

## BOOK REVIEWS 110-140

***Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture.***  
By Steven W. Smith. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. 240 pp.  
\$24.99, Paperback. ISBN-13 978-1-4336-8250-6

A consensus on what exactly constitutes expository preaching is notoriously elusive. There are numerous preachers claiming to preach expositional sermons, but the degree of exposition these pastors employ in explaining the biblical text ranges from thorough to non-existent. To address this ambiguity, the text-driven movement from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary seeks to promote precise homiletical discussions that center on the nature and practice of biblical preaching. Steven W. Smith advances the text-driven model as a preaching professor at Southwestern. He defines text-driven preaching as “the interpretation and communication of a biblical text in a sermon that re-presents the substance, structure, and the spirit of the text” (17). In *Recapturing the Voice of God*, Smith addresses the role that literary genre must play in the preaching event for the preacher to faithfully exposit God’s word. In Smith’s analysis, to be text-driven is to be genre-driven.

Smith’s goal for this book is to help preachers see that a text’s genre contributes more than just a hermeneutical grid for proper interpretation. Since genre contributes to the meaning of a passage, a text-driven sermon must “re-present” the genre within the sermon itself (2). This means that a preacher is not only responsible for accurately interpreting the passage through genre recognition, but also preaching the passage in such a way that the “voice of God” is heard by “saying what God says, the way God says it” through genre re-presentation (2).

After establishing and defending his thesis in chapters 1-2, Smith explores the role of genre for hermeneutical and homiletical faithfulness in chapter 3. Here, Smith organizes all nine genres found in Scripture into three main categories: story, poem, and letter. In the category of story are the genres of Old Testament narrative, law, Gospel/Acts, and parables. In the category of poem are the genres of Psalms, prophecy, and wisdom literature. In the category of letter are the genres of epistles and Revelation. The remaining nine chapters are devoted to each respective genre. These chapters explore how each particular genre should be interpreted and then communicated within the sermon. The final section of each chapter contains a “step-by-step approach to preaching” the genre and an extended sermon outline that provides a concrete example

of what it looks like to re-present the text (56). A bibliography of recommended reading is also provided for further study on genre recognition and re-presentation.

The strength of *Recapturing the Voice of God* lies in its thorough and thoughtful integration of the disciplines of hermeneutics and homiletics. This book rightfully sees genre as an essential component of a text's meaning. Hermeneutically sound interpreters recognize that a text's genre must be taken into account for understanding a passage's meaning. However, if the preacher synthesizes the meaning of the passage and repackages the meaning in another form during the sermon, he changes the thrust of the text and loses the fullness of the text's intended meaning. In other words, any process of generalization will inevitably result in a loss of specificity. Since each passage of the Bible articulates a specific theology and covenantal demand, this specificity must be preserved by allowing "the substance, structure, and spirit of the text" (genre) to determine "the shape of the sermon" (19). As Smith argues, "The shape of the sermon is not arbitrary" (19). "Preaching sermons that honor the genre is the choice to die and let the genre of the text live. It is an extension of a high view of Scripture" (34).

For those desiring to preach the genre of a biblical text, Smith provides solid guidance. Of particular helpfulness is Smith's broad scope in dealing with all of the biblical genres in one cohesive and accessible work. He explains how the genres function as literary devices, how they are to be interpreted, how they are to be explained, and how they are to shape the sermon. Combined with its practical focus and concrete examples, Smith advances a sound methodology for uncovering and preaching a text's genre.

My main critique of *Recapturing the Voice of God* is that Smith does not consistently focus on the emotive dynamic of genre throughout his book. To be sure, Smith does not deny that genres communicate on an emotional level. He says that genres "influence the feel of the text—that is the author-intended emotional design of the text" (2). Smith also admits that "it is important to convey the tone of all the literary genres of the Bible" (139). Though Smith recognizes this as important, he primarily focuses on the way each genre communicates intellectual information. A notable exception to this is the way he explains the genre of the Psalms. Smith says, "Poems do not operate at a purely intellectual level. The words a poet uses, and the way they move, are intended to

produce an emotional effect on the listener” (131). Thus, he argues that preachers should “show [the congregation] the affective element of the psalm. They will understand from the meaning that the psalm has an emotional design, but showing it to them in the text actually reinforces this in profound ways. We then teach the listener that the Holy Spirit has inspired these affective designs” (137). Since engaging the heart (intellect, emotions, and will) with the word of God in the sermon is essential for faithful preaching, it would have been advantageous for Smith to make explicit how each specific genre contributes to the engagement of the emotions.

As a whole, Smith’s book is a valuable contribution in an area that has received limited attention in the evangelical homiletical literature. The unique helpfulness of this book means that it should serve as the go-to resource for students and pastors looking for an introduction on the role of genre for preaching.

Si Cochran  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The History of Theological Education.* By Justo L. Gonzalez. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015. xi + 155 pp. \$39.99. Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1426781919.**

Justo L. Gonzalez has provided a helpful review of the development of theological education while at the same time providing a prognosis for its future. Originating as lectures Gonzalez delivered on two occasions, the esteemed and prolific church historian refined his presentations into a short volume for any interested in this topic.

Rather than provide a mere historical overview, which Gonzalez does well, *The History of Theological Education* is organized around several premises. In addition to showing that theological education has always been a part of the church, Gonzalez explores how contemporary traditional theological education is in crisis, though wider non-traditional theological education is not. Exploring these themes over sixteen brief chapters, Gonzalez attempts to show how the study of the history of theological education can help provide guidance for the future.

In the early church, Gonzalez shows how there were Christian schools, like Justin Martyr's in Rome and the Alexandrian catechetical school, but these were not formal environs for the training of pastors but rather the simple study to the Christian faith (5-6). This informal catechetical study was the only requirement for pastors, yet it was also required for every believer. However, alumni from these schools would go on to form more formal projects in the second and third centuries following the conversion of Constantine. From this point until the Middle Ages, universal training declined and the training of individual teachers increased along with the introduction of monastic schools (22). With the arrival of the Germans into Roman territory, one of the few educated class of leaders that remained were in the church. Yet, even their training was limited and thus by the sixth and seventh centuries, Cassiodorus wrote his *Institutions* to train clergy first in what would become known as the *quadrivium* (logic, arithmetic, geometry, and music) before studying Scripture (25). This was followed by the more significant *Pastoral Rule* of Gregory the Great, which focused predominately on the task of the clergy (27). In the early Middle Ages, clergy were trained by the monastic schools as well as schools attached to cathedrals wherein bishops would prepare candidates for ordination. However, most clergy remained untrained and even though under Charlemagne there was a revived interest in education, "general chaos and ignorance seemed to reign until the end of the eleventh century" (35). That, and during this period, most who did study were directed toward the application of tasks for ministry in administration, which Gonzalez notes, is why they employed the term clerks or clerics, for they saw their work as "clerical" (35).

With the dawn of the twelfth century an "economic and intellectual awakening" overtook Western Europe and with it came growth to the cathedral schools (41). This growth paved the way first for scholasticism and then the birth of the university. Schools in Paris, Bologna, and Oxford were noted for their study of theology and, in particular, the practice of 'lecture,' wherein a professor "commented on a text" (44). From Peter Lombard's *Sentences* to Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* (which Gonzalez notes was in part "a handbook for those undertaking missionary work among Muslims" (52)), a new form of theological education emerged. Yet, as Gonzalez relates, most of the clergy still did not receive training due to cost and lack of basic education

(53). By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, scholasticism saw a separation between faith and reason, and the academy and the church. This led to greater educational darkness even for parish clergy and, even more, a lack of desire or need seen for education to aid or help in the task of ministry (61). In reaction to this trend arose the humanists and Desiderius Erasmus with new proposals “for pastors and church leaders for whom it was impossible to separate study from devotion and the practice of charity” (68).

The Protestant Reformation launched via the work of a university professor, Martin Luther, and theological education saw reformation and formalization. Philip Melanchthon led the creation of public schools and the revamping of the theological curriculum at the University of Wittenberg, which would influence many other universities and future theological educators (71-74). In 1556, Andreas Hyperius proposed a three part curriculum still followed by many Protestant seminaries: (1) the study of the Bible, (2) doctrinal theology, and (3) practical studies (74). In Geneva, John Calvin shaped significantly the development of theological education among the Reformed with his writings and in the Academy of Geneva (75). In his 1541 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, Calvin established the church office of “doctor” to “teach the faithful the correct doctrine” and saw the need for this to take place in schools (76). Gonzalez notes that “the early leaders of the Radical Reformation were highly educated,” yet, due to persecution, this tradition would wait until much later to establish schools for theological education (77).

The Roman Catholic Church responded in the Council of Trent with a renewed emphasis on the education of priests (79). In 1563, the Council instructed each diocese to establish “seminaries,” a term first used seven years earlier by the Archbishop of Canterbury (80-81). These “seedbeds” Gonzalez explains were schools who were “to plant a large number of candidates, care for them in their growth process, and finally transplant them to the places where their ministry was to take place” (81). The next generation of Protestants engaged in the task of systematizing the doctrines of the Reformation for organization and teaching, which naturally led them to focus on theological education (89). While still opposed to Roman Catholicism, the Protestants would follow the same educational methods, especially in the establishment of seminaries (94).

Yet, as is often the fracturing nature of Protestantism, Gonzalez relates that “in protest against the intellectualism of Protestant

orthodoxy” the Pietists appeared and their approach to smaller churches within the church, or schools of piety (95, 98). Also connected to the University of Halle, a school that would shape Zinzendorf and the Moravians, thus connecting theological education to Protestant missionary advance.

In the Modern Era, theological education was shaped by Schleiermacher, one who rejected Pietism in favor of defining theological education in light of the Enlightenment (107). This leftward plunge into the scientific and historical critical method of studying both history and Bible brought many changes to theological education. Gonzalez recognizes a further divide between the academy and the church, liberalism and fundamentalism that resulted in change in many of the early American universities, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton and their approaches to theological education (110).

In this section Gonzalez explains that the fundamentalists “tended to reject many of the discoveries and theories that seemed to contradict the teaching of scripture” and calls this a ‘canonization of ignorance,’ explaining that these “theologians and religious leaders insisted on their traditional positions, ignoring the challenges of modernity” (110). Focusing on the Presbyterians, he lists as examples Charles Hodge and J. Gresham Machen. Gonzalez then expounds further explaining that this canonization of ignorance often results in “biblical imperialism” wherein “the pastor, on no other grounds than being a supposed specialist on divine matters, attempts to tell scientists how to follow their disciplines ... [w]hich isolates them from those who do not accept the pastor’s imperialism but do see the pastor’s ignorance” (112).

In his final two chapters, Gonzalez uses his historical groundwork to speak to contemporary theological education administration calling for a transformation beyond curriculum to a return to theological education for every believer (119). He provides seven directives aimed at reconnecting the academy to the local church that center on concepts like “community,” “relating,” “contemplation,” “responding to evolving circumstances,” “redefine the relationship to ordained ministry,” “train mentors,” and in light of these, “redefining faculty publication expectations” (127-129). He further assesses that “seminaries are not doing their job properly” as “the denominations that traditionally have been most insistent on the need for seminary education in order to practice the pastorate are also the denominations whose membership is

most rapidly declining” (132). While these assessments are ripe for debate, Gonzalez rightly notes one area for needed change is in understanding demographics as these denominations are seeing growth “among people belonging to ethnic minority backgrounds other than those traditionally associated with a particular denomination” (134). He states, “It will no longer be enough for a denomination to have an office or a department of racial-ethnic minority ministries. It will not be enough to recruit a few ethnic minority students and faculty. It will be necessary to reexamine the very structure, ethos, and form of government of a denomination, in order to see how these promote or impede its witness in the presently shifting circumstances” (135).

Gonzalez’s work will no doubt be seen as the primary source to cite for the history of theological education, and while for the most part this is helpful, it is regrettable for his dim assessment of the twentieth century and the future. For one example of those following Gonzalez’s lead, Christian Sharen and Sharon Miller cite Gonzalez in their *Auburn Studies* report, “Bright Spots in Theological Education” (Sept 2016). In this influential periodical, they note that the future of theological education is either dim or bright based on whether schools follow Gonzalez’s call for total reorientation and redefinition.<sup>1</sup> In particular they use Gonzalez’s work to see a dim future for schools “committed to the Master of Divinity as the gold standard for leadership preparation in declining mainstream churches” (Sharen and Miller, 5).

Gonzalez’s work further lacks an assessment of how a doctrinal or confessional core shaped and sustained many Protestant seminaries, and led to guiding the future of many denominations and missionary expanse. In his sections on the modern era, there is barely a mention of Andover seminary, the first non-university divinity school started by the Congregationalists (not the Baptists as Gonzalez states) that trained many leaders after the Great Awakenings and contributed to the start of formal participation by American Protestants in foreign missions (132). Further, there is no treatment of the founding and reclamation of Southern Seminary, its founder James P. Boyce and his formative “Three Changes” address. The growth and expansion of the modern Evangelical movement, the founding of Fuller Seminary, the influence of Dallas

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Sharen and Sharon Miller, “Bright Spots in Theological Education,” *Auburn Studies* No. 22 (September 2016).

Seminary and many others, do not appear in this volume. Further, there is no discussion of the pivotal role of accreditation and the historical development of the Association of Theological Schools. With these oversights, Gonzalez's concluding reflections and prescriptions ring hollow and unformed. With that said, this is a volume worth reading, but reading critically, as the earlier historical chapters are quite helpful for assembling a basic understanding of the history of theological education.

Jason G. Duesing  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Make Peace before the Sun Goes Down: The Long Encounter of Thomas Merton and His Abbot, James Fox.* By Roger Lypsey. Boston: Shambhala, 2015. 313 pp. \$18.05, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-61180-225-2.**

Any vocational pastor ministering within a multi-staff church is aware of the advantages and disadvantages of working alongside peers. Many of the advantages include professional camaraderie, community of ministry-minded clergy, and spiritual encouragement and accountability. One of the disadvantages is the possibility of a dysfunctional relationship among the pastoral staff. Conflict in a relationship without reconciliation has the potential to have a negative impact on each person and the ministry. In *Make Peace before the Sun Goes Down*, Lipsey explained the dysfunctional relationship between Catholic monk Thomas Merton and his Abbot, James Fox, at the Monastery of Gethsemani, located in Kentucky,

This book concerns a long relationship periodically and excruciatingly difficult. It was a relation that would founder in abysses of disagreement, misunderstanding, imposition, and resentment, yet emerge into the light as a willing partnership, only to founder again. Willingness and profound disagreement would often coexist (5).

*Make Peace* is a biography of two spiritual brothers who were never able to reconcile their differences. Yet, they were able to grow and learn



from each other, albeit often unintentionally. They were modern examples of how iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17). Their relationship, as Lypsey detailed, was defined by how they differed and disputed over nearly every aspect of the ministry at Gethsemani – from how to raise funds to defining the primary function of a monk. The relationship between Merton and Fox in *Make Peace* can be summed up with three differences: between contemplation and community, the authoritative control of Fox over Merton, and the misunderstanding between trust and truth.

There was a marked dissimilarity between the contemplative Merton and the community builder Fox. The signature difference between Merton and Fox was their approach to monastic life during the post-WWII era. Merton proved to be a prolific writer, producing his bestselling work, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. This work brought him international notoriety, as well as funding for the Abby. However, Merton was a man of two sides. On the one side, he desired to be on pilgrimage in the world, seeking to draw spiritually closer to God. On the other, he was a man who desired absolute monastic aloneness. These two polar opposites would be the main point of contention between himself and the abbot. Lypsey described how Fox “...was at heart a community builder and a man of prayer, not a contemplative” (22). His priority was the functioning and overseeing of one of the largest monasteries in America. He felt responsible for the spiritual formation of his younger protégé. Therefore, he neither allowed Merton to travel, nor did he allow him permanent seclusion on the monastery grounds. Merton proved to be the obedient servant, while Fox continued to block any opportunity for his personal and spiritual desires to be met.

Merton and Fox’s entire relationship appeared to be based upon Fox’s authoritative control to keep Merton close and Merton’s incessant requests to travel or to enter seclusion as a hermit. Lypsey described the nature of their relationship in a way that the reader often cheered for Merton. Journaling his life and encounters with Fox, Merton wrote in 1956, “I need plenty of grace now. I am coming to a crucial point in my life in which I may make a complete mess of everything – or let Jesus make a complete success of everything” (80). For Fox, he wrote letters to superiors to present his case against Merton. At one time Fox described Merton as, “...a neurotic in the strictly scientific meaning of the word”

(145). This biography revealed that one of the key sustainers for their inability to reconcile was their unrepentant use of the pen.

Finally, the other biographical link within *Make Peace* that kept Fox and Merton at odds was their misunderstanding of one another's position as related to trust and truth. Any request Merton sent to Fox for either a pilgrimage or hermitage was denied year in and year out. Fox claimed that if he had let Merton go, he would slip into the ways of the world and never return to Gethsemani. Lipsey weaved this tension throughout the work ensuring that the reader remained aware that the main irreconcilable difference between the two brothers was their inability to either trust each other or not believe their intentions true.

This biography summarized in great detail the complex and multifaceted relationship between Thomas Merton and James Fox. Although this is a biography on two catholic monks, it is a ministerial-rich read for any protestant minister who functions within a multi-staffed organization. It is not difficult to hear the words of the Apostle Paul ringing out on each page, noting that Jesus gave us, "... the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18)."

R. M. Skip Ferris

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Theodore Beza: The Man and the Myth.* By Shawn D. Wright. Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2015. 256 pp. \$14.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-78191-684-1.**

"Theodore Beza? Who is he? Why should I care about him" (9)? With these basic questions Shawn D. Wright, Associate Professor of Church History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, sets up the puzzle box that he attempts to solve with this accessible and rich biography. With the death of John Calvin in 1564, Theodore Beza (1519-1594), fellow Frenchman and protégé to Calvin, took the theological reins of the Reformed revolution centered in Geneva. It is with the rise of Beza's leadership that many Reformation scholars have insisted on a divergence of the pure Biblicism of Calvin in Reformed thought to a more

Aristotelian and Scholastic flavor of later Calvinism (41-42). The cold and unyielding logic of later Calvinism with its focus on predestination and reprobation are seen as mutations of or additions to Calvin's earlier system. These changes along with the hyper-Calvinistic accesses of later Reformed generations are laid specifically at the feet of Theodore Beza. It is here that Wright pushes against the prevailing opinions of Reformation scholarship. Wright wants the reader to see "the real Beza," through Beza's own words, clearly and honestly displaying the contextual discontinuities with Calvin, but also the boldly reaffirming continuity with the father of Reformed thought.

The opening chapters attempt to place Beza in his context so that the reader will better understand why Beza appears different from Calvin, and yet remains in agreement with Calvin. Using a precise historical account of Beza's life and ministry (chapter two) as well as a broad vision of Beza's theology and thought (chapter three), Wright deftly gives the reader a proper contextual foundation. In essence, Wright seeks to explain in these chapters that Beza's supposed divergences from Calvin are in fact primarily differences of style and emphasis, which can be explained by Beza's political and theological context. As an example, Wright points particularly to the explosion of French persecution of Protestants during Beza's career. Wright also defends against Beza's critiques by successfully demystifying the bogeyman label of "scholasticism." Standing upon the "Muller Thesis" Wright explains, "The discontinuities...were not due to substantial theological reorientation but were rather driven by external realities" (43-44). These realities fall into two categories. First, Protestant Scholastics needed to codify their theological views as they taught this early generation of Protestants. Second, there was a need to systematize and bolster their theological positions as they were responding to a revival of Roman Catholic opposition in the aftermath of the council of Trent (44). Beza's "Scholasticism" was not necessarily a divergence from Calvin's original thought, but rather a necessary codification and extrapolation due to the circumstances on the ground at this stage of the Reformation. As Wright summarizes, "We must realize that 'scholasticism' should not bear any negative connotations. It was merely the way in which theology was taught from the late twelfth century through the seventeenth century" (45).

Having established a broad historical and theological foundation for his defense of Beza's treatment of Calvin's legacy, Wright moves to the center of his argument with a thorough evaluation of several key primary sources (chapters four through eight). Each chapter takes a particular work of Beza, and follows a uniform outline: a succinct explanation of the historical setting, an outline and explanation of the work's content, and a devotionally centered application of the text in question. With each chapter the reader will find a continuation of Wright's thesis, as he defends Beza against the caricature that was created by many of his critics. Throughout the exposition of each of these texts, the reader finds Wright continuing his march against the myth of Beza as a cold and hollow systematizer.

A stand out example of Wright's expositional defense of Beza is his treatment of Beza's *Tabula Praedestinationis* (chapter four). This chapter is perhaps Wright's best defense of Beza and highlights an area that is regularly cited as a point of Reformed mutation: the prominence of predestination on Reformed theology and, specifically, the precise nature of double predestination. For example, Roger Olson insists that Beza was obsessed with predestination beyond even Calvin and created seemingly out of thin air supralapsarianism (111). To counter critics like Olson, Wright meticulously interacts with Beza's *Tabula Praedestinationis* and Beza's full explanation of double predestination. Wright explains that the asymmetry of the infamous "chart of salvation" found within the *Tabula*, along with corresponding theological explanations, show that Beza is articulating that sinners are judged centrally due to their own sin (114). Wright continues this defense by bringing Calvin back into the discussion, showing Beza was not original in his formulation of double predestination (123). Wright skillfully makes it clear that Beza, in fact, does not confuse the concepts of reprobation and condemnation, but rather holds them in distinct tension. Wright's aim here is to show the reader that Beza's doctrine of predestination is to see "The response of those whom God has saved should be able to preach His mercy to all, recognizing that all humanity alike deserves His wrath" (134).

Two particular strengths of this work can be noted for those interested in this volume. First, it is refreshing to see an accessible biography place the primary sources of the individual as central to the substance of the work. Far too often modern Christian historical biography careens into one of two ditches: that of borderline historical

fiction where the “story” overshadows the details and actual words of the subject or that of mere stenography where the primary sources are repeated but without context or explanation, which often loses the reader not already well-versed in the world of the subject. Second, Wright masterfully accomplishes what should be the goal of any good work of Christian historical biography: applying the historical and theological concerns of the subject to the reader’s world today. The reader will find at the end of each of the core chapters (four through eighth) a clear application of each of the texts explicated. Also, discussion questions at the end of these chapters further help the reader apply the author’s conclusions to their own spiritual life and development. Not only does this aid the reader in personal application of Beza’s work but also helps facilitate group studies, encouraging the often neglected discipline of doing historical theology in community.

While no formal critiques are offered here, there are two warnings that the reader should be aware of as they engage with this work. First, the overall writing style of the book is almost glaringly informal. First person pronouns abound and the writing is often casually conversational in tone and expression. For those accustomed to more formal works this may be initially off-putting, but should not necessarily be a cause for devaluing the quality of the work. Another warning is that, for better or worse, Wright spends little time directly engaging with the often-mentioned critics of Beza as a proper inheritor of Calvin’s legacy. It is possible that Wright’s defense of Beza would be strengthened by a more thorough treatment of those who have created the myth of Beza, but this would most likely lead to a decrease in the accessibility of the book. Wright’s work is a valuable addition to Reformation studies generally, and Reformed studies particularly. This accessible, and yet exceptionally credible, work will serve students and scholars well as the study of Theodore Beza continues to grow.

Joseph D. Garner III  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership.*** By Bobby Jamieson. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. 256 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4336-8620-7.

*Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership* is another contribution in the ever growing field of 9Marks' ecclesiological discussion. For Bobby Jamieson, a PhD student at Cambridge University, the main point of the book is tied in to the ecclesiological nature of baptism and church membership. "This whole book aims toward the conclusion that churches should require prospective members to be baptized—which is to say, baptized as believers—in order to join" (1). He does so in three major parts.

In part one, "Getting Our Bearings," Jamieson spends the first two chapters by laying his groundwork carefully. In chapter one Jamieson argues that "according to Scripture baptism is required for church membership and for participating in the Lord's Supper, membership's recurring effective sign" (8). As the book is Baptist in its truest fashion, this is to exclude paedobaptists since they have not been baptized biblically and, therefore, are excluded from participation in the Lord's Supper (8–11). This, he believes, is a debate worth having. In chapter two Jamieson highlights six reasons open membership "feels right," but is incorrect. Of the strongest, especially within Reformed circles, is the desire for evangelical cooperation across lines between Presbyterians and Baptists.

Part two is Jamieson's attempt to build a case for the points he has argued thus far. In chapter three he stays close to the biblical text to argue that believer's baptism is when a Christian's faith is made public. "If you're looking for a visible hook to hang your hat on when you speak about conversion, baptism is the natural choice" (41). He also takes on Piper's stance on open membership (50–52).

Chapters four through seven seek to answer the question: "How does baptism relate to the church" (55)? In other words, is baptism an individual matter or is it connected to the church and, therefore, has an ecclesial shape to it? Jamieson argues yes to each of these questions. Chapter four examines baptism through the lens of the new covenant and the Kingdom of God in order to describe its ecclesial shape. Baptism "is the initiating oath-sign of the new covenant, and this makes baptism

necessary for church membership” (56). Thus, “baptism is a solemn, symbolic vow which ratifies a person’s entrance into the new covenant” (63), but it is not akin to circumcision in that circumcision was a conditional self-malediction covenant (73–75). Chapter five discusses baptism as a passport to the kingdom because through baptism “you swear an oath of citizenship and are thereby formally recognized as a citizen of the kingdom of Christ” (94).

Chapter six “attempts to define the sense in which the Lord’s Supper constitutes a local church” (108). Jamieson provides four foundations for the ecclesial shape of the Lord’s Supper and attempts to connect it with the constitutive rite of baptism (110–120). His five conclusions that flow from his argument attempt to present the argument that the Lord’s Supper should only be administered to those who have been properly baptized, namely by immersion (124–133). Chapter seven finds Jamieson bringing together his biblical and theological statements in order to provide a practical and pastoral statement concerning church membership. “Baptism promotes and protects the gospel by requiring those who believe the gospel to publicly confess the gospel. When a church removes baptism from the requirements for membership, it privatizes Christian profession” (156).

Part three is Jamieson’s defense of his position amidst the questions provided by paedobaptists and those who hold to open communion and open membership. Chapter eight provides a brief review of Jamieson’s positions that have been developed. Chapter nine begins his answers to his objectors, and he lists seven significant arguments provided by his dissenters. He writes, “If baptism is a public profession of faith, then infant baptism isn’t baptism” (175). The problem, he argues, is that intention is not enough to mark a Christian distinct from the world; rather, baptism is what accomplishes this. To those who suggest inviting paedobaptists to preach but excluding them to preach is inconsistent, Jamieson notes the New Testament does not teach church membership is a requirement to fill a pulpit. “Unity between churches is made of different stuff than unity within churches” (190). In chapter ten Jamieson engages with open membership and engages effectively against this trend. Fundamentally he argues that open membership builds on error because “it enters a faulty value into the ecclesiological equation” (194). The final chapter provides the practical application of Jamieson’s view in the life of the church. He provides a guide of transition for those

who have allowed paedo-baptists into membership (210–211) and how the church may have meaningful membership rather than simply the name of the member on a list (219–223).

Jamieson is unapologetically “baptistic” in his polemical language regarding baptism. This would be a concern if he did not defend his arguments as well as he did. He delivers solid arguments for his “closed membership” position and he does not lack in his historical research. His Baptist historical analysis for both closed and open membership positions only strengthens the overall argument of his thesis. Furthermore, his willingness not only to address dead but also living theologians is commendable. He is firm and steadfast concerning closed membership despite possible friends that might be ostracized from participation in the Lord’s Supper as a result.

There were times when Jamieson could have been clearer than he was, or simply teased out his argument further. For example, his discussion on page 129 regarding “visiting Communion” perhaps would be strengthened had he elaborated further or provided more than one resource in the footnotes as to prove his point. Another example is his statement that baptism is an effective sign of church membership, which is valid. However, he then remarks that one cannot make Christians into a church without baptism so that, including the components of the Gospel, churches need to agree on baptism. By this Jamieson suggests baptism by immersion, which leaves the question of whether he would consider a paedo-baptist congregation a church? He would, but this issue was left open-ended.

Bobby Jamieson has provided a helpful resource that promotes true biblical church membership. He is to be commended for his clear writing, careful exegetical work, and cordial tone with those in disagreement. This is a discussion worth having, and Jamieson’s work is a worthy contribution to a difficult topic.

Jason P. Kees  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary



***Arminian and Baptist: Explorations in a Theological Tradition.***  
By J. Matthew Pinson. Nashville: Randall House, 2015. 262 pp.  
Paperback, \$22.99.

Matt Pinson serves as President of Welch College, the primary locus of the theological perspective (primarily within Free Will Baptists) known as Reformed Arminianism – that is, a theological perspective which follows Arminius himself, who was much closer to the early Reformers than later Arminians represented in the Wesleyan and Holiness traditions. Two of the foremost theologians associated with Reformed or Classical Arminianism – Leroy Forlines and Robert Picirilli – also serve on the faculty of Welch College.

In this volume, Pinson makes available to a larger audience a further development of a number of professional presentations and articles he had previously published. Earlier versions of three of the essays (chapter four on Thomas Helwys, chapter five on Thomas Grantham, and a review essay of the book *Whosoever Will* which I co-edited, were published in *The Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*. Some of the content from chapters one and six on the theology of Jacobus Arminius and John Wesley were previously published in *Integrity: A Journal of Christian Thought*. Earlier versions of chapter two addressing Arminius' view of the atonement, and a review essay on Roger Olson's *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* were previously published in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. The article on the Free Will Baptist tradition was previously published in *Evangelicals and Nicene Faith*, edited by Timothy George, and the introduction to *Classical Arminianism*, a survey of Leroy Forlines' thought which Pinson himself edited, are also part of the collection. The only previous article not published in any format is a comparison of the thought of early Baptists John Smyth and Thomas Helwys.

The reader might imagine that such a collection of articles might be disconnected or uneven, but this is not the case. Pinson has significantly revised some of the articles, and each chapter builds upon previous chapters in a logical, historical order. There is some repetition of content at points, which is nonetheless helpful in comparing and contrasting the views of earlier and later theologians.

The view of Reformed Arminianism that emerges in these essays is one that with the magisterial reformers, affirms doctrines such as

original sin and human depravity, salvation by God's grace alone, and the penal substitution theory of the atonement. It also shares an appreciation for confessional commitments that are products of the Christian community, as opposed to an individualistic view of soul competency. It has a strong appreciation for the need for Christian sanctification, and affirms a blend of both confessional orthodoxy and pietism. Reformed Arminianism eschews some doctrines affirmed by later Arminians, such as the governmental theory of atonement and Christian perfectionism or so-called "entire sanctification."

One doctrine unique to the tradition of Grantham and Wesley is the strong distinction between the application of the passive and active obedience of Christ in the atonement. The passive obedience of Christ (His going to the cross) took God's wrath for sin upon Himself and paid the penalty for believers' sins. Jesus' active obedience (His sinless life) was not what purchased our atonement, as most in the Reformation tradition affirm. Reformed Arminianism allows for apostasy, as distinguished from Southern Baptist belief in the security of the believer, but only for those who fall into unbelief, not by simply committing any particular sin. However, this variety of Arminianism affirms that one who falls into final disbelief cannot be renewed to salvation.

This book is a must-read for any evangelical theologian. Arminian theology is sometimes stereotyped in ways that are not representative of most or all Arminians. This volume unpacks what Arminius, Helwys, Grantham, and Wesley actually believed, and how that tradition is represented today by Reformed Arminians. Thus, the work is highly recommended.

Steve Lemke  
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

***An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology.*** By Thomas H. McCall. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 183 pp. Paperback, \$17.84. ISBN-13: 978-0830840953.

In *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology*, Thomas H. McCall explores how philosophy and theology interact and benefit one another. McCall summarizes the focus of his book: “I introduce non-specialists to analytic theology. I try to make clear both what it *isn’t* and what it *is*. Accordingly, I discuss what makes analytic theology *analytic*, and I try to lay out what makes analytic theology really *theology*” (9). Analytic theology (also called philosophical theology) has garnered new interest over the last 20 years. Eager young philosophers, coming out of a religious background, are surveying how (and if) philosophy is applicable to their faith. If one is to label a book valuable or noteworthy by the author’s success in detailing his thesis, then McCall’s book is valuable and noteworthy. In fact, if one is looking for an introduction to philosophical theology, McCall should be on your reading list.

In chapter 1, McCall defines analytic theology and gives it some historical context. According to McCall, analytic theology is generally defined as signifying “a commitment to employ the conceptual tools of analytic philosophy where these tools might be helpful in the work of constructive Christian theology” (16). With that McCall argues that analytic philosophy is beneficial to the theologian (and Christian believer) in that it gives the theologian logical tools to better understand Christian belief.

Christian philosophy has made significant inroads within a skeptical contemporary academic environment. Philosophers, such as, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, Brian Leftow, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and others have made not only an impact with Christian philosophy; these philosophers have made an indelible impact on the discipline itself. McCall writes that Christian theologians can adopt the general motivation of analytic philosopher: “a commitment to truth wherever it may be found, clarity of expression, and rigor of argumentation” (21). The goal according to McCall is not to remove all of the mystery in theology, nor is it to reduce the analytic theology to apologetics. The purpose is simple: analytic philosophy is a constructive tool to better understand Christian doctrine.

The focus of chapter 2, titled *Analytic Theology and Christian Scripture*, is to explore the relation between analytic theology and Scriptural study. The chapter does not merely ask the question: Which has priority: reason or Scripture? McCall asks, what hath the philosopher to do with biblical interpretation? The importance of this chapter to the overall focus of the book cannot be overstated: McCall is calling for an erosion of the false dichotomy between reason and biblical truth. Humans are endowed with rational abilities. By what mechanism does humanity understand the Spirit and Scripture, if not via the rational process? McCall concedes, reason must be tempered by divine revelation, but that does not mean reason is a hindrance or impediment to biblical interpretation or biblical understanding.

Furthermore, chapter 2 draws out the distinction and the benefit of the various hermeneutical disciplines. McCall writes,

“This does not mean that analytic theology finally supersedes or replaces biblical theology; nothing here implies that biblical theology is merely some pile of theological data or confused, immature rendering that only provides some raw materials for analytic theology and then can safely be discarded once the ‘real’ work of analytic theology has been done. To the contrary, one may affirm what I have said to this point and also affirm the continuing importance of a biblical theology that follows the shape of the complement to biblical theology; it need not replace or undermine biblical theology” (79).

In other words, analytic theology, according to McCall, can give the Christian a bigger picture of the text. Thus, analytic theology should not replace other hermeneutical disciplines, but it deserves a place in the conversation. To further his claim, McCall does not simply argue his point: he gives a lengthy case study of the debate between theological determinism and free will to show how philosophy can clarify such nuanced discussions.

Chapter 3 takes a close look at analytic and historical theology. In the chapter, McCall offers more case studies. He writes, “One shows how analytic theology can help us to better understand and defend classical orthodoxy in light of contemporary objections to it; the other shows how the creedal orthodoxy might serve as a guide to recent constructive work in analytic theology” (84). The first case study focuses on the dual natures of Christ; showing how analytic theology has been historically used within this conversation. The second case study addressed some recent

work on physical Christology (an idea that claims Jesus is identical with His body). In both studies, McCall shows the invaluable assistance of analytic theology to determine what is compatible with orthodox Christianity and what is not.

Contesting for the veracity and authority of Scripture is a perpetual battle in the contemporary world (issues such as the compatibility of science and faith, the historical Adam, etc.). In chapter 4, McCall sets out to show the reader that analytic theology is not merely a tool for the Christian wanting to better understand theology; analytic theology is a tool for the *church* to engage global issues. As with chapter 3, chapter 4 uses case studies to show that analytic theology is a guide for the Christian wading into the sometimes quixotic mire of Christian theology.

Chapter 5 is McCall's concluding chapter and an apology for analytic theology within Christian spirituality. I find this last chapter to be claiming: The study of Christian doctrine is a study of God.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas writes, "The chief aim of sacred doctrine is to teach the knowledge of God, not only as he is in himself, but also as he is the beginning of things and their last end."<sup>3</sup> The person who knows God is a person that flourishes. Studying Christian doctrine is a necessary, though not sufficient, discipline to knowing God. And analytic theology is a tool to avoid theological obfuscation and staleness. McCall writes, "Theology is not—and cannot be—a merely intellectual exercise if it involves genuine knowledge of God" (169). In this important last chapter, McCall elucidates the need for theology to go beyond the verbiage and jargon of an intellectual enterprise—that is, theology may have "feet."

Any reader of *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology* will quickly recognize this short book will live on for many years to come. It not only introduces the reader to analytic theology, but McCall discloses that analytic theology introduces the Christian to a beauty of the majesty and glory of God that may not be experience (in this life) otherwise.

Chad Meeks  
Navarro College

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<sup>2</sup>I adopt Wayne Grudem definition of "doctrine." He writes that "doctrine" is "What the whole Bible teaches us today about a particular topic" (Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999, 20).

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, I.2.

***The Things of Earth: Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts.* By Joe Rigney. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015. 271 pp. \$16.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-4473-6**

The book of Isaiah says this: “Holy, holy, holy is the lord of hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isaiah 6:3 ESV). However, as Joe Rigney points out in *The Things of Earth*, there is more to it. “A more literal rendering” would be “the fullness of the whole earth is His glory” (73). He presents two ideas that have their basis in this text. In referencing Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:9 about Solomon’s royal clothing being “his glory,” he argues that the creation *is* the glory of God (73). The other possibility is that the earth is like a bride, referencing 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7 where a woman “is the glory of man” and “the bride of Christ, as ‘the fullness of him who fills all in all’ (Eph. 1:23)” (74). In Isaiah 6:3, the earth, as a part of God’s creation, and all its *fullness*, or all that it contains, is like a glorious robe or bride for God. It’s an adornment and treasure. Creation is meant to communicate God’s nature and glory. As Christians, we surrender our lives to serve this living God in what John Piper calls, a “wartime” lifestyle (198-214). However, one can get the impression that Christianity means asceticism. This is a dangerous idea and those who are prone to it experience a false sense of guilt for enjoying God-given pleasures. This book’s main focus is the fact that Scripture reveals God creating all things for *His* glory, and that He is to be glorified in its enjoyment.

Additionally, the book unpacks the Triune God using two different models of analogy. The “Psychological Model” is drawn from Jonathan Edwards and the “Family Model” is used as well (39-40). Those who are saved by God, are invited and even swept into the fullness of the Trinity (40-46). The “mutual indwelling” of the Triune God, or *perichoresis*, is illustrated using the two different models (36-40). Rigney, in citing John 17:5 and 17:24, points out that the “glory of God” is “the Trinitarian fullness” (40-41).

It is from the foundation of *perichoresis* and the glory of God in creation that Rigney builds his case for the necessity for Christians to enjoy the “things of earth” as gifts. Drawing heavily from Jonathan Edwards, C.S. Lewis, John Piper, and Douglas Wilson (15), the case is made for pure pleasure in earthly, created things. In fact, pleasures are

intended to draw us closer to God, when understood and used appropriately. This frees those who feel a sense of false guilt for enjoying life as Christians, but the book also warns against the inevitable pitfalls of idolatry that are present in earthly enjoyment. Rigney begins by unpacking divine sovereignty and human freedom through the analogy of story (47-60). As God is sovereign over all creation, so are writers over their stories, like C.S. Lewis and Narnia (49-54). The author *and* the characters in the story are equally responsible for the actions of the characters (49-52). In our story, God is the main character, and Christ comes to the earth and becomes a “*human character*” to redeem mankind (60).

As aforementioned, creation itself is a form of communication from God (Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:20), and Scripture brings meaning to it through the use of “*typology, analogy, and metaphor*” (62-66). Rigney quotes C.S. Lewis’s analogy of a toolshed, where light is peering in, illuminating floating dust particles and one “*looks along*” the shaft of light to the source of it (66-67). Rigney argues that created things are those “*shafts*” leading to God (66-72). As one must “*taste*” honey in order to know its sweetness, and understand the “*spiritual benefit*” of it to grasp the sweetness of God, so must we embrace God’s gift of creation (71-75). Rigney also underlines the fact that the good gifts of God are meant to be “*provisions*” for the Christian mission on earth, as well as “*gifts for our enjoyment and pleasure*” (83, 85). A threefold vocation of man is illustrated with Adam in the Garden of Eden (83-85). Adam has a kingly, priestly, and prophetic role to play in the dominion and leadership roles assigned by God. The gifts are a part of and help to accomplish the roles. The gift that Adam directly praises is Eve (82-83). Rigney illustrates how the appreciation of her beauty and kinship to Adam is not condemned but advocated (81-86). However, in valuing things, one must keep in mind the “*proportionate regard*” of the infinite value of God (86-90). In seeking to value things for what they are worth, God’s superior value must be regarded comparatively and in an integrative way (95-99). These “*tests*” of where we set our minds and the greatest treasures of our hearts, are to be done in a “*rhythm*” to prevent idolatry and maintain “*godwardness*” (99-124). Thus, we can then safely “*know God better*” by “*knowing the world better*” (125).

Rigney unpacks the “*cultural mandate*” given in Genesis 1:28, equating Adam’s task of naming the creatures with our own task of

“naming” in “creativity” and “culture making” (137-147). Rigney completes this with a chapter of personal examples of grasping God through weaving examples from his own family, poetry, seeing natural beauty, story, and understanding of Scripture. Finally, the challenge of Christian “sacrifice, self-denial, and generosity” is addressed in regard to the proper use of wealth (175-192). The right motivation is gratitude, and not guilt, citing Paul’s example of the Macedonians’ generosity (193-196).

Rigney uses himself as an example to point out that this “wartime” mindset of Christian living allows mission-minded generosity, which John Piper promotes from Scripture (198-214). However, it can go wrong when one forsakes the goodness of God’s gifts in the process. He further points out that gratitude does not depend on good gifts, but the loss of these gifts can actually provide a test for what we really treasure. As Narnia was merely a “shadowland” which was pointing to the real Narnia to come, so is this created order merely a shadow of better things to come for Christians (228). Therefore, we can have joy and hope even when our gifts are taken away, since we await a heavenly city to come (228-230). Finally, Rigney concludes by exhorting Christians whose passion is singularly both the glory of God and their own joy (231). He invites them to “embrace their creatureliness,” to “seek to be *like* God,” and not “seek to *be* God,” having Christ “in the good gifts,” in receiving and giving gifts away “in the cause of love,” or “in the loss of everything that is precious to you” (234-235).

The strength of the book is how it soundly addresses the *ditch* of asceticism with some warning against extreme narcissism as well. Thankfulness and gratitude are soundly argued for in the Christian life. However, if taken wrongly, it could give the impression of a selfish Christianity that only thinks about personal desires. A prior reading of John Piper’s works would be helpful as well.

Ashley Steven Napier  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary



*Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age.* Edited by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2015, 380 pp. \$44.99, Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-4336-8104-2.

There are many situations in Baptist church life that cause lively discussion among the members of the congregation, one such is the issue of church government. Different views exist on this subject, and each view will have its adherents and opponents. Yet, the independent nature of Baptist churches demands that each congregation seek an answer to the question of how to best operate a church so as to bring glory to God and effective unity of purpose.

Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman have entered a clarifying volume into this discussion. This work carries enough valuable information to increase understanding for anyone who desires to learn of Baptist roots and traditions. Roots grow in the historical background and foundational effort within Baptist ecclesiology, and tradition asserts the governing methods which have held sway over Baptist churches for many decades.

Each major section of this book highlights what the authors and editors indicate are the best methods for governing Baptist churches. These sections include Congregationalism, Ordinances, Church Membership and Discipline, Elders and Deacons, and a final section on how churches are to relate to other church groups inside and outside the Baptist denomination. The flow from section to section feels very natural as one subject leads to the next. Each chapter contains Scriptural excerpts as historical underpinnings which buttress the chapter's arguments. All of these attributes make this volume a well-executed work on the subject of Baptist church government.

Three attributes within *Baptist Foundations* are briefly showcased here. First, Leeman introduces three historical individuals whose names may not be familiar to many Baptist congregations. In the section titled "Unity, Holiness, and Apostolicity," the author gives Tertullian, Cyprian, and to a lesser degree, Augustine, opportunity to speak from history on the issue of holiness and apostolic authority as it relates to church unity. While some within the confines of Baptist life might wince at the use of church "Fathers" to illustrate contemporary arguments, Leeman does a service to the reader who may not be up-to-speed with how such men influenced the early church.

Leeman then brings John Calvin's views on holiness, unity, and apostolic authority into the mix. This is also an appreciated foray into Protestant historical background. While the name of Calvin brings mixed responses from different quarters, his view, per Leeman, "...represents something of an ecclesiological halfway point between the previous three authors (Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine) and the free church perspective...." (344).

Second, it is this free church perspective that both Dever and Leeman, as well as the other authors in this work, argue for in the context of both congregational and elder leadership. Without the historical frame of reference, their arguments would not have been as persuasive. This perspective appears in Calvin's view of the doctrine of imputed righteousness which the authors present. Baptist theology maintains that each person is accountable for his or her belief or non-belief in regard to the Lordship of Christ (often referred to as *soul competency*). Calvin taught that righteousness attached itself to every citizen in Geneva that belonged to the church whether or not the person had salvific faith. The use of this historical reference makes a clear distinction between the Reformed perspective and the Baptist understanding of righteousness. The authors showcase the fact that the believer stands as an individual before God and is justified on the basis of a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ and not on his or her standing as a part of any group.

Third, this idea leads to one of the most important concepts within this work. The individual's status as a believer shows through his or her membership in the local church. This is where the idea of individual faith and unity of the Body of Christ coalesces in the realm of the local congregation. The single member is crucial to the overall work and holiness of the Baptist church. The individual partners with others to form the congregation, and it is the congregational model of church polity that the authors repeatedly emphasize and explain. Within the context of this congregational polity, other important church-governance situations which are addressed include membership, ordinances, leadership, and church discipline. Each of these situations are given explicit Scriptural foundations and step-by-step guidance for implementation.

However, there are two areas which need further discussion. First, although it may not have been intended by the authors and editors, several passages within the text appear almost patrician in approach. For

example, the issue of deacons in leadership roles, as well as the possibility of women serving as deacons, appeared in Chapter 16. Benjamin Merkle states, "Just as the apostles delegated administrative responsibilities to the Seven (the first deacons), the elders are to delegate responsibilities to the deacons so the elders can focus their efforts elsewhere" (320). While this statement is historically accurate, to some readers it may seem to be a power-shift from deacon-led polity to an elder-led polity.

Second, there are those who would disagree with Shawn Wright's statement that shut-ins should not be given communion. He writes, "Special consideration must be given to whether to give the Supper to church members who are 'shut-ins'.... It's our opinion that bringing the elements of the Supper to them is not the way to encourage them. Giving them the elements apart from the communion of the whole fellowship...may weaken, not strengthen, their faith" (161). This statement is controversial especially since the chapter ends with Wright stating, "Far from being bare memorials, both baptism and the Supper are rich means of encouragement and blessing ordained by Christ" (163). The author initially denies the Lord's Supper to people who may not be physically able to attend a communion service and then praises the act as ordained by Christ. Does the author wish to deny such a blessing to a person unable to be with the congregation? The author makes valid points as to the function, service, and importance of the Supper, but denies it to shut-ins based on the necessity of physically being at the service. This practice displaces the shut-in from the Body through no fault of their own. The idea presented appears at best legalistic and at worst sacerdotal.

Despite the above mentioned drawbacks, this volume is concise, easily readable, and well-researched. It could easily act as a text book for seminarians as well as church congregations. It answers often asked questions concerning the historical rationale for church practices, and it delivers an important reemphasis on the necessity of being part of a local congregation. Its practicality is its greatest asset, and it avails itself as a resource for anyone interested in the debate over church polity.

Charles C. Yates  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*A Message from the Great King: Reading Malachi in Light of Ancient Persian Royal Messenger Texts from the Time of Xerxes.* By R. Michael Fox. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015. xiii + 170 pp., \$42.50, Hardback, ISBN-13: 978-1-57506-394-2.

When one reads the Book of Malachi, it does not take long to ask the question, “Why are there so many messengers?” In *A Message from the Great King*, R. Michael Fox not only attempts to answer that question but also presents Malachi as a *royal message* from YHWH, the Great King, while dating the book to *Xerxes’ time*. This new classification of Malachi and its date come from Fox’s extensive historical reconstruction and a deeper reading of the text with an emphasis on messenger language. He asserts that Malachi is full of such language governed by the Persian royal-messenger root metaphor (1-2).

Reading Malachi through the messenger metaphor showcases several strengths for this book. First, it is innovational to classify Malachi’s form as a *royal message* by applying Michael Ward’s methodology—donegality—to a biblical text, since scholars had previously classified Malachi in various forms: disputations (E. Pfeiffer), discussions (H. Boecker), hortatory discourse (E. Clendenen), or a covenant lawsuit (J. O’Brien) (120-121). “Donegality,” the term coined by Ward to explain C. S. Lewis’ series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, represents a unique atmosphere of a story and provides an interpretive lens. Using this lens, Ward showed that the medieval perception of a planet’s traits governs each *Chronicle* (28-42).

By adapting Ward’s method, Fox succeeds in showing that the messenger donegality rooted in the Persian royal-messenger system permeates Malachi. Reading Malachi through the messenger lens constructed in Chapter 3 reveals that the entire text is decorated by messenger metaphors (*poiema*, ποιήματα) of various gradations: the brilliant, bright, and subtle decorations. These messenger decorations range from the obvious messenger term (מלאך, 1:1; 2:7; 3:1) and YHWH as a Great King (מלך גדול, 1:14) to the use of subtle decorations including the treaty language of love/hate (1:2-5) and the connection between YHWH’s visit for the fiery purification of Jerusalem (3:1-7) and Xerxes’ destroying the Athenian Acropolis with fire (117-118). These ubiquitous messenger

metaphors unveil Malachi's high literary quality and challenge its negative evaluations from scholars such as W. De Wette, J. M. P. Smith, G. von Rad, and E. Hammershaimb (133-135). Thus, classifying Malachi as a *royal message* is a convincing assertion, and its original audience who would be familiar with Persian messengers would have easily understood Malachi's oracles as a royal message from YHWH (120-121).

Second, specifying Malachi's date as *Xerxes' time* (486-464 BC) is notable because there has been no firm agreement on Malachi's date among scholars. Most scholars agree that Malachi is from the post-exilic Persian era after the Temple reconstruction based on three clues: the term "governor" (הַנָּפֵט, 1:8), the restored Temple (1:6-2:9), and the desolation of Edom (1:2-5). Yet, since this broad period (515-330 BC) does not pin down a precise date, scholars such as Hill, Smith, and P. Verhoef have attempted to date Malachi by using similar issues in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The proposed time frames include during the reign of Darius I (c. 490-486 BC), shortly before Ezra's arrival (c. 470-460 BC), between Ezra and Nehemiah's second visit (458-433 BC), and after Nehemiah's second visit (after 433 BC) (14-18).

In this unsettled situation concerning Malachi's date, Fox makes a persuasive proposition by asserting that Xerxes' era satisfies two issues: Judah's religious apathy and Sabbath violations. The historical context of Xerxes' time explicates Judah's apathy. Under Darius I, Judah suffered due to the high taxation for supporting Darius' war against Greece. Thus, Darius' defeat at Marathon (490 BC) and his death (486 BC) would have generated the Judeans' concern with YHWH worship rather than apathy, because they could have seen their hope of Judah's coming restoration in Darius' failure. Yet, Darius' successor, Xerxes, soon stabilized Persia and further heightened taxes as he prepared for revenge against Greece. Therefore, severe poverty in Judah caused by Xerxes' policies and drought explains Judah's social strife, ethical decay, and religious apathy. Also, Xerxes' era (480s BC) provides enough time before Ezra's and Nehemiah's reforms to clarify why Malachi does not address the Sabbath violations which were rampant by Nehemiah's first visit (16-20).

Third, interpreting Malachi through messenger donegality presents a balanced view of Malachi's theological message (*Iogos*, λόγος). Scholars who have shown interest in Malachi's theology, such as W. Kaiser, Clendenen, and Hill, have stressed YHWH's love/faithfulness over His judgment (128-133). Yet, messenger donegality highlights both of these

aspects (love/faithfulness and judgment) of God with equal value. YHWH is a faithful God who loves His people and defeats their enemy, Edom (1:2-5). He desires to purify His covenant people by inviting them to repent (3:3-4, 7), to heal the land (3:8-11), to give them a place of prominence (3:12), to possess the faithful as a treasure (3:17), and to provide healing for the faithful by sending a messenger (4:2, 5-6) (130). However, YHWH is not only a faithful covenant keeper but also the Great King, the head of the army (יהוה צבאות), who threatens war against the unfaithful by judgment (1:10; 3:1-7; 4:1, 3). Therefore, messenger donegality presents a balanced portrait of YHWH: His love and hate, election and rejection, healing and destruction, security and threat, and life and death. Malachi, YHWH's messenger, rightly delivers a royal message from the Great King (131-133).

Despite the above strengths, there are a few concerns with this book regarding the confusion of the identities of the messengers within Malachi. First, the identity of Malachi/My Messenger (1:1) is blurred. Fox states on page 77 that identifying Malachi (מלאכי) as a proper name or title does not make a difference to his study. Yet, he refers to this Malachi as the titular prophet on page 117, where Fox presents him with the other three messengers in the book: the priests (2:7) and two eschatological messengers (3:1).

Second, the identities of future messengers (3:1) are also obscured. Per Fox, the king's messengers (the priests) were so horrendous that YHWH sent Malachi to address them over the king's displeasure in Judah's treachery (123). Due to this unfaithfulness, the king would send the messengers (3:1) to warn Judah of a destructive visit from the king. Here, these messengers blur together as the identities of the messenger of the covenant and the king overlap (125).

Finally, the identity of Elijah (4:5) is unclear because Fox calls him a messenger (128) while asserting that there are four messengers in Malachi (117). Since the identities of Malachi the prophet and the priests are relatively clear, it appears that Fox relates YHWH's forerunner (מלאכי, 3:1) to Elijah and the messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית, 3:1) to YHWH. If not, is Fox intentionally blurring the identities of these messengers? Despite his emphasis on messenger metaphors, it would have been better for Fox to further clarify the identities of these messengers.

Overall, despite the ambiguity of the messengers, Fox's work proved itself as an innovative addition to Malachi scholarship. Its creativity, starting with its innovational methodology, not only resulted in the new classification of Malachi as a *royal message* and its specific date in *Xerxes' time* but also demonstrated its impact on the interpretation of Malachi's theology as well as the assessment of Malachi's literary quality. Messenger donegality indeed has the capacity to influence future studies on Malachi and other biblical texts.

Shiny Kim Yates  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary