

BOOK REVIEWS 162-194

***A People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality is Not Just an Issue.* By Preston Sprinkle. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015. 224 pp., \$16.99. Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0310519652.**

Preston Sprinkle (PhD, University of Aberdeen) has entered the discussion of Christianity's relationship with the topic of homosexuality with a popular level (yet scholastically researched) volume.

The book is ten chapters in length, with an interlude which divides its contents between defining terms and applying what has been learned. There is an afterword and one appendix.

There is much to commend in Sprinkle's treatment of the issue which faces churches, pastors and lay people alike, which is how to biblically understand homosexuality and whether God in His Word strictly prohibits homosexuality in any form or whether it is acceptable when homosexuals pursue monogamous committed relationships (i.e. so called "Gay Marriage").

Sprinkle was dedicated to researching every aspect of this topic, from the biblical data, to the Greco-Roman cultural norms, and on to the modern-day understanding of homosexuality and all of the ancillary matters which are raised when this topic is addressed. Since he is not attempting to address this matter mainly to the secular world, but rather to the church, Sprinkle rightly appeals to Scripture as being God's Word and therefore authoritative, rather than opting for a lengthy apologetic for such a case.

The main thrust of the book is to address the topic biblically while at the same time call non-affirming Christians (a term used to describe Christians who see homosexuality as sin in any case) to see homosexuals as people and not an issue. This should be commended, since the church has struggled to know how to deal with these issues. I appreciate Sprinkle's unequivocal stance concerning Romans 1:26-27, stating, "Paul doesn't say that a certain type of same-sex relations were taboo in his Greco-Roman environment and therefore they are wrong. He says, or seems to assume, that what is wrong with same-sex relations transcends culture. Violating God-given gender boundaries is universal and absolute. They go against the way God created males and females and intended them to relate to each other sexually" (93). Also, the reminder that all have sinned and are in need of God's grace is appreciated. In this, Sprinkle is consistent throughout the volume.

Sprinkle's PhD is in New Testament and one should appreciate his statement that translations are not made in a vacuum; the way Greek is translated has consequences. Sprinkle carefully executes studies of *μαλακοὶ* and *ἀρσενοκοῖται* using not only prevalent Greek literature, but also refers to the likely use of these words by Paul stemming from their use in the Septuagint.

Sprinkle's use of an interlude to bring focus back and help summarize the issues in which he has invited the reader to study is also welcome. He draws it back to viewing the reader's own sin as wretched before a Holy God. He also reminds Christians of how to approach the issue of homosexuality with grace, truth, and love.

Although much is to be commended about Sprinkle's volume, I also have some critiques. As stated earlier, Sprinkle seeks to address this to Christians who need to see the persons involved in homosexuality and not just homosexuality as an issue. He attempts to do this in a winsome and relevant manner, but this sometimes comes off as crass. For instance, he illustrates the lack of biblical knowledge some Christians have regarding homosexuality through an experience he has on a plane, where a man has a hard time defending his reasons for knowing that the Bible is clear on the issue, but is unable to defend it with chapter and verse (15-16). While this can be an effective way to make your point, I am afraid some who could already be struggling to see the need to grapple with such issues, might be quick to put the book down due to what seems like an insult to their intelligence from the start. There are also times when Sprinkle uses slang, which brings an imbalance to the scholarly aspect of his case.

In my opinion, Sprinkle lacks caution, in cases when, in explaining the love of Jesus for sinners, he says that some of the most beautiful, wise, loving and moral people he knows are "gay." If one is living a homosexual lifestyle, it leaves the biblically-minded reader wondering in what way they are wise, loving, and moral (78). Sprinkle also speaks of the "everyman's view" of Christians in a poll with the responses being that 91% of people find Christians to be anti-homosexual, etc. While it can be understood that perception is indeed reality for some, this does not change the fact that there are Bible believing, Bible preaching churches that would be pigeonholed as anti-homosexual regardless of whether they were loving toward homosexuals or not, because they rightly see homosexuality as a sin (79-80).

Sprinkle reports statistics concerning the increased suicide of professing homosexuals as caused by lack of acceptance (82). In using these statistics, surely Sprinkle is aware that the way one is treated could be a contributing factor, but that there are other, unknown aspects as well. This would leave the results of such statistics lacking a fuller understanding of motives for such suicides. In saying this, I am not advocating the mistreatment of anyone, but this rhetoric often places the sole blame of suicide upon a lack of acceptance. Such acceptance, also seems to fall short of the desire of the LGBT community, who have made clear not only a plea for acceptance, but a demand for celebration. If Christians, loving and accepting as they should be, still call homosexuality sin (as they ought), they will likely still be blamed, in part, for this high suicide rate and will still be characterized as unloving.

Sprinkle also states LGBT people leave the church looking for a community which accepts them as humans (82). If such a church is being biblically faithful and seeking to call *all* sinners to repent and believe and live out their Christian life according to the Scriptures, it would seem that these LGBT people are leaving the churches not only to find acceptance, but agreement with their view that homosexuality is not sinful. There needs to be a clearer statement on how we are to treat people who struggle and want to fight sin versus those who want acceptance in living a lifestyle (though Sprinkle does not like this term) that Scripture strictly forbids. It could be that stating things as generally as Sprinkle does creates this issue, since each case would demand its own set of details to determine why an individual left a particular church. Indeed, this may be my major issue with the practical side of Sprinkle's work. Each case of any sinner who enters a church demands that we, as the church, not only welcome people, but also do the hard work of learning about them and evangelizing or discipling them. Sinners should not be defined by their greatest besetting sin alone. How do we seek to minister to those who recognize their sinfulness and desire to flee? How do we minister to those who do not see their sin as truly sinful and want to be a part of the church?

As well worked out as the first part of this volume is, with its exegesis and historical-cultural research, and as much as I agree with the intent of seeing homosexuals as people and not an issue, what seems to be lacking, is a more robust, biblically-balanced approach. In such an approach, Christians indeed ought to see homosexuals as a people to be

loved. Yet, Christians should confront all sin and genuinely come along side of those who are fighting against temptation.

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***The Psychobiology of Transsexualism and Transgenderism: A New View Based on Scientific Evidence.* By Thomas E. Bevan. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, an Imprint of ABC-CLIO, 2015. 257 pp., \$60.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-1-4408-3126-3.**

Many supporters of homosexual rights claim homosexuality is a trait much like hair, eye, or skin color. In *The Psychobiology of Transsexualism and Transgenderism*, Thomas E. Bevan makes the same claim regarding Transsexualism / Transgenderism [TSTG]: Transsexualism is an inborn trait which is immutable. Bevan is a former professor of biopsychology at Georgia Tech and holds a PhD from Princeton in physiological psychology. Himself a male-to-female transsexual, Bevan has also authored *The Transsexual Scientist* (2013) under his female name “Dana J. Bevan.” Though he is a transsexual, Bevan still claims to be sexually oriented to women and dedicates his book “to the love of my life, my darling wife.” In *The Psychobiology of Transsexualism and Transgenderism*, Bevan claims TSTG is biological in nature based on both genetic and epigenetic causes.

Bevan sees all human behavior as strictly biological in origin. He claims all human choices are merely a mirage of human freedom because we are driven by subconscious forces. Bevan asserts “there is no such thing as a conscious choice. Cognitive neuroscience evidence indicates that humans are only conscious of choices well after they are made by subconscious mechanisms” (10). In other words, humans are merely highly complex biochemical machines which have learned to self-reflect. At a worldview level, Bevan is actually arguing for a very harsh form of biological determinism.

Consistent with Bevan's biological determinism is his rejection of the idea of a soul. Bevan says, "There is no scientific evidence that there are ethereal spirits [read "a soul"] that communicate with us through our brains to create behavior" (185). Likewise, religious experience is a phenomenon of biochemical processes, as Bevan says, "We must assume that the perception of spiritual experience is mediated by subconscious mechanism(s) in the nervous system rather than through extracorporeal spirits" (186). Essentially, Bevan is making the secular charge that the idea of a soul is akin to a "ghost in the machine" and should be rejected.

Bevan also makes an astounding epistemological claim: "The continuous visual world we see is an illusion" (182). He goes on to say memory recall and motor skills are illusions based on unconscious mechanisms. He circles back to his hard determinism and says, "Like the illusions described here [memory recall, etc], conscious choice is also an illusion" (182).

Chapter Five—"Genetic Causal Factor in Transsexualism and Transgenderism"—summarizes Bevan's claims regarding the relationship between genetics and TSTG. In a sweeping survey of several studies, Bevan uses research based on genetics and homosexuality to springboard into discussions of genetic factors related to TSTG. He concludes by saying there are "DNA genetic markers for TSTG that confirm this DNA genetic causal factor" (96). Bevan's use of the term "causal" is imprecise. A more careful reading of the data reveals there are some variables in certain populations which correlate with a higher incidence of TSTG. But correlation does not equal causation. No genetic marker has yet been found which yields a high predictive power for TSTG. In other words, genetics may provide a contributing factor, but genetic causation of TSTG has not been proven.

Bevan places great emphasis on epigenetic mechanisms in chapter six—"Epigenetic Causal Factor in Transsexualism and Transgenderism." Epigenetics is a burgeoning science and refers to structures governing which genes in one's DNA will be "active" or express a trait. Epigenetic structures can be thought of as switches and knobs which turns things "on or off" or "up and down." Bevan favors the idea that maternal stress during gestation may be involved in epigenetic mechanisms which lead to TSTG. Bevan concludes, "Although initial research evidence of an epigenetic causal factor for TSTG is limited, it

suggests future research will be fruitful” (115). However, we are only now learning the manner in which individual choice (which, of course, Bevan rejects as a category) affects epigenetics. In other words, participation in TSTG behavior may possibly have an effect on one’s epigenetics, a theory Bevan does not explore in depth.

Bevan details the extreme measures to which people go to achieve sex-reassignment in Chapter 13–“Transition Procedures and Outcomes.” Most transsexuals begin the process of changing their gender by hormone therapy and then progress to more extreme measures such as body modification and genital plastic surgery. Two observations can be made from this chapter. First, the extreme measures required to achieve the desired goal of being another sex strongly argue in favor of learning to embrace one’s birth-sex. Second, that people are willing to go to such extreme measures demonstrates the level of brokenness associated with TSTG.

The most extensive study on the long-term effects of sex-reassignment surgery was published in 2011 by a team of researchers from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden. This long-term study followed the lives of 324 individuals who had sex-assignment surgery between 1973 and 2003. While Bevan mentions this study in passing, he does not detail the magnitude of mental health issues associated with transgender surgery. What the 2011 study demonstrated was that people who had sex reassignment surgery have considerably higher risks for mortality, suicidal behavior, and psychiatric morbidity than the general population.¹ Bevan blames the higher rate of suicide on cultural rejection of TSTG people and seems unwilling to admit that the TSTG behavior itself may be related to the less favorable outcomes.

If Bevan’s worldview is true, one is hard pressed to know why he expects his book to be taken seriously. If reality is merely an “illusion,” then why should I take anything he says to be substantive? If human senses are as unreliable as he suggests, perhaps Bevan himself is merely under the illusion that he really has the subjective experience of gender dysphoria. Furthermore, if the idea of conscious choice is an “illusion,”

¹ Cecilia Dhejne, et al, “Long-Term Follow-Up of Transsexual Persons Undergoing Sex Reassignment Surgery: Cohort Study in Sweden,” *PLoS One* 6.2 (2011): <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3043071/>. The authors are favorable to TSTG people.

then why should anyone be held morally accountable for any action? Bevan's worldview is biological determinism, but the science he cites only shows that some genetic or epigenetic factors may contribute to TSTG, a point which is generally granted. What Christians do reject is that we are excused from moral accountability because a particular temptation may have a biological component.

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The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures. Edited by D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016, 1240 pp., Hardcover, \$65.00. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6576-2.

The value of *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* is that it provides a broad range of domain-specific lenses for thinking about the complexities and veracity of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. D. A. Carson edits essays by noted scholars like Charles E. Hill, John D. Woodbridge, Craig L. Blomberg, Douglas J. Moo and Kevin VanHoozer. Carson provides the Introduction and addresses Frequently Asked Questions (specific to each chapter) at the end of the book, between which essays are arranged according to topics related to Historical (10 essays), Biblical and Theological (14 essays), Philosophical and Epistemological (6 essays), and Comparative Religions (4 essays). Daniel M. Doriani offers the concluding chapter under the heading Thinking Holistically. Due to space limitations, here one essay from each of the four sections of the book will be discussed.

Charles E. Hill analyzes the concept of 'Scripture' in the Patristic period (43-88). To those proposing that the idea of a canon of texts did not begin to develop until the latter part of the second century, yet remained in flux even by the time Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter in 367, Hill observes that Clement of Rome, Irenaeus and Ignatius describe apostolic Scripture as uniquely authoritative and authentic. The authoritative character of Scripture was expressed in the third and fourth

century lists of Origin, Eusebius and Athanasius, each noting the 27 works now understood as the New Testament.

But is the authoritative role of Scripture in the patristic period limited to lists—open to criticism because of questionable statements these fathers made in other places? No, Hill argues. He identifies the use of *diplai* (pl.), wedge or arrow shaped (>) characters written in papyri (for Matt 3:16 in Irenaeus' *AH* [P.Oxy. 3.4.05, from book 3] and P.Mich. xviii.764, a second century Christian text citing 1 Cor 3:13) as well as many places in the New Testament books of Codices Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, to mark citations of what is clearly Scripture (69). Why these *sigla* only for citations of Scripture and not pagan authors (e.g., Aratus in Acts 17:28 and Enoch Jude 14-15)? "Christians have a conception of Scripture as a distinct set of sacred texts" (69).

In recent years, Bart D. Ehrman's popular skepticism about the texts of the New Testament has compelled many scholars to address the integrity of the Scriptures. Peter Williams's essay, "Ehrman's Equivocation and the Inerrancy of the Original Text" (389-406) encourages those holding to inerrancy to improve both the means and the manner of how they communicate their position. First, Williams suggest that inerrantists employ more precise terminology. Rather than speaking of the inerrancy of the Bible (which may be understood by the listener as referring to the physical copy of Genesis-Revelation available in any number of translations at a local bookstore), they should discuss the inerrancy of the Scriptures—opening a window for the listener to engage the historic nature of the word of God. Rather than speaking of the inerrancy of original manuscripts (which skeptics like Ehrman demand be produced to warrant Christian belief), they would speak of the inerrancy of the scriptural author's words—providing opportunity to note how those words have been re-produced in manuscripts that are the basis of modern translations of the Bible. Finally, rather than arguing for an inerrant material text, advocates of inerrancy should clarify that it is the immaterial words written on the autographical surfaces (papyri, parchment, stone, etc.) or spoken by the apostles that they believe to be without error. "It is to the text of a work, not the document, that inerrancy applies" (400), writes Williams. He observes this thesis in the post-Reformation era writings of Matthew Henry and B. B. Warfield, and questions whether during his days in evangelicalism Ehrman ever understood the claims of historical inerrancy. Ehrman's critique(s) of

inerrancy seem rooted in misunderstanding, Williams avers, a fact that should “goad inerrantists to check that their own formulations have been as clear as they can be” (406).

But what about Ehrman’s claim that the pre-4th century scribes not only made typical copyist mistakes but also adjusted the words as they wished? Williams addresses Ehrman’s claim in the second section of his essay, headed “The Burden of Proof: Do We Have the Word or Not?” He questions Ehrman’s claim that, as an historian he is justified in skepticism until an inerrant original manuscript is produced. Historians investigating the New Testament text cannot stand long on such epistemologically shaky ground, magnifying the comparatively few conspicuous word changes in known manuscripts while minimizing the broad stability of the wording across preserved material forms (papyri, parchment, and paper; scrolls and codices; stone and pottery), languages (Greek, Latin, Syrian and Coptic), geographical regions surrounding the Mediterranean, and script types (majuscule and minuscule), argues Williams. “The presumption that we have the authorial wording until evidence arises to the contrary seems a more reasonable position than to refuse to believe that we have the authorial wording until an impossibly high level of proof be obtained that we do” (401-02).

Among the Philosophical and Epistemological Topics, Paul Helm addresses “The Idea of Inerrancy” (899-919). He argues that inerrancy is inextricably related to a hermeneutical methodology sensitive to the lexical, grammatical, literary and authorial features of a text. That is, a text can be said to be inerrant if the message the author intends via the words and literary conventions they employ is constantly true over time. Thus a document with misspelled words or ambiguous generic features is not necessarily errant. To say that spelling errors in a manuscript or inconsistency (as opposed to a logical contradiction) in reported scenes of a narrative necessarily qualifies a document as errant is to commit the fallacy of division.

Helm then applies his conceptual framework of inerrancy to the Bible. He maintains that—since God is the author of Scripture—it is necessarily inerrant. But Helm does not propose an unsophisticated, leap-of-faith view. “Scripture does not just happen, by a fluke, to be inerrant, but is so by the properties of God, its primary author, and his intention. It might be thought that this by itself seals it off against falsification. But this would be a mistake” (917). Helm argues that God’s

faithfulness to speak truth is expressed in Scripture through human authors who chose to convey their intended meanings through various lexical, grammatical and generic features. Thus, for Scripture to be errant, whether understood as a series of speech acts or propositions, Scripture must be shown to explicitly contradict itself. Here Helm echoes Peter Williams' essay noted already: since it is the case that (a) when Scripture is interpreted holistically, with respect to the syntactical and generic features of the author and their day, no explicit self-contradictions are identified, then (b) the burden of proof for an errant Scripture rests upon those maintaining that position.

Helm's contention for necessary inerrancy of Scripture echoes in Te-Li Lau's "Knowing the Bible is the Word of God Despite Completing Claims" (989-1012), the lead article in the final section, Comparative Religions Topics. Lau notes that though sacred texts of Christians, Mormons, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists all self-attest to complete truthfulness, the Bible distinguishes itself because it also "makes other claims that can be verified, makes prophetic predictions that have been fulfilled, presents credible accounts of eye-witness testimony, etc." (995). Besides the vast quantity and quality of historical New Testament manuscripts, in comparison with these religions, the fact that the Bible presents a coherent narrative taking place across time, cultures and authorial pens (as opposed to an isolated ideology), substantiates self-attestation of inerrancy.

Daniel M. Doriani's "Take, Read" (1119-1154) fulfills the final section of *Enduring Authority*, Thinking Holistically. He suggests that those who recognize the complete truthfulness of the Bible continue to live beneath its authority, reading it for life. "The essential point for our study is this: it is possible for putatively submissive teachers to think they have the Bible's message under control and so to seal their ears. They are unwilling to read with true openness for they are too committed to their own opinions" (1142). Love, honesty, mercy and patience characterize those who ascribe to the authority of Scripture as a truthful mirror of the soul (1154).

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Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture.
By Steven W. Smith. Nashville: Broadman and Holman,
2015. 240 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4336-8250-6.

Steven W. Smith, current Vice President for Student Services and Communications at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has challenged the primary notion of what people consider expository preaching. According to Smith, expository, or text-driven, preaching “is not a style but a theologically driven philosophy of preaching whose purpose is to get as close to the text as possible” (1). Sermons are simply a “re-presentation of what God has already presented” (3). In order to accomplish this, Smith argues that preachers should pay attention to the genre.

Chapter one highlights the deficiency of the typical “one size fits all” structure of a sermon. The structure of the text shapes the structure of the sermon (8). The task of the preacher is to “re-present what God has said” and the end of preaching is “to sound like God’s Word” (10). This leads to his point in chapter two, namely that the secret to great preaching is simply staying at the text until its meaning is clear (17), because it is the pastor’s responsibility to explain the Scripture to the congregation (22–25).

In chapter three Smith helpfully guides the reader through the basics of genre and forces the preacher to understand the influence of genre. He argues that genre is both situational and moving. Smith convincingly argues that if the preacher views the genre as arbitrary, the communication of the text will be flat. The preacher must remember that the exegetical work is done by “mining the life that is already embedded in the text” (32), thereby relinquishing the temptation of presenting the sermon as either flat or static.

Chapters four through seven comprise Smith’s attempt to help the preacher recapture God’s voice in narratives. In chapter four he begins with Old Testament narrative and remarks that narratives are parts of a larger whole and are affected by its surrounding context. To neglect this is to detach these stories from their “original purpose or authorial intent” (40). Stories have structure and, therefore, discovering its structure produces the structure of a sermon outline (41). Chapter five encompasses the Law, perhaps the most neglected of the genres to be preached. Smith reminds the reader that the Law leads people to Christ

(67) and describes God's nature (67–68). He also rightly provides the reminder to look to both the micro and macro-exposition of the Law in order to aid in sermon outline (74–75).

Chapter six changes to the New Testament narratives. The preacher must remember the narrative as a whole (91) and allow the structure of it to shape the outline. Smith reminds the reader that each Gospel is its own, has a unique purpose, and its own unique structure. Therefore, the sermon outlines for each respective Gospel will not appear the same (81–86). In chapter seven Smith seeks to answer what the structure of a parable is since they are “inductive stories that develop toward a main point” (105). He argues they should be structured based on their own structure and not content (106). Because parables are culturally distant (110) they must be translated for the modern audience (111–112) or they lose their force.

Chapters eight through ten discuss how to recapture God's voice in poetry. In chapter eight Smith lays out his guide on how to preach the Psalms, and he argues that the preacher must let them stand alone before making connections elsewhere in the Scripture or the New Testament (124). He notes that psalms contain poetic features such as parallelism, movement, and imagery (125–131). To preach a psalm Smith allows for two approaches. First, the analytical approach can be employed when preaching shorter psalms but, second, a topical approach can likewise be used when preaching the larger psalms (137).

The Wisdom Literature is the focus for chapter nine, and Smith encourages the preacher to view them as travel guides (146). He tackles each book from the Wisdom Literature corpus in its own section. Job is narrative poetry and synthetic parallelism is often used (148). Proverbs allows the preacher to “preach across a wide spectrum of topics” (148) since its structure is topical and collective. Ecclesiastes is focused on the futility of life and provides a collection of sayings and thoughts as to its structure (150–151). The Song of Solomon has a distinct narrative flow and is possibly chiasmic in nature (153).

Chapter ten focuses on prophecy. Smith notes the importance of remembering the prophets each have a unique historical setting, one which typically is found “unpacking cultural issues...and judgment” (166). To structure a sermon from the prophets requires utilizing the strophes contained therein, staying aware of varying genres within

prophecy, or perhaps even considering preaching one sermon on one minor prophet (173–174).

Chapters eleven and twelve focus upon both the Epistles and Revelation, respectively. In chapter eleven Smith remarks that the “Epistles are the bread and butter of most evangelical, pastoral preaching” (180). They also have macro and micro-structures (182), and serve as occasional letters that address a specific issue (185). To read the macrostructure and move it to the micro-structure is important because it safeguards “ourselves from reading meaning into words and sentences and disregarding the context of the book” (191). Chapter twelve concludes with Revelation and, as Smith notes, it contains both a unique genre and structure. The structure will vary depending upon the ensuing narrative scene (200) and genre (202–203).

Smith’s work is helpful in that it provides the solution to a problem most preachers will encounter, sermon structure. When the preacher allows the structure of the biblical text to inform sermon structure, he is then alleviated the temptation to superimpose the “one size fits all” method. Also beneficial is his sermon outlines at the end of each chapter. Furthermore, Smith’s chapter on both the Law and the Parables are extremely helpful. He carefully guides the reader through the technicalities of these difficult genres and shows that they are not as difficult to preach as one might think.

A few points of critique are in order. First, Smith states the first question of the Bible is God’s inquiry as to where Adam and Eve are (1). This is not so, for it is the serpent’s question to Eve, “Did God really say...” Second, the accompanying diagrams that begin each chapter are helpful, but following these as a guide would lead to prophecy as chapter nine and Wisdom Literature as chapter ten, but it is swapped in the book. Consistency would be helpful here.

Overall, *Recapturing the Voice of God* is a worthy read. Steven Smith has aided the preacher with practical application of how to preach the genres and preach them well. This would be a welcome addition to any pastor’s library.

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***Chance and the Sovereignty of God: A God-Centered Approach to Probability and Random Events.* By Vern Sheridan Poythress. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. 357 pp. Paperback, \$25.00. ISBN: 978-1-4335-3695-3.**

“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD” (Prov 16:33 ESV).

How ought we understand unpredictable events in light of the biblical testimony about God’s relationship to creation? This question underlies Dr. Vern Poythress’ recent book, *Chance and the Sovereignty of God: A God-Centered Approach to Probability and Random Events*.

Dr. Poythress is a well-known New Testament scholar, having served for the past 40 years at Westminster Theological Seminary, where he is currently Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Editor of the *Westminster Theological Journal*. Perhaps less well known is the fact that, prior to his graduate work in biblical studies, Dr. Poythress earned a Ph.D. in mathematics from Harvard University and taught mathematics at the collegiate level. And from early in his life Dr. Poythress has been interested in the relationship between theology and science and mathematics: his Th.M. thesis was titled “An Approach to Evangelical Philosophy of Science” (1974) and one of his early published essays was a chapter titled “A Biblical View of Mathematics” in a compendium of essays applying the Van Tillian framework (1976). Over the most recent decade Dr. Poythress has made common cause, in different ways, with both Van Til and Abraham Kuyper by producing an impressive corpus that seeks to demonstrate the Trinitarian foundations of language, logic, philosophy, mathematics, science, and sociology. *Chance and the Sovereignty of God* expands this corpus by developing a “God-centered approach to probability and random events” (5).

The book is divided into four parts. In Part I (“The Sovereignty of God”) Poythress lays the conceptual foundation for the book. He begins with the presuppositionalist affirmation “that God is the ultimate source for knowledge” (19) and concludes that on account of God’s instruction to us in the Bible, we can find answers to questions about the meaning of “so-called ‘chance’ events” (20). He goes on to demonstrate from Scripture the meticulous sovereignty of God, including God’s control of unpredictable events, disasters and suffering, human choice, and even

small random events. Poythress then progresses to consider the meaning of chance in light of God's sovereignty, arguing persuasively that the popular understanding of chance as *luck* is precluded by a proper view of God's transcendence and imminence. Our understanding of chance must instead be based on the idea of chance as *unpredictability*. Specifically, we must recognize that what we experience as chance events "are unpredictable and inexplicable for human beings, but not for God" (96), who is present and in control of all events, working them together for good.

Having established a biblical understanding of chance, Poythress proceeds in Part II to argue for "God as the Foundation for Chance." He begins by establishing that "God in his wisdom has given us the whole tapestry of regularities and unpredictabilities and their connections with one another. This tapestry, along with many other features we see in creation, reflects his wisdom and his character" (101). But these regularities and unpredictabilities not only reflect God, they are grounded in him: "The wonderful interlocking between the general and the particular has its ultimate foundation, its ultimate archetype or original pattern, in God himself" (107). God is thus the foundation for chance: he created the world so as to reflect the unity and diversity in the Trinity (108) and he created and governs the world by speech that finds its basis in intra-Trinitarian communication (107, cf. 58).

In Part III ("Probability") Poythress undertakes the task of defining probability and describing how it is estimated. Those acquainted with probability theory are aware of the many complexities that attend such a definition. But Poythress handles these complexities deftly by offering a creative synthesis that effectively reduces to three essential and complementary perspectives, mirroring John Frame's tri-perspectival approach to ethics. Equally skillful is the subsequent exposition of fundamental concepts of probability and estimation; all readers should be able to grasp the fundamentals with reasonable effort, regardless of previous exposure.

The final section, Part IV ("Probability and Mathematics"), is the most technical, as Poythress furthers his discussion of the concept and computation of numerical probability. Here his discussion consistently begins by establishing intuition before moving to computation, which greatly aids comprehension. Again, a reader need not have previous exposure to apprehend the material; Poythress provides an excellent

introduction. Nonetheless, those who despair of mathematics can be forgiven for skipping ahead to the concluding chapter.

Two facets of the book, woven throughout and elaborated in appendices, complement Poythress' principal project described thus far. While principally concerned to develop a God-centered view of chance, Poythress also endeavors to engage alternative views (particularly the views of chance implicit in the natural and social sciences) and to explicate the practical implications of the doctrine he develops. Both contribute meaningfully to the work. The former aids in clarifying his project by comparison and contrast; the latter aids in establishing its relevance.

Because of its subject matter, *Chance and the Sovereignty of God* is liable to be misunderstood by various audiences that bring their own expectations to the book. Two suggestions may help readers fully appreciate the work on its own terms. First, it is important to read with the nature of Poythress' principal project in constantly view. His project is fundamentally one of practical theology in the Kuyperian tradition, seeking to extend Jesus' lordship to every sphere of life. The book is not intended to be an exhaustive defense of meticulous providence, a self-contained introduction to statistics or a comprehensive philosophy of probability or mathematics. As he has made clear elsewhere, Poythress does not imagine he is speaking a final, definitive word; rather, he desires to lay a foundation on which others can build. Second, it is helpful to understand the book in the larger context of his corpus on the Trinitarian foundations of human knowledge. Elsewhere Poythress uses a familial analogy to explain the relationship between his "God-centered approach" books; it follows from this analogy that a single book can be understood in isolation, but is best understood in its broader context. Awareness of the arguments developed elsewhere in the corpus will both clarify and add persuasive force to the argument developed in this particular book.

Chance and the Sovereignty of God is a valuable addition to Poythress' corpus. In it he presents a well-reasoned, biblically-grounded understanding of the nature and measurement of unpredictable events and he plausibly grounds both in the Trinity. Generalist readers as well as mathematicians and theologians will find much to stimulate their thinking about the nature of chance and the foundations of probability.

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***Jesus or Nothing.* By Dan DeWitt. Wheaton: Crossway, 2014. 144 pp. \$10.99, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1433540462.**

With Colossians as his compass, Dan DeWitt (Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Cedarville University) guides his readers through the “human epic” of finding meaning and purpose in life (13–17). While skeptics may seek these answers in “the Nothing” (nihilism), for DeWitt, ultimate truth can be found in “the gospel alone” (100).

In nuce, the thesis of DeWitt’s book is that the gospel of Jesus “addresses the basic questions common to humanity” (31). DeWitt finds Paul’s letter to the Colossians particularly helpful because of its “secular context.” According to DeWitt, there are two antithetical, competing worldviews from which humanity must choose: Jesus or Nothing (17, 27, 31, 127). For DeWitt, there is no *via media* (27). The Nothing is of the nihilistic ilk espoused by Sartre, Nietzsche, and Foucault, and whose *telos* is hopelessness and despair (116–22). DeWitt contrasts these two worldviews—following G. K. Chesterton’s, Dorothy Sayers’s, and Augustine’s lead—in terms of the ball (world) or the cross, creed (Christianity) or chaos, and the City of Man or the City of God (19, 21, 109–10). DeWitt argues that in man’s unending scientific/philosophical quest to find a “theory of everything” (TOE), only the gospel of Jesus sufficiently satisfies (35–41). DeWitt states his purposes in writing are to “encourage believers in their love for the gospel, challenge skeptics in their rejection of it, and assist Christian parents and leaders as they contend for the faith” (17). DeWitt’s goal “is not to offer finely tuned apologetic arguments . . . but instead to ask the reader to envision what the world would look like if the gospel were actually true” (17).

Structurally, DeWitt offers an introduction, seven chapters, conclusion, discussion guide (i.e., questions for study groups), and endnotes. In his introduction, DeWitt elucidates the problem of nihilism and its drastic effects upon the contemporary church. DeWitt weaves a tale of two stories/cities in chapter 1, and unveils the methodology used throughout the rest of his book. In his own words: “I want to use the book of Colossians to contrast a gospel vision of the world with an atheistic one” (31). Chapter 2 portrays the gospel from Colossians as the answer to Stephen Hawking’s quandary regarding a “complete theory” that would ultimately explain everything and be understandable to everyone (35). In chapter 3, DeWitt warns against hermeneutical/philosophical

blind spots, as well as the assumptions that often underlie skeptical arguments against the gospel. Chapters 4–5 deal with the guilt-based culture of the West, as well as human mortality. In an attempt to make sense of life/death, atheists have often proffered hedonism and humanism as alternatives to the gospel (82–83, 117). However, only the gospel gives meaning to life for DeWitt (84). DeWitt portrays the gospel as a compelling witness and the one true story for humanity's incessant quest for truth and meaning in chapters 6–7. DeWitt shows how the portrayal of Demas's apparent apostasy (2 Tim 4:9–11) applies to the contemporary attraction to nihilism (104–05). DeWitt clarifies how John Lennon's imagining of a hopeful world without God is really an illusion, and suggests that "*the gospel is the anti-Nothing*" (106, 112, emphasis original). In his conclusion, DeWitt compels his readers to weigh the evidence set forth in his book regarding the "wagers" of Blaise Pascal and Lennon—thus, inviting his readers to make an informed choice (116–22).

In terms of strengths, DeWitt's project is a winsomely accessible work that is easily read in a single sitting or perfect for youth groups and young adult classes. DeWitt's succinct format with detailed discussion guide makes for an engaging, nine-week study (9, 131–36). Second, DeWitt's passion for the lost and desire to honestly engage his surrounding culture for Christ is laudable. Third, DeWitt blazes a trail for others to follow in melding academic scholarship with a white-hot zeal for Christ and his church. DeWitt challenges both skeptics and Christians alike to honestly assess their hermeneutic and praxis. In other words, DeWitt challenges everyone to be consistent in the story they believe and tell—whether it is the story of Jesus or Nothing (112–13, 116–22).

No book is perfect, however, and *Jesus or Nothing* has its share of weaknesses. First, DeWitt's slim volume does not go quite far enough in acknowledging the validity of the skeptics' arguments against nominal "Christianity." DeWitt should have probably made a better attempt to meet skeptics where they are (e.g., Paul's approach in Acts 17:22–31) in letting his own tradition be critiqued where critique is warranted. In other words, perhaps walking his readers through Colossians may not have been the best place for DeWitt to begin, especially for those readers who deny the authority of God's Word. However, with a title like *Jesus or Nothing*, atheists would not seem the most likely candidates to buy this book. Second, despite DeWitt's work being well-written, it does have a

few typographical errors that detract from DeWitt's argumentation (e.g., 83, 109, 136). Third, what are the roles of the Father and the Spirit in DeWitt's project? Despite their co-equality with Jesus, there is a paucity of references to either of these other Persons within the Trinity. Only one reference to the Father and only two references to the Holy Spirit were found in DeWitt's book (39–40). Adding a brief paragraph in the introduction outlining DeWitt's presuppositions regarding the Trinity would have improved this work.

In sum, DeWitt makes an important contribution in addressing the seeming exodus of young adults from the church. DeWitt's fictional character, "Zach," represents many young adults who may have been raised in church, but have abandoned Christianity for sundry reasons (122). While skeptics may argue that DeWitt has presented a false dichotomy between two extremes—Jesus or nihilism—DeWitt does a fine job in exposing the presuppositions undergirding the New Atheist movement (20–25). DeWitt also issues a clarion call to consistency in worldview and hermeneutic toward both "cities"—the City of Man *and* the City of God (104, 116–22). Despite the minor quibbles mentioned above, *Jesus or Nothing* should be widely read as it fills an important lacuna (especially in thinking through youth and young adult ministries) as the church seeks to reconcile the lost (from within and without) to God through Christ (Col 1:20).

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***Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy.* By R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Peter Enns, Michael F. Bird, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and John R. Franke, ed. J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett. Counterpoints: Theology and Bible series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. 328 pp. Paperback, \$19.99. ISBN-13: 978-0310331360.**

I almost invariably enjoy and appreciate multiviews books, and *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* is no exception. Of course, in such a collection of views, the reader is likely to agree more with some contributors than others, and to disagree with other contributors. In this volume, all the contributors are broadly evangelical, although some would be considered as post conservative progressive evangelicals. Affirmation of the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy is required to be a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, and thus is often used as a measuring rod for being an evangelical. By that standard, the contributors appear somewhat one-sided, in that only one of the contributors endorsed the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy in an unqualified way – Dr. Albert Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Most of the other contributors also affirmed the Chicago Statement, but did so in a qualified or nuanced way, noting problems they had with the Statement.

The contributors clearly have five different views, but they are not the traditional perspectives on inerrancy. Mohler defends the classical doctrine of inerrancy as defined in the Chicago Statement. Mohler presents a cogent argument from the Bible addressing what Scripture claims about itself. He asserts that the church must be presented with an authoritative Scripture, and that evangelicalism cannot survive without a clear affirmation of plenary verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture. However, all the other contributors express the worry that those who affirm the Chicago Statement believe not only in the inerrancy of Scripture but also the inerrancy of their interpretation, and that the Chicago Statement does not allow for an adequate interpretation of different genre of Scripture.

Kevin Vanhoozer also broadly affirms inerrancy, but voices a number of worries about the Chicago Statement, including that it appears to presuppose a foundationalist theory of knowledge, the correspondence theory of truth, and the referential theory of meaning.

In this reader's opinion, these three beliefs are not bad things, but Vanhoozer's point is that wooden application of them in interpretation may not adequately account for various forms of genre in Scripture. Vanhoozer prefers what he describes as a "well-versed" definition of inerrancy that is more sensitive to the genre and rhetoric of Scripture. In this view, "the authors speak the truth in all things they affirm (when they make affirmations), and will eventually be seen to have spoken truly (when the right readers read rightly)" (pp. 213-14). Vanhoozer is not worried about minor verbal differences, and asserts that proper interpretation will resolve or harmonize any apparent contradictions.

Michael Bird affirms the truthfulness of Scripture, but asserts that the doctrine of inerrancy is not important in an international setting. An Australian, Bird complains repeatedly that the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy which approved the Chicago Statement was primarily made up of Americans. Bird is right that more international participants would have enhanced the "International" Council, however, it is also fair to point out that most church councils in church history did not involve anyone from North or South America or, for that matter, Australia. Bird understands the Chicago Statement to be primarily a "bounded set" by which American evangelicalism may be evaluated. Bird asserts that the "international" or "global evangelical churches" prefer to describe Scripture with the word "infallible" rather than "inerrant."

John Franke identifies himself as a post conservative progressive evangelical with a post foundationalist view of truth. Franke calls instead for a fallibilist, polyphonic, and pluralist view of Scripture. The view of inspiration he describes, however, sounds difficult to distinguish from the Barthian Neo-Orthodox view of Scripture, in which the actual words of Scripture are not true, but are a witness to the truth. Franke speaks of the words of Scripture not being "divinitized," but having a creaturely character. He asserts that Scripture is truth with a small "t," that it offers a series of faithful witnesses to the Truth (Christ), and that "the Word of God is always an *act* which God performs or an *event* in which God has spoken" (p. 270).

Peter Enns rejects the Chicago Statement altogether, citing a series of purported counterexamples of parallel texts which appear to be contradictory. He proposes instead an "incarnational" view of inspiration. His view of Scripture does not really fit within an evangelical framework. Enns is not a member of the Evangelical Theological Society

since his views are incompatible with inerrancy, and complaints from evangelicals about his book *Incarnation and Inspiration* led to Enns' dismissal from Westminster Theological Seminary. Reading Enns' article in this book reveals why his views are seen as problematic by many evangelicals.

The editors wisely and helpfully asked the contributors to describe their position not only on inerrancy conceptually, but to illustrate their view with reference to three key Scripture texts that are potentially problematic for inerrancy – the conquest of the city of Jericho in Joshua 6 (challenged by some archeological evidence), the apparent discrepancies in details between the two accounts of Saul's conversion in Acts 9 and 22, and the apparent conflict between the genocide ordered by God in Deuteronomy 20 and Jesus' principle of love in Matthew 5. These three case studies provided excellent examples for each contributor to flesh out his perspective on inerrancy in actually interpreting a text.

In a world that appears to be post conservative, post evangelical, and post Christian, a new generation of evangelicals appear to embrace looser definitions of biblical inspiration and authority than the classical definition of inerrancy. The articles and scholarly interactions in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* provides a rich resource for thinking more carefully through one's view on this crucial doctrine. In this reader's opinion, Al Mohler defended the classical view of inerrancy effectively, but his voice is outnumbered by opposing voices in this work. Despite this lack of balance, the work is a valuable contribution. Highly recommended.

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***The Text of Galatians and Its History.* By Stephen C. Carlson. WUNT II/385. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015. xiv + 308 pp. \$128.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-3-16-153323-5.**

This is Stephen Carlson's slightly revised 2012 dissertation completed at Duke University on New Testament text criticism methodology, using the text of Galatians as a test case. Essentially, Carlson posits for a new approach in New Testament text criticism (NT TC), proposing a hybrid model of stemmatics and eclecticism, while accounting for contamination, a step Lachmann's stemmatics was unable to overcome due to the cross fertilization of the massive NT evidence. Carlson accomplishes his goal by borrowing a method known as "cladistics," a technique first used by computational biologists for classifying organisms according to their historical pedigree using algorithms and applying the principle of "parsimony" (Occam's razor). Of course, Carlson's background in computer engineering places him in a unique position for this type of research.

With the *Editio Critica Maior* still in progress employing Gerd Mink's Coherence Based Genealogical Method (CBGM), one wonders if the field needs still another TC methodology? Carlson is of the opinion that our current TC models are all different in their approach of presenting a history of the text. Furthermore, Carlson believes the field needs a model that can actually infer a history of the text rather than impose one *a priori* that largely goes undiscussed, yet broadly shared. Carlson admits that the CBGM and its suggestion of the *initial text* rather than the *original* is probably the most rigorous yet, as far as allowing for both contamination and internal evidence based on textual coherence. According to Carlson, while it remains true that Mink attempts to provide a solution for some of the circular reasoning of contemporary eclecticism and has pushed the field beyond the Hortian eclectic model of text-types, CBGM's textual flow diagrams are too abstract and do not conform to the textual state of any lost exemplar. Consequently, they are not useful for the customer who is interested in reconstructing the history of the text.

Also, Carlson's investigation takes up the concerns voiced by Epp and Ehrman more than twenty years ago now and, with these in tow, Carlson attempts to push the field ahead. In light of now defining NT TC in terms of a two-step process involving textual production and

transmission, this dissertation takes its point of departure from the work of a French text critic Dom Froger, who found a way to escape the circular reasoning between the reconstruction of a text and the reconstruction of the history of the text. Froger did this by proposing two stages: The first stage determines the shape and linkage pattern of the stemma, but not its orientation (particular starting point). The second stage orients the stemma based on internal evidence. In sum then, Carlson accounts for the claims made by Epp and Ehrman, utilizes Froger's approach to stemmatics, and seeks to advance the discussion by proposing a stemmatic-eclectic methodology. Where Carlson precisely makes his contribution in the NT TC field is by making a way for contamination to be factored into his computer-implemented algorithm. At the end of chapter four, Carlson's research produces a critical text of Galatians, which is suited for both customers in the TC enterprise, those interested in an authorial text and those interested in this historically-transmitted text.

In chapter one, Carlson identifies the gap, namely that the field needs a model that infers a history of the text. To establish the necessity of his research and the potential for its effectiveness, Carlson illustrates a possible textual transmission scenario that helps the reader to visualize, not to mention exploit some of the complexities surrounding ancient book publication and textual transmission. From here, Carlson evaluates the current models, choosing stemmatics (which represents the history of the text in the form of a stemma), yet supplementing it in a separate stage through the route of eclecticism (which produces a serviceable authorial text). Using this hybrid model that captures the attention of both customers, Carlson proposes to control the vexing problem of contamination at both stages.

In chapter two, Carlson describes the first stage of his methodology, namely how he uses *cladistics* to produce an unoriented stemma, representing the relative genealogical relationships of the witnesses, yet without identifying the base of the stemma. Carlson's own computer program (6548 lines of code) is feasible for step one because no subjective judgments need to be made as to the priority or direction of textual changes. Using a simplified version of cladistics done by hand with four witnesses over 34 variation units, Carlson effectively demonstrates on a small scale how his computer implemented algorithm, after running for about two weeks, was able to determine the best

unoriented stemma from his major collation project of 92 textual witnesses over 1,624 variation units.

In chapter three, Carlson explains step two of his methodology by orienting the stemma from his cladistics procedure. He first identifies the location on the large, unoriented stemma that is provisionally the most important targeted area for constructing his critical text of Galatians. Once this location is determined, Carlson examines 36 textual variants along the course of the inner branches, using internal evidence as the means towards orientation. Here, Carlson draws upon the work of Stephen Levinsohn and functional, descriptive linguistics with particular consideration on the Greek article, word order, and conjunctions. The finished product is an oriented stemma of Galatians, resulting in two basic divisions in the history of the text: the Western branch and P46-B group and the Eastern Branch with 01 and 33 as its supporters.

In chapter four, Carlson identifies and examines 13 variation units where the earliest witnesses are evenly split and not as clear in their distribution between the two divisions. If chapter three was the *recensio* stage, chapter four is the *examinatio* stage, where the potential for primitive error may require conjecture, again based on internal evidence. After this step is complete, Carlson includes his critical text of Galatians.

In chapter five, Carlson traces the history of the text, concentrating on the internal questions regarding the Western branch and the rise of the Byzantine text within the Eastern branch. With the internal questions pertaining to the origins of the various readings and what they might infer about the readers/copiers of the text, Carlson is particularly curious about potential theological conclusions based on over 120 textual changes within these two branches. (Some may recognize that Carlson's conclusion hearkens back to Parker's 1997 conclusion regarding scribal behavior, namely that the scribes were copying "living texts" which reflected their environment.)

In chapter six, Carlson concludes his study. He traces the history of the text by concentrating on the external questions related to how the manuscripts originated and their relationships with one another. He gives special attention to comparing and contrasting Carlson's findings against those of Zuntz and Hort. Finally, while Carlson's critical text of Galatians differs from the Nestle-Aland critical text in twelve places, there are three places that might be considered historically and theologically significant (for instance, the vexing issue at Gal. 2:12). This

conclusion further suggests that there may be room for improvement in some other writings of Paul, not to mention the rest of the NT.

After reading this monograph, two weaknesses are worth noting. First, Carlson never comments (not even in a footnote!) as to how his understanding of Gal 2:12 involving Paul and Peter at Antioch would be affected if Galatians is dated prior to the Jerusalem Council. This omission takes away from Carlson's conclusion in chapter six regarding this historically-substantial variant. Second, Carlson's illustrative textual transmission scenario, while challenging the assumptions of the different approaches to NT TC, may be guilty of an oversight. Drawing off the work of E. Randolph Richards, not once does Carlson consider how expensive these manuscripts may be, a detail that Richards does not fail to highlight.

These somewhat minor quibbles are not meant to take away from Carlson's research. His thesis is clear from the beginning and he stays on track. His pictures and tables are helpful, especially providing relief when the reader is bogged down in the added metalanguage of cladistics. Carlson's simplified example of cladistics done by hand in chapter two provides some hope for the reader, who does not have a background in computer programming. In this reviewer's opinion, Carlson pushes the reader, especially in chapter one, to examine one's assumptions when establishing the text of the NT. Lastly, regardless of whether cladistics grabs the attention of the field, the notion of using pragmatic linguistics for making decisions based on internal evidence may be an interesting development in the field of NT TC. Time will tell.

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***Awakening the Evangelical Mind: An Intellectual History of the Neo-Evangelical Movement.* By Owen D. Strachan. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015. 240 pp., \$24.99. Hardback. ISBN-13: 978-0310520795.**

Owen D. Strachan's splendid book emphasizes significant intellectual developments in the conservative Christian movement. Focusing on the early part of a 40-year period (1940-1980), he explores the impact of Park Street Church's Harold Ockenga, the "Cambridge evangelical" scholars in the Boston area, and the mid-century intellectual surge at this time.

Based on research for his doctoral dissertation at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Strachan sketches the book's aims. He will utilize those sources that identify and explain this intellectual growth within the evangelical movement in the post-war period. In so doing, he uncovers key bibliographic materials, collections of relevant papers and letters, and pertinent discussions that shed light on this subject.

He highlights the vastly understudied and underappreciated impact of these scholar-leaders, their accomplishments, and associated institutions. This involves a close look at some of the key personalities that developed a thoughtful approach to meet secular challenges to the Christian faith.

Primary attention of the volume begins with a consideration of Harold J. Ockenga. After graduation from Taylor University, Ockenga did his theological training at Westminster Theological Seminary. Here, a long and formative relationship was begun with J. Gresham Machen, president, competent New Testament scholar, and consequent mentor.

Ockenga was, for a very short time, assistant pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh under Clarence Macartney. Soon after, he was appointed pastor of Point Breeze Presbyterian Church, east of the downtown area. While in the city, Ockenga took graduate classes at the University of Pittsburgh, resulting in both an M.A. and Ph.D. in philosophy. A call to be pastor of Boston's historic Park Street Church would noticeably change his life-direction and ministry.

At Park Street, he would distinguish himself by first-rate expository preaching, by building and then expanding a strong missions outreach, strengthening Christian education, and enlarging other programs. Of special interest in this connection, Ockenga convened

three scholars' conferences (1944, 1945, & 1947) to discuss and practice robust theological scholarship. With Terrelle Crum, he formed an evening Bible school and Christian training center in Boston. Strachan observes that, as pastor of prestigious Park Street Church, Ockenga was well-situated to be a leader of a revitalized intellectual movement.

With Charles E. Fuller, he was later instrumental in forming Fuller Theological Seminary in California, and took on the role of its first president for several years, however *in absentia*. Upon his retirement from Park Street Church, Ockenga was appointed president of Gordon College, and also the merged Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (1970-1979).

During the mid-century decades, a number of evangelical scholars would obtain their advanced degrees from universities in the greater Boston area. At Harvard, the list of names include Gleason L. Archer, Harold O. J. Brown, Edward J. Camell, Terrelle B. Crum, Elizabeth Dole, James Leo Garrett, John H. Gerstner, Owen Gingerich, Burton Goddard, J. Harold Greenlee, Paul K. Jewett, Kenneth S. Kantzer, Harold B. Kuhn, George E. Ladd, Harold Lindsell, Paul L. Maier, Roger Nicole, William Childs Robinson, Samuel Schultz, Timothy L. Smith, Merrill C. Tenney, Bruce K. Waltke, and Nicholas Wolterstorff.

Boston University conferred advance degrees on Edward J. Carnell, Carl F. H. Henry, and Warren C. Young. Among the scholars at nearby Brandeis University were John B. Graybill, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., John N. Oswalt, and Edwin M. Yamauchi.

Many of these young graduate students attended Park Street Church and benefited from the outstanding expository preaching and other opportunities. Ockenga took a personal interest in them, their academic projects, and career interests. The interactions among them, Strachan explains, would include strategizing for the future, discussing projects to publish, classes to teach, and subjects to master.

The connection between Ockenga and these conservative scholars, Strachan indicates, was informal and advisory. They commonly encouraged one another, Strachan notes, both in terms of supporting their convictions and in finishing the demanding tasks they had embarked on. Over time, they would participate in a remarkable course of writing, teaching, and institution-building.

One of these scholars who would profit positively from this situation was Edward J. Carnell. Carnell had studied at Wheaton under

the instruction of Gordon H. Clark. Like Ockenga, he did his theological work at Westminster Theological Seminary. He followed that with a move to Boston where he earned both a Th.D. in theology at Harvard and a Ph.D. in philosophy at Boston University. After gaining some teaching experience at Gordon College, he was selected by Ockenga to join the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary in its second year of operation.

His numerous scholarly productions established him as one of the brilliant Christian apologists and analysts of the 20th century. Especially important are his titles *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* and *Christian Commitment*. Pledged to full scriptural authority, Camell typified the very exceptional, intellectual talents of these conservative graduate students who spent time in Boston.

Another important figure targeted in Strachan's treatment is Carl F. H. Henry. When a young newspaper editor of the *Smithtown Star* on Long Island, Henry was converted to Christ. He earned his undergraduate degree at Wheaton, then stayed on to obtain an M.A. Next, he earned the Th.D. at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, and remained there to join their faculty for a time. He then received a Ph.D. in philosophy at Boston University where he developed a friendship with Carnell. Much later on, he did additional study at Cambridge University and Edinburgh University.

Eventually, both Henry and Camell would be invited to join the faculty of the newly-founded Fuller Seminary on the West Coast. Here, Henry taught courses in ethics and theology. While in California, he arranged a series of highly successful annual Easter sunrise services in the Rose Bowl and served as chairman of the organizing committee.

In 1956, Henry was appointed as the founding editor of *Christianity Today*, a magazine designed to articulate historic Christianity and its current relevance. He would hold this cutting-edge position for 12 years. The articles for *Christianity Today*—by intended editorial policy—provided material aimed at both clergy and thoughtful lay persons. The magazine competently dealt with a broad range of subjects (doctrinal, historical, apologetics, current moral issues, etc.), but in non-technical language. The quality of contributed content and breadth of credentialed writers were simply phenomenal, until editorial policy changes in the early 1980's.

After leaving *Christianity Today*, he became a visiting professor at Eastern Baptist Seminary in Philadelphia (1969-1973). Later, World

Vision appointed Henry as Lecturer-at-Large (1974-1986). He would also teach for awhile at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in suburban Chicago.

In all, Henry authored or edited some 35 or more books. Among these, special mention should be made of his Riley Memorial Lecture on *The Drift of Western Thought*, his definitive *Christian Personal Ethics*, and his monumental 6-volume *God, Revelation, and Authority*. Key, too, was his editorship of a number of symposium volumes (1957-1978) by collaborating scholars on major theological themes.

While Henry's vision of a new, academically top-rated Christian university never materialized, he did form the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies. This organization functioned for 35 years (1967-2002). It coordinated the efforts of a group of leading scholars many of whom held positions with noted secular universities. They sponsored numerous research projects, conducted scholarly conferences, and produced a series of top-notch volumes on key topics for a variety of academic disciplines.

Henry was recognized as a leading spokesman for and major contributor to vibrant, dynamic evangelical thought. This points to the pivotal function he played in encouraging extensive cooperative, scholarly efforts among a wide variety of conservative specialists across denominational lines. As one biographer suggested, Henry knew everyone, traveled everywhere, spoke everywhere, and wrote about almost everything theological. His own personal output in terms of books, articles, and reviews was staggering.

Some closing comments may be useful. First, in this reviewer's personal opinion, Ockenga's suggestion of the label "neo-evangelical" for this new emphasis was unfortunate. For one thing, it called for too sharp a contrast with previous periods—the biblically-oriented, doctrinally-focused, and missions-minded activity of believers in the 1920's and 1930's; the earlier evangelical experience in England, Scotland, and Wales; the Reformation itself; and even the movement's very roots in New Testament expression. Strachan reminds us, nevertheless, that Ockenga's leadership role in the intellectual surge of this period was extensive, even enormous.

Secondly, Strachan's excellent research on this period prompts us to think about the future of the evangelical movement. Today, of course, 21st-century issues raise a number of challenging questions

about the immediate future of evangelical intellectual viability. Will the exploding costs of higher education, for example, discourage more students from selecting first-rate learning options at notable locations like the greater Boston area?

On the local congregational level, will seeker-sensitive meddling in worship practices replace or water-down the strong impact that expository preaching (exemplified by Ockenga) makes on biblical literacy? Recognizing a tendency for institutions to sometimes drift toward heresy, Strachan himself asks, "Can Christian colleges and universities not only tender outstanding instruction and establish themselves as centers of influence but also remain distinctively Christian?"

Next, we fully concur in Strachan's assessment that Ockenga and these Boston-based scholars did indeed stage a compelling increase in intellectual and theologically robust thought-life rooted in biblically conservative truth. These conservative Christians, Strachan recognizes, had reentered the arena of academic disputation and were serious about scholarship, the life of the mind and the promotion of biblical faith. They "published widely, established and contributed to academic societies and journals ... encouraged one another in scholarship ... dared to think, strategize, fundraise, and tirelessly promote the idea of a new intellectual program." Together with parallel achievements in the Chicago/Wheaton region, metropolitan Philadelphia and elsewhere, these developments in the Boston area described by Strachan were significant in advancing the intellectual underpinning of the evangelical movement during this time. Finally, we are grateful to Strachan for his contribution of this very readable and interesting account. We rejoice, along with Strachan, in the enrichment of mind that Ockenga and the Boston-trained scholars provided, in the power of the gospel they clearly supported, and in their advancement of the cause of Christ.

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***Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism.* By Jonathan Leeman. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016. 200 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4336-8623-8.**

The western Christian in the 21st century may be startled by the differences between his perception of an ideal church, and the biblical standard for an ideal church. On the topic of polity in particular, this shock is utilized to make a biblical defense of a strong viewpoint that the ultimate authority in the Church (under Jesus Christ as supreme head) lies with the local congregation. Leeman speaks directly to a church elder on the balance of authority held by the elders and by the whole congregation, borrowing examples from the actual model set by Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Leeman's defense intersperses oft-observed truth and quirky stories to augment his basic argument. First, various governmental systems are defined and categorized. Establishing biblically why churches should care about polity, he then examines through Adam, Abraham, Israel, and Christ the task for which God's appointed are charged. Extending this charge through Peter to the church, the charge is broadly separated into three tenets of responsible watchcare over God's kingdom: "who," "what," and "how." The author then presents a New Testament foundation upon which the church (but not her elders as isolates) oversees the "who" and "what," while the elders are tasked with "how" by equipping the believers, managing minutiae, and setting the pace for the church.

The author is refreshingly non-partisan in his language, favoring words and definitions that take no clear sides in terms of denomination or polity fine points, while keeping the congregationalist view intact. This neutrality, along with precise explanations and a passionate conversational tone, opens the gates for clear expression of the congregational view presented. He urges unapologetically a need for the church to take responsibility for clearly defining lines of church discipline, membership guidelines, meeting together, member care, elder roles, and major decisions. Thorny and ambiguous issues also find their place within the larger text and system, so that the reader need not fear to address points on which the Bible lacks normative force or clarity.

Not sidestepping the need to *exclude* competing ideologies in order to define what to *include*, the author systematically highlights errors and misinterpretations of various denominations; but then turns table on the conceptions held by evangelical or reformed churches to show that all need grace and correction in fulfilling God's master plan for His church. The author himself extends this grace through the writing by working from the point of "what is" to "what should be" with a clear, incremental goal in view, taking aback the reader where necessary. Throughout the book, dialogue raises points that make the Christian, and particularly the pastor/elder/deacon, consider his own views critically, ultimately prostrating them before the word of God in order to assist the church leader to develop steps to empower the assembled believers.

As rightly as Leeman charges the Christian to account for his beliefs on church polity, he leaves a distracting structural gap in the text. Brief anticipatory statements refer with unsettling frequency to upcoming topics of discussion (e.g. "...as we will consider in chapter 4," (53)) perhaps dozens of times in the early pages of the volume. Retrospective summary statements are less, but still somewhat excessively, numerous in the twilight pages. In his limited space, the author leaves unaddressed many of the counter-arguments that could be raised about congregational views, so that the overall presentation becomes one-sided, despite efforts to the contrary. The closest direct address to the competing view of elder-rule comes as a scriptural dare where, having examined biblical precedent for authority exercised at the level of the whole church, the author writes: "My challenge for anyone holding to some form of elder rule would be to find a set of texts demonstrating elder rule comparable to these." (109).

Furthermore, some of the issues which he claims to seek to address, such as the possibility of multi-site churches and denominational or associational connections between churches, get barely a passing notice and few clear words from the author. Admittedly, "denomination" is not among the main points or purposes of this discourse, and sufficient literature abounds on the topic without need of elaboration here, but the discourse leaves more questions than answers when it comes to integrating congregational churches into like-minded denominations. As to multi-site churches, a few paragraphs in the section defining government structures consider the possibility, but

besides a brief statement that they inherently do not uphold congregationalism, nothing clear is spoken for or against the concept.

Although best handled in context of the Bible, some competing views, and good hermeneutical principles, *Don't Fire Your Church Members* is a remarkable and theologically sound resource for the pastor or church planter to start the explorative journey to discover how God has intended and deputized the functions of His church. In bold strokes, Jonathan Leeman has filled the gaping niche in providing biblical exposition of congregational church polity. May congregations at large realize the biblical weight of these issues and take steps to define and further execute their roles in the Almighty's kingdom!

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