

***The Metaphysics of the Incarnation.* Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 253 pages, \$125.00. ISBN 978-0-19-958316-4.**

The doctrine of the Incarnation has always puzzled Christian theologians. How can it be that a divine person, the second Person of the Trinity, could become a human being? How can the same person possess all of the attributes of divinity and, at the same time, all of the limitations of humanity? Can one person be both omniscient and ignorant, both omnipresent and spatially located, both omnipotent and vulnerable to suffering and death? *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, provides something of a “state of the art” response when it comes to answering these crucial questions. Paying special attention to recent developments in the philosophy of mind and in cognitive science, this collection of essays provides a helpful map of the metaphysical options open to those who still wish to defend the coherence of the Incarnation.

The book emerged from a year-long collaboration by the two editors in the philosophy department at Oxford University, and features several of the most prominent analytic philosophers and theologians who have engaged these important issues. In the introductory chapter, Jonathan Hill provides some useful distinctions that help categorize the various approaches taken in the book and in scholarship more generally. Perhaps the most significant of these is the distinction between transformational/abstractist approaches, on the one hand, and relational/concretist approaches on the other. According to the former, the Incarnation involves the Son becoming transformed into a human being by acquiring the abstract properties common to human nature, viewed as a universal. According to the latter, the Incarnation involves the Son acquiring a certain relation to a specific human nature, viewed as a concrete particular. One of the most common ways of articulating the concretist view of the Incarnation is to espouse some form of compositionism—the view that the Incarnate Christ is composed of various parts: the divine Son, the divine nature, and the human body and soul (or body/soul composite).

The next three contributors all adopt the compositionalist approach. First, Brian Leftow considers how God the Son can be identified with the composite Christ (the Divine Son plus a human body and soul) by utilizing an extended thought experiment involving an exact human “Double” in an alternate universe (chapter 2). Next, Oliver Crisp examines the “habitus model” of the Incarnation, common in medieval and several contemporary accounts, and seeks to show that it does not fall prey to the Nestorian heresy (chapter 3). Thomas Flint then considers

the strengths and weaknesses of several mereological models of the Incarnation—models that see the relation between the Son and his human nature in terms of parts and wholes (chapter 4).

The next two chapters consider the kenotic approach to the Incarnation: that is, the view that the Son willingly gave up certain divine attributes in order to become Incarnate. In chapter 5, Thomas Senor attempts to defend an “ecumenical kenotic christology” that combines the traditional kenotic perspective with the insights of other models, including the compositionalist account and Thomas Morris’s two-minds approach. Stephen Davis then considers the metaphysics of kenosis in chapter 6, arguing that the Son’s temporary kenosis (which, for Davis, lasted only during his period of humiliation) is metaphysically permissible and is mainly motivated by a consideration of the biblical presentation of Christ’s earthly ministry.

The next several chapters argue for what are basically transformational models of the Incarnation. In chapter 7, Micahel Rea offers an account of the Trinity and the Incarnation grounded in a specific form of hylomorphism (a form/matter approach to the “nature of natures”). In chapter 8, Richard Swinburne interprets the Incarnation in classic abstractist terms: “Christ’s human nature [is] merely a set of properties, a human way of thinking and acting substantiated in the second person of the Trinity and conjoined in a human body” (160). Utilizing recent philosophical work on consciousness, Joseph Jedwab’s chapter explores how the Son’s divine way of thinking and his human way of thinking relate to one another in a united consciousness (chapter 9).

Chapters 10 and 11 investigate vehicle externalism models of the Incarnation—models that view Christ’s human nature as an instrument of the Divine Son. Richard Cross examines the contributions of medieval theologians Duns Scotus and Hervaeus Natalis (chapter 10), while Anna Marmodoro explores how Clark and Chalmers’ Extended Mind theory—the theory that the mind extends into the world by use of external devices—might be utilized for understanding the Son’s relation to his human nature (chapter 11). In the book’s final chapter, Robin Le Poidevin considers the metaphysical possibility of multiple incarnations and concludes that there are no logical objections to multiple incarnations even if there may be epistemological, psychological, and theological objections.

Marmodoro and Hill’s edited volume might have been improved by offering some reflections of a more methodological nature. In other words, how do we adjudicate between these various approaches? What criteria would we use to do so? What role should Scripture, tradition, and reason play in our decision? Perhaps any one of these various approaches

can succeed in fending off the charge of incoherence with regard to Chalcedonian Christology, but how do we know which one, if any, is the correct way of conceptualizing the Incarnation?

This *desiridatum* notwithstanding, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* provides an excellent summary of the various philosophical approaches to the Incarnation on offer in contemporary analytic theology. The book's careful organization highlights the various families of approaches: compositionism, kenoticism, abstractism, and vehicle externalism. My own sympathies lie with the relational/ concretist/ compositional models, but all of the chapters provide stimulating defenses of the various approaches.

R. Lucas Stamps

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

***Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies: An Exercise in Christological Anthropology and its Significance for the Mind/Body Debate.* By Marc Cortez. T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology. John Webster, Ian A. McFarland, and Ivor Davidson (Eds.) London: T. & T. Clark International, 2008, 250 pp., \$130.00. hard cover. ISBN: 978-0-567-03368-0**

Recognizing the vast array of perspectives in the area of theological anthropology, specifically when it comes to the mind-body debate, Marc Cortez asks about the implications of Christology on these diverse views. In *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies*, Cortez presents a reworking of his doctoral dissertation. The purpose is to apply Karl Barth's Christocentric anthropology to current theories of philosophy of mind (12). The work can be divided into two main parts. The first encompasses a presentation of Barth's anthropology. The second houses Cortez's assessment of monism, dualism, and integrative models (106-8) as they are applied to Barth's criteria for the development of a Christological ontology.

The first half of the book contains Cortez's presentation of Barth's anthropology culminating in his criteria for a theoretical ontology: (1) selfhood, (2) consciousness, (3) continuous personal identity, (4) agency, (5) mental causation, (6) freedom, (7) embodiment, and (8) contingent personhood (100-6). Armed with these eight criteria Cortez is ready to evaluate whether various anthropologies are viable candidates for a "Christologically adequate anthropological ontology" (111).

Cortez first uses Barth's criteria to evaluate physicalist models. Upon listing three forms of physicalism--eliminative materialism, reductive (or conservative) physicalism, and nonreductive physicalism--he summarily dismisses the first two because they do not make good candidates for

developing a Christological anthropology. He writes, “It seems highly unlikely that either eliminative or reductive physicalism could be developed in a way that would prove adequate to a christological anthropology” (111). This leaves nonreductive physicalism as the only possible physicalist model. Over the course of the fifth chapter, Cortez examines the core philosophical commitments of nonreductive physicalism and concludes that it has difficulties with mental causation, phenomenal consciousness, and the continuity of personal identity. Despite these challenges, however, Cortez deems nonreductive physicalism to be “a viable candidate for use as a mind-body theory within a christologically adequate anthropology” (154).

In chapter six, Cortez does to dualism what he did to physicalism in the preceding chapter. Immediately upon reading this chapter, his readers will become aware that when he refers to dualism, he means Cartesian dualism, “Modern dualist systems thus include basically Cartesian approaches” (157), an oversimplification that is more than just a little distracting. Following the same pattern as the previous chapter, he briefly introduces the spectrum of dualistic theories but simply dismisses all but substance dualism. His goal is to see “whether it is possible to formulate a form of substance dualism that is compatible with Barth’s Christological framework despite Barth’s own disavowals” (157). From the plethora of substance dualisms, Cortez further eliminates all but holistic forms, settling on Cartesian holism, emergent dualism, and Thomistic dualism for close inspection (165-68). As with chapter five, he explicates the philosophical commitments and objections, and then considers it in light of Barth’s Christological framework. Cortez examines how these theories deal with the problems of mental causation, embodiment, and contingent personhood. And again, just like chapter five, while he finds that holistic dualism has some serious weaknesses, he chooses to accept it for “serious consideration. . . . Despite these weaknesses though, HD [holistic dualism] has proven itself sufficiently capable of responding to its critics to be considered a christologically viable candidate for developing an anthropological ontology” (187).

In the relatively short conclusion, Cortez summarizes his research and reinforces his methodological approach. He ends with a “wait and see” attitude as to “whether either approach is able to make progress toward clarity,” adding that his hope is not to cut back other views but to build toward those theories that “seem most promising” (195).

For being a revision of a dissertation, this book is what one might expect. Its research is well documented and the structure is pedantic. For the subject matter, though, its rigid layout seems appropriate. He is trying to build a case, and so he must lay out the evidence in a way that his readers can follow. Overall, I have high praise for Cortez’s efforts. The

thoroughness and depth of understanding that Cortez brings to the discussion is laudable.

Some criticisms need to be mentioned, however. First, the book series and title strongly imply that the work is an exercise in systematic theology. The material, however, primarily focuses on the field of philosophy of mind (12-15) rather than theology. Furthermore, the first 80 pages exclusively deal with Barth's view of human ontology. This foundational theology is not mentioned in the title. Such omissions are frustrating. A title should convey or reflect the essence of the book. So, why does the title not mention Barth and why is T. & T. Clark publishing a philosophy book in their series on systematic theology? A simple alteration of the title will make all the difference.

Another weakness of the book is the way Cortez ultimately deals with his material. The focus is on Barth's criteria and how they can be used to determine what current ontologies may be developed into Christological ontologies. After spending more than half of the book deriving these criteria, when he arrives at the application stage, he dismisses all views but nonreductive physicalism and holistic substance dualism as possible candidates. We then are not surprised that the preselected positions, even with their significant challenges, are considered good candidates. I am not criticizing the rigor against which the two types of ontologies are judged. Cortez does a thorough job and shows great skill and understanding of the material. The problem is that he pre-selects the particular views he will test and his methodology breaks down at this point. Cortez accepts Barth's claim that the two physicalist views are "highly unlikely" to support a Christological ontology (111), while he rejects "Barth's own disavowal" of pre-selected holistic dualism (157). So, we are left wondering, why are Barth's views accepted in one case and rejected in the other? Consequently, Cortez's work is only half done. He presents no evidence to support the claim that the other views do not satisfy the criteria to a similar degree to the one's tested. We do not know because Cortez did not evaluate them in the same way. Until that happens, the work is incomplete.

Over all, this book is well worth reading for those with some significant background in philosophy of mind. Cortez does a remarkable job of presenting complex material in an understandable way. Any reader, however, must bring a knowledge of philosophical terms to the reading or be ready to make frequent runs to the dictionary. I suspect this book will serve as a resource in my library for years to come.

Christopher J. Black
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA

***The Production of Prophecy: Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud.* Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Eds.). London; Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2009, pp. x + 235, paperback, \$32.95. ISBN-10:1845535006**

This work is a collection of essays by biblical scholars located at prestigious universities in both Europe and North America. Each contribution is a revised version of a presentation given at the first two sessions (2006 and 2007) of a new research program entitled, "Production and Reception of Authoritative Books in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods." These sessions were held at annual meetings of the European Association of Biblical Studies.

The contributors share some basic assumptions and presuppositions. Across the board, they date all the prophetic material to the very late neo-Babylonian period or the Persian period. Also, they display minimal or no interest in individual prophets; rather, they focus on prophetic books as cultural productions that reflect the concerns of a small, powerful, educated group responsible for producing them. In fact, Ehud Ben Zvi argues in his article, "Towards an Integrative Study of the Production of Authoritative Books in Ancient Israel," that the same Persian era group responsible for the prophetic corpus is also responsible for the production of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic corpus. His reconstruction suggests that these three sets of material are interrelated. Any display of diversity in these works was intentional and added interpretive flexibility to the textually-oriented societies that produced them.

Readers will find that *The Production of Prophecy* is truly *niche* scholarship. That is not necessarily a negative characterization. I simply use the term to describe the extremely narrow perspective and homogenous quality of the book. For example, Diana Edelman argues in her two contributions that those responsible for the prophetic material were post-exilic, elite priests who archived prophetic oracles into compositions (i.e. books) that rhetorically characterize prophecy as an obsolete phenomenon of the past. These priests attempted to undermine prophets and prophecy for the sake of establishing community and cultural cohesion. They believed texts could provide a cohesion and uniformity that prophecy could not. Although Edelman skillfully articulates her own theory, there is no dialog with alternate theories. Also, there is no consideration of possible problems with a theory of priestly composition. Malachi, for instance, ends the entire prophetic corpus with a prolonged, intense, theological attack on Persian era priests. According to Malachi, priests rob God, make a mockery of the cult, fail as messengers of YHWH, and are so spiritually impotent and

inept that God must send a special messenger (Mal 3:1-4) to purify everything and everyone. How does Malachi, then, fit into a theory of priestly composition? Are readers expected to believe that a corpus whose last word (i.e. Malachi) completely undermines the priesthood is itself a product of priests? These are the tough questions that *The Production of Prophecy* routinely avoids.

As a side note, I find it odd that a work like Malachi—a consensus Persian era book—merits no investigation whatsoever in a study of prophetic books and the Persian era. Perhaps in the end it is simply too much of a monkey wrench and needed to be left out of the equation. This point is important because it illustrates my characterization of *The Production of Prophecy* as *niche* scholarship. The contributors share the same general presuppositions and met to make advances in a shared theory. As a result, one can come away from the work with an acute understanding of their theory of composition of prophetic books and no idea that there are competing theories or serious problems with this one.

So who should read *The Production of Prophecy*? I would say that there are two groups for whom it is a “must read”: scholars specializing in the Persian era, and scholars specializing in the Hebrew prophets. Although it is not a conversant work, it is a clear articulation of a theory of Persian origins for all prophetic books (and for some contributors, the bulk of Old Testament books). Anyone who does not give a hearing to this perspective cannot say that he or she is current or up to date in their scholarship. I say this even though I left the book unconvinced of its theory. Those looking for a general work on the prophetic books should look elsewhere—this one is simply too narrow and homogenous to provide a sound vantage point for surveying the field.

R. Michael Fox
Brite Divinity School

Hays, Daniel J. *The Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010, 376 pp., \$44.99 hardcover, ISBN: 978-0-310-27152-9.

In his work *The Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament*, J. Daniel Hays offers undergraduate students and academically engaged church laity an excellent resource for studying the OT Prophets. The work represents what Hays calls “a ‘critical conservative,’ evangelical approach to the prophets,” (17) and strives for neutrality on issues surrounding the

millennial debate. Hays, who presently serves as dean of the Pruet School of Christian Ministries and professor of OT at Ouachita Baptist University, has demonstrated his ability to create helpful, learner-oriented resources for biblical interpretation with such works as *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (2nd ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005) and *The Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

The Message of the Prophets follows the English Canon and is divided into three major parts: introduction to prophetic literature, the Major Prophets (including Lamentations and Daniel), and the Minor Prophets. Part one is comprised of five chapters addressing introductory matters such as the nature of prophecy in the OT, ancient Near Eastern history that parallels the biblical prophets, features of poetic language, theological message, eschatology. Addressing the message of the prophets, Hays summarizes the “standard” prophetic message as threefold: “(1) You (Israel/Judah) have broken covenant; you had better repent! (2) No repentance? Then Judgment! Judgment will also come on the nations. (3) Yet there is hope beyond the judgment for a glorious future of restoration both for Israel/Judah and for the nations” (63). Hays’s discussion of eschatology presents a concise and helpful survey of the major interpretive systems regarding the millennial kingdom, along with a discussion of typology and an approach which he calls “the near view/far view” (80–81).

Following these introductory chapters, Hays designates 150 pages to the treatment of the Major Prophets in part two and 96 pages to the Minor Prophets in part three. Each book begins with a section on the historical setting of the book and the overall message. Hays then walks through each book, providing a basic commentary and presenting important topics in side-bar articles set apart from the text (e.g., “Swords and Plowshares” in his discussion of Isaiah 1 – 3, and “What Happened to the Ark of the Covenant” in his discussion of Jeremiah). Numerous photographs, illustrations, and maps fill out the pages of each chapter, making the book feel less technical and more multidimensional in its presentation of the material. A small bibliography for further study is included at the end of each chapter.

Hays’s comments on the biblical text are easily accessible for a wide readership, but reveal a solid familiarity with modern scholarship. While strongly recognizing the supernatural and futurist components of biblical prophecy, Hays focuses more of his attention on the meaning of the prophets’ words with regard to their ancient context. This is seen in his typological approach to the “seventy sevens” of Dan 9:24, where he writes: “Perhaps we should see this text with a near/far view

understanding and see Antiochus Epiphanes as the near view fulfillment, foreshadowing the future Antichrist (the far view)” (252). The “near view/far view” interpretation is employed for Immanuel in Isa 7:14 (111), messianism in Zech 9–14 (350), and the reconstruction of the temple in the postexilic prophets (347).

The Message of the Prophets excels in many areas as an introduction for the first-time student of the OT Prophets. Despite being a survey of the Prophets, Hays does not sidestep or gloss over difficult texts and concerns. Instead, he offers multiple perspectives, allowing the student/teacher to work through the interpretive issues at stake, often times referencing works in the text or footnotes for further study (e.g., authorship of Isaiah, 96–98). This is an important feature of the book, and will no doubt serve in making it more useful among varied theological traditions. For instructors who adopt The Message of the Prophets as a textbook, Zondervan Academic offers a host of excellent resources for enhancing the classroom (or virtual classroom) experience through their Textbook Plus program. Professors have access to an instructor’s manual, digital images used in the book, quizzes, map exercises, and exams. Having recently developed a course on OT prophetic literature using this book, the riches of the Textbook Plus program quickly became apparent and were appreciated.

Hays and Zondervan have succeeded in providing teachers and students with an engaging, accessible, and accurate guide to the OT Prophets. The material can easily be covered over one semester, but achieves a depth that surpasses a standard course in OT introduction. I highly recommend this work for undergraduate students and church laity seeking a reliable guide to the exciting—but sometimes challenging—study of biblical prophecy.

William R. Osborne
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology.* By Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011, 896 pp., \$46.99, hardcover. ISBN-10: 082543047X.**

Köstenberger is Director of Ph.D. Studies and Senior Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Academic Editor for Broadman & Holman Publishers, and the author, editor, or translator for over twenty books. Richard D. Patterson is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Liberty University, where he formerly served as chairman of the Department of Biblical Studies and professor of Semitic Languages and Literatures, and has published several books. They wrote *Invitation to Biblical*

Interpretation in order to present “a simple method for interpreting the Bible . . . built around the hermeneutical triad, which consists of history, literature, and theology” (23).

The book actually presents a triad within a triad. The authors explain that a full-orbed interpretive process consists of preparation, interpretation, and application. While the lion’s share of the book discusses the “hermeneutical triad” of history, literature, and theology under the category of “Interpretation,” the authors devote the first and last chapters of the book to “Preparation” and “Application and Proclamation,” respectively. In the first chapter, the authors orient the reader to the interpretive process, covering introductory topics such as the importance of correct interpretation, character qualities of the biblical interpreter, and historical approaches to interpretation. In the last chapter, the authors explain the process of moving from exegesis to exposition--from Scripture to sermon--focusing a good portion of the chapter on principles of application. In addition to the major sections on preparation, interpretation, and application/proclamation, the authors include a useful appendix on building a personal biblical studies library.

The majority of the book is dedicated to exploring a triadic approach to the text, allowing readers to view the text in multiple dimensions by understanding its historical context, literary features, and theological significance. In part one, the interpreter is encouraged to situate the text within its historical-cultural context by using relevant archaeological and textual sources, such as Ancient Near Eastern literature, rabbinic literature, pseudepigrapha, early histories such as Philo and Josephus, and Greco-Roman sources. In part two, the interpreter learns the importance of understanding literary features of the text, telescopically zooming into the details of the text by approaching it first at a canonical level (so as not to “miss the forest for the trees”) then moving to issues of genre and language at the discourse level. In addition to noting important interpretive guidelines for each scriptural genre, the authors explain linguistic issues such as grammar, syntax, discourse analysis, and semantics. The authors also include a helpful discussion on common exegetical fallacies, as well as principles for interpreting figurative language. Part three of the book details how to discover the theological significance of the text. With a renewed interest in Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS), Köstenberger and Patterson make a unique contribution to the field by explaining how TIS works at an interpretive level.

Invitation to Biblical Interpretation has much to commend it. First, while the rubric of the triad is simple enough to be memorable, it has the necessary breadth and depth to cover each step in the interpretive process thoroughly. Beyond this, though the authors have treated the subject comprehensively, the material is accessible enough to be useful as an introductory or intermediate text in hermeneutics. It makes for convenient classroom use with study questions and assignments at the end of each chapter (and additional teaching materials such as PowerPoint slides on the publisher’s website). Second, the book includes some unique features such as the sections on canon, discourse analysis, and theological analysis that exceed the expectations of a typical hermeneutics textbook. Third, though Köstenberger and Patterson give readers the tools to

approach the text with a serious exegetical methodology, they do not lose sight of the practical concerns of readers who are interpreting the Bible with an eye toward teaching and preaching. The last chapter provides practical advice on Bible teaching – including warnings against common mistakes made while moving from text to sermon through the various genres of Scripture.

Köstenberger and Patterson have left little to critique within this text. Even so, criticism might be leveled in a couple of areas. First, it was surprising that there was not a substantive discussion on whether the meaning of the text is controlled by the author, text, or reader, a question considered foundational to the discipline by most scholars. Though they believe that “authorial intention is the locus of meaning” (118), it would have been helpful to see a more thorough justification for this approach, especially in light of current postmodern hermeneutical methodologies which advocate reader-controlled meaning. Second, it could be argued that approaching the scriptural text at a canonical level in the early stages of the interpretive process--going from canon to book instead of book to canon--could do harm to the concerns of each individual book and author, causing the interpreter to read the message, language, or concerns of one biblical author onto another without giving proper treatment to each text individually. However, the authors have done a very adequate job of defending their approach, noting that a canonical approach is an appropriate response to the fact that separate texts are often bound together in various ways and it is helpful to interpret one text in light of another since they are all part of the overarching storyline of Scripture (p. 151-162).

Criticism notwithstanding, Köstenberger and Patterson have done pastors, students, and professors a tremendous service in writing this book. Among other commendable works on hermeneutics, such as Grant Osborne’s *The Hermeneutical Spiral, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William W. Klein, Craig L Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., and *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moisés Silva, this work should be prioritized as a gold-standard textbook for colleges and seminaries. It brings the most recent scholarship to the task of interpretation and presents the material in a cogent and cohesive manner. While the book is extensive enough for graduate-level students, it is still accessible for college students or pastors and laypeople with little theological training. If the reader is looking for a robust guidebook for competent exegesis from two expert practitioners, look no further.

Andrew C. Hebert
Criswell College

***How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture.* By Michael Williams. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012, 267 pp., \$18.99, softcover. ISBN-10: 031033165X**

Michael Williams is a professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary. *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens* follows in the tradition of the other *How to Read the Bible* series published by Zondervan. Williams wrote this book to show that the entire Bible is a witness to Jesus Christ. He

notes that “reading the Bible through the Jesus lens is reading it the way that it was intended” (9). Williams’ goal in this book is to parallel what Jesus did with his disciples on the Emmaus road by showing them that all of the Scriptures are about him.

In the heart of the book Williams covers each book of the Bible in individual chapters. He does this in a relatively short amount of space (usually about four pages per biblical book). Each chapter has the same design. First, Williams explores the main theme of each book and gives a memory verse that exemplifies the main theme. Each of these themes is then discussed in light of Christ; in other words, Williams looks at the theme through the Jesus lens. Next, Williams looks at the contemporary implications of the main theme. The Old Testament books are connected to New Testament passages. The final section of each chapter is composed of hook questions that lead the reader into an application of the text to their lives.

How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens has several admirable features. First, the book is clear and concise and is able to cover large amount information in a small amount of space. This is particularly helpful for the layman and student. The book gives a very good overview of how the entire Bible, book by book, refers to Jesus.

Another good feature of this work is that it does not stop at content, but goes on to application. Williams notes that he did not want this work to be academically detached, but to be applicable to contemporary life and he largely accomplishes this. It is refreshing to read a book that understands that a knowledge of Christ leads to the conformity of our lives to that of Christ’s.

There are a few minor deficiencies of this book that deserve mention. First, the themes that are identified are limited and do not always depict the major thrust of the book. The most prominent example of this is the theme identified in Psalms, “God the Great King provides words of lament and praise that are appropriate responses to him” (74). While this statement is correct and it does capture much of what the Psalms are about, it would be hard to classify every Psalm in this manner. In the chapter on the Psalms it would have been beneficial to approach the theme with more hesitation with a qualifier such as, “It is particularly difficult to pin down a single theme, but the book can largely be summed up as...” The theme of the book of Judges also only partially covers the idea of the book. With this particular example the memory verse associated with the theme would more naturally be Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes.” This appears in slightly different forms four times at the end of the book (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25) and serves as the hermeneutical key to the entire book.

A second minor point that deserves critique is that the application can at times seem forced. For example, the application that Williams draws out of Genesis is blessing, which he gets from Genesis 12:2-3. His application here (and a few other times) assumes a one to one correspondence of ideas from the Old Testament to the New. This particular application also does not take into account the direct context of the passage, where covenantal curses are just as much, if not more, a part of the context of the narrative as blessing is.

A final minor critique is that there are certain constraints to the format. While standardization is helpful, it gives rise to a certain inconsistency in presentation. The book of Obadiah, for instance, is given almost as much space as any other book, even though it is much shorter. Should shorter books like Obadiah or Ruth get just as much attention as larger books like Isaiah or Luke?

Despite these few negatives, *How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens* would be beneficial to the lay person, student, or pastor interested in understanding the centrality of Christ through the entirety of the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament. This work complements previous works like *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* by Edmund Clowney, *The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of the Messiah* by T. Desmond Alexander, and *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* by Christopher J.H. Wright. *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens* would serve as a good supplemental textbook at the college level or as a good resource for a Bible study in a church setting.

Daniel S. Diffey
Louisville, KY