out. Galli's volume does not escape this dilemma, though his target audience likely will not be aggravated. This reviewer desired to see a greater treatment of Barth's relationship with American evangelicals (biting and dramatic at times). Specifically, as one more sympathetic to the Neo-Evangelicalism of Carl F. H. Henry than the Neo-Orthodoxy of Barth, this reviewer found Galli's representation of the Neo-Evangelicals to be a bit unfair. Henry and Billy Graham are both quoted in such a way as to color

them as immensely hostile to Barth. And while they were certainly *not* theological friends (one recalls the famed Henry-Barth press conference dialogue, full of tension and resulting in Henry's delivering of perhaps the best extra-biblical use of Hebrews 13:8), *neither* were they outright foes. As the founding editor of *Christianity Today*, Henry made the occasional positive reference to Barth's contributions. Further, in his *Confessions of a Theologian*, Henry remarks, "Whenever I conversed with Karl Barth I had the clear sense that, however flawed was Barth's dialectical theology, I was in the presence of a believer in the gospel" (243). Still, the reader leaves with the sense that Henry and the Neo-Evangelicals were a crusty cadre diametrically opposed to everything Barth. Yes, their disagreements were unquestionably deep (Henry devoted numerous articles to debunking various aspects of Barth's theology). However, they were also more complex than one may gather from Galli's understandably brief (given his goals) presentation.

Finally, the volume falls victim to a chronologically unavoidable weakness. Just before the book's publication, *Theology Today* published Christiane Tietz's article "Karl Barth and Charlotte von Kirschbaum," which contained shocking details of Barth's adultery with his assistant. While Galli references this aspect of Barth's life, these revelations require more than passing mention in future accounts. Thankfully, Galli has responded thoughtfully and thoroughly in his *Christianity Today* online article entitled "What to Make of Karl Barth's Steadfast Adultery" (published October 20, 2017).

Overall, *Karl Barth: An Introductory Biography for Evangelicals* is an enjoyable primer on the theological giant and offers convincing reasons as to why evangelicals will benefit from grappling with Barth's ideas today. Though scholars are not Galli's target audience, the book deserves a wide reading among pastors, students, and laypersons (and scholars may gain a tip or two on how to wed delightful prose with serious research). If readers heed Galli's cautions, they will see why he still believes in Barth. Ultimately, Galli commends Barth to evangelicals not because of his genius or insight, but because he relentlessly drives people back to their Bibles (xv)—a high compliment for a flawed and fallen man and a needed exhortation for today's flawed and fallen world.

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***All That is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism.* By James E. Dolezal. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017. 176 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1601785541.**

There is nothing more elemental to theology than the doctrine of God. This important book examines the doctrine of God and current controversy over how best to rightly understand and articulate that doctrine. James E. Dolezal is a professor of theology at Cairn University. This book is based on a series of lectures that Dolezal presented at a Reformed Baptist pastors' conference in southern California in 2015. It reflects a more popular version of the author's monograph *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Pickwick Publications, 2011), a revision of his doctoral dissertation at Westminster Theological Seminary.

In *All That is in God*, Dolezal defends what he describes as "classical theism" over against "theistic mutualism" or "theistic personalism." The problem, according to Dolezal, is not just that some liberal theologians have departed from classical understandings of the doctrine of God in modern movements like "open theism" and "process theology," but that a number of evangelical theologians and philosophers have also increasingly adopted and advocated a "softer" form of "theistic mutualism." According to Dolezal, the "significant doctrinal flashpoints" in this controversy are most notably related to the doctrines of "divine immutability, simplicity, eternity, and substantial unity" (7). His desire is to rehabilitate "the catholic orthodoxy of the older Reformed confessions and theologians" (8).

Dolezal gives attention, in turn, to each of the four "flashpoints" noted above. He begins with immutability by sketching the classical understanding of divine self-sufficiency or aseity. Since nothing in God is derived or caused to be, God is not subject to change. "Classical theists insist that God is being, not becoming" (15). If God is "pure being," then "it follows that He cannot undergo change" (17). Mutabilist language in Scripture is, therefore, to be taken figuratively. Modern theologians, however, have pushed back against the classical view in an attempt to soften its "perceived austerity" (22). This has been true even in Calvinistic circles. Dolezal suggests that scholars like Bruce A. Ware have endorsed "the idea of a God who is subject to alterations of being" (27).

He contends that “Ware’s theology proper” is “a form of modified theistic mutualism rather than of modified classical theism” (28). He notes similar difficulties in the theologizing of J. I. Packer and Rob Lister. Theistic mutualism, Dolezal concludes, is “like an acid that cannot but burn through a whole host of divine attributes” (35). It is not simply a “variation or refinement” of classical theism but “more like a demolition and wholesale replacement” (35).

Dolezal proceeds to examine the doctrine of divine simplicity, which he describes as “the indispensable centerpiece” of theology proper (38). God is without parts. One cannot distinguish between God’s essence and God’s attributes. As the title of this book reflects, “all that is in God is God” (41). Though Dolezal concedes that this doctrine is supported by “no single Biblical proof-text,” he contends that it is there “by way of good and necessary consequence” (44). He sees three biblical doctrines, in particular, as supporting divine simplicity: divine independence, infinity, and creation. Divine simplicity is also affirmed throughout church history, from the patristic to medieval to reformational to modern periods. Thus, it constitutes “a baseline, a controlling grammar for all our thoughts and beliefs about God” (58). This fundamental doctrine has of late, however, been ignored, denied, or distorted by theistic mutualists. Dolezal suggests that Bruce A. Ware and others ignore divine simplicity when they claim that God can acquire being that he does not possess in his essence. The likes of John Feinberg deny it by claiming that it has no biblical warrant. John Frame and others distort it by making use of univocal religious language that has constructed a “complex-essence” view of God, seeming to regard “God’s divinity as a sum of discrete properties” (74). God is not, however, a composite of his attributes. According to Dolezal, the undermining of the classical theistic view of simplicity risks subversion of God’s “ontological absoluteness” (78). Thus, he urges recovery of the old commitment to divine simplicity and forsaking “the misguided path of thinking that our thought or language adequately computes the mysterious manner of God’s existence” (78).

Dolezal turns next to the doctrine of divine eternity. Theistic mutualists have, he claims, tended to posit that if God is truly related to the world in some meaningful way, he must “experience the passage of time” (81). The classical view of God, however, holds that since God is perfect, “no new state of being can come upon him, and neither can any state of being slip away from Him” (82). Thus, God is eternal, and his

eternity is timeless. Dolezal acknowledges that the scriptural descriptions of God's eternity as timeless are not always as clear as one might hope, but this doctrine is supported by other classical doctrines affirmed by Scripture, like divine infinity, immutability, and simplicity. Theistic mutualists, however, have undertaken either to replace, modify, or augment the classical view. Dolezal cites Christian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff as suggesting that we should speak of God as "everlasting," rather than eternal. Others, however, have simply modified the concept of divine eternity by holding that God was beyond time only until the creation. William Lane Craig is an advocate for this "timeless turned temporal" view. Finally, some suggest that God's timelessness must only be augmented by some degree of temporality. Dolezal cites here John Frame's view of "two modes of existence" in God. According to this view, "if God acts in time, then He really exists temporally" (93). Dolezal warns, however, that this third option requires the abandonment of divine simplicity. Eternalists maintain, contrary to the theistic mutualists, that even creation must be understood as "an eternal act of God that produces a temporal effect" (100). According to Dolezal, nothing less than "true religion is at stake," for to abandon divine eternity is to abandon the classical view of God altogether (104).

The final "flashpoint" is the substantial unity of God. Dolezal suggests that theistic mutualists face fundamental problems with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. Without divine simplicity, the three persons of the Godhead might be taken as three parts of God (modalism or Arianism) or as three discrete gods (tritheism). Dolezal notes that some evangelical theistic mutualists, including William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, have tended toward "compositional models" of the Trinity, like "social Trinitarianism." He also sees related problems in recent debates concerning the views of the eternal functional subordination of the Son, as advocated by Wayne Grudem and Bruce A. Ware. All in all, Dolezal suggests that the neglect of divine simplicity has created a "trinitarian dilemma" for some theistic mutualists (134).

Having surveyed these "flashpoints" Dolezal concludes that theistic mutualism "is not a promising way forward" (136). Classical theism "is not in need of a replacement model" (137). The old, confessional affirmations of divine immutability, simplicity, eternity, and substantial unity should be upheld.



*All That is in God* is tightly written and cogently argued. This is a didactic work, in that it positively and winsomely teaches the classical view of theology proper and gives special emphasis to the importance of divine simplicity as the fundamental “grammar” of theology. It is also a polemical work, in that Dolezal convincingly, clearly, and charitably challenges ways in which some evangelicals have departed from classical theism.

Pastors and teachers will profit from reading this work in at least two significant ways. First, it will challenge them to speak carefully and accurately about God in their preaching and teaching. Second, it will help them to be discerning in reading theological works that discuss the doctrine of God, including those that come from evangelical and Calvinistic authors.

This book also raises some interesting tangential points bearing on the relationship of the theology of confessional Protestantism and broader Christianity. If one holds to the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), a daughter to the Westminster Confession of Faith, as does Dolezal, one affirms a confession that teaches that the triune God is “without body, parts, or passions” and that this God is “immutable” and “eternal” (2:1), as well as “all-sufficient” (2:2). Thus, if one faithfully subscribes to the confession, one necessarily affirms the classical theism or “catholic orthodoxy” of historic Christianity, which includes the doctrine of divine simplicity. The Protestant framers of the confessions were, on this point at least, in agreement with both Rome and Constantinople. Indeed, Dolezal can cite both the Roman Catholic philosopher Edward Feser and the Eastern Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart, as well as the Puritan John Owen, in support of his defense of divine simplicity. Dolezal suggests the Enlightenment as the most likely culprit in decoupling moderns from classical theism, betraying “how much mechanistic Enlightenment thinking has impacted Christian theology” (64). Broad evangelicals who were never tethered to any of the full-orbed Protestant confessions were clearly even more vulnerable to drifting. Dolezal and classical theists, however, will also need to be prepared to be challenged from evangelical brethren as to whether they have put more stock in Thomism than Biblicism. Overall, however, I believe that Dolezal’s points are very well taken.

This work is an important call for clarification and unity on this most fundamental of doctrines: God.

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***Deeper Magic: The Theology Behind the Writings of C. S. Lewis.* By Donald T. Williams. Baltimore, MD: Square Halo Books, 2016. 287 pp. \$16.99, Paperback. ISBN 13-978-1941106051.**

Donald T. Williams is an English professor at Toccoa Falls College, where he teaches a biennial senior seminar on C. S. Lewis. He has also lectured on and authored multiple books on Lewis and his greatest influences, namely, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, and J. R. R. Tolkien. This depth of knowledge is evident in the familiar and clear manner that Williams expounds on Lewis' theology.

*Deeper Magic*, so named after the superior power of Aslan, seeks to critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of Lewis' unified theology from a "conservative Evangelical perspective," a task not undertaken before this work (13-14, 158). To achieve this goal, Williams systematically deconstructs and evaluates Lewis' beliefs in major theological categories, including chapters on Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and many others. Williams even includes a wonderful excursus on the soundness of Lewis' Trilemma, an apologetic supporting the divinity of Christ. This examination is surprisingly complex, given the fantastical nature of many of Lewis' works.

Lewis created fictional works because he believed that this medium enabled him to communicate Christian truths in a potent manner unattainable through traditional means (18). He possessed a "fertile imagination" and "sharp logical mind," which was enriched by J. R. R. Tolkien and George MacDonald, prominent fantasy novelists (13, 15). This led to the birth of some of his most prominent works: *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Space Trilogy*, and *The Screwtape Letters* (15). Williams mines these works, showing how Lewis tackled theological issues in them that most authors would be hesitant to address. In *The Silver Chair*, Lewis presents Anselm's classic ontological argument for God (77-79); in *The*

*Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the process of sanctification (188); and in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, penal substitutionary atonement (157-58). These passages provide an insightful look into Lewis' beliefs, but as fictional works, they do not have a direct correspondence with the real world.

Lewis refers to these works as 'supposals,' trying to imagine how God might interact in a land like Narnia, where animals speak and Jesus was incarnated as a lion (17-18). Despite the difficulty in distinguishing Lewis' beliefs from his artistic freedom, Williams does not shy away from the challenge, and his evaluation of the aforementioned passages (and others) is most informative. It yields insights into Lewis' theology that Lewis does not address elsewhere, in part because of his focus on mere Christianity.

In his books and public speeches, Lewis sought to convince people of the truthfulness of Christianity, but he offered little help in deciding between whether to be Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox. For this reason, Williams relies heavily on Lewis' letters, as Lewis "allowed himself in private correspondence to take positions he would not have taken publicly" (19). Enthusiasts of Lewis will find great pleasure in reading Williams' examination of these works, as they offer a novel look into Lewis' beliefs about sanctification, purgatory, and many other issues (197, 204).

Despite these gems, readers will at times feel disappointed with the scant material addressed, wanting a more detailed picture of Lewis' beliefs. This deficit is most apparent in the section on ecclesiology. While Williams provides a substantial analysis of Lewis' critique of Mariolatry, the section on the papacy is brief, and the chapter is silent on Lewis' views concerning baptism and the Lord's Supper (180-85). These holes are not a failure of Williams, however, but the result of Lewis' focus on mere Christianity (175-77). Lewis' works served as a testimony to the unbelieving community, rather than dogmatic treatises on divisive issues, fostering the "dog-fights between professing schools of 'Christian' thought," (Lewis, quoted on pg. 19). William's fault is much graver: marginalizing the theological errors of Lewis.

Williams provides a brilliant analysis of Lewis' works, comparing them to the classic evangelicalism, but upon identifying points of departure, he is too quick to excuse Lewis' faults. For example, upon establishing that Lewis was not an inerrantist, Williams attributes this

error to ignorance and “informational hastiness” (68-69). Williams makes similar claims concerning Lewis’ deficient theology on total depravity and soteriology (115, 165). In so doing, Williams asserts that Lewis would have rejected Anglicanism in favor of evangelicalism had he been better informed. This fails to acknowledge the depth of Lewis’ conviction and betrays a certain arrogance, holding that evangelical beliefs on divisive issues would be resolved by remedying a person’s ignorance. While this blunder is frustrating, it only slightly mars an otherwise commendable book.

*Deeper Magic* showcases Lewis’ wit while providing much-needed help in understanding Lewis’ fictional works as supposals. It has great depth, drawing upon the breadth of Lewis’ publications, broadcasts, and letters to present Lewis’ theological beliefs in every category about which he cared to write. Given the nature of the work, Williams presumes that his audience has a basic understanding of Lewis’ classic works (i.e., *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Space Trilogy*, *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*). While *Deeper Magic* is comprehensible without having read these works, certain passages will be difficult to understand, as quotations from these works are presented with minimal context. Were Lewis to review *Deeper Magic*, I expect that after making modest changes, he would give it an affirming nod, saying, “Yes, that is what I believe,” before adding a snarky quip to the effect of “though I pity the chap who went to such pains to create it.”

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***The Secret of Chabad: Inside the World’s Most Successful Jewish Movement.* By David Eliezrie. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2015. 432 pp. \$29.95, Hardback. ISBN 978-1-59264-370-7.**

*The Secret of Chabad* seeks to present the reader with an unprecedented inside look at the beliefs, history, and remarkable expansion of Chabad, a subset of Orthodox Judaism perhaps best known for its outreach efforts toward the broader Jewish world, which contrasts sharply with the isolationism of other Chassidic groups. The author, Rabbi David

Eliezrie, is certainly one of the most qualified scholars to write such a work, having been in Chabad for over five decades and having served in a number of significant roles in the organization—most significantly as a personally selected shliach (emissary sent to represent Chabad’s ideals and minister to the physical and spiritual needs of Jews within a particular region) of Chabad’s most treasured figure, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (affectionately referred to as “the Rebbe”).

Rabbi Eliezrie begins with his own introduction to the Rebbe at the age of fourteen, recalling how he was amazed by the Rebbe’s compassion and kindness, which flowed from his vision to “redefine Judaism in the modern age as a balance of tradition and compassion, observance and responsibility” (ix). In Chapter 1, he tells the story of Gabi and Rivkie Holtzberg, the shluchim of Mumbai, India, murdered in 2008 by terrorists attacking numerous locations in the city, including the Chabad Center. The entire nation of Israel mourned the tragedy; a loss for Chabad is a loss for all Jewish people, religious or otherwise (22-25).

The second chapter presents a short biography of Chabad’s Sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, as he brought Chabad’s ideals from war-torn Europe and Russia to America. Chapter 3 covers the early life and inauguration of the Seventh Rebbe, as well as his tone-setting agenda: “The Rebbe called upon each person to recognize his responsibility to uncover the holiness latent within himself, to reveal the inherent holiness of the world and to take responsibility to similarly inspire others” (65). The Great Escape, a clandestine exodus of over 1,000 Chassidic Jews from Communist Russia, is the main subject of chapter 4. Chapter 5 recounts several stories of Chabad’s earliest outreach efforts in America, which led to the innovation known today as the Chabad House.

Chapter 6 covers the Rebbe’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, for which he asked his shluchim to open 71 new institutions—a goal met twice over in Israel alone (122-124). Eliezrie then discusses Chabad’s conflicts with other forms of Judaism in chapter 7, focusing primarily on the Menorah Wars of the mid-1970s. Chapter 8 concerns Chabad’s financial side: their motivations for and methods of raising support in their local communities. Chapter 9 recounts Chabad’s extraordinary efforts to meet Soviet-era Russian Jewry’s physical and spiritual needs. Eliezrie fast-forwards in chapter 10 to post-Soviet Russia and Chabad’s efforts to rebuild Jewish identity there. The eleventh chapter covers Chabad’s

apolitical work in Israel to bridge the gap between observant and secular Jews.

Chapter 12 emphasizes the role that the yeshiva (Jewish school for religious education) plays in Chabad's fortitude and mission. The thirteenth chapter addresses the difficulties that Chabad has experienced balancing traditional values with modern global engagement. Finally, in chapter 14, Rabbi Eliezie explores Chabad's massive success since the Rebbe's death in 1994, boldly predicting that the majority of the next generation's American Jews will be Orthodox or on the path toward fuller observance (335-337). His afterword recounts the day of the Rebbe's death and the shlichim's promise to continue his mission.

One particularly attractive element of Rabbi Eliezie's work is that his rhetorical methodology mirrors the Bible itself: rather than state their ideas as lists of categorical indicatives (e.g. "God is powerful," "Chabad is family"), they *illustrate* such principles primarily through the medium of storytelling. Rarely will one find the sentence "God is powerful" so plainly stated in the biblical text, but one will find the principle abundantly illustrated through such stories as the Exodus, wherein Yahweh demonstrates his authority and power by sending ten plagues upon the Egyptians, each of which challenges a specific Egyptian deity. Likewise, Eliezie rarely states that Chabad is family; he instead illustrates it through such stories as those of the Holtzbergs and the Rebbe's wife, Chaya Mushka.

In the former case, the shliach in Perth, Australia, Shalom White, heard about the Mumbai terrorist attack and made the thirty-hour plane trip to Tel Aviv to attend the Holtzberg funeral. Once there, he ran into an old friend from yeshiva and explained why he had come so far for someone he had never even met: "[H]e was a fellow shliach – I had to come. We were both shlichim, we were brothers" (23). This bond of selfless camaraderie so influenced Rabbi White's old friend, Rafi Goldmitz, that he left his teaching career to become a shliach in the Negev (24-25). In the latter case, when the Rebbetzin died, the Rebbe naturally wanted to spend his grieving period with his closest family. Who were these family members that he brought to his home after the interment? His shlichim, of whom he ordered that a multivolume photo album be published in the Rebbetzin's memory; those volumes remained his most treasured possessions until the day of his death (339-342). These stories illustrate that Chabad is no mere religious affiliation, but a

family bound together by values of Torah and a love for all Jewish people. All other chapters function similarly (chapter 6—Chabad is ambitious; chapter 9—Chabad is fearless; chapter 13—Chabad is innovative, etc.).

*The Secret of Chabad's* largest problem regards its accessibility. While Rabbi Eliezie often explains ideas and phenomena that are not common knowledge—e.g., Chabad yeshivot sometimes experience tension between the Roshei Yeshiva and Mashpi'im (teachers of Torah's revealed and mystical portions, respectively, 269-273)—more work could have been done to clarify esoteric topics for the uninitiated reader. For example, most can glean from pages 32-35 that what separated Chassidism (out of which Chabad eventually emerged) from other forms of Judaism during its formative years was an emphasis on “religion of the heart” in addition to the “religion of the mind” of their opponents, the Mitnagdim. One of the ways that this was accomplished was through dissemination of Kabbalah, which is an important concept, but is not defined much beyond “hidden Jewish mysticism.” Moreover, the majority of people do not know what distinguishes Chabad from the broader category of Chassidism, which is itself distinguished from the broader category of Haredism, which is itself distinguished from the still broader category of Orthodoxy. It is thus easy to see why many readers can lose their way in this volume.

A potential counterargument is that the demographics of the intended audience are quite narrow, so it would be reasonable to assume that anyone interested enough to read the book would already possess a baseline of knowledge about modern Jewish faith and practice. Moreover, it might be argued that to provide a full-orbed explanation of all terms and factors relevant to the state of Chabad today would necessitate a far larger project. These are valid points, but the story of Chabad's qualitative and quantitative success in light of an otherwise secularizing global culture is nevertheless hindered from reaching and inspiring a far larger audience. This is a shame, because Chabad has much to teach anyone, religious or otherwise, concerning sacrifice, humility, and dedication to a goal higher than oneself.

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***God's Ambassadors: The Westminster Assembly and the Reformation of the English Pulpit, 1643-1653.* By Chad Van Dixhoorn. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017. 215 pp. \$40.00, Hardcover. ISBN 9781601785343.**

In *God's Ambassadors*, Chad Van Dixhoorn, professor of historical theology and church history at Reformed Theological Seminary, skillfully draws from the minutes and papers of the Westminster Assembly and other primary sources to tell the story of a forgotten, yet crucial aspect of their proceedings. The assembly is best known for the confession of faith and catechisms that they produced – documents still influential in circles touched by various strands of Reformed theology. However, those with only a cursory knowledge of church history and theology may be unaware of the assembly's ongoing concern and efforts regarding preaching in seventeenth-century England.

The book sets the Westminster Assembly in its historical context, that of an English church changed by the Protestant Reformation, but inseparable from the English crown. By 1643, the Bible had been legally available in common language translations for over a century. Yet John Calvin's vision for preaching, so formative among those who fled to Geneva during the Marian persecutions (1555-1558), had not fully taken hold in Elizabethan England. Calvin saw the preacher as an ambassador for God who simply delivered God's Word and, as a student who learned from the Master at the school of the Bible, was tasked with only passing on what he had been taught (19). Yet England suffered from pulpits where ministers read the homilies of others. Furthermore, some ministers obtained their appointments through corruption, some lived scandalously, and it was obvious that some either did not possess the gift of teaching or were not exercising and developing it.

The English church, wed to the state, suffered from Elizabeth I's low view of preaching, in which she was content with a handful of preachers who administered sacraments but failed to expound the Bible (23). Some sought to improve the state of preaching through opportunities for fellowship and training in the study and preparation of sermons from the Bible. The state church eventually quelled these meetings, known as "prophesyings." Edmund Grindal, archbishop from 1576-1583, found his duties curtailed after about a year of cooperating with those hungry for pulpit reform, when he refused to comply with the queen's directive to



stop the prophesyings (22-23). His successor, John Whitgift, followed the queen's desires. A more favorable environment for preaching arrived with the reign of King James, but Archbishop William Laud opposed it during the reign of Charles I (26-29). While the pulpit had no friend in the king or head cleric, it found one in the Puritan-influenced Long Parliament of 1640, which even called for the printing of sermons and convened the meeting of theologians and ministers in the Westminster Assembly to deal with matters of church governance (30, 36). From 1643, amid civil war, until 1653, at the beginning of the Protectorate government under Oliver Cromwell, the Westminster Assembly held its meetings.

These meetings included discussions of church governance and Christian doctrine, but their members also used them to address concerns about unqualified and untrained ministers. Their reforms included examining and removing some ministers from pulpits, coming to terms on qualifications for pastoral candidates, detailing the considerations of ordination, evaluating candidates, and providing documents to guide churches in what their public worship and the office of the minister, including his preaching, should entail.

Van Dixhoorn provides both historical and theological reflection, delving into the thought processes behind the assembly's views of preachers, preaching, biblical interpretation (focusing on Christ-centered exegesis), and the role of the Spirit in preaching. Three helpful appendices and a bibliography round out the book. "The Duties of a Minister," "The Directory for Ordination," and "The Subdirectory for Preaching" give the reader direct access to the assembly introduced by the author.

*God's Ambassadors* tells its story with concise and selective presentation of the assembly's history, deploying a liberal sprinkling of poignant quotations. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, "The clergymen that filled the pulpit could administer sacraments and read sermons, but as the godly were quick to point out, 'reading is not feeding'" (18). The 1641 House of Commons declared preaching as "the way to bring People into a state of Salvation" and the minister "as an ambassador, to publish and spread abroad the mind and message of God touching Man's duty, and salvation, and to instruct the Church of God" (30).

While the book is sympathetic toward the assembly and its concerns, the author provides helpful analysis and evaluation. For

example, he points out that the assembly apparently overlooked the strategy and goal of the previous prophesyings, which aimed at equipping and improving existing ministers. A similar approach could have eliminated the need for replacement of ministers who simply needed more training, of which they might have availed themselves (99-101).

As a specialized study, the book assumes some general knowledge of the history of England and the church, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the ability to read the older English archaisms of its primary source quotations. Without such knowledge, the book may prove difficult to grasp – a consideration that should not repel readers, but cause them to improve their minds to acquire the treasures of this study. Though academic, the book is immensely practical, addressing matters of ongoing concern to the contemporary church, such as the moral and educational qualifications for ministry, the proper subjects of ordination, and whether biblical warrant exists for lay preaching. The primary sources exude pastoral concern and practical instruction for ministers and churches. For example, the Subdirectory for Preaching includes such gems as the following:

In Raysing doctrines from the text, his care ought to be That the matter be the truth of God, & what he speaketh he speaketh as the Oracles of God. 2ly, That it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text, that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence. 3dly, That he chiefly insist upon those doctrines which are principally intended, & make most for the edification of the hearers (194).

Van Dixhoorn's treatment of the assembly's pulpit reform efforts deserves attention in the fields of church history, historical theology, biblical hermeneutics, and homiletics, especially in seminaries and graduate schools, but is also useful beyond academia. Educated church members and leaders, regardless of their church tradition, would also benefit from engaging with the issues raised by the book. Those who aspire to the pulpit, those who examine and ordain, those who call, and those with the opportunity and appointment to preach should wrestle with the same concerns that burdened the Westminster Assembly:

to see a God-approved, Christ-exalting, Spirit-empowered, Bible-preaching ministry marked by moral integrity and faithful teaching.

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***The Essentials of Christian Thought: Seeing Reality through the Biblical Story.* By Roger E. Olson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 234 pp. \$18.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-52155-6.**

Roger E. Olson is professor of theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University. In this book, he challenges every major Christian metaphysical perspective on “the ultimate reality” to examine whether its tenets have origin directly in the Bible as divinely revealed or in reason-based secular philosophies that have mixed with biblical revelation. Following the key principle that the ultimate reality, God Himself, is supernatural and personal but not human, the author walks through the falsehood of competing doctrines such as Manicheism, pantheism, and naturalism before arriving on a philosophical view justified within Scripture. From this guided view of God, Olson derives a view of the world as “God’s good but dependent, contingent, creation, and also God’s freely chosen counterpart and yet broken and corrupted” (186). His biblical anthropology presupposes the truth of Psalms 8 and 14 in observing both mankind’s special exalted place in creation and responsibility for the present state of human brokenness. As an aid for the reader in grasping a Christian metaphysic within his own terms, the author inserts seven “interludes” to minimize misunderstanding of explained concepts and to connect the concepts to each other; these also conveniently serve to portion out the text for reading in short, digestible segments and to clarify Olson’s mission to reopen dialogue in areas of philosophy that have become more distant from each other in the last three centuries.

This book excels in defending the idea that the Bible presupposes one ultimate reality—the Lord God Almighty, with certain attributes revealed in Scripture— and in challenging the source in secular philosophy from which other presuppositions would come. Olson is a

strong, keen, and consistent manager of thorny questions involving theodicy, original sin, and morality. He deals well with the idea that God is a personal being and not being itself, thereby allowing the Christian no philosophical ground for panentheism, either intentional or accidental (146-147). With similar reasoning, he addresses numerous subtle ambiguities in doctrine, each time resolving that Scripture is not ambiguous.

The author's laudable commitment within this text to biblical authority augments a healthy self-awareness and humility when establishing the veracity of the sources from which he and his contemporaries have derived their worldviews. Furthermore, the author accounts for bias by not "protecting" any metaphysical construct, including his own, from sharp warnings about realities and teachings that stem more from Greek, Eastern, or even Zoroastrian sources than from the word of God. If any belief system or practice here addressed is inconsistent with Scripture, regardless of the source of the inconsistency, the system's shortcomings and "other sources" lie exposed under Olson's metaphysical searchlight. This can help the reader to be more careful and mature in recognizing and stating his actual beliefs according to the Word of God. In short, Olson is right to challenge the believer's thought process from Scripture, and no believer's thought process is left unchallenged.

As captivating and careful as the volume is when speaking on general principles, at least four hazards complicate a Christian's attempt to benefit from the text: poor semantics, unexplained minutiae, unsubstantiated claims, and unapplied concepts. Semantically, the author highlights many words and phrases which have taken on a meaning inconsistent with the original meaning and applies deeply specific "original" meanings to the words used. Examples include Olson's use of "humanism," "supernatural," "eternal," and "science" within the text. While he clearly explains his application of the words as being an "original usage" without many contemporary connotations, the practice of linguistic prescriptivism here becomes a small stumbling block in the text's dialogue with recent literature that presumes contemporary connotations. Once grasped, though, the language of the book is consistent and uniform in its application.

When Olson enters the concept of God's eternity on pages 156-160, the large concepts are presented without room for specific

explanations. This example is the most prominent of a few key places in the text where insufficient detail is given to form a clear grasp of a concept, much less achieve the book's aim in using the Bible to source and verify a presupposition. The text lacks the necessary detail that a Christian would want for evaluation of Olson's claims against Scripture; thus, some of these claims are written to seem counterintuitive (perhaps aiming for shock value with the reader), but are, for the reader's ability to verify, neither biblical nor un-biblical. Here also is the hazard of unsubstantiated claims—the author argues and justifies many of his points from philosophers who uphold the Bible rather than from the Bible itself. Dependence on even well-grounded, biblical philosophers (while their input is invaluable and their instruction important) is no substitute for adherence to the Word of God as given, meaning that the author's biased view is poorly managed in this aspect.

The only remaining hazard, unapplied concepts, is a perfectly understandable one given the extent of material this project aims to address and the project's length. The book simply lacks the needed length to move from the theoretical reality of the biblical metaphysic into the practical aspect when applied to an individual Christian's experience of God's Word and the world around him. The lay Christian, a substantial subset of the author's stated intended audience, receives little practical instruction for resolving his now-challenged presuppositions nor for understanding the bearing of the instructed presuppositions of God and the Bible upon his daily life. In this aspect, the text is more relatable by far to the career theologian or philosopher than to the church member in the back pew.

With the understanding that Olson's aim is to challenge the source of a metaphysical construct, a view of "ultimate reality," in piecemeal fashion, the book is a worthy reminder of how bias can impact any Christian's view of God and His relationship with mankind. Olson rightly recognizes and warns the contemporary philosopher, in means that communicate clearly to postfoundational, postmodern, and postliberal understandings, that to presume upon the Bible and some philosophy that "explains it" is to fail to presume the truth of the Bible at all. Although other resources are more accurate and thorough in demonstrating what the truth of the Bible is, especially on individual doctrines and hermeneutics, Olson uses a combination of antiquity and modernity to stand in an ancillary void alongside other works in

metaphysics to show that the Bible is sufficient and authoritative for forming the Christian understanding of God's ultimate truth as supernatural and personal.

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