

***Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News.* By Darrell L. Bock. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010, 146 pp., \$16.99 paperback. ISBN 978-08054-6465-8.**

Darrell Bock brings his considerable knowledge and skill as a New Testament scholar to bear on what he correctly views as an urgent need for the church today. As Research Professor of New Testament Studies and Professor of Spiritual Development and Culture at Dallas Theological Seminary, Bock embarks on a needed “mission of rediscovery” as he challenges readers to examine key biblical texts in light of a simple but critically important question: What does the Bible say about the gospel?

All too often, Bock asserts, the gospel is portrayed as something less than the amazing good news that calls believers into a dynamic relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

[W]hen I hear some people preach the gospel today, I am not sure I hear its presentation as good news. Sometimes, I hear a therapeutic call – that God will make us feel better or prosper more. Other times, I hear so much about Jesus paying for sin that the gospel seems limited to a transaction – the removal of debt. Or perhaps I hear it as a kind of spiritual root canal. Still other times, I hear a presentation that makes the gospel seem more about avoiding something from God versus experiencing something with Him. Other presentations make me think Jesus came to change politics in the world. Such political presentations make me wonder why God did not send Jesus to Rome rather than Jerusalem. None of these is the gospel I see in the Scripture, though some are closer than others (2).

When the gospel has “gone missing” in these ways, the “church suffers, God’s people lose their way, and the world lacks what it so desperately needs – an experience of God’s presence” (2). Worse yet, people who enter the church “lose sight of why they really are there and what it is they should be doing for God” (2). Only the real gospel as revealed in the pages of the New Testament provides a sufficient *raison d’être* for the church.

Bock begins his quest to recover the lost elements of the gospel by noting that when the Apostle Paul refers to the cross in 1 Corinthians, “the term cross functions as a hub and a synecdoche for all that Jesus’ work brings” (3). Consequently, the message of the cross involves much more than a single salvific transaction. “The gospel is not about a death but about a death that leads many to life. It is not about avoiding something but gaining someone precious, a new vibrant relationship with the

gracious and self-sacrificing God who created us to know and follow Him” (17). Receiving the gospel results in experiencing the promise of God’s Spirit and entering into a new relationship with God and other believers in the community of faith. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper celebrate these realities as good news in the fullest sense of the phrase – “an entry into communion with God and His people” (38).

Chapter three describes how Christ’s redemptive work on the cross was a unique action that meets a comprehensive need. Jesus’ death was much more than a transaction that redeems us and takes care of our debt and guilt. It “restored us into a new way, bringing new relationship, new power, and new access to the living God” (54). Furthermore, the gospel is “inaugurated as a gift of God’s grace” (chapter 4), revealing who Jesus is through the scriptural testimony of the early church (chapter 5). In chapter six Bock explores what it means to embrace the gospel through repentance and faith, noting that “faith, by its very nature, underscores the fact that the gospel is not fundamentally about a transaction but about a sustained relationship” (89). This relationship enables believers to experience the life-changing power of the gospel (chapter 7). Bock writes, “The good news is that God indwells us to show us we are His children. His Spirit enables us to be His children and to live like it” (122).

Bock underscores the point of *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel* by titling the concluding chapter of the book, “Getting the Gospel Clear: A Relationship Rooted in God’s love, Not Just a Transaction.” He writes powerfully and passionately about the new relationship with God that is available to all who discover and receive the great news of the gospel:

We are invited to sit at the table in God’s house with His love, power, and protection surrounding us. That offer of new life and relationship is the gospel. That relationship, rooted in God’s love and everlasting in duration, is what Christianity is all about. That gospel is what the church is called to preach – and to live. It is a message we need to recover and share with a tone that reflects the love and reconciliation that motivates it because it is a testimony to the wonderful and deep love of God for us. Embrace it in faith and share it with others. It is a story of good news worth telling (132).

Recovering the Real Lost Gospel accomplishes the task delineated in the subtitle of the book: *Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News*. While the casual reader might get lost occasionally in the details of Bock’s scholarly explanations of key scriptural texts, the serious Bible student will discover many gems worth mining. The book offers pastors an excellent

biblical theology for reflection and action as they seek to proclaim faithfully the good news of the gospel.

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***Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed.* By Marc Cortez. Guide for the Perplexed Series. London: T. & T. Clark, 2010, 179 pp., \$24.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-567-03432-8**

T. & T. Clark's *Guide for the Perplexed* series is designed to introduce subjects that students find particularly challenging. Marc Cortez, Assistant Professor of Theology at Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon, has taken on the challenging subject of theological anthropology, variously called Christian anthropology and the doctrine of humanity. This important subject has been the source of many debates and controversies since the dawn of Christianity. With a mind to orient his readers to the landscape rather than to offer a particular path, Cortez presents this book as "a way of thinking theologically about the human person" (13).

Recognizing that the doctrine of humanity consists of numerous debates, Cortez selects four areas for discussion: "the *imago Dei*, human sexuality, human constitution (i.e., the body/soul relationship), and free will" (12). Astute readers might notice that he omits one of the traditional pillars of anthropology, "sin." His omission is not egregious; he merely subsumed it within his discussion on the *imago Dei*. These four areas were selected carefully for they best demonstrate the focus of the book: the key to understanding anthropology is through the person of Christ (7), an idea that flows from his dissertation (published as *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies*, London: T. & T. Clark, 2008).

He connects the *imago Dei* to Christ by critiquing the traditional perspectives and suggesting three relational ways to understand the image: representational, personal, and covenantal (30-37). From this, he concludes that "Jesus Christ is the revelation of true humanity" (38). In this way, Cortez claims that unless we begin with the *imago Dei*, we will never be able to understand what it means to be human.

Building on his presentation of the image of God, Cortez discusses human sexuality. He critiques traditional understandings, then brings in an alternate way based on relationality: fulfilling our incompleteness through relationship (66). From this, he is able to connect human sexuality with the image of God. He, therefore, concludes: "The reproductive and fecund nature of sexuality can be understood as expressions of this

drive toward community” (67). Thus, sex becomes all about relationships with one another and with God.

In order to understand how we relate to our surroundings, we have to understand the way we are constituted. Cortez spends the majority of the chapter that tackles the mind and body debate giving a detailed account of the differences between substance dualism and physicalism, the two most prominent opponents in the debate today. He goes into some depth with his discussion, which may leave novices a bit overwhelmed. For example, Cortez presents an excellent comparison between *epiphenomenalism*, *supervenience*, and *emergence* (81-82), a discussion hardly suited to newcomers.

The last chapter before the conclusion deals with human free will. Cortez points out that free will is central to relationality: “Most obviously it shapes fundamental moral concepts such as responsibility, accountability, personal development, and interpersonal relationality” (98). He deftly walks his readers through the subtleties that make up the various sides and evenly presents their strengths and weaknesses, concluding that both compatibilism and libertarianism are born out of logic and a biblical foundation. As with the previous chapter, the subject of this chapter proves to be forever an enigma. Philosophy, psychology, theology, and the Bible provide no definitive answers. He presents both sides of the issue and emphasizes that, while these issues are not resolved easily, they are worth discussing because they are foundational to who we are and how we relate to God and creation (136-37). In summary, he concludes that anthropology must be rooted in Christology: “Ultimately, then, we see that the *who* of humanity resides in the *who* of Christology. Who is the human person? The human person is the one called into existence, summoned into partnership, and drawn into relationship in and through Jesus Christ” (136).

While Cortez does a wonderful job presenting the various perspectives with fairness and insight, his Christological emphasis is weak. Like Stanley Grenz’s systematic theology that tries to connect all areas of theology to “community,” Cortez seems to stretch his point a little too far at times. To accomplish his goal of filtering the entire doctrine of humanity through a Christocentric grid, he is forced to redefine some of the central tenets of humanity. For example, he expands human sexuality to encompass all aspects of relationality in order to incorporate sexuality into the divine/human relationship: “To this extent, then, we can say that the divine being is ‘sexual’—that is, in God we see the three persons who are both ‘other’ and ‘same’ eternally bonded in intimate community” (67). He adds that our drive to reproduce is grounded in community, thus our desire to commune with God is an expression of sexuality. In this way,

he stretches our understanding of *sex* to the breaking point. He based much of the section about bonding on the seventh chapter of Grenz's *The Social God and the Relational Self* (Louisville: WJK, 2001, 267-303, esp. 274-80), so his ideas are not novel, though maybe a bit under explained. Where he, along with Grenz, places *sex* as the overarching umbrella under which relationship lay, I think the inverse is true. If he approached human sexuality in the context of relationship rather than relationship in the context of human sexuality, he could have made the same point without all the linguistical calisthenics.

Cortez does an admirable job of spelling out the various positions of each of the issues while demonstrating little bias for any particular side. At times he becomes caught up in the jargon of the debate and loses sight of the mandate to inform the uninformed, thus making it difficult for the truly uninitiated; but, for the diligent student, this book can be a outstanding introduction to the debates that continue to rage. As an attempt to connect humanity to God in each of the areas discussed, Cortez has mixed success. But even with these minor imperfections, this book would make a wonderful addition to an advanced course on theological anthropology, where the students come already with a foundation of understanding.

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***Revisiting the Days of Genesis: A Study of the Use of Time in Genesis 1-11 in Light of Its Ancient Near Eastern and Literary Context.* By B.C. Hodge. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011, xxxvii + 172 pp., \$23.00 paperback. ISBN 13: 978-1-60899-597-4.**

Modern scientific theory, particularly the theory of evolution, has so permeated the culture that its influence can be seen in areas of study beyond biology. In few places is this more evident than in the interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. A literal, seven-day creation stands at odds with what is considered modern scientific understanding of the origin and age of the earth. Many who hold a high view of the Scripture have long struggled with how to reconcile the text with the conclusions of science, while others simply ignore the controversy, rejecting either science or the text completely. In *Revisiting the Days of Genesis: A Study of the Use of Time in Genesis 1-11 in Light of Its Ancient Near Eastern and Literary Context*, B.C. Hodge weighs in on the debate by examining the literary and theological function of time within the primeval history of Genesis. Hodge seeks to move past what he considers a false dichotomy between a natural and supernatural understanding of the text, which he believes misses the intended point of the narrative.

In chapter 1, Hodge gives a more detailed explanation as to how Genesis 1-11 may express mythical events and still be considered true. He does not insist that the book is completely mythological. In fact, he shies away from the term *myth* because of the negative connotations associated with the word. He prefers instead the phrase *cultural symbolism* to express those literary elements that are present in the text and represent a symbolic expression of a theological truth. This is an important distinction, since Hodge never denies the truth of the text. While the stories may not be portrayed in a historical manner, *per se*, they are tools the author uses to express theology. Hodge likens this to “historical fiction” movies, such as *Braveheart*, which take artistic liberties with the events “to give greater meaning and significance to the director’s contemporary audience” (5). If the text has been written to artistically and symbolically express a greater truth, then the use of time within the narrative may be used to the same effect. This is an important element to Hodge’s argument, and he insists that to read the Scripture in a different way is to do injustice to the text.

In the rest of the book, Hodge discusses specific issues related to temporal language in Genesis: the days of creation (Chapter 3); the use of “day” in Genesis 2:4b (Chapter 4); the death sentence given to the first couple (Chapter 5); the genealogies of Genesis (Chapter 6); and the days of the Flood (Chapter 7). In each of these, his conclusions are based on an interpretation of the language of Genesis from a cultural-symbolic perspective. That is, Genesis was written utilizing images and symbols intended to portray a certain theology that ancient readers would have understood.

Hodge is a graduate from the Moody Bible Institute and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Currently he is studying at Westminster Theological Seminary, pursuing a Th.M. in Biblical Hermeneutics. His underlying argument that the book of Genesis should be read in light of its intended meaning and purpose is well taken. His chapter on the history of interpretation (Chapter 2) is particularly useful in putting the discussion in perspective. He demonstrates that the history of orthodoxy has allowed a non-literal view of the time portrayed in Genesis 1-11. This is a noteworthy corrective against those who would condemn a believer who might not hold a literal view. Further, the way Hodge reconciles his understanding of the days of Genesis with the authority of the text is valid and instructive. If nothing else, it allows the reader who may not have considered anything but an absolutely literal view of the days of Genesis insight into another method of hermeneutics.

Hodge is correct to insist that the text of Genesis is a product of an ancient mind with ancient concerns and should be read accordingly. In

supporting his argument, Hodge utilizes ANE texts to demonstrate parallels in thought and usage of temporal language, and the texts are generally well used. Of particular help is his argument concerning sanctuary language in the creation and garden account. While this is not a new view, Hodge is to be commended for providing a well-organized explanation. The only negative in his use of ANE texts is his decision to provide a transliteration of the sources within the text of the book's text itself. While he does provide a translation immediately after each section, the inclusion of the transliteration is distracting.

The absence of a discussion of the New Testament understanding of the days of Genesis (or temporal language in the Old Testament) is disappointing. In his treatment of the history of interpretation, Hodge moves from the Second Temple period (i.e. Philo and Jubilees) to the Patristic writers. Is the New Testament silent on this topic? If so, the silence could be instructive—the lack of silence would be even more instructive, and Hodge gives no explanation why he overlooks it.

Further, there are several questions he leaves unanswered. For instance, if the death promised to the first couple is simply expulsion from the land (as he argues in Chapter 5), why the repetition of the phrase “and he died” throughout chapter five; if the line of Seth was to represent the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent (in Cain), what are the implications of the sin of Ham after the flood, particularly since Cain's line is cut off? While these questions are not decisive flaws in his argument, they are weaknesses that need to be addressed. Of further note is his reading of Genesis 2-3 in view of God's struggle over chaos. While there is some evidence for this, Hodge tends to read too much implication into the evidence.

While Hodge argues that the days of Genesis 1-11 are better read literally and theologically, he goes too far at times in assigning figurative meaning to time in the Old Testament. For example, he reads the various occurrences of forty and seven (whether days or years) within the Old Testament as figurative, and not literal time. This applies to several examples of seven days of cleansing and forty days of trial throughout the corpus. So also the forty days that Jonah waited to view Nineveh's destruction are not literal. As he writes, “Are we really to believe that he sits there for forty days in the scorching hot sun until he realizes that God is not going to destroy it?” (137) This seems to betray an interpretive factor behind Hodge's argument that is not necessarily germane: believability.

These weaknesses are noteworthy, but they do not ultimately detract from the overall work. This writer recommends the book to anyone who is grappling with providing a relevant and contextual interpretation of Genesis. Whether one agrees with his conclusions or not, Hodge's inter-

pretation seeks to ask the correct questions of the text. In so doing, he well-illustrates how Genesis is a product of its own time and culture and how it may be read accordingly. While he might not change the mind of anyone who would argue vehemently for a literal understanding of the days of Genesis, he does provide a calming voice in what is often a harsh debate.

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***God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?* By David T. Lamb. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011, 205 pp., \$15.00 paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0830838264**

David Lamb begins his book with this provocative question: “How does one reconcile the loving God of the Old Testament with the harsh God of the New Testament?” As unexpected as it may be to most readers, this demonstrates a common misunderstanding about how God is portrayed in both the Old and New Testaments. Many consider the Old Testament’s portrayal of God as a harsh, vengeful deity, while the New Testament emphasizes a loving, forgiving God in the life of Jesus Christ. This is not an accurate assessment. Lamb reminds us, “God in the Old Testament is consistently described as slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, but Jesus speaks about hell more than anyone else in Scripture” (9). In *God Behaving Badly*, Lamb seeks to correct the misconceptions that many readers bring to and carry from a reading of the Scriptures, particularly the Old Testament. This is also a response to critics such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, who attempt to impeach God (as He is depicted in the Old Testament) because of actions and commands they insist show the God of the Old Testament is an evil, vindictive, petty God. Lamb does not shy away from such accusations—indeed, he freely admits that a surface reading of the Old Testament text does indeed seem to portray a God who is anything but abounding in steadfast love. However, he insists that any reading that pits the two Testaments against one another is a gross misreading of the text.

David Lamb is associate professor of Old Testament at Biblical Theological Seminary, and is the author of *Righteous Jehu and His Evil Heirs: The Deuteronomist’s Negative Perspective on Dynastic Succession* (Oxford, 2007). Those who have avoided works of theology and exegesis for fear of dry prose and difficult jargon need not hesitate to dive into *God Behaving Badly*. This work is aimed at the laity, and as such it is highly readable and easy to understand; his tone is light and, at

times, playful. He flavors his arguments with illustrations taken from popular culture, such as (to name only a few) *The Simpsons*, Gary Larson comics, Monty Python, and *Ocean's Eleven*. His prose (and even his footnotes) is marked with humorous asides, often times taken from his personal experiences. Lamb is a teacher, and he writes as one, boiling his chapters down to the essentials and pacing his lessons for all students.

Each chapter is dedicated to a different question. He examines accusations against God, such as that He is angry, sexist, racist, violent, legalistic, rigid, and distant. In each case, Lamb states the problem and examines the evidence based on a careful and contextual reading of relevant passages. It is unfortunate that he is not more exhaustive in his selection of passages to examine, but this cannot be avoided in a work of limited scope and purpose. He himself admits that he has been selective in his use of passages. That being said, Lamb has been fair and judicial in his selection, and the evidence he examines is appropriate. For example, in his chapter, "Racist or Hospitable?" Lamb examines the curse of Ham (Gen. 9:24-27), and the "Canaanite genocide" (Josh 10:40, *et. al.*). By examining the context of these passages, Lamb is able to show that these are not cases of racism, but rather judgment. He notes that God shows mercy on Canaanites (e.g. Rahab) and other non-Israelites (e.g. Namaan), and God punishes His own people for their sin. He writes, "If Yahweh were racist, he would punish only other nations, not his own" (79). Further, he shows that Yahweh demands justice for the "sojourners" within Israel's borders, which again demonstrates not the racism of God, but His justice. Lamb then goes on to show that Jesus shared this interest in justice for all, regardless of race, as illustrated by his parable of the Good Samaritan. This is a pattern he follows throughout the book: the statement of the problem, examination of relevant Old Testament context, and a comparison of a New Testament parallel. He concludes each chapter with a discussion on the implications of each principle in the life of the church. He does not simply demonstrate that God is not racist, but challenges Christ's church to emulate their Lord.

There are a few (minor) weaknesses in *God Behaving Badly*. Lamb's lighthearted tone (though perhaps appropriate for his intended audience) may strike some as flippant, and some of his section headings might be deemed inappropriate by others (e.g. "Jesus and the Female 'Dog' [p. 147]; "I Had Never Picked Up a Prostitute Before" [174]). Further, while Lamb does not like the dichotomy between the "God of the Old Testament," and the "God of the New Testament," he does use that same terminology himself, especially when says he will use *Yahweh* to refer to the former and *Jesus* to refer to the latter (18-19). This writer's greatest disappointment with the book was that Lamb is too apologetic for God's behavior. The book would have been well served with a discussion of

Job, especially God's answer to Job's complaint. Job is never given a reason for his suffering—he is simply faced with the power and sovereignty of God. As uncomfortable as that answer might make us, sometimes that may be the only answer we may receive for God's behavior.

The great strength of *God Behaving Badly* is its constant emphasis on an honest approach to many tough questions. This honesty means that we cannot avoid those accusations against God that make us uncomfortable; it also means that those accusations must be examined in light of the inspired word. Lamb does not shy away from the tough questions. He wants the reader to be uncomfortable, to wrestle with the real problems and real questions that many honest people bring to the God of the Bible, but he also forces the reader to examine each question within the pages of the whole of Scripture. Because of this, the book (though in spirit, apologetic) is one of good exegesis and sound theology. This writer highly recommends *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?* for any person (believer or not) who would better understand who God is and how we can be sure that He is the same in the Old Testament as He is in the New.

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***Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide.* By Brett McCracken. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010, 256 pp., \$15.99 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8010-7222-2.**

I am relatively young, but when I first stepped into one of the churches mentioned in *Hipster Christianity*, I felt utterly and completely uncool. I was surrounded by good-looking young(er) people who know how to dress and communicate in a language that was all but foreign to me. I thought, "How did I get so old and out of touch so fast?" According to McCracken, these are the same sorts of questions that have caused much of Evangelical Christianity to try to woo the young, hip demographic. The question posed by McCracken is can and should the church be cool?

Brett McCracken, a self-proclaimed hipster, holds degrees from Wheaton College and UCLA. He is a regular contributor to *Christianity Today* and *Relevant*, primarily in the area of film, and writes a blog (still-searching.wordpress.com). This is his first book.

Hipster Christianity is divided into three parts. Part one, "The History and Collision of Cool and Christianity," outlines the history of *cool* or *hip* in general and *cool/hip* Christianity in particular. He begins by asking if Christianity is cool, but withholds his answer until the end of the book.

He traces the beginnings of cool to the end of the feudal system in Europe, but maintains that the concept fully took hold in the 18th century with the political philosopher Rousseau and the demise of the landed classes. The desire to be cool, he argues, goes hand in hand with the desire to be free. Hip Christianity has a much shorter history, beginning with the Jesus Movement of the 1960s-1970s. The hallmark of Christian hipsters today is much the same as their secular counterparts: rebellion against societal norms, social activism, fashion, music, and a propensity to indulge in such things as alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and premarital sex.

Part two, "Hipster Christianity in Practice," discusses, not surprisingly, what Hipster Christianity looks like in practice. McCracken profiles seven *communities*, including Jacob's Well in Kansas City. He also discusses the Emergent/Emerging Church and its relationship to Hipster Christianity, arguing that much of its theology informs hipster Christians. Finally, he discusses Hipster Christianity's interest in living *missional* lives, being *green*, working for social justice, and its leftward leaning politics.

Part three, "Problems and Solutions," gives a hard look at Evangelical Christianity's desire to be cool, the shortcomings of Hipster Christianity, and argues that Christianity can be cool, so long as it maintains a passionate dependence on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a commitment to preach that Gospel to the world. He points out seven problems with being cool: individualism, alienation, competition, pride and vanity, a focus on the now, rebellion, and a reduction of identity to the visual. After this, he gives a picture of cool Christianity that will work: one that is sincerely interested in music, art, and film, one that is Christ-centered, one that is distinct from the world, and one that abstains from sin.

Hipster Christianity is a well-written, engaging look at the implications of the idea of cool for the church. It captures the oft elusive trifecta of great scholarship—it is thought-provoking, funny, and filled with good research. The book's primary problem is its tendency to generalize. McCracken prefers to speak in terms of *wanna-be* hipster churches and *organic, authentic* hipster churches, painting each group with broad strokes. In doing so, he tends to be suspicious of the *wanna-be* churches without conceding that they may also be trying to fulfill Christ's command to make disciples of all nations. In the final analysis, McCracken asks many questions that need to be considered by Christians and churches throughout the United States. What is cool? Why do we want to be cool? Can the church be cool? What is the essence of the Gospel? The book offers a corrective both to those congregations that attempt to harness culture (i.e. be cool) in order to gain converts and to those congregations that really are *hip*. He warns the first group that they will never be able to keep up with culture and that it is a futile endeavor anyway. He

warns the second group that the defining factor in their personal and corporate lives must be Christ, not their own coolness. All in all, this book is recommended to every believer who wants to understand the implications and dangers of courting culture for the sake of Christ.

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***Fundamentals of New Testament Greek.* By Stanley E. Porter, Jeffrey T. Reed, and Matthew Brook O'Donnell. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, 466 pp., hardcover, \$40.00. ISBN-978-0-8028-2827-9. Plus workbook, \$20.00. ISBN-978-0-8028-2826-2.**

Fundamentals of New Testament Greek (further, FNTG) presents systemic-functional linguistics in a first-year Greek grammar written for analytical learners. Skimming the FNTG table of contents dispels any notion that Greek grammar pedagogy is a neutral endeavor. Porter's paradigm regarding the significance of verbal aspect guides the organization and emphases of FNTG. This volume is but the beginning of an ambitious, larger scope of works the authors wish to produce, including: 1) an intermediate-level text which advances students in their understanding of Greek, 2) a reader of extra-biblical Greek texts, including vocabulary and commentary, 3) a book on textual criticism, and 4) a handbook to exegesis (x).

The authors recognize a deficiency in how traditional first-year grammars develop students' vocabulary acquisition and grammatical competence. They write, "We have tried to make this a grammar that provides all that a first-year student should gain—including exposure to enough vocabulary (over 950 words); all forms of Greek verbs, nouns, and adjectives, with explanations of their derivation to aid in memorization; clear and helpful paradigms that consolidate all of this information into memorizable form; and basic comments on syntax and word order and their significance" (ix). The authors try to minimize incompleteness in FNTG by providing fuller discussions on points of grammar than one finds in other first-year texts, and including all vocabulary used twelve times or more in the New Testament (presented through the chapters in roughly their order of frequency).

The authors acknowledge that, "students may initially find this approach daunting, though we are convinced that, in the long run, it will serve them better" (xii). The authors structure each chapter with a view to making FNTG accessible for students and teachers with varying degrees of aptitude or availability, stating, "The thoroughness of this textbook allows teachers to use it in the way that they see best" (xii). One

can use FNTG comprehensively or more narrowly because each chapter: 1) begins with key objectives to be covered therein, 2) lists vocabulary which must be memorized with that chapter in order to cover all 950 words presented in the textbook, 3) explains key concepts in normal type, and less immediately essential material in other type styles and fonts, and 4) presents concluding formulae and paradigms for memorization. Besides the pedagogical structure of each chapter, several other components of FNTG facilitate its usefulness for those who may be intimidated by the authors' lofty aims: 1) comprehensive review exercises at the end of every five chapters, 2) a drill rubric for retaining grammatical, lexical, and reading competence during semester/holiday breaks, and 3) a corresponding comprehensive workbook.

At points this review will compare FNTG with William D. Mounce's *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Zondervan, 2009). Porter and Mounce discussed their approaches in the Program Unit, "New Testament Greek Language and Exegesis," at the 2010 ETS Annual Meeting in Atlanta. After providing introductory material in *Basics of Biblical Greek* (further, *BBG*), Mounce presents in order the noun system (with the inclusion of εἰμί, and adjectives), then indicative verbs, participles, and non-indicative verbs. Mounce, like most grammarians, organizes *BBG* according to parts of speech. Looking at the table of contents for FNTG, one notices that its authors employ a different philosophy; its thirty chapters are not grouped according to parts of any designation. Rather, as one might expect from the authors, after describing some basic elements of nouns, adjectives, and the article, verbs are presented as early as chapter four.

Though not designated as such in the table of contents, one can see that FNTG is organized according to the authors' understanding of the importance of designating between perfective, imperfective, and stative verbal aspect, following specially Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood* (Peter Lang, 1993). Generally speaking, in FNTG the indicative and infinitive are examined together, beginning with the aorist tense-form, then the imperfect, present, and future tense-forms respectively. Chapters five through nine alternate between lessons on the aforementioned verbal tense-forms and instruction regarding nouns and adjectives. By chapter 10, just one-fourth the way into the textbook, the authors present first and second aorist, present, and future active participles, and the genitive absolute. In the course of a normal academic calendar year, all major parts of speech (save the subjunctive and imperative) are introduced before the November winds begin to howl!

The first half of FNTG also includes chapters focusing on aorist, future, present, and imperfect middle and passive voice indicatives and

infinitives, prepositions, and the aorist and present subjunctives. Filling in the frame established in the first half of FNTG, chapters on μ -verbs, aspectually vague verbs, the perfect tense-form (indicative, infinitive, and participle), and adjectives and adverbs dominate chapters 15-30. The back matter includes lists of verb formulas, endings, and accents, as well as over 40 pages of noun, pronoun, adjective, participle, and verb paradigms. These are followed by a table listing principle parts of 121 verbs, and an alphabetized list of the 950 vocabulary introduced in the chapters (compared with 319 vocabulary in BBG, words used 50 times or more in the New Testament). All of the elements of back matter in the textbook are reproduced at the end of the workbook.

The authors concede that the scope of FNTG reaches beyond what students (and many teachers) have come to expect for elementary Greek. In what rings of a confession, they state, "We know that this is a very full, comprehensive, and perhaps even challenging grammar. We also believe that there is no substitute for serious and rigorous study of the Greek of the New Testament. We know that this book works and will take students to a level not often achieved through other beginning textbooks" (x). The authors of FNTG thus envision a future aspect to their work, seeing its impact on students (and teachers) in both intermediate Greek and exegesis courses. They write, "We hope that we have provided enough so that, with the aid of a lexicon, they (students) can begin to read entire chapters and even books of the Greek New Testament with profit and delight" (x).

This reviewer questions whether at times FNTG provides enough. It lacks any attraction for visual or creative learners, a concern BBG addressed in the 3rd ed. In the vocabulary section of the back matter of FNTG, words are alphabetically listed with reference to the chapter to which they correspond in FNTG, but without reference to frequency of use in the New Testament. This hinders students from making connections from the vocabulary list and their NT; it would not have been difficult to list frequency of use in the New Testament, as BBG, which follows Bruce M. Metzger's *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* (Baker, 1997). Perhaps most concerning is the fact that FNTG provides far fewer exegetical insights than BBG.

On the whole though, it seems that FNTG provides too much. While the authors claim that the varying type-size and styles assist the reader in differentiating between less immediately essential material and prominently necessary concepts, this is not the case. Because all Greek text is bold, everything seems immediately essential. How necessary is it to bold font the Greek text in every paradigm, when there is no immediately surrounding English? This is simply not pleasant to the eye. Despite the

authors' claims (and hopes), the quantity of what seems to be immediately essential material could be overwhelming for some students.

Nevertheless, FNTG remains an attractive option because of the speed with which it prepares students to engage the Greek New Testament. Arranging FNTG according to verbal aspect theory, without neglecting essential elements of nouns, adjectives and other parts of speech, helps students to recognize the critical role verbal aspect plays in New Testament Greek. Additionally, presenting all major parts of speech in the first ten weeks of the academic year provides students using FNTG a framework into which the teacher can build individual concepts throughout the year. This more quickly opportunes students to open their Greek New Testament and recognize the roles various grammatical forms play within the matrix of a sentence, paragraph, and book. Finally, the amount of vocabulary integrated into the 30 chapters of FNTG equips students to recognize words in the Greek New Testament much more quickly than the approach of BBG.

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***Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament.* By Steven E. Runge. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010, 404 pp. hardcover, \$49.95. ISBN-978-1-59856-583-6.**

Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament (further, DGGNT) expands Runge's *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament: Introduction* (Logos Bible Software, 2008), presenting the fruit of Runge's research for *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament* (Logos Bible Software, 2007; further, LDGNT). The LDGNT database annotates all occurrences of devices in DGGNT. Though Hendrickson's first printing of DGGNT (December, 2010) does not include Modern Author, Subject, and Ancient Sources indices, which are included in Hendrickson's second printing (July, 2011), and in DGGNT (Logos, 2010).

Discourse Analysis identifies units within the whole of a text. The four parts of DGGNT: "Foundations" (3-57), "Forward-Pointing Devices" (61-177), "Information Structuring Devices" (181-313), and "Thematic Highlighting Devices" (317-384), demonstrate how various linguistic devices cohere the parts and provide distinction within the whole. Runge aims to "provide a unified description of these devices that complements traditional grammatical approaches" (7), and arranges chapters accordingly. Most chapters present Conventional (traditional) and Discourse Grammar Explanations of various linguistic devices, followed by application of methodology (i.e., noting how these devices operate in a text), and titles for suggested reading. Runge functions as a teacher, taking the reader from known, to unknown, to exempla. He states, "I will

not ask you to throw out all that you have known to be true about Koiné in favor of a brand new linguistic analysis” (xviii), and, “I want to get you interested and then get out of your way” (xx).

Runge calls his methodology cross-linguistic and function-based (xviii). By the former he means taking readers beyond the syntax of New Testament Koiné to comparisons with how languages operate in general (viii). DGGNT recognizes that authors arrange their ideas within a specific linguistic framework, and proposes that grasping an author’s meaning holistically requires analyzing his linguistic choices in light of the choices available within his specific linguistic system. Runge argues that “defining the meaning associated with the choice is different from assigning a syntactic force or from determining an appropriate translation” (6).

By function-based, Runge attempts to illustrate the conceptual tasks various grammatical phenomena accomplish in the Greek New Testament. DGGNT proposes that, like other languages, Koiné is a linguistic system comprised of sets. Within these sets one finds more basic or ‘default’ phenomena, and more ‘marked’ elements which emphasize a specific quality. Though quantitative analysis helps to define default/marked tendencies of a linguistic system, genre, content, and contextual factors require special consideration. Since Runge seeks to demonstrate how linguistic elements function, he is concerned not only with semantic meaning but also pragmatic effect. Distinguishing between the two “is critical to providing a coherent and accurate description of the device and its function with the discourse” (9).

What of all this data? Runge proposes that identifying an author’s default/marked linguistic choices equips the interpreter to identify the portions of the discourse which the author makes prominent, and provides contrast with other units of the discourse. Three presuppositions found Runge’s methodology: 1) an author’s choice implies meaning, 2) semantic or inherent meaning should be differentiated from pragmatic effect, and 3) default patterns of usage should be distinguished from marked ones (5). He writes, “Since prominence is fundamentally about making something stand out in its context, marking prominence typically involves creating contrast with other things in the context. Contrast, in turn, presupposes that a person recognizes the underlying pattern” (16).

While syntax grammars present categories for various parts of speech, DGGNT demonstrates how various grammatical phenomena function at the discourse level. Syntax grammars explain a language; DGGNT explains how linguistic elements function in units of text. Thus, when Runge describes the role of Connecting Propositions, “the objective is not to know how to translate the connective, but to understand

how each one uniquely differs from another based on the function that it accomplishes in Greek” (19). While syntax grammars list *καί*, *δέ*, *οὖν*, *γάρ*, and *ἀλλά* with categories like connective, contrastive, correlative, explanatory, and inferential, DGGNT notes their role in providing continuity and development of the discourse, or some form of semantic constraint (e.g., temporal, causal, support, expectation, correction) (17-57).

Discourse Analysis recognizes that authors arrange discourse in progressive units. Runge proposes that authors use specific linguistic devices to move the reader forward in the text, often marking prominence in subsequent units. He argues that since these devices are not necessary to understand the author’s message, which could be communicated more simply without them, their presence in the discourse plays a role in moving the reader along to important information. While traditional grammars present nouns, conjunctions, indicative verbs, and participles as separate parts of speech, DGGNT describes how authors use these as devices to point the reader forward in the text.

Runge proposes that while interrogatives, demonstratives, and adverbs default to anaphoric reference, authors purposely employ them as forward-pointing references directing the reader to a subsequent ‘target’ in the text. This Reference-Target combination coheres units of discourse and marks prominent subsequent material. While syntax grammars note the correlative and contrastive use of conjunctions like *μὲν* and *ἀλλά*, DGGNT notes how these function in the discourse to move the reader forward in the nuances of an author’s argument, often marking prominence in what follows.

Runge attempts to purify the muddied-waters of verbal aspect and the Historical Present by arguing that “the present form is the most viable option for marking prominence in a past-time setting” (130). Since past-time is normally communicated by perfective aspect tense-forms, marking prominence in the midst of perfectives requires the author to interrupt with an imperfective form. Why choose the present tense form instead of the imperfect tense form? Since the imperfect yet references past-time, the present is used as a device for more dramatically highlighting what follows.

Though it might appear that Forward-Pointing Devices accelerate the pace of the discourse, Runge notes that authors heighten reader anticipation by slowing the discourse flow. Devices like Tail-Head Linkage, repeating an action in an immediately preceding clause (often using an adverbial circumstantial participle) which was stated at the conclusion of the previous clause, point forward more slowly (163).

Runge’s concern for semantics and pragmatics surfaces in his presentation of Information Structure Devices and Framing (chs 10-11). He recognizes that Koiné word order defaults to verb-subject-object, and

proposes that authors provide a frame of reference for subsequent material by interrupting this default pattern and placing framing devices in the initial position. Runge states that authors produce scene-setting effect by placing topical, temporal, spatial, conditional, comparative, and reason/result frames before the verb in a subordinate clause. Where traditional syntax grammars list exegetical categories for particular parts of speech, Runge lists categories recognized as framing devices across various parts of speech: noun clauses, relative clauses, the content of substantival conjunctions, and prepositional phrases can each function as Topical Frames (210-16); both prepositional phrases and adverbial conjunctions establish a Comparative Frame (233-37). Runge lists the prepositional phrase *χωρὶς αὐτοῦ* in John 1:3 (*πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν*) as a Topical Frame, and comments, "My approach is more functional than formal...Since the prepositional phrase conveys topical information in the context, I construe it as a topical frame of reference" (211-12, n. 12).

While most devices described in DGGNT cohere a text by pointing forward, Runge notes that interpreters should heed linguistic elements which "draw attention to the extra information" (315). These "Thematic Highlighting Devices" (317-84) include combinations of participial phrases, prepositional phrases, personal pronouns, and other linguistic elements which "make you think about the right thing in the right way at the right time" (315). For example, syntax grammars note the ascensive use of the conjunction *καὶ*, but DGGNT describes its use in John 12:9-10 as a device for Thematic Addition, helping the reader to connect the discourse from John 11 to John 12.

One who looks for DGGNT to offer scientific breakthroughs for grammatical difficulties identified in syntax grammars (e.g., the verbal aspect and the Historical Present) may be left wanting. Runge has a different aim: DGGNT explains how various parts of speech function at the discourse level, not how Discourse Analysis solves various points of exegetical tension (though at times DGGNT offers robust explanations for these). Nonetheless, this reviewer is concerned that DGGNT attends primarily to narrative literature. Of Runge's 283 application examples, roughly one-third are from Matthew, one-third from the other Gospels and Acts, and one-third from the Epistles. One investigating epistolary or apocalyptic would need to interact with DGGNT and LDGNT in order to follow Runge's rationale more closely. Though in the summary section Runge notes briefly that devices frequent in reported speech in narrative also surface in epistles, this reviewer proposes that either DGGNT offers less insight into non-narrative genres, or that discourse devices outside of narrative have not been adequately analyzed. The latter is probably the

case, and considering that Runge's LDGNT and DGGNT date within the last five years, one can understand why there might be a deficiency here or there.

These concerns aside, DGGNT blazes a new trail in the burgeoning field of linguistics and the Greek New Testament. But, in light of the number of resources available to those teaching Greek and exegesis courses, where does DGGNT fit? This reviewer suggests using it for second-year Greek grammar classes (along with LDGNT), preliminarily to something like D. Wallace's *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Zondervan, 2000). DGGNT helps students appreciate the forest of Greek linguistics in the New Testament, and prepares them to interact more carefully in identifying the trees.

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***The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature.* By Ryan O'Dowd. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009, 213 pp. hardback. \$101.00. ISBN: 978-3525530894.**

Since the Enlightenment, epistemology in western culture has been construed primarily in terms of cognition. Ryan O'Dowd argues that epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature offers a better way of knowing, one that consists of cognition and obedience and is rooted in humanity's creation by God. O'Dowd is currently a fellow at the Paideia Centre for Public Theology and Assistant Professor for Religion and Theology at Redeemer University College in Canada. He has written articles on the epistemology of Deuteronomy and Wisdom Literature and *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction*, a collaboration with Craig Bartholomew, will be released later this year. *The Wisdom of Torah* is a revision of his doctoral dissertation, which he completed at the University of Liverpool under the supervision of Craig Bartholomew.

The book's primary purpose is "to explore the conditions and contexts for knowing in the Hebrew world, focused particularly on [...] wisdom and torah [sic]" (ix). A secondary purpose is "to provide a 'meta-critique' of modern epistemology" (ix). The work is descriptive and multi-disciplinary, combining hermeneutics, exegesis, and philosophy to make its case. It boasts a significant bibliography reflective of its multi-disciplinary approach, as well as an index of Scripture citations. A subject index would have been helpful as well, though the table of contents provides a thorough description of each chapter.

Chapter 1 gives a brief history of the epistemology of religion—how people know God and the world (2). Here O'Dowd points out the prima-

ry distinction between Hebraic and Western epistemology of religion. The latter is rather atomistic in its approach to knowledge while the former approaches it holistically, refusing to separate ethics, history, and worship, which he argues is “grounded in a narrative, mythical framework” (3), namely Genesis.

Chapter 2 examines the “epistemological worldview” (12) of Genesis 1-11 and shows how the “stories” (12) relate to Deuteronomy’s epistemology, which he explores in the following three chapters. He argues that knowing is a matter of imitating God, such that knowledge and obedience are synonymous.

Chapters 3-5 examine Deuteronomy’s epistemological worldview, paying special attention both to its relationship with the cosmic creation narrative in Genesis and its importance for Israel’s liminality as she prepares to cross geographical and ideological boundaries. Chapter 3 focuses on Israel’s actualization of the knowledge of Yahweh in Deut 1-11. O’Dowd argues that the purpose of these chapters is to show Israel the way to know Yahweh without the mediation of Moses, which is through internalizing the Torah. Knowing God is thus “cosmically rooted in the eternal designs for humanity (Deut 1-4, 8), historically transmitted by the community (Deut 6:4-9; 8:1-20), divinely initiated in a covenant, and ethically conditioned by Israel’s response” (52). Chapter 4 examines Deut 12-26 to show that its purpose is “to preserve and protect Israel in future contexts” (80). The laws, in effect, ensure the possibility for Israel to know and have relationship with Yahweh. Chapter 5 examines Deut 27-34, arguing that the purpose of these chapters is to transform Moses’ speech to a written document that future generations will use to renew and protect their covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Chapter 6 marks the beginning of the second portion of the book, which examines epistemology in the Wisdom Literature. It begins by looking at Proverbs. Here O’Dowd calls for a nuanced reading of Proverbs that acknowledges the tension inherent in retribution theology, thus linking Proverbs’ epistemology with that of Job and Ecclesiastes. Chapter 7 discusses the epistemology of Ecclesiastes and Job. Concerning Ecclesiastes, O’Dowd posits that it makes significant use of irony and rhetoric to show the reader that fear of God, not perfect knowledge, provides the answer to the ambiguities between received theology and experience (161). Likewise, Job struggles with traditional wisdom’s conflict with his experience of life. Each book presents a “bi-polar” worldview that “confirms the existence of a divine reality (and wisdom), but also the inability for humanity to see that reality as God sees it” (160).

Chapter 8, the book’s conclusion, synthesizes the work O’Dowd has done and makes comments regarding its importance and where scholar-

ship can go from there. He reiterates the grounding of both Wisdom and Torah in the cosmological narrative of Genesis 1-11, but distinguishes the two, stating that “Torah goes *through Israel* to the world while wisdom precedes Israel and embraces the covenant with humanity *in creation*” (165, emphasis original). He concludes by stating that Hebraic epistemology, if applied today, will provide the opportunity for academia to offer a fuller, more nuanced critique of western epistemology that will influence the way it interacts with the world at large.

The Wisdom of Torah provides a thorough analysis of the epistemology of the Torah and Wisdom Literature. The presentation of Deuteronomy is especially helpful. O’Dowd shows that it was intended to provide Israel with a way to know Yahweh after its mediator, Moses, died. Furthermore, his analysis of the liminal nature of the book is intriguing—Israel received Deuteronomy on the border of the Promised Land, and it marked out the borders of life that would enable them to have a living relationship with Yahweh through obedience to and knowledge of Him. The book also conclusively shows that Deuteronomy’s epistemology is grounded in the worldview of creation presented in Genesis 1-11. This is important for a theology of the Pentateuch, as well as a theology of the entire Bible. His view of the internalization of Torah is also helpful because it highlights the similarities between the Old and New Testaments—the goal of each is for people to enter into relationship with God.

While O’Dowd’s analysis of Deuteronomy is exceptional, the same cannot be said of his examination of the Wisdom Literature, with one important exception. His argument for a nuanced reading of Proverbs accounts for the contradictory statements in the book while showing that they also wrestle with apparent inconsistencies between traditional wisdom theology and lived experience. This closes the epistemological divide between Proverbs on the one hand, and Job and Ecclesiastes on the other.

O’Dowd demonstrates the reliance of Proverbs and Job on creation theology, an important step toward developing a coherent biblical theology. He fails, however, to do the same for Ecclesiastes, though many authors have pointed out its relationship to Genesis. His examination of Ecclesiastes instead focuses on rhetoric and irony, which are important, but his purpose was to show that wisdom literature is grounded in the cosmology of Genesis 1-11, which he did not do. Furthermore, he adopts the frame-narrative view of the structure of Ecclesiastes without supplying sufficient evidence for doing so, other than to point to previous authors, such as Tremper Longman.

Overall, *The Wisdom of Torah* largely succeeds in both its primary and secondary goals. Readers would do well to heed O’Dowd’s call to appropriate the epistemology of Wisdom and Torah, rather than separat-

ing the knowledge of God from obedience to Him. The book is heartily recommended to those with basic knowledge of Hebrew who want to understand the epistemology of the Old Testament and its relationship to God's created order.

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