

BOOK REVIEWS 137-176

Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study. By Jonathan I. Griffiths. In *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, 42. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017. 153 pp. \$22.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8308-2643-8.

Jonathan Griffiths writes *Preaching in the New Testament* from the perspective of a scholar and practitioner. He has served as a teacher for The Proclamation Trust's Cornhill Training Course and is the Lead Pastor of the Metropolitan Bible Church in Ottawa, Canada. Thus, he is well-suited to address the biblical basis for preaching and its implications for contemporary ministry.

Preaching in the New Testament aims to answer two primary questions. The first question asks if preaching is a distinct word ministry in the church (2), and the second question enquires about the continuity which may exist between Old Testament prophecy and New Testament apostolic ministry and contemporary preaching (3).

To answer these questions from the New Testament, Griffiths structures his work in three parts. Part 1 begins with "a brief biblical-theological overview of the theology of the word of God" (5). Next, the author summarizes key information related to three Greek words for preaching, namely, *euangelizomai*, *katangellō*, and *kēryssō*. After an excursus on "The identity of the preachers in Philippians 1:14-18" (41-43), the first part of the book concludes with a treatment of how a New Testament understanding of preaching impacts other word ministries in the church.

The second part of *Preaching in the New Testament* consists of six exegetical studies. The first focuses on 2 Timothy 3-4, with special attention given to 2 Timothy 4:2. Griffiths begins with this specific text because he asserts that "[2 Timothy 4:2] is arguably the New Testament passage concerning preaching that most clearly and directly applies to pastor-teachers in the post-apostolic age" (53). Following an excursus on "Biblical-theological connections between New Testament preaching and Old Testament prophecy" (61-66), the remaining exegetical studies are presented in canonical order and center around Romans 10, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 2-6, 1 Thessalonians 1-2, and Hebrews, respectively. Although these swaths of the biblical text are lengthy, Griffiths does a masterful job of providing sufficient interaction with the

details of key passages within their broader discourse settings while maintaining his focus on the theme of preaching.

Part 3 is the most succinct section of the book. Here Griffiths collects key exegetical observations from the second part of his resource in one convenient list and unpacks insights from his overall study. Taken together, these closing observations provide an answer to the two primary questions which set the course for this work.

The following two strengths and weaknesses may be noted for *Preaching in the New Testament*. Beginning with the strengths, Griffiths' work may serve to supply an antidote for the pragmatism which ails some aspects of contemporary preaching and which could eventually call into question its relevance for ministry today. The author pinpoints this important issue when he asks, "Is a view that in any sense sets pulpit preaching apart from other forms of word ministry simply a carry-over from an earlier age of evangelicalism – a piece of historical and cultural baggage which has no real basis in Scripture and which is best discarded" (3)? Of course, the fruit of Griffiths' exegetical efforts yields the following modest but clear response: "Preaching is not the sole ministry of the word mandated by the New Testament, but rather forms part – albeit a distinct and highly significant part – of the variety of word ministries envisaged for the post-apostolic era" (133). Consequently, those who value the essential role of preaching in the local church will receive solid affirmation from a careful reading of Griffiths' theological and exegetical arguments.

Another strength of Griffiths' work is the balanced way in which he presents some of his conclusions. For instance, Griffiths does not view preaching in corporate gatherings as dispensable, but neither does he consider other word ministries unnecessary. Instead, he argues for a biblical balance when he explains that "the distinctive nature and significance of preaching suggest that the preaching of the word of God should drive and fuel the other word ministries within the church" (133). Thus, rather than setting forth a false dichotomy between preaching and other word ministries, the author contends a biblical balance exists where various types of word ministries all serve important roles in the church.

In relation to some weaknesses in *Preaching in the New Testament*, it would be helpful for Griffiths to provide more clarity on some points which are integral to his overall thesis. Specifically, one of the main

summary points Griffiths emphasizes is that “the ‘preaching’ to which our three key verbs refer in the New Testament is usually carried out by figures of recognized authority” (35). However, it seems that by way of implication this “recognized authority” is primarily, if not exclusively, presented as vertical in nature, that is, God grants this authority to those who preach. Yet, readers may wonder if there is some sense in which an outward affirmation of God’s call to preach is also important? While a “yes” answer appears to be the case here, readers have to wait until nearly the end of Griffiths’ book for this answer, and it only surfaces in a footnote on page 128. So, Griffiths seems to argue that preaching is limited to those who are both called by God *and* affirmed by the church, but with this aspect of preaching being crucial to an understanding of its biblical basis, more clarity on this point would be beneficial.

Lastly, since Griffiths’ work interacts with some implications for preaching in contemporary ministry, one might expect for Griffiths to argue more directly for a specific approach to preaching which dovetails best with the biblical basis for preaching outlined in his book. However, this only seems to surface indirectly in the author’s study. For example, the word “exposition” appears in Griffiths’ concluding chapter when he describes an important aspect of Old Testament prophetic ministry in post-apostolic preaching (127). So, it appears that Griffiths would argue for an expository approach to preaching, and this makes sense in view of the theological propositions he summarizes early in his work to frame his entire discussion of preaching (16). Thus, an expository approach to preaching as opposed to, say, a topical approach would flow best from the high view of Scripture embedded within the overall fabric of Griffiths’ study, and a more straightforward argument for this approach to preaching would perhaps serve to further strengthen his work.

Griffiths’ goal in *Preaching in the New Testament* is an ambitious one, and aside from some weaknesses which are likely more the result of his self-imposed, restricted focus than anything else, he accomplishes his goal in a clear and concise manner. Readers will find here a wealth of information and insight related to the biblical basis for preaching which should fuel a life-long commitment to handle God’s truth rightly and to proclaim it to others today. For at least these important reasons, *Preaching in the New Testament* should be welcomed with enthusiasm as a vital resource for all those who are called to serve in the specific word ministry known in Scripture as “preaching.”

Pete Charpentier
Grand Canyon Theological Seminary

John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat. By Crawford Gribben. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. 424pp. \$35.00, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0190860790.

Crawford Gribben teaches history and anthropology at Queen's University, Belfast and researches the development of religious ideas in the modern era. In this new biography of John Owen, Gribben aims to describe Owen's "intellectual habits" and "interaction with the literary cultures of his various environments" (ix) to show changes in Owen's theology as reflected in changes in his immediate context. Gribben recognizes his indebtedness to previous biographies and the growing amount of literature on Owen's theology. However, he aims to challenge the common portrayals of Owen as a static figure (even encouraged by Owen himself, who did not draw attention to his changing beliefs but asserted his self-confidence and avoided talking about his personal life) by showing how he experienced defeat, which led to change.

Owen was born after the Reformation in England, a time of great change. The Puritans claimed to continue the reform that had not been completed by challenging the accepted form of church government. Already, separating from the Church of England had demonstrated their failure to reform from within the state church. Thus, Owen was not raised in a time of Puritan triumph but failure. Owen's schooling followed common practices, but his experience at Queen's College became embroiled in Arminian and Calvinist debates, showing that assumptions in Reformed orthodoxy were now being challenged. After Owen's graduation and ordination, he began his divinity studies, but was soon compelled by his conscience to leave Oxford (thus experiencing vocational defeat), because he could not uphold Laud's recently imposed rules. Upon leaving Oxford, Owen felt unimportant and entered a crisis of faith. Though he began working as a tutor for the Lovelaces, he soon found that their differing stances on the war made their relationship untenable and Owen willingly re-entered a time of uncertainty and

disadvantage. He overcame this by throwing himself into scholarly projects.

When Owen began his work as a pastor, he propounded views of ecclesiology, covenant theology, and toleration that differed from the Presbyterian norm, and would thus have to advance his views through the channel of a public career. Owen finally gained the public recognition that he was hoping for when he was invited to preach after the execution of Charles I. His sermon became popular and set him up as a leader of the new direction in which England was going. This made returning to local church ministry seem uneventful and even discouraging, and the loss of his eldest son, after already losing children years before, increased Owen's difficulty. Soon, Owen met Cromwell and accompanied him to Ireland, where Owen was dismayed by the suffering there, but also encouraged by responsiveness to his preaching.

After issues in Ireland and then Scotland had been dealt with, Owen was asked to get Oxford under control. He must have felt triumphant upon his return, but his Puritan attitudes were not welcome among the royalists who still had control of the university; thus, he had to promote his views by focusing on piety rather than dissenting issues. He also began working towards the creation of national reforms, but they would not be accepted or put into play.

With Cromwell as Lord Protector, Owen's career reached its climax. He continued work on a national level but his disillusionment with the status quo under Cromwell began to simmer under the surface. Owen returned to Oxford, where reforms had been successful, but was soon demoted. He opposed the idea of Cromwell taking the crown and even publicly criticised him. This led to his return to the pastorate, where he began to lead the Independents in creating a confession (the Savoy Declaration) as part of their attempt to fill the power vacuum created by the death of Cromwell and ascension of his son. These hopes were dashed when the revolution ended and the monarchy was restored. Owen's colleagues were arrested and killed for their involvement in the king's execution, and the Clarendon Code brought persecution that would force Owen to be constantly moving and changing employment. He channelled his energy into writing and eventually became the pastor of a house church where he would stay until his death, spending his final years as a Nonconformist leader, writer, and pastor. He died without seeing his

dreams fulfilled for the church, though he was an influential Puritan leader.

Overall, Gribben regularly interacts with scholarship, corrects common hagiography, and offers a fair evaluation of general trends and developments in Owen's life and context. However, he also seems to unnaturally squeeze some details of Owen's life into the pre-formed mold of defeating experiences. First, Gribben regularly interacts with past and current scholarship on Owen, making this biography not only useful for understanding Owen's life but also the history and current state of interpreting Owen and potential research topics. As an archivist, this reader was excited to see that Gribben often went back to early printings instead of solely relying on Goold's set of Owen's works. Second, Gribben presents a needed corrective to the trend of overemphasizing Owen's strengths by presenting his shortcomings and failures. Third, Gribben is able to offer general evaluations of Owen's life and context as a whole, as well as developments in his thought over time, the nature of this biography as a chronological account of Owen's life that cross-references other contemporary sources. Perhaps the greatest strength of Gribben's work is that he constantly makes Owen and his context interact with each other. This is seen for example in his explanations of when and why Owen wrote some of his discourses, his involvement in print culture, and his connections to contemporaries like Josselin, Bunyan, and Hutchinson.

However, at times Gribben seems to prod and pull at the details of Owen's life to make them fit into the theme of defeat. Perhaps this is permissible as a corrective to accounts that push to the opposite extreme, or perhaps it is an inevitable consequence of attempting to present a person's complex life in a more coherent way. But this reader would argue against concluding that Owen was "always pushing for providence to lead in the direction he preferred" (248); or that he "made no distinctive and enduring contribution to English or Reformed theology," (270) since he was not innovative. There would be no agreement either, on the argument that Owen's perspective of his own life was one wherein "every success had been undone in defeat" (262); or that those who express their indebtedness to Owen as a spiritual example by getting t-shirts with his face on it, are not in tune with what Owen saw as his weightier successes like his commentary on Hebrews (272). As someone specializing in millennial thought, it is possible that Gribben took Owen's unfulfilled

expectations for the church in his time too far, and as someone trying to critique accounts of Owen's life that divorce theology from context, it is possible that Gribben emphasized context to the point of neglecting theology.

In conclusion, Gribben rightly contextualizes and critiques Owen in a way that advances Owen studies, but could have produced a balanced conclusion by more thoroughly explaining Owen's own understanding of the purpose of the Christian life and what success looks like, as well as his godly intentions as a pastor and writer. Perhaps if Gribben further explored the nautical theme in Owen, using his commentary on Hebrews 6:19, where he says hope is described as an anchor, because it "will hold fast and retain the ship in safety against all outward violence" and will allow the crew to "attend to their occasions" on shore, Gribben could have been more in-tune with the use of Owen as a spiritual authority and example of someone who trusted God and pressed forward in the midst of defeat.

Jenny-Lyn de Klerk
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Taking God At His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me.* By Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton: Crossway, 2014. 138 pp. \$17.99, Hardcover. ISBN 978-1-4335-4240-4**

Known for addressing controversial topics with clarity and grace, Kevin DeYoung (M.Div., Gordon-Conwell) serves as senior pastor at Christ Covenant Church in North Carolina and teaches systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary. He has authored numerous books, including *Just Do Something*, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, and *Crazy Busy*, and he serves as a regular blogger for the Gospel Coalition.

In this short and easy-to-read book, DeYoung examines Scripture's teaching about Scripture. DeYoung focuses each chapter around a biblical passage, drawing out its contribution for his doctrine of Scripture. In chapter one, he introduces Psalm 119 and explains his hope that it would "be an expression of all that is in our heads and in our hearts" (16). This

psalm, he claims, “shows us what to believe about the word of God, what to feel about the word of God, and what to do with the word of God” (16). DeYoung desires readers to express a similar love and admiration for God’s word, and he uses the remaining seven chapters to build towards this goal. In chapter two, DeYoung employs 2 Peter 1:16-21 to contend that Scripture is the divine, inerrant, word of God. This passage, DeYoung argues, shows that the biblical authors grounded their beliefs in the true events of history, not on myths or fables. Peter’s conviction rests in both his own eyewitness testimony, as well as the authority of Scripture.

Chapters three through six make up the core of this book. Using the SCAN acronym, these chapters cover the sufficiency, clarity, authority, and necessity of Scripture. Regarding the *sufficiency* of Scripture, DeYoung turns to Hebrews 1:1-4. He claims that because redemption is finalized in Christ, revelation must be final as well. “Scripture is enough,” DeYoung writes, “because the work of Christ is enough. They stand or fall together” (52). Next, DeYoung uses Deuteronomy 30:11-14 to defend Scripture’s *clarity*. This doctrine affirms that the saving message of Jesus is plainly taught in Scripture and can be understood by all (44). In addressing the Bible’s *authority*, DeYoung contrasts the divergent responses to Scripture in Acts 17:1-15. The Bereans were of more noble character because they saw Scripture as authoritative. While general revelation is helpful in teaching about God, we should never allow it to supersede special revelation. Finally, DeYoung examines 1 Corinthians 2:6-13 and the *necessity* of Scripture. General revelation alone is insufficient for salvation. “We need Scripture because without it we cannot know the love of God” (89).

The last two chapters serve to tie the book together. Chapter seven asks, “What did Jesus believe about the Bible?” Through examining several passages (John 10:35-36; Matt. 5:17-19; 12:38-42), DeYoung describes Jesus’s high view of the Scriptures. Jesus “never disrespected, never disregarded, never disagreed with a single text of Scripture” (109). In his final chapter, DeYoung encourages Christians to endure. Using 2 Timothy 3:14-17, he identifies four reasons Christians should stick with the Scriptures: the history and heritage of their faith, Scripture’s ability to save, the divine origin of Scripture, and Scripture’s practicality in leading to holiness.

Many Christian authors seek to impact people's lives, influence their thinking, and lead them to a greater love for God and His word. To this end, DeYoung's *Taking God At His Word* will find success with many. The book succeeds for three main reasons. First, DeYoung writes with exemplary style and clarity. Taking a complex topic, he delineates it into something any church member can enjoy. He is direct and unequivocal about his meaning. This fact—along with the book's short length—makes it accessible and unimposing to all. Second, DeYoung pairs forceful teaching with memorable illustrations. One example is his turn on the classic *elephant and the blind men* analogy. While acknowledging the analogy works to explain human's inability to fathom the divine on their own accord, he then poses the question, "What if the elephant talks?" (69). DeYoung's sudden turn demonstrates perfectly the uniqueness of Scripture and why it is trustworthy and clear. While I highlight this one example, DeYoung saturates his book with pointed teachings, memorable illustrations, and persuasive application. A third reason worth mentioning is DeYoung's transparency. His love and passion for God's word is evident, and the effect is contagious. Because of this, readers will find their own passion and appreciation for God's word increase. DeYoung's desire for people to love Scripture feels genuine, and it helps the book succeed. For all that the book accomplishes, nothing is more important than this.

A final benefit worth mentioning is the book's appendix. DeYoung lists thirty books dealing with topics of Scripture. These topics include apologetic concerns, the doctrine of Scripture, how to study Scripture, and inerrancy. For each reference, DeYoung gives a short description and rates each work into *beginner-intermediate-advanced* categories, helping readers identify which book to pick up next. This list is a valuable guide for anyone seeking further study.

While I admire DeYoung's love for Scripture and his honorable goal in this book, I am personally uncomfortable with his hermeneutical approach. He claims that this is a book "unpacking what the Bible says about the Bible" (23). Yet in forming and defending his doctrine, DeYoung uses passages that do not speak about the Bible. For instance, DeYoung mixes the concept of the *Bible* with *Jesus* (Heb. 1:1-4), with the *Mosaic Law* (Deut. 30:11-14), and with the *Holy Spirit* (1 Cor. 2:6-13). In addressing Psalm 119, DeYoung acknowledges the different aspects of God's revelation. But then goes on to claim that Psalm 119 is "about the

Bible itself" (12). DeYoung's blending and blurring of concepts forces the Bible to say things about itself it never actually intends to say. His approach disregards the author's original intent, and allows the interpreter to dictate meaning. The inspired Scriptures simply never refer to a sixty-six-book canon, leading me to question whether DeYoung's approach allows the Bible to authentically speak for itself.

Taking God At His Word provides a short, readable depiction of an Evangelical doctrine of Scripture. Many churches will cherish its brevity and clarity. Members sympathetic to DeYoung's perspective will benefit from its content. I recommend this book for anyone wanting to better understand an Evangelical view of the Bible.

Jeffrey Lee Flanagan
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Augustine: Conversions to Confessions. By Robin Lane Fox. New York: Basic Books, 2015. 688 pp. \$35.00. Hardback. ISBN-13: 978-0465022274.

Augustine persists as one of the most discussed and written upon subjects in history. For generations, Augustine has been appreciated, approached, and appropriated from numerous angles. Like a precious stone, Augustine has been admired and cherished from his own time through today. For Gottschalk of Orbais, he was the pearl of predestination. For Thomas Aquinas he was the sacred stone of sacramental theology. To Luther and Calvin, he was the rare jewel of the Reformation. Specifically, his *Confessions* endures as a timeless classic, appreciated by Christians and non-Christians alike for its uncanny ability to describe a universal spiritual angst. For Robin Lane Fox, retired Oxford classicist and author of *Augustine: Conversions to Confessions*, the bishop of Hippo is the pearl of philosophical enquiry and the great gem among great men in late antiquity.

As one "intrigued by his restless intelligence and his exceptional way with words," Lane Fox seeks to understand Augustine as an "intensely introspective" human being just like you and me (xi, 12). Turning the gem to discover one intriguing facet, Fox approaches his subject from the

philosopher's perspective, tracing Augustine's philosophical journey in detail as given in the *Confessions*. Admiring another angle of this jewel, Fox commends the Christian commitments of Augustine, if somewhat hesitantly. Rotating the precious stone yet again, Fox elucidates Augustine as a man of his times, albeit unique in many senses. As a trained historian, Lane Fox ultimately produces a text of significant historical investigation. In all this, Lane Fox produces a lengthy yet readable volume. His work, at times humorous, is not always charitable, yet remains a respectable biography of Augustine.

Conversions to Confessions is presented in six parts, with chapters discussing numerous themes among the numerous "conversions" of Augustine's life. For its length, readers will find it hard to believe that this is only a partial biography. Stopping in CE 397, the year Augustine began writing his *Confessions*, Lane Fox provides a study of Augustine's process of "conversion" which culminated in the writing of his spiritual autobiography. Lane Fox uses "conversion" language to describe shifts in practice and belief in favor of adopting a new one. Lane Fox affirms that conversions happen not exclusively from one religion to another, but "are possible within one and the same religious commitment" (8). This is the hub on which the text turns. The journey of Augustine is one of conversions, at times subtle, but not necessarily radical shifts. For Fox, Augustine was nursed upon the milk of Christian teaching and self-identified as a Christian albeit as a catechumen and one who held Christian Scripture in strong distaste.

Fox triangulates Augustine in history by comparing him to two contemporary figures of antiquity. Libanius, a rhetor some forty years older, serves as a pagan counterpart to Augustine. Libanius also later wrote an autobiography of sorts, a life guided by, in his case, the pagan goddess Fortuna. Synesius, an even nearer contemporary of Augustine, serves as a Christian counterpart to Augustine yet of much different temperament. Lane Fox compares and contrasts Synesius with Augustine's own assimilation of Neoplatonism into his Christian thinking. He also compares the reactions of both Christian leaders who were appointed as clergy against their will. These two men of late antiquity provide historical counterpoints which simultaneously shed light on Augustine's context, while revealing his unique spirit and place in history. Fox traces the training and early careers of Libanius and Augustine, demonstrating their dual concern for public oration.

This book provides valuable reflection on Augustine as philosophical wanderer. I also found Fox's chapters on Manichaeism and Neoplatonism satisfying and helpful. Additionally, Lane Fox's view of *Confessions'* structure and narrative arc, potentially confusing for readers, is helpful and compelling. Lane Fox is thorough in these particular chapters, yet with others, it is possible to get lost in the weeds of Lane Fox's massive text. Lane Fox, with all his helpful elucidation on various facets of Augustine's life and influences, presents some topics with a tad bit of oversimplification. His explanation of the Arian viewpoint is not historically nor theologically complete. Additionally, Lane Fox conceives of Augustine as always within the bosom of the church. As Augustine himself confesses, he was raised on the milk of God's word. Although this is true, likely through the diligent efforts of his mother Monica, Augustine's conversion in the Milanese garden represents more than just a conversion to ascetic Christianity free from the tethers of sexual lust. While there is a thread of sexual reformation in *Confessions*, the thrust of the work relates to the rescue of a wandering soul who is far from God. The instance of the pears in book two demonstrates Augustine's view of sin, and as such, it is not related to sex at all. This story highlights the dramatic effects of sin upon the human soul, allowing the progressive story of Augustine's life of sin and eventual conversion to have a more dramatic impact. Seeing Pontician's desire to forsake all for Christ (after reading Scripture and the *Life of Antony*), Augustine states that the Lord "used his [Simplician's] words to wrench me around to front myself" (*Conf* 8.16). For the majority of Augustine's life, his path towards wisdom and knowledge was completely self-directed. Like a lost puppy seeking shelter, Augustine drifted from ideology to ideology seeking the best one to solve his questions and dilemmas. His inner spiritual struggle continued to toss him to and fro, and each time he would walk away still clinging to a life of the flesh. Though beginning to discover the truth, Augustine says, "But I held back" (*Conf* 8.2). It was God, through the examples of fellow believers and ultimately through Scripture, which finally (truly) converted Augustine. This alone was God's direction and power despite Augustine's attempts to do otherwise. The thesis of conversion from sex to celibacy as the driving force of *Confessions* simply doesn't account for the entirety of Augustine's perspective. It's a significant dimension of Augustine's story, but not the operating agency.

This said, Lane Fox does provide some useful correctives to a simplistic understanding of Augustine's conversion experience. He helpfully asserts that Augustine's garden experience gave him a more balanced view of the Christian God. Augustine, free from inner turmoil which had plagued him for so long, was now *compos mentis* in regards to the God of the Bible. Lane Fox's suggestion, however, that Augustine's conversion to wisdom is on par with his conversion to Christianity is slightly dubious. Certainly conversion comes in many forms, from the sudden to the subtle, but the shift to orthodox Christianity was certainly more than a gentle nudge along the same spectrum for Augustine. Augustine, who once adhered to Manichaeism, an absolutely other-than faith from Christianity, could not possibly have made only a slight shift in his thinking. His anti-Manichean writings, following his conversion to orthodoxy, demonstrate something more than just a modest alteration of thinking. Lane Fox's wonderful treatment on Manichean theology and Augustine's writings on Genesis and creation would seem to understand the dramatic shift in Augustine's thinking, though his thesis does not appear to account for this.

Though he proposes a potentially contentious way of reading Augustine's life of "conversions," his work will certainly prove helpful to scholars of Augustine, worthy to be read alongside other modern biographies. That said, this text is not intended for the Augustine novice or casual reader. Though I disagree with his conception of Augustine and his "conversions," there is much to commend in Lane Fox's scholarship of Augustine's early life. One wonders if he needed almost 700 pages to accomplish his task, but in some ways his attention to detail is admirable. As mentioned previously, his chapters on Neo-Platonism and Manichaeism are some of the most thorough within modern scholarship. Even if scholars may contend greatly with Lane Fox and his arguments, as they surely will, his efforts and positive contributions in this text should not go unnoticed nor underappreciated.

Coleman M. Ford
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Covenant and God's Purpose for the World. By Thomas R. Schreiner. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 119 pp. \$14.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-4999-1.

In recent years, increased attention has been given to the role of covenants in the biblical storyline. *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* by Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum (Crossway, 2012) sought to chart a course between dispensational and covenant theologies under the label "Progressive Covenantalism." This framework seeks to underline God's revelation through covenants, the relationship between the covenants, and how all the covenants find their fulfillment in Christ. Dr. Thomas Schreiner, James Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has continued the progressive covenantalism conversation in his lucid monograph, *Covenant and God's Purpose for the World*. Schreiner's volume is accessible to every thoughtful Christian and rich in biblical material.

The covenants form the backbone of the Bible, unfolding its story from beginning to end. For this reason, Schreiner observes, "We can't grasp how the Scriptures fit together if we lack clarity about the covenants God made with his people" (12). The aim of Schreiner's book is to biblically explore how the covenants progress, interrelate, and ultimately, climax in Christ.

Schreiner defines *covenant* as "a chosen relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other" (13). It entails mutuality and election, oaths and signs, as seen in ancient Near Eastern context (51, 61-65) and biblical history. The *progressive* nature of the covenants looms large in the volume, with each covenant making up a separate chapter.

The first covenant explored is the covenant of creation, which Schreiner admits might be "the most controversial in the book...for...we don't find the word *covenant* anywhere in Genesis 1-3" (19). Nonetheless, Schreiner compellingly argues from 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 that a covenant can be present even when the word is absent, as in the case of God's promise to David (20). A close examination of early Genesis reveals "the constituent elements of a covenant were present at creation" (21). Furthermore, a correct reading of Hosea 6:7,

along with the parallel between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, confirm a covenant of creation (22).

God's covenant with Noah is set before the reader in chapter 2. There Schreiner shines light on the parallels between Adam and the new kind of Adam, Noah (33). Noah dwells on a similar earth with animals (Gen 1:20-21; 8:17-19) and seasons (Gen 1:14-18; 8:22). He was commanded to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28; 9:1, 7). Like Adam and Eve, Noah was to rule the created order (Gen 1:26, 28; 2:14; 9:2). God promised to preserve the human race through his covenant with Noah, hence Schreiner says it could be titled the "covenant of preservation" (31). Yet, even after a new beginning, old realities of sinful corruption still inhabited the heart. Noah would sin in a garden (Gen 9:20-21). Clearly, "the new family (Noah's) had all the same problems as the old family (Adam's)" (38).

Ungodliness continued until the life of Abraham (Gen 12), who was called out of idolatry and into covenant with God (Josh 24:2-3; cf. Rom 4:5). Schreiner's chapter on the covenant with Abraham expounds the threefold covenant promise: offspring, land, and universal blessing (53). Resembling Noah, "Abraham was a new kind of Adam, representing a new beginning" (42). The promised seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) would be the promised offspring of Abraham, Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). As a new Adam, Abraham was promised a new Eden (Gen 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:7, 16; 17:8; 22:17) fulfilled by Christ in the new creation (Rev 21:1-22:5). The covenant promise of universal blessing is also fulfilled in Christ, who "ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). Schreiner's Christocentric hermeneutic is a leading strength of the book. He sets each covenant in context while also giving due attention to how each covenant finds its *telos* in Christ.

The next major covenant in biblical history is God's covenant with Israel, often called the "Mosaic covenant" or the "Sinai covenant" because of the respective leader and location present when the covenant was initiated (59). The chapter is partially framed around the parallels between suzerain-vassal treaties of the ancient Near East (1400 to 1200 BC) and the Lord's covenant with Israel (61). In the Mosaic covenant, the covenant is entered after deliverance from Egypt (Ex 2:23-25; 20:2, 24), stipulated in blessings and curses (Ex 20; 24:7; Lev 26; Deut 26-28), deposited in the temple (Ex 25:16), sealed with a meal (Ex 24:9-11), and marked by the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-16).

In 2 Samuel 7, God establishes his covenant with David. A close reading of the Pentateuch (Num 24:17-19), particularly Genesis (17:6; 35:11), anticipates the fulfillment of a promised king from the line of Abraham. “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” (Gen 49:10), Moses writes. In Schreiner’s estimation, that promise-fulfillment lies at the heart of the Davidic covenant. Schreiner states, “The covenantal nature of what God pledged to David is clear: his dynasty and kingdom will never end...A Davidic king will be the means by which the promises of land, offspring, and worldwide blessing will be realized” (75). David is a new Adam, a fulfillment of Abrahamic promises, and a new Israel, who is to be eclipsed in the new covenant by Christ, “the true and perfect Adam, the true Israel, the true son of Abraham, and the true David” (83).

In the OT, “the prophets promised that a new day was coming, a new covenant would be realized, and thus there would be a new exodus, a new David, and a new creation” (72). The beauty of *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World* is how simply and directly Schreiner showcases Christ as the fulfillment of whole Old Testament. Schreiner helps the reader understand the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34) through several themes: “(1) renewal of heart; (2) regeneration; (3) complete forgiveness of sin; (4) new exodus, forgiveness of sins, and a new David; and (5) reunification of the people of God” (90). Additionally, the volume concludes by examining how, covenant by covenant, “the new covenant is consummation and fulfillment of the previous covenants” (113).

This volume stands as an excellent introduction to the biblical covenants. I commend Schreiner for his clear prose, accessible insights, and most of all, for his presentation of Christ as the fulfillment of the OT, who purchased the new covenant and all its benefits for God’s people by his substitutionary sacrifice on the cross (Luke 22:20).

Brandon M. Freeman
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Greek for Life. By Benjamin L. Merkle and Robert L. Plummer. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 152 pp. \$19.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-9320-3.

In *Greek for Life*, Benjamin Merkle, professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Robert Plummer, professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, have teamed up to consolidate their years of Greek wisdom into one practical book. Merkle and Plummer have worked together before, along with Andreas Köstenberger, to produce the helpful textbook, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament*. Both scholars have taught New Testament Greek for over twenty years. They know the pitfalls of learning and retaining Greek, and they understand how to steer students to success.

Merkle and Plummer's stated goal is to prevent the all too common tragedy of a person receiving an education in Greek for the purpose of New Testament exegesis, only to see that knowledge slip away from memory (ix). They aim to prevent this problem by 1) issuing strong warnings about losing Greek proficiency, and 2) providing motivations and tools that help to keep one's Greek in his exegetical wheelhouse for a lifetime. These professors have crafted the art of inspiration during their years in the classroom and skillfully share motivations that are tried and true. Merkle's and Plummer's advice serves to point Greek students in the right direction—sharpening their focus on the most important things.

Greek for Life is set up as a series of exhortations that come in rapid fire succession with each new chapter. Chapter one sets a pastoral tone by reminding students that Greek is a means to an end, it is not the end in itself. Greek ought to be studied for the purpose of knowing the God who revealed himself in the pages of Scripture, and coming to see him through his language of choice (2). Chapter two is titled, "Go to the Ant, You Sluggard," and serves a fresh dose of admonition to be disciplined in one's pursuit of Greek (19). Various tips and resources are offered for maintaining diligence regarding pursuit of the Greek language (24-33). Chapter three articulates the importance of review and also issues direction for how students ought to go about using the tool of repetition (38).

Chapter four offers a peek into the human brain as it pertains to memory. After an exhortation to use one's memory effectively, Merkle and Plummer provide specific mnemonic devices for various paradigms and charts (54-61). Chapter five contains practical advice for how to use one's Greek daily through an established routine (68). In chapter six, Merkle and Plummer evaluate various resources and offer direction for using them well (91-100). Chapter seven may be mostly directed toward college or seminary students, but the principles apply beyond the classroom. Merkle and Plummer direct Greek students how to use their breaks well so as to avoid long periods of time with no exposure to the language (105). *Greek for Life* ends with a final chapter titled, "How to Get It Back." It presents not only a compelling case to revive lost or rusty Greek knowledge, but also the guide rails for how to get there (123).

Greek for Life has much to be commended. It is short and sweet, friendly yet firm, and filled with expert advice. In many ways, it gives the reader the sense of being back in his seminary classroom—allowing him a second chance to be inspired and equipped by the professor. This is one of the major features that distinguishes *Greek for Life* from other available Greek help books. People who have attempted to learn Greek have an appreciation for the essential role that motivation plays in the learning process. Technical acquisition and rote memorization are critical to learning Greek, but motivation to stay perseverant is equally important—and this is where *Greek for Life* contributes effectively.

Perhaps the strongest feature of the book is the uncovering of the hidden key to Greek mastery. Unfortunately, students are often discontented with it when it is presented to them as Merkle and Plummer do here. The key is discipline. Readers might be disappointed with this solution because they want the secret formula to bring *instant* mastery for Greek. Discipline is the key to mastery, but it is not instant. Honest readers will see that Merkle and Plummer offer something better than instant knowledge. They push for students of New Testament Greek to form habits that bring them, on a recurring basis, to the banquet table of the Scriptures in their original language (20-30). This is something that instant knowledge can never provide.

Two final strengths are worth mentioning. First, *Greek for Life* is peppered with a vast array of quotations and sidebars from scholars, pastors, historic figures, and seminary students. These quotes prove to be more than anecdotal; they shed light and generate urgency, bringing

unique perspectives and adding credence to the overall message of the book. For example, a pithy statement from Hayyim Nahman Bialik, Jewish Poet (1873-1934), says, "Reading the Bible in translation is like kissing your new bride through a veil" (4). Also, an extended quote from Daniel Wallace tells the story of how he lost his memory through an illness and then persevered to relearn Greek from his own textbook (128-129). Second, *Greek for Life* is written from a pair of authors who love the Greek language and who also happen to be God-fearing, and Christ-exalting men. This is a beautiful combination. There is not a worship of the Greek language, but a healthy love.

Two weakness will be highlighted here. First, there is an absence of instruction in the language itself. Merkle and Plummer motivate the reader to go learn Greek, but they don't teach the reader any Greek directly in this work. This may not be as much of a weakness as it is fair warning about what this book is not; it is not a textbook. It serves to motivate readers to pick up their textbooks and learn. Second, there is a scarcity of actual Greek text. Perhaps mercifully, and with the fledgling student in mind, *Greek for Life* contains very few Greek words and examples. The scope of the work seems to be more so limited to strategies and motivations.

There exists a vast contingent of *former* Greek students within the American church who wish they could get their Greek back. For students of Greek who need a coach to call them to action and chart out the proper course, *Greek for Life* is highly recommended. It not only has the potential to help reestablish proficiency, it might even help students achieve a working knowledge of Greek that truly becomes a skill for life.

Mark R. Kelley
Cornerstone Bible Church, Westfield, IN

The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams. By Zac Hicks. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 198 pp. \$17.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-52519-6.

In this short, deceptively dense volume, Pastor Zac Hicks shares his fifteen years of music ministry experience with fellow worship leaders. The burden of *The Worship Pastor* is clear: Hicks wants for worship leaders to think of themselves as pastors, and to filter everything they do through that pastoral lens. This overarching goal is accomplished through sixteen chapters which describe the different aspects of pastoral ministry for music leaders. Faithful worship pastors, argues Hicks, are not just “the music guys,” they are “Church Lovers,” “Corporate Mystics,” “Doxological Philosophers,” “Disciple Makers,” “Prayer Leaders,” and much more.

Because of the punchy, snap-shot structure of the book, summarizing the chapter content is no easy task. Hicks treats each chapter as its own individual unit of thought, which may or may not have anything to do with the preceding chapters (save the shared goal of pushing worship leaders to lead pastorally). *The Worship Pastor* is not a house built with a foundation first, then walls, then a roof, etc.; *The Worship Pastor* is instead a collage. So summarizing the chapter contents by clusters of similar themes is preferable to summarizing their information in chronological order.

Chapters one (“The Worship Pastor as *Church Lover*”), four (“The Worship Pastor as *Disciple Maker*”), five (“The Worship Pastor as *Prayer Leader*”), six (“The Worship Pastor as *Theological Dietician*”), and eleven (“The Worship Pastor as *Caregiver*”) deal with the tasks that are most intuitively associated with the role of the pastor. In these chapters, Hicks helpfully reorients his readers to things of first importance. As he labors to dislodge common, consumeristic assumptions about worship in these important chapters, Hicks argues that the question, “Does this build up the body?” is “the umbrella for everything we do in worship” (53). Thus, “the rest of this book is really just an expansion of this idea—how worship pastors make disciples through the ministry of worship in the church” (53). As Hicks makes clear, this guiding principle has massive implications on how the worship pastor feels about his congregation, how he prays in the service, the theological rubric he uses for song

selection, etc. Thus, these chapters are characterized by gospel-centrality and corporate-intentionality.

Chapters seven (“The Worship Pastor as *War General*”), eight (“The Worship Pastor as *Watchful Prophet*”), nine (“The Worship Pastor as *Missionary*”), twelve (“The Worship Pastor as *Mortician*”), and thirteen (“The Worship Pastor as *Emotional Shepherd*”) can all be described as subsets of the chapters listed above. They further elaborate on Hicks’ core ideas. Making disciples and building up the church, argues Hicks, involves (among other things) speaking prophetically about sin in the world and salvation in Christ, preparing the saints for spiritual warfare, practicing missional intentionality, and preparing the church to suffer and die well. The chapters that comprise this cluster explain how these crucial activities are uniquely fulfilled by worship pastors (as opposed to how they may be fulfilled by other shades of ecclesial leadership).

Hicks ventures into the nuanced weeds of musical style, philosophy of music ministry, liturgical structures and the like in chapters two (“The Worship Pastor as *Corporate Mystic*”), three (“The Worship Pastor as *Doxological Philosopher*”), ten (“The Worship Pastor as *Artist Chaplain*”), fourteen (“The Worship Pastor as *Liturgical Architect*”), fifteen (“The Worship Pastor as *Curator*”), and sixteen (“The Worship Pastor as *Tour Guide*”). Where other chapters contain large portions of information that are applicable to all Christians, these chapters move deeper into the worship pastor’s role to plumb the “tricks of the trade.” The reader finds her technical discussions that concern worship leaders and only worship leaders.

There is much to commend Hicks for in this little volume. Hicks brings to the forefront many issues that are neglected by modern evangelical music leaders. His chapters “The Worship Pastor as *Disciple Maker*,” “The Worship Pastor as *Theological Dietitian*,” and “The Worship Pastor as *Caregiver*” particularly stand out as shining stars. The best thing Hicks has going for him in this book is his awareness of the incredible influence that the music leader has, intrinsic to the role. The general burden of this book for music leaders to wake up to this reality and to steward that influence intentionally and faithfully is a needed, and most welcomed proposal. In this respect, *The Worship Pastor* is a breath of fresh air.

Aside from relatively insignificant, stylistic issues (like a hectic order of content and the redundancy of certain chapters), *The Worship Pastor’s*

biggest problem is the bombshell that should be vigorously argued for, but is instead simply stated axiomatically in the introduction: the notion that fulfilling a role that performs “pastoral” tasks equates to “being a pastor.” Right out of the gate, without reference to the biblical qualifications of—or the formal ordination unto—the church’s office of pastor, Hicks announces to his worship-leading readers, “Ready or not, you’re a pastor” (13). Hicks conflates function and ontology, and essentially says that since the music leader does things in his role that resemble what a pastor does in his role, he *ought* to take ownership of the “pastor” designation. In this way, Hicks shifts the historic, biblical, ecclesial term “pastor” from a formal designation—with specific instructions, specific charges, and specific qualifications (which are not even examined in *The Worship Pastor*, save a passing mention of them in the conclusion [94])—to a self-designated title for those who happen to perform certain duties in the local church. Granted, this oversight is owing to the fact that Hicks attempts to instruct a broad audience from different historic backgrounds with different ecclesial terminology, but the definitional shift is too drastic to make without some justification.

Furthermore, the conflation of function and ontology also leads to serious practical issues. Because of his fast and loose designation of “pastor,” Hicks effectively creates an ecclesial office that is foreign to the New Testament, the qualifications of which are *strictly* functional. This newly created office brings with it expectations that are extra-biblical. For example, in his chapter, “The Pastor as *Artist Chaplain*,” Hicks argues that, strictly because of what a music leader does (i.e., music), regardless of whether or not he has been ordained into a pastoral office and charged to shepherd members of a flock, he is uniquely responsible for caring for *one demographic* of that flock: artists. In other words, Hicks’ definition of “pastor” both falls short of, and goes beyond, Scripture’s definition of “pastor.”

Therefore, Hicks undermines his genuinely strong points in *The Worship Pastor* with this central notion. The “ready or not, you’re a pastor” concept, stated so axiomatically (which is surprising, given Hicks’ careful nuance on a number of topics throughout the rest of the book), proves to be a nagging distraction, which unfortunately threatens to draw the reader’s eye from the bounty of treasures Hicks has placed in *The Worship Pastor*. However, the music leader who can turn a blind eye

this persistent issue will be instructed and encouraged greatly by Pastor Hicks' heart, passion, and experience in this book.

Samuel G. Parkinson
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Anyone Can Be Saved: A Defense of Southern Baptist Soteriology. Edited by David L. Allen, Eric Hankins, and Adam Harwood. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016. 206 pp. \$24.00, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1498285155.

During the summer of 2012, Eric Hankins, then pastor of the First Baptist Church in Oxford Mississippi, released a statement outlining a "Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation" (18). The statement consists of ten articles of affirmation and denial that distinguish Southern Baptist soteriology from Calvinistic soteriology (and to a much lesser degree, Arminian soteriology). The release of the *Traditional Statement* (TS) has proved a major contribution to the ongoing soteriological conversation among Southern Baptists.

Anyone Can be Saved: A Defense of "Traditional" Southern Baptist Soteriology, furthers this ongoing conversation by providing a commentary on the TS. Edited by David L. Allen, dean of the School of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Adam Harwood, associate professor of theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Eric Hankins, *Anyone Can be Saved* is a collection of essays from pastors, professors, and denominational leaders that defend the TS and the soteriological framework the statement articulates.

The first two chapters of the book offer context which situate the chapters concerning the TS. Adam Harwood begins the book by introducing the reader to the TS, and outlines the organization of the book. In chapter one, David Allen provides observations and suggestions regarding the convention-wide soteriological debate, offering a helpful word of unity while charting a course by which the two soteriological camps can both fellowship and engage in healthy debate. In chapter two, Eric Hankins attempts to articulate the uniqueness of Southern Baptist

soteriology, which he argues is not properly defined by Calvinist or Arminian theological systems. The next ten chapters, written by various authors, offer commentaries on the ten articles of the TS. These ten articles are: The Gospel, The Sinfulness of Man, The Atonement of Christ, The Grace of God, The Regeneration of the Sinner, The Election to Salvation, The Sovereignty of God, the Free Will of Man, The Security of the Believer, and The Great Commission. The last two chapters offer supplementary material to the “Traditional” soteriological framework. In chapter 14, Harwood defends the TS against the charge of semi-Pelagianism. The book ends with Steve Lemke describing various theological models relating divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

There are several commendable aspects of *Anyone Can Be Saved*. First, this book is the only in-print defense and commentary on the TS. Indeed, considering the authors contend that Southern Baptists occupy their own, unique “brand” of soteriology (10-13) there is precious little ink dedicated to the matter. Given the importance of the TS within the denominational conversations, a commentary on the statement’s theological positions is needed.

Second, from the outset, the authors acknowledge that the ultimate goal of these ongoing Southern Baptist soteriological conversations is the unity of the convention (xi, 3). David Allen’s chapter on the convention-wide debate is encouraging to this end. While maintaining that navigating the issue of Calvinism and non-Calvinism in the SBC will be both difficult and an ongoing issue (1), he argues, “Being a Calvinist should not be a Convention crime,” and that, “When it comes to Calvinism in the SBC, a fair amount of misinformation, misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation characterizes the current climate” (2). In this chapter, Allen is able to speak clearly and carefully into a conversation dominated by passionate and often hurtful rhetoric.

Despite these few bright spots, *Anyone Can Be Saved* ultimately struggles to be a helpful voice in the SBC soteriological conversations. While Allen sets the expectation that the book will strive to be a fair and unifying discussion, some of the contributors to *Anyone Can Be Saved* may not have read Allen’s chapter, or else have not taken his message to heart. Ronnie Rogers, in his chapter on Article 5, claims that the Calvinist understanding of regeneration prior to faith denies the “clear teaching” that John wrote his gospel so that “...all people, by the Grace of God,

could see who Jesus really is and what he did for them, believe and be saved" (78). Later in his chapter, Rogers accuses the Calvinist of employing "double-talk," a way of speaking that covers up the "disquieting realities of Calvinism." Additionally, in the preamble of the TS, Hankins seems to indicate that Calvinism, without modification, leads to "unacceptable conclusions (e.g., anti-missionism, hyper-Calvinism, double predestination, limited atonement, etc.)" (16). In other words, "unmodified" or "pure" Calvinism is borderline unorthodox. Unfortunately, these statements, and others like them, leave Allen's helpful word of fairness and unity looking disingenuous.

Another shortcoming of the book is that it falls victim to the same traps into which many multi-author books stumble. For example, while the book occupies a theologically sparse niche, it cannot decide if it wants to occupy that space as an academic work or as a popular-level work. Chapters by Harwood and Allen (both professors) have a noted academic tone, while chapters by Eric and David Hankins (a pastor and denominational leader) read more like sermons than academic defenses of a theological position. These disjointed tones lead the book into a squishy middle - too academic for the layman, and too broad, general, and unnuanced for the academic.

However, even in the "academic" chapters, there are several instances where nuance and fairness seem to be sacrificed in the name of "making a point." The book's discussion of compatibilism demonstrates this well. In his chapter on Article 2, Harwood defines "compatibilism" as, "...the Calvinist view that a lost person's will is irresistibly changed through regeneration so they now desire Christ" (39). This is not the definition of compatibilism - at least, not the definition one would find in a theological or philosophical dictionary. Compatibilism is a well-known theological/philosophical concept, yet, Harwood presents his stipulative definition without any qualification. Compatibilism continues to show up several times throughout the book, including chapter 5 (56), chapter 8 (93), chapter 10 (120), and chapter 14 (170), and its presentation constantly shifts between the *Stanford Dictionary of Philosophy* definition and the stipulative definition as a Calvinist way to reconcile (but ultimately supersede) human freedom with divine sovereignty. It would be understandable if a reader with no preconceived notion of compatibilism came away from the book with whiplash, and not a great deal further along in their understanding of the concept.

Anyone Can Be Saved is helpful insofar as it is currently the only book explicitly dedicated to defending “traditional” SBC soteriology via the Traditional Statement. However, despite this unique contribution, this volume is sure to be championed only by those who already subscribe to the Traditional Statement.

Jacob D. Rainwater
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires Our Trust More Than Our “Correct” Beliefs. By Peter Enns. New York: HarperCollins, 2016. 230 pp. \$15.99, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0062272096.

Peter Enns is an Old Testament scholar and author perhaps best known for his controversial tenure and eventual departure from Westminster Theological Seminary. While at Westminster, the flashpoint of controversy had been Enns’ advocacy of a modified form of Biblical inerrancy, known as “progressive inerrancy,” reflected in his 2005 book *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*. By 2008 Enns had unceremoniously departed from Westminster. His teaching and writing, however, have continued to make waves, especially with regard to his attempts to reconcile Biblical teaching with scientific evolution and related challenges to the historicity of Adam (see his 2012 book *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Does Not Say About Human Origins*). In this new work, *The Sin of Certainty*, Enns provides personal insights into how those bumpy days at Westminster and beyond affected him and his family. It also reflects how Enns’ theological views have continued to tack toward the left. Indeed, Enns now suggests that the search for absolute religious certainty is, in fact, sinful.

Enns’ main point is to communicate how, in his movement away from the world of conservative Protestant evangelicalism, his mind has changed with regard to the need for precision in doctrinal beliefs. According to Enns, the problem with conservative evangelicals is that they become preoccupied with “correct thinking,” which “reduces the life of faith to sentry duty, a 24/7 task of pacing the ramparts and scanning

the horizon to fend off incorrect thinking, in ourselves or others" (18). For Enns, such a preoccupation leads to a form of idolatry, as "the problem is trusting our beliefs rather than trusting God" (21). He suggests shifting the focus of faith from beliefs about God to belief in God.

According to Enns, evangelicals have entered an intellectually unhealthy and reactive mode in the face of modern challenges like Darwinian evolution and German higher criticism of the Bible. Drawing on the Psalms, he suggests that the Bible is "less an instructional manual and more of an internal dialogue, even debate, among people of faith about just who this God is that they are dealing with" (70). He also sees this "dialogue" in the Genesis account of Abraham, as well as in the books of Ecclesiastes and Job. For Enns, faith in God "is more than the thoughts we keep in our heads, the belief systems we hold on to, the doctrines we recite, or the statements of faith we adhere to, no matter how fervently and genuinely we do so, and how important they may be" (102).

Enns seems to revel at times in pushing up against traditional theology and piety, asking whether believers have "mistakenly" described man as made in the image of God just because he is "an evolved species with particular adaptive functions," or suggesting that some have been helped more by "therapy and Lexapro" than prayer, Bible Study, and pastoral counseling (128). In the end, Enns suggests that the emphasis on certainty has had "disastrous spiritual consequences" for himself and others as it leads to endless conflict and controversy (140).

Several of the book's brief chapters are devoted to describing his experiences during the controversy at Westminster and the impact this had on him and his family. Sadly enough, Enns describes how those circumstances coincided with a period of time in which his daughter also suffered from an anxiety disorder. This led to her eventual enrollment in a therapeutic school. Whatever one's disagreements with or assessments of Enns, one should feel compassion for what he and his family endured during this stressful time.

In the end, Enns suggests that he has emerged from those difficulties with a transformed and superior spiritual outlook. The alternative to the old rational religious certainty to which he once strived, he now claims to have found in a faith that is "transrational (not antirational) and mystical" (152). Like many liberals before him, Enns makes doubt a veritable spiritual discipline: "Doubt is sacred" (164). Striving for

certainty, on the other hand, is “at best a spiritual distraction, and at worst, simply destructive” (190).

After the Westminster disruption, life has apparently gotten back on track for Enns and his family but in a decidedly new and progressive direction. His daughter thrived at her new school. He now holds an endowed chair in Biblical Studies at Eastern University, a school with American Baptist roots. He has moved from a context of confessional and Reformed evangelicalism to mainline Protestant liberalism.

How are we to assess Enns’ thesis in this book? Is striving for certainty in spiritual beliefs necessarily a sin? What about Paul’s admonition in 1 Timothy 4:16a: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine”? Or Jude’s exhortation “that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3)? Does not the Bible teach the importance of doctrinal precision as part of Christian maturity, lest the believer be “tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14)? It is far from evident that the Bible promotes the search for doubt rather than the search for truth.

Enns’ thesis is also flawed in that it assumes that the desire for certainty in doctrine necessarily leads to lack of vibrant faith in God. Can one not have both? Can one not seek to honor God through orthodoxy while also enjoying him through orthopraxy? And where exactly would Enns draw the line on the piety of uncertainty? Is it overly precise to say that the God the Bible is the one true God? That there are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in essence, power, and glory? That the Word became flesh? That Christ came into the world to save sinners through his death on the cross? That Christ has risen from the dead, ascended, and will come again to judge the living and the dead?

Back in the late nineteenth century there was an Old Testament scholar name Crawford H. Toy (1836-1919) who taught at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Toy was an able scholar who had completed studies at the University of Berlin where he had embraced the German higher criticism of Wellhausen. Upon his appointment as a professor at Southern, he attempted to accommodate his higher critical views to the theologically conservative Baptist context. Using the historical-critical method he wrote several commentaries on Old Testament books which were well respected in the academy of his time and which are still consulted by scholars today. However, in 1879

controversy erupted over some of his writings which led, within a year, to his dismissal from the seminary. By 1880 Toy had become a professor of Biblical studies at Harvard. Within a few more years, he had abandoned traditional, orthodox Christianity altogether and become a Unitarian.

The Sin of Certainty might cause one to wonder if Enns could be tacking on a similar trajectory as that of Toy. Surely, it is sinful to hold wrong beliefs with certainty, but it is not sinful to hold right beliefs with certainty. This is a distinction Enns fails to make in this book, which means his argument rests on a faulty thesis.

Jeffrey T. Riddle
Christ Reformed Baptist Church, Louisa, Virginia

The Extent of the Atonement: A Historical and Critical Review. By David L. Allen. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016. 820 pp. \$59.99, Hardback. ISBN 9781433643927.

In the book, *The Extent of the Atonement*, David Allen, Dean of the School of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, seeks to primarily give a historical overview of the doctrine of the atonement's extent. In the preface, Allen writes, "I have attempted to identify and clarify the significant matters in the history of the discussion and to present them in historical context for consideration" (ix). To accomplish his goal, the book is divided into three major sections with nine chapters.

Part one focuses on the extent of the atonement in church history. This section in four chapters is a historical survey of non-Baptistic theologians from the early church up to the current century. Part two, in three chapters, homes in on Baptist history. The final chapter in this section effectively covers the wide tent of Southern Baptist Convention theologians. In the final section, Allen deviates from a historical survey to offer his readers a chapter-by-chapter critique of the tome *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*. Allen concludes his massive discussion by giving readers an argument for believing in unlimited atonement.

Within *The Extent of the Atonement*, there is much from which to glean. Allen's historical survey of the early church is helpful. He examines

the atonement doctrines of men such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Basil, Jerome, and Augustine, among others. With careful scholarship, Allen demonstrates that the believers of the early church did not hold to a limited atonement view (24). He says, "What one finds in the patristics is a limitation in the application of redemption, not in its accomplishment" (24). The above point is important. One must distinguish application from accomplishment in a discussion of the atonement's extent. This distinction is a motif throughout the book. Additionally, extra space is given to Augustine since many Calvinists like to claim him as being "a Calvinist before Calvin." Allen shows readers that Augustine held strongly to an unlimited atonement (21).

In chapter five, Allen surveys the notable Victorian English Baptist, Charles Spurgeon. Unfortunately, Allen has the incorrect date for Spurgeon's birth. He was born in 1834 not 1836 (503). However, he also charges Spurgeon with inconsistency on his limited atonement conviction. He writes, "Clearly Spurgeon believed in limited atonement. But it is equally clear he was not always consistent with that belief in his own preaching" (506). To this reviewer, it appears that Allen is basing his charges of "inconsistency" on Spurgeon's use of the phrase "Christ dying for your sins towards unbelievers" (504). He also charges Spurgeon with "inconsistency" for using general phrases such as "mankind" and "ungodly" (504-505). What Allen fails to recognize is that a five-point Calvinist can use a "broad" term such as "ungodly" and remain consistent. The reason for this is because "ungodly" is a biblical term. Using Allen's logic, for a five-point Calvinist to use the terminology of 1 John 2:2 in a sermon, the five-point Calvinist would then be inconsistent. The five-point Calvinist must only use the terminology of Hebrews 9:28 and many other verses to stay consistent. This cannot be the case.

Also of interest to this reviewer is chapter six on North American Baptists. It teaches about many Baptist men with which the reviewer was unfamiliar. This is one of the book's greatest strengths. Regardless of one's view on the topic, one must appreciate the extensive historical research done by Allen. For example, there is good information on men such as J. Ramsey Michaels, David Nettleton, Leroy Forlines, Robert Picirilli, and Earl Radmacher, among others.

Allen's critique of James R. White is extensive. He claims that White is a "modern-day high Calvinist" because of his view of the atonement (546-547). This reviewer would attribute high Calvinism to one's view of

lapsarianism, not the atonement. Among other items, Allen's tone in critiquing White seems more harsh than previous limited atonement theologians (with the exception of perhaps Owen and Gill).

In the final historical chapter, Allen provides readers with a survey of Southern Baptists, past and present. As with the previous chapters, Allen takes care to survey many theologians in each respective category. Interestingly, Allen conjectures that since the Abstract of Principles lacks a statement on limited atonement, James P. Boyce, the founder of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, may not have affirmed limited atonement (569). The above is worthy of one's consideration. Allen does a superb job representing most of the SBC's theologians on this matter.

Finally, Allen offers his critique of *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, and he also provides his own argument for unlimited atonement. Brief attention to Allen's argument is appropriate here. His issue is that high Calvinism does not actually teach a sufficient atonement as high Calvinists think (772-773). He puts forth that one of the consequences of high Calvinism is that the non-elect has nothing to reject if Christ did not die for them (774). However, contra Allen, it should be noted that it is not ultimately the atonement they reject but God Himself. God commands all (regardless of their election status) to repent and believe.

David Allen's book is worth reading by all theologians, regardless of theological persuasion, if only for the very fact that this brief review cannot do this large book complete justice. The value of the book is in the historical surveys, rather than the ending argument. That material is well worth the price of the book.

Edward G. Romine
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life. By Michael Horton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 334 pp. \$22.99, Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-310-53406-8

Whatever one thinks of Pentecostalism and the broader Charismatic movement, there is no doubt that they have greatly influenced the development and practice of Christianity around the world. One of the chief ways we can see this influence is through the renewed interest in the person and work of the Holy Spirit, beginning in the twentieth century and extending into the present. This interest has extended across all Christian traditions as they have grappled with understanding and responding to the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. As Michael Horton notes in the introduction to *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, it used to be commonplace to lament the Spirit's neglect within theology, but that is certainly no longer the case (14). Which raises the questions of why another book on the theology of the Holy Spirit is necessary, and why this book should be read instead of others.

Horton recognizes the importance of these questions. While his ultimate goal is to help us understand and experience the Holy Spirit in a more biblical way, his work explicitly challenges three distortions in the church and in the academy that he believes have resulted from this renewed interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. First is the association of the Holy Spirit primarily with the extraordinary, or a tendency for many to think about the Spirit mainly in terms of his baptism, his gifts, and his power instead of the full range of his activity in the world and in our lives as believers. Second is the way this focus on the extraordinary tends to depersonalize the Spirit by leading people to think of him as "power" or as a "force" instead of the "The Lord and Giver of Life" along with the Father and the Son, as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed puts it. Modern academic theology only exacerbates this depersonalization of the Holy Spirit by immanentizing him, assimilating him to the human spirit or the world spirit. This depersonalization of the Spirit then leads to the third distortion, particularly for those who reject Pentecostal or Charismatic theology: marginalizing the Spirit, or taking his presence for granted, relegating him to a minor or even ignored role in the drama of redemption.

Therefore, Horton's central concerns are to explore the Spirit's distinctive role in every work of the triune Godhead, to demonstrate how the Spirit's work is intimately connected to the work of the Father and the Son, and to emphasize the Spirit's continual work in the world and in believers. He begins with an exploration of Trinitarian doctrine and the distinctive role of the Holy Spirit in God's economy as the one who moves the creation toward its intended goal. Next come chapters on the Spirit's work in creation, providence, and redemptive history. The Holy Spirit is the person of God who now brings life from death, salvation from sin, purpose from chaos. The central part of the book examines the Spirit's work in light of Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension. Horton includes chapters on the Spirit's transforming, judicial power, his work of continuing Jesus' ministry in the present age, and what it means to be baptized in the Spirit. He continually demonstrates how we can only understand these works biblically when we understand them in light of the Spirit's relationship to the Son. The latter part of the book focuses on the present and future work of the Spirit, including chapters on the gift of salvation, spiritual gifts, glorification, and the life of the Spirit in the church. Again, Horton emphasizes how these salvific works only take place in Christ, according to the plan of the Father.

Horton, who currently serves as J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary California, writes from within the Reformed tradition, and draws liberally from theologians such as John Calvin, John Owen, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Bavinck. One never gets the impression that his goal is simply to reiterate the historic, Reformed understanding of the Spirit, however, but to be biblical. The book is clearly structured along the lines of redemptive history, moving from who the Spirit is in and of himself as God before creation all the way to the work of the Spirit into eternity. At the same time, it is appropriately systematic, as the particulars of how the Spirit works in a certain or at a certain time are always applied to and understood in light of what the entire Bible teaches us about the Spirit. Horton interacts with all major Christian traditions, especially when comparing or contrasting different interpretations of Scripture, and consistently does so in a gracious way.

What ultimately makes Horton's book stand out is the helpful, Scriptural balance it brings to our understanding of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is involved in what we call the natural and the supernatural, the

extraordinary and the ordinary. As God, he is transcendent and immanent, working to sustain creation and give life, but never to be confused with the creation or life itself. He works individually, corporately, and cosmically, saving individuals who become part of the people of God who will dwell in the kingdom of God. He has a distinctive, unique role in working out God's purposes and is a distinct person of the Godhead, but his work and person should never be considered apart from the work and person of both the Father and the Son. Despite the renewed emphasis upon the Holy Spirit in recent years, much confusion about him still persists. *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit* reminds us that he is actively involved in our lives and in our world at all times, and for that it's worth reading.

Gary L. Shultz Jr.
First Baptist Church Fulton, MO

Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ. By David B. Garner. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2016. 366 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-62995-072-3.

David Garner (Th.M. Dallas Theological Seminary; Ph.D. Westminster Theological Seminary) is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. He has written and lectured extensively on the doctrine of adoption. In *Sons in the Son*, he takes up some of the questions that remained unanswered in his dissertation and other writings on adoption, providing readers with an excellent, accessible survey of the doctrine of adoption that touches union with Christ, justification, and sanctification.

Garner provides a poignant introduction to *Sons in the Son* in which he exposes how using the modern, human understanding of adoption to explain or illustrate theological adoption distorts the biblical teaching of the believer's adoption in Christ. A distinctive of theological adoption is that it exposes and celebrates the benefits that believers receive because of their union with Christ. Adoption in Christ provides riches that far exceed human adoption. As the title of the book suggests, adoption can only be properly understood if it is understood to be adoption *in Christ*.

The believer is adopted because Christ was adopted by the Father. This understanding is the foundation for Garner's presentation of the doctrine of adoption. In the introduction, Garner also provides an outline of his goals for the work: (1) to bring renewed reflection on and prominence to the doctrine of adoption, (2) to deconstruct misunderstandings regarding theological adoption, and (3) to "construct a biblically faithful theology of adoption in Christ" that is both forensic and filial (xxvi). He admirably accomplishes each of these goals in the chapters that follow.

Sons in the Son is divided into three sections. The first section provides a helpful foundation for the rest of the study. Chapter one argues that Paul uses the concept of adoption both comprehensively and paradigmatically, even though the term for adoption is used infrequently in the Pauline corpus. In this chapter, Garner also briefly surveys the key biblical texts for adoption (Romans 8-9, Galatians 4, and Ephesians 1) and determines that Ephesians 1 is the most appropriate starting place from among them. Chapter two provides a historical survey of the church's understanding of the doctrine of adoption. While adoption has been a well-loved and pastorally relevant doctrine to many throughout the centuries, Garner concludes that, despite its integrative treatment by Calvin and its inclusion in the Westminster Standards, the doctrine of adoption has often been largely mistreated. Sometimes it has been overshadowed by or subsumed under other doctrines and rarely has it been given the full treatment that it deserves. Calvin's *Institutes* provides possibly the fullest treatment of the doctrine, considering adoption to be "synonymous with salvation" (28). Chapter three explains the "biblical, cultural, etymological-lexical" background of Paul's concept of adoption (35).

While admitting that the Graeco-Roman culture certainly informed Paul's understanding of adoption, Garner argues that Paul's primary understanding of adoption is theological. It is built on redemptive-historical and covenantal concepts to explain how people become sons of God. Garner's argument is convincing because it is built on the understanding that "covenant history is gospel history" (45) and that the redemptive-historical and covenantal contours of Scripture can more appropriately determine the meaning of the gospel than can Graeco-Roman legal practices.

The second section of *Sons in the Son* provides exegesis of the key Pauline adoption texts. These key texts follow the outline of adoption purposed (Ephesians 1), adoption accomplished (Galatians 4), and adoption applied (Romans 8-9). Working progressively through these passages in this order fits well with Garner's redemptive-historical approach, but more importantly, it fits well with the biblical narrative. One of Garner's recurring themes throughout these three chapters is that redemption involves more than simply a change in legal status by justification and placement into a family. Garner insists that adoption must be understood to involve moral transformation as well. "In the beloved, adopted sons become holy sons; by the Holy Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15), they conform fully to the image of their elder brother (Rom. 8:23-30; 1 Cor. 15:12-49). Election and predestination deliver filial transformation—legal and renovative—by filial grace" (75). He continues this emphasis throughout much of the remainder of the book, and his corrective emphasis on the necessity of both justification *and* transformation in redemption is welcome. It is certain that those who have been adopted by the Father *in the Son* will be progressively transformed by the indwelling Holy Spirit and will one day be glorified, completing this transformation.

Garner truly shines in the final section of the book that explains adoption's place in biblical and systematic theology. In the first chapter of this section, he deals with the issue of Christ's adoption as Son. He places the adoption of Christ as Son at the resurrection and successfully avoids both the errors of adoptionism and "static sonship" (184). He clearly makes the point that Christ's adoption is a new kind of sonship for the eternal Son. Those who are redeemed take part in Christ's adoptive sonship rather than His ontological, eternal sonship. In the next chapter, Garner addresses the confusion regarding the *ordo salutis*. He points out the overemphasis on justification that is common in Protestant circles. He helpfully explains that Reformed soteriology is not only compatible with but in fact teaches that righteousness is both imputed (justification) *and* infused (sanctification) (248). Chapter nine outlines the covenantal parallels between the first Adam and the last Adam. The resurrection of the second Adam marks His fulfilment of the Covenant "on behalf of the sons" (260). The final chapter brings the topics of the previous three chapters together by explaining that adoption is the "inclusive benefit" (308) that the adopted sons receive by

nature of their union with the adopted Son. All those who are united in Christ are adopted by the Father. Justification and sanctification are the result of union with the adopted Son, and justification and sanctification are the evidence of that union. Arguments concerning the order (whether logical or chronological) of these benefits are unnecessary since these benefits are the result of union with the Adopted Son. Adoption is "the supreme benefit [because of] its Christological substance" (310).

Garner has written an excellent study of the doctrine of adoption in which he interacts thoroughly with current and past scholarship. He weaves together the key threads of biblical studies, systematic theology, and historical theology to present a strong case for adoption that displays the glories and benefits of union with the adopted Christ through both justification and sanctification. He interacts very well with the relevant works in the field, often navigating a solid middle ground between very nuanced positions. He is also not afraid to challenge traditional Reformed understandings of adoption and the *ordo salutis*. *Sons in the Sons* should be read by professors, seminary students, pastors, and informed lay people. It would fit well as a supplemental text for any class on soteriology and should be required reading for any study on the doctrine of adoption.

Bradley Sinclair

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***First Freedom: The Beginning and End of Religious Liberty*. 2nd ed. Edited by Duesing, Jason G, Thomas White, and Malcolm B Yarnell III. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016. 288 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1433644375.**

First Freedom is a collection of essays aiming to help Christians appreciate and protect the gift of religious freedom. Thinking about the relationship between our faith in Christ and our engagement in American culture is often fraught with complexities. Numerous questions are raised and simplistic answers will not suffice. J. G. Duesing, provost and associate professor of historical theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, along with Thomas White, president of Cedarville

University, and Malcolm Yarnell III, professor of systematic theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, have assembled a number of essays in order to point readers in the right direction.

Most respectable Baptist sermons begin with an introduction that grabs attention and sets a trajectory for what lies ahead. Often, these sermons have three points and a conclusion. *First Freedom* reads like a well-written sermon in the same tradition. Duesing gives a brief overview of how the idea of a “wall of separation between church and state” found a home in American religious and political philosophy. Though not explicitly found in the American Constitution, a separation of church and state nonetheless existed in the mind of at least some of the founding fathers and most Baptist believers. Yet, the promotion and defense of religious liberty is not restricted to early American thought. Edward Bean Underhill, a British citizen and Baptist, promoted religious liberty in England even as similar ideas were developed across the ocean. The authors of the present book continue in the tradition of early Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic in defending and promoting religious liberty.

Like a well-rounded sermon, the book is divided into three sections. In section one, biblical and historical foundations of religious liberty are outlined. Paige Patterson, Thomas White, and Malcolm Yarnell combine to offer a respectable introduction to religious liberty in New Testament, Anabaptist, and Baptist history. Yarnell helpfully introduces the reader to two prominent streams of early American political theology. Particularly important in this section is how our Baptist forebears, in continuity with Jesus and his disciples, held both to the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation and to religious liberty for all.

The second section narrows in on the particulars of religious liberty from a biblical perspective. Barrett Duke argues for religious liberty as a fundamental human right. Evan Lenow shows how religious liberty connects to the gospel, including how religious freedom should lead to gospel proclamation. Finally, Andrew T. Walker helps the reader think carefully about faithful engagement in the public square, especially in light of recent challenges to such engagement. The third and final section takes a closer look at the application of biblical ideals in light of present challenges to religious liberty. Russell Moore reminds us that we must engage culture first as Christians and not merely as conservatives. Albert Mohler offers stunning insight into how the present sexual revolution challenges our gospel-driven efforts in the public square. Thomas White

and Travis Wussow close the third section by explaining the unique challenges facing religious institutions and international communities.

Duesing brings the sermonic presentation to a close. Though we argue for and defend the idea of religious liberty for all persons in the present, we must remember that this present age is soon to pass away. In the near future, when Christ returns, all persons will, willingly or unwilling, bow their knee to the kingship of Jesus and religious freedom will be no more. This eschatological reality should inform how we live in the present day.

The historical portions of the book remind the reader of the diversity of thought about the church and its relationship to the state. Any belief that Baptists have approached politics and the Christian faith in monolithic ways is deconstructed. Malcolm Yarnell does a particularly fine job in describing the “major tradition” and the “minor tradition” in historic Baptist political theology. The “Virginian tradition” (the major tradition) “tends toward the Quaker position, while the second tends toward the Puritan tradition” (51). As Yarnell shows in his chapter, there are negatives and positives within each and we are wise to learn what we can from both.

This is tremendously important for us today as we engage with other Christians. There are and always will be (until Christ returns) those in our churches who formulate different positions than we do. In such cases, there must be grace and understanding. We must guard the unity of the body, making sure not to elevate second and third tier issues to places of unnecessary importance. Noting the diversity of early Baptist thought helps us appreciate the diversity of opinions today while seeking to live faithfully tomorrow.

Another important aspect of the book is how religious liberty connects to the mission of the church. In a number of the essays, various authors remind the reader of how our freedoms serve rather than hinder our gospel-driven efforts. Evan Lenow writes, “It is easy to see how legal guarantees of religious liberty provide a context in which the gospel can move about unhindered by threat of bodily or social reprisal” (115). Lenow continues, “May we exercise [our religious freedom] first and foremost by bringing the message of the gospel to a lost and dying world” (126). Andrew Walker states, “religious liberty is like a lineman who clears the way for a running back” (154) “so that the gospel might advance” (155).

The advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the Spirit-empowered work of Jesus' people. Religious freedom clears the pathway for us to take the gospel forward. The path may become cluttered in our cultural situation, and armed guards might stand in our way, but we do not put the mission on hold. We march on regardless, confident that Jesus is building his church. Yet, we do not have naïve and romantic ideas of persecution that keep us from seeing the tremendous advantages religious liberty provides as we work to see the gospel flourish.

Duesing, White, and Yarnell have assembled a stellar cloud of Baptist witnesses to offer a thorough introduction to religious liberty. The essays in *First Freedom* should serve pastors, students, and lay persons in thinking historically, biblically, and theologically about the proper separation and interaction between individual faith and the public square. The book helps us all appreciate and defend our first freedom, while taking advantage of our opportunity to advance the good news of Jesus for the good of all peoples and the glory of our God.

Jonathon D. Woodyard
Northfield, MN