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REVIEW ESSAYS

## *Review Essays*

***BibleWorks 8: Software for Biblical Exegesis & Research.* Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, LLC, 2009. DVD, \$349.**

BibleWorks continues to impress with its package of top-notch exegetical resources in BibleWorks 8. This review will include three sections, the first providing a brief description of the program, the second addressing the additional Bible versions, resources, and features in version 8, and the third noting the reasons why I recommend BibleWorks as the first choice among Bible software programs.

First, for those unfamiliar with the program, a brief description should prove helpful. Moving from left to right, three primary windows appear. The left window includes the command line and search results, the center window shows the biblical text for one or multiple versions, and the right window provides information about the text, whether lexical information, statistics, resources, cross-references, a variety of word lists, version information, or personal notes. It is possible in version 8 to change the right window into another biblical text window, allowing one to focus on a single verse in the middle of the screen while viewing the larger passage on the right (or vice versa). In addition to a very large number of Bible versions and expansive search capabilities, the program provides maps, dictionaries, lexicons, grammars, reference works, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal texts, timelines, diagramming modules, parsing information, and a vocabulary flashcard module. To illustrate the search capability, a simple double-click can search the entire Bible for a word in hundredths of a second. With respect to lexical information, simply placing your cursor over a word will take you immediately to the lexical entry. For those who have ever used a concordance or looked up a word in a lexicon, these two features alone are well worth the price of the program.

Second, BibleWorks 8 includes many new Bible versions, resources, and features. English highlights of the 33 new versions include the TNIV, NirV, and ESV (2007 edition). The additions bring the total of Bible versions to almost 200 in more than 30 different languages. While most users will only read a handful of languages at most, the other languages can in fact prove useful. As my colleague Paul Hoskins has pointed out, there are likely people in your neighborhood who speak a language other than English. Having the ability to show the Bible to others in their native language can be tremendously helpful in evangelism and discipleship.

Highlights of the 23 new reference works include Wallace's *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Waltke-O'Connor's *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Joüon-Muraoka's *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2006 revised edition), Evans' *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha in Greek and English*, Charles' *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha in English*, Schaff's *Early Church Fathers*, A.T. Robertson's *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, the entire New Testament

diagrammed by Randy Leedy, and two editions of New Testament Apocrypha (James and Hone). Regrettably, six volumes are no longer included in the base package of BibleWorks, notably Metzger's *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. Users who upgrade from previous versions receive activation codes to maintain some of these volumes (depending upon one's prior version), with the exception of Robertson's *Word Pictures* and Futato's *Basic Hebrew for Bible Study*.

The inclusion of new works such as Wallace's *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* has proven tremendously helpful, whether viewing pertinent information through the resource window (information appears for the verse you are studying), opening the book and working through entire sections, performing a search for topics within the book, or for the professor, having electronic text to copy and paste for quizzes and tests. Since this and all of the sources are hyperlinked, it is very quick and simple to move between sections of the book.

New features in version 8 include word and context tabs showing the most common words in the book, chapter, and pericope, a phrase matching tool, a related verses tool, enhanced copy functionality, frequency-based display of parsing and lexical information, the ability to search within a results list, and the ability to search using word lists or Louw-Nida domains.

For those who believe in using biblical languages in ministry, there is a legitimate concern about software programs becoming a crutch. This certainly occurs, but programs like BibleWorks can also be tremendous tools and, in my opinion, provide a realistic hope of establishing generations of ministers who continue to use the languages after seminary. The key is to train people to use the programs correctly, and BibleWorks provides many customizable features which facilitate language learning. For example, it is quite simple to turn off parsing information or hide lexical entries, forcing you to think through the text before turning to a tool. Once it becomes necessary to turn to a tool, you can view the information with just a click. In BibleWorks 8, it is possible to limit lexical entries based upon frequency. For example, I may not wish to view automatically lexical information for words that appear 20 times or more, but would wish to see lexical information for words occurring 19 times or fewer. This filter can be adjusted to any number.

Third, although I use Accordance and Logos as well, I recommend BibleWorks as the first Bible software program to be purchased. Of course the choice of programs does depend upon your computer system. BibleWorks is designed for a PC but may be used on a Mac with Boot Camp or Parallels and Windows. Accordance is designed for a Mac but can be used on a PC with a Mac emulator (the appearance of which will take you back to the 80's). Logos is designed for a PC but a Mac version is under development and is currently available in a pre-release Alpha version with very minimal functionality. For PC users or Mac users with Windows, I recommend BibleWorks first based upon its focus, speed, resources, simplicity of content packaging, and cost.

BibleWorks' motto is "Focus on the Text." There is a slight but significant contrast between this focus and what I believe to be the purpose of Logos as revealed (if unintentionally) in the introductory video to Logos 4. With Logos, you more readily learn about the Bible. In my personal study, I have found that when I

want to study the Bible, I use BibleWorks. When I want to study about the Bible, I use Logos.

As a company, BibleWorks does not believe in providing large electronic libraries. As such, they do not offer large collections of commentaries and books. Instead, their focus is on exegetical tools for the study of the biblical text. When BibleWorks does add resources to the program, as evidenced in version 8, they are top-notch exegetical works.

In contrast, Logos is first and foremost an electronic library system. Purchasing Logos is in many ways like purchasing a minister's library at an estate sale. You certainly find many treasures (many recent ones in fact), but there is a significant amount of material that is of limited value. While in some regards it does not hurt you to have the extra material, it can slow down the program. Students do not automatically know the difference between sources that are helpful and those that should be ignored, leading to a false sense of having done proper research. In the end, this deficiency confidence can be very damaging.

I have never read an entire book on a computer, but I find reference works and commentaries tremendously helpful in an electronic format. If you are one who will use electronic books, I would recommend that you first purchase BibleWorks for your work in the text and then choose one of two options. First, if funds are limited, purchase individual volumes or sets for use in Logos, many of which are available from online sources at a significant discount. It is not necessary to purchase the Logos software program in order to use the Logos (Libronix) digital library system, which is included with the purchase of electronic books designed for use in Logos. This library system will not provide the content that is available in Logos, but will provide the ability to read and search the books that you have purchased. It is also possible to download the Logos engine for free from the Logos website. Second, if funds are more readily available or may become available over time, after purchasing BibleWorks, purchase one of the advanced Logos packages as well.

Accordance occupies a middle ground between BibleWorks and Logos on this point. Like BibleWorks, Accordance is focused primarily on the text. However, they do offer significantly more electronic books than BibleWorks, although fewer than Logos. With respect to the focus on the text, I prefer Accordance over Logos. Regarding the ease of using electronic sources, I prefer Logos over Accordance.

BibleWorks provides the most straightforward approach to purchasing the program. Whereas Accordance and Logos have a variety of levels from which to choose, BibleWorks provides one level for \$349 which includes everything except for a small number of primarily technical modules which may be purchased separately. Accordance offers six different primary collections. Pricing for these collections ranges from \$99 to \$648. There are a variety of other options, bundles, and several "Unlock All" packages (each unlocking all of something but not all of everything), some costing as much as \$3200. Spending \$349 (the price of BibleWorks) on Accordance would net significantly fewer Bible versions and resources than BibleWorks. Logos offers seven different libraries ranging from \$264.95 to \$4,290 (before any applicable discounts). These include Bible Study,

Leader's, Scholar's, Silver, Gold, Platinum, and Portfolio. In order to obtain Greek and Hebrew texts, one must purchase at least the Scholar's library which retails for \$629.95.

I also recommend BibleWorks because of its speed. BibleWorks and Accordance are both much faster than Logos. Logos points out that their search is akin to having a personal research assistant open all of your books to the right page, but there is no getting past the fact that it is much slower than the other programs. The most recent version was supposed to have been faster, but in my experience, it has been slower. The speed of BibleWorks is evident not only in search time per se but also in the number of keystrokes or clicks necessary to perform a search and the immediate display of lexical information by simply hovering over a word.

Although I recommend BibleWorks first, BibleWorks still has room for improvement. Both Accordance and Logos are more appealing to the eye. Accordance is sleek and simple, although this simplicity makes it more cumbersome to navigate through search results and view the verse in context at the same time. Logos is also cleaner and provides more features related to visualizing the text. BibleWorks, by comparison, has the feel of an earlier Windows program. The buttons are the least appealing visual element and in my opinion are not terribly intuitive. This criticism is lessened by the fact that descriptions appear by simply hovering over the buttons, and the buttons can be hidden if you prefer.

One common complaint about morphological searches from the command line is the necessity of using a different version than the regular display version. For example, if one is reading the Greek text in the BibleWorks New Testament (BNT), one cannot search this version for specific inflected forms (such as the dative masculine singular of  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ ) but must search the morphologically tagged brother text, the BibleWorks New Testament Morphology (BNM) version. While overcoming this structure would likely require an enormous investment of time and resources, it would certainly represent an improvement. Two other potential search related improvements include the ability to search for second aorist forms as in Accordance and a syntactically tagged text as in Logos.

Changing the font size for some features is not difficult through the options window, but it could be even easier by adding right-click functionality or a button. More importantly, it is not possible to change the font size for some resources that open in their own window. BibleWorks is currently investigating a solution to this issue.

In sum, BibleWorks offers the most bang for the buck. Considering the focus, speed, resources, simplicity of content packaging, and cost, BibleWorks remains my first choice among Bible software programs.

David Hutchison  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament.* By Richard M. Davidson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007. 844 pages. \$29.95 paper.**

In this age of flaming language about sex, sexuality, gender studies, and its implications, Richard M. Davidson, J.N. Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Andrews University, has written an ardent, authoritative survey of sexuality discovered in Old Testament Scriptures. Without losing the passion of presenting the foundational attributes of sexuality given as a “divine design” by our Creator in Genesis 1–3, Davidson tackles the difficult issues, a litany even Dante would have included in the *Inferno*, such as cultic sexuality, pagan practices, feminine imagery, homosexuality, marital foundations, polygamy, feminine leadership and submission, the priesthood, abuse of spouses, prostitution, premarital sex, adultery, divorce, intimacy, incest, illegitimate childbirth, reproduction birth control, abortion, rape, and others. Most Christians would shun these issues, but Richardson unveils their association with the biblical passages in which they arise and therefore “supports the view that biblical materials do not reflect a negative view of sexuality itself” (8). Richardson explains well the view of seeing the whole body in relationship to sexual organs, a Hebrew mindset. He boldly asserts the teleological plan for sexuality from the Creator, traces the degeneration of sexuality after the Fall, and fortunately ends up on a positive note, verifying the beauty of sexuality as a holy union, using the metaphor, “The Flame of Yahweh” from the Song of Songs (Song 8:6), as the wholesome, holy beauty of sexuality.

The structure of the book consists of three parts. The first part analyzes the divine design of the Creator in creating Adam and Eve, or the “Edenic design.” The second section examines the development of sexuality “outside the garden.” The third major division constitutes a “return to Eden,” concentrating on the Song of Songs, the beauty and holiness and virtue of sexual love. An afterword incorporates how the study of Old Testament sexuality has implications for the New Testament. Throughout the book, each area has separate issues or topics in sexuality as well as references to the canonical development of the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings. Richardson’s last chapter reaches beyond the scope of the Old Testament by suggesting some implications for a New Testament theology of sexuality; certainly, a follow-up sequel to his study will follow and will be anticipated by readers interested in these issues. Finally, the bibliography offers an extensive selection of sources in the study as well as an index of ancient biblical references and sources.

*Flame of Yahweh* fulfills a great need in the history of Old Testament scholarship. Richardson attributes the lack of scholarship in sexuality in the last century and the renewed interest in the twenty-first century to the areas of the modern feminist movement, the new literary criticism, and the sexual research of social scientists. The existential liberation movements have been exaggerated and transformed into existentialism exaggerated: the postmodern turn. With this background, Richardson attempts a counterargument based upon biblical grounds—his project is a “*wholistic theology of sexuality in the Old Testament*” (1). Instead of focusing on the prevalent specializations in the literature, such as the role of women and the feminine dimension of divinity, Richardson desires a

comprehensive theology with depth and breadth, beyond three major works he mentions: Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Samuel Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings: A Biblical Theology of Manhood and Womanhood* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); and David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Unfortunately, he does not include, except in the bibliography, some excellent evangelical recent influences presenting a biblical insight into sexuality issues from a biblical view: Daniel Akin, *God on Sex: The Creator's Ideas about Love, Intimacy, and Marriage* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003) and Wayne Grudem and John Piper, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991).

Richardson does a magnificent job of surveying the Old Testament passages relevant to the sexuality issues; however, I would prefer that he uses exegesis on each passage rather than assuming “where necessary” in order to give ethos or credence to his scholarship. Many times he uses hermeneutic interpretative devices of language analysis in order to bias his viewpoint on the issue, criticizing some traditional values of Orthodox Christianity. In addition, more explanation needs to be developed in what he calls an “analysis of the canonical form of the Old Testament.” What definition of “canonical form” is he using in this context? He certainly does not mean the classical definition of the “canon,” since he “utilizes insights from such widely accepted synchronic methodologies as the new literary criticism and the new biblical theology which focus on the final form of the Old Testament text” (2–3). On the other hand, Richardson uses his own interpretations of Hebrew words in order to present his views on postmodern problems raised by feminism and the new literary criticism itself. It turns out that Richardson is trying to be all things to all people by incorporating both the conservative–evangelical and liberal–higher criticism approaches to biblical criticism, an admirable approach for reaching out to the postmodern feminist critique of the Holy Bible, but one that avoids a fundamental stand for classical biblical scholarship:

By focusing on the final form of the Old Testament text, I believe it is possible that the interests of both the liberal-critical and evangelical OT scholarship may merge in seeking to understand what constitutes the canonical theological message of the OT regarding human sexuality. Although I have profited enormously from feminist scholarship, this study does not employ the feminist hermeneutic of suspicion and resistance, but rather the hermeneutic of consent. In other words, I read not *against* but *with* the grain of the text in its final form (3).

Applying Paul Ricouer’s “hermeneutic of suspicion,” I suspect that even Richardson is biased in his presuppositions, using Hans Georg-Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons,” in order to fuse the evangelical mind with the liberal critical scholars, an attempt, although noteworthy, has failed even in professional arenas like the Evangelical Theological Society. This Rogerian “win-win” approach

cannot displace Toulmin's logical analysis, or Aristotle's deductive Rhetoric, nor alleviates D.A. Carson's "exegetical fallacies" inductive scrutiny, approaches to understanding the text. Richardson insists his theology is "allowed to emerge from exegetical analysis of relevant passages; thus it is an "exegetical theology" (6). The key word here is "relevant." Richardson's premise is that "Genesis 1–3 has been situated as an introduction to the canon, and the whole rest of the canon regularly harks back to and builds upon this Edenic pattern" (3). His teleological approach is admirable as a foundational theme, but each biblical passage should undergo exegesis in order to prove his argument in context of the specific issue in sexuality. At least, Richardson's voice can be heard in the academic marketplace of ideas: "I do not claim to have the final or exclusive word on sexual theology in the Old Testament. Hence, this work constitutes *a* (not *the*) theology of sexuality in the Old Testament" (5). As a scholarly study, Richardson's *Flame of Yahweh* ignited a desire for understanding more about the dynamics of sexuality as a gift from God, but it is still only *a* study, not *the* study on sexuality, and *the* best source is still *the* study of *The Word of God*.

Harvey E. Solganick  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America's Largest Protestant Denomination.* Edited by Douglas K. Blount and Joseph D. Wooddell. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007. 233 pages. Softcover, \$24.95.**

Douglas Blount, professor in theological studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, and Joseph Wooddell, professor of philosophy at Criswell College, combined forces in their book, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, to defend the revisions made to the 2000 edition of the Baptist Faith and Message and explicate its eighteen articles of faith which Southern Baptists so vehemently uphold. Employing the expertise of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BF&M 2000) committee members, as well as other contemporary influential Southern Baptists, Blount and Wooddell walk through the eighteen articles elucidating both the meaning of the article and the cause for revision to the article from that of the 1963 edition. This review will both summarize the contents contained within Blount and Wooddell's collection and offer a critique as to its clarity in explaining the need for revisions.

Blount and Wooddell's book appropriately follows the structure of the BF&M 2000. After reading a brief word by Tom Nettles on the history of Baptists as a confessional people, Blount and Wooddell turn to discuss the eighteen articles. Following the order of the 2000 edition, Wooddell commences the discussion of the BF&M 2000 with Article I, The Scriptures. Wooddell is an ardent defender of the inspiration of Scripture. He draws out the implications of the change made in the 2000 edition to remove "record of God's revelation" and replace it with "[Scripture] is God's revelation" (6). Next, Blount himself discusses Article II, God. Blount demonstrates that a simple change in the 2000 rendition that Christ is "fully God, fully man" more appropriately identifies the incarnate Christ as



opposed to the 1963 version, which states that Christ partakes “of the nature of God and of man” (14). This revision thus affirms the Baptist belief that “the Christ of Chalcedon is the Christ of Scripture” (6). Article III, Man, is overseen by Robert Stewart. Stewart explains that the minimal rewording of the 2000 edition intends “to make explicit what many believe was implicit” in the 1963 edition such as distinguishing that God’s global mission extends to all nationalities of the human race and are not limited by geographic locations.

Albert Mohler in Article IV, Salvation, eloquently explains that salvation is an act purely of God’s working and that once a person tastes of that salvation, his eternal salvation is forever secured. Daniel Akin follows suit in Article V, God’s Purpose of Grace, by punctuating what Mohler stated regarding a believer’s eternal security. Next, Malcolm Yarnell discusses The Church in Article VI. Yarnell clearly outlines appropriate church polity, discipline, structure, and ministry according to the biblical mandate. He spends a concentrated section on differentiating the universal church from the local church. Next, John Hammett elucidates the proper understanding, administration, and qualifications for both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in Article VII. As the two ordinances Christ commanded his bride to perform, Hammett reflects upon the importance of baptism by immersion and partaking of the Lord’s Supper within the context of the local congregation. Briefly, Hammett continues in Article VIII, The Lord’s Day, by exploring the history of how Christians came to worship on Sunday.

Article IX, The Kingdom, attracts little controversy, but Russell Moore nevertheless argues for the sovereign rule and reign of Christ over all creation. Though a work in progress, the kingdom of God will be fulfilled at the parousia of Christ. Continuing with the discussion of eschatology Paige Patterson, in Last Things, deduces twelve confessions Article X affirms about the eschaton and then systematizes an eschatology based upon the Scriptures. Next, Keith Eitel concisely offers a summation of the import of personal evangelism in Article XI, Evangelism and Missions. Steve Lemke in Article XII, Education, focuses on Baptists’ continued conviction to serve God by being good stewards of their minds by properly educating themselves. Similarly, Barry Creamer in Article XIII, Stewardship, reconciles the Old Testament doctrine of tithing with the New Testament concept of offering. Next, Article XIV, Cooperation, though not attracting much controversy, is nevertheless explicated by Chad Brand by demonstrating from Scripture the principle of local church cooperation. Later, Ben Mitchell fabulously explains how Christians are to engage the culture around them for Christ yet not confuse this “salt and light” with a social gospel in Article XV, The Christian and Social Order.

Continuing, David Cook discusses the Baptist perspective of just war theory in light of ever present warmongering nations in Article XVI, Peace and War. Jerry Johnson defines the roles of church and state in Article XVII, Religious Liberty. In this section, Johnson explains that the state has obligations to the church and vice versa. Finally, Dorothy Patterson in Article XVIII, Family, defines the roles of husbands in relation to their wives and children according to the mandates of Scripture. Here she stresses that gender and sexuality are a gift from God and must be embraced with humble submission.

Overall, the contributors of Blount and Wooddell's book adequately explained each article of the BF&M and offered appropriate commentary on the need for the 2000 revisions. Of course not all articles of the 2000 edition incurred revision and therefore serve primarily as historical background information from earlier versions. Those with substantive changes were carefully crafted. The contributors delicately handled each revision in a well structured defense of the need for changes. However, special attention is directed to the articles by Mohler, Yarnell, Paige Patterson, and Dorothy Patterson.

First, Mohler, as a Reformed Baptist, is quick to draw careful attention to the fact that the 1925 BF&M adopted, as the basis of its article concerning salvation, the verbiage from the New Hampshire Confession. Expressly stated, the New Hampshire Confession, replicated in the 1925 BF&M as well as subsequent revisions to the BF&M, maintains Calvinistic underpinnings in modified tones. Though not necessarily implying a reformed *ordo salutis*, Mohler highlights that the moderate Calvinism of the 1925 BF&M was strengthened in the 1963 revision by placing the discussion of regeneration prior to repentance and faith. This change "effectively shifted the confession in a more explicitly Reformed direction" (41). Later, Mohler exceptionally explains the exclusivity of salvation through Christ alone. This is perhaps the central revision to this section and distinguishes Baptists from many other denominational assemblies.

Second, Yarnell's explication of the church is thorough and practical for today's pew sitter and pastor. Yarnell offers some helpful insights while discussing controversial matters. Dealing with two controversial issues, Yarnell clearly takes a stance of a "one elder-led" congregation based upon an examination of the Greek. However, Yarnell understands the role of the single elder as one cog in the greater wheel of church polity for the "church is ruled by Jesus Christ, governed by the congregation, led by pastors, and served by deacons" (60). Second, he builds a case for the mere potentiality of the universal church and not its present actuality. Scriptural passages which draw analogical conclusions for familial relationships based upon the reality of the universal church (e.g., Eph 5:23) must be reckoned with in light of Yarnell's thesis.

Third, falling in line with mainstream denominational belief Paige Patterson draws special attention to previous Baptist heroes and interdenominational preachers who were both pre-millennial and pre-tribulational. After detailing the particulars of this belief, Patterson expounds upon twelve confessional truths which Article X affirms. However, Patterson seems to contradict himself in his third affirmed truth by directly claiming that the world was not created to be eternal (101), but later in his ninth affirmed truth, he indirectly claims that it was sin which caused the world and mankind to lose their eternity (103). In his conclusion, Patterson rightly states that the most remarkable facet of the BF&M 2000 is the consensus among Baptists to affirm God's judgment in Article X despite the influence from this postmodern generation to skirt the issue altogether.

Finally, Dorothy Patterson's section on wives and motherhood is particularly relevant in a growing society of feminism which seeks to destroy the nucleus of the family. Patterson knocks the breath out of the feminist argument that submission equals subversion by demonstrating etymologically that submission is a

choice, not coercion. She accurately captures the conduct of a man's responsibility for a woman by the phrase servant leadership. Only one statement requires more explanation. Patterson comments that a "deviation from God's plan for marriage mars the image of God" but perhaps the space constraints of the chapter prevent her from addressing, as she has deftly in many other venues, the issue of how this happens in conjunction with her definition of the image of God (186). Since the linchpin of the equal but distinct relationship between a husband and wife rests on the image of God, this reviewer would love to have seen Patterson address it here even though that might not have been possible in a single chapter.

As a seminary student and, Lord-willing, a future pastor, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America's Largest Protestant Denomination* exposed the need for preachers to stand firm against the slippery slope of lax theology so prevalent in America's Baptist pulpits today. By disclosing the verbiage concerns within the articles of the BF&M 2000 and the need to clarify the conservative position within the convention, this book serves as a plumbline for both theology and polity within the local church. I strongly urge pastor and layperson alike actively to mine the biblical nuggets from this volume, not passively peruse through its leaves. This volume will benefit the pastor by keeping the local church functioning according to the New Testament example, and the layperson will better grasp the distinguishing marks that make him a Southern Baptist.

Brent A. Thomason  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Essays on Religion, Science, and Society.* By Herman Bavinck. Translated by Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. 304 pages. Hardcover, \$39.99.**

Directly on the heels of the four English volumes of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008) comes this collection of essays by an oft-neglected Dutch Reformed giant. The writings of Bavinck deserve both translation and wide dissemination, and the Dutch Reformed Translation Society is providing a great service to the theological world in this regard. Bavinck is a careful and engaged scholar whose work in the realm of religion, science, and society is still fruitful for Christian reflection, in spite of the fact that his contributions were crafted nearly a century ago. The editors have chosen a 1921 collection of short essays by Bavinck for full translation from the Dutch and have added an introduction, a biographical sketch, and two appendices (a preface by Herman's brother, and the remainder of an abridged chapter). After the biographical sketch, a selection of the various essays according to the categories of religion, science, and society are surveyed below.

The "biographical sketch" is actually a panegyric delivered by an American colleague, Henry Elias Dosker of Princeton, soon after the death of Bavinck. From a Baptist and Free Church perspective, it is instructive that the separatist worldview of the ecclesiastical tradition from which Bavinck descended and against which he rebelled is described as "practically that of the old Dutch Anabaptists" (17).

(Bavinck himself rejected the Anabaptists as akin to the liberals [38].) Although Dosker did not describe Bavinck's shift as rebellion, it is clear that Bavinck's interaction with culture is much more engaging, personally and intellectually, than that of his father. Dosker also offers a helpful comparison between Bavinck and his immediate and very famous predecessor in the Free University of Amsterdam, Abraham Kuyper: "[I]n breadth of accurate scholarship, Doctor Bavinck may have excelled Doctor Kuyper, while Doctor Kuyper excelled Doctor Bavinck in giving definite conclusions and daring utterances. The one gently tries to untie Gordian knots; the other cuts them through with mighty blows of his keen sword" (19).

Under the category of "religion" may be considered Bavinck's insightful essay, "The Essence of Christianity." The ecumenical project, which must identify the "essence" of Christianity, began "about the eighteenth Century" among the theologians of Reformed and Lutheran orthodoxy, who divided foundational from non-foundational doctrines (33). It was taken up later by Schleiermacher, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Strauss, the latter of whom greatly furthered the quest for the historical Jesus that denigrated the confessional standards of orthodoxy, divorcing the Christ created by the early churches from the Jesus who actually dwelt upon earth. The project was taken up with vigor by Adolf von Harnack, whose influence transformed the false dichotomy between the Christ of the councils and the historical Jesus into an unquestioned axiom. In response, Bavinck engages in a careful critique of the underlying historical critical method, which he finds of limited usefulness and subject to misuse. The search for the essence of Christianity is thus tainted by the tendency to redefine Jesus Christ on a basis other than revelation. In the current environment, perhaps the most relevant statements in Bavinck's essay on the essence of Christianity are two: first, "Christianity rises and falls with Christ" (46). Here is a healthy Christocentrism that Bavinck would have wisely followed in his earlier prolegomena. Second, Bavinck casts the ecumenical project of theological triage into doubt by asserting that the goal of Christian theology is not reduction but fulfillment: "Dogmatics that takes its point of departure in Christology cannot, as we explained, stop there but must stride from here to the unfolding of the rich content that God has granted to the congregation in his Word" (47). If Southern Baptists heed the Dutch master here, they might save themselves from the dissolution of their biblical identity.

Under the category of "science" may be considered the essay entitled "Evolution." Bavinck, as was typical for him, begins with a historical and linguistic analysis of the idea under consideration. The concept of evolution or development originated with the Greek philosophers and found detailed expression in Aristotle's belief that "being" issues forth in "becoming" (106). Christianity completed the classical definition of evolution by positing the origin of all things in creation and the goal for humanity of eternal life. In the nineteenth century, however, there was a shift in the concept of development. The modern definition has a threefold peculiarity: it focuses upon a theory of descent, is bound by mechanism, and has no room for the essence or the end of things. Having defined the historical debate, Bavinck proceeds to a critique of the modern concept of evolution, noting its lack of mystery or mechanistic outlook. Although Bavinck is not averse to the exploration of biological evolution, he is clear that the modern idea is merely "a

hypothesis" (114). He explores a way forward for scientists and theologians by arguing that if mechanical philosophy is rejected, there remains "no antithesis between creation and development" (117). He concludes by noting that any proper idea of development must reject mechanism and embrace "an organic, teleological concept" (118). While helpful on an etiological basis, Bavinck leaves one wondering whether modern biological evolution is really compatible with divine providence apart from natural science abandoning its modern philosophical foundation.

Finally, under the category of "society" may be considered the essay entitled "Ethics and Politics." Bavinck, a member of the Dutch parliament, begins by noting that without religion, morality falters. On the basis of Romans 2:14–15, he argues for the unity of morality and law. As a result, in all three ways (*scientia, ars, praxis*), "one may regard politics as a high, noble, nearly sacred matter" (264). Again, providing an historical review, he notes the shift from Hegel's tendency to deify the state to Bagehot's definition of the state as amoral might. The political philosophy known as "political realism" (*Realpolitik*) comes in for criticism as being "closely related to the materialistic spirit and the theory of mechanical evolution" (267). Bavinck appeals to philosophy and Scripture to demonstrate that morality and justice, though distinct, are nevertheless related. The key here is a recovery of "natural law," as rooted in Cicero. Bavinck argues that, "Just order is grounded in moral order and possesses its strong, unshakeable permanence" (271). He thence challenges Nietzsche's separation of individual morality from any morality for the state, and instead distinguishes moral power from coercive power. Bavinck's attractive definition of justice (275) even allows him to posit (correctly) that war may have a moral basis in love. Indeed, he argues that international justice rests on "two pillars: the Christian principle of the oneness of the human race in origin and essence, and the principle of the catholicity of God's kingdom" (277). After filling an essay with such compelling ideas, Bavinck ends curiously with a naïve accolade for Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

These three essays are merely representative samples of the wealth of applied theology contained in this book, which was Bavinck's final contribution to theological discourse. Bavinck introduces or recovers major ideas that may be helpful in current discussions about psychology, pedagogy, classical education, and aesthetics. For instance, his survey of psychology brings him to the crucial claim that "the soul cannot be reduced to nature" (169). As a result, psychology may never stand on its own as a science, but must look to "logic and ethics, religion and aesthetics" as independent and necessary instructors (173). In this translation are many such thoughts worthy of deep consideration by modern practitioners of various disciplines. Indeed, the theological principles enunciated therein may help solve some of the problems that currently face Southern Baptists and American evangelicals. This is true, not only with regard to evangelical ecumenism, biological evolution, and political theology, but also with regard to biblical counseling, and many other matters in the realm of common grace. The high praise offered in this review may appear disconcerting, in light of the reviewer's trenchant criticism of Bavinck's prolegomena in *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007). However, the previous criticism regarding Bavinck's foundational mixture of philosophy and revelation, as well as his unbiblical

definition of the church, still stands, even as praise is now delivered for aspects of the Dutch theologian's practical theology.

Malcolm B. Yarnell III  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***From Student to Scholar: A Candid Guide to Becoming a Professor.* By Steven M. Cahn. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. 84 + xviii pages. Softcover, \$14.95.**

There are some books one receives and after completing them, thinks, "How helpful this would have been for me to have five years ago," or, "I can see where this book would be helpful in 10 years, but I cannot relate now." And then, there are some books that come along and evoke the response, "This is exactly what I need to read at this point in my life." For all those engaged in the world of higher education, from graduate student to senior professor, Steven M. Cahn's *From Student to Scholar*, will certainly prompt all three responses, and many more.

Having taught at several universities for over four decades, Cahn presently serves as the professor of philosophy at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He explains that the idea for *From Student to Scholar* arose out of a colloquium he taught to doctoral students providing "strategies for prospering in academic life" (xvii). Cahn's work candidly seeks through ten chapters to answer questions such as How do you deal with the challenges of graduate school? Writing a dissertation? How do you handle job interviews? How do you improve your teaching? How do you turn research into publications? (xvii).

In chapters one and two, Cahn focuses on the uncertain and often lengthy world of graduate studies. Speaking bluntly, he characterizes the marked differences between graduate and undergraduate education and the need for graduate students to think early in terms of narrowing their specialization and securing a suitable, and helpful, professor-mentor. When considering the dissertation, Cahn's sage advice toward selecting an appropriately narrow topic and the need to develop a healthy ethic of perseverance makes *From Student to Scholar* worth putting into the hands of anyone thinking of pursuing doctoral studies.

Chapters three through six chronicle the valley of experiences one must traverse while pursuing the prospect of a career teaching position. Tellingly, Cahn explains, "When should one begin to prepare for a job search? As soon as you take a course with a professor who is impressed with your work" (18). Cahn advises that it is better to secure a letter of reference while your abilities are fresh on the mind of the professor even if you will not use it for a few years. In chapter three, Cahn articulates well the purpose and need for graduate students to present papers at regional and national society meetings. Chapter four walks the reader through a "first interview" and the need for the mastery of the simple traits of courtesy, conscientiousness, honesty, and, again, perseverance.

Chapter five might be the most helpful for those considering professorial careers. Here Cahn explains, in general terms, how a university functions – from trustees to department chair—and describes in reverse how it is, likely, that a par-

ticular school determined its need for a new teaching position. Rarely are graduate students given such an explanation of the nature and complexities of the dean's task or the pressures and responsibilities of the administrative functions of schools of higher education. Cahn's short survey of these often misunderstood or underappreciated necessities provides both students and professors a great service. Chapter six breaks down the "second interview" and recommends, for the interviewee, the appropriate time to ask questions related to compensation and other diplomatically sensitive items that should have been held for inquiry until this point.

Chapters seven through ten discuss the ways to navigate the teaching profession once a job has been secured. From decoding and preparing for tenure review to making classroom lectures clear to explaining the importance of faculty serving on various committees, Cahn makes the early years of faculty service seem full and demanding, but equally achievable and enjoyable.

When discussing the nature of faculty service, this reviewer would like to have Cahn's perspective and advice for the role of faculty in student recruitment and the advancement of the institution. How should faculty members operate so as to keep future incoming students on their minds? What are appropriate and helpful ways faculty can support the institution financially? For schools with athletic programs, how should faculty support these programs and how often?

Chapter ten surveys the crucial role that research and writing plays in the academy and in the professor's career. Cahn explains that this is the most important part of a faculty member's work and it is often the most neglected. Why is writing and publishing so important? Cahn replies,

Because everyone in the academic world recognizes that the most arduous of all professorial tasks is to research and publish the results in scholarly articles or books. But simply attempting to engage in such activity is insufficient. Even reading papers at scholarly conferences—certainly commendable—is a step below putting your ideas into print. Your original thinking needs to be available for evaluation by interested specialists, and the easiest way for them to have access to your work is for you to publish it (66).

Cahn proceeds to provide helpful and practical tips for successfully and regularly producing original research. His review of the difference between peer reviewed and non-refereed journals, the weight or merit of book reviews and works for popular media, the task of writing monographs, and how to go about submitting these for publication, to whom and at what time is essential reading for every doctoral student or new faculty member.

In addition to providing advice for how a busy professor can maintain and meet regular writing goals, a further explanation of how the professor can maintain the discipline of scholarly reading would be helpful. How does one "stay current"? How does a faculty member regularly read monographs and journal articles, not only in their field, but in related fields of interest? How do they follow scholarly

work through the New Media? How do faculty members start relationships with publishers? How do they receive review or examination copies of books?

Also, for the twenty-first century faculty member, perhaps an expanded treatment on appropriate faculty-student interaction would be helpful. Navigating the protocols of the ever-reincarnating world of social networking could provide needed clarity to an obscure and awkward milieu. (Pundits give advice on everything from “Facebook is only for students and faculty should stay away” to “if you are not a Twittering faculty member you are out of touch and are failing to reach your students where they live.”). And, this of course, speaks to the larger issue of faculty and technology. What level of proficiency is needed or should be required?

For those pursuing the task of academics through the ministry of theological education, Cahn’s work is indeed helpful, but will, of course, not address key items such as: the professor’s freedoms and responsibilities at an institution guided by a confessional document, the professor’s work as ministry—integrating teaching, research, and writing with service to one’s local church and denomination, and the pastoral or counseling role one provides to students preparing for ministry. The theological educator not only must publish and write to share his original research and further the study of his field, but also has the privilege of engaging the writing task for the growth and edification of members of local churches, and in the communicating of the truth of the Gospel to those who have never heard and responded (perhaps even in the academy) to the good news found in Jesus Christ. While his peers in the secular universities may not understand this task, and even question his scholarship for participating in such, the responsibility of serving the churches demands it.

In addition, unique to the realm of theological education is the fact that many who obtain doctoral degrees do not intend to serve as faculty members. While their preparation remains the same as those who will pursue teaching careers, many pursue these studies for a wide variety of ministry assignments and, therefore, should not be discouraged from this task. Further work is needed by someone in the theological arena to address these topics and other related items, such as scheduling around chapel hours, spiritual formation classes, and mission trips or ministry emphases, to add to Steven Cahn’s helpful book, *From Student to Scholar*.

Jason G. Duesing  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 24: The “Blank Bible.”* Edited by Stepen J. Stein. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. 1,435 + xiii pages. Hardback, 2 volumes, \$200.00. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 25: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758.* Edited by Wilson H. Kimnach. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. 799 + xiv pages. Hardback, \$95.00.**

Half a century in the making, the final volumes of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* are seeing the light of day with the publication of these volumes, which



prove to be a valuable, though expensive, resource for pastors who desire to examine Edwards in his study wrestling with the Bible, and crafting excellent sermons. One more volume is left for publication, an event that will bring to a close a canon comprising the first comprehensive *critical* edition of Jonathan Edwards' works, a labor of love that Yale University Press has been nursing since the mid-1950s. The entire set will stand as the definitive edition of Edwards' works for the rest of the twenty-first century.

These works canvass two related aspects of Edwards' role as a gospel minister—his detailed study of Scripture (volume 24) and the eventual result of those studies, his sermons (volume 25). The former showcases Edwards' unique notebook, what he called the "Blank Bible," which contains thousands of exegetical observations on a multitude of texts throughout the Bible. One might say that this notebook represents the closest thing we have to a "Jonathan Edwards *Study Bible*." The latter work contains thirty-seven representative sermons from the last fifteen years of his life (1743–1758), a period that spans almost half of his public ministry. Both volumes are edited by senior statesmen in the guild of Jonathan Edwards scholarship. Stephen Stein, editor of the "Blank Bible," has for four decades called scholars to examine Edwards' exegetical method, long before the history of Biblical exegesis became a hot topic in scholarly circles. His numerous studies on the topic include two previous volumes in the Yale series (volume 5, *Apocalyptic Writings* [1977], and volume 15, *Notes on Scripture* [1998]), and volume 24 is graced with his 117-page introduction which represents the fruit of over thirty years of study on the topic. Volume 25, the sermons volume, is written by the dean of Edwards' sermon corpus, Wilson Kinnach, whose previous work on the subject also includes an earlier volume in the Yale series (volume 10, *Sermons and Discourses 1720–1723* [1992]). Volume 25 represents the sixth and last volume in the Yale series on Edwards' sermons. We will review each of these volumes separately.

Sometime in 1730 Edwards received a unique, "interleaved" Bible from his brother-in-law, Benjamin Pierpont, who had recently decided to abandon preparations for the ministry. The book contains two types of pages: small leaved pages of a King James Bible interleaved with large blank pages intended for note-taking on each page of the Scriptures. For the remaining three decades of his life, Edwards filled these blank pages with exegetical notes, theological observations, and hundreds of references pointing him to other commentators on particular passages. Stein notes that within several years of its use the Blank Bible "gradually took on the function of a general index of to [Edwards'] exegetical reflections" (19). In total, Edwards recorded over 5,500 separate entries in the "Blank Bible," and the Yale editors thankfully divided the text up into two manageable volumes (Old Testament and New Testament).

Those who are familiar with the timeless features of his rigorous, pietistic Calvinism found in his more popular writings may find in the "Blank Bible" a strange and foreign Edwards who reads the Bible very differently than many of us do today. For one thing, we find in Edwards very little awareness of a division between exegesis and theology. The careful and even cumbersome transitions that seminary students learn to make from exegetical observation to biblical theology

and ultimately to systematic theology are quite absent in the “Blank Bible.” This is not due to the fact that Edwards was a sloppy exegete; rather, it is merely an example of how an eighteenth century theologian interpreted the Bible. Before the rise of modern critical methodology, evangelical interpreters like Edwards often moved with great ease from exegetical observation to systematic formulation. Hence, Christ’s breathing upon the disciples in John 20.22 is evidence for the *filioque*. “[T]he Holy Ghost,” he writes, “proceeds from the Son as well as the Father, for the Holy Ghost is the breath of Christ” (964). Paul’s mentioning of the Spirit and the flesh lusting after one another (Gal 5:17) confirms Edwards’ position on the nature of grace: “grace in the heart is no other than the Spirit of God dwelling in the heart, and becoming a principle of life and action there” (1085). Edwards’ example challenges Bible students today not only to master the nuts and bolts of exegesis, but also to become proficient in the art of theological interpretation.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of Edwards’ reading of holy writ to twenty-first century sensibilities is his heavy reliance upon typological readings of Old Testament passages. Typology is a lost art among evangelical interpreters of Scripture today. It basically was a way of discerning the multiple ways Christ is prefigured in the Old Testament, thereby reading the Old Testament as a thoroughly Christian book. For Edwards much of the material of the Old Testament contains typological references to Christ. Thus, for Edwards the burning bush (Exod 3:2–3) represents Christ’s human nature—as it was not consumed by the divine fire so too was Christ, the “Branch” from the stump of Jesse (Isa 11), not consumed by the wrath of God in his redemptive work for humankind. “The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, [by] his appearing in this bush, is a type of his being manifest in the flesh” (209). Similarly, Christ is represented in Jacob’s dream (Gen 28) in numerous ways: “Jacob’s sleep here seems to represent the death of Christ” he writes.

As Jacob in his sleep has the gate of heaven opened, and a ladder set on the earth on the land of Canaan, whose top reached to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it, and God appearing in heaven revealing himself as the covenant of God of him and his seed, and promising that his seed ‘shall be as the dust of the earth’ [vs. 14], and that in him and in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, so Christ by his death procured that the gate of heaven should be opened towards the earth, and that there should be an union between heaven and earth, and that there should be a way to heaven from the earth (172–73).

The church also is featured prominently in Edwards’ typological readings. For instance, Sampson’s wife who repeatedly attempts to extract from her husband the meaning of his enigmatic riddle in Judges 14, “represents the church, the spouse of Christ.” As Sampson revealed to her the meaning of the riddle, so “Christ revealed to his church in the gospel day the mystery of the gospel which had been kept hid from ages and generation, after his church had long sorrowed and wept under her legal dispensation” (337). Typological readings like these populate hundreds

of Edwards' notes on the Old Testament and stand of a fine example of how early eighteenth century Protestants interpreted Scripture.

Edwards' "Blank Bible" is not for everyone. The work is designed for specialists, does not contain a central narrative or argument, and is very pricey. Yet for those who want to "read Scripture with Edwards," catch a glimpse of the private world of Edwards' intense pursuit of knowing the Bible, and be fascinated by the wonders and peculiarities of his hermeneutics, this work would be a valuable investment.

Edwards' preaching after the great years of the Great Awakening underwent a mild transformation, so says Wilson Kinnach, editor of volume 25. Other literary pursuits (*The Religious Affections*, *Life and Diary of Brainerd*, and his works from the Stockbridge years), as well as difficulties with his Northampton congregation, and the fact that he recycled many of his Northampton sermons in Stockbridge all contributed to the fact that we do not have as many complete sermon manuscripts from the last fifteen years of Edwards' life. Simply stated, other activities preoccupied Edwards' energies; the sermon, Kinnach observes, "was [at this time] becoming marginalized within the cycle of Edwards' literary activities" (38). Yet this does not mean that the sermons from this period are poorly written. On the contrary, when Edwards did devote the time to sermon preparation the result was the same excellence he sought in his earlier endeavors. The sermons in this volume showcase Edwards as a seasoned homiletician, at the heights of his sermonic powers. Many of his well-known sermons from this period are contained in its pages: his funeral sermon for David Brainerd (*True Saints, When Absent from the Body, are Present with the Lord*), his *Farewell Sermon* preached to his Northampton congregation after they voted to dismiss him, and *True Grace, Distinguished from the Experience of Devils*, a 1752 sermon which Edwards preached to the Presbyterian Synod of New York that majestically summarizes his theology of revival and religious experience. In addition to these sermons, pastors and Edwards fans will find throughout the volume a treasure of material that is spiritually edifying, theologically profound, and rich with pastoral insight. In what remains I will examine two themes that link many of the sermons together in this volume: Edwards' ideal of the gospel minister and his dedication to cross-cultural missions.

The volume contains numerous "ordination sermons" that Edwards preached on the event of a young minister's installation at a congregation. Edwards used these solemn occasions to impress upon both the minister and congregation the responsibilities and privileges that are bound up in the minister's vocation. The ideal gospel minister, Edwards writes in *The Church's Marriage to Her Sons and to Her God*, is called both to "marry" the congregation he is called to, and to officiate a marriage between Christ and the people of God in that congregation: "he espouses them, that in their being espoused to him, they may be espoused to Christ" (184). In *The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister* (1744), Edwards presents the gospel minister as one who is both a burning and shining light, one who not only "is set to be a light to men's souls, by teaching, or doctrine" (i.e. a "shining light," 92), but one who is filled with "the holy ardor of a spirit of true piety" (a "burning light," 91). Like his Lord, the gospel minister is willingly to embrace the

difficult challenges of the ministry for he is called to emulate his Master, a point he illustrates in *Christ's Sacrifice an Inducement to His Ministers*. “[Be] ready to be conformed to Christ, and as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify [it] by the word, so the minister should be ready to give what they have, and give themselves, to spend and be spent” (670). Sober warnings frequent some of these passages regarding the minister who has failed in his calling and Christian profession. “[T]is likely,” he writes in a fashion that is true to his hell-fire and brimstone image, “that those in hell that will be nearest to the fallen angels, in their state of misery, will be those that Christ once set to be angels of the churches, but through their unfaithfulness, failed of their proper excellency and end” (98). These images, collected from these sermons, paint a challenging and inspiring portrait of the ideal gospel minister, one that every pastor today should read and meditate on.

Many of the later sermons in the work represent his attempts to preach the gospel to local Indians associated with the Stockbridge mission, a responsibility that he embraced when he was called to the frontier pastorate of Stockbridge, Massachusetts in 1751. These sermons are a fascinating showcase of “America’s theologian,” who is known for his metaphysical subtlety and theological acumen, teaching the basics of Christianity to Native Americans who knew very little about the faith. We find in these sermons what Edwards considered to be the non-negotiables of Christianity, and the basics of his evangelistic method. *How* Edwards preached is significantly different in these sermons for he emphasized more of a story-telling approach than he did in his sermons to a European audience. But *what* he preached, the content, he did not water down. The same themes of a new heart, divine and supernatural light, and evangelical Calvinism populate these discourses. In *God is Infinitely Strong*, Edwards explores the facets of God’s great power and steers the sermon to their need of a new birth. God created all things, Edwards says, “making things so great, making ‘em out of nothing;” and he “can do all things for you, [and] can give you a new heart. No other can” (644–45). In *Christ is to the Heart Like a River to a Tree Planted by It*, Edwards woos his hearers to Christ in typical Edwardsean fashion: “As the waters of a river run easily and freely, so the love of Christ. [He] freely came into the world. [He] laid down his life and endured those sufferings. . . . Christ never [leaves] his saints that love him and trust in him: the love of Christ never [ceases]” (602–03). We can discern in these basic sermons his evangelistic method in its simplicity where he calls people to Christ, to get a new heart, and to turn away from all sin. His sermon *Death and Judgment* ends with the following impassioned appeal: “Now I, as a minister of Jesus Christ, invite you to come to Christ to be saved from hell. He is willing to accept: he says, ‘He that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.’ He will forgive all your sins and will bestow heaven and all its good things upon you, if you will but hearken unto him” (598–99). The core of Edwards’ message remained the same regardless of his audience.

As Edwards’ popularity continues to grow, so too do the distortions of who he really was and what he really taught. In the current resurgence of Calvinism in North American evangelicalism, I have noted a peculiar tendency on the part of some who basically read into Edwards the beliefs and values that characterize

today's Calvinists without taking into consideration the significant historical, theological, and contextual differences that exist between our time and his. Many, in short, make Edwards in their own image. These volumes, if read and studied, will go a long way in aiding to correct these misconceptions and will allow us better to understand, appreciate, and be challenged by the real Edwards of history.

Robert W. Caldwell III  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***By My Own Reckoning.* By Cecil Sherman. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2008. 280 pages. Hardcover, \$24.00.**

If Cecil Sherman were to offer his judgment that “grass is green,” this reviewer would probably want to reconsider his own perspectives about the color of grass, which is no surprise to anybody. Maybe grass, after all, is red. So, why have I always loved Cecil Sherman and why did I find his autobiography *By My Own Reckoning* one of the most delightful reads in many moons? The answer to the question presents itself in the very pages of the book. Cecil Sherman is an honest man who tells you up front what he thinks about everything without indulging in political spin games. Furthermore, in the last chapter of this book, without the slightest intention on his part, Sherman reveals the heart of a devoted husband and father to an extent rarely discernible among liberals, neo-orthodox, postmoderns or, may God forgive us, evangelicals.

There is much with which to take issue in the analyses that are provided in the book, especially when Sherman is talking about one of his favorite targets—“Fundamentalists.” He indulges in some of the same calumnies and misrepresentations that other books of this genre have made infamous. He cannot get away from the “busing” that the conservatives did at the Southern Baptist Convention, even though there has never been any proof or evidence of such “busing” other than perhaps a Southern Seminary bus of moderates before which I had my picture taken at one of the conventions. This caricature of “Fundamentalist” is not wholly fair since there are unkind and uncharitable moderates just as there are unkind and uncharitable fundamentalists.

But even when Sherman misrepresents “the enemy,” there are mitigating factors. First, several times in the autobiography he prefaces statements with some expression like, “Obviously, I am providing my own perspective.” In so doing, he admits that there might be error in his view or at least other possible interpretations. Second, there is never a time when you get the impression that bitterness is the chief operative emotion in his assessment. This common weakness has been found in most of the books coming from a similar point of view; but whereas there are occasional indications of bitterness, even these are handled with an honesty that softens the sting. Finally, Sherman’s reporting of events and his assessments of both friends and foes includes “the good, the bad, and the ugly.” Consequently, the book is both refreshing and, in the final chapter, profoundly moving.

Among the things to be noted is the foreword by W. Randall Lolley, who admits that Sherman told the six seminary presidents, “You fellows have sold the

store!" While Lolley does not say so, the hint is that he suspects Sherman was right. Sherman admits that he effectively resigned from the Southern Baptist Convention and desires no further concurrence with it (4). He records that the Bible "was the record of the way God moved upon his people in history" (21). In that classic neo-orthodox way of speaking, Sherman does not deny that significant portions of the Bible constitute the Word of God, but he does make clear that this record of the way God moved in the lives of His own people in history is characterized by inaccuracies and mistakes. Unfortunately, Sherman gives no sure method of ascertaining what is reliable and what is not.

Sometimes Sherman reports things that are not quite right. He describes an incident involving my now deceased mother (48–49). I was not there, so I cannot be sure of the accuracy of the account, though I am certain Sherman believes it happened this way. Part of it could not be true, however, since according to Sherman, my mother was defending the fact that both of her children were saved by the age of six, when in fact I was not saved until age nine. Even that must have come as an astonishment to my mother, who, by that time, was wondering if I belonged to the elect at all!

One of the strangest things about the book is that Sherman describes his baptism and his call to ministry but only hints at any story of conversion. This should not be taken to mean that there was no conversion experience; but for those of us who belong to the Baptist tradition of regenerate church membership, the testimony of genuine conversion to Christ is always an essential part of anyone's biography. Should Sherman decide to provide a second edition, an explanation of how he came to faith in Christ would be a helpful addition.

Other assets of the book include a forthright assessment of the Elliott Controversy with the admission that most of the professors in the six seminaries agreed with Elliott. In this, he joins with Dr. Elliott himself, who, in his memoirs, alleged exactly the same thing. The chapters on Sherman's pastorate in Asheville will be required reading for my students in pastoral ministries. Sherman's handling of the race issue at Asheville in a courageous, yet statesmanlike, fashion is a model for any; and no one with a sense of justice could help but admire how he functioned in that situation.

Sherman is candid about the fact that, in the days prior to the Conservative Resurgence, there was a focus in the convention on missiology rather than upon doctrine and that this is the way the convention functioned (133). Like most moderates, he seems oblivious to the fact that it is impossible to focus on "missions" without having some sort of underlying theology that states what the "mission" is and why it matters. Nevertheless, his assessment of how the convention was working in those days is accurate.

The internal story tells of competing views among the moderates, including the overconfident assertion of those "driving the train" that "we can handle these people," which is observable in Ken Chafin's famous statement that some of the agency heads "could not tell the arsonists from the firemen" (154).

Although I am certain that not all members of the Peace Committee would agree with Sherman's assessment in every part, certainly this perspective from the Peace Committee is of enormous value and is one of the few internal assessments

made public. The story of his disagreement with the six seminary presidents over the Glorieta Statement and his decision to resign is classic. Russell Dilday's rebuke, which led to Sherman's resignation, came about when Dilday said in effect that "He (Sherman) was a bigger problem to the moderate cause than they are" (pointing down the hall to Adrian Rogers and two other conservatives who were talking). This kind of candor about the internal disagreements of the moderates is refreshing and provides a unique insight into what was actually transpiring. The chapters on the development of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship lack the vitality of the rest of the book, but Sherman himself recognized that; yet the value of his assessment of the beginning of the CBF is a worthy contribution.

The final chapter, "Retirement Years," ought to be read by anyone who has the slightest aspirations to be a noble husband. This superb marriage between "Dot and Cecil" is a rewarding study on its own. They love each other profoundly, and clearly their faithfulness to one another is beyond question. That would be sufficient to commend the book. However, when Alzheimer's struck Dot and eventually had its nefarious way with her, my own love and appreciation for Cecil Sherman reached new heights. His assessment, clearly not intended to be self-aggrandizing, made me examine my own heart and pray that God would make me as good a husband as Cecil Sherman. I not only believe that every preacher ought to read the last chapter, but I believe every Christian husband ought to read it and be challenged by it.

*By My Own Reckoning* admits that the book is by Sherman's own reckoning. That alone would commend the book. Once again the honesty and integrity with which he tells his story, even where one may differ about the facts, increases the value of the book. Sherman has made an obvious attempt to put bitterness aside as much as possible; and, to most of his opponents, he has given the benefit of the doubt, disagreeing with them vociferously but not concluding that all were malicious in their motives. Sherman was a formidable foe for those of us who were deeply involved in the Conservative Renaissance. However, had all of our opposition had the character of Cecil Sherman, although the outcome would probably not have been different, the fallout and the injuries sustained on both sides of the aisle might have been significantly reduced. Liberals, moderates, neo-orthodox, postmoderns, conservatives, evangelicals, and fundamentalists all can say a hardy "thank you" to Cecil Sherman for opening a door to his heart and inviting us in. God bless you, my brother!

[Editor's Note: Rev. Dr. Cecil Sherman, B.D. and Th.D. from Southwestern Seminary, passed away on 17 April 2010. May he rest in peace.]

Paige Patterson  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Becoming Beside Ourselves: The Alphabet, Ghosts, and Distributed Human Being.* By Brian Rotman. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. 176 +. xxxiv pages. Softcover, \$21.95.**

In the age of Facebook, iTunes, World of Warcraft, avatars, and many other digital-social formats, the world is becoming a rapidly shrinking stage. Where does this leave the individual? How, in the digital age, can personhood be defined? In *Becoming Beside Ourselves*, Brian Rotman explores the entailments of *techné* upon human *psyche* in both the present-archaic alphabet age and the present-nouveaux digital age.

The current volume is the third part of a Rotman trilogy dealing with the “nature and functioning of certain signs and the writing practices associated with them” (xxxv). The first two books, *Signifying Nothing: The Semiotics of Zero* (1993) and *Ad Infinitum . . . The Ghost in Turing’s Machine: Taking God out of Mathematics and Putting the Body Back In* (2000), are briefly discussed in a foreword by Timothy Lenior and the preface by Rotman. Each discussion serves as a reader’s guide to the thought of the trilogy and the place of the current volume within it.

The crux of this book is Rotman’s distinction of “I” (the first person singular pronoun) throughout the ages. Rotman argues that the understanding of “I” has changed through the course of human history, and that understanding has always been a result of the medium in which it was used (xxxv). Rotman distinguishes four mediums: “a gestural self-pointing ‘I’; an ‘I’ spoken in language; an inscribed ‘I’ within alphabetic writing; and a digital ‘I,’ a self-enunciation within contemporary network media” (xxxvii). In other words, there is a distinction to be made concerning self-awareness brought about by the different media employed in human history: gesture, speech, writing, and digital. For Rotman, the purest form of human communication lies in the nexus between gesture and speech (23). It is the prosody the two create that becomes lost when one moves to writing (25). The loss of prosody, the gestures and use of the body, (i.e. body language, during speech), is the consequence of accepting alphabetic writing as the favored, dominant medium (27). Only a networked, digital medium which envelops a person into the haptic, visual, auditory, and temporal world of the communicator is able to allow humans to regain a sense of “I” which earlier humans enjoyed before the creation of the alphabet. In fact, according to Rotman, digital medium allows for the fullness of speech-gesture communication with the permanence of writing (43).

Interestingly, whether he realizes it or not, Rotman describes each subsequent change in media as a loss of something important and valuable in the previous one. That is, the evolution of media produces a worse result than it previously held. For instance, gesture, though it is limited in its ability to disclose information, nevertheless is free from linguistic constraints which the coded words of speech must subsequently wrestle with (19). Likewise, writing lacks the intonation and overall prosody of speech (25). For Rotman, only digital media enables one the freedom to express without constraint. It liberates the “I” to a parallel self, a “para-human” which is present in many realities, all attributable to the digital, virtual world (103). This progress is a twisted Darwinian process at best and is



troublesome for an argument which aims to advance “I” to an evolutionary ultimate (136–37).

By Rotman’s own admittance, the center portion of the book is somewhat disconnected with the rest of the book, and may be passed over by non-mathematical readers. Rotman’s self analysis is accurate, and we will omit critique of it here. Those interested with the mathematical consequences of Rotman’s argument will, nonetheless, find chapter three helpful.

The second portion of the book attempts to wrest the understanding of “I” from the medium of the alphabet, (i.e. writing), and place it under the full discretion of digital communication. In refuting the alphabet’s several millennia-long dominance, Rotman describes what he calls “ghosts” of each medium. For writing, the ghosts are the 1) Jewish mono-divinity, 2) the Greek notion of the mind, and 3) the mathematical explanation of infinity. Each of these ghosts, according to Rotman, are creations derived from Western society’s dependence upon an alphabet (113–14). Much space is devoted to the discussion of these ghosts.

Deep into the volume, the reader may be uncertain as to whether Rotman is making his claims of the para-human as a means to lament the current virtual age or to extol its virtues. In chapter four the reader no longer has doubts: “We can, I believe, embrace the para-human, to begin—haltingly, with confusion, pain, wonder, inevitable resistance, nostalgia, feelings of loss and dread, and moments of intense liberating pleasure, not to say joy and surprise—to become plural I’s able to be beside ourselves in ways we’re only just starting to recognize and feel the need to narrate,” (104–05).

Rotman’s basic premise of the digital “I” is misguided. What he takes to be “virtual” is better described as “artificial.” While taking writing to be a distortion of speech, he forgets the reason for its genesis, that is, to establish in a more permanent media what speech could not. Once an utterance is spoken, it is gone. Writing records human language as least as long as the media on which it is recorded is preserved. Digital media, on the other hand, is able to be “motion captured” (46), but its successful public acceptance has been due to its ease of manipulation. Digital media only conveys a sense of a certain “I” so long as trust has first been established between the communicator and its recipient. Once the trust is betrayed, virtual “I” becomes artificial “I.” Consider the new Facebook regulations released in 2009, online sexual predators, the internet technology market bubble, and real-time stock trading. In each case, trust has been betrayed, and the public has retracted considerably from digital “I.”

Also, Rotman recognizes that the virtual world is enabled by electronic technologies (111). However, no discussion is given to the dependence of virtual “I” upon electrical energy. Virtual “I” exists as a result of digital technology, but digital technology may be ended with the flip of a switch. Digital is wholly dependent upon energy, thus virtual “I” is dependent upon an uninterrupted energy supply. If this supply is disturbed, virtual “I” reveals its true artificial nature. Consider New Orleans in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina. The entire world was aware of the plight of the victims trapped in the city because of the digital media which conveyed it. However, those in the city, those most directly affected, had less understanding

of their situation than those who were half a world away. Their “para-human” self was eliminated.

Rotman’s true purpose for the book is revealed in its final pages, that is, an end to theism (136–37). While space limits a full defense of theism here (and as a Baptist pastor, the temptation is difficult to avoid), a few notes may be made. First, if Rotman is correct, and writing is responsible for creating monotheism, then the new digital age, which will usher out the alphabetic age (137), will see the final and welcome end of theism. So, is Rotman then suggesting that the only sword which will bring death to theism is illiteracy? This seems to be the case. Also, the atheistic, virtual world which Rotman imagines seems less attractive than the old-fashioned, theistic, alphabetic one he desires to end. Rotman heralds, through digital media, the invasion of another’s mind, invasion of another’s actions, and sex-at-a-distance, including “pseudo-masturbation, an indirect self-pleasuring enacted through another’s body” (46–47).

Rotman sees the distributed para-human as a foregone conclusion. Perhaps the current Great Recession of 2009 will cause him to reconsider.

Champ Cox  
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Gueydan, LA