

Reviews of Books

Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ, Thomas R. Schreiner & Shawn D. Wright, eds. Nashville, Tenn: B&H Academic, 2006. 364 pages, \$19.99, ISBN: 978-0-8054-3249-7

This volume of essays is a welcome contribution to the ongoing intra-Reformed debate about paedobaptism. It is the most significant contribution on the Baptist side since Fred Malone's *The Baptism of Disciples Alone* in 2003 (Cape Coral, Fla.: Founders Press). There are three chapters on baptism in the Gospels, Luke-Acts and the Epistles, one key theological chapter on the relationship between the covenants (Stephen Wellum), five historical chapters and a concluding essay on baptism in the local church. It includes contributions from most of the heavyweight American Reformed Baptists, led by Schreiner. It is predominantly an academic work, which makes Mark Dever's concluding essay from an active pastor the more welcome. The contributors are irenic and gracious in tone, without shying away from expressing clear concerns about paedobaptist theology and practice where appropriate. They are familiar with most of the recent paedobaptist works and devote space to fair expositions of the paedobaptist argument. However, the book as a whole is ultimately disappointing, failing to make a number of vital logical and theological distinctions, and seems to have completely by-passed the Reformed paedobaptist arguments for infant faith. To paedobaptists already widely-read in the debate, there is little here that is not already familiar from Jewett and Malone.

The book's strengths provide challenges to Baptists and paedobaptists alike. The early NT chapters, most especially Andreas Köstenberger, are fine examples of marrying careful biblical theology with appropriate systematic deductions. Most of all, this whole volume takes baptism seriously. It criticises the way many modern evangelical churches, Baptist and paedobaptist, seem to treat baptism

as an optional extra (33, 54, 63). Schreiner, writing on the Epistles, is particularly strong that the NT assumption is that all believers are baptised (68). It is clear that baptism is not simply the individual's public confession of faith, but that 'it is also a sacred and serious act of incorporation into the visible community of faith' (xvii), and thus should be restored to a central liturgical place in corporate worship, that it is an objective work of God (77), and that it signifies union with Christ (89).

There is a persistent rejection of the modern evangelical divorce between physical and spiritual. Baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit should be seen in parallel, never in antithesis (36, 75). Schreiner shows that the key NT baptismal passages of Rom 6, Col 2 and Tit 3 have in mind water baptism, not just Spirit baptism (81-86). Robert Stein's suggestion of a trinitarian partnership in baptism between God, the church and the individual (54) is an intriguing one.

Finally, there is a strong challenge to the consistency of paedobaptist sacramental theology. Schreiner and Wright note that most paedobaptists do not admit their baptised youngsters to the Lord's Supper, despite the fact that 'such a divide between baptism and the Lord's Supper cannot be sustained from the NT, for it is clear that those baptized participated in communion' (5). They note recent moves amongst some paedobaptists to adopt paedocommunion and applaud this consistency, though as Baptists they do not agree with it. In later chapters on the relationship between the covenants and the logic of Reformed paedobaptists, this reviewer was struck by the sophistication and development of Reformed arguments for infant baptism, and reflecting on the challenge over the Lord's Supper, it seems that traditional arguments against paedocommunion have not followed the same level of discourse, often consisting of a simple appeal to discerning the body in 1 Cor 11:29. It appears that the paedobaptist commitment to covenant continuity evaporates during discussions about paedocommunion.

Despite these strengths, this volume demonstrates some major shortcomings. Having upheld the marriage of physical and spiritual, Schreiner argues that the typological antecedent to baptism in Col 2 is not physical circumcision, but spiritual circumcision (78). We may respond why not both, as physical and spiritual need not be divorced? Particularly as Schreiner had only just observed that even

under the old covenant it is spiritual circumcision which matters (Deut 30:6). More generally though, there is a problem of failing to make distinctions where they are needed. Right at the outset, 'admission into the people of God', 'being right with God', being 'members of the church', 'entering God's kingdom' and 'membership in the new covenant' are all equated as the same thing in one paragraph (2). It may be argued that these are overlapping rather than identical categories. This failure to distinguish is also seen in the treatment of the new covenant promise of Jeremiah 31. The promise that all will know the LORD is assumed without argument to mean all without exception, every member of the new covenant. It should at least be considered whether this could mean all without distinction, that is every type of person in the new covenant, as indicated by the following phrase, 'from the least of them to the greatest' (Jer 31:34). Please see my article in the next issue of this journal for a fuller exploration of a Reformed paedobaptist reading of Jeremiah 31-32. There is also a failure to distinguish between corporate and individual breaking of the covenant in Jer 31 and Heb 8. Wellum states that paedobaptists believe 'the new covenant is a breakable covenant like the old' (116). It appears that paedobaptists are simply rejecting Jeremiah's promise of an unbreakable covenant. This is an unfair representation. Paedobaptists believe the new covenant is unbreakable in the same way that the old was breakable, that is corporately. Presumably there were faithful Israelites even under the old covenant. And yet, the people of Israel, corporately, broke the covenant (Jer 31:32). But the new covenant will not be breakable in the way the old was. The church of God will not be able to break his new covenant. But just as there were faithful individuals in corporately unfaithful Israel, so there may be unfaithful individuals in the corporately faithful church.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment in this volume is the failure to engage with paedobaptist arguments for infant faith. Almost every essay demonstrates an *a priori* assumption that it is impossible for infants to have faith in any way, most explicitly, 'it is difficult to see how infants can fit with what Paul says since they cannot exercise faith' (77). In 364 pages, the only references to the extensive Reformed heritage regarding infant faith are a footnote from Schreiner: 'Nor is it convincing to posit here that infants can exercise faith' (73); and four

pages touching on Luther and infant faith from Jonathan Rainbow. Yet infant faith is central to the whole argument. Most recently, Rich Lusk's *Paedofaith* (Monroe, La.: Athanasius Press, 2005) has recapitulated the biblical and historic Reformed material on infant faith, though unfortunately, that book emerged only a year before the reviewed volume, perhaps too late for most of the authors to have engaged with it. However, Lusk is no novelty. He surveys Luther, Calvin and his successors, Turretin and the Puritans (*Paedofaith*, 80-90), noting the different expositions each gives of infant faith. Admittedly, there is no single Reformed definition of infant faith, but each of these schools argues a biblical case for genuine faith in infants. If such is the case, then the Baptist objection, that paedobaptists are baptising those without faith, falls. Given the centrality of this argument, it was particularly disappointing that it was not covered in Wright's chapter on the 'Logic of Reformed Paedobaptists', especially as that chapter shared considerable overlap and repetition with Wellum's relationship between the covenants. Part of the difficulty encountered in discussing the faith of infants arises from the initial definition of faith deployed. Quite reasonably, Schreiner and Wright use the Reformers' own definition, that 'belief encompasses a person's intellect and affections and leads one to entrust himself to Christ' (6). This is entirely appropriate for a normal adult. However, such a definition not only excludes the possibility of an infant having faith, but raises serious questions about those with severe mental handicap. It is fair to ask of the Baptist position if it therefore permanently excludes from the church those who will never have the requisite intellectual capacity to profess faith?

Finally, the book's argument seems to fail even on its own logic. Throughout it is argued that 'the church is properly composed of those who are members of the new covenant' (96), and that the covenant sign should only be applied to the elect (108, 113). Wellum summarises the distinctiveness of the new covenant:

The change is found in the shift from a *mixed* community to that of a *regenerate* community with the crucial implication that under the new covenant, the covenant sign must only be applied to those who are in that covenant, namely, believers.... Because the church, by its very nature, is a regenerate community, the covenant sign of baptism must only be applied to those who have come to faith in Christ (138).

However, it seems that under this logic, no-one should ever be baptised by the visible church on earth, as we cannot know who are the elect, however convincing a profession of faith is offered by an individual. Baptists would respond that they baptise those whom they have good reason to believe are regenerate (333). Paedobaptists argue the very same, that God promises that the children of his people are also his.

Despite the strengths of exegesis and biblical theology, it sadly feels as though this volume has failed to interact with key foundations of the paedobaptist argument and ultimately fails to advance the debate any further.

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The Baptized Body, Peter J. Leithart. Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 2007. 136 pages, \$15.00, ISBN: 13: 978-1-59128-048-4

The central question of this book is ‘what does baptism do for the baptised?’ In answering this, Leithart addresses the most contentious aspect of baptism in the contemporary Reformed world, namely its efficacy. His purpose is ‘to drag conservative Reformed churches, all kicking and screaming, into the twentieth century, the century of ecclesiology’ (x).

In Chapter 1, Leithart exposes what he regards to be the unexamined false assumptions that have shaped the modern Reformed view of baptism. These assumptions effectively remove the water from the New Testament passages which speak of baptismal efficacy. He seeks to clear the ground by exposing and correcting false assumptions which lead to what he deems a ‘feeble’ sacramental theology. The presuppositions which he believes have diluted the Bible’s teaching about the efficacy of baptism are wide-ranging and include: an anthropology produced by modern individualism; the atomistic view of human nature assumed by modern liberal politics; the tendency to misunderstand the nature of communication by treating signs rationalistically; and a mechanistic and impersonal view of grace as a substance. By contrast, his thesis assumes that

baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, a ritual action of the personal, covenantal God.

The author turns to examine New Testament passages which have a strong view of baptismal efficacy (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 3:21). His purpose is to affirm what the New Testament says without apology or hesitation, while also avoiding the very real and dangerous errors that have plagued the church for centuries (31).

His thesis has three axioms, each of which is the subject of a chapter (32):

1. *“Baptism” is baptism. When the New Testament writers use the word “baptism” they normally mean the water rite of entry into the church.*

2. *The “body of Christ” is the body of Christ. When the New Testament writers call the church the “body of Christ,” they mean the visible or historical church is the body of Christ.*

3. *Apostasy happens.*

In Chapter 2, Leithart deals with all the relevant New Testament texts to establish his first proposition and concludes that in the New Testament (particularly in Paul) ‘baptism’ usually refers to the water rite that initiates the baptised into the fellowship of the church. Consequently, he urges the church to face up to the fact that the Bible attributes astonishing power to this ritual.

Chapter 3 examines the second proposition: ‘The “body of Christ” is the body of Christ.’ This is the most important chapter in the book because contemporary debates (at least among the confessionally Reformed) are not essentially about baptismal efficacy. The Westminster Confession (28:1), Belgic Confession (Art. 34), Heidelberg Catechism (Q. 74) and Second Helvetic Confession (XX) all teach that baptism admits the baptised into the visible church. The confessional ambiguity is about how this affirmation is developed and unpacked. Leithart demonstrates how these debates about what it means to be a member of the church actually turn on ecclesiological assumptions about the body of Christ (hence the title).

Recognising, as others have done, some problems associated with the distinction between the visible and invisible church, Leithart introduces the terms ‘historical’ and ‘eschatological’ (62) to describe the church in progress and the church at its destination. He insists that the historical church is the ‘body of Christ.’ This distinction

guards against a kind of ecclesiological Nestorianism in which the body of Christ and the person of Christ are 'detached and work independently' (69). In other words, 'Christ is no more separable from His corporate body than He is from His personal body' (71). Thus, if baptism joins the baptised to the historical church, and if that church is the body of Christ, then those who are baptised are implanted into Christ's body and share in all he has to give. Leithart regards this as the 'central affirmation' of the so-called 'Federal Vision' (ix).

The last of the three axioms, 'Apostasy Happens,' is dealt with in Chapter 4. He makes clear that the appropriate response demanded of everyone graciously baptised by water into the corporate body of the Son of God is faith. It is only by faith that the baptised remain in the body of Christ and bear fruit. Addressing the sad reality that some who have been brought into the church, the body of Christ, fall away, Leithart discusses the varieties of apostasy with special reference to King Saul and Judas Iscariot. Acknowledging the force of 1 John 2:19 'they went out from us because they were not of us', he argues that this is not how the Bible *usually* describes apostasy. Many passages indicate that those who fall away had 'received many benefits and blessings and had a personal connection with the Son and Spirit of the Father' (90). Affirming that eternal election and reprobation are not at stake, he contends that a proper understanding of how God ordains time with all its changes and grace as God's personal favour leads us to a better understanding of election and reprobation. This entire chapter is particularly pastoral and it ends with a discussion of assurance. Recognising the reality of apostasy, Leithart warns against not keeping faith and ceasing to believe. However, conscious of the danger of self-examination descending into morbid introspection, he points out the pathway to assurance, telling us that '[a]postasy doesn't sneak up on people who are keeping faith . . . [God] is kind and good, and merciful to those who have even the smallest grain of faith' (105).

Chapter 5 reprises the thesis of the book in a delightful fairytale version of all that has preceded entitled 'A Tale of Three Servants.' In these five pages the author employs the craft of the storyteller to distil what has gone before into something that captures the imagination and the heart.

Appended is 'The Sociology of Infant Baptism', an essay first

published as a *Biblical Horizons Occasional Paper* in 1996. It explains something of how the covenant nurture of baptised children works. One particularly memorable section exposes (contra Barth) the myth of neutrality regarding the setting in which children are raised: 'If imposing religion on an infant is violence, every child is a victim of violence' (122). Another fascinating section argues that the question 'Why baptize infants?' is similar to the question, 'Why speak to infants?' 'The answer is of course that it is through speaking to them that they learn to understand and even to speak for themselves. . . . Similarly, we do not baptize babies because they understand what is happening to them, but in order that they might come to that understanding' (127).

This marvellous little book is provocative, insightful, paradigm-breaking and pastoral. It will appeal to readers of this journal in that Leithart clearly believes that Reformed theology offers the best expression of the theology of the Bible and (thankfully) Leithart shows that he is confessionally Reformed, particularly in areas in which his opponents would deny his orthodoxy, e.g. divine unchangeability, the uniqueness of the hypostatic union, eternal election, the perseverance of the saints and the possibility of assurance. However, in classic Leithart form, there is a desire to be always reforming, looking for God to shed new light on his Church from his Word. His concern is clearly to expound Scripture faithfully, rather than forcing the Biblical text into a procrustean bed of dogmatic formulations.

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Words and the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation and Literary Theory, David G. Firth and Jamie A. Grant, eds. Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 317 pages, £19.99, ISBN: 978-1-84474-288-2

The word of God is living and active. Heb 4:12.

Does it matter how language works, or is this an obscure science of purely academic interest? Does it matter to the *Christian* how language works? Two examples may suffice to show that it does

matter, and matters greatly.

First, our assumptions about how language works structure our exegesis. Many of us gained a basic grounding in inductive Bible study from frameworks such as, 'What does it say (what, who, when, where)? What does it mean (why, how)? What does it mean to me?' But does a question like 'Who is being addressed by whom?' always have a clear answer in the book of Micah? If it does not, should we infer that the answer does not matter (since Scripture tells us all we need to know) or might the uncertainty be deliberate and significant? Again, students are taught to 'look at the context, subdivide the passage and find the main point.' But what is the context of a psalm or proverb? Are Greek and Hebrew texts meant to be subdivided at all, and if so how? Can every passage be summed up in a sentence, especially an indicative sentence?

Second, and as a result, our assumptions about how language works inform our systematic theology. The longstanding dispute between dispensationalist and covenant theologians is, as Vern Poythress pointed out in *Understanding Dispensationalists*, largely due to different definitions of 'literal meaning'. In a similar way, the Federal Vision view of baptism tends to underestimate the richness of language. It may be, as Leithart argues in *The Baptized Body*, that when baptism is mentioned there is always a reference, at some level, to the water rite, and that this must be given due weight. This does not, however, mean that there is *only* a reference to the physical rite, or that the reference is necessarily free from metaphor, irony, and even ambiguity. If "'baptism" is baptism,' must we also say that "'circumcision" is circumcision,' and if so how should we interpret 'circumcise your hearts' (Deut 10:15)?

It does matter how words work, which is why the collection of essays entitled *Words and the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation and Literary Theory* deserves wide readership. Two broad surveys of literary theory in relation to biblical studies are followed by six essays covering specific approaches: speech-act theory, genre criticism, ambiguity, poetics, rhetoric, and discourse analysis.

The theme that emerges time and again is that words *do* things. This is the explicit focus of speech-act theory, which distinguishes the locutionary act (the meaningful utterance), from its conventional illocutionary force (such as promising, blessing or cursing), and its

perlocutionary effect (such as bringing to repentance). Basic exegesis thus needs to ask 'What does it do?' as well as 'What does it say?'; Briggs suggests that 'in many cases, the correct illocutionary classification is *the* question of interpretation' (90). The traditional distinction between interpretation and application is then transformed by the distinction between what the text does to every reader (illocution) and its effect on a particular reader (perlocution). Rom 1:18–3:21 convicts us all in a heavenly court, whether we respond in humble confession or proud denial, and that is precisely why response matters so much.

To say, however, that the illocutionary act is the business of the text and the perlocutionary effect the choice of the reader would be to underestimate language. Firth argues that deliberate ambiguity 'pique[s] the interest of the readers' (173) and 'draws [them] into the text in order to explore the possibilities in meaning' (153) while Phillips presents 'primary rhetoric' as 'the power of the text' to alter a worldview (236). For Briggs, 'the issue at hand is how this (biblical) text transforms its readers' (100). The text does not merely communicate propositions; in interaction with the cultural context, genre expectations and social conventions of a specific period, it is instrumental in bringing about our response.

Like all collections of essays, this volume has some gaps and unevenness. The editors, for instance, acknowledge that a discussion of metaphor might profitably have been included. Within each essay, moreover, the author is necessarily selective. Thus, although Grant mentions Berlin's multi-dimensional approach to parallelism, he confines his own discussion almost entirely to the semantic dimension. Although Wardlaw surveys the spectrum of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic concerns within discourse analysis, he then narrows his focus to pragmatics and within this to critical discourse analysis. For a volume celebrating the richness of language, the worked examples in several essays are somewhat pedestrian.

More regrettably, perhaps, the two introductory essays hint at an elitist view of Bible study. Osborne's solution to the problem that lay people too often read Scripture as if it were all 'a series of propositional theological principles stated in epistolary form', and that inductive study can easily become 'simply a more scientific way of being subjective', is to supplement inductive study with the 'sure'

guidance of deductive scholarly aids (17–18). Snyman goes so far as to say that only the theologically trained reader ‘is serious about trying to get to grips with the meaning of the text as accurately as possible’ (51).

Readers may take issue with this stance, and for two reasons. First, many scholars have been as guilty of ‘propositional’ interpretation and pseudo-scientific subjectivism as lay people; indeed lay people inherit their implicit literary theory from scholars. Second, there are plenty of believers with no formal theological training who are passionate about understanding Scripture accurately. Deductive use of research aids is certainly necessary to fill in the details of historical context, genre expectations, the history of interpretation, and wordplay in the original languages. However, to read texts as actions, to take account of translatable ambiguity, and to be wary of indicative summary statements are inductive skills that anybody can learn. In other words, ‘preconceptual rhetoric’ and ‘illocutionary force’ are technical terms best confined to scholarly circles, but ‘What does this text *do* (and how)?’ is a question for every Bible reader.

It is therefore to be hoped that the target audience of this valuable book, which includes ministers and theological students as well as scholars, will pass on their discoveries to their congregations. Some readers will be motivated to explore for themselves the more specialised literature on the topics covered, reassured that ‘literary theory’ is no longer synonymous with deconstruction. Others will recognise the complementary importance of the theology of language and, if they have not already done so, will turn to scholars such as Thiselton and Vanhoozer. In either case, the bibliographies provided for each essay will be helpful. But perhaps the most important impact this book can have (in the spirit of *semper reformandum*) is at second hand, through the commentaries lay people read, the sermons they hear and the Bible study in which they themselves engage.

First and most importantly, as we have already discussed, literary theory suggests new questions to ask of a text and, with respect to long-familiar questions, changes our expectations of the answers, whether we deduce them from a commentary or induce them from the text.

Second, literary theory promotes self-awareness in interpretation and therefore humility. Brown’s essay includes a telling quote from

Eagleton: ‘without some kind of theory, however unreflective and implicit, we would not know what a “literary work” was in the first place, or how we were to read it. Hostility to theory usually means an opposition to other people’s theories and an oblivion to one’s own’ (144). The model of Bible study in many English conservative evangelical churches owes much to the secular, and largely inductive, New Criticism of the mid-twentieth century. It may be excellent, but it is not culturally neutral. Indeed, we are still playing catch up; both Empson (whose work forms the basis of Firth’s essay on ambiguity) and J. L. Austin (the founder of speech act theory) come from that same era. Deductive study aids, similarly, are most useful when read with awareness of their presupposed literary theory, whether that is modern or postmodern, critical or reformed.

Third, literary theory opens our eyes to the ways in which the Lord who created language, and who is himself the Word, uses language to its fullest and richest potential. If human words have power to change those who hear them, simply through the way language works, how much more should we expect God’s Word to change us when that power is wielded by his Spirit!

My word that goes out from my mouth... will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. Isa 55:10–11

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Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice, Daniel J. Treier. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic; Nottingham: Apollos, 2008. 221 pages. £11.99, ISBN: 1-84474-311-X

Daniel Treier provides readers with an overview of the state of play in the contemporary hermeneutical movement known as the ‘theological interpretation of Scripture’ (TIS). That is, the trend found among a growing and increasingly influential body of scholars since the 1990s driven by the impulse ‘to reverse the dominance of historical criticism over churchly reading of the Bible and to redefine the role of hermeneutics in theology’ (14). While the movement is

nascent, the practice is ancient: from the earliest days of the church, 'Christians read the Bible as Scripture, authoritative as God's Word for faith and life; thus, to interpret Scripture was to encounter God' (13).

The book divides into two equally weighted parts. The first deals with the catalysts for TIS, and the topics most pervasive to the movement. The second deals with the major challenges facing its practitioners, whether the result of internal disagreement or simply a function of the maturation of a project that, at least in its latest, scholarly garb, is still in its infancy. At regular intervals throughout both parts, Treier considers the doctrine of the *imago Dei* as an extended case study in the way various facets of TIS bear on the reading of the text.

Treier discerns three overarching themes that together encapsulate the concerns of TIS. In chapter 1, he describes the move to recapture the interpretive strategies of precritical readers of Scripture. For such interpreters, to study the sacred text was by definition to engage in a multiplicity of ways a thoroughly christocentric, unified narrative that could not but nourish the lives of the pious. In chapter 2, Treier homes in on the role of Christian doctrine in setting parameters for these interpretive strategies. He focuses on the role played by the Rule of Faith for patristic interpreters of Scripture. Since the text was read for the sake of Christian practice (71), the Rule operated as a moral restraint (59) against the tendency to distort the Scriptures in self-interested ways. At the same time, it liberated interpreters 'to explore imaginatively the classic Christian consensus about God' (63).

The collective context of this exploration is the subject of chapter 3. If the heartbeat of the ecumenical creeds is decisive for the interpretation of Scripture, the church as the community of the Spirit is the requisite hermeneutical environment. Here Treier, in some detail, reflects on the work of Stephen Fowl, in whose writings the call for Christian convictions and practice to shape scriptural interpretation is a loud and persistent refrain. For proponents of TIS such as Fowl, the formation of Christian virtue is a nonnegotiable aspect of the interpretive endeavour (92). The endgame for TIS is not the cognitive affirmation of truth; rather, it is a matter of 'the arduous but rewarding journey of communing more faithfully with God and others in concrete circumstances' (89).

In chapter 4, Treier turns to the question of biblical theology, the first of the three major challenges he suggests advocates of TIS must negotiate. After cataloguing the hardening of the Gabler-inspired distinction between biblical (descriptive) and dogmatic (prescriptive) domains, a division that served to equip the discipline of biblical studies with a decidedly antitheological edge (105), Treier proceeds to consider attempts to 'rejuvenate biblical theology in service to the church' (110). First, he surveys the popular evangelical understanding of biblical theology as an essentially historical affair, that is, tracking the progressive revelation of God's redemptive-historical actions through the pages of Scripture (111). Second, he turns to the canonical approach of Brevard Childs, in which the theological payload of Scripture is most fundamentally a function of the final form of the canonical text (114) rather than the actuality of the historical events to which it witnesses (111). In each case, Treier finds the relationship between the presenting variety of biblical theology and some of the characteristics of TIS to be unclear. In the former, true theological reflection with normative force too often is absent, as systematic theology in this tradition sometimes proves to be 'nothing more than a rigorously descriptive biblical theology "contextualized" or translated into contemporary language' (113). In the latter, Treier fears there is a level of arbitrariness in the way certain historical-critical results, as they are taken for granted in understanding the text's prehistory, impinge on the texture of the authoritative final form (115).

In chapter 5, Treier exposes the drive to interpret Scripture theologically to the most basic hermeneutical questions. In reading this sacred text, how should the author, the text, and/or the reader be coordinated, and what is the proper role of each in the interpretive process (135)? Treier describes various approaches to 'theological hermeneutics', both in the sense of the proper mode of interpretation in general, and the material content of the special hermeneutics that pertain to reading the Bible (136). Leaning on the work of his *Doktorvater*, Kevin Vanhoozer, Treier affirms the use of 'performance' as a metaphor for scriptural interpretation (148-50), as it allows the biblical canon to speak with an authoritative voice in directing the drama in which the Spirit-filled church is engaged without being embarrassed by all forms of interpretive plurality. In chapter 6, Treier

broaches an issue so far largely unaddressed by supporters of TIS, the particular significance of the various social locations of interpreters of Scripture in an age of globalization. Treier takes, first, the application of postcolonial theory to biblical interpretation and, second, the pentecostal character of so much of the rapidly growing Christianity of the global South as examples that call the theological interpreter of Scripture to a properly generous appreciation of local theologies (184) that simultaneously maintains 'the possibility of ascertaining and passing on enduring convictions about concrete truths' (182).

Treier has produced an articulate introduction to a complex, developing subject. The book is a pleasure to read, the prose crisp and the progression of ideas clear. It could be used with great profit in conjunction with the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer *et al*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), a project in which Treier had a significant hand. *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture* provides the narrative context required to elucidate the range of approaches found in the larger work. To this end, and quite appropriately, the present volume is generally descriptive in nature; readers in search of a seasoned personal manifesto for scriptural interpretation, encompassing summary judgments on all major aspects and practitioners of TIS, will be disappointed. Nevertheless, the outline of Treier's approach to several of the issues central to TIS debates is discernible. For example, he insists that critical biblical scholarship is, in principle, of 'much help and is here to stay' (34); the challenge for the proponent of TIS is to incorporate the best of precritical approaches as well.

For readers of this journal, the appeal for Scripture to be interpreted theologically might appear decidedly unremarkable. The plea is new and particularly newsworthy only in those contexts most permeated by "'critical" assumptions, reading practices and conclusions', namely, the academy and certain mainline Protestant denominations (22). In contrast, some aspects of theological interpretation have 'persisted among evangelicals during their eclipse within wider academic and ecclesiastical cultures' (23). Here lies the rub, however, for such readers of Scripture. To the extent that the distinctive concerns of TIS (chapters 1-3) accurately capture the character of a fully theological reading of Scripture, so evangelicals have not 'retained or attained all that theological interpretation of

Scripture could embrace' (25). Treier rightly calls for reflection on the promises and pitfalls of the democratic environment that pervasive literacy has brought to the church (79). While opportunities for 'lay participation in Scripture reading and theological discernment' are greater than ever, so is the temptation to pursue 'individualistic and idiosyncratic interpretation', without due consideration of the way 'the Holy Spirit leads members of the Christian community to discover the meaning of Scripture, and in particular how different parts of the body of Christ connect with each other in that process' (80). It is one thing to put the Bible in the hands of the people. It is another to teach them to read it *by* themselves.

More controversially, Treier ties the theological skinniness of too many evangelical readings of Scripture to the continuing embrace, in reliance on E. D. Hirsch Jr., of the modernist distinction between 'a text's "meaning" as single and determinate and its "significance" or "application" as multiple and context-sensitive' (24). Such an approach is ill-equipped to appropriate the full stash of riches found in precritical readings of Scripture, both 'literal' and 'figural' or 'spiritual' (48); indeed, it continues to suffer embarrassment in the face of the interpretive strategies employed by the apostles (50). The insistence on the absolute hermeneutical priority of the singular meaning of the text as defined by the intent of an original human author too often closes the door on Scripture's 'multiple complex senses given by God, the author of the whole drama' (200, taken from the fourth thesis of the Center of Theological Inquiry's 'Scripture Project'). Treier shares the instincts of other proponents of TIS in affirming that the validity of the theological reading is discerned, ultimately, in the doing: the entire realm of a properly Christian reading of Scripture 'concerns living virtuously in communion with God according to the image of Christ' (156). Much evangelical biblical theology will only live up to its billing when it learns more adequately to press a description of the plotline of biblical history into the practice of the community of the Spirit. The testimony of Augustine offers strong support for this aspect of Treier's case: 'Anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them' (94, from *On Christian Teaching*, I.86). We might

assume that the author of 1 Corinthians 13 would agree.

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1 & 2 Kings, Peter J. Leithart. SCM Theological Commentary on the Bible. London: SCM, 2006. 304 pages, £19.99, ISBN-10: 0-334-04098-1

Peter Leithart's commentary on 1 & 2 Kings was the second volume of the SCM Theological Commentary series to be released by Brazos Press in 2006. This commentary series takes as its starting point the conviction that the Nicene tradition, far from being an obfuscating film laid over the biblical text, can actually serve as a clarifying lens. Each of the volumes in the series is written by a theologian (David Hart, Stanley Hauerwas, Jaroslav Pelikan, and Robert Jenson among them), seeking both to redress theology's loss of its exegetical imagination and to bring theological insight to the task of exegesis, which has long suffered from a dearth of it.

In consequence of the 'tentative and exploratory' character of the commentary series, the various volumes in this series do not share a single hermeneutical vision, nor are they structured alike. Although this does afford the individual commentators considerable freedom in determining the manner in which they will approach their books, it also results in a degree of unevenness across the series. For instance, whereas Pelikan's volume on Acts adopts a more conventional verse by verse approach, Leithart's commentary breaks the text of 1 & 2 Kings into 39 sections (generally corresponding with the chapter divisions of the books), each of which is treated as a unit.

In many respects, Leithart's book bears a closer affinity to a series of theological homilies upon the text than it does to the standard commentary format. The theological observations are often tangential to the text and many of the details of the text that a standard commentary would be expected to address are passed over without comment.

Leithart's writing is always a pleasure to read, this commentary being no exception. The short and relatively self-contained chapters

make the book quite accessible and ideal for the reader with limited time on his hands. Although he engages with the Hebrew text and explores some more complex theological issues along the way, there is no reason why the intelligent layman should feel daunted by this book. The chapters generally flow smoothly, although one can occasionally hear the gears shifting as they move to the more overtly theological discussion.

Leithart's reading of 1 & 2 Kings is literary, typological, evangelical and ecclesial. Great attention is paid to the larger patterns and literary structures to be observed within the book and its constituent parts. Leithart is an observant reader and his insight into the narrative art of the text is one of the most valuable features of this commentary. Many surprising and illuminating wordplays, intertextual echoes and chiasms are identified, yielding a considerably richer reading than one finds in many other commentaries. Although certain of the literary details and structures that Leithart identifies are not entirely convincing (a number of the chiasms strike this reader as being slightly forced), for the most part his comments successfully expose the inner structure, and literary and thematic coherence of the book.

In providing a typological reading, Leithart observes the deeper, theologically significant, relationships that pertain between various characters and series of events, the manner in which particular roles and sequences are developed, inverted, subverted, re-enacted and foreshadowed. Whilst the literary art of the text often highlights such relationships, Leithart's analysis is more probing and wide-ranging, demonstrating the presence of numerous leitmotifs that 1 & 2 Kings shares with the rest of Scripture. For instance, Leithart observes that Solomon is a greater Adam (49), Elijah, Elisha, and Ahab are related to Moses, Joshua, and Pharaoh (172), Ahab is an inverted Solomon (147n3), and the ascension of Elijah in 2 Kings 2 follows the pattern of the sacrificial rite of Leviticus 1 (176). One would have to look hard for a commentary that better showcases the fruitfulness of a typological reading of Scripture.

One of the most refreshing features of this commentary is the fact that, as an evangelical reading, it approaches 1 & 2 Kings as a 'gospel text'. For Leithart this book is a story of God's mercy and longsuffering, of the manner in which God fulfils his promises on the

far side of judgment. A pattern of death and resurrection is seen to underlie the entire narrative, a pattern that, as with so much of the book, anticipates a full realization in the person of Jesus Christ. Leithart's conviction that the full sense of the book of 1 & 2 Kings is only found as the text is read in light of Christ yields much exegetical fruit.

One particular theme that surfaces on several occasions is that of the analogy between the division between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and current ecclesial division. Although this analogy has often been employed in the cause of partisan or separatist polemics, Leithart focuses upon God's continued interest in both kingdoms and the hope of reunion after the death of exile, relating this to the hope of church reunion.

Throughout the commentary, Leithart explores a wide range of theological issues that are raised by the text, giving his readers stimulating observations on such subjects as sloth, the culture of death, Marcionism, empire and the place of human creativity. Augustine, Calvin, John Milbank, Oliver O'Donovan, William Cavanaugh, and Thomas Aquinas are among the many travelling companions that we dialogue with as we travel through the text of 1 & 2 Kings. Although the movement of the text places constraints on the degree to which theological questions can be explored, the limited discussion in the commentary does whet one's appetite for the fuller treatments of the subjects that one would find in the works of the theologians.

One particular area of criticism. In the series preface, R.R. Reno speaks of the detachment of exegesis from theology, comparing the situation to that of a weakened and fragmented army, where the various corps have 'retreated to isolated fortresses'. In a commentary that is in part an attempt to address the separation of the theologians from the exegetes, the limited engagement with the standard critical commentaries on 1 & 2 Kings is disappointing. Reading Leithart's commentary one gains only a very limited sense of the shape that the scholarly conversations surrounding 1 & 2 Kings have taken. At some points I was left wishing for a more consistently postcritical approach, with greater engagement with and appreciation of the achievements of the critical exegesis of the book.

Despite such limitations – a number of which Leithart openly

admits in the acknowledgements – this volume is a valuable complement to more standard commentaries on 1&2 Kings. Leithart's smooth prose, exegetical imagination, and theological insight are all very much in evidence. Whether one is an exegete, a theologian, a pastor, or just an average reader, one will find much to stimulate, encourage, challenge and enlighten within this book. It augurs well for the rest of the series.

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The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism, Timothy Keller. New York, NY: Dutton Books, 2008. 293 pages, £12.99, ISBN: 978-0-525-95049-3

Timothy Keller is the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York. Out of the lessons learned in that context comes *The Reason for God*, a Reformed, contemporary apologia for the Christian faith that seeks to persuade the sophisticated sceptic and strengthen the believer's convictions (xviii).

Following the introduction in which Keller locates his book in the context of the culture wars in the US, he proceeds to establish his apologia in two distinct sections. The first half of the book deals with the seven most common (in Keller's experience) 'objections and doubts about Christianity' (xix). The territory covered here will be familiar to most who have engaged in evangelism and apologetics in the western world (for example, human suffering, the exclusivity of Christianity, and science versus Christianity all receive treatment along with other matters), though perhaps the only surprising omission is any chapter dealing solely with questions of human sexuality and sexual practice. Following an intermission in which Keller defines his terms, the second half makes the positive case for belief in the God of orthodox Christianity. Here Keller covers evidence for God's existence, before proceeding to present cogent explanations of the major tenets of the Christian gospel such as Christ's passion, his resurrection, and the doctrine of sin.

The book is characterised by a number of strengths that will be

well known to anyone familiar with Keller's ministry. He writes in intelligent prose that successfully inhabits the territory between an academic work and sermoncraft, all the while combining warmth, plainness and gentleness. Likewise, the book contains explanations of aspects of Christianity characteristic of Keller, such as the nature of sin as idolatry, and a holistic vision of salvation and the nature of discipleship. Additionally, although he confesses to toning down his distinctives in order 'to represent all Christians' (116-117), Keller's presentation of Christianity benefits from the insights into the gospel of the Augustinian and Reformation streams of thought. Keller is not afraid to spend several pages explaining human sin from several angles, or in condemning both legalism and license and labouring the importance of grace. Indeed, by the end of the book even the doctrine of divine election to salvation has put in a brief appearance.

All of the above serve to make *The Reason for God* persuasive and theologically robust amidst what is (necessarily) a simple presentation of the core elements of the Christian faith. However, the book's dominant strengths are in the area of methodology. Even from the outset it is clear that Keller's approach is going to be a form of presuppositionalism. For example, the introduction encourages sceptics 'to look for a type of faith hidden within' their doubts about Christianity (xvii). Both believers and doubters are working from a position based upon a sort of faith. Keller's approach in the first half of the book is then to encourage sceptics to doubt their doubts. Consequently, each of the objections covered is shown up for where it is internally inconsistent, incapable of safeguarding its own values, or leads to conclusions that would be repugnant to most protagonists. Keller's presuppositionalism leads him to admit that he is arguing from a position of bias and to deny the possibility of complete objectivity. This allows him to be both the champion of integrity and honesty, whilst also employing the tools of relativism found in many of the objections against themselves. For example, Keller quotes Nietzsche and Foucault to deconstruct the objection that Christianity's truth-claims are mere power-plays, and elsewhere employs a relativising perspective on culture to challenge western offence at the doctrine of judgment. In answering objections Keller manages therefore to make a case for Christianity based in part on the bankruptcy of the explanatory power of the alternatives. Perhaps the

best illustration of where this approach leads in the first half of the book is when Keller demonstrates that the criticisms levelled at the atrocities done in the name of Christianity only have validity when founded on 'Christianity's own resources of critique' (61). Apparent objections to Christianity stand most stable when grounded in the presuppositions of Christianity itself.

The second half of the book proceeds on the same principles. Having rejected the myth of neutrality, or the possibility of pure objectivity, Keller argues that he will not be seeking to 'prove' the existence of God in a pure sense of proof. The main apologetic is not some proof accessible on intellectual neutral ground, but rather is found in encouraging his readers 'to put on Christianity like a pair of spectacles and look at the world with it' (123). Hence part two commences with a chapter in which Keller marshals the more traditional proofs of God's existence (e.g. from God as First Cause, the orderliness of creation, etc.) as indicative 'clues' showing that Christianity has more explanatory power than scepticism. This then, is an apologetic approach that does not sacrifice the primacy of special revelation, yet does not deny an appropriate place to evidence and argument. Moreover, Keller's method is not just to deal with matters of truth in the abstract. He is not afraid to appeal to the aesthetics of the gospel (for example, he argues that sceptics ought to *want* the resurrection to be true (211)), or to human affections as well as to the mind (e.g. 95-96).

All of which is not to say that the volume is without its weaknesses. Indeed, as is often the case, it is sometimes in the areas in which *The Reason for God* is strong that its weaknesses are most apparent. For example, on a few occasions one is left with the distinct impression that in the desire to be winsome, Keller has perhaps conceded too much ground to the objectors. Minor examples of this come whenever Keller concedes that Christians might not compare favourably to non-Christians in terms of moral character (e.g. 53-54). While making a crucial point (salvation is by grace), here it will appear to some that Keller is overstating common grace's ability to conserve whilst at the same time understating the transformative potency (and demands) of saving grace. However, a more serious example of this tendency concerns Keller's portrayal of Creationists in chapter 6. Undoubtedly many in the Creation Science movement will

not recognise themselves as those who see the relationship between Christianity and Science as one primarily of conflict. No doubt this arises from Keller's New York context, and his broader concern to locate Christianity (and especially that practiced at Redeemer) within the quagmire of the American culture wars as a genuine 'third way' (ix-xx). Unfortunately however, one gets the impression that this might have led him into an over-readiness to accept some common critiques of the (perceived) Christian right, a move that will only serve to confirm the suspicions of some of those already predisposed to disagree with his position on evolution.

That Tim Keller's ministry is amongst literate Manhattanites profoundly shapes the book in other ways too. Over the course of the volume Keller references the likes of Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Nagel, Jonathan Edwards and Leonard Bernstein on the one hand, whilst drawing illustrations from Tolkien, *Star Wars* and *Rocky* on the other hand. In doing so he masses between 10 and 30 endnotes for most chapters (although these are, helpfully for this sort of volume, found at the back of the book rather than within the text). Again this relative strength also gives rise to a relative weakness - Keller's volume will not be suitable reading for everyone. Some readers will be intimidated by Keller's eclecticism and intellect, the exact features that will be enticing for others. This is not to criticise the approach Keller takes so much as to make the necessary recognition that pastors and other Christian leaders will need to give careful thought as to whom the book will be helpful.

Criticisms aside, Timothy Keller has done the Church a great service in producing a robust, persuasive, evangelical and Reformed apologetic suitable for a variety of postmodern western contexts.

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Is Christianity Good for the World? Christopher Hitchens and Douglas Wilson. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2008. 67 pages, ISBN: 979-1-59128-053-8

After a foreword by Jonah Goldberg, 'a fairly secular Jew' (7), and the

introductions, this lively debate between atheist journalist Christopher Hitchens and pastor Douglas Wilson, which first appeared in *Christianity Today*, is divided into six rounds, with Wilson responding to Hitchens.

The tone of the exchange is conversational (with a certain amount of repetition) which makes for easy and enjoyable reading, but perhaps a tighter discussion of the points at issue might have yielded greater clarity.

Hitchens' 'case' is more like a series of broadsides than a precise assault. Invoking Ockham's razor, he argues that God is an unnecessary hypothesis, whilst admitting that the origins of the universe remain mysterious. For Hitchens, the God of the Bible would be a cruel tyrant who takes away human freedom and threatens torment for those who fail to worship him, while condoning slavery and genocide. Hitchens calls Christianity immoral, saying, 'I would principally wish to cite the concept of vicarious redemption, whereby one's own responsibilities can be flung onto a scapegoat and thereby taken away' (22).

Hitchens loses points for his confusion over the Parable of the Good Samaritan, in which he assumes the hero is a Jew and eventually concedes to Wilson that he had missed the point about the character's ethnicity (51).

Wilson's knockout blow is to insist that atheists like Hitchens can provide no objective basis for morality, or indeed for rational argument. Hitchens often seems to fail to understand the point and appears not to recognise the problem. He wrongly thinks that Wilson has admitted that 'morality has nothing to do with the supernatural' (31) whereas Wilson's contention is that if an atheist behaves in a moral manner he is being '*an inconsistent atheist*' (33, original emphasis). The best Hitchens can come up with is that moral behaviour evolved (59) and is motivated by 'mutual interest and sympathy' (32) and 'derived from innate human solidarity' (36). Hitchens can give no reasons why anyone ought to share his moral preferences and cannot object to the supposed immorality of Christianity except by assuming the truth of the faith he seeks to deny (49).

In addition, Wilson mentions some evidence for the Christian faith and also includes brief presentations of the gospel.

A number of times Hitchens refers readers to his book *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, and this slim volume could serve as useful antidote for anyone who is overly impressed by Hitchens' argument there. Since Hitchens' polemics are similar to those of other campaigning atheists such as Richard Dawkins and have a wide currency, Wilson's responses may also help to show the bankruptcy of godlessness, and the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Christian worldview to those not familiar with Hitchens' other work. Believers may find their own faith strengthened by Wilson's words and gather ammunition here for apologetics and evangelism.

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You Can Change: God's Transforming Power for our Sinful Behaviour and Negative Emotions, Tim Chester. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008. 204 pages, £7.99, ISBN: 1-84474-303-2

Books now flow steadily from Tim Chester's pen (or computer), with his recent publications including *From Creation to New Creation* (2003), *The Message of Prayer* (2003), *Good News for the Poor* (2004), *Delighting in the Trinity* (2005), *The Busy Christian's Guide to Busyness* (2006), and *Total Church* (2007). Thankfully, as his latest title demonstrates, quantity has not diminished quality. *You Can Change* is an excellent book.

Chester's message is clear: 'change takes place in our lives as we turn to see the glory of God in Jesus. We "see" the glory of Christ as we "hear" the gospel of Christ ... Moral effort, fear of judgment and sets of rules can't bring lasting change. But amazing things happen when we "turn to the Lord"' (23). The book is structured around ten questions which flesh this out.

Chapter one (what would you like to change?) draws out the comprehensive nature of this change. Through a brief biblical theology of glory and image, Chester urges us to settle for nothing less than being like Christ and reflecting God's glory. He then tackles motivation, stressing that we do not change in order to prove ourselves to God, other people or ourselves, but rather, because we

are justified through faith in Christ, we enjoy a new identity. Consequently, we are to be what we are. This chapter (why would you like to change?) is good at spurring us 'to enjoy the freedom from sin and delight in God that God gives to us through Jesus.' (41) Yet, it is still possible to embark on change in the wrong way – in our own strength through a list of do's and don'ts (chapter three – how are you going to change?). Instead, the gospel alternative is to repent of legalism and self righteousness and acknowledge that it is God who transforms us from our new hearts out.

The next three chapters fit closely together. Chester identifies the heart and its sinful desires as the root cause of sin, not our struggles, temptations or circumstances (chapter four – when do you struggle?). In our hearts we are both 'interpreters' (we think and believe) and 'worshippers' (we desire and worship) and so when we sin we interpret wrongly and believe lies, and do not desire God primarily and worship idols. A double solution is needed. First, we must trust God (chapter five – what truths do you need to turn to?). We are to tell ourselves the truth that sets us free and embrace it thereby desiring God more than any sin. Chester has a great section where, drawing on Psalm 62:11-12, he shows how freedom and satisfaction can be enjoyed because God is great, glorious, good and gracious. Second, we must worship God which involves repenting of worshipping idols (chapter six – what desires do you need to turn from?). Sin is desiring something more than God while repentance is desiring God more than other things. Chester rightly stresses the need not just to turn from sinful behaviour, but to trace it back to the idols and desires causing it, before repenting and removing them. Helpfully, he points out that though sin seems attractive and inevitable, God is more attractive and powerful.

The obstacles to change are examined in chapter seven (what stops you from changing?) and Chester is good at emphasising our responsibility in sinning (reflected in the language of disobedience, not defeat) and the need to expose hidden sin ('Sin is like mould: it grows best in the dark. Expose it to the light and it starts to dry up' (135)). Particularly penetrating is the section on 'hating the consequences of sin, but not the sin itself' (136) which sets up well the tonic of continually returning to the cross. Galatians 6:7-8, with its images of reaping and sowing, provides the platform for examining

‘what strategies will reinforce your faith and repentance’ (chapter eight) with helpful material on avoidance and means of grace.

While the preceding chapters may have focused on the individual, Chester is adamant that change is a community, not a solo, project (chapter nine – how can we support one another in changing?). The church is the God given context for change, ‘a better place ... than a therapy group, a counsellor’s office or a retreat centre’ (167). He challenges us to ensure our fellowships are ones of truth, repentance and grace. The book then ends on a realistic and hopeful note with three sets of twin truths: change is a lifetime and daily task; I can and will change; I am a sinner and righteous.

Chester’s debt to others is clear, especially the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation based in the USA, and hopefully this book will introduce their very good material to a wider audience. Yet, that aside, *You Can Change* has a number of real strengths. In particular, it is gospel driven, with the imperatives of change firmly rooted in the indicative of the good news of Christ. It is infused with Scripture, saturated in grace and attractively presents the Christian life in terms of joy, freedom and transformation. It is also a soberly realistic book reflecting the author’s own struggles and some of those he has pastored. Finally, *You Can Change* is immensely practical. The reader is encouraged to work through it with a particular issue in mind – a ‘change project’. Each of the easy to read chapters ends with exercises and quotations for personal reflection or group discussion. These are well worth working through carefully. Further consideration of the older Christian who has plateaued in their faith or is feeling dry and yet knows this material well would have been helpful, but this is a minor criticism.

You Can Change is a great resource to use in sermon preparation, with small groups or individuals, or as part of a ‘spiritual check up’. In fact, it is just the book to read after your New Year’s resolutions have failed again!

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Impure Lust, John Flavel. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2008. 80 pages, £3.25, ISBN: 987-0-85151-981-4

This is part of a new series *The Pocket Puritans* designed to introduce readers to the Puritans. To date, the other books in the series cover *Anger Management* by Baxter, *Binge Drinking* also by Flavel, *Living Faith* by Ward, *Heaven* by Edwards, and *Repent and Believe* by Brooks. The *Pocket Puritans* are printed in the same format as the classic Penguin 60s (the sixty small books, priced at 60p, produced to celebrate Penguin's 60th anniversary).

The first half of the book is one section from Flavel's *A Caution to Seamen: A Dissuasive Against Several Horrid and Detestable Sins* originally entitled 'The Harlot's Face in the Scripture Glass.' Putting this short discourse in context, it is a 10 page excerpt from volume 5 of Banner's 1968 reprint of the 1820 edition of Flavel's works. The English has been adapted in a manner somewhat analogous to the principles of the New King James Version: specifically, modifying archaic personal pronouns, updating spelling, inserting the dates of some of the authors cited, adding occasional footnotes for clarity and very minor abridgements (e.g. the removal of a reference to *morbus Gallicus*, the 'French disease', presumably deemed inappropriate).

The treatise itself comprises ten warning arguments designed to expand upon the true nature and consequences of the sin of lust. This is followed by seven brief directions about how Flavel's Devonshire sailors might avoid this particular sin.

The remainder of the booklet is 'John Flavel: A Brief Introduction to the Man and His Writings' reprinted from *The Banner of Truth* magazine, September 1968. There is no doubt that this short biographical vignette helps locate Flavel's discourse in its historical context.

With this series Banner are joining Crossway and Christian Focus in repackaging the Puritans for a new audience; indeed, this was something that Banner originally introduced in (to my mind) the much more useful Puritan Paperbacks series. As yet, I am still to be persuaded about the value of this particular series. If the goal is to produce short accessible booklets on important pastoral issues, I

regard the CCEF *Resources for Changing Lives* minibooks as being in a class of their own. However, if instead the intention is to make the Puritans accessible then Kris Lundgaard's two adaptations of treatises by John Owen, *The Enemy Within* and *Through the Looking Glass* are first rate examples of books which whet the appetite for Puritan literature. Similarly, the two new editions of Owen that Kelly Kopic and Justin Taylor have produced for Crossway, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation* and *Communion with the Triune God* are outstanding examples of making Puritan writings accessible, the strength of which lies notably in mapping out the outline of the argument and in providing extensive explanatory footnotes.

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