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BOOKS REVIEWED

Book Reviews

Biblical Studies

***Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey.* + CD-ROM. 2nd ed. By Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering Biblical Studies.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. 446 pages. Hardcover, \$44.99.**

This highly colorful, visually-pleasing New Testament survey is part of the excellent *Encountering Biblical Studies* series, of which Walter A. Elwell is the general editor as well as the New Testament editor. Elwell is Emeritus Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Wheaton College. Coauthor Robert W. Yarbrough is Associate Professor of New Testament at Trinity International University. Their excellent book comes with a bonus that should become the standard for survey texts: a helpful CD-ROM, which contains the electronic text of the entire book, additional pictures, thirteen video clips, interactive quizzes, hot-key definitions, and high-definition 3-D maps.

The book is well organized. Written for college students as well as laity, it is certainly attention-getting. Every other page contains at least one colorful picture, map, chart, or highlighted text box. This layout is, no doubt, beneficial for the expectations of today's visually-oriented college student; however, this layout does limit how much can be said in the text.

Clearly coming from a conservative evangelical perspective, the writers present an excellent survey of the New Testament. The material is accurate and well researched. Two purposeful choices stand out. First, they give an overview of the Gospels (37–151) prior to presenting an introduction to modern critical approaches to the text (153–90). This unusual order correctly highlights the importance and authority of the text over the interpreter (13). Second, they unfortunately avoid going into what they call the “technical discussion” of many critical issues (298), such as the debates over authorship of the writings (78–79, 89, 109–110, 258, 371). Although this reviewer agrees with the writers that the evidence against the traditional New Testament authors is not compelling, students ought to be able to see the evidence as well as arguments for and against it.

Refreshing for a New Testament survey, there is a good emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of the inspiration of the Bible

(26–27). For instance, in delineating why the Gospels were written, the writers note that certainly God was involved in the process (76).

This book will work well as a text for a college New Testament survey class. Icons clearly delineate the focus of each section of text: from primary source quotations to focus boxes highlighting key issues. Chapters begin with a clear outline and stated objections, and they conclude with summary statements, review questions, study questions, and suggestions for further reading—all helpful to encourage further study for the reader.

Yet, as good as this book is, it could be better. First, endnotes impede learning. Footnotes are more helpful. Second, there is inadequate description of such important areas as New Testament inspiration and canonization (25–27). Third, the review questions are often too general—with more than one answer possible (e.g., 150) but only one answer supplied (407). Fourth, references to Patristics and other ancient writers ought to include specific citations (88, 98, 109, 118, 376). Fifth, many pictures of objects, such as statues and coins, do not give their provenance—neither where they were found nor where they reside today (78–79, 101, 113, 197–98, 200, 213, 218, 224, 227–28, 300, 312), and some pictures are captionless (38–39). Sixth, some text boxes need Scripture references to help in verification of the material and for further study (93, 103, 124, 202). Seventh, the maps are 2-D rather than 3-D. Topographical markings would help the maps to look less commercial or cartoonish and more scholarly. These maps—although colorful—seem imprecise, like computer maps that come with cheap Bible study software. Interestingly, the maps on the CD-ROM are much better than the ones in the book.

Even with some room for improvement, *Encountering the New Testament* makes a fine college textbook as well as an excellent text for lay people to learn more about the New Testament.

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***Fortress Introduction to the Prophets.* By Rodney R. Hutton. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004. 114 pages. Softcover, \$16.00.**

This small work marks Hutton's entry into the nature and scope of Israel's prophets. The author earned his PhD from the Claremont Graduate School. His topic of "Declaratory Formulae" among Israel's writing prophets was heavily influenced by Gerhard Von Rad. Hutton's clear desire is for this work to be used as an introduction that will spark "the reader to (examine) the critical issues that concern Israel's prophetic texts in their broad scope" (viii). In the introduction the author asks five preliminary

questions, which he notes, surprisingly, are “fundamentally insoluble” (4). Possibly his guiding question is his first, which seeks to ascertain the extent to which the prophetic books provide a witness of the real phenomena of prophecy in Israel. The author is interested in adducing the social location of the prophets as well as their legal and historical relationship to the prophetic corpus. Hutton ends the first chapter with a cursory overview of how the prophetic corpus is viewed by the traditions of Judaism (“Prophets as Guardians of the Torah”), Christianity (“Prophets as the Foretellers of Christ”), and Liberal Protestantism (“Prophets as Bearer’s of Israel’s Truth”). He ends this chapter with a cautionary caveat regarding the anti-Semitic complicity of the academy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The second chapter inaugurates Hutton’s search for the elusive origins of Israelite prophecy. This chapter is simultaneously refreshing and disconcerting for the reader. While Hutton diligently seeks the source of Israelite prophecy, he unfortunately turns to Mari for the genesis of this institution. It would have been more fruitful to examine the origins of Israelite prophecy within the corpus of the biblical text itself. Abruptly, Hutton turns from his quest for origins to the topic of Amos of Tekoa. A cursory glance at Amos research in the last decade will show that the works produced on this prophet and the book that bears his name are legion. It is unfortunate that in a book on the origins of Israelite prophecy Amos gets only four pages. Hutton also curiously discusses the social and critical issues of the book. Helpfully, the author does find hope in the preaching of Amos in regards to the “fallen tent of David” (Amos 9:11–15).

The remainder of the book is exclusively reserved for the other pre-exilic prophets. Hosea is given a full eight pages of material divided up by four general topics. Standard elements such as “historical context,” “social aspects of Israel’s offense,” “priests and the lack of knowledge,” and “Hosea’s visions of restoration,” are dealt with in very terse fashion.

Not surprisingly, Hutton divides the investigation of Isaiah up into two similar chapters. In chapter four he undertakes the investigation of what he calls “Isaiah of Jerusalem.” The fifth chapter is a vignette of Isaiah and the Assyrian crisis which befell Judah. Refreshingly, the author does not do scholastic surgery on this grand and majestic major prophet. Throughout both chapters four and five Hutton consistently understands Isaiah to be the author of the book that bears his name.

The sixth chapter is devoted to Micah of Moresheth. In elucidating the themes of Micah the author once again helpfully turns to the theme of “restoration.” Chapter seven is given over to what the author entitles “Prophets in the Interim.” Quickly Hutton gives the historical background

to Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk followed by the very briefest exploration of theology within each book.

In chapters eight through twelve the author focuses solely on the book of Jeremiah. Hutton minutely examines Jeremiah and the reforms of Josiah and in so doing rightly argues for an early date for the book. The ninth chapter provides the reader with a structural overview of Jeremiah. Diverse elements such as the role of Jeremiah, Baruch, and the scroll of 605 B.C. are examined for their relevance in compositional understanding. The final chapter is given over to ascertaining the “portrait” of Jeremiah. Hutton here breaks with a majority of the guild and finds that Jeremiah should be identified as a prophet of Judah.

In reading this book there are four criticisms that must be made. First, there are few references to the exilic and postexilic prophets. It could be that Hutton could not do the exilic and postexilic prophets justice in the page constraints of his book. However, if this were the case then the author should have perhaps renamed the work to reflect only the preexilic prophets. Second, in an introductory text such as this, one expects either footnotes or endnotes to guide the reader. Unfortunately neither footnotes nor endnotes are given and the reader is left to the short bibliography to ascertain further reading on diverse subjects in the book. Third, a perusal of Hutton’s bibliography shows that while it contains a good many works, there are some major items that were omitted. Fourth, while the book strives to be an introduction to the (writing) prophets of Israel, the majority of its research is on Jeremiah (five out of twelve chapters). This book should not be recommended to seminary students nor pastors. However, it might serve as an ancillary to a more thorough introduction to the prophets.

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***Jesus in Context: Background Readings for Gospel Study.* Edited by Darrell L. Bock and Gregory J. Herrick. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. 286 pages. Softcover, \$22.99.**

This present volume completes an excellent informal trilogy of books by Darrell L. Bock, Research Professor in New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. In 2002 Bock wrote *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* as an insightful overview of the background and critical studies of the canonical Gospels (reviewed in *SWJT* 45 [Summer 2003]: 70–71). In the same year he published *Jesus according to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospel (JAS)*, in which he examined the canonical portrait of Jesus in a micro (textual examination) and macro

(theological portrait based on Gospel themes) basis (reviewed in *SWJT* 46 [Spring 2004]:85). The coauthor of *Jesus in Context* is Gregory J. Herrick, a researcher and writer for the Biblical Studies Foundation.

Jesus in Context is a Gospels background reader: a compilation of ancient writings dating both before and after the composition of the canonical Gospels. Other New Testament readers are usually compilations of material arranged by author, such as *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, by C.K. Barrett. In *Readings from the First-Century World*, Elwell and Yarbrough arrange their readings by topic or by the corresponding New Testament book, and their reader covers the entire New Testament. It is designed to be read from cover to cover in conjunction with the New Testament, as is Bock and Herrick's book (and *JAS*). However, *Jesus in Context* is unique in covering the Gospels only and in organizing the readings according to the chronological events in the Synoptic Gospels as well as John.

Although this is an interesting read, it is also designed as a reference book. Two handy cross-reference guides at the beginning of the book tie each extra-biblical reading with the Gospel passage to which it is pertinent as well as the section of *JAS* to which it relates (7–12).

So what is the purpose of a reader: just another required reading book for a seminary class? Hardly! The editors cleverly describe it as “a poor man's Strack-Billerbeck” (15), the monumental six-volume 1928 German commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash. Reading the English translation of this background material to the world of the New Testament gives one a better understanding of the cultural world (e.g., taxes, marriage, and death), religious world (e.g., tithing, fasting, prayer, and alms giving), and sometimes the diversity of opinions present in Jesus' day (13–14).

This is an enlightening and entertaining read. The Mishnah forbade Jews from clapping hands, slapping their thighs, and stomping their feet on the Sabbath (190, m. Besah 5.2). Obviously they never sang, “If you're happy and you know it clap your hands!” Sadly, rabbi Aqiba taught divorce is permissible if one finds a prettier woman (85, m. Gittin 9.10). The Mishnah said a Jew may not cut through the Temple as a shortcut, nor may he spit in the Temple (151, m. Berakot 9.5). Rabbi Hillel allowed one to pray for the sick on the Sabbath, but rabbi Shammai forbade it (81, t. Sabbat 16.22).

This reader is full of sources for teachings of Second Temple Judaism that one has heard but probably never read the specific source. The idea that the Jews added laws to “make a fence around the Torah” (161) is mentioned in Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Pisha 6. One understands why Jesus waited until the fourth day to raise Lazarus from the dead (John

11:6, 17) after reading Leviticus Rabbah 18.1, which mentions the Jewish belief that the soul hangs around the body of the deceased for three days only, attempting to return, but it is gone by the fourth day due to the body being no longer recognizable (231).

This reviewer found only one mistake: it says “Stephen” was stoned to death in AD 62, and it should say, “James, the brother of Jesus” (28). In addition, here are some improvements that would help the book: (1) put the date of each writing by its title; (2) add footnotes of some important differences in the way to translate some of the writings, such as when Eusebius quoted Aristion saying Mark was Peter’s “interpreter” (29); (3) be more specific about the origin of patristic citations, since the previous quotation from Aristion came to Eusebius via Papias; and (4) since there are so many citations from the Talmud, it would help to explain in detail to the reader how the Talmud came to be, and how and why a rabbi was able to add a new point to a discussion (e.g., 45–47, 49–50, 110–17); otherwise, the long lists of continual additions may be confusing.

This book is a valuable source tool. It will benefit pastors, students, and lay people desiring more firsthand knowledge of the background of the New Testament.

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***Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation.* By Wayne Grudem, Leland Ryken, C. John Collins, Vern S. Poythress, and Bruce Winter. Wheaton: Crossway, 2005. 157 pages. Softcover, \$14.99.**

All five contributors to this book were members of the Translation Oversight Committee in 2001 for the production of the English Standard Version Bible (ESV), an excellent, recent, and essentially literal (EL) Bible translation. They presented the articles in this book as formal papers at the 2004 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society.

The five scholars offer their articles in this book “to encourage the ongoing, careful reflection on methodology and issues in Bible translation—that necessarily work, which the Christian church is called to undertake, with fear and trembling before our sovereign, holy God, for the sake of the gospel and the truth of God’s Word” (7). Their articles are excellent and certainly add clarity to the important field of Bible translation. However, with the exception of Winter’s article, which seems out of place with the thrust of the other four articles, a more accurately stated purpose for this book would be: a defense of EL Bible translation against the practice of dynamic equivalence (DE) Bible translation (also called

functional equivalence), a thought-for-thought translation. Winter, on the other hand, examined Paul's plain, unrhetorical writing style in the Corinthian letters (150).

As with any collection of articles, there is the expected repetition, but this book has just a few: (1) redundant definitions of terms (20–21, 58); and (2) similar charts (22, 82). Otherwise, each writer approaches a different facet of the topic that makes a helpful apologetic for the EL translation of the Bible (22).

In clear apologetic form, Ryken gives reasoned responses to five common misunderstandings people have about EL translations. He is right on target with his answers. However, in responding to the charge of naiveté, leveled against EL translators, Ryken seems to have missed the most basic one. This straw man argument claims EL proponents believe good translation *only* goes word by word from the Hebrew or Greek in order to find an equivalent word in English (or in whatever the receptor language is) (60–70). Grudem actually answers this charge in his essay (20). However, every decent translator knows there is not always a word-for-word, nor a syntax-to-syntax, correspondence from one language to another. Ryken then turns around and calls the DE translators “naïve” (63–70)—good points, but perhaps the name calling could end!

Poythress' article is the most tedious, but necessarily so, since it deals with the history of translation theory and a critique of the prevailing theory: DE. Although he rightly takes issue with Eugene Nida and his DE theory (122–34), he does so respectfully and is complimentary of parts of Nida's work (131–34).

Most articles such as these bounce around through the Bible as they cite examples of mistranslations by the other side; however, Collins does a service by limiting his study to 1 John (94–105). This focus allows him to examine not only how translations handle individual verses, but also to study how translations deal with word repetitions and word ambiguities—important aspects often ignored in this translation debate.

Interestingly, there are conservative scholars on both sides of the EL versus DE debate even though it seems proponents of plenary-verbal inspiration would favor the EL approach, as does this reviewer. Although somewhat short, this book helps further the case for EL Bible translation and is clear enough even for the uninitiated to understand and appreciate the issues. For articles promoting DE translation, read *The Challenge of Bible Translation*, edited by Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, and Steven M. Voth.

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Theological Studies

A Definitive Look at Oneness Theology: Defending the Tri-Unity of God.
By Edward L. Dalcour. Lanham: University Press of America, 2005. 217
pages. Paperback, \$37.50.

In this book, Edward Dalcour attempts to present and refute the arguments of those who hold to the view of God he calls “Oneness theology,” the modalistic approach to understanding the divine nature which is characteristic of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI). Put simply, it is the belief that the Father, Son and Spirit are three manifestations, not persons, of the one true God. Dalcour’s approach to the subject is by means of an examination of the biblical text: “Hence, in this book, we will analyze Oneness theology on the basis of biblical truth. . . . [O]ur focus will be on the sole infallible standard that defines true Christianity from a professing one: the Scriptural teaching concerning the Person, nature and finished work of Jesus Christ” (2). He begins with a brief discussion of the tenets of oneness theology and then moves to a more detailed examination and critique of the specific arguments employed by oneness proponents. It is this section which forms the bulk of Dalcour’s work. He concludes with supporting historical and theological arguments for the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.

While the book does reflect a significant amount of thought on the issues at hand, it suffers from several weaknesses. Four are particularly noteworthy: first, the book is written in a strongly polemical style; second, the arguments presented are not fully developed; third, the breadth of research is rather limited; and fourth, the editorial work is lacking in attention to detail.

The information presented in the book is both interesting and important for Christian study. Unfortunately, Dalcour’s polemical style detracts from the seriousness of the work by removing any pretext of objectivity from the study. For example, Dalcour correctly notes that a mere claim of allegiance to Jesus does not constitute a faith that is consistent with historic Christian theology, but in doing so, he intimates that adherents to oneness theology do not base their faith on the Bible, which is patently false. For example, after noting that oneness adherents claim Jesus is Lord, he writes, “it is not the mere name ‘Jesus’ itself that has salvific value, for there were many who were named ‘Jesus’ (that is, Joshua) in the first century, but in contradistinction, it is *only* the Jesus of biblical revelation who can truly save those who are enslaved to sin. It is *this* Jesus who *alone* can forgive sins, and it is *this* Jesus who *alone* can grant eternal life!” (2–3). While some oneness proponents do admittedly place too much emphasis upon the name

“Jesus,” to critique them on the basis of the commonality of the name Joshua is to create a straw man. Clearly oneness proponents mean to refer to the Jesus of the biblical gospels and not just anyone named, “Jesus!” They just understand his nature in a different way from traditional orthodox Christianity. The polemical tone leads to a lack of precision in his analysis of Oneness theology. He argues, “By denying the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit, Oneness believers deny the Holy Spirit all together” (41). This is both unpersuasive and unfair. Similar arguments are made throughout the book. In the chapter on early church history, Dalcour expends valuable space demonstrating that the early apologists relied on the Bible as their rule of faith. His point is unclear, but he seems to be implying that the early monarchians did not use the Bible. This, again, is false at best and misleading at worst.

In many cases Dalcour’s response to oneness arguments amounts to little more than scriptural quotation. He seems to expect his readers to agree automatically with his reading of the passages, as opposed to the oneness interpretation (e.g., his use of Rom 8:3 on page 44). Only brief explanations of his interpretation are given, with little justification or substantiation. Dalcour seems to think the orthodox view of the Trinity is self-evident, as can be seen in his use of rhetorical questions: “If these passages do not teach that the Holy Spirit is a Person, then what would a passage look like that did?” (50); “If Jesus was the Holy Spirit Himself, as to His divine nature, and they are not differentiated, why then, did the biblical authors spend so much ink distinguishing Jesus from the Holy Spirit in the same context (esp. John chaps. 14–16)?” (52). This approach to argumentation is rarely convincing to the skeptic. If Dalcour’s desire is to convince avowed modalists of the error of their ways, it is doubtful that he will have been very successful.

Dalcour relies too heavily upon David K. Bernard’s work as representative of the *Oneness* position. He therefore spends the majority of time responding to him and does not explore possible avenues a proponent of oneness theology might take, even if not taken by Bernard. The work reads almost like an extended book review of Bernard’s work. Dalcour also tends to rely upon somewhat dated research (e.g., he quotes B.B. Warfield authoritatively on numerous occasions without considering modern discussions of the biblical passages under investigation), and rarely consults discussions of key texts in the journals. The antiquated citations leave the reader wondering if the arguments presented are still generally accepted in the scholarly community.

The book is fraught with typographical and grammatical errors. Several errors were found in each chapter. While this may be as much the fault of the editor and publisher as the author, it still detracts from the merit of

the study. In addition, there are several points at which the author fails to make the fine distinctions among theological positions one would expect from a scholarly work. For example, there are many places where Dalcour lumps Arianism and Modalism together for purposes of refutation. While there are some similarities in basic philosophy behind the two heresies, they are clearly different and should be treated as such. In the chapter on Modalism and the early church, Dalcour fails to explain the natures of both Gnosticism and Monarchianism, yet refers to both in rather general terms. The reader is left to piece the puzzle together for himself. This lack of sophistication is both frustrating and troublesome.

To some extent, Dalcour's brevity can be attributed to the scope of his project. He simply tried to do too much in a limited space. Perhaps Dalcour's effort would have been better served if he had limited himself to an examination and evaluation of the claims of Oneness theology. The chapters which focused on these issues (chapters. 2–4; "Examining the Oneness Claim that Jesus is the Father," "Examining the Oneness Claim that Jesus is the Spirit," and "The Preexistence of the Son") were by far the best and left the reader wanting more. Dalcour engaged in a measure of in-depth study of the Greek text of the New Testament, and made some insightful observations, but the exegetical work was far too brief. It is unfortunate that he was unable to expand these sections. The information in the other chapters (Oneness objections to the doctrine of the Trinity, UCPI baptismal formula, Modalism in the early church, and the Tri-Unity of God) seemed either redundant or only secondarily relevant.

Despite its shortcomings, the book is not without value. While it cannot stand alone as a *definitive* refutation of Oneness theology, it can serve as a good starting point for scholarly examination of the issues at hand. It is probably most valuable, though, for the busy pastor who wishes to learn more about Oneness theology and the errors inherent in the system. For those who do not have time to conduct the exegetical work necessary to refute Oneness claims, but who wish to be theologically informed or to discuss the doctrine of the Trinity with theologians in the United Pentecostal tradition, Dalcour has provided a valuable resource.

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***God is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself.* By John Piper. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005. 185 pages. Hardcover, \$17.99.**

In this brief, popular work, John Piper, Senior Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, argues that “the final” and “supreme good” of the gospel “is God himself seen and savored in all his glory (37).” Although some readers will disagree with Piper’s Calvinist emphases, he correctly insists that God ought to be every believer’s all-satisfying treasure.

The gospel is good news. 1 Corinthians 1:3–4 highlights the “indispensable deeds” of this news (67) and, in chapter two, Piper elucidates fifteen specific aspects that make it “good.” Yet none of these “facets of the gospel-diamond is the chief good or highest goal of the gospel” (45). Not even justification, which is “the sustaining source of all the other benefits of the gospel” (44), because it addresses the most fundamental need of humanity by removing sin and imputing righteousness, can be labeled the greatest good of the gospel. That honor belongs to God himself.

My point in this book is that all the saving events and saving blessings of the gospel are means of getting obstacles out of the way so that we might know and enjoy God most fully. Propitiation, redemption, forgiveness, imputation, sanctification, liberation, healing, heaven—none of these is good news except for one reason: they bring us to God for our everlasting enjoyment of him (47).

God Himself is the gospel. The heart of the gospel is not what He accomplishes in Jesus Christ for humanity’s sake but rather the purpose for which it is accomplished—bringing believers to God (1 Peter 3:18). The former makes much of humanity; the latter allows believers to make much of God.

In order to be truly converted, a person must love God for Himself, not merely for the magnificent gifts He provides. Fallen humans, for instance, naturally desire to avoid punishment and pain. Therefore, humans naturally desire to avoid hell; likewise, the appreciation for the one who provides such an escape is natural (121). By contrast, fallen human beings do not naturally love God for himself. Doing so is a supernatural act accomplished via the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers (79, 90–97). Rest assured, Piper does not want to belittle the gifts of God (117) for he too loves them, but he insists that their purpose is to point away from themselves and to the one great gift of the gospel, God himself (118).

The question driving this discourse appears to be the same one that impelled Piper's historical mentor, Jonathan Edwards, to pen *The Religious Affections*: Why do so many who seem to have embraced the gospel fall away? Piper suggests that loving God for something other than himself, i.e. His gifts, misses the heart of the gospel; people who do this have not truly embraced the gospel at all (37–38, 47) and do not possess “the kind of faith that survives torture” (88). Such faith is incapable of persevering through persecution, something 1 Peter views as a gift from God (127). Here, Piper challenges a comfortable American Christianity, which knows little of real persecution except through *The Voice of the Martyrs*.

Piper also challenges a cultural milieu in which many equate believing the facts about Jesus with conversion. As Piper points out, even Satan believes in this manner (62). Like Jonathan Edwards, he insists that true conversion comes when believing the facts is accompanied by true spiritual sight granted by the Holy Spirit as a person embraces God himself through the gospel (62, 81–85).

Three problems pepper the pages of this book. First, the incarnation deserves more lengthy treatment in any book that emphasizes God's gift of Himself. Piper touches on the incarnation but views it almost exclusively as a means to the cross, not considering its radical implications in light of his own theme (e.g. 118–19). Second, Piper's interpretive method of filtering every biblical passage and understanding all of life through the hermeneutical lens of the “glory of God” seems contrived. Some non-Calvinists will find this approach deeply offensive, as they do much of Piper's work. Finally, Piper presents an inadequate Christology, deemphasizing the radical nature of Christ's divine-human person as Christ himself acts as a means to God's glory.

This volume is well-written, biblically-oriented, and worth reading if only because it raises the kind of questions that American Christians need to consider in order to follow Paul's admonition to self-testing (2 Cor 13:15). My greater hope, however, is that *God is the Gospel* might serve as a segue into reading and appreciating the works of America's greatest theologian, the paradigmatic pastor-theologian and reformed-revivalist—Jonathan Edwards.

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***How Do Catholics Read the Bible?* By Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005. 159 pages. Softcover, \$16.95.**

A well-known scholar and prolific writer, Daniel J. Harrington is professor of New Testament at Weston Jesuit School of Theology. He is the general editor of *New Testament Abstracts* as well as the *Sacra Pagina* Bible commentary series. An ordained Catholic priest, he has preached almost every Sunday for the last thirty-five years (113).

This little volume is both interesting and enlightening. Harrington certainly accomplishes his purpose of giving simple, easy-to-understand explanations to the non-specialist reader (xiv). Each chapter ends with some helpful “Questions for Meditation and Reflection,” and the twenty-five theses at the end of the book summarize the book well (129–32). However, he gives a one-sided picture of such matters as higher criticism of the Bible. He presents a positive assessment of redaction or other higher criticisms with no mention of any of their negative excesses. He does criticize certain beliefs that he rejects, such as supersessionism (79), literalism, or fundamentalism (103), but he presents Feminist Theology, Liberation Theology (38–39), and a problematic dual covenant idea (“a twofold way of salvation,” 80) with no criticism at all. It is as if he is writing to children and avoiding any mention of theological problems in the adult world.

Presumably, non-Catholics will comprise the majority of the readership of this volume. Thankfully, Harrington communicates well to a non-Roman Catholic audience. It is disappointing to note the trend among Catholic scholars away from a conservative interpretation of the Bible. The repeated description of “the word of God in human language” (35, 38) has too much emphasis on the human side of inspiration and the alleged errors that resulted. For example, an 1893 encyclical letter upheld biblical inerrancy (5), but a 1993 Pontiff Bible Commission harshly criticized an overly literal interpretation (11–12) as well as claiming biblical texts have dynamic (multiple) literal senses (104). Thus, Harrington rejects a literalist or fundamentalist approach to Bible interpretation (103). He calls Jonah and Esther “charming short stories” (26) like the apocryphal Tobit and Judith. One wonders what disparity there is between the Catholic clergy and laity in Bible interpretation, and it would have been helpful for Harrington to address this issue.

Apart from noting the obvious Protestant disagreement with Catholics over the Apocrypha (26–27), Harrington wrongly claims most Protestant Bible publishers add the Apocrypha in the appendix (26). Most Protestants will find his justification for the importance of adding tradition to Scripture weak (106–11). At any rate, although this book gives

good insight to Roman Catholic interpretation, it likely describes how their clergy and theologians—rather than their laity—tend to interpret the Bible.

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***Scripture Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine.* By R.C. Sproul. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: 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 archaeological discoveries 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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***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) for 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, where 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: one, God causes suffering either as a consequence of sin, a testing or learning opportunity, or for some reason known only to God; or, two, God allows suffering either as a natural consequence of the created order, or as the work of Satan. 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 questions 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 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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Evangelism and Missions

***Hispanic Realities Impacting America: Implications for Evangelism and Missions.* By Daniel R. Sánchez. Fort Worth: Church Starting Network, 2006. 320 pages. Softcover, \$27.95.**

Daniel Sanchez, professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has provided an invaluable resource for those interested in the dynamics of Hispanic ministry in the United States of America (USA). The book is divided into three main interrelated sections designed to provide both statistical data and sound theological interpretation.

The first section deals specifically with important statistical data which offers the basis for the book's claim that Hispanics "are now the

largest minority group in America and are projected to comprise one fourth of the American population by the year 2050" (xvii). It is in light of this fact that ten "realities" are exposed. One of them affirms that recent Hispanic immigrants have outnumbered previous generations, thus revealing a greater need for Hispanic speaking ministries and churches today than three decades ago (21). Another reality is that in the USA "Spanish language is not declining but increasing" (23). Still another reality is that "Hispanics are showing more receptivity to the evangelical message than ever before in the history of this country," making them the most responsive ethnic group to the gospel (35). The challenges for evangelical churches are obvious. Among other things, churches need to equip Hispanic leaders to share their faith in a context dominated by a Roman Catholic mindset. They also have to develop contextualized evangelistic, church planting, and church growth strategies that will accelerate outreach to all of the "Hispanics and enable them to establish churches with effective and compassionate ministries" (38).

The second section of the book is entitled "understanding Hispanics," and is composed of four fascinating chapters dealing with Hispanic historical, sociological, and theological issues. Two chapters specially deserve attention. Chapter 14 was written by Jesse Miranda, who also writes the book's very instructive preface. In "Modern Days Samaritans," Miranda, professor of Hispanic Studies at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, California, compares the historical, psychological, and behavioral patterns of first-century Samaritans and modern Latinos in the USA. For Miranda, many insights are gained from the way Jesus and the New Testament treated Samaritans and how North American evangelicals should treat and relate to Hispanics (138). Indeed, Hispanic Americans should find "comfort, instruction and inspiration" (155) for ministry in this chapter.

Sanchez's "Hellenistic analogy" (chap. 15)—an appealing comparison of the experience of first century Hellenistic Christians with contemporary Hispanic believers in the USA—leads him to conclude that Hispanics, who have experienced assimilation into the North American society, should consider their bi-culturalism not as a liability but as a "marvelous asset" in the furtherance of the Kingdom of God in this country and around the world (xv).

The third and final section of the book, presents four chapters devoted to practical suggestions and very useful principles for reaching Hispanics with the gospel, planting and growing Hispanic Churches, and involving them in missions. Readers will gain multiple benefits from all the valuable information gathered by the author's research and experience. Sanchez's book is readable and instructive. It should be read by all who are involved

in Hispanic Ministry in the USA and by those who have yet to enter this growing ministry field.

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***Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims.* By Sam Schlorff. Upper Darby, PA: Middle East Resources, 2006. 202 pages. Softcover, \$19.95.**

Sam Schlorff is retired from over thirty-five years of service as a missionary and missiologist in residence with Arab World Ministries (formerly North Africa Mission). His career includes assignments in Tunisia, France, and the United States. He graduated from Wheaton College, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Westminster Theological Seminary. Importantly, at Westminster he studied under the tutelage of Harvie Conn and Cornelius Van Til. *Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims* is Schlorff's life work.

In Part 1, Schlorff makes an important contribution by classifying historic Muslim mission into six models. Beginning with George Sale, Henry Martyn, and other polemicists, he provides a summary for each model, largely from original sources, on the basis of the following eight observations: object of mission, theology of non-Christian religion, contextual approach, hermeneutic, church strategy, strengths, weaknesses, and the model today.

Another contribution is his recognition of the importance of hermeneutics for evangelical mission. He classifies methods of quoting the Qur'an as either positive or negative. The classification is helpful in displaying the missiological implications of the theological shift in the last century. A transition in missiology began with William H.T. Gairdner and Samuel Zwemer in their attitude toward Islam. Later, Geoffrey Parrinder and Kenneth Cragg formally introduced the new hermeneutic into evangelical circles. Cragg is not merely using the Qur'an as a proof text for the Bible. The open objective is to propose a new understanding of the Qur'an itself, an understanding that Muslims would find acceptable.

Part two appropriately finishes with a section on ecclesiology. It is helpful to field workers to recognize the three assumptions behind the prominent dynamic equivalence model: missionary extractionism, neutrality of culture, and Muslim forms with Christian meanings. Along the same lines, he calls attention to two categories important for evangelical missiology. First, one must be intentional with theological starting points. For evangelicals, beginning theology from anywhere but the Scripture should be unacceptable. Second, one must carefully choose a cross-cultural

hermeneutical model. All should take to heart his exhortation for an analytical, rather than synthetic, hermeneutic for Islamic cultural and religious forms.

The most promising part of *Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims* is Schlorff's proposal of a new model. He introduced the betrothal model in the July 2000 issue of *Missiology*. It is based upon II Corinthians 11:2–3, and asserts that church planters are guardians for new churches. He summarizes it according to the same eight principles as earlier models, showing how his model could safeguard evangelicals from previous theological mistakes. For many field workers, long bewildered by a model not taken explicitly from Scripture, Schlorff performs an immeasurable service.

One weakness in the book is that he is the first to propose this model. First, for such a bold innovation in mission, the book is much too short. Two hundred pages simply cannot adequately express the import of Schlorff's proposals. However, the brevity does make the book readable for a wider audience.

The greatest weakness in the book is that it does not always incorporate positive innovations or address chief concerns from earlier models, especially the dynamic equivalence model. For example, in Dean Gilliland's response to Schlorff's initial article, which appears in the same issue, the new model is criticized for never mentioning the Holy Spirit. Perhaps more than previous models, the betrothal model rests directly on Scripture. In the Corinthian epistles, as well as the other writings of Paul, the Holy Spirit is prominent in the birth, life, and ministry of the new church. Yet, Schlorff does not explain the Holy Spirit's place. Further, his criticism of the dynamic equivalence model being anthropologically driven rather than scripturally so should be heard, but he does little to explain the place of culture in the new model. Such questions will arise, given the prominence of anthropology in mission today.

Finally, Schlorff sets forth a somewhat out of date and hard to apply model for evangelistic encounter with Muslims. He promotes a method of inter-religious dialogue called "Church Without Walls," but admits the method is not well suited for use outside of the West. Truthfully, evangelicals have much work ahead on how to proclaim Christ to Muslims. The betrothal model is promising for progress in the task.

Missiological Models for Ministry to Muslims is a book written three decades too late. It is the only book that evaluates mission in such way as to make the historical and theological framework of each model easily identified. Hopefully, evangelicals will incorporate Schlorff's research, and the betrothal model, into their ministry not only in the Muslim world, but also to the people of other religions.

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Ethics and Philosophy

***Living Together: A Guide to Counseling Unmarried Couples.* By Jeff VanGoethem. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005. 208 pages. \$12.99.**

There has been a need in the evangelical community for a book on how to deal with the growing numbers of couples, both young and old, who are bypassing marriage and just living together. Jeff VanGoethem, a DMin graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and pastor of a growing church in Bloomington, Illinois, has researched and written an insightful and instructive piece to give guidelines for counseling such couples from a biblical and evangelical perspective.

The style of his presentation develops a reasoned basis for, not only cautioning couples not to live together before marriage, but to help guide couples who are already doing so to refrain from that form of immoral living and to move toward a more God-pleasing and biblically based marriage. The challenge of moving couples to act in this moral manner recognizes that many may not be willing to do so. Nevertheless, the author challenges pastors to seriously consider the need of the couples they marry for having a godly foundation for a lasting marriage, as well as seeking to create a moral climate in their churches by teaching against the practice of living together and promoting a consistently biblical view of marriage in their churches.

The first five chapters deal with a convincing amount of research that demonstrates why living together frequently results in broken and immoral relationships, as well as being contrary to a Christian lifestyle. Chapters 6 through 8 deal with perspectives from Scripture and church history for lessons against the practice of living together as well as those in favor of Christian marriage. The last four chapters give careful guidance for counseling with couples who are living together before marriage or are considering doing so. In all, it is a much needed piece of sane and sanctifying advice for wise Christian counselors, pastors, and church leaders, especially those who work with young adults.

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***The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity.*
By Carl Raschke. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004; 240 p. \$22.00.**

As the title of the book suggests, Raschke believes we are on the brink of another sweeping reform of the church, one that is similar in thrust and focus to that of the sixteenth century. This new reformation is identified with the changes in thought brought on by the questioning of enlightenment foundationalism in the postmodern movement. Raschke sees his task as threefold: 1) to correct misconceptions of postmodernity among evangelical scholars and ministers; 2) to demonstrate that evangelicalism is really tied to enlightenment thought; and 3) to explain how postmodern thought can aid evangelicalism in being a “progressive rather than reactionary force” in the world (9).

In his historical analysis, Raschke notes that the post-structuralism out of which postmodernism grew was really a questioning of the prevailing scientism (as epitomized in logical positivism) of the day. Evangelicalism had long fought against the notion that reason and logic should have a place of primacy (over against mere faith), and so postmodernism really serves to strengthen its claims. In Raschke’s words, postmodernism had the ability to undercut the “priestly posturing on the part of the secular rationalists” (37). Raschke argues that the evangelical movement has strayed from the Reformation spirit and has instead wedded itself to Enlightenment rationalism and British empiricism. This wedding has stifled theological development and led to as dead an orthodoxy as the Catholic church of Luther’s day. Raschke hopes to call evangelicals back to the Reformation ideals of *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, and the priesthood of believers. He believes that these ideals, or the spirit that drove them in the Reformation era, are to be found in the evangelical postmodern movement as epitomized in the Emerging Church movement.

Raschke contends that Luther’s emphasis on faith alone was a reaction against the *via moderna* of his own day (the relatively recent stress on human will in salvation). Similarly, postmodernism is a reaction against modernity, while evangelicalism, with its stress on logic and political action, is simply a part of modernity. Whereas the presuppositional apologetics of early Dutch Reformed theology focused on the differences in worldviews of believers and unbelievers, the political activities of current evangelicals (e.g., Reconstructionism) evinces an acceptance of the modern worldview and a fundamental lack of faith. According to Raschke, the aspirations of evangelicals in the political arena point to a theology of glory rather than a theology of the cross and thereby prefer knowledge to faith: “Theologies of glory—whether they be Scholastic, Calvinist, commonsense realist, Hegelian, positivist, foundationalist, or presuppositionalist—all share the

common trait of making the claim that a particular reformulation of our understanding of truth and language is sufficient for understanding God” (110). However, one would be hard pressed to find any evangelical proponents of inerrancy claiming to have a complete understanding of God, or claiming that language is not an accommodation. But to say that verbal revelation must include an element of condescension is not to say that it must thereby include errors, as Raschke suggests. It is instead to note that it cannot be comprehensive or exhaustive of God’s nature. But this is a very different claim!

Raschke’s comparisons of the Reformers and the spirit of the Reformation with postmodernism are hardly convincing. In essence, he claims that since Luther questioned the established wisdom of his day, and that postmodernism does as well, their views are the same. There are many problems with this approach. The claims that Luther reacted against the moderns of his own day and that evangelicalism is really just a product of modernism, are both suspect. But perhaps the greatest problem is Raschke’s failure to admit Luther’s basis for reformation—the Bible as properly interpreted. It is to this topic that Raschke turns in his discussion of *sola scriptura*.

Raschke argues that evangelicals have also abandoned the Reformation idea of *sola scriptura* insofar as their emphasis on inerrancy has led to a misplaced trust in human reason rather than in God. He claims that this caused the goal of Bible interpretation to shift from hearing God’s voice to identifying propositional truth, which in turn, led to an exaltation of doctrine to (virtually) the status of revelation. Raschke suggests that the very use of the term, “inerrancy,” “betrays a certain skittishness about whether we can trust God, or profess to trust God, without some sort of ‘cognitive’ as well as confessional insurance” (129). This could not be further from the truth. Raschke fails to inform his readers that the doctrine of inerrancy was largely developed and codified in response to claims by liberal and neo-orthodox theologians that the Bible had actual errors in it. He also misleads his readers by suggesting that the doctrine of inerrancy somehow questions the sufficiency of trusting the Bible because it is a word from God. In point of fact, inerrantists have argued for the doctrine on this very basis—inerrancy is merely the logical presentation of the beliefs of Paul, Augustine, and Luther regarding the truthfulness of God’s Word because it is from Him. It is merely the claim that its truthfulness extends to everything it claims. Inerrantists make no claims of inerrancy for doctrines (even if some are still true). Raschke also misrepresents evangelical notions of saving faith when he claims that it is cognitive and devoid of the heart. In reality, evangelicals view saving faith as involving not only intellectual assent, but also an emotive or affective component. The evangelical claim

that intellectual assent is a necessary component of salvation is something the Reformers would surely have agreed with; Calvin spoke of a necessary work of the Holy Spirit on one's mind enabling him to understand the meaning of Scripture and Luther wedded his theology to the dictates of his conscience. Similarly, it is unlikely that Raschke really believes that saving faith includes no cognitive element; surely some level of understanding of who Jesus is and what He did is necessary for saving faith!

It is his contention that emphasis on truth of the very words is stifling of personal encounter with God because it demands only one meaning for each passage, while the emphasis of postmodernism on multiple meanings for passages allows believers to hear God speaking to them through His Word in various ways. God can say different things to different people by means of the same text/passage because that text gains new meanings as persons read it. However, Raschke has failed to note that, while most inerrantists do argue for only one meaning of a text, they also admit of several applications of a text. The various applications are grounded in the one meaning, and this is what guards against the possibility of relativist readings of the Bible, something evangelicals have constantly warned against in postmodernism.

Raschke moves to the third Reformation doctrine, the priesthood of believers, and claims that postmodernism more closely approximates the Reformers' emphasis of relationality in the *imago dei* than evangelicalism, which he believes is akin to the medieval scholastic emphasis on rationality and morality. According to Raschke, both mainline and evangelical churches view the work of God in the church primarily as top-down; the ministry of the Holy Spirit is conceived as coming through the vocational priesthood to the congregants. By contrast, postmodern churches, who utilize cell groups, recognize the value of horizontal work of the Holy Spirit by means of the congregants. Raschke seems to suggest that this can only be accomplished by means of the cell-group model, or at least cannot be accomplished through the traditional Sunday School program (though he give no reasons why this would be the case). His characterization may be true of some evangelical churches, but it is an oversimplification and too sweeping a generalization to be taken seriously of all. In fact, evangelicals have always included an appeal to heart as well as mind.

While some of the details of his presentation could be questioned, much of what Raschke says in this section is of value. His emphasis upon the leading of the Spirit and the ministering work of the laity is to be taken seriously and evangelical church leaders should take note. Ironically, his criticisms focus on the personal desires of church members and utilization of marketing strategies for determining programs echo arguments made against prevailing church growth wisdom from many evangelical

inerrantists. In fact, many of these same problems have been cited in the so-called “Emergent Church” movement, the very movement which Raschke commends to his readers. This, then, is precisely the point—the importation of business strategies into church development, management, and even worship is not merely a problem for traditional evangelicals, though we certainly have our share of guilt. In fact, it seems to be an error tied largely to Western American consumerism, and this is a problem all churches face, emergent or otherwise.

One of the values of Raschke’s work is that it clearly demonstrates the hostility toward evangelical commitments found in postmodernism. Raschke’s arguments against inerrancy, while simply a regurgitation of those presented by liberal theologians, show how even a conservative postmodernism is incompatible with evangelicalism. Thus, those evangelical scholars and pastors who flirt with postmodernism in any of its forms, endanger their students and congregations by denying the truth of the Bible and proclaiming a subjectivist approach to hermeneutics.

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***Rethinking Holy Land: A Study in Salvation Geography.* By Marlin Jeschke. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2005. 171 pages. Softcover, \$16.99.**

The long-standing debate over the Holy Land typically concerns who owns the land: the Jews or the Palestinians? However, Marlin Jeschke interestingly reframes the question in his book on salvation geography: what makes this land—or any land—holy?

Jeschke rejects the popular evangelical claim that says modern Israel fits within God’s plan for the return of the Jews to the Holy Land, which He gave them in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:1; 15:7, 18–21; 17:8), and that they will ultimately become Christian (Rom 11:26) (77–78). Yet, neither does he fall into the other camp, the supercessionist view, that says Israel has no divine claim to the land because the church has replaced Israel (135). Instead, Jeschke tries to minimize this issue to make his case that *any* land can be holy if a Christian practices salvation geography there.

He is clear about his aim in this book: to teach North American Christians how to use a new, biblical paradigm for how to acquire and possess a land and call it holy (21, 27). He believes the proper goal is salvation geography: “a community living out the distinctive style of possession of territory that salvation history teaches, receiving the land as a gift from God and stewarding it with respect for neighbors and descendants,

extending the reach of holy land” (23). Thus, *all* land could potentially be holy, so Israel has no special place as *the* Holy Land, according to Jeschke (140–41).

Although salvation geography sounds appealing if one could still reserve a special place for Israel as the Holy Land, most Christians will probably have a problem with Jeschke’s advocacy of total pacifism. Jeschke is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Religion at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana (171). Since he is a Mennonite, his views on pacifism are expected; however, they appear naïve to this reviewer. Jeschke leaves no room for any kind of just war or self-defense of any kind, such as the protection of oppressed people, the defenseless, and even one’s family (152–56).

Jeschke writes clearly, adequately interacts with opposing views, accurately cites his sources, and appropriately makes some valid points, such as: (1) one should not practice *herem* (the ban) today (52–55); (2) a Jewish or Christian theocratic state has historically been fraught with difficulties (57–67, 113); and (3) a biblical theology should include how one treats the land (such as ownership) as well as what one does on the land (27).

Weaknesses of this book include: (1) although attempting to be balanced, Jeschke criticizes modern Jews much more than the Palestinians (19–20); (2) his promotion of total pacifism is unrealistic and too simplistic—charges he anticipates and tries to answer, although not successfully to this reviewer (152–54); and (3) although he attempts to take a biblical approach to salvation geography, he takes a decidedly critical approach to Bible interpretation. Of course, he is free to take whatever approach he wishes, but many Christians will reject his “biblical” approach as unbiblical. For instance, he rejects Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (41), and advocates reading “the canon with discrimination (52),” which to him means to discount “the more gruesome texts (45)” of violence in Deuteronomy and Joshua as later fabrications or exaggerations, contrary to what the biblical text says. However, his most glaring weakness is his assertion that Jews have fulfilled God’s promise, that they would be a blessing to the world, (Gen 12:3) through their inventions, scholarship, philanthropy, and contributions to the arts, rather than being the people through whom God sent Christ. Jeschke wrongly claims the Jews do not need to confess Him as their Messiah (131).

Jeschke’s viewpoint is interesting and thought provoking, but it is not necessarily helpful in the ongoing debate over ownership of the Holy Land, and it is only partly applicable to any other land.

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