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## THE FAMILY

### BOOKS REVIEWED

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## *Book Reviews*

**1 Peter.** By Karen H. Jobes. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. xviii + 364 pages. Hardcover, \$29.99.

The BECNT is an excellent commentary series, and Karen H. Jobes gives a well-researched, fresh look at 1 Peter in her contribution to this series. Jobes is Associate Professor of New Testament at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California.

Jobes' expertise in both New Testament and Septuagintal studies clearly shines through in this volume. She emphasizes the LXX origin of the Scripture Peter quoted, a point sometimes missed in other commentaries (xi, 55). Yet, her most interesting contribution to 1 Peter studies is the theory that the recipients of this epistle were Jewish converts to Christianity, displaced from Rome to Asia Minor (xi, 23–33, 61), rather than indigenous Gentile converts in Asia Minor. Coupling this idea with the possibility that Peter went to Rome in the A.D. 40s (although not necessarily permanently), and was therefore connected with these converts, Jobes presents an intriguing idea that is worthy of more study (33–41). She rightly presents her ideas simply as possibilities due to the lack of historical background references in 1 Peter (41).

The single excursus is another area in which Jobes successfully challenges a belief found in most studies on 1 Peter (325–38). Her examination of the syntax of 1 Peter lays the groundwork to help dispel the assumption that the Greek in 1 Peter is too good for Peter to have written. Using a quantitative model she developed for her dissertation, Jobes demonstrates at the syntactical level (which is typically subconscious) the writer of 1 Peter shows enough Semitic interference to indicate the writer was *not* a native Greek speaker (328–29, 337). Rather, the writer was a native Semitic speaker—as Peter was. Jobes rightly calls for more objective literary analysis to be done beyond the syntactical level, and her work gives a viable foundation for this process (338). Earlier in the commentary, Jobes does an excellent job in answering objections to Petrine authorship of 1 Peter (6–11), thus allowing it could have been Peter with the possible help of an amanuensis (11).

There are a few minor problems in the commentary. Sometimes Jobses relies simply on secondary sources (1, 15, 22), and there is a missed citation for Calvin (23). Yet, considering her citations easily run into the thousands, her accuracy is commendable. This reviewer disagrees with Jobses' contention that pseudepigraphy can be part of an inerrant writing (14). Misrepresentation is wrong even if it is culturally accepted at the time.

The perceived value in a commentary today is not in dishing out dogma but in describing and critiquing various interpretations while ultimately advocating the position consistent with the beliefs and objective research of the writer. Jobses does this well in a clearly evangelical framework. She handles the difficult-to-interpret 1 Peter 3:18–22 with thorough research and accurate analysis (235–60). However, considering Jobses' theory that the recipients were converted Jews, it would have helped to tie in the application of 1 Peter 2:4–10 to these Jewish Christian recipients in contrast with non-believing Jews (144–64).

One wishes Jobses had written an excursus analyzing the use of the LXX in 1 Peter, drawing upon her expertise in this area. Textual comments refer to this subject (e.g., 117–18, 137–41, 220), but a summary and separate analysis would strengthen the commentary in the niche Jobses created. Still, this is a fine commentary, with rich exegesis and exposition, good food for thought, and plenty of citations to aid the reader in further study.

James R. Wicker  
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***From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile.* By James C. Vanderkam. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004. xix + 548 pages. Hardcover, \$35.00.**

Covering an important facet of Jewish background to the Old Testament and New Testament, *From Joshua to Caiaphas* is an important and comprehensive examination of the fifty-one high priests of the Second-Temple period. An expert in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as early Judaism, James C. Vanderkam is the John A. O'Brien Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and he is eminently qualified to write this excellent study.

Jewish high priests had various responsibilities in the four periods of Second-Temple Judaism (Persian, Early Hellenistic, Hasmonean, and Herodian)—sometimes taking on the role of ruler in addition to being spiritual leader. Examining the individual priests—their accessions, important acts, and death or removal from office—gives important insight into the Judaism of the Old Testament, intertestamental period, and the

New Testament. The personal focus keeps this study interesting even as it covers almost six hundred years of history, until the “high priesthood whimpers to a sad end (490).”

The challenge Vanderkam faced in his research is the lack of historical sources and the necessary heavy dependence upon Josephus, who occasionally gave contradictory (viii–ix, 331) or wrong information (138, 174, 434) in his writings. At times Josephus was confusing (183, 203–04) or mischievous (331), and sometimes he had dubious motives which colored his writings (462, 482). Yet, Vanderkam is careful and judicious in handling historical sources. He consistently urges caution when speculating beyond where the evidence points (123, 218–22, 478). For instance, following John Hyrcanus (134–104 BC), there is no extant evidence of a subsequent high priest being a Sadducee until Ananus (Annas) the younger (AD 62) (430, 477–78).

Vanderkam handles primary and secondary sources well, and he effectively interacts with conflicting viewpoints—often hypothetical reconstructions (23, 46–47, 59–62, 85–99, 143–53, 445–47, 466–75)—with Vanderkam usually siding with traditional interpretation and chronology (47, 62, 97–99, 153, 447, 475). He deals with the biblical material with fairness and respect (4–18). His numerous content footnotes are valuable. The indices in the back are also helpful; however, an additional index of modern writers would improve this section, as Vanderkam interacts much with Emil Schürer (vii, 260, 272, 339–40, 412, 453, 464), Daniel R. Schwartz (441, 443, 445, 450, 469, 472–75), and a host of other scholars throughout the book.

One could find a certain subject and wish more information were present in this volume, such as wanting more about the debate over whether or not the Hasmoneans were Zadokites (Vanderkam gives it a 66% chance and says the likelihood should be emphasized, 270); however, when covering six centuries of history, a writer cannot be comprehensive on any one topic. Vanderkam is to be commended for presenting an excellent, scholarly, well-organized, readable, indispensable, and unique look into the high priesthood of the Second-Temple period.

James R. Wicker  
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***Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms.* By Daniel J. Estes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. 448 pages. Hardcover, \$34.99.**

Students, pastors, and lay leaders who have been introduced to the Old Testament books of poetry will find this handbook helpful. Daniel

Estes guides his readers through a scholarly discussion of the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, and he lists resources at the end of each chapter which provide an important bridge for those wanting to further explore wisdom literature.

Each of the five chapters covers a book of wisdom and is comprised of three parts—summary of introductory issues, exposition of the book, and bibliography. Primarily, Estes presents insightful quotations from commentaries and other scholarly studies and knits these opinions together with his own summary and opinion in a discussion type of format.

The exposition sections receive most of the focus of each chapter. The books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are covered in their entirety. For the exposition of the Psalms, Estes defines and explains ten types of psalms, such as descriptive praise psalms, nature psalms, lament psalms, songs of trust, messianic psalms, etc., and then follows his descriptions with an example. For instance, after spending a few pages discussing the components of lament psalms, he discusses the three strophes of Psalm 13. For the exposition of Proverbs, the author chooses a topical approach. Topics—such as cheerfulness, purity, righteousness, etc.—were selected based on a careful synthesis of key Hebrew words and based on the individual meanings of sayings as they contributed to the topic as a whole. In addition to standard works and major commentaries, the bibliographic material at the end of each chapter includes selected English articles, essays, and monographs from 1992–2004.

The main strength of this handbook is the clarity of writing and the author's ability to integrate citations from commentaries and other scholarly research into a didactic discussion that both informs the reader and maintains the reader's interest. While this approach allows for the author to succinctly express his interpretive positions, detailed support for conclusions is not given (11). For example, after reviewing the overall arguments concerning the genre of the book of Job, Estes concludes that the book is not a record of actual conversation, but it is a case study of the ideal, an inspired piece of "imaginative" literature which explores the problem of evil (19). The reader here is invited into the debate, interest is created, but for a complete argument, the reader would need to explore other resources.

Of all five books, the exposition of Ecclesiastes receives the most thorough attention, which alone is worth the price of the handbook. Overall, Daniel Estes accomplishes his purpose in familiarizing students, pastors, and teachers with scholarly opinion, and he gives the reader an excellent guide to understanding the wisdom books and Psalms.

David Wallace  
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***Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus.* By Allen P. Ross. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. 496 pages. Soft-cover, \$34.99.**

Commentaries on the book of Leviticus do not always inspire interest or ignite a passion for further study of God's Word. However, this one is an exception. In this well-written and engaging work, Ross has presented a comprehensive, thoroughly annotated, biblically-based, and exegetically sound presentation of this highly significant book of the Bible.

Ross admits that his volume is not meant to be "an exhaustive commentary on Leviticus." Instead, he establishes as his goal, "to show the expositor how to bring all the material together in the development of the exposition, formulate theological principles from the text, and correlate the derived meaning of each subject in Leviticus with the fuller revelation of the New Testament" (9). In the end, readers will agree that the author has accomplished his goal and presented the book of Leviticus as rich in expositional truths that both inspire and instruct.

Ross has structured the fifty chapters of his commentary into five parts: the laws of the sacrifices, the laws of the priesthood, the laws of purification, instructions for holiness, and redemption of vows. Part of the uniqueness of Leviticus, Ross notes, is the topical structure of the book which is reflected in the organization of the commentary.

Each chapter includes a general overview of the passage under discussion; the theological ideas presented in the text; a synthesis, including a summary and outline of the passage; and a section dedicated to the exposition of the pericope. The expositional section includes a sample outline for preaching through the text. Preachers and teachers alike will find this component especially useful.

For each division, the background of the passage is carefully presented and supplemented by interaction with scholarship and skillful use of the Hebrew text. The author explains that Leviticus is not just a book written for priests and religious leaders, but for the whole nation. Moreover, Ross highlights the application of the text for believers and the church today. He disagrees with those who dismiss the Old Testament law as anachronistic, yet points to its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

Ross reflects a refreshing humility when dealing with difficult passages, often avoiding dogmatic conclusions where no compelling evidence for clarity of interpretation is available. On the other hand, he competently examines critical issues of the text presenting a consistently conservative view of the text and its authorship.

This book is more than a commentary, it is a resource. It is guaranteed to be referred to again and again by those interested in faithfully presenting the text.

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***Is Jesus the Only Savior?* By James R. Edwards. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. 250 pages. Softcover, \$16.00.**

Can a Christian still present Jesus as the only Savior of the world to a contemporary society where exclusivism is considered a social evil violating the peace of the community? James R. Edwards, a New Testament scholar and an ordained minister of the PCUSA, argues that the particularity of Jesus is not a hindrance to, but rather, a necessary means for accomplishing God's plan for salvation. If God truly became incarnate in a real person, the chronological and geographical particularity of that divine activity matters. According to Edwards the incarnation of God in history supports the universal sufficiency of God's salvific event in Jesus. Salvation through Jesus of Nazareth is available to all human beings, because they can exercise faith in him regardless of race, gender, possession, age, intelligence, and so on.

Edwards' target audience is the Christian whose faith is being disturbed by a postmodern criticism of the uniqueness of Jesus and the non-Christian who simply desires to discover whether Christianity has any rationale for its belief in Jesus as the only Savior. In order to accomplish his task, Edwards first exposes the methodological and theological fallacies of the Quest for the Historical Jesus in all of its variations and then provides evidences of the historical credibility of the New Testament by comparing it with other ancient historical or philosophical writings in terms of manuscripts.

In response to Bart Ehrman's thesis that high Christology is the product of the early church, not Jesus himself, Edwards asserts that the Jewish monotheism of the apostles could not allow any deification of a human. If high Christology did not result from Jesus' self-awareness, the church would not have made "the scandal of equating Jesus with God," because her confession of Jesus as Lord and the only Savior was the very cause of the persecution of the early church by the Jews and the Roman Empire (46). Like C.F.D. Moule's *The Origin of Christology*, Edwards' book contends that a high Christology is what Jesus presented and what the later church councils affirmed. Christ's exclusive relationship with God in Matt. 11:25–27 and Luke 10:21–22, Christ's authority over the Torah—"You have heard . . . but I say to you,"—and Christ's reference to God as

his father attests that a high Christology was also found in the synoptic Gospels whose writers belonged to the first generation of Christianity.

Edwards reminds his readers that, the mission of the church to preach salvation as found only in and through Jesus in a pluralistic world is not a new issue. The writers of the New Testament also faced various religions promising differing soteriologies and cosmologies as an alternative to those of Christianity. It is worth noting, however, that the early church successfully carried the exclusive gospel of Jesus to the world. Edwards suggests that contemporary Christians not diminish the seriousness of sin in dialogues with other religions, for the divine condemnation of all sinners requires them to rely on Christ's atoning death on the cross. At the same time, however, Edwards urges Christians to be humble in their presentation of the gospel, since the truth of God revealed in Jesus has been given to them, not because they are worthy, but because God graciously decided to reveal himself to them. Therefore, Christians should not act as if they are morally superior to the practitioners of other religions.

Despite his helpful suggestions, there are sections of the book where conservative, evangelical Christians might not be able to agree with Edwards. First, Edwards denies the notion of hell as a place. Second, he describes the atonement of Christ only as expiation, not as propitiation. Third, he opens the possibility of the postmortem chance to respond to the gospel, although insisting that inclusivism might endanger the efforts of the church to evangelize the world. Fourth, his desire for interfaith dialogue leads him to contend that the difference between Christianity and other religions is on the cognitive, rather than moral and spiritual, level of the mystery of God for the salvation of humankind.

Edwards' book should be commended to seminary students, pastors, and laypeople. Seminary students will gain excellent critiques of the Jesus Seminar from the perspective of biblical theology. Pastors and laypeople can utilize Edwards' apologetic approach to the New Testament and the uniqueness of Jesus in their personal evangelism and mission. Edwards' personal illustrations help readers to understand certain theological issues more easily. This book is also helpful for those seeking an introductory work that supplies both a brief explanation of postmodern objections to the particularity of salvation in Jesus and biblical critiques of them based on evangelical New Testament scholarship.

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*Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment: Knowing the Presence of God.* By Josh Moody. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005. 203 pages. Softcover, \$33.95.

Jonathan Edwards continues to attract the attention of excellent scholars who wish to sharpen their skills by scaling the heights of his Everest-like mind. Josh Moody, a Cambridge trained pastor-theologian who is the senior pastor at Trinity Baptist Church in New Haven, Connecticut, has written a fine work tackling a question that has intrigued scholars for some time: What is the relationship between Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment? Was Edwards a pre-modern, Reformed thinker who stood strong against the theological infidelity of modernity, or did he drink deeply from the wells of modern thought? Was Edwards perhaps so far ahead of his time that he can even speak to our intellectual, postmodern situation today, not just to a group of Puritan and Edwardsean lovers? With the recent rise of the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment these questions have drawn the attention of Edwardsean scholars.

Josh Moody argues rightly that Edwards appropriated key aspects of Enlightenment thought in order to critique it. Edwards advanced a “re-formation of the Enlightenment,” and a “deliberate reworking” of Enlightenment thinking (156) in such a way that strengthened Christian orthodoxy (in his case Reformed, Puritan orthodoxy) while at the same time remaining in a position of dialogue with modern thought. Edwards thus offers contemporary thinkers and theologians a model for engaging modern thought in a creatively Christian way that neither call us back to “pre-critical” days nor to isolate ourselves from modern intellectual currents. Moody clearly is aware of the postmodern critique of Enlightenment and modern thought, and while he feels there is much bite to this critique, there is still much to be salvaged. Edwards, for Moody, provides the key for how one could salvage that which is of value in modern thought.

Moody proposes that the organizing principle in Edwards’ theology is simply known the presence of God. “The communication of the presence of God in response to the Enlightenment is the axis around which Edwards’ globe spins” (8). Such a “center” has the advantage of necessarily including his revivalistic work in his theological vision, a point that has been overlooked by a few scholars in the past who have tried to drive a wedge between Edwards’ brilliant intellectual pursuits and his pedestrian work as a revivalist. In the first chapter, “True Salvation,” Moody surveys Edwards’ theology of making the gospel “real” to his parishioners and all the mechanics that entails (the theology of salvation, faith, preaching, prayer, etc.). The goal is to show how central the evangelistic mandate was to Edwards, a mandate that deeply shapes his intellectual pursuits. In

the second chapter, “True Experience,” Moody explores the dimensions of Edwards’ spiritual epistemology, his theology of authentic religious experience, and how Edwards’ views measure up against the current religious epistemologies of Hebblethwaite, Hick and Alston. Chapter three, “True Reality,” is Moody’s exploration of the Edwardsean vision of ideal reality, Edwards’ theocentric response to the mechanistic universe of Enlightenment science. The last chapter, “True Light,” treats Edwards on the relationship between reason and revelation.

This book is a fine work that needs to be read by Edwards scholars and theologians who are interested in the potential that a redeemed form of modern thinking presents us today. Key to the book’s strength is the way that Moody canvasses the literature on numerous topics in Edwards scholarship—the analysis of revival, Edwards’ theology of preparation for salvation, and Edwards’ relationship to covenant theology for instance—all within a short span of pages. The extensive footnotes promise fruitful trails of inquiry into numerous issues. Moody also briefly brings Edwards into conversation with current philosophical and theological issues in an attempt to show the potential that Edwardsean lines of thought could offer to current discussions. I highly recommend this work.

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***Learn New Testament Greek.* By John H. Dobson. 3rd ed. with accents. CD-Rom. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. xii + 384 pages. Hardcover, \$29.99.**

“Start reading meaningful verses from the Greek New Testament after just ONE HOUR of study!” touts the front cover—sounding like a weight-loss ad: “lose thirty pounds in one week with no exercise!” Interestingly, the front covers of the first two editions both say: “Begin reading the Greek text in 10 days.” Evidently, this third edition is turbo charged.

Yet, “an innovative, original way to learn!” on the back cover is on target in describing this course by long-time Greek teacher, Rev. John H. Dobson. This is not your father’s Greek course! It is, however, reminiscent to this reviewer of a somewhat similar method in *Greek Signals: The Door to the Greek New Testament* (1978) by Lacoste Munn and Bruce Corley. At the heart of Dobson’s method is an attempt to get a student to learn meanings from Greek words in various forms through repetition, with morphological terms and concepts not introduced until late in the course.

Innovative and different are not necessarily bad in learning Greek, and Dobson’s teaching approach evidently has merit and has born fruit.

Thousands of students have learned Greek by this method, including those whose first language is not English, and this book has survived into a third edition. It has been translated into five languages, and there are plans to translate it into Chinese and Urdu (ix).

Changes in the third edition include more readable English and Greek fonts as well as the addition of Greek accent marks. Dobson added more reading material and training exercises—the third edition is seventy-one pages longer than the second edition. The audio CD-ROM now contains more material, covering lessons one through twenty-one (ix).

Greek teachers who employ the classic method of teaching Greek—using ending charts and paradigms—can benefit from using exercises from this book as well as Dobson's clever Word Fun sections, using puns or plays-on-words to introduce vocabulary words (39, 47). Dobson gives a good emphasis on translating the meaning of the Greek phrase or sentence rather than striving for a simple word-for-word correspondence (14, 31, 83). His humorous warning against a naïve rush to find root meanings in Greek words for preaching and teaching is well taken (282). His hints for teaching biblical languages are insightful and helpful (351–57), even if occasionally cheesy: “Measure your forward progress in smiles per hour” (351). Unfortunately, there is an unnecessary emphasis on the need for gender-neutral translation (55).

How well a teacher favors this innovative approach to teaching Greek will no doubt be tied to how one learned Greek originally and how tied the teacher is to the classical method of teaching Greek. There are fifty-two lessons, and there are no grammatical terms or concepts introduced until lessons thirty-one and thirty-three (180–83, 198–99)! Other radical differences from the classical method include: (1) little or no homework is expected (descriptive page 2, xi), which seems a dubious way to learn, (2) no rote memory of vocabulary is suggested, and nowhere do vocabulary words appear in the traditional lexical form (such as: nominative form, genitive ending, and gender indicator for nouns), (3) morphological explanations are not fully given until the end of the book, and they are inadequate and sparse (Reference Grammar and Accents, pp. 335–50), (4) tables and charts are almost non-existent, and noun cases are given in an unusual order: nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive, and then dative (pp. 337, 339), and (5) the Index of Greek Words (typically a mini-lexicon in most Greek Grammars) is cumbersome: neither giving the typical lexical entries (such as giving the six principal parts of a verb) nor a helpful definition; instead, it gives page numbers to refer the student back to the word's first appearance in the text (pp. 369–84). This reviewer uses the classical method in teaching Greek, and sees these differences as likely problematic; however, other teachers may find them refreshing, helpful, and effective. Surprising

for a third edition: two descriptive pages prior to the cover page contain four grammatical errors and a preponderance of passive verbs.

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***Paradox and Perseverance: Hanserd Knollys, Particular Baptist Pioneer in Seventeenth-Century England.* By Dennis C. Bustin. Studies in Baptist History and Thought, Vol 23. Carlisle, Cumbria, United Kingdom: Paternoster, 2006. xvi + 380 pages. Softcover, \$42.00.**

While English Baptists in the nineteenth century had Spurgeon, and in the eighteenth century had Fuller and Carey, few names are as well known among English Baptists in the seventeenth century. To date, much of the work that focused on the early days of English Baptists has examined the circumstances of Baptist origins or Baptist denominational developments. This has left open the opportunity to investigate the lives of the men behind the developments, and a work on one of the preeminent leaders, Hanserd Knollys, is long overdue.

Along with William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys is arguably one of two founding fathers among the Particular Baptists in London. Where the General Baptists were inaugurated by the influence of Smyth and Helwys, the Particulars were served well by the lengthy pastorates and civil lives of Kiffin and Knollys. Kiffin's life and work has yet to find a definitive and detailed treatment, but Dennis Bustin has thankfully provided such for Hanserd Knollys in *Paradox and Perseverance*. In fact, Bustin's historical and biographical work is a strong compliment to Barry Howson's theological treatment of Knollys in *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions* (Brill, 2001), which, when combined, give a thorough reading of Knollys for the twenty-first century.

A sprawling seven chapters buttressed by an introduction, epilogue, conclusion, and five appendices, this volume uses Knollys' 82 years as a window through which to view the political machinations, theological developments, and denominational progress of English Baptist citizens in the seventeenth century. The first chapter provides an overview of the secondary literature to date that aside from misspelling the name of Southwestern historian, H. Leon McBeth (MacBeth), is quite helpful (19). Published in the same year as Stephen Wright's *The Early English Baptists*, it would have been fascinating to see Bustin's interaction with Wright's new thesis that reclassifies General and Particular Baptists, especially as it relates to Knollys.

One unique chapter in Bustin's volume discusses Knollys' eschatology. Living in an era of multiple plagues, the English Civil War, the fire of London in 1666, and later monarchical restoration it is no surprise that many were prone to claim that the end of the world was near. In chapter six, Bustin interacts with Knollys' eschatological works and metaphorical treatment of apocalyptic biblical literature. Further, Bustin traces Knollys' understanding of four eschatological themes. First, Knollys identified the beast in Revelation 13, or the antichrist, as many Protestants did with the Pope in Rome. Second, Knollys understood the second coming of Christ to be a warning for spiritual preparation and a life of faithfulness rather than naming or predicting a time and place. Third, with regard to the millennium, Knollys shifted in his views as he aged. Initially, he believed that Christ would return physically after the millennium, but in his later works he seemed to favor a pre-millennial view. Finally, Knollys believed the *eschaton* to consist of the resurrection of the dead, followed by the final judgment, and then "Christ shall deliver up the Kingdom unto God the Father" (230). This chapter alone reveals the wealth of material yet to be discovered among the early English Baptist forefathers. Dennis Bustin has done all students of Baptist history and theology a great service with his work on Hanserd Knollys.

Jason G. Duesing  
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***The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15.* By Bruce K. Waltke. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. 693 pages. Hardcover, \$50.00.**

Bruce K. Waltke, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Regent College, Vancouver and Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Florida, is perhaps best known for his contributions in the field of Hebrew language studies. He brings to whatever project he is tackling an impressive reserve of linguistic knowledge and insight. In producing his two volume commentary on the book of Proverbs, he does not disappoint in this regard and also succeeds in bringing a pastoral perspective in relating the importance of the contents of this oft used, but also often misunderstood, book of the Bible.

Proverbs carries with it distinctive problems and issues involving its authorship, genre, and purpose. To each of these issues, Waltke has spoken with the caution of a scholar, but the conviction of a believer. He appropriately highlights the multilayered status of the book in its compilation and construction, yet argues forcefully for the scholarly unpopular inclusion of

Solomon as a major force behind the book. Furthermore, while carefully noting that proverbs as a genre is not strictly promissory in nature, he correctly notes that it is much more than a category of “pithy sayings” that is often applied to any text that is considered proverbial in nature. As a result he has composed a commentary that is lucid, helpful and a great addition to both the pastor’s and the scholar’s library.

If there is one qualm to be had regarding the work, however, it is that Waltke sometimes seems to forget that not all of his readers have the depth of understanding of Hebrew that he possesses. This despite the fact that he highlights in the author’s preface that he is attempting to address the “average Bible reader.” Certainly, there are whole discussions within which such a reader will be totally lost and wondering exactly what it is that Waltke is arguing as he presents the nuances of certain Hebraic constructions and relationships.

Proverbs requires a gentle hand in navigating the path between oversimplification and obfuscation through examination of minutiae. For the most part, Waltke applies such a touch to his interpretations and discussions. In those places where he wanders into the latter, he is to be excused because seldom does he do so without good reasons. In the end, this first volume is very helpful to all those who are interested in understanding the nature of wisdom and in understanding a book that still has much to say to modern churchgoers who are looking for biblical answers to living a godly life.

Timothy M. Pierce  
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***The Perfect Prayer: Search for Kingdom through the Lord’s Prayer.* By Philip Mathias. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005. xiii + 159 pages. Hardcover, \$16.99.**

When one quotes the Lord’s Prayer or plumbs the depths of its petitions, it is typically to the more well-known version in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:9–13) to which one looks rather than Luke 11:2–4. However, journalist Philip Mathias much prefers the version in Luke, which he calls “the perfect prayer” and an “exquisite homily on the spiritual life” (1–2). Mathias believes the search for the kingdom of God is the core of Christianity, and he says the Lord’s Prayer in Luke aptly expresses this search (xii).

Mathias readily admits he has no systematic theological training and is “not a particularly devotional person” (xiii)—ironic, since this book is a spiritual reflection on the Lord’s Prayer! However, Mathias is an accomplished writer, and he does present some interesting insights in a well-



written manner. For instance, his description of why God set up a kingdom and how both a king and a kingdom works is helpful to readers, such as this one, who have little firsthand knowledge of an earthly kingdom (72–76). He uses some engaging illustrations, such as the brave Spartans at Thermopylae (74), the heroic efforts of the Santa Marija Convoy taking desperately-needed supplies to the island of Malta in World War II (105–9), and an altruistic cheese maker (147).

Perhaps it is to be expected that Mathias is overly exuberant about this prayer, but some statements clearly go too far. He claims this prayer contains *all* that a Christian ever needs to pray to God (2); yet, in this prayer Jesus was more likely being illustrative rather than exhaustive. There are other New Testament prayers that cannot fit in any of its petitions, such as Paul's request for God to remove his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:8) or James' admonition to ask for wisdom (Jas 1:5). Mathias advocates using the prayer as a mantra (2), which certainly goes against Jesus' prohibition of "meaningless repetition" in Matthew 6:7. At times Mathias seems to attribute mystical qualities to this prayer—as if it is a magical incantation (19), but the Lord's Prayer is not a divinely-sanctioned hocus focus.

Unfortunately, Mathias' basic linguistic analysis of the prayer is flawed—arriving at a rigid parallelism in the prayer. Not only is this structure tenuous at times (as are the alleged parallels with the Ten Commandments, 86–89), its "pure" structure is postulated by criticizing Matthew's allegedly bloated version that has words Mathias claims Jesus never said (4–6)! Also problematic is Mathias' tendency toward universalism (19, 21, 40, 44, 91–97—in this latter section he includes Muslims in the kingdom of God!). Other problems include: (1) he reflects a typical mainline liberalism, believing Genesis 1–11 is myth (pp. 26–27, 48–49, 110) and condemning homophobia but not homosexual practice (p. 21), and (2) he condones praying to the saints and Mary (pp. 2, 109), both non-biblical practices.

James R. Wicker  
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***Philippians.* By Moisés Silva. 2nd ed. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. xx + 248 pages. Hardcover, \$29.99.**

This commentary is an update of the volume originally in the Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary in 1988. Four years later it was reprinted with a few corrections as the inaugural volume of the excellent Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (xi). This second edition in

2005 updates the volume to reflect the last thirteen years of scholarship on Philippians as well as conforms it to the style of other BECNT volumes.

Moisés Silva is a noted scholar with an expertise in Pauline writings as well as hermeneutics. He has taught New Testament at Westmont College, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. A real strength of this commentary is that Silva's interpretation of each passage is carefully connected to the context of the letter—which, importantly, Silva views as a cohesive whole (104, 117, 134–35, 143–44). This interpretive method is especially helpful in dealing with highly-debated passages such as Philippians 2:5–11 (92–3).

While this commentary delves deeply into textual matters, it is geared both to the pastor/teacher as well as the scholar. Common to the BECNT, when Silva addresses the text, it appears in Greek, English transliteration, and English translation throughout the “Exegesis and Exposition” sections (e.g., on almost every page of 38–53). However, there is no transliteration in the “Additional Notes” sections (e.g., 53–58), presumably because one should know Greek to take this deeper step. The Works Cited and four indices are very helpful (214–48).

Silva stays within the objective of the BECNT, dealing with important textual and theological matters, but not giving a verse-by-verse exegesis nor an exhaustive treatment of any textual question (ix). Silva uses “exegetical essays” (xiii) to accomplish this mandate, but the reader may feel slighted, desiring more comments than the “Additional Notes” afford. Another weakness of this volume is the lack of application, which would certainly have been of benefit to pastors and teachers.

The exegesis and exposition is excellent, the interaction with other important commentaries on Philippians is admirable, and the handling of difficult passages is careful and commendable. Silva does not hesitate to differ with other scholars, but he does so respectfully, and he stays within an evangelical framework (e.g., his disagreements with Fee: 139, n. 6, 147, 159, n. 8, 164, n. 17, 178, n. 10). Unfortunately, most references to scholarship since the first edition (1992) appear only in footnotes, so this was not a thoroughgoing revision of the commentary. The one excursus (211–13) is short but excellent; one wishes there were more. Yet, this book remains an excellent commentary on Philippians and is worthy of the BECNT series.

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***Scripture Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine.* By R.C. Sproul. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005. 210 pages. Hardcover, \$15.99.**

Is the Bible truthful? Is it reliable? Is it without error? These are among the most critical questions facing the church and believers today. R.C. Sproul, in his book *Scripture Alone*, has presented a convincing case for the inerrancy of Scripture and its reliability for believers today.

The book is composed of a collection of his earlier articles written in defense of the inerrancy, infallibility, inspiration, and authority of Scripture. Its appendices include a copy of "The Ligonier Statement" and "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy." The book is divided into two parts. The first part explains the history of the debate in the church on biblical inerrancy as well as Sproul's argument for it. The second part is an explanation and commentary on the nineteen articles in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

Because the book is composed of some of Sproul's previously written articles on the subject, it tends to be redundant at times. However, Sproul explains in the introduction that his purpose is to assist a new generation in understanding the history of the debate over the Bible and the defense of its truthfulness.

Sproul does an excellent job defining inerrancy and infallibility. He addresses the different beliefs concerning infallibility and also discusses the dangers of limited inerrancy. Sproul concedes that a person's salvation does not depend on a right interpretation of these terms but does assert that right doctrine does. Moreover, even a belief in "inerrancy is no guarantee of biblical orthodoxy" (35), but Sproul rightly insists that there is a correlation.

One of the strongest discussions in the book is Sproul's explanation of the problems of limited inerrancy. He explains how a limited view of inerrancy is subjective, artificial, and dangerous. He also notes how some have even justified sin by avoiding or reinterpreting clear biblical teachings.

Sproul admits that there are difficult passages in the Bible and even some "as yet unresolved discrepancies" (161). He allows the possibility that copy errors may exist between the original documents and the versions that we currently have. However, he asserts that "for more than ninety-nine percent of the cases, the original text can be reconstructed to a practical certainty" (147). In addition, Sproul maintains that where difficulties exist, "no essential article of the Christian faith is affected" (148). Moreover, he explains that a great deal of progress has been made recently to resolve many of these questions. It should be understood that archeological dis-

coveries and other efforts are proving fruitful in continuing to shed light on the Scripture and resolve previously-thought irresolvable questions.

A final word that Sproul emphasizes is worthy of note. The Bible is true whether or not a person chooses to believe it. A person accepting it does not make it more true, and his or her failure to believe it does not make it any less true.

Sproul's work is an excellent resource for anyone interested in learning about the history and critical importance of biblical inerrancy. His work should be read, studied, and digested in hopes that the next generation re-learn the lessons from this generation that God's word is ultimately, reliably, and undeniably true.

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***Spiritual Landscapes: Images of the Spiritual Life in the Gospel of Luke.* By James L. Resseguie. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004. 195 + xi pages. Softcover, \$19.95.**

This thought-provoking and highly practical book is one of three such fruits from James L. Resseguie's studies that began while teaching literary theory as Fulbright Professor at the University of Iceland in 1990. Resseguie is the J. Russell Bucher Professor of New Testament at the Winebrenner Theological Seminary.

His thesis is as simple as it is applicable: "Luke uses the physical, social, and economic landscapes of the Gospel to develop and elaborate the contours of the spiritual life. Luke challenges us to think critically about the spiritual life and its implications for everyday living (ix)." Thus, Resseguie examines topographical settings in Luke's Gospel—lake, mountain, desert, river—as spiritual watershed experiences: the testing of one's faith (chap. 1). Yet, claiming *every* topographical setting has religious meaning, as Resseguie seems to do, likely leads to the claim that some settings are contrived—which they are not! Next, a physical journey indicates a spiritual journey, such as Jesus' long journey to Jerusalem in Luke (chap. 2). Certainly, social landscapes of meal hospitality, family relationships, clothing, and financial decisions are strong indicators of a person's spiritual condition, as the author plainly points out (chaps. 3–6).

A refreshing benefit of Resseguie's tools of literary criticism and narrative criticism (with a dash of social-scientific criticism) is his sole focus on what the text says and what meaning can be drawn out of it. Unfortunately, other higher criticisms can become sidetracked in seeking sources of the text that the exegete misses the actual message of the text. Gladly,

Resseguie's mission is both to understand the text and apply it to the life of the modern disciple.

Good wordsmithing makes interesting reading, and Resseguie does not disappoint. For instance, "Simon's spiritual constipation" (71), the "impotence of abundance" (103), the "propinquity of the poor man" (107), and "peril of plenty" (108) wed both good word economy with vivid word pictures.

Some of this ground has been well-traveled today: Luke's emphases on the themes of general reciprocity (4, 11, 26, 110–12) and reversal of fortune (47–49), as well as his use of such literary tools as chiasm (31, 62, 106) and parallelism (48, 57). Yet, the author draws insightful observations on the use of a number of literary tools, some lesser known: rhythmic pattern (38–39, 64–65), repetition (40), rhetorical strategies (47), asyndeton (64), parataxis (65, 71), and a preponderance of pronouns (104). However, Resseguie weaves these emphases well into his study of spiritual meaning found in topographical and social landscapes.

Interestingly, the most applicable and potentially convicting chapter—chapter six on conspicuous consumption—seems to be the one most indebted to other sources. The first endnote of this chapter credits the author's indebtedness to George Ritzer and Juliet B. Schor (155). However, Resseguie does cite a number of other sources in this chapter and every chapter in this book—making good use of today's major Lukan scholars.

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***The TNIV and the Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy.* By Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004. xxxiii + 494 pages. Softcover, \$24.99.**

For just over ten years the controversy of a gender-neutral NIV has raged in the USA. Although some other Bible translations had already gone gender-neutral (the ICB in 1986, the NCV in 1987, the NRSV in 1990, and the CEV in 1995) (121–4), it was not until the widely-popular NIV appeared as the *NIV-Inclusive Language Edition* in Great Britain in 1995 that both Christian scholars and laity took notice and the debate began, especially among evangelicals in the USA (125).

This volume is essentially a major update of the 2000 book, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words*, by Poythress and Grudem, which appears as chapters 7–21 and appendices 1–6 in this present book. The first six chapters consist of material that Poythress, Grudem, and others wrote in 2002, when Zondervan and the

International Bible Society made the stunning revelation they were going to publish the TNIV in the USA even though they previously said they would not do so (xxvii, 132).

Vern S. Poythress is professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary. Wayne A. Grudem is professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Phoenix Seminary. Both scholars are prolific writers, experts in their respective fields, and outspoken critics of gender-neutral Bible translations.

Written for the general reader, this volume uses non-technical language, transliterated Hebrew and Greek, and purposefully simplified arguments (xxix). The authors clearly and respectfully present effective arguments against gender-neutral translations, and this book is a must-read in this ongoing debate. They are fair and balanced, avoiding pejorative language and treating their opponents with respect. They present a running “dialogue” by extensively citing and effectively answering D.A. Carson (*The Inclusive-Language Debate*, 1998) (31–34, 51–60, 66–69) and Mark Strauss (*Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender Accuracy*, 1998) (9–10, 91–92, 116–17), noting agreements, disagreements, and misunderstandings. Interestingly, this volume presents an in-house “debate”: all four of these scholars are complementarians (as opposed to egalitarians) who believe in biblical inerrancy (8).

Poythress and Grudem present a compelling case “against the systematic and unnecessary removal of male-oriented components of meaning that are there in the original text (53).” Examples of unacceptable changes (213–21) include: (1) changing a historic reference to males (Greek ἀνὴρ) to a generic meaning, such as “choose *someone*” (TNIV) rather than “choose one of the *men*” (NIV) to be a replacement disciple for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:21) (p. 213), (2) omitting “he/him/himself/his,” such as “speak to God when alone” (TNIV) rather than “speak to *himself* and God” (NIV), which changes the meaning of 1 Corinthians 14:28 (p. 2), and (3) changing “father” to “parent” and changing “son” to “child” (Heb 12:7) (p. 1). Yet, the authors also propose acceptable changes (203–11), such as: (1) using “people” rather than “men” when no masculine term is in the text (Matt 5:15) (p. 205), and (2) using “people” or “person” rather than “men” or “man” when translating the plural and sometimes the singular use of ἄνθρωπο (Rom 2:16) (p. 205). The full text of the Colorado Springs Guidelines in Appendix 1 (411–31) is quite helpful.

The eclectic nature of the opening chapters results in some repetition of material; yet, the plethora of biblical examples throughout the book is both helpful and enlightening. Poythress and Grudem do the evangelical world and Christianity in general a great service with this needed book. They clearly illustrate the problem with gender-neutral translations, such

as the TNIV, is the interpretive damage such translations do to the text. They are clearly *not* Don Quixotes chasing windmills because of a blind insistence that English never changes (66), an ignorant misunderstanding of dynamic equivalent translation (170–79), a misogynistic backlash against feminism (66, 247–73), nor a naïve concept of word-for-word translation (194–202)—all allegations masterfully expelled by Poythress and Grudem.

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***Where is the God of Justice? Biblical Perspectives on Suffering.* By Warren McWilliams. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005. 259 pages. Softcover, \$16.95.**

All of us have either experienced the topic of this book or someday will. That relevance makes this book immediately enticing. Growing out of his background as a university professor, McWilliams addresses many of the common sources suffering people experience from an objective view. The title of the book comes from the question of the struggling post-exilic Jews in Malachi 2:17. That question serves as the foundation of the book. McWilliams admits that many today struggle with the question, “How can a good, loving God allow suffering in His world?” (ix) Hence, he attempts to present a “biblical perspective on suffering” (ix) toward the purpose of helping “Christians think about the issue of suffering and respond creatively.” (x)

The book is organized in two parts. The first part deals with four questions people often ask about suffering: Is suffering a punishment for sin? Does God cause suffering? Does my suffering affect God? And is there an end to suffering? The second part of the book focuses on specific issues related to suffering. In this section, the author deals plainly with common sources of suffering. Although McWilliams tries to distinguish his study, which he calls a theology of suffering, from traditional theodicy, which he sees as more philosophical, the distinctions are often blurred.

The issues related to the different types of suffering tend to fall into two categories: either God causes suffering either as a consequence of sin, a testing or learning opportunity, or for some reason known only to God; or God allows suffering either as a natural consequence of the created order, or as the work of Satan. Though, McWilliams admits that human experience does not always fit into logical doctrinal categories. Ultimately, the author asserts that God alone holds the key to the answers to the ques-

tions many sufferers ask. He describes mankind's actions as penultimate, whereas God's are ultimate.

McWilliams presents various viewpoints on each issue he addresses, but concludes each chapter with his personal view which emphasizes God's grace and hope. One chapter that seems a little out of place is the chapter on animal suffering. The discussion is informative, but very speculative and seems incongruent with the stated approach of the second part of the book. The final chapter presents his appeal for "reverent creativity" (174) in our response to the struggles God allows in our lives. He highlights those who creatively responded to their suffering "from the resources of their faith in God" (174).

This book is an enjoyable read. Its strength is its practical focus and honest assessment of issues all of us face. Throughout the book, McWilliams maintains a strong biblical focus and steadfast faith in God. In the end, he allows that it is not wrong for sufferers to ask questions, and in fact, even the asking of them may be part of our spiritual growth process.

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