

Book Reviews

The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy

Aristotle Papanikolaou

Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press

2012, 232 pp., paper, \$27.00

ISBN: 978-0-268-03896-0

Reviewed by Nathan Crawford

In his *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy*, Aristotle Papanikolaou argues for a more positive attitude on the part of Christian theology in relation to liberalism and the liberal project. Papanikolaou wants to counter the critiques of liberalism put forward by those in the theological camps of Postliberalism (namely Stanley Hauerwas) and Radical Orthodoxy (namely John Milbank), while also critiquing those Eastern Orthodox theologians that have been critical of Western liberalism. Instead, Papanikolaou mines his own Eastern Orthodox tradition to put forward an understanding of the political through a theology of divine-human communion.

The driving force behind *The Mystical as Political* is the doctrine of *theosis*. As Papanikolaou makes clear, this is a doctrine that is central to the Eastern Orthodox understanding of Christianity. However, he reorients the idea from becoming divine to the communion that takes place between the divine and human. With this in mind, he understands politics as the place that ensures the possibility of making a choice for divine-human communion to take place, as well as the choice to reject it. Interestingly, the political has to keep open the possibility of the non-church in order for the church to rightly complete its task of witnessing to the Kingdom of God. The community that is distinct from the church, though, is still created by God and so contains a good internal within itself. It is with this goodness that the church and Christian theology seeks to build connections, living out the aspects of the good internal to the “secular” community. By working together on those things that both communities hold as good—like freedom of speech and

religion, certain human rights, a commitment to democracy, etc.—the church and secular community can accomplish the work of both communities. This position that works from the divine-human communion means that Christian theology must engage in a nonviolent approach to all things, including the secular society. This nonviolence includes the threat and use of physical violence, along with violent rhetoric and intellectual violence (146).

In making the argument that he does, Papanikolaou offers a distinctive critique of two major streams of Christian theology in the contemporary world: Postliberalism and Radical Orthodoxy. These two theological approaches have dominated much in the realm of political theology and Papanikolaou offers his position as a corrective. In regards to both, he posits the idea of the necessity for a secular world to exist so that divine-human communion can take place. Challenging the ontology of participation that Radical Orthodoxy utilizes, Papanikolaou talks of an ontological realism that acknowledges God as Creator of all things, but that also takes into account that there is that which is separate from God and the church. Against the work of the Postliberal school, Papanikolaou argues that theology cannot conflate the work of the church with the work of the secular world. While the two intertwine at times, they do have separate agendas and, in order for divine-human communion to take place, must stay separate. With these critiques, Papanikolaou can put forward a vision for the political as the place that gives the ability for divine-human communion to take place. From the divine-human communion that takes place in the church, the body of Christ can then begin to enter the political fray in a way that brings the secular into contact with the Kingdom of God. Through this interaction, the church can accomplish its mission of bringing the Kingdom of God to the whole world.

Four aspects of *The Mystical as Political* strike me as noteworthy. First, the text is a major contribution to the ongoing discussion between Christian theology and the political arena; however, Papanikolaou makes a significant contribution by giving an Eastern Orthodox voice to the conversation. Second, Papanikolaou gives a theological critique and embrace of the liberal project, offering criticism where necessary while acknowledging the positives. Third, he develops a distinctively Eastern Orthodox perspective on divine-human communion (*theosis*) that brings the doctrine to a place of relevancy in the contemporary world. Fourth, for Methodist and Wesleyan theologians, Papanikolaou's approach to divine-human communion presents a great deal of insight for our own understandings of sanctification and Christian perfection, most notably how it functions in a political context.

In all, while an academic theologian writes *The Mystical as Political*, the text is lucid, clear, and will be a great help to many people who are struggling with the place of the Christian church in our contemporary world. Anyone that is

familiar with church history, discussions of Christian theology, and semi-aware of the political climate of the West will find many valuable contributions.

Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views

Beilby, James K., and Paul R. Eddy, eds.

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2012, ix, 230 pp., paper, \$19.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-3936-2

Reviewed by Fredrick J. Long

This well-edited “Four Views” volume by Baker (with footnotes and indices) fills a niche not covered by the “four views” books by Zondervan on, e.g., Salvation, Hell, Eternal Security, Divine Providence, Baptism or IVP on, e.g., Women in Ministry and Atonement. These books feature proponents presenting their views followed by the others critiquing these views. Absent here is a concluding essay. However, the forty-five page (!) introductory essay by editors Beilby (prof. of theology) and Eddy (prof. of biblical and theological studies) virtually justifies purchasing the book, in some ways outshining the other contributions.

The first essay by Wink (NT theologian) edited with Gareth Higgins (spiritualist peace activist) explicates “the World Systems” approach. For Wink, “The Satan of the Bible is more akin to an archetypal reality, a visionary or imaginal presence or event experienced within” (58). Satan is a human creation to label what is evil/wrong with the world, although “the experience of Satan is a brute and terrifying fact” (59). The responses echoed my own that Wink treats Scripture inconsistently, allegorizing plain texts and emphasizing certain passages at the expense of others.

Powlison (faculty of Westminster in pastoral counseling) presents “The Classical Approach” (a.k.a. from a reformed perspective), wearily walking through Eph 6:10-20 as if this were a manual on spiritual warfare. Nevertheless, Powlison rightly expounds that believers have access to God’s Messianic armor and, by practice of the means of grace, combat moral and spiritual evil in the world. Powlison concludes with two testimonial accounts of “problematic” exorcisms (one in the US; the other in the African context).

Boyd (pastor) presents “The Ground-Level Deliverance Model.” His exposition aligns quite well with the practical assumptions and practices of many Christians: *intercessory prayer matters in our resistance to evil forces*. The strength of Boyd’s presentation is in tracing the conflict of God against personal, spiritual powers in the OT followed by describing the NT understanding of victory over Satan through a life of discipleship to Christ in love and helping those oppressed.

Wagner (former missions faculty at Fuller) and Greenwood (deliverance minister) explicate “The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model,” discussing spiritual mapping, identificational repentance, prophetic decrees and acts, and power encounters, etc. Their reviewers (whose collective response is devastating) question the subjective nature of discernment and assessment of success, as well as their exegesis, use of mythic stories, and triumphalist perspective.

The essays and responses are thought provoking. However, it is diabolical that Matt 6:13 (“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One”), John 17:15 (“I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the Evil One”), Eph 5:27 (“nor give the devil a foothold”), and 1 John 5:18 (“We know that no one who is born of God sins; but the One being born from God keeps him and the Evil one does not touch him”) are not cited, let alone expounded upon anywhere here; and James 4:7 (“Submit therefore to God; stand against the Devil and he will flee from you”) is cited (not quoted) only briefly in a footnote (106n5).

Women’s Bible Commentary, 3rd edition

Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds.

Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox

2012, 704 pp., hardback, \$50.00

ISBN: 978-0664237073

Reviewed by David J. Zucker

For a one-volume, scholarly, and also readable, women’s commentary on the Bible (Hebrew Scriptures, Christian Scriptures, the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books) this work is unbeatable. The many authors are a who’s who of North American women scholars, some of who are also feminist scholars. This newest version of *Women’s Bible Commentary* is a revised, updated, and improved iteration of the superb first edition published twenty years ago. At over six hundred fifty pages, it is about fifty percent larger than the original work that Newsom and Ringe edited. Further, there are thirteen specially commissioned articles for this volume. These essays “sketch the interpretation of significant female figures from the Bible.” Amongst these special articles are, “Eve and Her Interpreters,” “Sarah, Hagar, and Their Interpreters,” “Miriam and Her Interpreters,” and “Job’s Wife and Her Interpreters.” In terms of the Christian Scriptures, there are articles on “Mary and Her Interpreters,” and “Mary Magdalene and Her Interpreters.” Other articles of special note include “When Women Interpret the Bible,” “Women as Biblical Interpreters Before the Twentieth Century,” “Women’s Religious Life in Ancient Israel,” “Beyond the Canon,” and “The Religious

Lives of Women in the Early Church.” There are also special articles in the Apocrypha section.

Feminist biblical criticism has changed profoundly in the past two decades. “Issues that were just beginning to be explored . . . the hermeneutical significance of sexual identity, analysis of masculinity, and postcolonial positioning” are now part of feminist criticism. Additionally, there has been an explosion of feminist biblical critics, women as well as men. The editors explain that they agonized over several issues: whether to limit this volume to women writers (and that answer was “yes”), which articles to include from previous volumes, and which younger women working in the field to ask to write new articles. Former authors were most gracious in stepping aside, and those who reappear here revised their previous work, in some cases significantly.

Not all biblical books are of equal interest in terms of a women’s commentary. Many chapters are but a half-dozen pages in length, others that raise feminist issues run ten to twenty pages. Chapters devoted to biblical books and to the works of the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical literature have three sections: Introduction, Content, and Bibliography. The commissioned articles, addressing the reception history of such women as those mentioned above (Eve, Sarah, Mary . . . but also Rahab, Deborah, Jael, Jephtha’s Daughter, Delilah, Jezebel, Judith and Susannah) feature the article with a Bibliography. Reception history articles often include observations on Jewish, Christian, and Muslim responses to these women, and their depiction in the arts.

What “sets the *Women’s Bible Commentary* apart from others is its authors’ acknowledged commitment to read the biblical texts through the varied lenses of women’s experiences in ancient and modern religious and cultural contexts.” While readers vary in their understanding of the Bible, for many women the authority of the Bible is often a matter of ambiguity or ambivalence. One of the editors explains, “women reading the Bible have found themselves on alien and even hostile turf.” In fact, both “the silence of women and their silencing – the contempt in which they are held and the violence with which they are treated – in the Bible mirror the realities of many women’s lives. For them, the Bible is experienced as giving a divine stamp of approval to their suffering” (Ringe, “When Women Interpret the Bible”).

The book also addresses the suggestion that readers often unconsciously are influenced by centuries of interpretation that are nearly indistinguishable from the text itself. Two examples are: household codes in the Christian Scriptures, which mandate the submission of women (Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1; 1 Pet. 2:18-3:7), and a history of interpretation among Christians that “often contrasted the worst from among the varied teachings concerned

with women in later rabbinic writings with the best of the values and practices related to women attributed to Jesus.”

While there is much to be gained in just reading this wonderful anthology, bibliographies throughout the book provide direction for further study.

Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling

Dean Flemming

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic

2013, 288 pp., paper, \$24.00

ISBN: 978-0830840267

Reviewed by Jeremy B. Griffin

Dean Flemming, known for his book *Contextualization in the New Testament*, has written another work on a biblical theology of the mission of God, with the goal of helping the church properly understand its mission. Flemming introduces his argument in the introduction, saying that rehashing the debate of whether evangelism should be in word or in deed misses the overarching themes of mission in the Scriptures. For Flemming, *being, doing* and *telling* relate together and are inseparable in the mission of God’s people. His book joins the works of other authors, such as William Abraham, Craig Bartholomew, Michael Goheen, Darrell Guder, Ronald Sider, and Christopher Wright, who promote a similar understanding of mission for the church.

Chapters one and two cover select portions of the Old Testament, considering how Israel functioned in mission. Flemming maintains that Israel was to be a people to whom other nations were attracted, and Israel in mission was more about how they lived before other cultures than a message they brought to the surrounding nations. Chapters three and four cover the Synoptic Gospels, as Flemming looks at Jesus’ whole mission, which becomes the mission of the church, in word and deed, through proclamation and demonstration, with no dividing line between these actions. In each Gospel, Flemming gives its audience, purpose, and Jesus’ main function in that Gospel. Looking at the Gospel of Matthew, instead of skipping to the end of the Gospel to find mission in the Great Commission passage, Flemming promotes that the whole book be read in light of the final passage. Chapter five surveys the Gospel of John with Flemming viewing that mission is ultimately rooted in the loving character of God. Chapter six covers Acts with Flemming showing that the church should not only speak the good news but also demonstrate it through their actions and character.

Flemming confronts one of the most difficult issues in Pauline studies in chapter eight: whether Paul required churches to speak the gospel to

the watching world. Flemming carefully demonstrates that Paul expected churches to witness with their words and lives. I found this section to be one of the highlights of the book. Chapter nine covers First and Second Peter with Flemming noting that for Peter, doing good, holy conduct, and nonverbal witness were all forms of mission. Chapter ten surveys mission in Revelation, which is not the first place people turn to understand mission, but Flemming demonstrates that mission in Revelation, for the church, includes both separation from and engagement with the world.

This work is a challenging read for those who subscribe to the view that either proclamation or conduct in evangelism has precedence over the other, for as Flemming demonstrates, the mission of God is about the church engaging in being, doing, and telling, with these functions inextricably linked. This book provides an admirable biblical overview of mission and can be recommended to pastors, mission leaders, or professors who are looking for a book with a multifaceted approach to the biblical theology of mission.

Grace Under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions

Joerg Rieger and Jeorg Rieger

Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church

2011, 110 pp., paper, \$12.95

ISBN: 978-0938162773

Reviewed by Nathan Crawford

In *Grace Under Pressure*, Joerg and Jeorg Rieger set out an agenda for the church as a place of resistance to empire. They do so by developing an understanding of the work of God in places of “pressure,” or those places where there is oppression and marginalization, where empire is in control. The Riegers argue that in these pressure points God’s grace is not only made evident, but that this is where God works. They believe that the exposition of God’s grace has implications for the way in which theology and church is done. First, they argue this overcomes a “top-down” approach to Christianity by understanding God as working from the “bottom-up.” This implication comes from the Riegers’ continued insistence upon the idea that Christianity begins with the least and moves to the greatest, instead of starting with the greatest and having these people set the parameters for Christianity. Second, their emphasis on God’s grace working under pressure leads to a way of thinking that does not embrace the liberal-conservative dichotomy and also does not slip into a “middle road” approach. Instead, the

Riegers make the argument that all of these approaches are asking the wrong fundamental questions as well as proceeding in a fundamentally problematic way in doing both church and theology. To overly simplify their argument, the Riegers contend that there must be an emphasis upon both orthodoxy and orthopraxy with an understanding of how each is tied to the other and influences the other.

The Riegers make their argument through an introduction, four chapters, and conclusion. The introduction serves as a clearing of the path by critiquing religious self-centeredness, which they say tends to make God in our image instead of our being made in God's image. This opens the possibilities for offering a bottom-up approach that still evades being a middle way. The first chapter investigates the Riegers' claim that Methodism flourishes when it recovers the place of God's grace in the various pressures of life. They say that grace is not captured in the mainline but at the margins as God works in the least, not the greatest, an echo of both Jesus and John Wesley. The second chapter articulates how it is that Christians can find God's grace in the margins by showing the necessity of both works of piety and works of mercy as means of grace. In doing this, following Wesley, the Riegers keep together love of God and love of neighbor in an intimately bound relationship where one is not possible without the other. By doing this, the Riegers also believe they challenge the structures that keep people poor, because the works of mercy are not merely charity, but the actual experiencing of God's grace in the relationship one has with the oppressed. Chapter three, then, expands upon the role of the church when works of mercy are a means of grace. This chapter counters a "free-market capitalistic" understanding of grace (i.e., that grace is something that can be earned or commodified through certain actions) by arguing for grace as a gift from the One who cannot be commodified. In so doing, humanity can now see how God brings grace from the margins, where pain and suffering are prevalent, to create a new creation in the here and now. The fourth chapter details how Methodism has been involved in postcolonial approaches to empire. At times, this has resulted in becoming complicit in empire, but most of the time, as the Riegers show, Methodism works as a force of resistance to empire. He shows this by detailing various places that Methodism begins from the margins of society and reorients priorities around these, instead of trying to make the margins look like the broader culture. This chapter, then, shows how the embrace of bottom-up power has worked as a force for good inside of Methodism. The Riegers conclude the book by reiterating the need for alternative structures of leadership. Primarily, they advocate a church leadership that is predicated upon listening. They say that the means of grace, both piety and mercy, teach one to listen to both God and neighbor. Listening, then, opens the eyes of

the church to those places where we had not previously seen the work of God, in the margins of oppression and marginalization.

The Riegers' approach and argument is impressive and necessary. However, *Grace Under Pressure*'s one weakness is in its lack of concrete examples. For those of us who do constructive theology, this is a continued critique. However, due to the nature of the Riegers' book, examples of "pressure points" as well as instances where one theologized from such a point would be quite helpful. As it is, the Riegers point to places of pressure without being specific, as well as giving clues for a way of proceeding without being concrete. This could be a frustration to some readers. However, it should not deter people from reading what is a very compact, accessible, and clear approach to how church should be done, especially in light of current concerns with empire. Overall, I would highly recommend it to anyone involved in ministry or who is involved in training those who will be involved in ministry.

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus

The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary series

Robert W. Wall with Richard B. Steele

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

2012, 416 pp., paper, \$24.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-2562-9

Reviewed by Isaiah Luke Allen

Opening this book, I silently asked: *If scholarship does not advance from its current stalemate regarding the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, what value does new insight into their moral and theological message hold?* Robert Wall, Professor of Scripture and Wesleyan Studies at Seattle Pacific University, where he has been for 35 years, offers a compelling response to this question. Wall has developed a critically astute canonical approach to interpretation, and he consistently applies it to the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) in this mature volume from Eerdmans' *Two Horizons* commentary series.

Wall argues that, as sacred texts, the Pastoral Epistles derive their authority from the continued inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who speaks through them to new generations of the church that perform scriptural truth as canon in the absence of Paul. According to Wall, this argument diminishes the importance of, or contentions regarding, whether the historical Paul wrote them. As far as Wall is concerned, the customary arguments against historic Pauline authorship are not sufficiently convincing, but he does not enter into the debate. He does not seek to present new arguments for or

against Paul's authorship of the pastorals, because Wall's canonical approach obviates it as a relevant question. In a sense, the church has engendered a new moment of authorship (or authorization) by virtue of canonizing the epistles, so their authority derives from the solid evidence of centuries of canon "performance," not the debatable provenance of Paul's pen.

After an introduction to the Pastoral Epistles in general, with an explanation of the canonical approach Wall takes, the commentary is split into three sections for each book. The first of these sections is a linear, passage-by-passage, commentary consistently following Wall's canonical approach. The second section is a "Rule of Faith Reading" of each major section of the respective epistle according to each of Tertullian's major theological points. So, each epistle is interpreted section-by-section with respect to its contribution to theology of God the Father, then God the Son, God the Spirit, the church, and so forth. This multi-pass tactic may sound tedious, but it is remarkably rich in theological insight, especially as it deals with books that some critics have assumed offer little by way of theological depth. The final section for each book is a case study from the history of the church (each from the Wesleyan tradition of their author, Richard Steele) of how the teaching of these epistles is instantiated in Christian community. This format coincides with Wall's canonical approach – the case studies embodying the canon of the historic church's "performance" of Pauline truth. Lastly, the book contains customary author, subject, and scripture indices.

Lest anyone assume that a canonical approach is too credulous, Wall demonstrates scholarly rigor and intellectual honesty throughout the book. Genre considerations are a key touchstone for Wall. He reads the Pastorals as "succession letters," which are meant to form congregations faithful to the "Pauline Apostolate" in his absence. Whether they were composed in the first or second century, the measure of their canonicity is the church's acceptance and (even more tellingly) "performance" of them "as a sacred text" (3). This commentary, then, offers much to the pastor or church leader seeking insight into the moral and theological message of the Pastorals, unhindered by the myopic conventions of historical criticism.

In my opinion, Wall's treatment of 1 Timothy is his strongest and most original exegesis in the book. It provides scholars an excellent extended example of the promising results of a sophisticated, consistently applied, critical canonical approach to a New Testament book. For scholars interested in critical canonical approaches, Wall definitely raises a standard.

Because the church's historic "performance" is so crucial to Wall's canonical approach, the book offers an intensive case study for each epistle, written by Richard Steele. The range of tradition that the examples come from is narrow (Wesleyan); but for that reason, the treatments are deep. The

embodiment of canon must take place within some particularity, so Steele wrote on a tradition within his expertise. More than helping exemplify and crown the canonical approach to scripture, the case studies were delightfully well written and provide insightful glimpses of history in their own right.

A very minor annoyance was the apparently inexplicable and inconsistent practice of transliterating Greek terms. Sometimes a Greek word appeared without transliteration, sometimes with, and sometimes only the transliteration appeared. Wall discussed grammar only occasionally, but it would have been helpful to choose one practice; and I do not see the value in transliteration, especially when the Greek spelling is absent.

My greatest criticism of Wall's commentary is that the issue of authorship cannot be avoided concerning books that contain specific and explicit claims of such. In other words, as fresh and compelling as Wall's canonical approach is, it begs the question. It is not a fault to dismiss the arguments for and against Pauline authorship on the basis of a canonical approach interested in the church's acceptance and performance of them, but it is a fault to suggest that the canonical approach renders the matter obsolete. Further, as Wall knows, the church's canonization was (has been) a process and practice of discernment, not an event. Inasmuch as the historical event of composition matters to interpreters, it matters to the church.

Wall hopes that his reading of the Pastorals as "succession texts" will invite the contemporary church to see itself in the same position as Timothy or Titus – successors to the Pauline apostolate with responsibility to carry on his irreplaceable apostolic deposit. In which case, authorship does not matter, for the church essentially re-authors the text in every generation. But, what if the church, as it is today, is reluctant to "re-authorize" a text that violates its sensibilities concerning truth-telling (e.g. by pseudoeigraphy)? Shall it be condemned for "de-canonicalizing"? Further, each of the Pastorals suggest that a living, historic Paul would have continuing authority and influence in the congregations and would also live to see his faithful followers again. The succession analogy between Paul's generation and our own is not so categorical as Wall implies.

Although Wall offers a compelling and worthwhile commentary on the Pastorals that would be a valuable addition to a scholar's, biblical (especially Pauline) student's, or pastor's library, it is not an all-service commentary. For instance, on account of his canonical approach, Wall does not rehash or enter a full discussion of the state of the debate vis-à-vis authorship. No single commentary can stand alone, but Wall's occupies a place on a continuum closer to niche than comprehensive. It would be an illuminating compliment to commentaries like those by Philip Towner (Eerdmans, 2006), Luke Timothy Johnson (Doubleday, 2001), or I. Howard Marshall (T & T

Clark, 1999). It is good for pastors, teachers, and scholars interested in the possibilities of a consistent and well-reasoned canonical critical approach.

The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott

Brian Stanley

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic

2013, 288 pp., paper, \$24.00

ISBN: 978-0-8308-2585-1

Reviewed by Robert A. Danielson

Brian Stanley, the professor of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh, is known for his scholarship and the accessibility of his writing in the history of various Christian movements. Stanley delivers on both counts in his newest book, the fourth volume in InterVarsity's series *A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World* (projected to be five volumes when completed). In this volume, Stanley attempts to cover the historical developments in evangelicalism from the post World War II period to the year 2000. He divides this time period into three phases: an early phase from 1945-1958 when evangelicals were differentiating themselves from fundamentalists, the "long 1960's" from 1958-1974 when evangelicals began to grow in influence, and the post Lausanne period from 1974-2000 when global forces began to move evangelicalism out of the English-speaking world to become a global force. Stanley admits up front that there are some difficulties in writing this book, since it is designed to be a history of evangelicalism in the English-speaking world and yet much of the dynamics of the later period takes place outside of the traditional focal points of Britain and the U.S.

Stanley succeeds admirably in the first two phases, providing fascinating insights into the growth of evangelicalism as an idea in the academy especially. The development of evangelicalism through Billy Graham, Fuller Theological Seminary, and *Christianity Today* in the United States and John Stott, InterVarsity Fellowship, and the *Church of England Newspaper* in Britain effectively demonstrates the various approaches taken across the Atlantic. True to the subtitle, John Stott and Billy Graham are covered in great detail, but many other figures of importance are also touched on. Stanley also takes care to relate movements and trends in evangelicalism in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, true to the focus of this work on the English-speaking world.

As predicted in Stanley's introduction, the third phase of the globalization of evangelicalism is more problematic. Except for a brief discussion of the

East Africa Revival, and a more in depth coverage of Lausanne in 1974 and the role of young Latin American leaders René Padilla, Samuel Escobar, Orlando Costas, and Sergio Garcia, the global spread of evangelicalism largely takes a backseat to developments in the United States and Britain. While Stanley has attempted to prepare the reader for this, it still comes as a letdown given the ambitious title of the work. While the charismatic renewal, the Toronto Blessing, and evangelical debates on women in ministry and homosexuality are all important, the growth of Pentecostalism in the Global South is perhaps the major defining shift for evangelicals in this time period. While Stanley does mention this, little is said about how this global diffusion occurred, the missionary movements and people who pioneered this, or the missiological implications. Granted, this is a tall order for an accessible history of evangelicalism in the English-speaking world, and Stanley has done the best possible job given an impossible task in under 300 pages. Stanley's book is exceptionally well written, incredibly informative, and will be very useful in a wide range of settings, but I can't help wishing the editors of the series had chosen a more realistic title, or provided an additional volume to cover evangelicalism and its spread outside of the English-speaking Global North. Failure to include this subject continues to perpetuate a Western dominated paternalism that is not really indicative of the current state of evangelicalism in the world.

Seven Events that Shaped the New Testament World

Warren Carter

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2013, xxi, 162 pp., paper, \$21.99

ISBN: ISBN: 978-0-8010-3916-4

Reviewed by Ryan K. Giffin

In the book *Seven Events that Shaped the New Testament World*, Warren Carter, Professor of New Testament at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, explores seven foundational events that serve as onramps into the world of the early Christian movement. In this small yet substantive work, Carter provides readers with an introductory-level discussion of the complex social and cultural dynamics of the New Testament world via seven key historical events: the death of Alexander the Great, the process of translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, the rededication of the Jerusalem temple, the Roman occupation of Judea, the crucifixion of Jesus, the writing of the New Testament texts, and the process of “closing” the New Testament canon. The book contains an introduction, seven chapters

(one for each event), a conclusion, an index, and several helpful maps, charts, illustrations, and photographs sprinkled throughout the text.

On the first page of the introduction, Carter outflanks a critique common to similar introductory works with a disclaimer that “this book does not pretend to be comprehensive” and that “there are many, many other events that we could have highlighted” (xvii). It becomes clear to the reader that the purpose of highlighting these seven particular events has less to do with the events themselves, and more to do with how each event serves as a sort of launch pad for Carter to discuss the larger cultural dynamics and socio-historical realities that were significant for the world in which the New Testament was written. For example, the death of Alexander the Great provides a focal point for Carter to discuss Alexander’s influence on the spread of Greek language and Hellenistic culture across the ancient world, and the location of early Christianity within that world. Another example is Carter’s examination of the translation of the LXX, which opens a door for a larger discussion of how the first Christians negotiated their multicultural world by embracing the common language of the day, while simultaneously retaining their sacred Scriptures. Carter captures the thrust of his whole project in this way: “The seven events function as entry points into the worlds that constitute the complex multicultural environment in which the Jesus movement emerges” (xix).

The major strength of *Seven Events* lies in Carter’s unique approach to the material typically found in the voluminous number of introductory works on NT backgrounds on the market today. By organizing his work around these seven key events, Carter is able to cover key introductory matters in a format that provides readers with a helpful chronology of events and issues without being restrictive or woodenly linear. The result is a well-researched, yet highly readable and refreshing, account of the contexts of the NT and early Christianity. However, disappointment may come to readers expecting a full treatment of the seven events advertized on the cover of the book. The events themselves serve more as a means to Carter’s real end of discussing the shape of the NT world. In this way, the title of the book has the potential to mislead readers who anticipate any sort of extended critical analysis of the seven events.

Overall, *Seven Events* is to be commended to students, pastors, and teachers of courses on NT introduction. Such readers will find Carter’s work accessible, provocative, and full of helpful information on the world in which the texts of the NT emerged. In a modern world in which there are no shortage of works on NT introduction, *Seven Events* emerges as a unique and welcome contribution.

Second Corinthians

Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament

Raymond F. Collins

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2013, xviii, 302 pp., paper, \$27.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-3186-1.

Reviewed by Fredrick J. Long

Currently one finds many short, non-technical, reader-friendly commentary series, such as the New Cambridge Commentary, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, Beacon Bible Commentary, and Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament. Raymond F. Collins's contribution to Paideia reflects a seasoned theological interpreter engaging a very difficult text. For each pericope, Paideia commentaries treat "Introductory Matters," "Tracing the Train of Thought," and "Theological Matters," further delineated into passage-specific sub-categories (e.g. "Jesus," "Eschatology," or "Paul's Financial Independence"). Additionally, for Collins' volume each passage has a "Rhetorical Flow" outline contextually locating each passage. The Paideia series states five goals, by which I can evaluate Collin's contribution: 1) attending to ancient narrative and rhetorical strategies (fair), 2) explicating theological convictions and moral habits (excellent), 3) commenting on the final canonical form (good), 4) discussing the cultural, literary, and theological setting (fair-good), and 5) illuminating the text through judicious use of maps, photos, and side-bars (excellent). Contributors bring their strengths (and weaknesses) to bear in their exposition. The "fair" areas likely result from Collins' lack of interaction with secondary sources; only fifty-seven modern authors are cited, one-fifth of Charles H. Talbert's Ephesians and Colossians Paideia contribution with nearly three hundred. Despite this, Collins adequately treats matters of the letter's compositional unity (11-14, 63, 141-42, 180, 193-94), although this detracts somewhat from focusing on the text's canonical form.

But Collins far surpasses Talbert's contribution (only forty-five) in sidebars and charts, with on average two information boxes found per two-page spread. The boxes provide lexical data, summarize scholarly discussions, contain brief quotations from Church fathers (e.g. John Chrysostom, 57, 79, etc.), and explain rhetorical/literary devices, such as hendiadys (40), paronomasia (41 and 204), ellipsis (108), anacoluthon (109), chiasm (126), preterition (181), homoeoteleuton (200), inclusio/ring composition (202), and anaphora (228). Particularly well-done are boxes discussing word plays (e.g. 41, 46, 77, 151) and providing word study data, e.g., *paraklēsis* "admonition, encouragement" (34), *chara* "joy" and cognates (52), "in Christ"

and equivalent phrases (120), *katalassō* “I reconcile” (134), *charis* “grace” (178–79), *leitourgia* “public work” (186), *koinōnia* (188), and the virtue, vice, and hardship lists (138, 252–53).

Although sensitive to micro-level stylistic features (e.g. 184 and 200), Collins misses much. For example, his treatment of chiasms is very weak (but see 126 on 5:21) when identifying merely A-B-A structures (which in IBS terminology is intercalation), as in 7:5–16 and 7:8–13a. Collins fails to see here the extensive chiasm emanating out of 7:7b–9a, which is lexically based (rejoice-grieve-letter-regret/regret-letter-grieve-rejoice; observed by my M.Div. student Joe Driver), extending across 7:2–16. Another weakness is Collins’ inconsistent understanding of Paul’s psychology and discursive ability/performance in writing. On the one hand, he praises Paul’s rhetorical ability (“Paul was a master rhetorician,” 41) and warns against psychoanalyzing Paul (“The careful reader … should not psychoanalyze Paul’s experience of consolation and joy…” [161]), but then repeatedly indicates that Paul’s emotions affected his writing, resulting in syntactical inconsistency and ambiguity (e.g., 108–9, 159, 187, 195).

Overall, the commentary is good for its strengths: theological exposition, attention to word usage, and interest in moral formation. It is well written, attractively edited, and contains few typos or mistakes, although *autos* is misidentified in 10:1 as a relative pronoun (196).

Four Views on Christian Spirituality

Counterpoint Series

Bruce Demarest, ed.

Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan

2012, 240 pp., paper, \$18.99

ISBN: 978-0-310-32928-2

Reviewed by Benjamin D. Espinoza

Interest in spirituality in the United States continues to increase rapidly. Two-thirds of American adults consider themselves “deeply spiritual” (11), and tend toward practices of Zen meditation, Yoga, new age mysticism, and many others. This renewal of interest in spirituality warrants a discussion regarding Christian spirituality in its many expressions. In *Four Views on Christian Spirituality*, scholars from four of the larger Christian traditions come together to voice their traditions’ expressions of spirituality and engage in collegial discussion and critique. An entry into the successful *Counterpoints* series published by Zondervan, this work is an engaging and critical foray into continuing dialogue regarding Christian spirituality.

Bradley Nassif argues that Eastern Orthodox spirituality is gospel-centric, emphasizing that the multiplicity of doctrines and practices in the Orthodox tradition is rooted in the soil of the gospel (29). For Nassif, Orthodox spirituality is a paschal spirituality, “where death to sin and newness of life has been won through the victory of the cross and Christ’s triumphant resurrection from the dead” (36). Orthodox spirituality is richly sacramental, recognizing that sacraments occur “whenever God’s grace communicates through the created order;” however, the Orthodox emphasize seven primary sacraments (Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Repentance, Holy Orders, Marriage, and Anointing the sick) (38-39).

Scott Hahn notes that even though it finds numerous expressions throughout the world, Roman Catholic spirituality is rooted in familial themes, such as the invitation to become part of God’s family through spiritual adoption and participation in Trinitarian life. For Hahn, family is the core of Roman Catholic spirituality, whether it is participation in the sacraments, calling spiritual leaders “fathers” and “sisters,” becoming stewards of the Father’s creation, or viewing the world through a distinctively sacramental lens. Regarding the Roman Catholic approach to Scripture, Hahn writes that the “Bible does not stand apart from the church’s life, but at the heart of it. Scripture is the content and the context of all the church’s ritual and devotion” (92).

Joseph Driskill, representing the Mainline Protestant perspective, articulates his tradition’s commitment to intellectualism, social progress, community, lay leadership, and a personal relationship with God. Driskill candidly notes that mainline Protestantism has “enmeshed” itself with a modern worldview (114). This alignment with modernity manifests itself in numerous ways, namely approaching the Scriptures with a hermeneutic of both skepticism and appreciation, valuing the resurrection of Christ more for its symbolic power than its historical authenticity, and experiencing the Spirit of God more through community life than through rich times of worship and prayer. For Driskill, the future of mainline Protestant spirituality lies in a renewed commitment to social justice, racial reconciliation, peace advocacy, and the recovery of Christian practices.

Evan Howard represents the evangelical perspective, and recounts a robust history of evangelical spirituality across several denominational boundaries. He argues that evangelical spirituality is Protestant, theologically orthodox, committed to conversion, active, lay-driven, and seeks “bounded ecumenicity” (177). Howard highlights the evangelical emphasis on the primacy of Scripture in spiritual formation through reading and meditation. Listening to sermons, worshipping within the church community, intercessory prayer, thanksgiving, and praise are also hallmarks of evangelical spirituality.

This volume is unique in that it allows for candid yet collegial discussion

between the contributors to follow each chapter. The contributors provide dense and succinct summaries of their traditions, acknowledging their differences with conviction while celebrating their unity with grace. While many of these responses elevate the traditional debates between theological camps, Driskill's chapter on Mainline Protestantism receives the most biting criticism. Nassif expresses concern that mainline Protestantism is devoid of an ecclesiology based on historic orthodoxy (144-145). Howard argues that mainline Protestantism has either struggled with or flatly rejected an orthodox Christology (155). Hahn writes that mainline churches have transformed into upper-class social clubs, and that mainline Protestants have turned away from the divine and have become "this-worldly" (149-150). Apart from these stronger criticisms, the contributors write with a posture of humility toward one another and appear genuinely concerned about the witness of the church in a postmodern culture.

This book will be especially helpful for seminary students and pastors seeking to understand how different Christian traditions express their spirituality. Professors teaching courses in spiritual formation will benefit from using this work as a textbook, as it provides a model of collegial dialogue in a humble, engaging, and informative manner. While this volume contributes to the continuing conversation regarding Christian spirituality, the volume could have included other crucial perspectives such as Pentecostalism. The four traditions explored in this volume all have a charismatic wing, and Pentecostal/charismatic theology and practice continues to grow within these traditions and across the globe. Additional perspectives, such as Anglicanism and the emergent/emerging church go unnoticed. While the sheer breadth of Christianity precludes the inclusion of many perspectives in this volume, these movements deserve consideration in future volumes devoted to Christian spirituality.

Scripture and Tradition: What the Bible Really Says

Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology

Edith M. Humphrey

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2013, 182 pp., paper, \$19.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-2773-4

Reviewed by J. Jordan Henderson

At the 2010 Wheaton Theology Conference held in honor of N. T. Wright (see N. Perrin and R. B. Hays, eds., *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic,

2011]), Edith M. Humphrey expressed one longing for her former teacher: that “Bishop Tom would venture more deliberately into the world of the church fathers and more completely into the strange terrain of the Eastern Church” (Perrin and Hays, 178). Wright’s response, while showing respect for biblical interpreters of the past, nevertheless remained firmly rooted in the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*: “Tradition is important, but I will drink to Paul first and to tradition afterward” (Perrin and Hays, 182).

While Humphrey makes no claim that her most recent book *Scripture and Tradition* is written in response to Wright’s answer, it certainly could have been. For Wright’s answer begs a number of questions: To what extent are Scripture and tradition separable? To what extent did the early Church, prior to the closing of the biblical canon, recognize such separation? And what does Scripture itself, particularly the NT, have to say about the topic? These are questions wrestled with by Humphrey in this book.

Chapter One, “Lost in Translation,” focuses on the noun *paradosis* (tradition) and the verb *paradidomi* (literally “to tradition”) as they are translated in many English Bibles, noting the “anti-traditional” bias evident as *paradosis* is often translated “tradition” when used in a negative sense, and “teaching” or “ordinance” when used more positively (25-44). She gives a more nuanced discussion of *paradosis* as it is discussed in the NT, beginning with “the manner in which the biblical writers themselves ‘traditioned,’ or handled, traditional material” in the time prior to and following the closing of the OT and NT canon (34-40).

In the next chapter, “Deadly Traditions,” she looks closely at Mark 7, often used to argue against tradition (45-68). She comments that this story itself is an example of “living Church tradition in the early years of the Church’s growth” (55). Without disputing the historicity of this scene, she remarks that the story is told in the context of later Church debate, hence Mark’s parenthetical comment “In this way, Jesus declared all foods clean” (7:19).

She next considers the positive apostolic witness toward tradition in the NT, especially in 2 Peter, Acts, and the Pauline corpus (69-90). She insists that these positive comments on tradition are vital for the Church today in the midst of “conflicts between the Scriptures, the ongoing life of the Church, cultural norms, the present leading of the Spirit, and the teaching of leaders” (87).

The following chapter (“The Blessed Delivery,” 91-108) explores God as both Giver and Gift as Christian tradition is passed on from generation to generation. Noting the apparent “chain of command” inherent in Jesus’ commissioning of the seventy (Luke 10) – “from the Almighty One, to Jesus, to the Twelve (whom he has appointed in the previous chapter) with

the seventy, to us” – the gift that is passed on is both from God and is in fact God Himself (91-92).

In the chapter “Holy Tradition Versus Human Traditions” (133-157), Humphrey looks at the use of tradition in early Church history in order to discern a proper use of tradition in the Church today. She emphasizes the need to discern between “what is *a* tradition, and therefore potentially subject to change, and what is part of the Holy Tradition” (156; italics in original).

She concludes with a challenge both to those from backgrounds skeptical of Christian tradition as well as those such as her fellow Eastern Orthodox Christians that place a high value on Holy Tradition (159-172). To the former, she encourages them in light of the emphasis placed on tradition within the NT itself to a fruitful understanding of Holy Tradition, going beyond mere historical curiosity to reverence for what God has entrusted to His people to preserve and faithfully pass on. To the latter, in addition to differentiating between mutable traditions and Holy Tradition, she challenges them to “acknowledge where the Holy Tradition has come to have only a formal place in the community’s life,” and to reclaim it (170).

In a very slim volume, Humphrey has given a masterful exploration of a topic that has been debated for centuries. She succeeds in illustrating that the NT places a high value on true living tradition faithfully passed on among God’s people both orally and in written form, as well as that one cannot appeal to the principle of *sola Scriptura* itself without also drawing on a particular Christian tradition.

I have two minor criticisms of this book. First, since she seems largely to have an Evangelical audience skeptical of tradition in mind, her defense of tradition will still beg the question for many of her readers about traditions held about people in the NT that are not clearly expressed in the NT. For instance, if we concede that tradition is important to the NT authors, does this mean that later traditions concerning the birth and death of the Virgin Mary must necessarily be observed by Christians? This is not as simple as differentiating between “big-T” and “little-t” traditions, for major feasts in the Orthodox Church commemorate both of these traditions.

This brings up my second criticism: What exactly is Humphrey’s view of the place of Scripture within tradition? Is it elevated above, equal with, or beneath other components of the Great Tradition, such as liturgical rubrics, iconography, canon law, or hagiography? I did not see her answer these questions, although they are admittedly beyond her scope, which is to simply examine what the NT itself says about tradition. Here she succeeds magnificently.

Invitation to the Psalms: A Reader's Guide for Discovery and Engagement

Rolf A. Jacobson and Karl N. Jacobson

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2013, 192 pp., paper, \$17.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-3644-6

Reviewed by Jeremiah K Garrett

The Book of Psalms is one of the most enduring and endearing collections of poetry. For nearly 2,500 years, persons in the Judeo-Christian faith traditions have heralded the Psalter not only as a fine work of literature, but also as inspired Scripture. In recent history, with literacy becoming the norm in Western societies, a movement has begun in which individuals are encouraged to read the Bible for themselves. As an unintended result, the psalms, which were designed to be recited systematically as beautiful, communal poetry, often have been reduced to privatized and misunderstood statements of theology, morality, or history outside of their poetic context. In their book *Invitation to the Psalms*, brothers and experienced teachers Rolf and Karl Jacobson provide beginning students with a “tour-guide” to the Psalter that serves as a much-needed call to actively experience the poetry within.

Although the target audience only included beginning students, the book is perhaps increasingly more valuable for pastors wishing to preach from the Psalter, worship leaders wishing to use psalms for dramatic or musical presentations, and ultimately individuals outside of scholastic settings who desire to experience the psalms in a fresh, renewed way. It is rare to find a book intended for the academy that also has so many practical applications within the personal and social lives of church leaders and laity. The introductory information within the book is also invaluable in university and seminary settings for all non-specialized students wishing to understand how to experience the Psalter as Hebrew poetry. This is especially true for institutions that emphasize the Inductive Bible Study method as the primary approach to interpreting, understanding, and applying messages found within Biblical literature.

Towards the goal of experiencing the psalms, four main topics comprise the first five chapters of the book. After an inviting introduction, the authors begin the book by explaining how parallelism forms the basis of all Hebrew poetry, giving detailed examples of the different types of parallelism and explaining how to identify their various uses. Adding to this understanding of Hebrew poetry, they continue by discussing the various structures found within individual psalms and how these structures play the primary role of developing the intended message. The second and third chapters discuss how

to identify and understand the various genres of psalms, with chapter two explaining forms and chapter three explaining themes. In the fourth chapter, the Jacobsons provide a multifaceted and intricately linked discussion of how to inductively identify the persona of the psalmist within the psalm's implied setting. The aim of this discussion is to encourage the reader to experience the motives behind the writing of the psalm so that the reader may be able to imagine what it would be like to participate in its setting and apply it to one's own life. Chapter five provides a basic overview of metaphor and ties this into specific uses of metaphor within the Psalter.

Each chapter consists of a thorough discussion of its topic alongside representative psalms and illustrative charts or figures. At the end of each chapter, the Jacobsons offer a brief conclusion followed by several ways to apply what the reader has learned in a "Going Deeper" section. Activities begin with basic self-discovery habits such a reading particular psalms in an educated attempt to experience them. In an effort to get readers to truly live the psalms, the Jacobsons also include outreach activities, inviting readers to share what they have discovered with others who have not studied the psalms. Each chapter closes with a brief list of additional resources for further reading.

To conclude the book, the Jacobsons include a sixth chapter that offers a theological interpretation of the primary message of the Psalter, as well as detailed explanations regarding how each genre of psalms contributes to this primary message. Although the stated purpose of the sixth chapter is to invite the reader to join the conversation by painting his or her own unique portrait of God, this final chapter rather seems to give the reader a front-row seat to observe how the Jacobsons express their own artistry. While their theological interpretation is thought-provoking and without contentious error, the conclusion leaves the reader reflective upon the Jacobsons' theology of the Psalter rather than upon the theology of the Psalter itself. Even so, as with the other chapters, this final chapter concludes by inviting the reader to go deeper. In the final "Going Deeper" section, the Jacobsons encourage readers to return to the psalms to find and experience ten different images of God, and then they close the section and the book by suggesting readers take these experiences to friends in society, providing the additional resources section as a means to do so. As appendices, the book also includes a thorough scripture index and a helpful subject index.

While the book is an excellent introduction and invitation to the psalms, one essential area of experiencing Hebrew poetry is noticeably lacking—Hebrew poetry! The writers do include a discussion of a few theologically relevant words, such as '*emet* and *hesed*, but lacking are any examples of the poetry of the original language. As an old Italian saying goes, *traduttore*,

traditore, in paraphrase: “there are no translations, only betrayals.” In order to fully experience the Hebrew poetry of the psalms, one must hear it alongside others in all its untranslatable anguished agony, blessed beauty, grating grief, passionate praise, royal richness, vehement vengeance, and Zionistic zeal. It can be assumed that the Jacobsons considered this, given that they specified their intended audience, limiting it to beginning students with no knowledge of Hebrew. Yet even someone who knows no Hebrew could appreciate simple examples of poetic word choice and rhythm such as found in the first verse of the Psalter:

‘asherei ha’ish ‘asher
 lo’ halak ba’atzat resha’im
 ubderek ḥata’im lo’ ‘amad
 ubmoshav letzim lo’ yashav

The experience to which the Jacobsons invite the reader is a worthwhile experience, but that experience remains incomplete without hearing the poetic Hebrew within a community, something the Jacobsons only offer to their readers by referring them to works such as James Kugel’s *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

The Jacobsons have written an excellent book, and the reservations expressed above do not affect its endorsement. Whether within the academy or without, students interested in experiential, literary, narrative, or theological interpretations of the Bible—especially those that include Inductive Bible Studies—will find this an invaluable tool not only in understanding the Psalter, but also in experiencing it and sharing that experience. The Jacobsons have earned their place in these fields of Biblical interpretation, not by adding another textbook, but rather by adding a book that illuminates the Text, inviting the reader to enjoyably bathe or angrily burn in the various colors of light that are produced, ultimately inviting them to reflect that light for others to see.

Defending Constantine

Peter Leithart

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

2010, 373 pp., paper, \$27.00

ISBN: 978-0-8308-2722-0

Reviewed by Steven Lane

Leithart’s *Defending Constantine* is a multi-faceted work that walks the line between history and theology. The “Constantinian” problem occupies the

focus of the book, both in terms of history (Did Constantine ‘convert’? What influence did he have on the Council of Nicaea? Etc.) and in terms of theology (Is a “Constantinian” political theology a viable one in the democratic 21st Century? Etc.). Leithart takes up the defense of Constantine against the attacks of John Howard Yoder and his theological family tree, such as Hauerwas. Leithart argues that Yoder’s reading of history is wrong, and because of this incorrect reading, Yoder then makes inaccurate theological statements, which in turn lead to bad theology. As such, *Defending Constantine* has, at times, a strongly polemic character.

Leithart begins with a review of the historical sources, starting with the latter half of 3rd Century Rome under the rule of Diocletian as a contextual framework. Diocletian attempted to unite the Empire through the persecution of Christians; Constantine would attempt to unite the Empire under the banner of the Cross. The political machinations of Rome following the retirement of Diocletian, along with the role Constantine and his family had in the affair, is well documented. Leithart also devotes a good deal of space to the incident at the Milvian Bridge and Constantine’s vision of the Cross. He does not merely recite Eusebius’ version of events, but attempts to reconstruct the incident from other sources. Once Constantine is in power, Leithart illustrates the ways in which Constantine is not a normal Roman emperor. Leithart uses art, architecture, and coinage, in addition to the more traditional edicts and histories, to illustrate that something radical separated Constantine from Diocletian and the imperial line. A chapter is also devoted to the supposed political interference at the Council of Nicaea, and Constantine’s role (or lack thereof) in the debates.

Once the historical groundwork is laid, Leithart turns to the polemical side of the work. He begins by attempting to dismantle the key pillars of Yoder’s “Constantinian shift” by drawing on the history that he has just laid out. Leithart argues that Yoder’s claims regarding the “pure” pre-Constantinian Church cannot stand. Leithart goes to great lengths to explain his reading of Yoder. Leithart does not construct a straw man out of Yoder’s arguments, but purposefully focuses on the presuppositions that Yoder relies on. Unlike too many popular books on Christians and political theology, Leithart is not talking past Yoder, but is challenging his theses head on. Ultimately, Leithart shows that the historical grounds on which Yoder builds his political theology are flawed. This is not to say, however, that Yoder and his disciples are necessarily wrong theologically. However, it does claim that they must reformulate the foundational building blocks of their theology, or risk falling into a-historical Gnosticism.

More than any other aspect, *Defending Constantine* is an example of historical theology fulfilling its purpose. The occasional (wishful) naïveté that can

develop among systematic and moral theologies is shattered by the harsh realities of the historical Church. While that naïveté is what the Church should hope for, it is not what the Church actually faces. Political theology is undoubtedly the “messiest” of all theological endeavors.

The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works

Matthew Levering

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2013, 224 pp., paper, \$24.99

ISBN 978-0-8010-4848-7

Reviewed by Charles Meeks

The recent boom in academic publishing on the subject of Augustine does not appear to be coming to an end any time soon. This includes both new editions of his works and scholarly monographs on his life and thought. Yet, despite this influx of new (and mostly good!) reflection, novices to the Church Fathers in general and Augustine in particular are often left to fend for themselves in the vast sea of Augustine’s output. Even in a course in which primary texts are read, at an introductory level many students will be handed one or two of Augustine’s works without having a sense of how they fit into his staggeringly large corpus. Moreover, they will be highlighted as examples of certain characterizations of Augustine—here is Augustine the Pastor, here is Augustine the Philosopher, etc. This is problematic.

Thankfully, Matthew Levering has not only recognized the need for a new introductory work on Augustine, but has produced a fine one. In *The Theology of Augustine*, Levering intends to guide the interested reader on a journey through seven works he deems most important for synthesizing the fullest picture possible of Augustine the Theologian, through both theological and exegitical works: *On Christian Doctrine*; *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*; *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*; *On the Predestination of the Saints*; *Confessions*; *City of God*; and *On the Trinity*. In surveying each of these works, Levering clearly summarizes Augustine’s logic while also drawing in secondary sources through excellent footnoting. Levering’s approaches to *City of God* and *On the Trinity* are especially praiseworthy, as he deftly navigates what at times are quite laborious arguments by Augustine in a way that draws out the essential meaning clearly. Levering’s conclusion is short, but insightful as he seeks to do what Augustine always wished: pull his readers back to the main point of everything, which is the love of God and the service of humanity.

The Theology of Augustine stands clearly in the stream of newer attempts

to offer a fuller picture of Augustine than in generations past. Where it differs from recent publications such as William Harmless' *Augustine in His Own Words* and Paul Kolbet's *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, however, is Levering's refusal to get in the way of the text in order to compartmentalize which bits of Augustine are at the surface in each work; he even refrains from caricaturing certain works as "early" or "late" Augustine in order to make apology for some of Augustine's less endearing notions. By refusing to treat Augustine in a piecemeal fashion, Levering does justice to his excellent introduction and conclusion.

Levering is no academic slouch, and has demonstrated multiple times in the last decade that he wields more than an average proficiency of understanding theological texts both Patristic and Medieval in his pursuit of reconciling the traditionally split disciplines of theology and biblical studies. It is therefore delightful to see a volume in which he explicitly establishes his mastery of Augustine. This work should be a boon to laypeople and Augustine novitiates alike for many years to come.

W. E. Sangster – Herald of Holiness. Sanctification and Perfection in the Thought of W. E. Sangster

Studies in Evangelical History and Thought

Andrew J. Cheatle

Colorado Springs, CO: Milton-Keynes, Hyderabad: Paternoster

2011, xxii, 242 pp., paper, \$30.00

ISBN: 978-1-84227-216-9

Reviewed by David Bundy

The subject of this volume is William Edwin Sangster (1900-1960). He was a preacher of mythic proportions, known around the world for his skill at that craft. In folklore and in the literature about the period, he is understood almost exclusively as a preacher; Cheatle demonstrates that Sangster was also an important theologian and churchman. As Kenneth Newport states in his "Foreword," this volume "brings [the] 'real' Sangster to life" (xi). The volume, a Ph.D. dissertation at Liverpool Hope University, is a remarkable achievement. It is important for the scope of its research data, the method of dealing with the data, and the analysis. It is a significant contribution to the study of twentieth century Methodism, a much-neglected field of study.

Cheatle begins with a methodological introduction that acknowledges the diverse literary corpus of Sangster works, preserved in various media and the attendant historiographical problems posed by that diversity. These vary from recorded sermons and radio interviews to his Ph.D. dissertation at the

University of London. The latter was written during the intense German bombing of London during which he stayed at his church, Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London, where a multitude was sheltered and cared for every night in the lower basements of the building. At breaks in the bombing he would ascend the stairs to his office to work on his dissertation, published as *The Path to Perfection* (New York: Abington, 1943). As Cheatle demonstrates, the articles published in widely diverse newspapers around the world provide a longitudinal basis for understanding the significance of the dissertation and the many other volumes published. As it is made clear, Sangster was able to change his mind and never ceased wrestling with the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification or Christian perfection.

Sangster's theology of sanctification was heavily shaped by his experiences in ministry and his own spirituality. He began his ministry as a teenager at the Radnor Street Mission in London, a mission to the poor and downtrodden. He was at the same time a member of the Band of Hope, an organization committed to fighting the scourge of alcoholism in the industrial heartlands of Britain. This was followed by service in World War I as a chaplain. Because of this ministry experience, and the recognition of his skills, he was presented as a candidate for the Methodist ministry without his knowledge! Ministry in the industrial seaport of Liverpool and Scarborough followed. Eventually he was appointed to London.

Personal crises of assurance and his continuing theological reflection brought him into contact with the Oxford Group and his writings for a time reflected the thought and disciplines in that spiritual movement. The dissertation project provided an opportunity to wrestle in more formal fashion with the doctrine of sanctification, thinking about philosophical categories (78-80), eschatology (80-83), higher biblical criticism (83-92), and evolution (92-104). Cheatle gives special attention to the impact of this thinking on Sangster's understanding of sin (105-130) as well as sanctification and perfection (131-165). The changes in Sangster's perspective on these issues throughout his life are carefully delineated. Importantly, Sangster was doing this theological work while engaged in active ministry. This was theological reflection in intense discussion with the wide range of British culture.

The resultant theological analysis was received with enthusiasm in many circles, but in the conservative Holiness Movement (inside and outside Methodism), there was considerable concern. One expression of this concern is revealed in an Asbury Theological Seminary connection to the Sangster story. George Allen Turner, later Professor of English Bible at the Seminary, was a doctoral student at Harvard University when Sangster's *The Path to Perfection* (New York: Abington, 1943) was published. Turner was working on similar themes, from a quite different perspective and in a radically different

context. The resultant “A Comparative Study of the Biblical and Wesleyan Ideas of Perfection to determine the Sources of Wesley’s Doctrine,” (Ph.D. Harvard University, 1946) took Sangster to task on several issues. Turner’s dissertation was published as *The More Excellent Way: The Scriptural Basis of the Wesleyan Message* (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life Press, 1952). Sangster responded in a review published in the Methodist theological journal *Religion in Life* 22, 2 (1953), 310-311. He pointed out that Turner had misrepresented him at several points, most importantly on the question of sin. Turner argued that Sangster was promoting a version of sanctification with “little attention” to Wesley’s concept of “inward sin.”

A significantly revised edition of Turner’s book was published with the title, *The Vision which Transforms: Is Christian Perfection Scriptural?* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964). This tome is more irenic toward Sangster and several of the criticisms were omitted from the new version; there were numerous complimentary comments about Sangster’s work. Unfortunately, as Cheatle indicates (114, *et passim*) Turner persisted in this misreading of Sangster, probably because of misunderstanding the philosophical, psychological, and theological categories with which Sangster was working and with which he was in dialogue.

Cheatle’s volume is an important contribution to understanding both Sangster and the discussions of Methodist theology, especially but not only as it relates to sin, sanctification, and perfection during the first six decades of the twentieth century. He includes the American and British Holiness scholars in the analysis as well as the more “mainline” Methodist thinkers.

The volume is enhanced significantly by an appendix (171-221) that inventories articles and letters published in the scholarly, religious, and secular presses. This is a huge contribution. It provides a database which future scholars of Sangster and his period will be obliged to use. It is arranged chronologically and a mere reading of the titles and the valuable abstracts provided by Cheatle can introduce one to the passionate Wesleyan theology of Sangster, and provide a window on the debates of forty years within British Methodism. A list of other Sangster sources (in various media), a bibliography of secondary literature and an index add further value to the volume.

In this book, thanks to the careful, detailed, nuanced analysis, Sangster emerges as an important theologian and a crucial figure in twentieth century Methodist theology.

Rich Church, Poor Church: Keys to Effective Financial Ministry

J. Clif Christopher

Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

2012, 120 pp., paper, \$14.99

ISBN: 978-1-4267-4336-8

Reviewed by Robert Baker

I just finished reading *Rich Church/Poor Church – Keys to Effective Financial Ministry* by J. Clif Christopher. Honesty compels me to admit I have had this book on my bookshelf since offering to write a review of it this past summer; it was also the smallest book on the “need to review” shelf. The reason the book sat on my bookshelf for so long is the title. This was going to be yet another book on how to financially manage one’s ministry, or so I thought.

I read the book in less than two hours at the B.L. Fisher library, when I was supposed to be catching up on class work. Christopher hooked me with the opening question from a congregant to a pastor who was trying to raise money for some project or another, “Can you honestly tell me that my church is the best place for me to give?” (2). This isn’t a question from a person that did not have the resources to share, or was not actively seeking a way to do so. This is a person honestly assessing the most effective use of her money in a plethora of other worthwhile charitable organizations competing for the same monies. And that is the crux of this book; not another “how to” church collection strategy or “how to” balance a ledger book. It is a book that presents how the financials of a ministry are directly affected by the fundamental execution of its mission. There is a lot of information packed into 107 pages.

Each of the ten chapters that follow the first begins with a matrix that compares the emphasis of the Rich Church with that of the Poor Church. The use of the words “Rich” and “Poor” do inevitably relate to each of the churches financial positions, however the emphasis of the argument is what each of the churches do that makes them “Rich” or “Poor.” The book focuses on the interconnections of church culture, learned habits of pastors, and what stimulates a person in a congregation to financially support the church mission in lieu of all the other competing financial demands. Not surprisingly what motivates a congregant to financially support a church is directly proportional to their perception of the church’s faithful and quantifiable mission of God. Also not surprising, to someone who has had a career working within for profit companies with competing needs for limited capital, the key is to be bold enough to ask for the resources and then be proactive enough to follow up with personalized communications and status updates to ensure future support. Apparently Christopher does

not see much of either in the churches that come to him for help.

Christopher does not offer a cookie cutter approach of “do this” or “do that” as he weaves a balanced argument for emphasis and execution of mission, and I like that. Instead he relates types of efforts expended and/or avoided with their intended or unintended results. He talks about the pastor that has been trained to view donations and those that make the donations as separate from his or her proper duties; the avoidance of proper follow-up to donations and to the donors who step up and fill a need; the congregant(s) who tunes out the request from the financial committee’s help “close the gap” speech that is made part of a worship service, especially during holiday seasons. Christopher advocates a more proactive approach to stewardship with mission that sets clear goals and unmitigated examples of how the church’s resources are meeting God’s call to church mission. The last chapter is a simple game plan that a pastor and/or congregation can follow as a first step to digging itself out of the “poor church” syndrome. The chapter is again not an end all answer to a church’s challenge; however it is intended for what I believe to be nothing more than a simple construct from which to begin conversations.

Needless to say, I believe this is a great book for those of us that aspire to ministry in a denominational or congregational church, or active pastors of the same that are engaged in an endless “do loop” of financial crisis. My review attempts to briefly present the core tenants of what the author is attempting to impart to us the reader and some of my thoughts on what I believe he is communicating. In the end, faithfulness to the mission God has called His church to is all that Christopher is advocating.

John Howard Yoder: Revolutionary Christian Citizenship Yoder for Everyone

John C. Nugent, Branson Parler, and Andy Alexis-Baker, eds.

Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press

2013, 150 pp., paper, \$15.99

ISBN: 978-0-8361-9688-7

Reviewed by Nathan Crawford

To begin this review, let me point to a controversy that has erupted since the publishing of the book. John Howard Yoder has been accused, and seems to have admitted his guilt before his death, of abusing his female students and others under his guidance. This abuse was usually done through groping and/ or pressuring females to have physical contact, although Yoder never seems to have engaged in sexual intercourse with these women. In

this regard, Yoder's work as a theologian and Christian ethicist comes into question because of his staunch support of nonviolence and pacifism. While he argued for a nonviolent approach to all human endeavors that reflect the person of Jesus Christ, Yoder was engaging in such violent acts through sexual misconduct. Due to this, reading Yoder's work becomes much more difficult and reviewing or judging it becomes nearly impossible. The people publishing the series "Yoder for Everyone" seem to agree, as they have recently made the decision to place a *proviso* at the beginning of the books detailing the controversy surrounding Yoder.

In order to write this review then, I will bracket the heinous acts that Yoder committed. Instead, I will try to engage his work on a merely theological and ethical basis, while acknowledging that Yoder not only failed to live up to his high ideals, but also lived a life in direct contrast to them. However, we must still engage his thoughts and weigh whether they can push us to be better and more Christ like than Yoder ultimately was.

The editors divide Yoder's writings into three sections. The first section is entitled "The Witness of Jesus." Here, we find a conception of Jesus as one whose teachings found a distinctive community, the *ekklesia*. This community is ultimately a political community, but operates under an alternative politics, relying upon its faith in Jesus Christ to do miracles and to make all things work together for the glory of God. The witness of Jesus for this community is one of active nonviolence, as one who actively resists the recourse to violence found in society-at-large. Instead, Jesus offers a way of being that is predicated upon peace, the activity of making peace (this is in contrast to the idea of just not causing violence). The second section, "The Witness of the Church," builds upon the first by describing the kind of community that forms in light of Jesus' call to nonviolence. For Yoder, the answer is a distinctive community that cannot merely be a number of individuals, but an elect group that comes from the wider society. This distinctive community is where people learn to walk in the footsteps of Jesus' nonviolence through the church's call to repentance and faith. The church is a place of discipleship, where formation takes place. This formation is a way of being church inside of a society that has recourse to violence. Part of the task of this church is discipleship, the creation of people who live the life of peace first given witness to in Jesus. As the church does this, it bears witness to the broader society as to what it means to live peacefully. The third section, "Witness in Action," shows how the church acts as witness to the broader world through its actions. Specifically, the editors display essays where Yoder takes on those actions that display the peace of the church, such as voting, self-defense, paying taxes, the arms race, etc. In these essays, Yoder shows the "payoff" of proper discipleship to be allegiance to the Kingdom of God over, and at

times against, the kingdoms of this world. The witness of the church is the active peace that comes through proper discipleship. This peace shows the world what it means to have true peace and not just not-violence.

As I conclude, let me offer a few parting thoughts. First, I wish the editors had left some of the longer essays in their original form: the editors made the decision to cut certain essays due to their length. While I understand the goal was to make Yoder more readable for everyone, at times arguments seem truncated or the reader fails to get the full grasp of what Yoder is up to in his thoughts. This has the tendency to take away some of the complexity that is Yoder's writing.

Second, this book was put together for the layperson in mind. Most of these writings are from lectures, popular level writing, or sermons in chapels. As such, the text was meant for more general audiences or beginning academics (such as undergraduates), perhaps to be used among a group at church. However, in light of some of the new revelations about Yoder, it would probably be better to find another set of writings for a group at church or in an undergraduate classroom. One could use writings by a number of thinkers in lieu of Yoder. In all, I would recommend this book to those studying Yoder in a classroom or doing research on him as a useful tool for getting more thoughts; however, as a book for a general audience, I am not sure that this book passes muster.

A Shared Christian Life

Ben Witherington, III

Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

2012, xii, 186 pp., paper, \$14.99

ISBN: 978-1-4267-5317-6

Reviewed by Jeff Hiatt

Ben Witherington provides a needed resource into Christian spiritual formation from a biblical-Wesleyan viewpoint. The essential spiritual formation goal of this book depicts the normal Christian life and spiritual growth process through the usual gatherings of Christians for Sunday worship, collective prayer, searching the Scriptures, and sharing Communion (179). This is both biblical and John Wesley's regimen for making progress toward a life of Christ-likeness (cf. Chapter 3).

Witherington divides the book into two main parts that elucidate the corporate context (chapters 1-5) and the individual Christian experience (chapters 6-9) for spiritual maturation. You will not find spiritual asceticism,

or super-spiritual, individualistic elitism offered in these pages. As the reader gleans in this field, it will be in the company of others in the body of Christ who have the same Christian “fruit of the Spirit” goals as any ordinary Christian believer (68-9). It is a *shared Christian life*. The reader may encounter a personal desire to give full attention to God in worship, prayer, and the Lord’s Supper as means of experiencing God’s grace (ix)—God’s transforming favor to be like Jesus. Yet, the call to do so comes in the midst of the congregation. There is a fine balance of the emphases on the individual and the collective elements of the Christian life-in-process.

Although there is a healthy weight placed on personal piety, even this focus is tempered through the community activity of serving others. In fact, personal growth is more likely to occur rapidly when one is engaged in humble caring for another person. These acts of biblical charity, mercy, or social justice often become unintended, unsought moments of social holiness forming the personal Christian spiritual growth (147-9). Witherington highlights that Mr. Wesley believed that the Bible taught this other-centered pattern as its norm (cf. 149, note Wesley’s comments on the “Sermon on the Mount”). The traditional spiritual disciplines that other authors emphasize for individual-focused spiritual growth exercises are not covered (e.g., compare Richard Foster’s *Celebration of Discipline*, and Ruth Haley Barton’s *Sacred Rhythms* for those elements). Instead, Witherington presents a corrective to the lop-sided individual over-emphasis so often found today.

This book is poised to be used easily as a textbook at the undergraduate level, or for local churches that wish to provide small group collective study and spiritual growth for its members. The book is undergirded by astute scholarly acumen that unloads its profound content in non-specialist accessible language.