**Book Reviews**

**An Exploration of Christian Theology, 2nd Edition**  
Don Thorsen  
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic  
2020, 448 pp., paper, $39.99  
ISBN: 978-1-5409-6174-7

Reviewed by Benjamin P. Snoek

Among the ever-widening sea of introductory systematic theology texts is Don Thorsen’s *An Exploration of Christian Theology*, which has become one of the more prominent books in evangelical circles. Now in its second edition, Thorsen has updated his text and included two new chapters on apologetics (ch. 5) and the fate of the unevangelized (ch. 29). The *Exploration* follows a typical systematic structure, roughly patterned after the logic of the Apostles’ Creed. It treats prolegomena, God, creation, humanity, sin, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, salvation, the church, and the future. Each chapter follows an overall predictable arrangement: an opening illustration from scripture, a historical survey of the doctrine’s development, and a sweep of contemporary perspectives on the doctrine (with special attention given to evangelical views). This reviewer finds it notable that Thorsen opens each chapter with a scripture reference—a strategic move that grounds his doctrinal exposition in the biblical text.

In his writing, Thorsen expresses a warmly evangelical yet decidedly Wesleyan perspective. While he teaches at a Wesleyan-Holiness institution, Thorsen also engages in ecumenical work, a labor that is clearly reflected in his generous treatment of Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, Holiness, and Charismatic perspectives. He dedicates more attention to Wesleyan and Pentecostal views; to be sure, especially in his discussion of sanctification and charismatic gifts. Thorsen openly and unapologetically advocates for an egalitarian inclusion of women in ministry (329), for instance. Furthermore, he is obviously writing with John Wesley in the
fore of his mind; at one point, he unnecessarily injects Wesley’s opinion into a discussion of Reformation-era soteriologies (247). While remaining cognizant of his American Wesleyan bias, Thorsen seeks to “explore the full Christian tradition by providing an ecumenical sketch of its beliefs, values, and practices as they developed in history,” an approach that “does not seek church unity so much as it seeks a unity of understanding and appreciation for the varieties of church traditions” (10).

Thorsen’s *Exploration* has many laudable strengths. Each chapter is very short and digestible, ideal for introductory students who may be overwhelmed with foreign theological vocabulary. Whereas many systematic theologies are cool and didactic, Thorsen writes with a friendly and conversational tone, using plain yet profound language. Thorsen’s precedent writings advocate for the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as the sources for theology; however, he does not openly state his proclivity in this book. Nonetheless, the structure of his chapters is clearly influenced by this method, with an opening introduction from scripture, a description of historical developments of the doctrine (tradition), a conclusion that appeals to reason, and a set of reflection questions that appeal to experience.

Another strength is found in the design and layout of the book itself. Although some may find its size to be unusual and clunky, its design is actually a strategic way of accommodating two-column text throughout. Other comparable systematic theologies look more like monographs than introductory textbooks. For instance, Daniel Migliore’s *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Eerdmans) uses roughly the same dimensions but uses one-column text and no pull quotes or call-out boxes. Beth Felker Jones’ *Practicing Christian Doctrine* (Baker Academic) is smaller than Thorsen’s book but feels more cluttered with its many call-out boxes on a small page. With prominent (but not distracting) pull quotes and helpful headers that organize key points, and generous space for reading, the layout of Thorsen’s *Exploration* makes it easy to quickly identify information.

Given the panoply of introductory systematic theologies, why choose this book? It is this reviewer’s opinion that Thorsen’s text has a place for many venues of theological education. Thorsen’s *Exploration*, in particular, is a suitable text for undergraduate theology courses and perhaps an introductory seminary course. Even a church adult education class would benefit from this resource. The short chapters are appealing for students who are unfamiliar with theological language or are not majoring in theology. The back matter contains dense indices and a handy glossary.
of key theological terms—useful reference material for any student. Some systematics lean toward praxis (Felker Jones), while others lean toward theory (Migliore). Thorsen, however, attempts to find a *via media* and does so with relative success, given the sizeable weight of this task. The reflection questions at the close of each chapter help bridge doctrine and practice and could be used as reading journal assignments in a classroom setting.

To be sure, there are some who *shouldn't* adopt this book. Those aiming for deeper theological study, or who already have basic theological education, may be disappointed by this book, finding it insufficient for their needs. Moreover, those who are seeking a distinctly evangelical introduction to theology may be distracted by the ecumenical flurry of Thorsen’s attention. A more fitting resource might be Daniel Treier’s *Introducing Evangelical Theology* (Baker Academic), released in the same catalog year as this book. Treier’s book may be similar in content but finds its structure in a Trinitarian frame. Although both are writing within the evangelical tradition, Thorsen may have a more generous eye for his intended audience, while Treier is advancing decidedly evangelical theologies.

In short, Don Thorsen has gifted students with a revamped *Exploration of Christian Theology*, continuing the legacy of an already strong text. As far as introductory systematic theologies go, this book is a viable contender for any classroom. Students will enjoy Thorsen’s perspicuity, readability, and practicality. Moreover, instructors will find that this book is comparable in content to “competitive” texts but is presented, both logically and physically, in a much more appealing manner. For these reasons, *An Exploration of Christian Theology* merits inclusion in the course booklist or, at the very least, in the course bibliography.

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**Honor, Shame and the Gospel: Reframing Our Message and Ministry**

Edited by Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke  
Pasadena, CA: William Carey Publishing  
2020, 252 pp., paper, $17.99  
ISBN: 978-1-64508-280-4

Reviewed by Bud Simon

*Honor, Shame and the Gospel: Reframing Our Message and Ministry* is a compendium of essays presented at the 2017 Honor-Shame
Wheaton conference. The theme of the book addresses the intersection of honor-shame (HS) with gospel, mission, praxis, and theology. The book provides an admirable addition to the dialogue on HS through fifteen essays, each of which is a standalone article, and enriches the conversation. The compendium offers a diversity of contributions written by different authors on a range of topics. The editors provide reflection questions at the end of each chapter which points the reader to deeper engagement with the topic.

A list of ten statements concerning honor-shame clarifies assumptions which provide structure to further the conversation and is found in the introduction of the book (xxi-xxiv). These statements highlight established assumptions as a framework to catalyze fruitful conversation and are worth mentioning here: HS is a foundational cultural dynamic, there is no culturally neutral gospel, humanity longs for honor as part of God's design, HS is both ancient and contemporary, Shame can be honorable (healthy), HS is one among several cultural values as well as interwoven into all cultural values, the Bible speaks of many facets of HS, toxic shame is a global epidemic, the gospel is fundamentally honorific, and HS reveals a hermeneutic for scripture as well as relevance for culture.

The book is divided into two sections - general and mission contexts. The section on general context primarily addresses honor-shame in theology and biblical studies while mission context focuses on culture and ministry. Each essay makes a distinctive addition to the honor-shame discussion and three of these essays are highlighted.

Chapter one (by Steven C. Hawthorne) discusses the metanarrative of God's glory in scripture and God's plan of honor for humanity. Honor flows from humanity to God as well as from God to humanity. The invitation from God is to share in his glory with Christ and fulfills the innate longing for honor found in every human. The theme of honor runs from Genesis to Revelation and demonstrates how HS plays a role in all cultural value systems. This chapter sets the stage for the rest of the book.

Chapter seven (Steve Tracy) discusses the transformative power of the cross to remove the shame of abuse. This is a pivotal perspective because it appropriates the grace of the cross not only for the sins committed by the recipient, but also for the shame of sins committed against that person. The cross provides an encounter in which shamed people share in the honor of Christ, just as he did not suffer because of his own wrongs. This chapter appropriates HS positively against the stigma victims often suffer, especially victims of rape and sexual abuse, by using concrete experiences from the
Congo. Understanding how Christ honors those who are victims brings healing. The chapter also invites the church to be a safe and healing place for those who have been victimized by others.

Chapter eight (Lynn Thigpen) delves into orality, illiteracy, poverty and HS. Too often those who have low or no literacy are treated as inferior in their culture and, sometimes, by those who minister to them. The church needs to transform this shame by providing an open, welcoming place where the poor and illiterate can find community and connection. When the church creates such a space it removes the shame placed by others on these vulnerable populations. Presenting the gospel through orality communicates honor through kindness and allows the church to become the light of Christ to the marginalized.

Each chapter holds a meaningful message for the church and those who minister. The rich insights in this book are highly recommended for academics and practitioners because it elucidates honor-shame as a lens for understanding scripture and doing ministry. The perspective of honor-shame through multiple lenses allows readers to realize the extent to which these values impact their world.

**The Psalms as Christian Praise: A Historical Commentary**
Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston
Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans
2019, 354 pp., paper, $35.98
ISBN: 978-0802877024

Reviewed by Wesley D. Custer

The Psalms have been prayed, sung, preached, and studied for millennia and we still find ways to plumb the depths of this ancient Hebrew poetry. The Psalms can be examined as Christian worship generally, and lament and/or praise more specifically. Waltke and Houston engage psalms of praise in their latest work on the Psalms engaging the text critically and contextually within Christian practice throughout history focusing on Christian praise.

Waltke and Houston take the Psalms as the hymnbook of Jesus and an integral part of the worshipping core of the Christian Church. Conceptually, the goal is to examine a selection of psalms exegetically and
also examine the church’s use and application of these same psalms through the lens of historical figures of the church up through the 19th century. Waltke writes the section of exegesis and Houston writes the section on the church’s response or use of the same psalm. The dialectic of these two approaches engages the whole life of God’s people throughout history and gives the reader several perspectives through which to address the present-day situation of God’s people.

Waltke and Houston have both distinguished careers in their respective fields and are now emeritus faculty at Regent College, Vancouver. Waltke is also a distinguished professor emeritus at Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale.

The commentary covers Psalms 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, with chapter 1 introducing their concept and approach to the commentary. Waltke and Houston do not consider these only psalms of praise but they are chosen as exemplars for study from the perspective of praise by God’s people. Their overall scholarship is well founded and the dialectic between quality exegesis and historical interpretation is uniquely beautiful.

The exegesis is accepting of traditional views of authorship and does not engage some of the late authorship theories of the Psalter. However, these discussions are mentioned in footnotes so as not to dominate the commentary. The historical interpreters are generally presented uncritically but fairly, meaning that the presentation of historical uses or expositions of a particular psalm is not engaged from an evaluative perspective to determine the quality of the witness. Rather, the source/historical figure’s writing is chosen because their use and interpretation of the psalm is worth noting and considering.

It seems as though it is two books placed into the same binding. That is to say, while the authors write transitions between the critical exegesis and the voices from church history there is no space given to interaction between the two. It is left to the reader to fulfill work of the dialectic and provide their own synthesis.

I would recommend this volume to anyone interpreting the Psalms for scholarship, preaching, or group Bible study. It is accessible to the seminary student and the clergy. It will widen the perspective of the reader and challenge them to dig deep as they seek to move between critical exegesis and historical interpretation toward modern or localized application of the Psalms.
Hebrew for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving Biblical Hebrew
Adam J. Howell, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic
2020, 240 pp., paper, $22.99
ISBN: 9781540961464

Reviewed by Nicholas J. Campbell

Adam Howell is assistant professor of Old Testament interpretation at Boyce College and Benjamin Merkle is professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Robert Plummer is the Collin and Evelyn Aikman Professor of Biblical Studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The authors designed Hebrew for Life to help current and former Hebrew students to continue or reignite their study of the language. Howell has also revised Greek for Life by Merkle and Plummer. He applied the principles of language development to Hebrew and added a chapter on Aramaic (x). Each chapter typically begins with a personal story to introduce the material and ends with reflection questions and a short linguistic insight provided by a Hebrew scholar.

Much of the information is basic to language learning, or perhaps memory retention, in general but the detail of the chapters increases as one moves through the book. One of the most insightful sections presents ways of reading the text (which unfortunately is in the Wisdom of Resources chapter not the Read, Read, Read chapter). Some of the options discussed are: slow grammatical reading, slow exploratory reading, and slow contemplative reading (146-47). The second option is especially significant because it encourages Hebrew learners to explore wildly while reading. Instead of considering lexical rabbit trails and wild goose chases through online grammatical resources as wasting time, the authors argue that this type of reading can occasionally be fruitful and perhaps even lead to important insights. Most teachers advocate grammatical reading and, occasionally, contemplative reading in Hebrew but rarely do they consider reading the Hebrew Bible and following whatever information peaks the readers interest in their online resources as beneficial. Affirming this as a legitimate, though definitely not the only, way to read is greatly encouraging to students who feel they must block out all distractions and maintain serious focus every time the Hebrew Bible is opened.
The second point of value is the scholarly discussion at the end of each chapter. Though these are sometimes unrelated to the chapter to which they are appended, the insights they provide are worth the price of the book. Two particularly noteworthy excurses are Dominick Hernández’s discussion of Job’s repentance (ma’as in Job 42:6) and Peter Gentry’s discussion of asyndeton in Genesis 6:1-4. These bring academic grammatical discussions into biblical interpretation questions and show the value of biblical languages.

Hebrew for Life is primarily directed at seminary students and those in ministry. The ministerial focus is shown by Howell’s frequent urging to study Hebrew because Christians are called to faithfully study scripture and his discussions of the benefits of using the original languages in sermon preparation (19). Though many of the insights could be found in numerous books on language learning and memory retention, the practical application of these insights through Hebrew reading plans, an annotated Hebrew resource list, and the academic excurses makes this book a valuable resource. A current or former Hebrew student would benefit from this text even if only to use the reading plan suggestions (96-103).

A History of Christian Conversion
David W. Kling
New York, NY: Oxford University Press
2020, 852 pp., hardcover, $150.00
ISBN: 978-0195320923

Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts

“God breaketh not all men’s hearts alike” - Richard Baxter (quoted on 283).

There have been many books that study the phenomena of religious conversion from various angles. One that immediately comes to mind is, of course, the psychological approach of William James’s The Varieties of Religious Experience. One could also quickly point to sociological studies by Émile Durkheim or Peter Berger. What, though, does a history bring to the task of understanding religious conversion?

David Kling’s History of Christian Conversion is definitely a work of history. For those who have taken a church history course or are well-
read in the history of Christianity, much of the ground covered and many of
the people encountered will be very familiar. Kling ambitiously attempts to
lead the reader on a tour of conversion through much of Christian history.
Although the book’s major divisions are divided by region and loosely
by chronology (Rome, Europe, the Americas, China, India, Africa), the
order and flow of the narrative means that the first 400+ pages follow the
typical arc of Western Christianity with glances toward Orthodox churches.
Writing a comprehensive and completely fair history is impossible (and
Kling openly acknowledges the limitations of his history, xii), but this
structure that places China, India, and the entire continent of Africa within
a little over 200 pages at the end of the book was a concern. One is led
to question whether these parts of Christian history are properly integrated
into the narrative or whether they have been added on as an afterthought.
While there probably could have been more integration and representation
outside of the Western narrative, in Kling’s defense, the sections on China,
India, and Africa do not come across as an afterthought. In fact, because
the people and stories encountered in those sections do not usually get
much time in the traditional Western church history texts, there is much that
is fresh and insightful.

Throughout, Kling brings the conversion experiences of individuals
and groups to the fore and spends time exploring the context of these
conversions. This is done especially through studying written conversion
narratives, but also through other sources like hymns and associated
artifacts. Kling is a careful and critical historian, noting the strengths of
these accounts and the places where skepticism is warranted. This placing
of people into their context and sketching the contours of what conversion
meant in that context is what *A History of Christian Conversion* brings to
the larger conversation surrounding religious conversion. Richard Baxter’s
quote above speaks to the idea that he did not believe Christians should
expect conversion to follow an orderly, predictable pattern even within
his own time period. Kling shows that the meaning, patterns, reasons,
and forms of Christian conversion have shifted from era to era, location
to location, and culture to culture. While some may think that their
experience of conversion is basically the same as other Christians through
history, Kling draws out the reality that, while there are continuities, careful
study shows that the conversion experience has changed as it has moved
through cultures and time periods. To use Charles Taylor’s vocabulary,
the social imaginaries of these groups and the history-bound nature of
human beings has meant that the understanding of conversion, which has been taken as such an important and obvious concept in Christianity, has varied quite widely through history. Kling especially adds careful detail to the phenomenon of mass conversion, which can be easily overlooked or disregarded by those from modern, highly individualistic paradigms of conversion.

In the end, A History of Christian Conversion succeeds as a history and digs into the specific contexts which shaped the conversion experience of individuals and groups. The writing is consistently clear and eminently readable, with content suitable for a seminary student but accessible for the church history novice.

The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels
D. Brandon Crowe
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic
2017, xviii +264 pp., paper, $32.00
ISBN 978-0801096266

Reviewed by Joseph Kiluda

Brandon D. Crowe is associate professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, Pennsylvania. He is the author of numerous books and serves as the book review editor for Westminster Theological Journal.

In The Last Adam, Crowe mounts a exegetical and biblical theological case that the Gospels present Christ as a “representative figure,” especially “the last Adam” (16). As such, the obedience of Jesus outside the passion narrative is vicarious and carries a saving character. After the introductory chapter, Crowe develops his work in six substantive chapters. In chapter 2, Crowe argues that the four canonical Gospels present Jesus not only as the new Israel, but also as the Last Adam. Luke’s genealogy represents Jesus’ sonship as expressly Adamic in character, while Matthew’s genealogy presents Jesus’ ministry as covenantal and in the context of Genesis’ creation account. The title “Son of Man” also presents Jesus as the Last Adam.
In chapter 3, Crowe argues that the title Son of Man does more than denote Jesus filial obedience to God. That title carries in its background not only Israel but also Adam. Jesus is the obedient son that Adam and Israel failed to be. This obedience is brought to the fore early in Jesus’ ministry, particularly in the baptism and temptation accounts. Chapter 4 takes up passages in the Gospels in which Jesus is said to bring scripture to fulfillment. Particular attention falls upon Matthew 3:15, in which Jesus declares his intention to fulfill all righteousness. Chapter 5 argues that the fourth Gospel presents Jesus’ lifelong, filial obedience necessary for salvation. It is John’s passion narrative, in particular, that offers suggestive indications that this obedience is that of the Last Adam. Chapter 6 concentrates on the motif of the Kingdom in the Gospels. The authority of Jesus to implement the kingdom of righteousness, Crowe claims, is often portrayed in Adamic terms.

In his book, Crowe attempts to highlight how the Gospel narratives themselves, in parallel with the other New Testament writings, uniquely show Jesus as the Last Adam and that it is his obedient life that reverses the disobedience of the First Adam and secures salvation for God’s people. Crowe begins building his argument by drawing the reader’s attention to the idea that Adamic Christology is not simply an idea found in Pauline theology or a feature in other New Testament letters, but that Jesus is clearly portrayed as the perfect and obedient Adam throughout the Gospels as well. In the New Testament, an Adamic Christological framework is evident in Pauline passages such as Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. These key texts show that even from an early date, Christ-followers have interpreted the salvific nature of Jesus’ life, ministry, and death in a way that highlights the Adam-Jesus connection.

Crowe’s central argument is that the Gospel narratives of Jesus’ life and ministry actually mean something and serve a more significant purpose than simply to be extended introductions of the passion narratives. Jesus’ active obedience is demonstrated in every part of his life from his dedication at the temple, to his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, to his ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing.

His passive obedience is wrapped up in his suffering and death. Through submission to the will of God, Jesus passively attains salvation for his people. According to Crowe, this passive type of obedience completely satisfies the righteous requirement of the Messiah, and so there is no need to argue for or concern ourselves with the active obedience, which is the
righteous life, lived out in the flesh by Jesus prior to his passion. Crowe contends that Jesus’ life demonstrates both aspects of obedience and does so perfectly, in such a way that in his passive and active obedience humanity receives salvation vicariously through both Christ’s life and his death. The Gospel narratives show Jesus connecting his actions in ministry with what he reveals as necessary for salvation to occur.

The creation narratives shows Adam as created sinless, in the image of and as a son of God, and crowned with authority and dominion over God’s creation. In giving into temptation, Adam forfeits his relationship, status, and calling. It is his disobedience that must be attuned for because it is his disobedience that leads to death, not just for Adam, but for all humankind. Jesus, in his incarnate state, serves as a representative for all people. Humanity is condemned because of the disobedience of Adam, but salvation is wrought through the radical obedience of Jesus in every aspect of his life.

In the Gospels, “Son of Man” is Jesus’ favorite self-designation, and this title, not only connects Jesus to prophecies in Ezekiel and Daniel, but in his application as the Son of Man, Jesus connects himself to the very first man, Adam. Again, Crowe seeks to show that Jesus becomes the perfectly obedient representation of humanity in order to reverse the disobedience of Adam and secure salvation. Jesus proves himself faithful to the task of Messiah and provides a pattern, indeed a substitution for his people, in a way that points to his full-fledged obedience. As the Messiah works on the earth through his ministry in the flesh, Crowe postulates that he is the reconstituted Adam - born sinless and thus able to forgive sins, overcoming temptation and thus providing a pattern for humankind to follow, and calling his disciples to “rest” in him from the toil and hardships of the world.

Crowe’s other contribution to his argument comes in his discussion of how Jesus is portrayed in the Gospel of John. Crowe believes that a Johannine Christology begins with Jesus being “sent” by the Father. This idea points to two realities: 1) the divinity of Jesus is established from the very beginning of John’s Gospel, and 2) if Jesus is “sent” then there must be a purpose for his life and mission. Jesus fulfills his purpose through completing the work that the Father sent him to accomplish. Crowe highlights three specific chapters in John (John 4, 5, and 17) where Jesus explicitly states that his mission is to complete the work the Father has given
him. Again, the obedience of Jesus makes a relationship with the Father a reality, for the life of Jesus and for all humanity.

For me, this is a fascinating book. Crowe sets out to show that the Gospels do indeed portray Jesus as *The Last Adam* - the perfectly obedient Son of God that secures salvation for humanity in his incarnation, life, ministry, death, and resurrection. *The Last Adam* is a fine scholarly work and Crowe writes with deep passion and a strong knowledge surrounding this issue. However, the book comes across as more of an extended bibliography and a repository for all works that may allude to this Adam-Christ connection. Crowe does one thing extremely well, and that is to clearly state his objectives for each chapter, deliver on that promise, and then wrap up the chapter with a nice conclusion.

Indeed the author demonstrates to his readers the purpose of his book which is in twofold: 1) to show in the Gospel narratives that Jesus is a representative figure and stands as *The Last Adam* for Israel and humanity, and 2) that the life of Jesus cannot be divorced from his death because the redemptive work of Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels, shows that it is Jesus’ full obedience, in life and in death, that reverses and overcomes the disobedience of Adam. For the preacher, this book will certainly aid one in seeing Jesus’ vicarious and salvific obedience in a multitude of Gospel pericopes. Crowe imported a reformed theme in theology into his book hence doing eisegesis rather than exegesis, thus convincing us that Jesus fulfilled the covenant of works and that his active and passive obedience before his death is a significant part of the fulfillment of scripture.

**The Genealogical Adam & Eve: The Surprising Science of Universal Ancestry**
S. Joshua Swamidass
Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press
2019, 265 pp., hardcover, $27.00

*Reviewed by Logan Patriquin*

Recent data from population genetics has obfuscated traditional accounts of human origins tied to a historical Adam and Eve in the recent past. In the face of the current theological trend to mythologize the early
Genesis narrative, Dr. Swamidass swims upstream to present an alternative view in which “...Adam and Eve, ancestors of us all, could have been de novo created less than ten thousand years ago” (201). His Genealogical Hypothesis reclaims theological space by moving out of the realm of genetics proper and towards a genealogical framework for understanding human ancestry. This move, he hopes, will recover a traditional account of human origins that is neither anachronistic nor reductionistic. Without denying evolutionary biology, his model purports to, “…[rebind] many splintered [ecclesial] traditions together” (155).

The Genealogical Adam and Eve consists of five parts though the reader will likely only perceive two. The opening section lays out the science behind his claim that genealogical ancestry trumps genetic ancestry. In fact, he imagines it is perfectly plausible to believe that Adam and Eve are our genealogical ancestors even though they are now “genetic ghosts” (69 & 84). Page after page of graphs and charts begin to numb the senses as he unfolds his admittedly ‘nonintuitive’ argument that computational models show a likely universal genealogical ancestor to all textual humans as recent as six thousand years ago—let’s call this premise X (46-47 & 64). His convoluted presentation does manage to advance his point that contemporary science does not challenge that Adam and Eve could (he would say must) be “’ancestors of everyone to the ends of the earth from at least AD 1 onward” (64).

The second half of the text couples premise X with a theological claim, Y, that Adam and Eve were de novo created in the recent past. Swamidass always carefully posits premise Y in the subjunctive mood but the theological hoops he jumps through to affirm Y suggest anything but a shaky presupposition. How does one account for biological humans produced through evolutionary means that are outside the garden? A philosophical twist does the trick. Our author suggests that people outside of the garden are biological though not textual humans. As such, “historical theology and Scripture itself has been largely silent [author emphasis] about them” (134). In his model, biological humans are “coextensive” with textual humans until such a point that the genealogical ancestors of the de novo Adam and Eve have subsumed the whole. This must have taken place, of course, by AD 1 so that Christ may be a second Adam to all, not simply some.

Theological questions abound due to the coupling of X and Y. For instance, what provokes God to break his time-honored evolutionary
means of producing human beings, however one defines them? If there are people outside the garden before, concurrent with, and after the miraculous de novo creation, and subsequent Fall, of Adam and Eve then how does one understand the origin of sin? How would one define sin proper with eons of pain, suffering, and death in advance of this Augustinian conception of the Fall?

Swamidass does not dodge such questions, most of them anyway. Chapters proceed in increasingly speculative fashion as he constructs an account of special creation, a Fall event, and then wades into the theological quagmire that is Original Sin. Adam and Eve’s special creation is defended vocationally. Though not biologically distinct, the author argues, “They had a special purpose, one that require them to be created entirely sinless, with a clean slate” (205). One is right here to inquire, a clean slate from what exactly?

When Adam and Eve fall, physical and moral corruption, as well as an imputation of debt, are unleashed. According to Swamidass: physical corruption spreads instantly, moral corruption spreads contagiously, and imputed guilt spreads via genealogical descent (189-190). Such are the three legs that also support his understanding of Original Sin. In the end, Swamidass opts for one major theme to weave the whole narrative together—Exile. God substitutes exile for execution in the Fall story as well as in many other places throughout scripture. Consequently, all of us inherit the mercy of exile that we cannot repay. This is his map to the theological affirmation of universal human sinfulness and the universal need of a savior, one who can end our exile (197-198).

The Genealogical Adam and Eve achieves its aim of carving out space for theological dialogue. His presentation affirms, “The traditional account [a literalist reading of Genesis 2 and 3] was not false. It was part of this larger narrative [one preceded by Genesis 1 and continuing in us today]” (201). Readers will enjoy the sketched out theological framework and ought to appreciate the scientific rescue job that rediscovers the potential for a historical Adam and Eve without forsaking evolutionary science. All that being said, in the same way that science can’t disprove a de novo Adam and Eve, it says nothing to affirm it either. Sure, a genealogical ancestor of humans within the last six-to-fifteen thousand years is probable, if not mathematically certain. That truth does not necessarily entail that Adam and Eve of the scriptures. Christian theology would do better with a model for understanding origins, the Fall, and Original Sin that works
within a non-historical Adam and Eve framework as well as within the broader spectrum of literal/literalist renditions of early Genesis.

Teaching Across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission
James E. Plueddemann
Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press
2018, 168 pp., paper, $20.00

Reviewed by Matthew Haugen

James E. Plueddemann in Teaching Across Cultures develops a framework on how to teach nearly anything to anyone, anywhere by utilizing sociology, theology, and education theory. Teaching Across Cultures is organized into twelve chapters in which Plueddemann develops his paradigm of a pilgrim rail-fence approach to teaching. Each chapter ends with a story from or about a teacher from the global south exemplifying the chapter’s content in the form of a story.

Chapter 1 begins the conversation of education theory by discussing metaphors of teaching from Edward T. Hall (i.e., production, growth, travel) and Plueddemann’s pilgrim metaphor of teaching, which is a nuanced approach to Hall’s metaphors. Chapter 2 introduces one of Plueddemann’s unique contributions: the rail-fence paradigm. The fence posts represent the work of teachers to facilitate the connection between the rails, which are theory and practice. Chapter 3 addresses the deficiencies of twenty-first century education (i.e., to overemphasize content at the expense of context). He advocates for teachers to become students of students in order to mitigate this tendency.

Chapter 4 addresses the complexity of differences of human beings. This section included topics such as glocality, personality differences, and combating stereotypes, but each of these topics deserved more attention given the nature of the subject and that he is a developmentalist. Chapters 5 and 6 address the complexity of teaching a high-context learner versus a low-context learner. Each type of learner has varying tolerances toward ambiguity as well as differences in power distance between teachers and students.
Chapter 7 defines the aim of teaching as the promotion of holistic growth: wisdom, physical, social, and spiritual, in which the first three form and inform the last. Chapters 8 and 9 describe possible educational objectives (i.e., behavioral, problem-solving, and expressive) based on one’s teaching and learner context.

Plueddemann claims in chapters 10 through 12 that the pilgrim metaphor best harmonizes Hall’s teaching metaphors as well as high- and low-context cultural contexts. The pilgrim metaphor integrates the cultural context, teaching method, and perceived goal.

One of the strengths of *Teaching Across Cultures* is Plueddemann’s critique of online education. Online education has made education more accessible and affordable; however, it is not positioned well to form people. Formational opportunities on online mediums are available insofar as they do not supplant local and embodied practices and community (cf. Meadows, Philip. “Mission and Discipleship in a Digital Culture.” In *Mission Studies*. 29 (2012). 163-182).

One of the weaknesses of *Teaching Across Cultures* is that Plueddemann does not spend enough time explaining how teachers might facilitate bridge-building between content and context. For instance, how might teachers become students of students? How might this endeavor of becoming a student of students function differently based on the medium of communication? How might places of education collaborate with local places of formation (e.g., churches) to facilitate the holistic growth of students? However, *Teaching Across Cultures* contributes to the fields of education and discipleship studies, and as such I recommend this book to those in higher education, missionaries, and pastors.

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**Peace Love Yoga: The Politics of Global Spirituality**
Andrea R. Jain
New York, NY: Oxford University Press
2020, 224 pp., paper, $24.95

Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts

For fans of well-researched dissections of cultural phenomena where all of the pieces are laid out with scholarly precision and care,
Peace Love Yoga: The Politics of Global Spirituality is a worthwhile read. From the beginning, Andrea Jain is open about the angle from which she is approaching what she calls a “neoliberal spirituality.” Hers is a feminist-socialist stance, which provides a framework for looking at manifestations of yoga and popular spirituality throughout this work. Owning that stance and giving the reader a chance to understand yoga from that perspective is part of the strength and draw of Jain’s writing. One does not have to be a practitioner of yoga or particularly identify as a feminist or socialist to gain from the rich descriptions and sharply argued content of Peace Love Yoga.

One of Jain’s major concerns in this book is the question of whether popular practitioners of yoga, those who buy the merchandise, are vocal about a certain package of issues (like environmentalism), and would describe themselves as “spiritual,” are more likely to be involved in movements for structural societal change. What she finds is that those who are participants in this sort of spirituality might spend large amounts of money buying items which claim to be environmentally friendly or yoga products that support one of their favorite issues, but these actions are individualistic and largely “gestural.” This consumerism that focuses on the individual being disciplined, doing their part by “buying green,” but does not push for larger collective action is what Jain means when she labels this as neoliberal spirituality. It does not escape the system around it in a way that can meaningfully challenge that system. In that way, she sees it as a conservative, not revolutionary, practice.

Another main theme is the way that power is used by teachers and promoters of yoga. While many in the West would see International Yoga Day as a positive celebration and an act of cultural respect, Jain points out the ways that Yoga Day in India was actually exclusionary. There, Narendra Modi’s promotion of yoga as part of the Indian identity was not welcomed by many in the minority Muslim population who do not practice yoga. They claim that Yoga Day is another symbol of a Hindu nationalism which marginalizes minority groups. This is the use of power to mold national identity, but Jain also looks at the famous gurus who are the celebrities and founders of yoga brands and styles. Here she points to uses of power by teachers in the world of yoga to commit acts of sexual harassment and assault. A key example is the life of Bikram Choudhury, founder of Bikram Yoga, which is laid out as a disturbing litany of control, accusations of sexual harassment and rape, extreme devotion from followers, and various abuses of power which were allowed to build over time. While, of course,
not every yoga studio is such a poisonous environment, Jain asks the reader to look hard at the systems which have allowed these men to be revered and praised while they continued patterns of abusive behavior.

These are, of course, very serious topics covered in an incisively critical way. That is not to suggest, however, that Peace Love Yoga is at all a drudgery to read. The writing flows nimbly back and forth between real-world examples and analytical insight, which keeps the reader engaged. There are some points where chapters cover content that overlaps with other chapters because this book does collect material from Jain’s previous articles on yoga, but these repetitions support the structure of the chapters and were not wholly unwelcome. Peace Love Yoga provides an insightful perspective on contemporary yoga and is a worthy contribution to understanding religious practice in the world today, particularly the practice of those who claim to be “spiritual, but not religious.”

Christian Martyrdom: A Brief History with Reflections for Today
Edward L. Smither
Eugene, OR: Cascade Books
2020, xvii + 79 pp., paper, $16.00
ISBN: 978-1725253810

Reviewed by W. Brian Shelton

The subject of martyrdom remains recognizably significant in the formation of the early church and intermittently throughout church history. It continues to receive attention in scholarship, the popular mind, and the contemporary landscape of the church. In this work, the history and theology of martyrdom provides a backdrop to understand current martyrdom events.

Ed Smither is Professor of Intercultural Studies and History of Global Christianity at Columbia International University. The institution is recognized for its missions enterprise as Smither is known among missiologists, represented by his works Christian Mission: A Concise Global History (2019) and Mission in the Early Church (2014). In this work, mission finds application in the meaning and motive of martyrdom.
For works like this, stories are an indispensable necessity and the opening story captures an important prototype for this study. In 2007, two Turkish pastors and a German missionary welcomed five seekers to a bible study. Once the meeting had begun, the visitors revealed their radical Islamic values, tied up and tortured the Christian leaders, and executed them on broadcast video. The extensive legal process was not accompanied by a retaliatory spirit as the pastors’ wives publicly declared their forgiveness of the murderers. Story provides a narrative quality that personalizes the martyrdom events throughout this work, from early to modern Christianity.

Martyrdom history is woven together with martyrdom theology to shape the identity of the church in all generations. Smither ingeniously adopts the “suffering servant” metaphor for centering this theology. “Christians are motivated to suffer and even welcome martyrdom because of their love for Christ—because they worship a Suffering Servant” (9). This ideal unfolds to recognize the biblical expectations of suffering with examples of historical Christian suffering across eras. The central part of the book reveals how we witness, prophesy, and worship through martyrdom. The root of “martyr” as “witness” is expected, evidenced by early church legal transcripts where defendants simply professed, “I am a Christian” (31-33). Theological expansion comes when the martyrs are recognized as prophets who not only stand against an inimical society, but they also “rebuked the church to return to the gospel and to pursue justice as a visible reflection of God’s kingdom” (56). Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, and Oscar Romero are twentieth century examples. A theology of worship also offers a refreshing perspective to Christian martyrdom ideology, seen in the Waodoni Mission with Jim Elliot in Ecuador and the Lord’s Table food relief in Somalia, where worship of God surrounded the ministry and response of Christians to their martyrs. Smither insists, “Worship is the beginning and end of Christian mission” (67).

Reflection on martyrdom here is directed along a global context. First, the majority world must teach American and European Christians about their suffering: “Their testimony ought to convict the western church, which is often enamored with comfort, affluence, and a desire for political power” (69). Second, accepting persecution does not mean that the church no longer champions social justice. This instruction is crucial for individuals who advocate social legitimacy—our faith perpetuates even when justice does not prevail. Thirdly, an informed reflection on martyrdom helps the church develop a competence for suffering. Finally, “this reflection on
martyrdom should teach us that martyrdom is more of an attitude than an act” (70). Brother Yun becomes a model for Smither, as this Chinese house church pastor extensively wrote and sang worship songs during his numerous imprisonments. The application of historical martyrs offers specific and valuable application for the contemporary church and society.

Historical content initially seems displaced when non-martyrs such as Athanasius, Anthony, Basil, Augustine, and Brother Yun provide instruction and models for suffering rather than martyrdom. This reveals the difficulty of separating persecution from martyrdom, twin experiences cut from the same theological cloth. Smither frequently blends non-martyr suffering stories among the martyr stories, explaining that martyrdom is one terminus to “a wide spectrum of persecution” (xiv). Important early church figures and texts do not populate the historical overview section, because they inhabit other chapters to illustrate the theological understanding of martyrdom. For example, only Tertullian and Polycarp receive attention in the Roman persecution section; the reader will have to search to find Perpetua and Felicitas, Justin, and Blandina in other chapters.

The only legitimate surprise of this work is its general omission. While the subtitle “a brief history” lives up to its approach, the occasions of recognized martyrs in Christian history is limited. Franciscans and Moravians solely represent the medieval period. Latimer, Ridley, and Anabaptists combine for two pages from the Reformation period. If one looks for a thorough history of martyrdom, this feels like a sample set of stories from which the contemporary church can learn. The Huguenots, the martyrs of Córdoba and Amorium, and the Jesuits in imperial Japan are unnamed. The contemporary martyrs find better representation with stories cited from Turkey, Afghanistan, Egypt, and China. Here, the details of names, dates, and places provide credible data of illustration for the contemporary church. The omission is redeemed by the quality of examples present. For example, Coptic Christians sing songs about the martyred each week, modelling how reflection on suffering can live on in the consciousness of a Christian community.

Smither’s goal is to provide a basic overview of martyrdom episodes and theology. For an undergraduate class with martyrdom on the periphery, this short work is a good adoption. Historical fact and theological justification are solid in this work, evidencing the reality of martyrdom without the myth of martyrdom proffered in contemporary scholarship. For non-scholars who want an introduction to martyrological history, this
work will be ideal. For all of us who are appalled by majority world martyrs before we return to comfortable and safe lives, this book is a meaningful reminder that our Christian faith should be one ready to be characterized by a pathos of suffering.
Books Received

The following books were received by the editor’s office since the last issue of The Asbury Journal. The editor is seeking people interested in writing book reviews on these or other relevant books for publication in future issues of The Asbury Journal. Please contact the editor (Robert.danielson@asburyseminary.edu) if you are interested in reviewing a particular title. Reviews will be assigned on a first come basis.

Anatolios, Khaled

Andrews, Lewis M.

Baker, Jonny and Cathy Ross

Barclay, John M. G.

Bauckham, Richard

Bird, Michael F.

Black, David Alan and Benjamin L. Merkle, eds.
Boccaccini, Gabriele
2020  

Breimaier, Thomas
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Buckwell, Brenda K.
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Campbell, Constantine R.
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Campbell, Constantine R. and Jonathan T. Pennington
2020  

Carroll R., M. Daniel
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Cleaver, Emanuel III
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Cohick, Lynn H.
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Cotherman, Charles E.
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Creach, Jerome F. D.

Crisp, Oliver D.

Curtice, Kaitlin

Dreff, Ashley Boggan

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays

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Farhadian, Charles E.

Flett, John G. and Henning Wrogemann

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Goldingay, John
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<th>Author</th>
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<td>Horrell, David G.</td>
<td><em>Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities.</em></td>
<td>Wm. B. Eerdmans.</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>978-0-8028-7608-9</td>
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Leach, Jane  
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Levison, Jack  
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Longman, Tremper III  
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Kling, David W.  
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McCaulley, Esau  
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McFarlane, Graham  
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Pasquarello, Michael, III  
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Richards, E. Randolph and Richard James  
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Richter, Sandra L.  
2020  

Shay, Scott A.  
2018  

Skinner, Christopher W., Nijay K. Gupta, Andy Johnson, and Drew J. Strait, eds.  
2021  
Stetina, Karin Spiecker.  

Storms, Sam  

Stubbs, David L.  

Sumney, Jerry L.  

Sun, Chloe T.  

Taylor, Derek W.  

Thiessen, Matthew  

Williams, Thaddeus J.  

Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty, Nathaniel D. West, and Annie Lockhart-Gilroy, eds.  
Witherington, Ben, III and Jason A. Meyers  

Wright, Catherine J.  

Yong, Amos  