

## *Book Reviews*

### **The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom: A Thematic-Theological Approach**

Andrew T. Abernathy

New Studies in Biblical Theology Series

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

2016, 250 pp., paper, \$25.00

ISBN 978-0-8308-2641-4

Reviewed by Michael Whitcomb-Tavey

In his book, Andrew T. Abernathy analyzes the book of Isaiah from a thematic-theological position. His premise is that the holistic theme of Isaiah, from start to finish, is that of “God’s kingdom.” More specifically, throughout the book of Isaiah, various elements in reference to this prophetic meta-theme are addressed. Primarily, Isaiah details five specific sub-themes related to the overall theme of God’s kingdom. These five sub-themes consist of 1) identifying the King of God’s Kingdom, who is God Himself, 2) discussing how God is the only deity worthy to be labeled as a “saving king,” 3) addressing the ways in which God is both a warrior and compassionate king, which leads to international peace and prosperity, 4) identifying the lead agents of His Kingdom, who are used to bring about the kingdom of God upon earth, and 5) identifying both the realm and people of God.

In reference to the first sub-theme, God is primarily described as the “king” throughout the book of Isaiah. This is discovered throughout the book, but primarily in chapter six, where God is described as a holy king at a time when Israel had just lost a king. With keen insight, Abernathy reveals how this sub-theme is substantiated by the next two sub-themes of Isaiah. First, God is king because He is the only divine entity that can rightfully be claimed as a saving king. According to Abernathy, God is described as one who has saved Israel, and who will save Israel in the future. In fact, Isaiah describes God as the one who has defeated all the other gods, thereby proving his worth as the Divine king. Second, God is king because He is both a warrior and a compassionate king that will eventually inaugurate a kingdom where all nations prosper and where all nations experience peace. This

theme reveals how God is not only going to heal Israel, but all the nations. Such peace and prosperity will lead all the nations to journey to Israel, in order to worship God as king. Abernethy explains the importance of these two sub-themes: God can be the only rightful king of the Divine kingdom, for he is both more powerful than all the other gods, and He is also the God of all nations.

The fourth theme identifies the lead agents of God's kingdom. This sub-theme alone could comprise its own book. Therefore, Abernethy only discusses the three primary agents in Isaiah: the Davidic ruler, the suffering servant, and the prophetic figure. While discussing this sub-theme, Abernethy is sagaciously sensitive to both Isaiah, as its own prophetic book placed within the Old Testament, and also its canonical witness to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. According to Abernethy, the Davidic ruler is the ruler God sets up to rule His kingdom with righteousness and justice, the suffering servant is the agent God uses to bring about redemption for His people, and the prophetic figure is the agent God uses to lead His people to a more Holy lifestyle. Finally, the last theme identifies the entire Universe as the realm of God's kingdom, with "Zion" (i.e. Israel, which eventually becomes the "church") being His manifested place of rule on earth. As such, the people of God within Isaiah were the Israelites.

With sixty-six chapters of complex prophetic content, the book of Isaiah can be both overwhelming and confusing for even seasoned Biblical researchers. Despite this, however, Abernethy is able to help bring focus to the book as a whole, providing a thematic guide for the reader, so that the reader might better understand the material. Abernethy's book will provide teachers, students, pastors, non-pastors, and others with an acute understanding of the book of Isaiah. Moreover, he also provides a teaching series outline as an appendix, thereby providing the pastor and/or teacher a guide on how to disseminate the information they learn. As a result, not only will the pastor and teacher benefit, but those they teach as well.



## **Thinking, Listening, Being: A Wesleyan Pastoral Theology**

Jeren Rowell

Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press

2014, 192 pp., paper, \$19.99

ISBN 978-0-8341-3246-7.

Reviewed by J. Russell Frazier

Jeren Rowell serves as the president of Nazarene Theological Seminary and has served as the district superintendent of the Kansas City District of the Church of the Nazarene and as an adjunct faculty member of Olivet Nazarene University where he earned his highest degree, Ed.D. in ethical leadership in 2010. For fourteen years, he served as the Senior Pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Shawnee, Kansas; previously, he served for 12 years as an associate pastor in three different congregations. He also served as editor of two denominational publications *The Communicator* and *Preacher's Magazine*. In addition to the current volume, he is the author of two books *What's A Pastor to Do?* and *The Good and Difficult Work of Ministry*.

Despite the author's denominational affiliations and the use of the denominational publisher, Rowell avoids the use of parochial terminology in favor of employing more ecumenical terminology (cf. p. 8 where he employs the term "overseer" rather than "superintendent"). Although he quotes from the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* (147) in discussing the ritual of the sacraments, the source of the citations are only evident in the footnotes and not in the body of the text itself. The attempt to avoid denominational references makes the book useful to a wider audience, specifically Wesleyan-holiness pastors (23).

Rowell holds that many pastors fail due to "a poorly constructed pastoral theology" (22). He determines to correct the faulty theology. The aim of his work is stated as follows: "...I set out to gather in some kind of systematic way a theological and practical framework for thinking about, preparing for, and executing the life and work of a pastor" (22). He is modest in his purpose, not supposing that it will add "greatly" to the classic pastoral theologies (22-23, 181), but does anticipate that his work will provide "theological reflections on the life and work of the pastor" (23).

The first eight chapters appear under the first part entitled "Good Thinking: Wesleyan Pastoral Theology" and include descriptors of the word "thinking" which are: Wesleyan, theologically, identity, prayerfully, leadership, essentially, humbly and holy. In chapter one, "Thinking Wesleyan," Rowell provides pointers on how the

Wesleyan Quadrilateral can be used in developing a Wesleyan pastoral theology. The identity of effective pastors arises from the call of God and the Church. Pastors should maintain a prayerful orientation that engages in constant prayer. Rowell challenges the secular paradigms of leadership and promotes a biblical model of leadership, which is characterized by humility, solidarity, compassion, integrity, and sacrifice (58f). In the chapter, “Thinking Essentially,” Rowell, borrowing a page from Eugene Peterson, challenges pastors to focus on the essentials: prayer, study of Scriptures, and spiritual direction. Thinking humbly entails downward mobility, submitting to authority, and a humble leadership posture. Rowell desires for pastors to demonstrate a leadership “that is so defined by God’s perfect love that it no longer has anything of its own to prove; it has only to prove the authenticity of a love that lays down its life in service to another” (87).

Part two is entitled “Good Listening and Being: Wesleyan Pastoral Practice.” The first two chapters focus on listening to God and to people. Rowell focuses in these two chapters on techniques and means of listening, including, in the first chapter, respecting Sabbath and listening to God through Scripture. The second chapter discusses listening to people in an unhurried manner and active listening both with individuals and among groups. The next six chapter titles use descriptors of the word “being”; they are being preacher, evangelist, teacher, officiant, reconciler, and true. Rowell emphasizes biblical preaching and planning for preaching. The role of evangelism and the role of the pastor in teaching congregants to witness to their faith are stressed. Rowell holds that pastors should live so that their “entire life becomes instructive as a model of fully surrendered discipleship” (127). Chapter 14, a longer chapter, stresses the role of the pastor as a leader of worship, including his/her role as an officiant of the sacraments, weddings, and funerals. The author discusses the importance of church unity and the role of the pastor in reconciling in conflicting circumstances within the local church through the use of strategies of reconciliation. In the chapter “Being True,” Rowell addresses ethics traps and strategies for the ministers to remain true to their calling.

Part 3, entitled “Faithful and Effective: Rightly Assessing Pastoral Work,” discusses the appropriate perspective on ministerial success in the seventeenth chapter. In the last chapter “Legacy,” the author discusses two ways that pastors can make a purposeful investment in the lives of successors: 1) nurturing the call of God in the lives of others (177); 2) mentoring others in the ministry (179).

Rowell’s work has made an important contribution to the field of pastoral theology for Wesleyan-holiness pastors. The author acknowledges debts to the writings of pastoral theologians Eugene H. Peterson and William Willimon

(22), but he extends the discussion beyond the writings of these mentors, making application of ministerial disciplines to the thinking of the pastor. Not only does the writer stress thinking and the need for practical theologians (22, 37), Rowell also emphasizes mentoring, integrity, humility and other disciplines of the pastor's life. Despite the subtitle, the book does not provide a comprehensive treatment of pastoral theology, but its emphasis on the disciplines of the pastoral life is its strong suit. This seasoned pastor, writer and overseer of churches should be commended for a heartfelt introduction to pastoral ministry and the emphasis on the spiritual life and thinking of pastors.

### **Brian McLaren in Focus: A New Kind of Apologetics**

Scott R. Burson

Abilene, KS: Abilene Christian University Press

2016, 303 pp., paper, \$22.99

ISBN: 978-0-89112-469-6

Reviewed by R. Scott Smith

Scott Burson has written the best work on Brian McLaren's thought to date. It is massively researched, drawing upon his dialogues with McLaren. Moreover, McLaren wrote the introduction, providing direct support of Burson's work. The book also includes an appendix of their e-mails. Burson carefully draws upon these and other sources, enabling him to clarify McLaren's views.

The book consists of nine chapters and four useful appendices. In the introduction, Burson explores McLaren's motivation to reconsider the "distorted" Christian narrative we have inherited. McLaren originally attributed it to five-point Calvinism ("5C"), but later to fundamentalism. Burson carefully explains how McLaren sees the cognitive influences of modernity upon 5C. But, even more importantly, he surfaces McLaren's deeper concerns with 5C's ethical effects, which McLaren thinks include excessive confidence in the elect and "colonizing superiority and oppression" (111).

In chapter two, Burson identifies three periods of development in McLaren's life and thought: the early (1956-94), the emerging (1995-2005), and emergent (2006ff) periods, with their key publications and events. Burson clarifies McLaren's early influences, such as his upbringing in the Plymouth Brethren, and his being discipled by a Calvinist. Here, too, the influences of many others (e.g., Stan Grenz and Walker Percy) become clearer.

Chapter three explores McLaren's views about the Bible, where Burson initially identifies McLaren's resonance with open theism, and his rejection of total determinism. For him, humans have genuine freedom, so the future is open. Yet, due to how they read Scripture, evangelicals often miss appreciating the importance of human dignity, evolutionary development, and narrative. Burson makes helpful distinctions, noting for instance that while McLaren is not a process theologian, he is a theistic evolutionist.

Chapter four focuses more on Calvinism. Part of McLaren's reason for rejecting it is that he sees it as portraying a modern, mechanistic view of God, whereas he sees God in an organic, relational way. McLaren rejects total depravity, yet not original sin; rather, he redefines it in terms of Girard's mimetic theory. McLaren also rejects total determinism because it undermines human dignity, authenticity, and relationality. He stresses God's goodness, not sovereignty. Here, too, Burson helpfully evaluates McLaren's arguments, with good attention to determinism, compatibilism, and libertarian freedom.

In chapter five, Burson takes up McLaren's doctrinal revisions, including total depravity and unconditional election (which he redefines). McLaren does not have a theory of the atonement, and he rejects the penal substitutionary view. Eschatologically, Burson describes McLaren as a preterist. Burson also touches on (but does not fully pursue) McLaren's influence from pantheists such as Jürgen Moltmann, John Haught, and Wolfhart Pannenberg. (It also would have been helpful for the publisher to include Burson's dissertation's material on McLaren's nonreductive physicalism.)

Next, in chapter six, Burson attempts to locate McLaren's views on a spectrum of modern liberal, post liberal, post conservative, and evangelical theology. He considers several factors and notes that McLaren does not deny the existence of miracles. For example, he believes in Jesus' resurrection and life after death for humans. Apologetically, McLaren stresses having a good faith over a right faith, which is marked by three traits: a) cooperation, not conquering; b) holism, not rationalism; and c) particulars, not universals. Overall, Burson sees McLaren as being "in the post conservative/post liberal neighborhood, but perhaps on the post liberal side of the street" (199).

Burson uses chapter seven to see to what extent McLaren stands in affinity with Arminian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. There he also suggests ways to strengthen McLaren's objections to determinism. Chapter eight, however, explores the extent of McLaren's dissonance with Arminianism, such as over the Wesleyan Quadrilateral; hell; and Christ's atonement, resurrection, and divinity. Moreover, he assesses McLaren's alternative telling (the "Greco-Roman" version) of the received

Christian narrative as lacking academic support and discounting the Spirit's ability to guide, correct, and communicate with us.

Finally, in chapter nine, Burson asks, "What can evangelicals learn from McLaren?" Emphatically, many might say nothing. Yet, Burson probes why McLaren has dropped off evangelicals' radar screen, which has been due to strident critiques leveled by Calvinist "gatekeepers." In contrast, Burson's writing is an example of what he thinks evangelicals can learn the most from McLaren: the importance of embodying a generous, charitable spirit, and adopting a tone of kindness.

Burson has brought much clarity to many of McLaren's positions through careful exposition of his works. Charitably, yet faithfully, he assesses McLaren's contributions and weaknesses with strong theological, biblical, and philosophical insights. This work is irenic and scholarly, yet also written very accessibly. It deserves wide, thoughtful attention.

### **The Mestizo Augustine: A Theologian Between Two Cultures**

Justo L. González

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

2016, 192 pp., paper, \$24.00

ISBN: 978-0-08308-5150-8

Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts

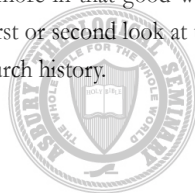
Justo González is well known for eminently readable works on church history. *The Mestizo Augustine* in this regard does not disappoint. It is a slim volume, yet it provides both biography and a fresh analysis of Augustine in a highly accessible fashion. In this way, it easily recommends itself both to the person looking for an entry point to Augustine and the person familiar with the material but looking for a new angle from which to approach it.

The new angle offered is to look at Augustine through the lens of *mestizaje*, a Spanish term that has come to mean living between multiple cultures or in the overlap of multiple cultures. It is the experience of many immigrant populations in the highly mobile world in which we find ourselves in today. There is, however, both a connection and a disconnection expressed within this word. "To be a mestizo is to belong to two realities and at the same time not to belong to either of them" (15). To be Mexican-American may mean that neither other Mexicans nor other Americans accept you as truly Mexican or truly American. To be mestizo is to deal with issues of identity and acceptance.

Yet, the experience of being mestizo can be fertile ground for creativity and an opening for new cultural possibilities. It is here, González argues, that we find Augustine. At first, this may sound like the heavy-handed, anachronistic application of a modern, Spanish term to a historical figure in order to say something about a pressing current issue. González, though, is a careful historian sensitive to context. He spends a large portion of the book sketching the life of Augustine within its social, cultural, and political setting. As one looks at the life of Augustine with the term “mestizo” floating in the background, the details of his movement across and between cultural boundaries and groups come into sharper relief. Augustine is not Mexican-American, but he is developing and ministering within African Berber or “Punic” culture at the same time that he is being steeped in the politically dominant Roman culture.

Moving from the biography, González devotes four chapters to looking at the interactions Augustine has with Manichaeans, Donatists, Pelagians, and pagans. Within each of these debates, the pastoral Augustine reaches for persuasive responses, but at times he leans on his Berber heritage and at times he draws upon his Roman background. That is not to say that Augustine is always successful and González points out multiple points where the framework that Augustine used to answer the pressing questions of the day sometimes muddled the conversation. At times, neither side can see some of the larger political and social stakes within the conversation (i.e. Augustine’s attempts to answer Donatism in a totally theological way, without dealing with the issues relating to Roman oppression and African resistance).

Even so, González makes a strong case that part of the profundity and the enduring influence Augustine has had over Western culture has to do with the way multiple cultures are embraced and clashing within this one person. The mestizo lens accents the contextual responsiveness and cultural resources Augustine is drawing on as he is answering difficult pastoral problems. Rather than being awkward or anachronistic, by the end of the book I was actually wishing González had been more forceful and direct in his application of this mestizo lens. It seemed that there was so much more that could still be said, so many more connections waiting to be made. That restraint, though, is part of the charm of this book. The reader is left asking for more in that good way which inspires conversation, scholarship, and, perhaps, a first or second look at the source material: all excellent outcomes for a teacher of church history.





## **Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience**

by Stefan Paas

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

2016, 316 pp., paper, \$28.45

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7348-4

Reviewed by Bud Simon

Stefan Paas, a professor of missiology and intercultural theology in Amsterdam, makes a solid contribution to the Gospel and Our Culture Series with a close examination of the state of church planting in Europe. His analytical research of existing strategies is a unique contribution to the post-modern and post-Christendom realities that exist in Europe today. This book is an important contribution for students, researchers and practitioners interested in such contexts as it provides a historical and theoretical framework of European church planting with well-reasoned missiological insights.

Paas brings together research from various European contexts and historical perspectives. This is helpful to spotlight church planting that has been successful in the past and what contributed to those successes. He also provides missiological reflection on the historical framework that allows the reader to interpret the successes in light of contemporary context. The aim of the book is to move the discussion of church planting away from methodology that doesn't consider historical and local context so that the conversation is grounded missiologically. This goal is well achieved through the willingness to challenge colloquial assumptions concerning contemporary theories and practices of church planting in Europe.

One example of this is that Evangelicals often use models and justifications of church planting which flow out of the Reformation, especially from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, when there was a movement to seek freedom from state churches. This type of church planting relies on reasons that flow from the context of that era rather than reflecting on the current reality that the church faces. One function of this is that church planting normally is an extension of denominationalism and rarely is there any attempt to coordinate between different churches. Another function of that era is that church planting is simplified into an expression of evangelism and justified as such. However research into who is joining new churches doesn't demonstrate evangelistic growth. These examples demonstrate Paas' willingness to challenge current pragmatism in the field so as to move the discussion towards a missiological framework.

One weakness in the writing is that there are few solutions suggested to resolve the issue of re-evangelizing Europe. He recognizes that the church crisis needs adaptable solutions for the multiple contexts of the continent and suggests that church planting needs a climate of tolerant innovation. In this way, theology casts church planting as an expression of mission in order to establish an alternative community in the world. But the question of turning such suggestions into realities is only addressed at the theoretical level.

Overall Paas does a good job of deconstructing oversimplifications of the crisis in European Christianity. His discussion is wide ranging and demonstrates the need to rethink strategies. The book's dialogue with typical church planting expectations rethinks the way God has called churches to engage their communities and is recommended as a worthy addition to the bookshelf of those involved in such situations.

### **Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study**

Jonathan I. Griffiths

New Studies in Biblical Theology Series

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

2017, 153 pp., paper, \$22.00

ISBN: 978-0-8308-2643-8

Reviewed by Scott Donahue-Martens

Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study, by Jonathan Griffiths, the lead pastor of the Metropolitan Bible Church in Ottawa, Canada, primarily seeks to uncover whether the practice of preaching is biblical and if it is distinct from other word ministries. As the title suggests, the main area of focus is New Testament preaching, and more specifically, post-apostolic sections of scripture. At the same time, the author is concerned with whether a line of continuity exists from the Old Testament prophetic preaching, to the preaching of Jesus and the apostles, and finally to post-apostolic preaching. The book is split into three parts and contains two excurses. Exegesis and biblical theology are the primary methodologies of the work.

In part one, Griffiths highlights the importance of words to God and God's work. He argues that when preachers are faithful to God and to the biblical

text, they are speaking God's word. This theological section helps the reader grasp what is at stake in the preaching event and why preaching is central to the Christian community. Griffiths builds on Claire Smith's identification of three "semi-technical terms" for preaching by providing valuable charts of their use in the New Testament. For the terms, *euangelizomai*, *katangellō*, and *kēryssō*, the charts record speaker, context, and content. The systematic and organized approach is helpful for the reader to gather an overview of how words translated as preaching or preaching activities function in the New Testament.

The particular passages, 2 Timothy 3-4, Romans 10, 1 Corinthians 1-2, 9, and 15, 2 Corinthians 2-6, 1 Thessalonians 1-2, and Hebrews, are given larger attention in part two. Each of these books is given a separate chapter. The chapters describe significant verses, give biblical context for the verses, and relate the individual book to the larger focus of biblical theology. Griffiths lays out a good introduction of a biblical theology of preaching with a strong textual methodology. A great strength of *Preaching in the New Testament* is its reliance on scriptural support to make arguments. The author continually gives extensive references within particular post-apostolic texts and the canon as a whole. While this is done well and with care, the lack of engagement with the broader historical milieu diminishes the exegetical method employed. A reader searching for information about preaching in the Greco-Roman world or even the extra-biblical context of the "three semi-technical" terms for preaching may be disappointed.

Griffiths concludes that preaching is biblical; however, because none of the three "semi-technical" words are used in reference to general believers, he asserts that preaching is done by those specifically called by God. He contends that other believers participate in a general category called word ministries, but preaching is exclusive to those commissioned by God to preach. Those commissioned by God preach to a public audience by declaring God's message to the people. The relationship between divine and human elements of preaching within the biblical texts is rightfully noted and explored, especially with regards to the authority of the messenger. The strong evangelistic thrust of preaching within the New Testament is highlighted throughout the book, as the content of preaching is generally salvific. The relationship between New Testament preaching and Old Testament prophecy is explored in an excurses and throughout the book. Griffiths determines that a line of continuity exists between the two; however, New Testament preaching functions differently because he argues that preachers no longer receive new revelations from God.

Griffiths is forthright that his work is not a guide on how to preach but an exploration on the theology of preaching. Those seeking a guide on preaching

or looking for how a theology of New Testament preaching impacts preaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should look elsewhere. A stated goal of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, of which *Preaching in the New Testament* belongs, is to “help thinking Christians understand their Bibles better.” To that end, the book provides the general reader with significant information on how preaching functioned in the New Testament. The intertextual approach is skillfully handled and provides a descriptive approach to preaching rooted in the biblical text. Academics and seminarians looking for more than a word study on the ‘semi-technical’ words for preaching may be disappointed, especially with the exegetical methodology that exclusively focused on the text. Those looking for biblical justification for preaching or an introduction on a biblical theology of preaching that utilizes a strong textual methodology will enjoy and be enlightened by *Preaching in the New Testament*.

### **Prevenient Grace: An Investigation into Arminianism**

J. Alexander Rutherford

Vancouver, British Columbia: Teleioteti Publishing

2016, x + 342 pp., paper, \$16.00

ISBN: 978-1-5176-3840-5

Reviewed by W. Brian Shelton

The enduring debate on grace and free will has seen recent attention to the nature of depravity and the human condition. Alexander Rutherford continues this trend as a graduate student at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada. In a desire to “write for the Church and those who will teach the local church” (iii), Rutherford seeks to investigate the biblical grounding and rational foundation for the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace. This audience is kept in view as he attempts three strategies in a lengthy volume: a detailed analytical outline, an address to complicated and technical issues, and definitions of obscure terminology. The size of the work results from his explanatory clarifications to his lay audience, clarifications which are technical, rational, and analytical. His overarching priority is “to make the Bible the central piece of all my arguments” (iv) and his attention to scripture is considerable. The investigation intends to be objective as it examines prevenient grace through the exegetical data underlying the doctrine, the systematic construction of the biblical evidence, and the philosophical fortitude of the whole doctrine.

The author is familiar with the theological arguments surrounding the grace/free will controversy and he is enthusiastic about employing syllogistic approaches to theological thinking. Rutherford rightly recognizes that a doctrine of prevenient grace is foundational to Arminian theology: “God gives prevenient grace to every man and woman, freeing their bonded wills and enabling them to either choose His free offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ or reject it” (6). He recognizes that an Arminian understanding of the topic explains God’s relationship with the world and the nature of salvation represented in the Word. He is aware that the work of prevenient grace is an enabling one, a provisional one, and that this system with its prevenient grace offers an explanation of wooing and drawing (John 6:44) rather than unconditional election. He knows how prevenient grace offers an explanation for the universal availability of salvation (John 3:16) rather than a narrow atonement only for the elect. He is informed how the free will passages in scripture are collected to make a systematic theology that is biblically coherent for Arminians. Yet, he does not go deep into his investigation before revealing that this doctrine will not survive his biblical and philosophical rubric. At the earliest juncture, the doctrine of prevenient grace is for the author “like the seed planted on the rocks in Jesus’ parable”—flowering, drying up, and dying because it of its rootlessness (2). Any reader will immediately recognize the book as another polemical contribution to a commonly partisan debate.

At the core of Rutherford’s polemics is a rejection of any legitimate reading of scripture other than a Reformed reading. He shows naivety when he fails to realize that Arminians are familiar with his elaborate explanation of compatibilism, but they don’t believe the bible teaches it. Rather than allow for the Arminian reading of scripture to develop through exegesis and then engage each interpretation that constructs its theological system, a Reformed hermeneutic of impossibility haunts the Arminian exegesis: “Most of the Arminian arguments are not actually exegetical or biblical” (98). Universal passages signify only the elect (89), prolepsis finds no explanation or prospect (95), and compatibilism comfortably prevents some non-believers from salvation (151). This dismissal of the Arminian perspective is all the more disappointing when the author never engages nor cites Arminius or Wesley in their own writings; Roger Olson and David Fry become his principal sources for understanding prevenient grace. Rutherford completely overlooks the first comprehensive treatment of prevenient grace from 2014 authored by this reviewer. Its attention to the works of Arminius and Wesley could have intercepted some of his misunderstanding of their intentions. Meanwhile, the voices of Calvin and contemporary Calvinists sound throughout in defense of total depravity, unconditional election, and effectual calling.

Two particular extremes against fellow Protestants are concerning. First, the Reformed view of total depravity is equated with historic orthodoxy. While all Christians maintain depravity that requires grace for salvation, when prevenient grace proves untenable for him he remarks, “The Arminian position is stuck at the very least in self-contradiction or maybe even in the realm of historical heresy for denying total depravity” (6). Second, his reading of scripture admittedly necessitates the proposition that human activity is free when controlled by God: “Only compatibilism can affirm this proposition: if we reject this proposition, rejecting inerrancy is our only option” (125). For the author, Arminians cannot be inerrantists and they risk being heretical.

One of the strengths of the book is the lengthy and clear lay out of the arguments for each issue surrounding prevenient grace. At times, the tone is fair, even irenic, and explanatory. This offers instructive material to both the Arminian system and a Reformed response, although his technical approach will desert his lay audience intention. The work will provide many researchers insight into lines of thinking on election, determinism, free will, and depravity. However, the author chooses to employ invective in his teaching that exacerbates the debate. To list them all would be equally polemical, but a review warrants one illustration: “One does not need a doctorate in philosophy or theology to see the ridiculousness of the argument they are attempting” (109).

In the end, this book innovatively combines biblical, theological, and philosophical thought, but it suffers from all of the trappings of a Reformed perspective on Arminianism. The roots of prevenient grace have not been exposed for the tree to wither naturally, but the roots have been pumped with silvicide from a biased reading of scripture. The tragedy is not that Rutherford has written against prevenient grace; it is tragic that his work may further divide believers in an already divisive debate.



## **Being Human in God's World: An Old Testament Theology of Humanity**

J. Gordon McConville

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2016, xi + 240 pp., paper, \$25.00

ISBN 978-0-8010-9970-0

Reviewed by David Nonnenmacher, Jr.

It should not come as a surprise to students of the Old Testament that the conversation surrounding the creation of humanity is alive and well – the significance of such discussion can scarcely be overstated. In his work *Being Human in God's World: An Old Testament Theology of Humanity*, J. Gordon McConville unpacks an array of themes that contributes much to how one can begin understanding the role of humanity within its ancient biblical framework. True to his book's title, McConville centers the body of his writing around the question "what does it mean to be human?" This query, ultimately inspired by Psalm 8:4, can be felt looming in the background of every discussion and fueling each chapter with incentive to push forward ever deeper into the matters at hand.

The first and second chapters initiate the conversation with a well-structured analysis of Genesis 1-3 where the *imago Dei* is "fleshed out" in an interesting light. In opposition to scripture's ancient Near Eastern context, McConville argues that the *imago Dei* is less about humanity's representation of God in the world and more about humanity's desire to pursue the divine and live amongst one another. In short, it is both relational and active. The third and fourth chapters delve deeper into these concepts in a more exegetical fashion as McConville explores the nature of the self, including alternative nuances for the terms "heart, soul, mind, and spirit." While McConville does not specifically designate "parts" to his book, chapter five seems to serve as the change in tempo as it begins to explore how one may begin understanding Old Testament metaphor and language considering the aforementioned conclusions.

The subsequent chapters each contain their own primary thematic emphases. Chapter six immerses itself in creation's physicality; this does not just include humanity, but also the natural order and land. Chapters seven and eight highlight various aspects of human experience and identity. These include politics and rights as well as sexual desire and various ways in which intimacy is expressed. Chapter nine concerns itself more heavily with the increasingly popular theme of participation through work and livelihood. The author concludes his work in chapter ten by reflecting on worship as the center of what it means to be Christian.

Undoubtedly, some of the strengths of *Being Human in God's World* include its broad theological strokes and in-depth conversational approach. While this style can at times lend itself to digression and a lack of cohesion, such traits could be simply marked as an occupational hazard given the discussions at hand. Amongst the few critiques that could be made about McConville's methodology, his work may have greatly benefitted from including reflections from historical scholarship. It should be noted that he does phenomenally well in including modern philosophers, theologians, and even poets, but there is little to no mention of how his conclusions relate to those who have pioneered portions of this discussion in the past. Overall, McConville does well in navigating through a sea of theological principles and arriving at some robust conclusions that will surely edify any reader.

The creativity and imaginative elaborations expressed in this book gives it an edge against other similar works. Whether the reader is wading in its shallows or swimming in its depths, there is something here for everyone attempting to know more about the relationship between God and humankind. One does not have to be a scholar like its author to pick up this work and walk away feeling more illuminated. This is most certainly not to say, however, that both the budding and experienced Old Testament scholar wouldn't do well in adding this text to their bookshelf.

### **The State of Missiology Today: Global Innovations in Christian Witness**

Charles E. Van Engen, ed.

Downers Grove, MI: InterVarsity Press

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Reviewed by Stanley Cung

*The State of Missiology Today* is a collection of articles, which were being presented in a conference to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of School of Intercultural Studies (SIS) (formerly School of World Mission) in 2015 at Fuller Theological Seminary. It explores the developments and transformation in the study and practice of mission with two purposes: to look backward and celebrate the missiological innovations of Donald McGavran, the founder of SIS, and his associates (1), and to look forward for future directions of missiological engagement. Therefore, this book is about looking both backwards and forwards at mission studies and its prospects in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edited by Charles van Engen, the Arthur F. Glasser Professor Emeritus of Biblical Theology of Mission at Fuller



Theological Seminary, who has taught in the School of Intercultural Studies since 1988, it is composed of fourteen articles contributed by different scholars from diverse interest and background which makes the book more valuable and helpful.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, the authors focus on the celebration and evaluation of the innovations of Donald McGavran and his associates. And the second part focuses on looking forward to the future of mission studies by presenting the challenges of Christian mission. Among significant and important contributions from the authors of this book, I find four themes most helpful and challenging: the role of the Bible, radical embrace, mission to the margins, and future challenges for Christian mission. First, Shawn B. Redford's article on innovations in missiological hermeneutics discusses the role of scripture in relation to mission. He criticizes selecting biblical proof texts for mission, and argues for rereading the Bible with missiological eyes by presenting five hermeneutics that transform the relation of the Bible and mission: missiological hermeneutics by Arthur F. Glasser, thematic hermeneutics by Charles van Engen, ethnohermeneutics by Charles H. Kraft, spiritual hermeneutics by Shawn Redford, and scientific hermeneutics.

The second significant and most challenging article in this book is "Who Is Our Cornelius?" by Pascal D. Bazzell in which he discusses the importance of 'radical embrace'. He uses the story of Peter and Cornelius and explores the 'in-between space' for the model of 'mission with the people' to challenge the church to go beyond itself for a radical embrace of the divine in the other, and experience the mysterious presence of the Spirit in the other for mutual transformation – being both a bearer and recipient of truth. The third challenging missiological theme is mission to the margins by Jayakumar Christian. In his article, Christian discusses the role of the church in the margins. He identifies the problem as the absence of the church in the margins and the lack of missiology relevant for the margins, and highlights five missiological themes for the church and its mission to be relevant to the margins – a theology of power, identity, anger, the Holy Spirit, and truth – for alternative missiology for the margins.

For future challenges of Christian mission, the articles by Wonsuk Ma, Stephen B. Bevans, Mary Motte and Scott W. Sunquist are worth being mentioned here. In his article, Ma calls the SIS to seek the global voices and participation in ecumenical mission leadership, and for creation of mission knowledge. Likewise, Bevans presents a friendly challenge to SWM/SIS: the theology of liberation, the role of liturgy, prayer, and contemplation as elements of mission, and the practice of mission as prophetic dialogue. Mary Motte's discussion of four themes for the future of mission in Roman Catholicism is also a great contribution. They are open

to the ecumenical movement, express interest and a positive attitude in interreligious relations and a theology of dialogue, search for truth and promoting human dignity, and moving toward a new creation. In the conclusion of the book, Scott W. Sunquist lists the advancement of technology, the popularity and significance of insider movements, the ministry of peacemaking, the place of scripture, the issue of migration and displacement, the role of the Holy Spirit, the issue of poverty, and the concept of mission from the South and the East as the eight future trends which will guide us in mission.

The readers of the book might find some difficulty in connecting one article to the other as often happens in a book composed of a collection of articles from diverse contributors. However, it is undeniable that *The State of Missiology* is rich in missiological thinking. It not only brings out invaluable insights and contributions of missiologists from the past, but also covers and reflects current missiological themes from different scholars from diverse contexts. Its richness should have been complemented with an addition of missiological responses to the issues of ecology, which has often been missing in evangelical theological concerns. But, without a doubt, this book will greatly benefit those who are interested in mission studies and world Christianity.

