

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

Review: Nathan P. Feldmeth, S. Donald Fortson III, Garth M. Rosell, and Kenneth J. Stewart, *Reformed and Evangelical across Four Centuries: The Presbyterian Story in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022). Paperback. Xix +364 pp. ISBN 978-0-8028-7340-8. \$29.99. Reviewed by Sean G. Morris, Associate Pastor at Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA), Oak Ridge, TN.

This volume, as the title suggests, surveys the history of Presbyterianism in America as it has developed over the past four hundred years. This work possesses the unusual quality of being both well-researched and detailed in its presentation, and also a thoroughly pleasant read. The volume takes readers from the early foundations of Presbyterianism in the days of Scotland and John Knox, through Presbyterianism's expressions in colonial America, and up to the present. The work is co-authored by four academics who come from different American Presbyterian denominations: Nathan Feldmeth is A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO), Don Fortson is Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), Garth Rosell is Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), and Ken Stewart is Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). As such, these men's shared work brings an ecclesial and perspectival balance to the survey—a valuable, if underappreciated, element.

The opening four chapters review the rise of Protestantism in Britain, the genesis of the English Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians, Presbyterians' role in the English Civil War, and the ramifications for Presbyterianism once the British monarchy was restored after the Interregnum. Chapters 5 through 12 take the reader through the late seventeenth into the nineteenth century: from the arrival of Presbyterianism and Reformed theology in the New World up through the American Civil War. Along the way, the chapters examine the first American Presbyterian denominational body in 1729, Presbyterian involvement in the First and Second Great Awakenings and the American Revolution, slavery, the American Civil War, and related church schisms and postbellum ecclesiastical reunions.

Chapters 13 through 15 take the reader through Presbyterians' engagements with Darwinism, immigration, urbanization and industrialization, and the influence of the German university and her higher-critical scholarship upon American Protestant churches.

Chapters 16 through 19 take the reader into the twentieth century covering the fundamentalist-modernist controversies, World War I and II, Presbyterian missionary efforts during the first half of the century, the debates and development of women's ordination through the mid-century, the Civil Rights Movement, and changes to the confessional standards of mainline Presbyterian denominations.

The concluding chapters, 18 and 19, trace out the exodus of evangelical Presbyterians from the mainline denominations and how they went about establishing their own communions. Particular attention is given to the founding of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in 1973, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) in 1981, and the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO) in 2012.

One of the more pleasant surprises to this writer was the attention given to the formation of the Presbyterian Church in America (299–303). Here at the fiftieth anniversary of the denomination's founding, this was a most welcome inclusion. The attention to the historical and ecclesiastical factors behind the denomination's founding was both fair in its narrative, and historically thorough in its documentation. Especially appreciated were the highlights of various key leaders and organizations such as Morton Smith, Kennedy Smart, Concerned Presbyterians, and Reformed Theological Seminary. The section was also sensitive to modern items of note, such as minority outreach and ministries among Black and Hispanic populations, Mission to the Word, Reformed University Fellowship, the global church planting efforts of Redeemer Presbyterian Church and the late Timothy J. Keller, as well as the Redeemer City to City church planting network. Also well-noted was the history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and its eventual joining and receiving into the PCA in 1983 (305–306). Earlier in the work, three other eventual leaders in the PCA are given happy acknowledgment: John Gerstner, James Montgomery Boice, and R.C. Sproul (295–296).

It is because of this fair and sensitive documentation of the PCA that the lack of parallel documentation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) stood out to this author. Admittedly, perhaps the legacy of the OPC, J. Gresham Machen, and Westminster Theological Seminary play an outsized role in this author's imagination. As well, in a survey volume such as this one, when taking in the history of four hundred years

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of American Presbyterianism, it is impossible to do justice to every historical rabbit trail of Presbyterian denominationalism as one would like. Nevertheless, given the historical significance of Machen and the founding of the OPC in the midst of the twentieth-century Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy (which is highlighted in chapter 16), one might have expected a similar treatment of the origins and present expression of the OPC as had been given to her sister denomination, the PCA.

To be fair, the struggles of Princeton, the story of Machen, the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary and the OPC are noted in chapters 16 and 17 (251, 253, 258, 269 in particular), but even some of the book's mentions of Westminster Seminary are in connection with the founding of the PCA (301, 302). Again, the fact that the various pieces of Machen and the OPC's story were strewn about rather than strung together in a shared section struck me as a bit odd.

Conversely, the Reformed and Associate Presbyterians are given suitable attention in the book, particularly in the historical overview of their respective foundings (126–129). Now known as the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP), these communions are historic and well-established in the North American Presbyterian scene, which warrants the greater mention they are given relative to the OPC: The Reformed Presbyterians securing a minister on American soil as early as 1752, and the Seceders (Associate Presbyterians) in 1733 vs. the OPC being established in 1936. This volume ably highlights these communions' shared history, from the Great Awakening to the nation's founding, the 1777 Basis of Union, activism with regard to slavery, and more (100–102; 126–129; 169–170).

There are all kinds of hidden gems in this novel: from the well-documented analysis regarding the development of women's ordination in Presbyterianism in chapter 18, to the brief synopsis in that same chapter regarding the trial of Wynn Kenyon (287–288, an historically significant moment that is often overlooked in American Presbyterianism regarding the right of conscience and its collision course with the cause of women's ordination), to even the first two appendices at the back of volume. The first appendix (331) is a numerical breakdown of the total membership of the major American Presbyterian bodies, with statistics as recent as 2021. Readers will find these data to be fascinating and illuminating for a whole host of reasons. The second appendix (332–333) presents a nice genealogical table tracing out the splits, reunions, and developments of the various branches of Presbyterianism, from the time Scottish settlers arrived in the 1700s up through their present-day expressions. Visually-oriented learners will be especially grateful for this graphic aid that helps to make sense of the often-confusing schisms, mergers, and re-mergers among those "Split-P" Presbyterians.

Among the book's more salient aspects was the attention it gave to Princeton Theological Seminary and her centuries-long role in the education of Presbyterian ministers. Princeton's place of educational preeminence among Presbyterian clergy and her role in shaping the life of the Presbyterian church in the nineteenth century are difficult to overstate. Princeton's impact on Presbyterian theological education is well highlighted (153–156; 242–243), as is the development of other Presbyterian educational institutions (of both the New School and Old School persuasions) that coincided with American westward expansion. This institutional significance carried over well into the twentieth century, as this volume highlights Princeton's significance in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversies (252–256). Especially beneficial were the sections devoted to the careers and influence of Charles Hodge (204–207) and B.B. Warfield (207–211).

The overview of Princeton also touched on the academic controversy surrounding the origins of the Ph.D. degree, with its genesis in European universities before later being implemented in American theological education (242–245). Consideration is given to the rise of the so-called "Princeton Theology," coinciding with the founding of Andover Seminary and a post-Enlightenment dissatisfaction with theological training offered at Harvard and the New Divinity/New England theology. Following this brief observation, the authors then highlight the relatively late development of the Doctor of Philosophy degree on the American scene, with Yale University awarding the first Ph.D. degree in this nation in 1861. The impact of the Ph.D. degree on American theological education is rightly considered here, given how studies unobtainable in America were sought out by an increasing number of American scholars, including those such as Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield. The theological controversies and subsequent ecclesial turmoil surrounding German Ph.D.-awarded Charles Augustus Briggs is well-worth pondering. While the authors make no such pronouncement, a general cautionary tone is detected: when it comes to the theological education of Christian ministers, is the PhD necessary, and was requiring it of seminary faculty members worth it?

The work ends on an apropos note, highlighting American Presbyterianism's multi-cultural growth in the current global age, particularly with regard to Korean Presbyterians and their influence on American Presbyterianism (316–317). The connections between American Presbyterians and Korea date back to nineteenth-century missionary efforts, and the establishment of distinctly Korean presbyteries within both the PC(USA) and the PCA (as well as autonomous Korean-American Presbyterian denominations) is a worthy inclusion. Additionally, the brief note on Presbyterian connectionalism (317–318) was a welcome item, noting the involvement various denominations have had in wider bodies such as World

Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, National Association of Evangelicals, and the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

The conclusion of Presbyterian self-understanding as evangelical (319–329) made for an interesting epilogue. Though these days the term “evangelical” is often fraught with misunderstanding and unwelcome political import, the authors explore aspects of Presbyterian identity under the more classical definition of “evangelical,” with attention to a commitment to biblical authority, spiritual renewal, missionary efforts, theological seriousness, and cultural transformation. Historically, these descriptors have been true of evangelical Presbyterians, but a self-reckoning seems to be in the making in the present moment, as Presbyterians determine if and how they wish to remain committed to these virtues well into the next millennium.

Negatively, while the book does have a perspectival balance in many ways, in some ways, it does fall short. All four of the authors hold views that are largely sympathetic to the “New Side” school of Presbyterianism. Some of the authors have expressed this conviction outright. As such, there are some treatments of historical episodes that suffer from a less-than-full-orbed evaluation of the issues, such as:

- the discussion of the broader movement of evangelicalism and Presbyterian interaction with it (321–322);
- the assessment of the Synod of 1729 and the subsequent Adopting Act in which there was a heavy reliance on Charles Briggs and Leonard J. Trinterud as secondary source evaluations.
- likewise, the manner in which subscriptionism was discussed, noting this disagreement between John Thomson vs Jonathan Dickinson and what constituted the “essential and necessary articles” of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms (93–98).
- the synopsis on the Great Awakening (100–113, 322), especially with regard to the evaluation of the ministries and impact of Gilbert Tennent and Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen.
- the overview of Old School/New School split of 1837–38 and the use of Charles Hodge to frame the discussion around the “constituent doctrines of the Calvinistic system contained in the confession of faith” (146–150).

On these matters, the volume would have been greatly strengthened by having a contributing author of the “Old Side” persuasion. At the very least, the book would have been well-served if the authors had included some of the more robust Old Side arguments as worthy counterpoints raised during the controversies. Readers will note that there seems to be an underlying supposition that, while not expressly

stated, assumes that American Presbyterianism is largely part-and-parcel with evangelicalism and revivals and that the two developed along parallel lines (322)—a thesis with which Old School or Old Side proponents would have great objection. A clearer distinction between “evangelical” Presbyterianism and “confessional” Presbyterianism may have served the work better.

Overall, this is a well-researched, pleasant to read, and useful volume for Presbyterian history students, scholars, and hobbyists alike. The authors are sympathetic to the evangelical Presbyterian cause while giving a fair overview of mainline Presbyterian developments. As such, evangelical and confessional Presbyterians will likely derive more profit from it than their mainline cousins.

Review: David W. Hall, *Irony and the Presbyterian Church in America* (Covenant Foundation, 2023). Hardback. 408 pp. ISBN 979-8-3991-0538-3. \$29.95. Paperback. ISBN 979-8-3970-5783-7. \$21.95. Reviewed by Ryan Biese, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Oglethorpe, GA.

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) is an occasion for thanksgiving and celebration as well as reflection and assessment. David W. Hall’s new volume, *Irony and the Presbyterian Church in America*, aids us toward those ends by reflecting on how faithful the PCA has been to the original vision of her charter.

As he engages in his survey, Hall consistently asks two questions: “(a) are the actors unaware of some of the drama’s plot, even if unintended; and (b) are the actors aware of a larger comparative grid, namely, not how does the PCA fit with its contemporary peers in America but how does it fit with a broader, older Presbyterian ethos” (13–14). That second question is especially salient given the tension within the PCA, reflected in Hall’s work, between those who desire the PCA to be distinctively Reformed and Presbyterian versus those with a broadly evangelical vision for the PCA.

Hall did not enter the PCA with the original generation in 1973, but in 1982 through the “Joining and Receiving” of the PCA with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES). As such, his historical research in the archives of the PCA is supplemented by Hall’s own reflections on the deliberations, acts, and deliverances of each of the PCA General Assemblies since 1982.

Hall’s work is a welcome addition to the historical study of the PCA. Not only is it the first (and as of September 2023, *only*) monograph history of the PCA’s first half century, it notably lacks the hagiographic triumphalism that one would anticipate in such a work. Instead, Hall takes a realistic approach analyzing the growth, conflicts, and developments

of the PCA as she has advanced and persevered from 1973 through her 50th Assembly in 2023.

In his realistic assessment, Hall offers candid evaluation of how the denomination has, ironically, been transformed from a decentralized, grassroots denomination that prohibited the physical offices of its various agencies from even being in the same city, much less the same building (62) in 1975 to now in 2023 a denomination with a sizable bureaucracy headquartered in Lawrenceville outside of Atlanta, Georgia. In fact, Hall details the controversy regarding the purchase of a centralized office building and the loans to acquire it (see especially pp. 132ff).

The denomination's founding elders were so wary of church bureaucracy being abused by liberals that they proclaimed themselves "intensely presbyterian" (*MiniGA*, p. 29) and carefully established impediments to the cooperation of denominational agencies. However, by 2006 the PCA had developed a powerful and centralized "Cooperative Ministries Committee" (CMC) that would restructure the functioning of the General Assembly under the guise of "preserving the 'grassroots' nature of the Assembly," yet, Hall notes, at the time observers "sensed a centralizing effect, even if unintended" to the changes implemented by the CMC (316).

Another irony Hall observes is the overly ambitious goals set by denominational luminaries regarding church growth. Hall injects a realistic assessment to the impressive sounding initiatives of denominational bureaucrats. For example, he bluntly reminds his readers the accomplishment of "Vision 2000" (the goal of 2000 PCA churches by the year 2000) would have required 50 churches to be planted per annum until 2000 (259). It is worth noting that the PCA consisted of only 1,911 congregations and missions in 2021 (*Min49GA*, p. 184). Currently, the Mission to North America (MNA) Vision asserts, "by resourcing our churches for kingdom impact, in the next ten years, MNA will facilitate the multiplication of PCA churches in the U.S. and Canada from 1,932 to 3,000 congregations;" this would require an increase of more than 100 PCA churches every year (See <https://pcamna.org/vision/>). The more things change, the more they stay the same. One wonders why PCA Agencies have historically avoided establishing realistic goals with clear metrics for accomplishment and instead put forth impressive and highfalutin visions with few benchmarks for gradual achievement.

In his work, Hall regularly places the flashy and impressive-sounding ambitions of denominational bureaucrats against a contrasting backdrop of slow, but steady growth since 1973—growth that often was led not by the large churches, but by smaller congregations faithfully carrying out their ministry (see e.g., 170f). Rather than dwell on impressive or lofty sounding names and new initiatives, Hall praises the steadily faithful commitment to historic Presbyterian and Reformed

principles. Hall is not without warrant to conclude regarding Vision 2000, "Thankfully Vision 2000 was soon discarded to the dustbin of other failed plans. However, the successes of faithful churches would last for generations" (259).

Fittingly, given the title, it is ironic that Hall should produce the first—and thus far only—monograph reflecting on the first half-century of the PCA. For all its bureaucracy and centralization, its publishing arm and media staff, the Lawrenceville headquarters of the PCA has thus far been unable to produce any commemorative volume for the 50th Anniversary. Perhaps that is to be expected since the denomination did not undertake to mark its 40th Anniversary until the 42nd General Assembly (355). Perhaps by the time the General Assembly meets in the yet-to-be-determined city in 2025 for its 52nd General Assembly there will be an official commemorative and celebratory volume published by the PCA to mark the half-century. Until that time, David Hall's *Irony* is not only the definitive history of the PCA, but also provides a refreshing and helpful survey of the challenges and opportunities through which God has sustained this branch of His Church.

Review: Warfield's Works, A Review & An Appreciation: Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, The Classic Warfield Collection (P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, 2023). Hardback. 680 pp. ISBN 978-1-6299-5896-5. \$49.99. Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, The Classic Warfield Collection (P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, 2023). Hardback. 752 pp. ISBN 978-1-6299-5897-2. \$49.99. Reviewed by Jeff A. Stivason, Pastor, Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church, Gibsonia, Pennsylvania (RPCNA).

From 1948 to 1958, P&R Publishing published a five-volume collection of Benjamin B. Warfield's best theological writings. These works are now reprinted—and according to the *Foreword* to the *Revised Edition*—with the goal of providing "more accessible, readable, and useful versions of these books." This review will consider the first two books in the series of five, namely, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* and *The Person and Work of Christ* under three sections. First, the review will briefly explore the updates to make this edition of Warfield's works accessible, readable, and useful. Second, some of the content will be highlighted. And third, we will reflect on why Warfield's writings have occupied an ongoing place in the theological reading list of serious Christians.

THE ACCESSIBLE, READABLE, AND USEFUL UPDATES

First, if we are to thank P&R Publishing in general for these volumes, we must specifically thank John J. Hughes. John has put countless editorial hours into achieving the goals set for

these volumes, the fruit of which will be valued by generations to come. By way of example, each chapter begins with an abstract which contains a fulsome outline of the article. What is more, John spent a great deal of time reading through Warfield's text and taking his sometimes excessively long paragraphs and breaking them into shorter ones so that the modern reader might be helped to follow the logic of Warfield's keen mind. For example, in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, the first article in the older edition is titled "The Biblical Idea of Revelation." The beginning paragraph is a page and a half long! In the new edition, that beginning paragraph is separated into three paragraphs so that each logical step of the argument might be viewed clearly. This process was painstakingly done and it will benefit future readers.

Furthermore, anyone who has read the older volumes will have been frustrated by the lack of bibliographical information. For instance, only chapters 1, 3, and 5 of the earlier editions of *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* had bibliographical information, and they typically lacked complete data by today's standards. In the present edition, bibliographies have been either completed where information was lacking or created for chapters missing them entirely.

And who can forget Warfield's use of Latin abbreviations like *ad loc.*, *in loc.*, *loc. cit.*, *op. cit.*, and *sub. voc.*? In the present edition, where possible, actual information is used in their place. For example, in the older version of an article titled "The Real Problem of Inspiration," Warfield would have written the note "Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 49." (cf. *IAB*, p. 196). However, the new version reads, "Farrar, *Life and Word of St. Paul*, 1:49."

In addition, spelling and capitalization have been updated to conform to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.). What is more, the reader will have frequent recourse to the ever-helpful "Ed. Note," of which 170 of them have been added to facilitate ease of use. In these notes you will find the translation of obscure Latin words and phrases, definitions of opaque English words, comments on bibliographical matters, and other information to facilitate accessible use of the volume. An enormous help are the bibliographies containing hundreds of books and journal articles contained in the volumes.

After each article there are two accompanying sections. The first contains a series of study questions that will help the reader successfully meditate on and digest the material found in the preceding chapter. The second section, titled "For Further Study," contains works by Warfield and others related to the chapter topic. In this section, you will find not only paths to other related works by Warfield, but also recommendations of related works by other authors with annotations. These sections will provide fruitful avenues for further study. There are also appendices, glossaries, indices, and a biographical sketch of Warfield's life from his one-time

student, later friend, and co-founder of P&R Publishing, Samuel G. Craig.

It has been said that Warfield is an often-quoted theologian who is little read. Perhaps the fault lies between Warfield's unwieldy academic style and our modern desire for ease. Nevertheless, it is my hope that P&R Publishing has created an onramp for those who have always wanted to dip into Warfield but were too afraid to take the plunge. These books are an invitation to become acquainted with a great man of the Faith who can only help you grow closer to your God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

THE ARTICLES

It is not hard to understand why the book titled, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, is on the shelf of every person concerned with the doctrine of Scripture's inspiration. This book is known by almost all who love Scripture. However, it is equally difficult to understand why the same book is often not read. The book is a posthumous work. It is a collection of articles that Warfield wrote on the doctrine of Scripture. Some of them were written for journals, others were published as encyclopedia or dictionary articles, at least one was penned for the American Sunday School Union, and Appendix D is Warfield's Inaugural Address from his early days at Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA. All of them are pure gold.

I recognize that not everyone will labor through "The Oracles of God," which is a word study of the term *λογια*. However, some may and would do so with benefit. This article was written before all of the scholarly helps at the fingertips of Greek students today. This article stands as a testimony to Warfield's scholarly ability. However, "God-Inspired Scripture" is the same. It may draw more readers than "The Oracles of God" due to the topic, but its technical nature will likely ward off all but the courageous.

However, "The Biblical Idea of Revelation," "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration," and "The Church Doctrine of Inspiration" are articles that will likely capture the attention of most readers. They provide the patient and careful reader with a firm foundation and appreciation for Warfield as a defender of an orthodox view of inspiration. More importantly, these articles will instill not only understanding but confidence in a high view of Scripture that is continually under attack. This is not to say that "The Real Problem of Inspiration" holds no value today. It certainly does. In fact, there is more here for us today than meets the eye. What is more, "It says: 'Scripture Says: 'God Says'" is a tour de force that will remind the reader that Scripture views itself as God's Word.

For many years, Warfield defended an orthodox view of inspiration, and *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* is the fruit of some of that defense. However, he started to realize

that opponents of Scripture were formulating similar arguments and directing them at Christ. Those who rejected the divinity of Scripture were ready to reject the divinity of Christ. Thus, Warfield defended Christology with the same acumen and zeal with which he defended Scripture. *The Person and Work of Christ* is some of the fruit of that defense. The first two chapters, “The Historical Christ” and “The Person of Christ According to the New Testament” function as companions. Both are non-technical treatments. The first provides external and internal evidence for the existence of Christ as a historical figure and the second leads us through the New Testament’s presentation of Christ.

However, “The Christ that Paul Preached” will be an exciting read for those who know that Warfield’s close friend, Geerhardus Vos, took a much different view of Romans 1:3–4. For those interested in comparing Warfield and Vos, consult Vos’s article, “Paul’s Eschatological Concept of the Spirit,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (P&R Publishing, 1980). The article titled “The Emotional Life of Our Lord” is a classic piece that should be read by every Christian. Here Warfield, the defender of Christ’s divinity, puts on full display the humanity of the Savior. It is true that you will read names like Holtzmann, Montefiore, and Weiss, which are likely unfamiliar unless you are familiar with older scholarship. Despite our lack of awareness about certain names, we can still discern Warfield’s point and it’s often mixed with quick wit and not a little wry humor. For instance, when Johannes Weiss tries to convince us that Romans 9:5 has been corrupted and cannot actually say that Jesus is God, Warfield writes that “there is not a scintilla of evidence of textual corruption in Romans 9:5” and that “corruption is assumed solely because the assertion of the passage does not fit in with the lowered Christology which Weiss would fain assign to Paul.”

Not everyone will appreciate every article. Some are more academic, and others are non-technical, but all are meant for the upbuilding of Christ’s church. Therefore, every article is worth the attention it ought to be given. Give them your attention.

WARFIELD’S LONGEVITY

Sinclair Ferguson was asked to write the introduction to this new set of Warfield’s works. It certainly adds value to an already valuable collection. In his introduction, Ferguson identifies what it is about Warfield’s works that gives them perennial value from one generation to the next. He writes, “Warfield’s perspective was that of a biblical theologian, and there is a kind of timelessness and constancy about much of his writing” (p. xxx). This is true. According to Ferguson, the “names change and the contexts differ” but the basic theological issues remain the same, though they may appear in a new dress!

But there is something else. Warfield trains a Christian to think. He helps us to think biblically and theologically. But he also gives us the courage to call falsehood, well, falsehood! For example, when Warfield described the Ritschlian school of thought, he said that there was a strong tendency in Evangelical circles to look upon this neo-Kantianism with favor. Warfield continued, “Such a tendency was, indeed, little creditable to either head or heart; and can be esteemed merely a fresh example of that shallow charity which ‘thinketh no evil,’ only because it lacks the mind to perceive or the heart to care for the evil that is flaunted in its face.”

Let me encourage you to pick up these volumes and read a godly master teacher of the Faith. Warfield is a man from whom you will learn much and much of what you will learn will be biblical and theological. However, you will also “catch” what it means to be a godly man by the way he handles a text, by his charity toward others, by his humble but courageous boldness, and certainly you will get a sense of his reverence for God and adoration of Christ as he, a mere man, relies on the Holy Spirit.

Christopher Watkin, *Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible’s Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022). Hardback. 672 pp. ISBN 978-0-3101-2872-4. \$44.99. Reviewed by Benjamin Shaw, Reformation Bible College.

THE BOOK ITSELF

The reading public has long since become used to blurbs from prominent readers appearing on the back of a book. In today’s social media world, these endorsers would be termed “influencers.” Follow the influencer; read the book. More recently, publishers have begun taking several pages before the title page to add to the list of influencers promoting the book. This book is no exception, with encouraging blurbs from such notable evangelical scholars as Kevin Vanhoozer, Michael Horton, and William Edgar.

I am no influencer. And given that my specialty is the Old Testament, I am not best suited to provide the kind of review expected from those influenced by the blurbs accompanying this book. That being said, *caveat lector*.

The book begins with a substantial introduction. In this introduction, Watkin defines three terms that give direction to the body of the book. The first, and perhaps most important term is *figures*. Figures “are patterns and rhythms in creation, whether of matter, language, ideas, systems, or behavior” (5). He distinguishes figures from “ground,” which might, somewhat simplistically, be defined as the background of the figures. For Watkin, there are six categories of figures: language (which includes ideas and stories), time and space,

the structure of reality, behavior, relationships, and objects. All these figures taken together define the culture of the particular moment.

Watkin's second term is *worlds*. This could also be called worldview, but it is perhaps best understood as "world" as used in such phrases as "the Victorian world," "the world of model car making," or "the world of the New Testament." A world is composed of a multitude of figures, but no one figure controls the totality. The mutual interaction of the figures produces the particularity of the world. If we are going to understand our world, we need to understand the figures and their interaction.

Watkin's third key term is *engagement and diagonalization*. Engagement involves recognizing that cultures often present us with distorted versions of biblical ideas. We get the modern contrast between love and justice, where the culture presents love without justice ("no labels, just love") or justice without love. For Watkin, this is a false dichotomy that has dismembered biblical ideas. This is where diagonalization comes in (this is best visualized by seeing Watkin's diagrams). In short, diagonalization involves rejecting the dichotomy and bringing the sides into union by utilizing a biblical idea. This process of engagement and diagonalization is Watkin's primary tool in his cultural analysis, as can be seen by the significant number of diagrams in the book that present some particular diagonalization.

Following the introduction, Watkin gives the reader twenty-eight chapters of biblical theology, beginning with the Trinity and ending with eschatology. Each chapter presents some aspect of biblical or systematic theology and its application to our current cultural situation. An example of Watkin's approach is found in his treatment of the Tower of Babel episode from Genesis 11. For Watkin, the story displays human autonomy and pride, followed by the judgment of God. Borrowing a phrase from Richard Bauckham, Watkin identifies the episode as the beginning of a "globalization of domination," which results in those with power dominating others. This globalization of domination characterizes the city of man, which operates without consideration of the coming judgment by God. We find these same things reflected in our current cultures. Unfortunately, this chapter is typical of Watkin's analyses. He presents some aspect of biblical theology and points out that we see the same thing in modern cultures. Considering that obvious point, the reader might easily say, "So what?" or "What am I supposed to do about that?" Watkin's answer is, "To live in God's city here and now is to enjoy God's limitless peace, love, and creativity; it is also to live a subversive, revolutionary life in this world as we repeatedly scratch the surface of the earthly city to reveal God's goodness, truth, and beauty under its makeshift palimpsest" (220–221). The reader might be forgiven for thinking that, as prettily as this is said, it is both facile and trivial.

A second example is the final chapter, "Eschatology and Culture." He presents three dichotomies. The first dichotomy is "The Dichotomy of Comparing Cultures" (Figure 110). This contrasts two ideas: that one culture is superior to other cultures and that all cultures are essentially equal. Watkin's diagonalization rejects the dichotomy by asserting the preeminence of the transcultural gospel. This fails to recognize that some human cultures are more gospel-influenced than others and, hence, culturally superior by merit of that greater quotient of gospel-influence. It also fails to deal with the difficulty that, before the eschaton, the transcultural gospel will have different levels of effectiveness in different cultures.

The second dichotomy contrasts between the demand for absolute justice now and the apathy and self-interest that avoids any work for justice in the present. Watkin diagonalizes this contrast by observing that we shall be changed; therefore, we abound in the work of the Lord. In other words, we should recognize that complete justice will not be achieved in the present, but we should nevertheless work to increase the level of justice we see in society.

The third dichotomy is that between the Left and the Right. He defines the Left as socially global and economically local. He defines the Right as socially local and economically global. The diagonalization that solves this dilemma is the globalization of blessing.

In all three dichotomies, Watkin fails to define his terms clearly. I imagine, for example, that many on the Left and the Right would object to his characterization of their views. In each case, the solution he proposes is a simplistic presentation of a biblical truth. It's the kind of thing that most Christians recognize to be true, but the difficulty is in implementing a solution. He does not seem to recognize that Christians may agree on the problem but disagree on the solution to that problem, with neither side necessarily being entirely wrong.

THE PROBLEM OF THE TITLE

The title of a book implies something about its content. Given the recent prominence of discussions about Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, and social justice, the title of this work implies either a critique of these current ideas from a biblical perspective or the presentation of a critical theory based on the Bible. In either case, clear definitions of the terms are necessary if the reader is to profit from the book. It is unfortunate, then, that the work presents no such definitions. This strikes me as odd, given that the author is a specialist in modern French philosophy. The philosophers generally regarded as connected with Critical Theory are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Friedrich Pollock, among others. Except for a single reference to Marcuse, none of these names appear in the body of the book, the bibliography, or the author index. We must

conclude that the author has no interest in dealing directly with Critical Theory and its offshoots. Given the lack of clarity in public discussions about the meaning of these terms, the absence is disturbing. The title serves only to create false expectations about the content.

THE PROBLEM OF THE SOURCES

Who does Watkin cite? Whose thoughts lie behind Watkin's discussion and analyses? First, we have Augustine. Watkin indicates this in his preface when he says, "I have attempted to take the biblical-theological structure that I find so compelling in Augustine and use it as a way to frame some contributions to a biblical social theory for today" (p. xx). The remaining list of most-cited authorities is an odd mix. From before the twentieth century, he gives us Thomas Hobbes and Karl Marx. We have G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, and Paul Ricoeur from the early twentieth century. More recent names include David Bentley Hart and Timothy Keller, the Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor, and the English ethicist Oliver O'Donovan. It makes the reader wonder how much Watkin had studied the topic of Christianity and cultural engagement before he set out to write the book.

THE ET CETERA PROBLEMS

Oddly, a book devoted to Christian cultural engagement manages to say nothing about some of the most pressing issues of our time. There is nothing in the work about abortion. There is nothing about the alphabet soup of LGBTQ+ and transgenderism. There is nothing about religious freedom. There is nothing about human trafficking.

Even with those omissions, the work is too long. Careful editing, including eliminating unnecessary jargon, would have produced a more readable and perhaps more profitable work. As it is, I cannot recommend this book to the reader. Having said that, a couple of alternative suggestions are in order. Justin Ariel Bailey, *Interpreting Your World: Five Lenses for Engaging Theology and Culture* (Baker Academic, 2022) is a good introductory-level discussion. The following are more advanced discussions: Kevin Vanhoozer, et al., eds. *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (Baker Academic, 2007). James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Baker Academic, 2017). Each of these accomplishes that kind of thing Watkin seems to be aiming at but in much less space.

Lyle D. Bierma, *Font of Pardon and New Life: John Calvin and the Efficacy of Baptism*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). Hardcover. ix + 267pp. ISBN 978-0-1975-5387-9. \$78.23. Reviewed by Ryan M. McGraw, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

The sacraments occupied a central focal point of debate during and after the Protestant Reformation. An author's views of the nature and efficacy of the sacraments often served as the proving ground of his entire theological system, illustrating the practical outworking of his understanding of the relation of Word and Spirit, the nature and necessity of faith in Christ, the role of the church in salvation, and many other related issues. Surprisingly in this light, historical scholars have devoted inadequate attention to baptism in particular—let alone its efficacy—in Reformed thought. Lyle Bierma helps remedy this lack by providing one of the first monographs on John Calvin's view/doctrine of sacramental efficacy, including his potential influence on later Reformed sacramental theology. This finely written and well-documented study helps guide readers through Calvin studies on baptism up to this point, showing the enduring effects on Reformed thought in relation to how baptism serves as a means of grace.

In nine chapters, Bierma traces Calvin's teaching on the efficacy of baptism chronologically. Following the introduction, he follows Calvin's thought on this topic from the first edition of the *Institutes* in 1536 up through the *Consensus Tigurinus* and Calvin's death in chapters two through six. Dividing Calvin's life into five periods, Bierma challenges authors who detect massive developmental changes in Calvin's views of baptismal efficacy (245–246). His primary thesis is that Calvin's views of baptism contained elements of what he calls instrumentalism, parallelism, and developmental change (15).

Rejecting the idea that the sacraments were mere symbols of grace (241), Bierma argues persistently that Calvin balanced two senses in which baptism was instrumental of grace: the first in that it strengthened believers' knowledge and assurance in Christ, and the second that baptism was an actual means of grace exhibiting and conferring what it signified (e.g., 241). Parallelism, which was the view of Heinrich Bullinger, asserted that both the sign and the thing signified could be present at baptism without establishing a clear connection between the two (see ch. 5 and pp. 205–214). Without rejecting such parallelism, Bierma contends that Calvin went beyond it in his view of instrumental grace in baptism. In each chapter, the author argues cumulatively that Calvin did not substantially change his views of baptismal efficacy through the course of his life, but that he increasingly balanced his emphases on baptism as both an instrument of assurance and an instrument of grace (e.g., 115, 122). However, Calvin qualified his views of baptismal efficacy by noting that the efficacy of baptism could be "latent" or delayed for baptized people who came to saving faith at various points in life, and by observing that the benefits of baptism were life-long (5, 244).

Following this chronological sketch, the author in chapter seven devotes special attention to the efficacy of infant baptism, followed by the "legacy" of Calvin's teaching in Reformed

confessional theology up through the Westminster Standards in the mid-seventeenth century. The chapter on infant baptism further highlights the point of latent and enduring baptismal efficacy, following the chronological method of the preceding chapters. Chapter eight traces eight influential Reformed confessional statements (176), detecting Calvin's direct or indirect influence in at least six of them. What will perhaps surprise some readers is Bierma's arguments that the Heidelberg Catechism and Second Helvetic Confessions teach only "instrumental parallelism," falling short of asserting that the Spirit exhibits and conveys Christ and his grace through baptism as a means of grace. Regardless of whether readers are persuaded by this chapter, the author makes a cogent case for his conclusions using copious primary source evidence. The conclusion drives the idea home that Calvin taught instrumental baptismal efficacy without rejecting parallelism, contending that his views remained relatively stable throughout his life.

One helpful feature of this volume is the author's attention to Calvin's description of the sacraments exhibiting Christ to people. Such terminology passed into much later Reformed thinking (see ch. 8), though it is often opaque or unclear to modern readers. For Calvin, 'exhibiting Christ in baptism' meant holding him forth in his saving power as the object of faith (26–27). While Bullinger largely rejected this language in favor of "testimony" (94), Calvin embraced and articulated the position that 'exhibiting Christ' was the turning point between treating baptism as a sign and its use in conferring and applying Christ's grace to believers. In fact, "exhibit" was Calvin's favorite term in describing the sacraments as means of grace (132). As God exhibited Christ in baptism, believers moved through the sacrament as an instrument of knowledge and assurance to baptism as a means of increasing their union with Christ (133). Since exhibition language passes into such widely used Reformed confessions as the Westminster Standards, Bierma's attention to this term furthers our understanding of the broader development of Reformed sacramental theology.

Whether or not readers fully agree with Bierma's explanations and conclusions, this is a solid and readable work of historical theology. We need many more historical studies on the Reformed sacramentology in order to grasp more clearly the meaning and function of the sacraments in Reformed thought. Such studies will enable us to understand and use sacramental language better as it has passed into currently used Reformed confessions, enabling the church to administer and apply the sacraments more effectively.

Gregory David Soderberg, *As Often As You Eat This Bread: Communion Frequency in English, Scottish, and Early American Churches* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023). Hardback. 280 pages. ISBN 978–3–525–56070–9. 120,00 €. \$138.00 US.

Review by Ryan Speck, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA), Columbia, Missouri.

INTRODUCTION

This book could have been a very small pamphlet if it simply addressed the historical frequency of communion—even a chart, really. The titles for the columns would have been, "Annually, Quarterly, Monthly, Weekly," and the names of pastors, theologians, and churches would have been entered into the appropriate columns (along with dates). However, Gregory David Soderberg addresses much more than the simple fact of frequency; he addresses the reasons for the varied rate at which churches observed the Lord's Supper, delving into and analyzing the theological, political, traditional, and financial factors that led to varied frequencies in observing Communion. By his research, Soderberg opens a rich vein for understanding the arguments and reasons for Communion frequency.

One of the main takeaways from this book is the tension between Communion frequency and preparation. Many theologians throughout church history believed in the necessity of extended and rigorous preparation before participation in the Lord's Supper. Such preparation made it impossible to partake frequently. If men would prepare properly, they simply could not partake weekly.

Another primary lesson is that not every man got what he wanted in his church context—or even pressed for his belief to be instituted—which should not be overly surprising to experienced ministers. For example, perhaps you have heard someone say something like this, "Well, Calvin observed the Lord's Supper weekly in Geneva. We as *Calvinists* should too!" In fact, Calvin expressed a desire for *more* than weekly communion, not necessarily on Sunday (p. 48). Further, while Calvin expressed his desire for more than weekly Communion, he only ever practiced quarterly Communion in Geneva "because of the frailty of the people" and "the danger" of misunderstanding Communion, if observed too frequently (p. 64). Thus, we must distinguish between what a man believed and what he practiced, discerning whether this was mere hypocrisy or feeble cowardice or pastoral sensitivity (or something in between).

CHAPTER 1: COMMUNION FREQUENCY AND REFORMED IDENTITY

In his short introductory chapter, Soderberg begins by suggesting that recent discussion about Communion frequency "raises fundamental questions about the nature of the Reformed tradition. Does the historic Reformed tradition elevate the 'Word' too far above the 'Sacraments'? What does it mean to partake of communion in a meaningful way? Has the Reformed tradition interpreted Paul's exhortation to

‘examine yourself’ in an overly intellectualistic fashion? Can a ritual be repeated frequently, and yet not lose any sense of its profound meaning?” (pp. 11–12). To explore such questions from historical data (not Biblical exegesis), Soderberg’s “study focuses on a central research question: *What patterns of communion frequency characterized the sixteenth-century Swiss Reformed, English Puritan, Scottish Reformed, and early American Reformed communities?*” (pp. 15–16). Yet, as noted, Soderberg does not merely ask “what” but also “why” these patterns emerged.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNION FREQUENCY IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL PERIOD AND THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CONTINENTAL REFORMED REFORMATION

In this chapter, Soderberg presents the Medieval context of Communion frequency setting the stage for reform, and sets forth the convictions of key Reformation figures, whose beliefs were “transmitted to later generations” (p. 22). In fact, the Reformation was especially an attempt to reform worship practices. As John Calvin maintains, “the whole substance of Christianity . . . is, a knowledge, *first*, of the mode in which God is duly worshipped; and, *secondly*, of the source from which salvation is to be obtained.”¹ Accordingly, the issue of Communion as related to the Mass was of critical importance in the Reformation.

Although for the first three hundred years of the early Church, churches partook of Communion weekly (which is not disputed), by the Medieval Age, Communion was held once a year on Easter (p. 25, fn. 15). This infrequency heightened the holiness and mystery of the act and created a sense of community. Even, when the people themselves did not partake (or did not partake fully), the priest communed with Christ, and the people via the priest (p. 24). For, to partake of this profound mystery of holiness, rigorous preparation was demanded—only those elite in holiness would dare to partake more than once a year (which was resented by the more “humble,” who dared but partake only once or less a year). Accordingly, many did not dare to partake at all, at least not with their mouths. Rather, “visual reception” became the norm. Citing Horton Davies: “To see the sacred Host became the principal, if not the exclusive, concern of worshippers in the High Middle Ages” (pp. 25–26). Yet, for a more tactile experience, the congregation would “pass the pax” during

Communion, which refers to “a smooth round object . . . with a crucifixion scene” passed around to be “touched and kissed” (p. 26, fn. 22).² Thus, the sensual aspects of the Lord’s Supper were transmuted into visual reception and passing the pax. This was the entrenched tradition the Reformers faced in their day.

Next, Soderberg details the beliefs of key Reformers, beginning with Johannes Oecolampadius, who assumed “the Lord’s Supper had a regular place in worship” and “was among the first of the Reformers to argue for ‘fencing’ the table” (p. 30). However, he did not convince most in Basel. Although accounts differ during his lifetime, by 1543 (after his death in 1531), Basel was known to hold monthly communion.

Martin Bucer favored weekly communion and practiced this frequency in his own cathedral. However, to achieve unity, he allowed for differences in belief and practice in other places of worship, and he taught the necessity for “religious instruction, catechesis, pastoral examination, private confession of sin, public profession of faith, fraternal admonition, and participation in a community fellowship committed to holiness and informal discipline” (p. 60)

According to Soderberg, it “seems inaccurate” to characterize Huldrych Zwingli’s view as “a mere memorialism” (p. 39). Rather, he believed in “a spiritual impartation of Christ” (p. 38, fn. 77). However, Zwingli certainly did significantly emphasize the horizontal aspects of communion. Thus, in a novel move, he even allowed participants to pass the elements one to another (as an act of reconciliation), and he argued against excluding even impenitent sinners (since they might be brought to repentance and reconciled in the act of Communion, p. 42, fn. 99). Zwingli instituted observance of the Lord’s Supper four times a year: Easter, Pentecost, harvest time, and Christmas (p. 40).

For my part, after reading and re-reading this section, I remain confused about Zwingli’s position on the Lord’s Supper, which is not surprising, given that experts and scholars debate it still today (as Soderberg demonstrates). Further, Soderberg does not cite any original material in which Zwingli makes his view plain on the presence of Christ. If such material exists, I suppose the debate would end. As it stands, I remain uncertain as to exactly what Zwingli believed on this issue.

Heinrich Bullinger, embroiled in controversy and battles of his own, did not fight this frequency battle but chose a middle way. Although he believed “weekly celebration was certainly justifiable on theological grounds,” he commended each side (frequent and infrequent observance) for their ideals, insisting that the Lord has left churches free to make decisions best fitting their congregations (pp. 44–45).

John Calvin believed that the Sabbath was abrogated (p. 48). Therefore, no particular day of the week need be set aside for worship, but at least one should be.³ Accordingly, Calvin

1. John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (Dallas, Texas: Protestant Heritage Press, 1995), p. 15.

2. One wonders how this “passing the pax” might relate to “passing the peace,” as observed in some worship services today.

3. Cf. John Calvin, *John Calvin’s Sermons on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980). Ed. Benjamin W. Farley. Those who hold to the “continental view” should review Calvin’s sermons on the Sabbath. For, in his sermon on this subject, Calvin

argued that whichever day(s) the church sets aside for worship, Communion should be one of the elements included, appealing to Acts 2:42 (p. 46). For Calvin believed that the Supper was a means of grace to nourish believers spiritually, and although he warns against partaking while “unrepentant and continuing willfully in sin,” he believed that “[o]ur faith in Christ makes us worthy” to partake (p. 53). Calvin also encouraged “that children be catechized and examined” before being admitted to the Supper (p. 65). In fact, considering the practice Calvin allowed in Geneva (explained later in the book), Soderberg concludes: “It becomes apparent that Calvin was willing to sacrifice frequency for the sake of proper preparation, which could imply that frequency was not an unqualified blessing in Calvin’s mind” (p. 45). Calvin’s chief concern was “to get rid of this great pile of ceremonies” heaped up by Roman Catholicism and to abolish annual communion, which he called a “veritable invention of the devil” (pp. 46–47).

The issues of church discipline, “the preconditions for participation in the Eucharist,” and the relationship between church and state were intimately bound up with the practice of Communion during the Reformation. Therefore, Soderberg considers the various attempts of Communion reforms in Zurich, Basel, Strasbourg, and Geneva. In Zurich, for example, Zwingli believed the church “was under the complete authority of the Christian magistrate” (p. 56), with which Bullinger (his successor) agreed (p. 57). However, Bullinger did not believe excommunication by the state meant exclusion from the Supper. In Basel, Oecolampadius believed impenitent sinners should be cut off from the Supper, but pastors had little control over such matters in Basel, which fell largely to laymen and magistrates (p. 59). In Strasbourg, Bucer believed excommunication should be in the hands of church leaders, and he called for the novel “*pre-communion confession and examination*” (p. 61). His ideals may not have been realized in Strasbourg, but he influenced other Reformers, such as Calvin (pp. 60, 63). Although Calvin—in Geneva—believed in frequent Communion, he also insisted upon proper discipline by church leaders: “Accordingly, the consistory devoted much of its time before the quarterly communion services to facilitating the reconciliation of offended parties, and to drawing up a list of those who were unrepentant, and thus barred from communion” (p. 67). Calvin himself often preached a fervent preparatory sermon the Sunday before Communion (pp. 67–68). In fact, he believed the people of Geneva may not be prepared to participate in frequent communion: “But because the frailty of the people is still so great, there is danger that this sacred and so excellent mystery be misunderstood if it be celebrated so often” (p. 64). Therefore, he recommended only monthly Communion in Geneva, but even then, bearing with the weakness of the people (with recorded protest), Calvin resigned himself to quarterly Communion observance:

“at Christmas, at Easter, at Pentecost, and in September” (pp. 64, 67). Soderberg summarizes Calvin’s position (p. 69):

In the context of this study, in [sic] can be concluded that Calvin thought that weekly communion was ideal, but not essential (it could be either more, or less often). However, Calvin gradually came to hold that spiritual preparation and examination were indispensable for proper participation in the Lord’s Supper, and for practical reasons this necessitated an infrequent communion-rhythm of at best 5–6 times a year per church.

Thus, the Reformers “did not simply argue for more frequent communion— they argued for more *faithful* frequent communion” (p. 71).

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNION FREQUENCY IN THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND (1536–1603)

As Soderberg cleverly puts it, “The scholarly interpretations of the upheavals in sixteenth century England and beyond are only slightly less contentious than the original events themselves” (p. 75). However, it is clear that Cranmer and other English Reformers held weekly Communion as their ideal (pp. 78–9). Nonetheless, given the long-standing tradition of only once-annual observance and the practice of visual only (vs. oral) Communion that developed during the Middle Ages,

explains his position: “Moreover, let us realize that it is not only for coming to the sermon that the day of Sunday is instituted, but in order that we might devote all the rest of the time to praising God.... It is true that it would be a poor thing if we did not think about the benefits of God except on Sunday, but on other days, seeing that we are so occupied with our affairs, we are not as much open to serve God as on a day which is totally dedicated to this.... But when Sunday is spent not only in pastimes full of vanity, but in things which are entirely contrary to God, it seems that one has not at all celebrated Sunday [and] that God has been offended in many ways. Thus when people profane in this manner the holy order which God has instituted to lead us to himself, why should they be astonished if all the rest of the week is degraded?” (p. 110). Calvin spoke of “a special day which should be totally dedicated” to spiritual ends each week, suggesting “one or two” such days might be established each week (p. 111). Is this the “continental view” so many are claiming today? Cf. John H. Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath: A Comparative Study,” in *Exploring The Heritage Of John Calvin: Essays In Honor Of John Bratt*, ed. David E. Holwerda (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), pp. 40–75; *Holy Time. Moderate Puritanism and the Sabbath* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989); “Sunday: The Lord’s day as a Sabbath—Protestant Perspectives on the Sabbath,” in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi, Daniel J. Harrington, S. J., and William H. Sher (New York: Crossroads, 1991); Stewart E. Lauer, “John Calvin, the Nascent Sabbatarian: A Reconsideration of Calvin’s View of Two Key Sabbath-Issues,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007): 3–14, 302; repr. in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 12 (2016): 149–160.

it is not clear how successful the English Reformers were in actually instituting weekly Communion.

In Scotland, the *First Book of Discipline* (1561) called for quarterly observance of the Lord's Supper. In an attempt to avoid all superstitious holidays, they recommended observance on the first Sundays in March, June, September, and December (pp. 83–4). *The Book of Common Order* (1562) “notes that communion is ‘commonly’ held monthly,” but this “was an ideal which failed to take root in Scotland” (p. 86). Why? Soderberg answers: “Some blame the tenacity of medieval Catholic tradition. Others blame the Puritans. While these various explanations might all capture aspects of the truth, one important factor is often overlooked. This is the same dynamic that made communion frequency difficult to achieve in Continental Reformed churches—the emphasis on catechesis and church discipline” (p. 88).

The Scottish Reformed liturgy “was dominated by preaching,” displacing the traditional centerpiece throughout the Middle Ages: the drama and mystery of the Mass. The Word preached was understood to be “sealed in the Eucharist” (p. 90). Thus, whenever the Scots observed Communion, they preached the Saturday before, twice on Communion Sunday, and once afterwards on Monday (p. 90). This quadruple sermonizing stoked great intensity during such times—an intensity that could hardly be sustained for frequent Communion. Likewise, the Scots insisted upon intense preparation for Communion seasons, including catechizing, rigorous examinations by the kirk (which granted a token or ticket to partake for those who passed), and much fasting. Such intensity in preparation made frequent Communion practically impossible in Scotland.

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNION FREQUENCY AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND (1603–1689)

In England, while Elizabeth may have believed that the 1559 settlement was the conclusion of Church reform, the Puritans did not. Their concern for further reform and purifying of the Church included the Lord's Supper, which, at this time, “most

4. “The communion, or supper of the Lord, is frequently to be celebrated; but how often may be considered and determined by the ministers, and other church-governors of each congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge. And, when it shall be administered, we judge it convenient to be done after the morning sermon. The ignorant and the scandalous are not fit to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Where this sacrament cannot with convenience be frequently administered, it is requisite that publick warning be given the sabbath-day before the administration thereof: and that either then, or some day of that week, something concerning that ordinance, and the due preparation thereunto, and participation thereof, be taught; that, by the diligent use of all means sanctified of God to that end, both in publick and private, all may come better

parishioners only received annually” (p. 102). When able to do so, the Puritans changed such practices. Accordingly, “The Puritan Baptist groups practiced monthly communion” (p. 103); “The English Congregationalists, or Independents, celebrated communion weekly” (p. 104); and “The English Presbyterians ... adopted the Continental Reformed practice of quarterly communion” (p. 105). Yet, their concern for purity included the need for proper preparation to partake.

Next, Soderberg cites many individual case studies, exploring “the dual priorities of emphasizing the duty of participating in the Lord's Supper and the necessity of preparation” (p. 109), beginning with Lewis Bayly. Bayly wanted to observe the Supper at least monthly, and “his emphasis on preparation makes it seem that our experience of God's grace in communion depends on how well we prepare for it” (p. 112). Thus, Bayly wrote: “the efficacy of the sacrament is received according to the direct proportion of the faith of the receiver” (p. 112, fn. 78).

Arthur Hildersham and William Bradshaw did not clearly state their frequency convictions. Rather, they emphasized the necessity of preparation and worthiness to partake, balanced by the blessedness of participation.

Stephen Charnock believed: “Frequent it should be. The too much deferring doth more hurt than the frequent communicating” (p. 121). Likewise, Charnock noted: “[i]f we abstain from it for reverence, we may rather come for reverence; for if it be worthily received, it increaseth our reverence of God, and affection to him” (p. 121). Accordingly, while “it is not absolutely necessary that it should be administered every Lord's day,” Charnock noted five benefits in partaking: “It weakens sin in us ... nourishes the soul ... increases the faith and grace in our lives ... increases our ‘sense and assurance of [God's] love’ ... and in the Supper ‘union with Christ is promoted” (pp. 121–22). Thus, he concludes: “Can we too often clasp about him; can the union be often renewed, and become too close and strait?” (p. 122).

The Westminster Divines “hotly debated” who could partake of the Supper, with many urging the necessity for churches to have the right to exclude participants, while some contemporaries (notably, William Prynne, labeled as an Erastian) argued that only government officials could exclude from the Supper. In fact, Prynne even “introduced the concept that the Lord's Supper was a ‘converting’ (i.e., leading to conversion) ordinance” (p. 126). Regarding frequency, the Westminster Assembly may have alluded to weekly Communion, but it left that decision to local churches (p. 127).⁴

Thomas Doolittle implies his approval of weekly Communion, but his calls for stringent preparation drown out his frequency conviction. Doolittle wanted days of preparation so that participants would come only “after painful

and serious preparation: no preparation, no participation” (pp. 131–32).

Matthew Henry followed the example of his father by observing Communion monthly. Further, he maintained that because Communion “is a family meal, all members of God’s family should be present at the family meal. . . . even if they have not had sufficient time to prepare thoroughly” (pp. 134–35). For, he held “that believers are inherently qualified to come to communion” (p. 136).

Strangely, Soderberg concludes this section on Post-Reformation England by simply announcing (without citation) that “communion frequency fell most naturally into a monthly rhythm” (p. 136). How that fits with the weekly, monthly, and quarterly summary on pp. 103–5, the reader is left to wonder.

Turning next to Scotland, Soderberg observes that the Scots continued the tradition of observing Communion once a year, despite their own church courts’ various attempts to mandate more frequency. This tradition was due to many factors, including politics, economics, lack of clergy, weather, etc. The Scots would preach preparation sermons, issue tokens, and gather around a table to participate in Communion, which became known as the Communion season. This season was a five-day event, and such “‘festivity’ mitigated against ‘frequency’” (p. 140). These events were times of intense religious experience and became entrenched tradition so that “Biblical exegesis was not enough—at issue was a Presbyterian tradition, combined with popular experience and expectations of what ‘communion’ should look, sound, and feel like” (p. 141). In 1701, 1711, 1712, 1724, and 1751, the General Assembly in Edinburgh urged more frequent Communion with little effect.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNION, PREPARATION, AND ECCLESIAL IDENTITY IN AMERICAN REFORMED CHURCHES (1620–1758) Christians came to the New World, in part, to put into practice their ideas of what a pure church should be and “saw themselves as examples for Old England” (p. 148). The earliest sources, Thomas Lechford and John Cotton, describe monthly communion in which a minority present partake, only officers sat at the table, and visitors must have a letter of recommendation from their home church to participate (pp. 149–50). Further, American Reformed Churches often practiced rigorous preparation for Communion, including especially the necessity of a conversion testimony. “However, not everyone could provide this verbal testimony” (p. 157), which led to the phenomenon of some who were baptized, regularly attended, had their children baptized, were considered Christians but were never received into the church’s communing membership, and so did not partake of Communion (p. 157). “In essence, there were two levels of membership: baptism and then participation in communion” (p. 158).

Next, Soderberg surveys select prominent theologians in America, beginning with Solomon Stoddard. Stoddard’s main concern was to get people to partake of the Supper, for he believed Communion to be a “converting ordinance” such that you need not be regenerate to partake. Edward Taylor opposed Stoddard, arguing in sermons based on Matthew 22:12 that coming to the Supper required the “clothes” of saving faith and preparation. According to Taylor, the Supper “‘never was ordained by God to give the first grace, but it is only a strengthening ordinance’” (p. 163, fn. 74).

Samuel Willard argued that “[m]oments of doubt and weakness are the most important times for us to come to the Lord’s Supper” because “communion is a vital means of strengthening faith in Christ” (p. 166). Further, when some participants feared that they came unworthily, because they did not experience what they expected or desired, Willard argued that it is man’s duty to partake “regardless of what spiritual experiences he may, or may not, have during communion” (p. 166).

Cotton Mather denied the necessity of relaying one’s conversion experience before partaking of the Supper, attacked the idea that the Supper was a “converting ordinance,” and warned against laxity in admission to the table (p. 167). Mather and others were fighting against chronic neglect by eligible participants. Accordingly, Mather challenged congregants not to make excuses but to prepare and partake. While Mather speaks pastorally at times, he quickly returns to emphasizing preparation and proper participation (p. 170). No wonder congregants refrained, considering themselves unprepared and unworthy.

In typical Puritan fashion, in his sermons Jonathan Edwards argues for strenuous preparation and self-examination before partaking of the Supper. Although Edwards thought 1 Corinthians 11:28–29 revealed that frequency bred contempt of the ordinance, he came to believe that weekly participation was ideal (pp. 175, 177).

The Scotch-Irish who emigrated to America continued the annual Communion seasons, gathering various church communities together for these extended festivities. The First Great Awakening arose out of such Communion gatherings (p. 179).

CHAPTER 6: SCOTTISH REFORMED COMMUNION FREQUENCY DEBATES: A TRANS-ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVE (1716–1840)

In this final chapter, Soderberg presents the debates on this issue amongst the Scottish Reformed, beginning with John Willison. Although Willison, alongside Whitefield,

prepared to that heavenly feast.” *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, in *The Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1855), p. 384. https://archive.org/details/confessionoffaitoochur_o/page/384/mode/zup

“preached at the largest documented revival in Scottish history”—which occurred at a “communion season”—Willison nonetheless desired weekly communion, saw quarterly as realistic, and lamented the practice of only annual observance. He argued that frequency does not lead to contempt but to higher esteem. Willison provided three reasons for frequent communion: the words “as often,” the example of the primitive church (e.g., Acts 2:42, 46; Acts 20:7), and the necessity of our souls.

Of all the original sources cited, John Erskine’s *An Attempt to Promote the Frequent Dispensing of the Lord’s Supper* appears to be the strongest source in favor of weekly communion, containing comprehensive and powerful arguments for frequency. He argued from Scripture (e.g., Luke 24; Acts 2:42, 46; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20–21, 25–26) and from church history, answered objections, and made observations (also providing quotations).

Thomas Randall argued that churches should celebrate the Supper as often as they use the other means of grace, such as preaching and prayer. Randall also suggested that “Jesus did not teach directly on everything, but revealed some things to the apostles through the Spirit. Because of this move, Randall can elevate the communion practices of the Apostolic church to the divinely-revealed will of God” (p. 196). As Soderberg notes, such a claim is dangerously close to similar Roman Catholic claims.

John Mitchell Mason, though writing with “excessive rhetorical flourishes,” added to the arguments by contending that the Lord’s Supper does not “require more holiness . . . than in other services” (p. 201). If preparation for the Supper requires fasting, for example, why does not preparation for preaching? Soderberg suggests that by relegating “the sacrament to a more ‘ordinary’ position, a position which would not require ‘extraordinary’ preparation, including fasting days, Mason . . . seems to deny any special grace available in the Supper” (p. 202). In fact, Mason goes so far as to say that Christians will not find “a single blessing” in the Supper, which we might not expect “in every approach to God through the faith of Jesus” (p. 203).

John Thomson argued against Mason, as an older minister to “a young man who is too brilliant and eloquent for his own good” (p. 203). Thomson argued that the apostolic Church needed frequent communion, considering its persecution and its conviction of the imminent return of Christ (p. 205). Regarding the early Church, Thomson argued it was corrupt, and its practices do not set the example for future ages. Further, he declared that preaching “commemorates the death of Jesus and his love for sinners” (p. 206), which is itself a feast for believers. In addition, Thomson argued that preparation days with fasting had biblical warrant in the Old Testament preparation days for Passover, and preaching after

Communion had biblical warrant in the feast days that followed Passover (pp. 206–207).

Likewise, John Anderson argued against Mason, especially emphasizing the centrality of “solemnity,” which was incompatible with frequency. Accordingly, Anderson argued that the Supper is not a “feast” but a “fast” (p. 213). Further, Anderson sees the other means of grace as distinct from the Supper, which condescends to our weakness. Accordingly, “[s]ince the Lord’s Supper is a ‘sensible’ (sensory) ordinance it should be infrequent, so that our senses are not dulled” (p. 214).

Alexander Duncan also argued against Mason, maintaining that the primary reason for the Lord’s Supper was unity. For Duncan, this meant unity amongst congregations, namely, “for large, multi-parish gatherings” (p. 215). He argued this based upon 1 Corinthians 10 and 1 Corinthians 11:20. Likewise, he argues, since the Passover was annual, so should be the Lord’s Supper. Duncan explained “as often” to mean “whenever.” While he grants the early church observed the Supper more often, he argues that the corrupt state of the church in his day demands less frequency, since the people are not properly prepared to partake. Likewise, while he grants fast days are not Scripturally mandated, “they are not contrary to Scripture and are salutary and beneficial” (pp. 222–23).

John Brown of Haddington—published posthumously—answered many objections to frequency. For example, to those who claim the early church lived in times of persecution, which led to frequent communion—as if it might be their last opportunity—he answers, “We ought to live as if every Sabbath were our last” (p. 227). Likewise, if Brown’s day was one of declension, the antidote is the Supper. “Do we withhold milk from a sickly child? Do we water a garden less frequently because it is dry?” (p. 227). Further, if solemnity is so necessary for the means of grace, why not “establish a fast day, preparation day, and thanksgiving day in order to hear sermons twice a year?” (p. 228). And, “If Passover is our model . . . Surely the Apostles knew the Passover was a yearly event, so why did they then celebrate communion so often?” (p. 229).

James W. Alexander, while acknowledging the benefits that came from communion seasons, argued that “all services which render the celebration of the Lord’s Supper protracted or wearisome, and all instructions and ceremonies which invest it with an unscriptural mystery or awfulness, have a necessary tendency to infrequent communion. Instead of being an attractive and delightful ordinance, it thus becomes fearful and repulsive. . . . The question is not whether it is ‘solemn,’ but whether it is ‘commanded’ by Scripture” (pp. 230–31). Alexander argued that annual communion was the innovation, not frequent communion.

At the end of this chapter, Soderberg summarizes the arguments from both sides. He notes, for example, that pro-frequency proponents largely argue based upon the New

Testament, while those for infrequent observance argue largely from the Old Testament. Regarding theology, those in favor of frequency argue the Supper is a feast, whereas opponents argue it as a fast (i.e., solemnity). Likewise, frequency advocates argue for a leveling of the means of grace, whereas they accuse their opponents (strangely, in my view) of too highly elevating the preaching of the Word. Regarding church history, frequency contenders argue it as an example, whereas their opponents point out the corruption of the early Church. In the end, Soderberg concludes: “The debates were not just about Biblical texts, or historical examples, in the abstract, but about shared rhythms of life that many people loved, some hated, and formed the inescapable context of the discussion” (p. 247).

Eventually, annual communion largely died out as a normative practice in American Presbyterian Churches. Yet, the fatal blows were not theological so much as pragmatic. For example, American revivalism grew in popularity and did not include Communion (p. 248). Likewise, “communion seasons” were seen as peculiarly “Scottish,” not American (p. 248). Yet, even some opponents of annual communion lamented the loss of serious preparation and broader Christian fellowship (pp. 248–49).

CONCLUSION

Soderberg concludes: “There is no single pattern of frequency that can be labelled as ‘truly’ reformed, as if all others were sub-standard and relics of the medieval church ... Communion frequency is a matter of inference, best judgment, and pastoral wisdom” (p. 254). In fact, Soderberg notes: “It is supremely ironic that the sacrament of unity has often been the source of disunity” (pp. 255–56). Further, Soderberg detects a lack of concern in modern discussions and practices on serious preparation for Communion, which preparation he “tentatively” calls “a catholic consensus” in the historical debate (p. 256). His final words, then, are: “What might it mean for us to prepare more fully for this rite? How might a renewed attention on this aspect of eucharistic spirituality help to restore this central sign of union and communion, which has so often been the site of division? Writers in the past knew that there was much at stake in the observance of the Lord’s Supper. By learning from communion frequency debates in the past, perhaps we can have more productive debates in the present, and in the future” (p. 256).

ANALYSIS

By way of critique, this book is, at times, confusing in its outline, making it difficult to discern what subject Soderberg is addressing or what point he is making. For example, Soderberg claims the goal of his book is “to illuminate the historical backgrounds and contexts of communion frequency debates in the American Reformed tradition” (p. 12). Yet, how does

that fit with his central research question: “*What patterns of communion frequency characterized the sixteenth-century Swiss Reformed, English Puritan, Scottish Reformed, and early American Reformed communities?*” (pp. 15–16). In fact, the book is best read as more aligned with this central research question than any special focus upon the American Reformed tradition. Likewise, for example, at times Soderberg enumerates lists with missing numbers (e.g., pp. 120–21, 253ff). Thus, the organization and presentation of content could helpfully be edited.

However, the subject matter is clearly well-researched and chock-full of helpful and corrective information. He proves his lesson that no one can claim “the” Reformed view on Communion frequency, and I was certainly convicted to think more seriously about the necessity of preparation for Communion.

Yet, one question Soderberg does not explore at length is how the centrality of preaching fits with frequency of communion, which, in my estimation, is an essential question in this debate. Soderberg touches upon the subject from time to time. For example, he does highlight the Scottish practice of hearing four sermons during a communion season (a preparatory sermon, two sermons on communion Sunday, and one after) as an “emphasis [that] flowed naturally from the Reformed emphasis on the close connection between the Word preached and the Word sealed in the Eucharist,” and he refers to the “logo-centric” shape of Scots Reformed worship” (p. 90). In fact, proponents of frequent Communion themselves complain that the “Scots Reformed place a greater emphasis on preaching” than on Communion (p. 239). Yet, in such communion seasons, is preaching, in fact, central and most emphasized? Preaching might occur four times and surround the sacrament, but is not the Supper, rather, the main event? If preaching were central, why use it as merely preparatory for the Supper? In fact, it seems to me that such an arrangement elevates the Supper above preaching. Preaching has become the preparation; the Supper is the central event. This arrangement seems to elevate the Supper beyond bounds and diminishes preaching. In my estimation, if the Supper is observed rarely, the possibility of elevating its importance beyond all bounds increases, making even preaching subservient to it.

Traditionally, the Reformed Church replaced the altar with the pulpit.⁵ In Protestant church buildings today, is not the pulpit generally elevated even above the table, typically on a raised platform with the table beneath? This architectural arrangement seems symbolic. The Word preached is elevated above the Supper served. The Supper flows from the Word—is

5. Bob Gonzales, “Sacred Desk or Sacred Cow? Perspective on the Pulpit (Part 1)” accessed August 18, 2023 on the internet: <https://sharperiron.org/article/sacred-desk-or-sacred-cow-perspective-pulpit-part-1>. Cf. even Wikipedia, “Pulpit,” accessed August 18, 2023 on the internet: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulpit>.

the Word made visible—not vice-versa. The Supper is below (subordinate to) the Word, not above it. Reformed churches declare that the three marks of a true church are the proper preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and exercise of discipline. However, really, both the administration of the sacraments as well as the exercise of discipline hinge upon the proper preaching of the Word and flow from it. Thus, preaching should be central in every worship service, with the Lord's Supper flowing as an application from it. The type of preparation involved in communion seasons seems incompatible with the centrality of preaching, even over the sacrament.

In modern debates among theologically confessional American Presbyterians, it is the Federal Vision proponents who explicitly argue that the Lord's Supper—and not preaching—is to be central. Thus Jeffrey Meyers, referring to the Lord's Supper, writes, “the end or goal of God's covenant is always a feast. God invites us to a meal. We come to church on Sunday to eat with Jesus and one another, to feast in His presence.”⁶ Accordingly, they would have us observe the Lord's Supper (by necessity) every Sabbath.

Yet, whether observing it once annually or weekly, the Lord's Supper is not the centerpiece of the worship service; rather, preaching occupies this place in corporate worship. In my estimation, therefore, whenever we schedule the Supper less frequently than weekly, we run the risk of elevating it above preaching. How so? That Sunday, “Communion Sunday,” becomes a special event, somehow more important than “regular” Sundays in which we only get to hear preaching. On Communion Sunday, we get to partake of the sacrament, which by implication is so holy that it cannot be offered every Sunday!

Of course, the Lord's Supper is certainly an important means of God's grace to nourish the souls of believers. By pinpointing the primacy of preaching, I do not mean to diminish the Lord's Supper as unimportant. In fact, by conviction we observe the Lord's Supper weekly at the church where I serve, for we do not understand why church leaders would not offer the full cornucopia of God's means of grace to the church every Lord's Day. If preparation is the issue, then emphasize it. However, let us not deprive our people of spiritual nourishment in the Lord! It may not be “the” Reformed position, but in my estimation, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper is the best practice to put the primacy of preaching and the blessing of the Supper into their proper places.

6. Jeffrey J. Meyers, *The Lord's Service: The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), p. 34. Meyers also wrote: “The sermon, for example, is elevated all out of proportion as the dominant element of worship” (p. 26).

G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology* (Baker Academic, 2023). Hardcover. 558 pp. ISBN 978-1-5409-6042-9. \$49.99. Reviewed by Roland Matthews, Pastor of Drapers Valley Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Drapers, Virginia.

G. K. Beale is a name well-known in the circles of academic biblical studies. He is a prolific scholar who over the course of his decades-long career has authored a number of important biblical commentaries, as well as numerous monographs, essays, and articles that delve deeply and competently into the sometimes murky waters of biblical theology and Scripture's use of Scripture. Building on the foundation of his previous work, Beale's most recent volume entitled *Union With the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology* focuses on the believer's union with the resurrected Christ “as the beginning of the eschatological new-creational kingdom” (xvi, 14).

Beale begins the book in earnest with a brief introduction that sets forth his basic thesis, which is succinctly expressed in the following: “What is true of Christ in his end-time resurrection and ascension is true of believers in their union with his resurrection” (2, 100). The introduction is then followed by seventeen chapters that develop and defend this thesis. They are divided into two sections.

The first section of the book is comprised of only two chapters, but these chapters serve an important purpose for the development of the book's thesis. These chapters present in brief form the contours of the biblical story-line Beale has developed in greater detail in his wide-ranging work, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Baker Academic, 2011). This story-line serves as the theological framework that undergirds the argument of the remainder of *Union with the Resurrected Christ* (21).

The story begins with Adam whom God made in His image and to whom God gave a commission in Gen 1:26–28 to subdue and rule over the earth (21–25). If Adam had fulfilled the parameters of the commission, he would have gained “irreversible escalated eschatological blessings” (24–25) for himself, his progeny, and the world. However, Adam failed to attain these escalated, consummative blessings, for he failed to guard the moral and spiritual sanctity of the Garden of Eden (25, 33). He did not rule and subdue, and he did not multiply and fill the whole earth. Nevertheless, according to Beale, Adam's sin did not bring an end to the divine mandate; Noah, Abraham, and Israel were “other Adam-like” figures whom God raised up and to whom God gave the priestly and kingly duties that He had first assigned to Adam (25–32).

The introduction of sin changed something of the tenor of the eschatological movement from the inaugurated kingdom to the consummated kingdom in that consummation

now required—and thus acquired—a redemptive dimension. With the entrance of sin into the world, a promissory redemptive element enters the picture so that the eschatological takes on a soteriological hue. Before the kingdom can be consummated, sin must be dealt with in such a way that victory over evil and its effects is secured. This then becomes the mood of the biblical storyline after God expelled Adam from the Garden. It is history, but more so it is *redemptive* history in which God is moving the creation toward His appointed end through promise, covenant, and a chosen people.

Yet, for one reason or another, none of these Adam-like figures received the fulness of the blessings of the consummated kingdom, though they did experience *some* degree of its fulfillment. In the case of Israel, sin and rebellion are the chief factors that prevented the consummation of the kingdom (30), but the promise remained. Thus, the hope of the consummated kingdom remained under the economy of the old covenant order. If Israel had repeatedly failed to advance the kingdom, what hope would there be of ever attaining to the eschatological blessings towards which the promises and the covenants pointed? The solution to this dilemma is found not in the nation of Israel per se, but in one person, namely, Jesus. Jesus Himself stands in the line of David and of Abraham, and He is the proper recipient of the promises God made to them. Therefore, Jesus is the one in whom the storyline of the old covenant economy finds its climax and fulfillment.

Jesus's life and earthly ministry that culminated in his death for sinners becomes the means by which God definitively addressed the problem of sin, and His resurrection from the dead was the inauguration of the new creation. The notions of resurrection and new creation are inextricably linked. In this regard, Beale says, "resurrection is conceptually equivalent to new creation because the way redeemed humans participate in the new creation is through having transformed, newly created bodies" (64). Jesus is an Adam-figure, but unlike other Adam-figures He has not only inaugurated the eschatological kingdom, but He has brought forward the essence of its power in His resurrection from the dead. His resurrection then leads naturally to the commission He gave to His disciples to engage in a worldwide mission to bring the prophetic word of blessing and judgment to the uttermost parts of the world. This corresponds to Adam's call also to move outward from the Garden to fill the whole earth with the glory of God. The resurrection has signaled the turning of the ages and stands as not only the anticipation of the consummation of the kingdom, but the present enjoyment of some measure of those escalated eschatological blessings (88) as those who are identified with and share in Jesus' death also are identified with and share in His resurrection and kingship (93). What

is true of Christ is true of believers as they are united to Him by faith through the Spirit.

In sum, the biblical storyline begins with the first Adam who failed in his commission to rule over and subdue the earth, and it finds its climax and anticipated eschatological consummation in the death and (especially) resurrection of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one in whom and through whom the heightened eschatological blessings find their initial fulfillment.

The second section of the book is comprised of the remaining fifteen chapters. Here Beale develops the relation between Christ's resurrection and the believer's union with Christ. He uses the metaphor of a diamond to picture the multifaceted nature and simultaneous possession of the benefits that belong to the believer by virtue of this union (p. 101).

In chapter 3, Beale turns his attention to the Gospels, Paul, and Hebrews. He argues that Christ is (1) the Son of God, (2) the Last Adam, and (3) true Israel. As the one who is "a corporate representative for his people," Christ brings believers into communion with Himself, so that they are identified with him as the glorious Adamic image and resurrected Son of God" (129). Chapter Four continues in a similar vein with an examination of portions of the Gospels of Matthew and John, some of Paul's writings (e.g., Eph 2:18–22; Col 2:9–10), Peter's first epistle (1 Pet 2:4–8), and the Book of Revelation (Rev 3:12). Beale argues that Christ is the true temple of God. Believers are incorporated into Christ, and through Him they become the true, end-time temple of God. In chapter five, Beale ranges over a number of New Testament passages and returns to the notion that Christ is the true Israel of God. He then contends that "believers become true Israel when they believe and come into union with Christ" (152). This means that those whom He represented as the true Israel of God become participants in His identity and are "considered to be obedient sons, true Israel, and were being restored" (156, 176–177).

The next chapter speaks of Christ as the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of the believer. Looking to 1 Cor. 1:30 for support, Beale argues that this passage teaches not the full and perfect possession of these attributes in the experience of the believer, but the full and perfect possession of these attributes in terms of their position and identification with Christ (180). Returning to Adamic imagery in chapter seven, Beale once again underlines the royal and cultic significance of Adam as king-priest in Eden, and draws a connection through Daniel 7 to the identification of Jesus as the *Son of Man* in the synoptic Gospels. Here he argues that the Son of Man carries with it the same royal and cultic overtones associated with Adam's calling. He concludes that Jesus, as Son of Man, also bears this royal and cultic role as king-priest but with a heightened

eschatological fulfillment. Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded, but ironically through the tribulation of death. Other portions of the New Testament also bear out Jesus' role in these terms. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, He is king and priest on behalf of His people, and His people—because they participate in His death and resurrection—are also kings and priests (224, 233). Chapter eight turns to consider the topics of restoration and reconciliation. Here Christ is seen as 'the one who is in exile' who suffers the ultimate exile on the cross, while His resurrection is His reconciliation and restoration, a return from exile (241–242). "All those he represented underwent his exile on the cross and his resurrection, which was the restoration and reconciliation to God" (242). The people of God find the way of restoration through the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ. Suffering then becomes a marker of identification between Christ and His people, which is uniquely expressed in Paul's own suffering on behalf of Christ, but also experienced by believers in general as they not only "imitate Christ's sufferings but that they actually participate in Christ's sufferings" (264–268). This also underlines the unique way in which the church as the people of God is a light to the nations: since Christ the servant of God suffered in bringing reconciliation into the world, those who are identified with him in His suffering and resurrection are to bring this message to the world.

Beale turns his attention to consider the relation of Christ and the Spirit in chapters nine and ten. In chapter 9 he focuses on the transformative work of the Spirit in both Christ and the believer. Beale notes that Paul speaks of Christ's transformation by the Spirit at His resurrection in 1 Cor. 15, which involves a future resurrection and transformation of the believer, and then of the believer's definitive transformation in 2 Cor. 3:16–18 by the Lord, who is identified with the Spirit. The same identification of the Lord with the Spirit is made in Rom. 8. Through this relation between Christ and the Spirit, the believer is transformed by the Spirit by virtue of his union with the resurrected, Spirit-transformed Christ. Chapter ten continues to address the relation between the Spirit and believers by drawing attention to those passages that speak of the Spirit bringing the believer into union with Christ. By bringing a believer into union with Christ, the Spirit transforms him into something different from what he was. The important point here is that the Spirit is the agent who brings the believer into union with the resurrected Christ through whom presence of the Spirit in the life of the believer provides a definitive break with the old world and therefore the old way of life (309). The believer will not experience the fullness of this consummative transformation until the eschaton, but in principle this transformed existence belongs to him now.

Chapters 11 and 12 are concerned with the important question of righteousness. Chapter eleven looks at Rom. 10:1–10

and 5:15–19. Beale argues that the former verse teaches that Christ has perfectly fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law, and the believer receives this righteousness by faith. The righteousness here is not merely the righteousness of what theologians have called the passive obedience of Christ (i.e., His death on the cross) but is inclusive also of his active obedience. Romans 5 bears this out, according to Beale. He expresses the relation between the two in this way: "it is better to see Christ's obedient death as a climax to his entire life of obedience, which has a parallel with Adam's sin" (332). Christ as the last Adam—by way of his obedient death—secures a justification that leads to life for the one who believes in Jesus. Here Paul draws a close connection between the believer and Christ, and states that that the righteousness of Christ becomes the believers only by faith in Him.

Chapter 12 and Beale's discussion of righteousness begins with an important feature of Christ's resurrection: Christ's resurrection was Christ's vindication, it was His 'justification.' This is evident in such passages as 1 Tim. 3:16, but the point for Beale's argument ought not to be missed. The believer's solidarity with Jesus and identification with Him is a solidarity and identification with His justified status (358). This point becomes clearer still in a passage such as Rom. 4:25. "Jesus's dying 'on account of our transgressions' identified him with believers in the punishment due those transgressions... Christ's resurrection 'on account of our justification' identifies him with saints in the verdict of justification" (359). Here the believer's justification is directly associated with the believer's identification with Jesus. Beale then considers several other passages that express a similar sentiment. Christ achieved justification through His resurrection, and those who believe in Him are identified with the justification of the resurrected Christ (365). They are thus declared to be just by virtue of their union with the resurrected Christ.

It is at this point that Beale addresses what he takes to be a theological problem, and indeed it has been a problem for some. The issue centers on the relationship between good works and justification. In particular, Beale asks, "what is the relationship between good works and the justification (or vindication) of believers?" (365). Some may take issue with Beale's formulations here, and dispute with his interpretation of certain key passages (e.g., Rom. 2:13; James 2:14–26), but Beale's basic point aligns with the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q/A 90. The Westminster Larger Catechism teaches that the righteous will be "openly acknowledged and acquitted" in the day of judgment. To draw this point in connection with the theme of union with the resurrected Christ, Beale, citing Gaffin, argues, "the last judgment for believers, which is according to works, is 'reflective of and further attesting their justification that has been openly manifested in their bodily resurrection'" (370). The believer is raised from the

dead in union with the resurrection life of Jesus, which is also equivalent to his justification (369), and only then will he be brought before the throne of judgment.

Beale seems to use ‘justification’ synonymously with ‘salvation’ in connection with this point (371), but the two notions are conceptually distinct. Perhaps it would have been better to distinguish these related theological terms to avoid possible confusion. Nevertheless, Beale notes that good works do “not have to include the idea of earning salvation by doing good deeds” (371). Thus, good works have a place in the final judgment, but the role is a subsidiary one in relation to the justification of the believer that is specially attested in his union with the resurrected Jesus. “What is true of Christ in his end-time resurrection and ascension is true of believers in their union with his resurrection” (2, 100). This would include all that is true of the believer’s standing with God, as expressed in the Reformed (and biblical) doctrine of justification.

Glory is the topic of the next two chapters. Chapter thirteen explores the relation between Christ’s “consummate glory at his resurrection/ascension and how this glory is attributed to those identified with Christ” (379). Christ’s death and resurrection are the means by which His glory is evidenced, and it is this selfsame glory that is ‘shared’ with believers (382) through their participation in Him (383–4). Beale then examines several other passages in which the two themes of resurrection glory and participation/identification of the believer in the glory of Christ are brought together. Jesus’ resurrection glory becomes a predicate of His people through their union with Him in the present. They will receive the consummate glory of Christ in their own resurrection at which time they will fully and perfectly reflect the glory of Christ. Chapter 14 continues to examine the theme of glory, but Beale focuses especially on the theme as it is developed in 2 Peter. The theme of the glory of Christ and the believer’s participation in that glory is similar to Paul’s. As with Paul, the believer is identified with the resurrection glory of Christ in the present, existing in “His realm.” As such, believers reflect Christ’s attributes in their present manner of life, and they will experience the full manifestation of that glory in themselves at the coming of Christ.

Chapter 15 touches on the topic of definitive sanctification. Beale defines *definitive sanctification* in the following way: “when one believes, one decisively, irreversibly breaks with the world and is transferred to a new creation in the image of the resurrected Christ, where one grows in the lifestyle of the new creation” (447). Clothing imagery in the Pauline corpus (e.g., see Col. 3:8–11; Eph. 4:22–25) draws this point out. The stripping off of the old man and putting on of the new man corresponds to becoming a new creature in Christ, and marks the believer’s definitive separation from the world

(i.e., definitive sanctification). This then places him in the position actually to obey the commands of God (i.e., progressive sanctification) until the consummation of the ages in which believer will be fully sanctified. “At their final resurrection, the resurrected Christ will fully conform them to his image” (464).

Chapters 16 and 17 round out the book. Chapter 16 is concerned with the regeneration of the believer. Looking at several passages in the Pauline corpus, a passage from 1 Peter and 1 John, Beale states that regeneration is a work of the Spirit who brings a person into person union with the resurrected Christ. It is by virtue of this union that the resurrection power of Jesus effects regeneration and therefore new creation. Chapter 17 brings a close to Beale’s arguments by drawing the reader’s attention to the fact that the life of the believer is now a share in the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. The one who believes in Jesus has eternal life because he abides in Christ and the life of Christ flows in him. The link between Christ and the believer could not be more tightly drawn. Indeed, according to Paul, they are inextricably linked (Gal. 2:19–22).

Beale’s conclusion to the book draws the various lines together in a summary fashion. One can restate the essence of his concluding sentiments with the same sentiment with which the book began. “What is true of Christ in his end-time resurrection and ascension is true of believers in their union with his resurrection” (2, 100). What may properly be predicated of Christ in His resurrected glory may properly be predicated of believers in virtue of their close identification with and participation in the resurrection life of Christ.

Beale’s scholarship in this volume is extraordinary in its scope. He demonstrates a remarkable mastery of the original sources and an impressive command of the whole sweep of the biblical canon. One may not agree with all of the particular moves that Beale makes in this volume (and he will no doubt leave some readers unconvinced of some of the particulars), but Beale has gone to great lengths to establish his central thesis that the believer by virtue of his union with the resurrected Christ receives the status of Christ Himself. The conclusion is unassailable.

Beale’s intended audience is the serious Christian reader. His work should appeal to academics, specialists, and students of theology, but also to the interested reader with no formal training in biblical or theological studies. *Union With the Resurrected Christ* contains a wealth of deep insights and penetrating analyses of the rich tapestry of Scripture that will be of interest to both. Ideally, it should be read in concert with his *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, but reading this book on its own will also prove beneficial. It will surely be of profit to anyone who will take the time to take it up and read.

Willem van Vlastuin, *Catholic Today: A Reformed Conversation About Catholicity*, Reformed Historical Theology, 66 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co., 2020). Hardback. 252 pp. 978-3525540817. 130.00 € / \$150.00 US. Reviewed by Thomas Haviland-Pabst.

Willem van Vlastuin is Professor of Theology and Spirituality of Reformed Protestantism, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands and the author of *Be Renewed: A Theology of Personal Renewal* (V&R Academic, 2013) as well as various chapters in edited volumes.

With this book, he seeks to explore a primary question: “how can the understanding of catholicity in the Early Church serve catholicity in the Reformed tradition?” (p. 12). In order to answer this question, he first turns to the historical theology, giving attention to views on catholicity in the patristic era in the first part and the views of Reformed theologians in the second part. Following this, he offers his own constructive account of catholicity in the third part.

The first part is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, he discusses the views of Ignatius (ca. 35–107). In the second and third chapters, he surveys Cyprian (ca. 205–258) and Cyril (ca. 315–386), respectively. With the fourth chapter, he explores Augustine’s views (354–43); finally, Vincent of Laurens (died between 434–450) concludes van Vlastuin’s survey of this era.

The second part is divided into six chapters. He begins with John Calvin (1509–1564) (ch. 6), which is followed by a discussion of key standards, such as the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Westminster Confession of Faith (ch. 7). Chapters eight through eleven give attention to James Ussher (1581–1656), John Owen (1616–1683), Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), and G. C. Berkouwer (1903–1996), respectively. With each chapter in these two parts, van Vlastuin focuses on key aspects of the particular theologian’s understanding of catholicity, which is followed by his own assessments of their understanding. In the final, constructive part of the book, the author teases out various aspects of catholicity that emerged in his historical discussion.

The remainder of this review will highlight some of the main aspects and arguments of van Vlastuin’s monograph. Summarizing his assessment of Ignatius, the author writes, “... the catholicity of the church is founded on the catholicity of Christ,” and, as such, “it cannot be locked within narrow national borders” (p. 24). Moreover, for Ignatius, “any attack on the unity, the truth or the offices in the church, is an attack on the body of Christ, and therefore ... [on] Christ himself” (p. 25). Cyprian, according to van Vlastuin’s analysis, is similar to Ignatius in that he understands catholicity as a quality rather than numerical quantity and he makes a strong connection between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Cyril provides an even fuller account of catholicity than the previously treated theologians by drawing out some significant implications of the same, such as the universal scope of the church’s mission, the inclusion of all categories of people (e.g., the poor and rich), and it is in the church that all doctrine is found as well as all virtues. Cyril, additionally, shows development in the patristic era such as his understanding that baptism can be received unworthily and thus the efficaciousness of baptism on the soul is lost.

With Augustine and his engagement with the Donatists, we see an extensive development of catholicity. For Augustine, van Vlastuin argues, catholicity was more primary than ecclesiastical office; thus he refused to deem the Donatists as separate from the church catholic, although at odds with the same, and was willing to honor their bishopric, even requiring “the catholic bishop to withdraw in favour of the Donatist bishop” (p. 55) if they were serving in the same town or city, which means that he effectively contextualized apostolic succession to some degree. As one might suspect, then, Augustine, while affirming the holiness of the church, did not see it as sinless and thus he stressed the link between “hidden election” and catholicity, without “evaporating” the visible aspect of the church (p. 58).

The last figure discussed in van Vlastuin’s handling of the patristic era, Vincent of Laurens, stresses that there is an underlying essence or identity to the church which remains the same despite all the shifting changes and weaknesses that has attended its history. Given this, Vincent warns us to exercise caution when considering innovations, especially ones that do not arise from the catholic church but rather “from a certain denomination or ... theologian” (p. 65).

From his discussion of this era, van Vlastuin derives six heads which guide the constructive account in the third part of this book: (1) difference and development; (2) the body of Christ; (3) the unity of Christ and thus the church; (4) the relationship between the church and the individual believer; (5) the link between the Holy Spirit, baptism and orthodoxy; and (6) the pilgrimage of the church in the world.

Turning to the Reformed historical survey, the author argues that, with the Reformation, “there is much more emphasis on the individual relationship with God at the expense of the corporative aspect of the church” (p. 87). In other words, the invisibility of the church was stressed more than the visible, external structures, offices, etc. Because of the dynamic, personal dimension of the church, it was possible, so van Vlastuin, “for Calvin to criticize the [medieval] church and to prove the relevance of the Reformation” (p. 87). Given Calvin’s stress on the forgiveness of sins and communion with Christ that every believer enjoys, he began with the invisible aspect of the church before moving out to the visible, without neglecting the latter.

Moreover, unlike the stress on justification by his predecessor, Luther, Calvin stressed both justification and sanctification and, as such, “[h]e speaks of Law and Gospel, Word and Spirit, election and responsibility . . . inward and outward, church and state,” without merely striking a balance but rather while allowing “the radicalism of opposites to function” (p. 98). By way of example, since “Christ’s dominion” is over “all areas of life,” he avoids both “sacralising [*sic*]” and “secularizing” society (p. 98).

Whereas Calvin signals something of a departure from the patristic era, Ussher represents continuity with the same given his stress on the *totus Christus* and his emphasis on the corporate body over against the individual believer. However, in line with Reformed sentiments, he considers the Roman Catholic Church an enemy of true catholicity by placing the pope as head of the church and prizing “its organisation [*sic*]” over “organic thinking” (p. 118). If Ussher stresses the corporate more than Calvin, then, according to the author, Owen stresses the individual more, even explicitly placing “the visible congregation at a lower level” (p. 120) than the invisible. Owen’s emphasis, in turn, displays his thoroughgoing Congregationalist conviction that the local church is free from “superlocal church relationships” (p. 122).

While Calvin stressed the universality of Christ’s lordship, Bavinck extended this insight, applying it not only to elect in Christ, but to the entirety of creation since “Bavinck has a cosmic reality in mind” (p. 137). Berkouwer, the latest figure discussed in the author’s survey of Reformed theologians, represents a mix of different Reformed tendencies. Like Ussher, he stresses the visible over the invisible aspect of the church and, in distinction from Bavinck, he reframes cosmology in the context of ecclesiology, thus moving him closer to understanding the church as *totus Christus* as well as the stress of Calvin, Owen, and Ussher on Christ as the source of the unity and catholicity of the church. Van Vlaštun sees Berkouwer’s focus on “the pneumatological dimension” (p. 149) of the catholicity as his most significant contribution to the discussion.

There are a number of strengths that attend this work. Van Vlaštun helpfully summarizes key patristic and Reformed theologians before embarking on his own understanding of catholicity. Given this historical theological analysis consists of the bulk of the book, the author demonstrates his conviction that systematic theology ought to stand on the shoulders of theologians that have come before. Naturally, not everyone will agree with the figures he chose for his survey in the first two parts.

Some will wonder why he left out Chrysostom or Athanasius; others will ask whether the omission of medieval theologians negatively impacted his treatment of Reformed theologians; still others will question why he didn’t include

such modern ‘Reformed’ theologians as Karl Barth alongside such broadly Reformed thinkers as Berkouwer. However, he does not make the claim that his historical-theological survey is comprehensive; rather, it is a sampling of significant thinkers from the periods in view. Moreover, he makes it a point in his exposition of Reformed thinkers to show their connection to the Middle Ages, which is especially seen with his discussion of Calvin and Owen. Two minor criticisms ought to be mentioned at this point. While one appreciates his summary of Calvin, his engagement with relevant secondary literature is noticeably lacking. Furthermore, he relies on Berkouwer’s book *The Church* primarily in his discussion of his ecclesiology. One wonders if his inclusion of Berkouwer’s sympathetic but critical engagement with Roman Catholicism (e.g., *The Second Vatican Council and The New Catholicism*) would have provided a different picture.

Additionally, his systematic discussion in the third part is brimming with insight. First, he stresses that catholicity, while having a quantitative referent (i.e., universal), is primarily a qualitative aspect of the church as it expresses “the spiritual fullness and theological richness of Christ’s body” (p. 163). Second, true catholicity, for Vlaštun, is best expressed by focusing on the one who is the head of the body, namely, Christ, recognizing that the growth of his body is not a work of the flesh but wrought by Christ himself through the Holy Spirit—the church is “Christologically determined” (p. 173).

Third, Vlaštun rightly argues that the primary difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformation was “the structure of the church,” with the latter retrieving the fact that the church is “the body of Christ” (p. 171). Fourth, regarding the relationship between the gospel and culture, Vlaštun makes the intriguing assertion that “the gospel contains such a fullness that it manages to absorb any culture” and thus that the identity of the Christian lies foremost in their “unity in Christ that transcends all cultures” (p. 180). Before one suspects that the author is overly triumphalist, he is careful to point out that the church is always in exile in this world and thus a wholesale Christianizing program divorced from the suffering that accompanies the church’s witness is not what should be expected. Fifth, he urges for the necessity of affirming the authority and inspiration of Scripture, arguing that one cannot have the Word become flesh without the Word speaking through the Scriptures. Sixth, he pushes against attempts to recast Reformed identity into a “Reformed 2.0” (p. 218) by contemporary Dutch theologians, arguing that they fail to understand the confession of the Reformed faith that is Christ and the continual reforming character of the Reformed tradition.

At this point, it must be noted that not all will appreciate Vlaštun’s criticism of confessionalism, which he sees as attempting to completely crystallize the truth in clear principles

and betraying an overreliance on doctrinal formulations to maintain the well-being of the church rather than a living relationship with Christ that promotes continuance reformation. Nor will all appreciate his more ecumenical tone which does not prioritize the Reformed tradition as more faithfully catholic than other traditions, all the while making it a point to emphasize the strengths of the Reformed tradition as writing from within this same tradition himself.

Aside from these criticisms, a few quibbles take away from the overall usefulness of this book. For example, the author makes the inaccurate statement that *Kurios* is the term that translates “the Hebrew word ‘Messiah’” (p. 178), apparently not realizing that *Christos* is the actual Greek word used to translate the Hebrew. Also, throughout the book there are a number of typos and misspellings, such as when we read “Thomas of Aquino” (p. 124) rather than the typical English rendering of Thomas Aquinas. Despite these and other criticism of this book, this is a sophisticated and historical sensitive exploration of the catholicity and unity of the church from a Reformed perspective that ought to be consulted by any theologian or serious student who is interested in the living, dynamic reality that is the body of Christ.

Review: Alasdair J. MacLeod, *John Kennedy of Dingwall, 1819-1884: Evangelicalism in the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023). Cloth. vi + 250 pages. ISBN 978 1399503891. \$114.90. Reviewed by Rev. Lane Keister, minister at Momenca Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Momenca, Illinois.

It is a pleasure to review a volume written by someone to whom I am undoubtedly related (my Scottish highland clan is the MacLeod clan), but also about a subject of which I have a personal interest: the progress of Christianity in the highlands of Scotland. This volume in no way disappoints. Not only are we treated to an excellent biography (and by “excellent” I mean a sympathetically critical appraisal) of one of the most significant ministers of 19th century Scottish evangelical Presbyterianism, but also an acute “situatedness,” or the historical background, of 19th (and even some 18th and 20th) century Presbyterianism itself. MacLeod is very sympathetic to his chosen subject, but not hagiographic in any sense. The author is a minister in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), and lectures part-time at Highland Theological College, having received his Ph.D. in 2019 (in history) from the University of Edinburgh.

The purpose of the volume is to answer partially the following question: how and why did Highlands evangelicalism become diverse from Lowlands evangelicalism in the years 1843–1900? While not claiming that the ministry of John

Kennedy of Dingwall constitutes a complete answer to the question, MacLeod does posit that Kennedy’s ministry was a major factor (2, 4, 11, 228). This thesis MacLeod amply proves from primary sources of the time. The importance of Kennedy is stated on page 4: “Kennedy was an able and prominent Highland minister, who pastored Dingwall Free Church for forty years from 1844 until his death, being recognised in the later years of his ministry, from about 1860 onwards, as the effective leader of Highland evangelicalism.”

MacLeod makes room for his thesis by pointing out the deficiencies of other accounts of the divergence between Highlands and Lowlands evangelicalism. Some argue that race (the difference between Gaelic and non-Gaelic Scots) played an important role. Others say that clan loyalty was the main factor. Still others that linguistic or sociological considerations hold pride of place. Most of these theories have already been debunked (6–11).

In chapter 1, MacLeod covers Kennedy’s conversion and ministry in more general terms, with some discussion of controversies surrounding the Lord’s Supper. Kennedy’s conversion to Christianity is described as a fairly typical evangelical conversion (18–21), though with a few unusual aspects. The occasion, by his own testimony, was the death of his father (20), and this happened after his ministerial studies had already begun. His ordination (at the age of 25) was on February 13, 1844 (25). Though he had been licensed by the Church of Scotland, he became ordained in the Free Church, being persuaded by the Disruption of 1843 (wherein the Free Church was formed) to go in a purer Establishmentarian direction. Kennedy would always remain persuaded of the Establishmentarian position, even if, as with all the Free Church ministers, he protested the right of patronage. Kennedy’s preaching was always textual-based expository preaching that was experimental and powerful. His pulpit was specially designed to allow him to walk back and forth across the whole width of the church with handkerchief in hand (27). Kennedy regularly spent about half the year travelling over the Highlands helping out with communion seasons (28). While he has been described as unlearned, this would not be terribly accurate, as Kennedy was well-versed in the languages (38–9), and while his preaching was not overly reliant on other authors, he was still well-read. His preaching centered on three themes: “From the various surviving evidences, therefore, it must be concluded that Kennedy’s preaching ministry was characterised by three particular themes: Divine sovereignty in achieving salvation, the freeness of the gospel offer on that basis, and the need therefore for urgent and thorough self-examination to ensure that one possesses the reality of a work of sovereign saving grace” (46).

Even in chapter 1, MacLeod notes some of the many controversies that would accompany Kennedy’s ministry, and

to which he would contribute. A baptism controversy arose with regard to the difference between members and adherents. Could both sets of people expect to have their children baptized, or only the former? Kennedy held that both sets of people could have children baptized, an opinion with which the General Assembly concurred (59). MacLeod's own opinion aligns with Kennedy (57).

Kennedy saw the observance of the communion season as one of the markers of faithfulness that proved the Highlands were more faithful than the Lowlands (60). This would be a highly debatable point, which MacLeod does not pursue. Instead, MacLeod focuses on Kennedy's concern to prevent false profession and illegitimate religious experience.

In chapter 2, the focus is on Kennedy's writing ministry. Kennedy wrote a history of Highland Christianity in Ross-shire called *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* (1861). Kennedy's historical writing was fairly idealistic and lesson-oriented, as was fairly common in the 19th century. Perhaps there was a sense of missing "the good old days." Kennedy was primarily seeking to retain the kind of piety and theological stability of confessional 18th century Scottish Presbyterianism, which he saw as being in decline. A similar idealism is present, even more obviously, in his biography of John Macdonald, entitled *Apostle of the North*. He used Macdonald as a template to tell people what ministers ought to look like. This biography does not escape the critique of being hagiographic (89–90, 92). However, what is intriguing is that Kennedy's biography of Macdonald was also critiqued in its day for being too frank in bringing up the false charge of adultery.

A further issue of Kennedy's writing is his only apparent approval of a sort of mystical piety (100ff). It was a sort of supernatural insight he was accused of favoring. However, Kennedy was only reporting what others had said. He did not approve of them himself.

Chapter 3 relates Kennedy's steadfast adherence to the Westminster Standards in the face of many challenges. The first challenge was on the reference of the atonement. A certain John Brown believed that the atonement had a double reference (one for all, but only to the elect was there an effectual reference). He was acquitted against Kennedy's protests. A second confessional controversy was over the proposed union between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church. Initially favorable to it, Kennedy eventually was turned off to it by the United Presbyterian Church's tendency to play fast and loose with the Westminster Standards, as well as their rejection of Establishmentarianism. The controversy over Establishmentarianism was a larger debate within Scotland, and would rage over several decades. With regard to confessionalism, the United Presbyterian Church proposed what was effectively a system subscription act. Kennedy opposed this vehemently.

Chapter 4 specifies five different controversies in which Kennedy played a large part in influencing Highlands Presbyterianism towards confessional positions. The first was Sabbath observance. When a train line was proposed to travel on the Sabbath, Kennedy and most Highlanders opposed it. Kennedy was also prescient about the effect of Sunday School on many families. A point which Ken Ham mentioned in his book *Already Gone*, and which Old School Presbyterians also mentioned, was that Sunday School would tempt parents not to instruct their children during family worship.

Secondly, Kennedy opposed the introduction of hymns and instruments into worship, things the Lowlands were propounding and implementing (175–82). Here is another place where MacLeod's own theological positions are visible, as he agrees with Kennedy that the introduction of hymns and instruments constitutes a serious downgrade of worship. Whether readers agree with this position or not, the historical picture is undoubtedly accurate.

The third controversy MacLeod outlines was occasioned by D.L. Moody's evangelistic tours in Scotland. Here MacLeod critiques Kennedy for misrepresenting Moody in his critique somewhat. Kennedy's main concerns were with the superficiality of conversion experiences (186–190). MacLeod's assessment is balanced, as he acknowledges that there were genuine conversions as a result of Moody's ministry, but also that the long-term discipleship would suffer from a general change in Scottish theology towards more revivalistic thinking.

The fourth controversy MacLeod describes is that of the temperance movement. Kennedy (somewhat unsurprisingly, being a Scot!) opposed the temperance movement. The concern was legalism (196). Quite insightfully, MacLeod comments, "In conclusion, Kennedy urged that the answer to the sin of drunkenness was the gospel of Christ, and its saving effects. By treating drink as the problem, the temperance movement was 'excusing' rather than 'exposing the sin'; drunkenness would be better treated as a crime" (198).

The fifth, and perhaps most importantly for the future of Scottish theology, the attack of the liberal-critical Documentary Hypothesis wound up undermining confidence in Scripture (205, 213–4). Kennedy was firmly opposed. The trial of Robertson Smith wound up having a similar effect to the Scopes Trial in the United States: Smith lost the trial, but won the war, much like Clarence Darrow lost the trial, but won the cultural war.

In conclusion, MacLeod has written a very strong biography that firmly situates Kennedy in his historical context, both in terms of events, and with regard to the theological climate and trends of the time. Kennedy was certainly a major factor in the diverging paths of Highlands and Lowlands evangelicalism. It is highly recommended.

Review: Mark D. Liederbach and Evan Lenow, *Ethics As Worship: The Pursuit of Moral Discipleship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2021). Hardcover. xxxii + 751 pages. ISBN 9781629952628. \$49.99. Reviewed by Rev. Lane Keister, pastor of Momenca Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Occasionally a book comes along which a person reads and thinks to himself, “This book could have been truly great.” This volume is one of those. There are flashes of brilliance intermixed with fashionable buzz-words, unclear language, and lack of theological rigor. This reviewer really wanted to like this book, but cannot ultimately recommend it.

There are a number of things which the authors do commendably well. Treatments of many issues are thoroughly biblical, thoughtful, and therefore helpful (the treatments of capital punishment, war, abortion, euthanasia, and sexuality are the best chapters in the book).

Furthermore, there are many quotable moments in the book. Their definition of ethics says many good things, though there are some issues with it: “Ethics is about God. It is about maximally adoring him and rendering to him all that he is due from all that he has made. And it is about our doing so both individually and corporately” (xxi). It seems that the core is correct, but the trappings leave something to be desired. No mention is made here about God’s law, which has always been central to Reformed ethics. Also, there is no distinction here (the whole volume suffers from this problem) between everyday life-as-worship and corporate weekly worship on the Lord’s Day.

The common canard that no one should legislate morality is dispensed with quite adequately (4, 490). All ethics has its source in God (5), and any attempt to have another foundation will result in chaos.

Theologically, they have an initially adequate (though not as precise as some of the best confessional definitions, such as WCF 11 and Heidelberg Catechism 60) definition of justification: “By *justification* we mean God’s judicial act of pardoning sinners, making them righteous, and accepting them as justified such that their relationship and standing with himself is permanently made right. It is God’s declaration that a sinner has been made righteous in the eyes of God on the basis of grace alone and taken advantage of by faith alone” (70, emphasis original). The language of “being made righteous” is ambiguous, as it does not delineate whether the pardoning changes a person on the inside (Roman Catholic formulations) or remains *extra nos* (Reformed and Lutheran understandings). They do include grace alone and faith alone. The words “taken advantage of” instead of “received” could be taken to imply that a person is contemplating whether or not to be justified, and decides to take advantage of it. Rather, the language of “receive” safeguards the passive reception of Christ’s

righteousness imputed. Later on, we will see some serious problems with the fudging of justification and sanctification.

Their definition of inspiration is thoroughly Warfieldian (137), though it is not entirely clear why a discussion on inspiration is necessary in a volume about ethics. Their attempt at connecting the dots runs through the idea of truth as determinative for ethics. Certainly, truth is at the center of ethics, but the method by which we obtain truth is not quite as central to ethics.

Their views on the three parts of the law is accurate and helpful: “[W]hile the *civil laws* may be time-bound and *ceremonial laws* find their fulfillment in Christ, the *moral laws* endure beyond context and time” (150, emphasis original).

The authors have a laudable emphasis on the goal or telos of ethical consideration. Why we do what we do, or for what purpose we do them, is a primary consideration. They would argue it is the most important consideration in ethics (182–3). We choose actions that are in accord with our values (183).

The dismantling of unbiblical systems of ethics is one of the more helpful sections in the book. Their discussion of utilitarianism (211–216) was particularly insightful. Also nuanced was the discussion about how to handle ethical dilemmas (246–79). One could argue whether such dilemmas are so common as to justify including such an extensive discussion about them. However, their discussion gives a good lay of the land.

Some statements about race in this book were biblical and advance the discussion. One I have appropriated in my own thinking is their encouragement to think not so much about color-blindness as about color celebration (321). To push the thinking forward a bit more: if “white” people can celebrate other colors in people as God-made diversity *and vice versa*, it will go a long way towards mitigating racial tensions. To put a theological point on things: it is God’s providence that each person has the color of skin they have. Does anyone wanting to think biblically about this really want to claim that God made a mistake in any such case? They also (as do I) prefer to use the word “race” to describe the unity of humanity (320) as God’s image-bearers. Differences in background and skin color should then be described as ethnic diversity, not different races. There is only one human race. They also highlight how the gospel transcends all such distinctions (323). By the same token, Marxism is rejected, in terms of its advocacy of class conflict as the way to overthrow oppressors.

Their discussion of poverty is also noteworthy in positing gradations (355). The US federal government’s definition of poverty, for example, is not the same as the World Bank’s definition of extreme poverty. Their recognition that certain discussions of living wages “often incorporate socialistic ideas that present a new set of problems” (355) is salutary.

In their chapter on capital punishment, they offer a biblical

exegesis of Genesis 9 and Exodus 20:13 that is much more convincing than that of those wishing to abolish capital punishment (432–4).

Lastly, in terms of the positives, their discussion of sex and gender rejects modern attempts to separate biological sex from gender identity as modern trans-gender activists do (570). Recognition that this is what is posited by those advocates takes away the first and primary objection to the biblical position, which objection is usually that we “confuse” sex and gender. There is a highly gnostic but self-contradictory and simultaneous rejection-yet-worship of the body in the trans movement: they believe that one’s biological sex does not always match with the gender, and that gender is fluid, and yet they want to change their body to “match” their gender identity. If the body doesn’t matter in gender identity, then why the need to change it? And if one is changing it, then why is it only a change to the other gender, and not to the supposed myriad of other possibilities?

In critiquing this volume, alas, there are far more points. The most important will be dealt with first. The concept of worship is not rightly distinguished, in terms of “all-of-life” worship versus corporate weekly worship. The elements of worship are redefined in terms of worshiping the right God, from the heart, in a proper form, comprehensively, individually and corporately (xxiv). This is not how Reformed theology defines the elements of proper worship, namely, preaching, prayer, alms, singing of psalms, sacraments, etc.

There is a very unfortunate fudging of the distinctions and connections of justification and sanctification. They define “positional sanctification,” for instance, as “the Holy Spirit’s work to apply the benefits of justification to our lives” (75). They then posit an internal moral change as part of justification (76): “Believers literally and actually are made righteous before God because we have been given the righteousness of Christ.” They define God’s declaration concerning sins as part of “our moral formation” (76), and then seem to posit sanctification coming before justification, “once the Spirit applies salvation to us and sanctifies us, we actually stand before God justified” (76). This means we cannot be justified before we are sanctified. Forgiveness, normally included under justification, is placed under the benefits of positional sanctification (80). Even worse, justification requires infusion: “[W]e would say that whereas the lived doctrine of *justification* requires the infusion of *theological virtues* (i.e., positional truths) into our lives by grace through faith, the lived doctrine of *sanctification* requires the development of *moral virtues*” (191, emphasis original). No Roman Catholic would object to this kind of highly confused language at all.

This reviewer would agree with David VanDrunen’s assessment about sanctification, that “they treat the crucial issue of sanctification as primarily a human work (in which

God’s grace and Spirit provide crucial help) rather than as a work of God, as the Westminster Standards define it.”¹ In particular, the authors seem to have virtue and good character backwards as to what produces what. They claim that “virtues and norms (are) necessary to shape morally good character” (174). In reality, it is the reverse: good character is formed by God’s grace and results in virtues. They also seem to claim that rightly ordering our lives is what enables us to become the worshipers God wants (128). The Bible teaches that God forms us into the worshipers He is seeking.

Ironically, though they place too much emphasis on works, they claim “The ethical demands of the Ten Commandments were never meant as a means to earn God’s favor” (66). Except, perhaps, for the Covenant of Works before the Fall? Coupled with this is a deficient definition of sin. Sin is defined biblically as violating God’s law, either by commission or omission, in our thoughts, words, or deeds. There is nothing comparable in this volume with regard to such a definition. The closest they get to defining sin is primarily a disordered relationship (62).

They seem to equate the final state with “restoration” (xxvi), and not as glorification, a step far above what Adam and Eve had before the Fall. Therefore, their eschatology is also deficient on this point. This is confirmed on page 83, where the glorified state is definitively equated with the Adamic state before the Fall. One could query at this point whether sin would still be possible, as it was in the Adamic state? If it is, then they have placed themselves outside of the normal Augustinian schema concerning sin and the four-fold state.

They give much too much ground to atheists in claiming that “It is possible to live an internally consistent life with the basic assumptions that God does not exist” (16). Of course, the authors show no sign of being presuppositional in their approach to apologetics, which is not the main focus of their volume, obviously. However, this reviewer, at least, would dispute the claim. Atheists have to have both a closed universe and an open universe simultaneously, if the Big Bang theory is going to have any credibility. Atheists have no basis for ethics or for any kind of definition of right and wrong, and yet reproach Christians concerning the problem of evil. They live as if both chance and order are simultaneously at work in their lives.

Less important, but still somewhat important, critiques can be offered concerning their linguistic outdatedness. They do not seem to be aware of James Barr’s refutation of “Hebraic” versus “Greek” thought (134). They use buzz-words like “missional” and “flourishing,” which they do not define, and

1. See David VanDrunen, “Review of *Ethics as Worship*,” in *New Horizons*, March 2022, 14–15. I also concur with VanDrunen’s assessment regarding too much focus on “big-issue” items, and not enough attention on everyday Christian living, especially as focused on how the Ten Commandments apply to the Christian life.

are often ciphers for progressivistic kinds of thought. They describe the fallen state as “broken and disordered,” instead of “rebellious” (146).

They argue that “The single greatest injustice in human history—indeed, in the history of the universe—is that God does not receive the worship he is due” (285). While one could not argue that the lack of worship of the one true God is a huge injustice, the crucifixion of the God-man Jesus Christ ranks as a far greater injustice. They show the influence of social-justice warriors when they call evangelism and discipline “social-justice initiatives” (288). They believe that racism is systemic (301–2, 317–8, 331). Their discussion of black versus white pictures of Jesus does not even address the Second Commandment violation that either would perpetrate (332). A claim that the Lord is free from bias is surely incorrect (334, fn. 46). The Lord God has the most holy, righteous, and correct bias in existence. This claim of theirs contradicts their ideal to see life situations “from a completely objective point of view” (266, fn. 42). They seem to quote favorably a rather semi-Pelagian, or even full-blown Pelagian assessment of humanity (341). The volume suggests that human activity is causally connected with environmental degradation (read “climate change”, 380). This is a highly disputed point, fraught with political connotations. They show no awareness that there is debate on the point.

For all these reasons, while there are some valuable points, and it is not a waste of time to read, it cannot stand as any kind of standard on Christian ethics that would replace, say, Bavinck, Douma on the Ten Commandments, or the excellent Puritan treatments of James Durham and others.

REVIEW: L. Michael Morales, *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*, Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020). Paperback. 207 pages. ISBN 978-0-8308-5539-1. \$24.00. Reviewed by Zachary Groff.

In *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*, L. Michael Morales traces the theme of redemption across select portions of Scripture. Throughout, Morales presents the narrative of Israel’s exodus out of Egypt as a—if not the—paradigm for biblical redemption. While eleven of the book’s fourteen chapters focus on Old Testament material, the final three chapters (constituting roughly 20% of the book) explore the exodus theme’s development in the New Testament.

This popular-level volume is both accessible and stimulating for thoughtful readers, regardless of their academic background. Though Morales was not necessarily writing for fellow scholars, The Gospel Coalition (TGC) recognized his work with a 2020 Book Award in the category of Academic Theology. Morales successfully straddles the line between

popular theology and academic biblical studies. Not only is his writing style engaging and readable, but his exegetical observations and theological claims are undergirded by a depth of scholarly research evidenced in the body and footnotes alike.

A casual perusal of the stacks in a library or display in a bookstore might lead readers to assume wrongly that Morales has written a brief commentary or Bible study on the book of Exodus. Though Exodus receives more direct treatment and attention (four chapters) than any other single book of the Bible, Morales’ goal is not to provide readers with an exposition of any one book of the Bible. Rather, Morales identifies and analyses the Bible’s narratives (and theology) of redemption, which he presents as patterned after Israel’s historical exodus out of Egypt.

Morales argues that throughout the biblical canon, the biblical theme of redemption manifests in ways that hearken to Israel’s exodus both before and beyond the event itself. Toward that end, the volume proceeds in three parts. After making initial observations about mankind’s exile-like alienation from God’s life-giving presence in the Garden of Eden and the life of Abraham as a series of departures and deliverances anticipating the exodus event, Morales establishes the theme of redemption in the exodus pattern set by Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt. Second, he explores the exodus theme’s expansion in the ministry and message of Israel’s prophets as they predict the prophesied second exodus. Finally, he explains the fulfillment of the exodus theme in the realization of the new exodus in Christ Jesus and its application to the New Testament church.

Morales’ presentation of the exodus pattern as the substance of the Bible’s theme of redemption engages with exegetical material that fits squarely into Israel’s national experience of divine salvation. Readers are to gather from this book that Israel’s exodus out of Egypt both manifested and set the pattern that is subsequently reenacted in Israel’s sacrificial system, and prophetically fulfilled in Christ. The primary concern of the book’s argument is to set forth the exodus pattern as an organizing principle that helps readers make sense of the various details of the Bible, such as descriptions of the sacrificial system, records of geographic movements, prophetic allusions, and particular miracles. These biblical details are arrayed in support of the thematic unveiling of mankind’s exodus-like redemption from sin and death into God’s life-giving presence.

But can the exodus theme account comprehensively for all the multifarious purposes, genres, and details of the Scriptures? Morales does not directly answer that query, as his aim is more modest. He restricts his focus to the three obvious exodus movements of the Bible, together with supportive material for which there is a direct narrative connection: Israel’s exodus out of Egypt, Israel’s prophesied second exodus (arguably—though not without some controversy in academic

literature—distinct from the remnant of Judah’s restoration from exile), and the new exodus fulfilled in Christ. While the aims and intended audience for the book demand a high degree of selectivity, the final result suggests to readers that certain canonical material (e.g., sapiential literature and great swaths of historical, prophetic, and epistolary content) is very nearly dispensable in the pursuit of an overarching organizing theme or motif for understanding the Bible. Such separation of the canonical tapestry into fabric on one hand and frills on the other is emphatically not Morales’ intent. In the Author’s Preface, he explicitly states that exhaustively to “trace allusions to the exodus from Genesis through Revelation” would not serve “the accessible, introductory nature of the ESBT series” (xii). This volume is an introduction to one biblical theological theme; it is not—neither is it intended to be—a comprehensive biblical theology of that theme. The pressing methodological issue in this introductory biblical theology of redemption is twofold: defining the biblical data that constitute the exodus theme and tracking how that data is transmitted through the biblical canon as the exodus theme is developed exegetically and theologically.

SURVEYING ISRAEL’S EXODUS

Israel’s exodus out of Egypt (heretofore referred to as the exodus event) is both the prototype and the database for all subsequent biblical development of the exodus theme. It is from the archetypal exodus event that Morales derives the discreet elements that recur thematically in subsequent books of the Bible. In a term borrowed from Michael Fishbane, Morales describes the exodus event as a ‘mythos,’ that is “a paradigmatic story and life teaching through which an objective past recurrently gave way to a subjective event of the present” (4). To borrow two more terms utilized by Fishbane, the exodus event supplies the fundamental scriptural ‘traditum,’ or exegetical content of thematic traditions, that later biblical authors exegetically interpret, develop, and apply by way of an unfolding ‘tradio,’ or process of transmission of said content.¹ In alluding to the written record of the exodus event—and its constituent thematic elements—God’s people express their hope for redemption by referring or alluding to the mighty deeds of their divine Deliverer in the past.

What are those discreet elements? What are the biblical data that constitute the exodus theme? Though he nowhere collects and presents individual exegetical or thematic items in a list format, Morales identifies and gathers them in the first and lengthiest part of the book, drawing from the Israelites’ situation prior to their deliverance from slavery, exodus out of Egypt, forty-year sojourn in the wilderness, and eventual arrival in the Promised Land. On the eve of the exodus event, Israel had grown numerically from an extended family of refugees into a vast nation full of life and vitality, though enslaved

to the anti-creational Pharaoh. Morales casts their historical situation in terms uniting it at once to the Creation Mandate of Genesis 1:28, humanity’s exile-like expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and the devastating judgment forewarned by the nation’s as-yet future prophets: Israel had enjoyed “God’s creation blessings amidst their exile in Egypt” (38). Israel’s bondage to slavery in Egypt as a form of exile parallels the situation of the nations. Morales writes, “As a witness to the nations of God’s plan for their salvation, Israel’s exodus was ordained as a deliverance corresponding to the exilic situation of the nations” (38).

In the exodus event itself, key details attend the Israelites’ liberation from slavery and departure from Egypt. These details are revelatory as God—resolved to restore His people to communion with Him in the Promised Land—makes Himself “known through the mighty acts and fatherly compassion that comprise Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt” (40). The knowledge of Yahweh and His name, His signs and wonders (expressive of new creation), His victory over the draconian Pharaoh (and Egypt’s pantheon of idols), and His deliverance of the Israelites through impenetrable darkness and the deathly waters of the Red Sea (both of which symbolize the figurative Egyptian grave from which the Israelites emerge) are important not only for the exodus event itself, but also for the transmission of the exodus theme and its development as a divinely enacted new creation in later biblical texts. Morales writes for example,

In other places in Scripture, however, the theology of creation is given in more poetic ways, portraying God as a mighty warrior who conquers the waters of chaos, personified by the sea dragon that lives in those turbulent waters. As a power that humanity is unable to tame, often dark and turbulent, the sea readily came to symbolize chaos in the ancient world, the forces of darkness and power of evil, even death. Not only was the sea itself personified, but it was also embodied as a monster within the sea. Job brings the two together when he cries out to God: “Am I a sea [*yam*] or a sea dragon [*tannin*] that you set a guard upon me?” (Job 7:12) (55).

Indeed, in the written record of the exodus event and its thematic development elsewhere in Scripture, themes of creation and redemption come together. In the exodus, Egypt was the land of death, darkness, and chaos, ruled by the murderous and anti-creational Pharaoh who sought to interrupt and stop God’s creational blessing in the fruitful multiplication

1. Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 6.

of Israel's life by exterminating the children of Israel. Thus, the exodus event is Israel's redemptive deliverance out of a creational conflict between life and death, order and chaos. The particular features and details of Israel's exodus experience which Morales highlights relate directly to the chosen people's translation from deathly peril to living in security.

Much like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, Pharaoh is an agent of death, whereas God is the champion of life in the redemption and new creation of His chosen people. The exodus event is encapsulated in the Passover, by which God exercises full control over death, causing it to pass over His people even as it visits the household of their chief antagonist (66). The Passover meal involved the death of representative lambs or young goats as sacrificial substitutes for the firstborn sons of Israel, the smearing of blood on the doorposts and lintels of Israelite abodes, and the sharing of Passover meals among the people.

In discussing the Passover, Morales relates the association between circumcision and the Passover to one of the most dramatic episodes in the life of Moses. In this, Morales seeks to lend support to the personal identification of the man Moses with the nation of Israel in a particular experience of divine redemption. Expounding on Exodus 4:24–26, Morales notes, “the scenario appears to involve God's death threat to Moses, who is spared through the circumcision of his son, with the blood of circumcision applied to Moses' feet.... The pattern of a divine death threat avoided through the application of blood surely does bring us into the realm of Passover theology” (75). In the drama accompanying his return to Egypt from the household of Jethro, “Moses had experienced a Passover deliverance himself even before the plagues in Egypt had begun. As Israel's mediator, Moses was also Israel's forerunner in deliverance” (75). The personal deliverance which Moses experienced, as Morales' exegetical argument goes, parallels and anticipates Israel's national “Passover deliverance” in the exodus event.

Is this connection between the circumcision of Moses's son and the substitutionary sacrifice of the Passover a legitimate one to make? Exodus 4:24–26 is notoriously difficult as perhaps the most obscure passage in the narrative portions of the book of Exodus. However, it is the case that circumcision was clearly obligatory for participation in the Passover meal (Exod. 12:48). From Genesis 17 forward, circumcision is the sign of an individual's interest in God's covenant with His people in the Old Testament, beginning with Abraham and then extending to Abraham's descendants. Likewise, the Passover meal signifying God's acceptance of a substitutionary sacrifice in the place of Israel's firstborn sons is reserved for those in covenant with Yahweh who instituted it. Insofar as circumcision is a covenantal rite and Zipporah's words in the second half of Exodus 4:25, “You are indeed a bridegroom of

blood to me,” refer to the blood of her son whom she circumcised, the connection Morales makes is reasonable. However, Morales' conclusion that Moses experienced “a Passover deliverance” rather than a more generically covenantally significant deliverance in this episode hinges on reading the first half of Exodus 4:25, “Zipporah took a flint and cut off her sons' foreskin and made it touch at his (i.e., Moses') feet,” as anticipating specifically the application of the Passover lamb's blood to the doorway of Israelite homes. Though Zipporah's words in the second half of the verse explicitly—if somewhat ambiguously—refer to the shedding of her son's blood, it may be better to conclude that Moses experienced a deliverance that bears marks of God's covenant dealings with Israel in general rather than a deliverance that particularly anticipates the Passover itself. Either way, the deliverance of Moses in Exodus 4:24–26 can be understood as connected—at least indirectly—to Israel's deliverance in the Passover, which is the main point that Morales makes in this section.

Not only was Moses a sympathetic mediator for the enslaved Israelites on the way to liberation, but he was also a singularly authoritative intermediary between Yahweh and the people, as evidenced by his mediation of the covenant delivered through him at Mount Sinai (83). Morales remarks that it is Moses who repeatedly ascends the mountain to meet with Yahweh, and it is Moses who descends from his unique audience with Yahweh to deliver God's commandments to the redeemed nation. The verbs describing Moses's ascent and descent are repeated throughout the narrative concerning Israel's encampment at the base of Mount Sinai, with his ascending functioning as a verbal metonymy for his role as Israel's representative to God and his descending functioning as a verbal metonymy for his role as God's representative to Israel. Through the exodus event, Moses functions as both prophet of God and priest for the people, in addition to acting as authoritative judge and governor of the nation during their deliverance from Egypt and sojourn through the wilderness.

As seen above, Morales argues that the shedding of blood and the movement of God's servant as the mediator between God and the people are significant details drawn from the life of Moses described in Exodus and experienced by Israel in the exodus event. In the shedding (and possible application) of his son's blood by circumcision, Moses is spared from an otherwise justly deserved death sentence (Exod. 4:24–26), and God through Moses directs each household of the Israelites to apply the blood of an unblemished male lamb (Exod. 12:5) to the family's doorway (Exod. 12:7, 22, 23) for the Passover. Moses ascends and descends Mount Sinai to perform his ministry as God's intermediary (Exod. 19, 24) and Israel's intercessor (Exod. 32–34), respectively. As God works redemption for His people in later biblical history, the pattern set in the life of Moses replays with modification. Morales notes that these

two phenomena (sacrificial shedding of blood and mediatorial movement) are aspects of Christ's ministry of redemption (81f, 85f, 88), an observation he will develop in his later treatment of the exodus theme in the Gospel of John (159–72).

The remainder of Morales' examination of exodus material concerns the cultic practices of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. Morales describes the ritual service of the tabernacle and the exodus event as mirror "rites of passage" marking the journey of the Israelites into God's life-giving presence as they are redeemed from slavery and reconciled to Him (97). Though Morales' chapter-length summary of his earlier scholarly work published in *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*² and *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured*³ is appropriately incorporated at this point to bring additional details into the project at-hand, it fundamentally refers back to the two essential themes discussed above (sacrifice and mediatorship). In making the connection to the anticipated perfect sacrifice to-come for the reconciliation of God to men, Morales writes, "But the true lamb, who would descend into death and then be raised up into heaven, would yet be provided" (103). What the intricate web of details about the Levitical sacrificial system clarifies in Morales' argument is how the people of God are identified with the promised servant of God who would be consecrated as Messiah into service for the redemption of the people in a new exodus. The background which Morales rehearses at this point is important for his development of the argument that God's messianic servant identifies with Israel in the message of the prophet Isaiah.

FORTHTELLING COVENANTAL MOVEMENTS

Having established the theme of redemption, Morales proceeds in the second part of the book to explore the theme's expansion and transmission in prophetic literature. Morales summarizes the theology of the prophetic corpus: "that Yahweh God would indeed judge his people with the scattering of exile for their wicked apostasy but that he would also restore them back to himself in such a way that the nations would be gathered in as well" (114). Grounded in the terms of the Mosaic covenant delineated in Deuteronomy 29 and 30, the message of the prophets recalls God's faithfulness, retells God's redemption of Israel from slavery, forthtells covenantal threats, and predicts restoration from exile.

The bonding agent between exodus and exile is God's covenantal dealings with His people, prefaced by His deliverance of them (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6). Morales writes, "As covenantal movements, exodus and exile are signals for the people's relationship with God" (115). Both exodus and exile move from redemption, through consecration, and to consummation in the Promised Land. This pattern is typified and reenacted in the liturgy of both tabernacle and temple: from purification, through consecration, and to fellowship with

God. Inextricably associated with the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to His people Israel as narrated in these sacred movements is the promise of blessing for the nations, rooted in the calling of Abraham (Gen. 12:3).

Morales highlights Isaiah's message of blessing for the nations whom God will raise up beside Israel as His possession. Referring to Isaiah 19:21–25, Morales writes, "Wondrously, the nations will be embraced by Yahweh in a relationship akin to Israel's: 'my people.' As with Israel, the nations will experience an exodus of deliverance that will lead to a covenant relationship with Yahweh" (117). As God works a second exodus with universal extensive effects—blessing the nations of the earth, beyond merely the people of Israel—He simultaneously works a radically intensive effect upon those whom He redeems. The prophets promise both an expansion of divine blessing to encompass the nations and an intensification of God's redemptive work. Not only will God draw men of every nation to His holy mountain (Isaiah 2:2), but He will work redemption in the hearts of men. Morales writes, "In the second exodus proclaimed by the prophets, however, Yahweh God would do a work *within* the hearts of his people—the deliverance would include an inward, spiritual exodus" (119).

The call and promise of inward redemption and reformation is not novel to the prophets. Morales shows how the prophets' message is rooted in that which Moses foretold in the closing chapters of Deuteronomy. However, the prophets take this 'Moses tradition' and develop it through the language of escalation. The work of inward redemption promised in the second exodus is far greater even than the initial work of physical deliverance out of Egypt. Drawing from Jeremiah 16:14–21, Morales writes, "The second exodus will so far exceed the wonders of the old exodus that even the exodus-defined name 'Yahweh' will call to mind the second exodus rather than the first" (121). What exactly is this second exodus? As suggested by the bittersweet expressions of the restored remnant of Judah in Ezra 3:12, the pre-exilic prophesies of the second exodus are not fulfilled in the initial reversal of exile.

Morales explains that the prophesied second exodus is distinct from the return from exile. The prophesied second exodus has five elements which are absent from the experience of the remnant that returns to the Promised Land, making that physical return from exile a partial fulfillment of prophecy, at most. The glorification of Yahweh's Name among the nations, the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom, the reemergence of an Elijah-figure as the forerunner of the Messiah's earthly

2. L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A biblical theology of the book of Leviticus*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, 37 (Nottingham, England: Apollos/InterVarsity Press, 2015).

3. L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, Biblical Tools and Studies, 15 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012).

ministry, the outpouring of God's Spirit upon His people, and resurrection from the dead are five prophesied features of the second exodus that are left unrealized in the Judean remnant's return from exile. Morales dedicates much of his ninth chapter to connecting these promises of Old Testament prophecy to their fulfillment in the Person and work of Christ in the New Testament. It is in Christ—and not physical return from exile—that the prophesied second exodus finds its ultimate fulfillment. In fact, he writes provocatively, “the return from Babylon, significant though it surely was, had been but a subdued and tragic parody of the original exodus” (122). What then is the theological function of the physical return from exile? It seems that Morales wants his readers to understand that the remnant's return to the Promised Land as “a dim foretaste of the new exodus” functions primarily to whet the appetite of the faithful believer for the “final and permanent deliverance” (122) they would experience only when God's appointed messianic servant would come to save them once and for all.

The next two chapters examine the prophetic descriptions of the Messiah as God's Servant in whom are fulfilled the promises of the prophesied second exodus. The work of God's prophesied Servant is fundamentally one of transforming God's people Israel (i.e., Zion) into all that God intended His covenant community to be. Morales presents a three-part structure for Isaiah 40–66 as he outlines the prophesied transformation of Zion through the work of God's Servant. He writes, “the focus of the second half of the book of Isaiah moves from Israel as failed servant of Yahweh (Isaiah 40–48), to the mission of an obedient and suffering servant of Yahweh (Isaiah 49–55), to the renewed mission of the servants of Yahweh, who are disciples of the servant (Isaiah 56–66)” (136).

Throughout, Morales emphasizes that the Servant is no mere substitute for Israel, but is Himself an embodiment of God's covenant people who are spiritually united to Him. Morales writes, “The servant does not replace corporate Israel but is himself an Israelite who embodies Israel” (140), much like Moses was before Him. Again, he reiterates, “No mere substitution, the servant dies for Israel to die with him; he is raised up for Israel to be raised up with him—herein lies the *crux* of Zion's transformation” (143). In chapter eleven, Morales then proceeds to cast the Servant of Isaiah as the Moses of the second exodus, a new David, and a manifestation of Yahweh God in the midst of His people. The individual Servant of Isaiah's prophecy is He who brings about Israel's transformation in His divine Person and perfect work of redemption. This reading of Isaiah's Servant songs in chapters

40–66 is given a necessarily abbreviated treatment due to the limitations of the series of which this book is a part.

Nevertheless, it is here that Morales makes a profound—but all too brief—comment on the connection between his redemptive-historical project in this book and the poetic literature of the Old Testament. He writes, “The shape of lament and thanksgiving found in the psalms, of affliction and deliverance, suffering and glory, death and resurrection, forms an *exodus pattern* engraved deeply on the soul of God's anointed one, the Messiah and shepherd of Israel” (152). Perhaps due to space constraints or a desire to maintain a sharp focus on material drawn from the Pentateuch and the prophets, Morales contents himself with this brief comment as he brings together Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 to develop the profile of the Servant figure as both Davidic and Moses-like in his suffering servant-leadership in the second exodus, referring as well to Adam Hensley's recently published study on the Psalter.⁴

EXODUS FULFILLED

The final three chapters of this volume present New Testament expressions of the redemption theme. What Morales seeks to show from John's Gospel and the Pauline epistles is how the New Testament both echoes the exodus event and brings to fulfillment the promises of the prophesied second exodus in the culminating work of Christ and His Spirit in the new exodus. In the earthly ministry of Christ as presented in John's Gospel, Jesus transforms the old creation into a new creation, lives a life of humiliation unto assured exaltation, and sheds His sinless blood such that the waters of spiritual renewal may flow freely to His people. It is Christ Jesus who is spotlighted in the Gospel as God's ultimate Passover Lamb in this new exodus. Furthermore, it is Christ who therefore baptizes—purifies and consecrates—God's people with God's Spirit so that they can then dwell with Him in His life-giving presence.

Morales presents Christ's death and resurrection in unity as the keystone of His redemptive work recorded in the Gospel of John. It is by the death of Jesus Christ the Lamb of God that atonement is accomplished for the people of God, and the Passover imagery is central to this all-important work of Christ. The feast of Passover is “mentioned in the Gospel of John more than in any other Gospel” (160), thus setting the Messiah's work within the narrative and theological context of Israel's remembrance and reenactment of the exodus event. Christ's miracles bear the marks of the exodus event in the turning of water into wine (John 2:1–11; 4:46) just as Moses turned the waters of the Nile into blood (Exod. 7:14–25), and in the raising of a ruler's dead son back to life (John 4:47–54). The “I am” sayings recorded in John's Gospel (6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1) echo both Yahweh's revelation of Himself to Moses from the burning bush as “I am that I am” (Exod.

4. Adam D. Hensley, *Covenant Relationships and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, 666 (London: T&T Clark, 2018).

3:14) and divine “I am” declarations attending the second exodus (Is. 41:4; 43:13).

In this exodus-rich context, Jesus is presented as the “Lamb of God” and “Son of God” in such a way that there is no denying the theological significance of Christ’s death and resurrection. God’s own firstborn Son works redemption from sin and its effects by His sacrificial death and victory over the power of the grave. Even the cross upon which Christ bled and died “has become the doorpost of the world” as Christ’s shed blood “takes away the sin of the world” (164). The efficacy of Christ’s work for all mankind is subtly expressed in the garden settings and Edenic allusions Morales explores in this chapter (169–172), demonstrating in vivid narrative detail how Jesus reverses the exile from the Garden of Eden and enters into the new creation life by His sin-atonement death and glorious resurrection. However, in much the same way that the construction of the tabernacle complex ends in a crisis as Moses and the priests cannot enter to perform their work due to the overwhelming presence of God (Exod. 40:35), so too theological tension exists in John’s Gospel. How can any mere man enter the new creation after Jesus?

Morales answers this question—and resolves the tension at this point—by appealing to Christ’s gift of the Spirit. By the Spirit, “the Son renews humanity and creation and brings his people into his Father’s household, leading them in a new exodus” (173). Morales continues his sustained treatment of John’s Gospel in a second chapter dealing particularly with the work of the Spirit as the gift of Christ the Son to His people. Much like the unified message of the prophets, John’s Gospel uses water imagery to express Christ’s pouring out of the Spirit upon His people (174). Not only does John present Jesus as abundantly filled with the Spirit, but he records how Jesus breathes out the Spirit of God upon His disciples. Commenting on this crucial act of the risen Christ in John 20:22 and relating it to the Spirit of God’s revivifying breath in Ezekiel 37:9–10, Morales writes, “In breathing out the Spirit, Jesus is raising old creation Israel up from the dead so that here stands not only the new humanity, but the renewed Israel of God—the new creation Israel” (177). This act bestows new life upon the covenant community as a renewed humanity and also reveals Jesus Christ the Son of God as God the Son. God alone “breathed into the nostrils of Adam, giving him life” (177) in Genesis 2:7. The psalmist testifies likewise to the unique prerogative of God to breathe—or send out—His life-giving Spirit (Ps. 33:6; 104:30). In the speech of Elihu in Job 33:4, the truth is proclaimed that “the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of *Shaddai* gives me life” (177). It was God Himself to whom Ezekiel made his appeal in 37:9, “O Spirit, breathe on these slain that they may live!”

The giving of God’s Spirit renews the life of Israel and impels the disciples on their mission of world-evangelization

by gospel-proclamation to the ends of the earth. This life-giving event triggers a global life-giving ministry into which the followers of Christ enter with spiritual vigor that comes by the immediate blessing of God the Son. In the concluding chapter of this volume, Morales shows just how good the gospel message carried forth by Christ’s Spirit-empowered disciples is. The message of the resurrected Jesus holds forth the world’s only hope for deliverance not only from death, but from sin. Morales writes, “Resurrection alone offers genuine hope and deep peace in the face of our own death, amid our battles with sickness and suffering, broken relationships and loss—and in the face of the evil within ourselves” (187). That “evil within ourselves” is sin, in all its gory power and defiling waste. Using the case study of the Apostle Paul and his theology, Morales shows how the resurrection is at the heart of the gospel message (188–195). Nothing short of resurrected life from the dead can manifest the power and goodness of God demonstrated in the new exodus of which Christ is both Passover Lamb and embodiment of Israel.

In conclusion, Morales competently and convincingly presents the Bible’s message of redemption as a sustained development of the exodus theme from Genesis through Revelation, notwithstanding some exegetical connections that may come across as overly figurative. As he does so, he focuses most on the bedrock material of the Pentateuch and how this material is transmitted by Israel’s prophets and fulfilled in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The lack of sustained engagement with either the sapiential literature of both Testaments or a more varied sampling of narrative literature is a deficiency of the book, necessitated no doubt by the focus and aims of the project. There simply is not enough room in a 200-page volume to address the thorny issue of how best to relate the sapiential and poetic literature of the Old Testament to the redemptive history of Israel, especially when some of that literature seems so detached from the primary narrative of Israel’s exodus, exile, and restoration. Biblical theologians continue to face the challenge of incorporating the various forms of literature found in the Bible into a cohesive biblical theological whole without either flattening the distinctive features of each genre or giving short shrift to the more difficult-to-place kinds of material.

Rather than instigating frustration among readers, the selectivity of this (and similar) introductory volumes should inspire reading and writing that pushes into the gaps. For example, how does the exodus theme find expression in the book of Job, with the suffering holy man’s cries for redemption and longing for vindication, apart from the covenant people of God? Are there exegetical connections to make between Exodus and Esther, especially considering that the latter narrative of deliverance curiously avoids making any explicit reference to Israel’s divine Redeemer? Does the separation and reunion

of the lovers in Song of Solomon reenact the movement of alienation or exile through exodus to life-giving fellowship with God? Morales' work would have been strengthened with an additional chapter helping readers to relate the sapiential and poetic literature of the Old Testament to a biblical theology of redemption in terms of exodus movements and traditions. If

nothing else, these and similar questions are indicative of the fact that readers of this volume will surely be rewarded with a more mature and informed desire to continue further investigation into the biblical theological approach represented by this book, perhaps using the recommended reading listed after the concluding chapter as a helpful starting point. ■

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