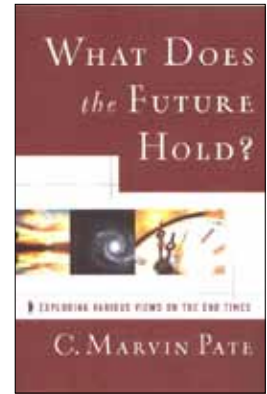


*What Does the Future Hold?: Exploring Various Views on the End Times.* By C. Marvin Pate. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. Pp. 151, Paperback \$12.99.

Have you ever been confused by all the various views of the end times? Well, if you have, you are not alone. In his recent book *What Does the Future Hold?*, C. Marvin Pate works to disperse the fog. It is clear, concise, and balanced, giving each of the major millennial views equal consideration. Pate also challenges the insipient skepticism creeping into Baptist churches and scholarship today. This book is a call to find comfort and joy in eschatological prophecy rather than fear and paranoia (7-10, 97, and 145). The degree to which he succeeds, however, will depend on his readers' ability to challenge some personal convictions that often are guarded fiercely.



Pate's outline is simple. He surveys the history of biblical prophecy, explains and critiques the three millennial views, and ends with an editorial on the prevailing skepticism in liberal eschatology today. The author then presents his eclectic eschatology that finds comfort in each of the millennial views.

The presupposition that undergirds Pate's eschatology is the "already/not yet" kingdom of God hermeneutic. In the opening chapter, he points out that "the careful reader . . . will recognize that often biblical predictions have two types of fulfillment: a near and a far fulfillment" (17), which he equates with "already/not yet." Pate, however, fails to build a case for this arguable hermeneutic, popularized by C.H. Dodd. The three examples, Isa. 7:10-16; Dan. 9:24-27; and the Olivet Discourse, are interpreted in light of the presupposition not as evidence for it. This weakness is key because Pate filters his entire eschatology through this presupposition. Considering the importance of the point, a more involved discussion is warranted.

Over the next four chapters, Pate summarizes and critiques the various views by the way they understand the kingdom of God. For premillennialism the kingdom of God has not yet come; for postmillennialism the kingdom of God has already come; for amillennialism the kingdom of God has already been inaugurated only to be fulfilled at the second coming; and for the skeptical view the kingdom of God is not going to come. Thus Pate makes a clear theological distinction between each of the four positions.

After walking his readers through each of the millennial interpretations, Pate states his view. From postmillennialism, he accepts the preterist conviction that many of the prophecies centered around the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, though he balks at their insistence that equates this event with the parousia. From premillennialism, he accepts the emphasis on the coming kingdom, though he recognizes that this view fails to appreciate the kingdom of God at work in the church today. And from amillennialism, he accepts the emphasis on how God's kingdom "is already here but not yet complete" (130), though he bristles at how it allegorizes Revelation 20 (129-30).

Pate claims that the Bible eludes not to the eternal kingdom of God but to a "temporary messianic kingdom" that was established with the incarnation and will be fulfilled at the parousia

(130-31). In this way, he is able to affirm both the “symbolic nature of prophetic-apocalyptic writings” and “the literal reality behind the symbols of Revelation 20” (131). Although he calls this view “eclectic,” it is nothing more than a soft form of amillennialism. He is in keeping with traditional amillennialism in all ways except for his willingness to include a premillennial, literal interpretation of Revelation 20 in tension with the established amillennial, figurative reading.

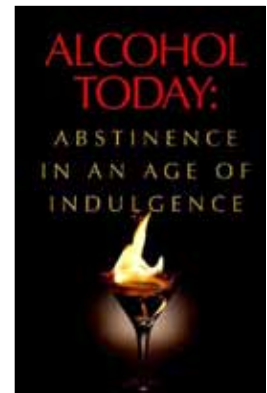
As mentioned above, the degree to which the reader can accept Pate’s so-called eclectic reading of eschatology depends on how tightly he or she holds to his or her current vision of the end times. For those, however, who have spent little or no time wrestling with this subject, Pate’s presentation may bring a certain peace of mind—which, ultimately, is his goal (8).

By including an explanation of the “already/not yet” presupposition, and by admitting that his so-called “eclectic” model is soft amillennialism that includes a literal fulfillment of Revelation 20, Pate would strengthen his book considerably. At a short 151 pages, this work could easily accommodate the additional space needed to correct these oversights. Pate does a good job at setting the various models of the end times apart from each other. He presents the basic position of each side, and for premillennialism includes the various views of the tribulation. The writing is easy for the novice to follow, even if occasionally it is too generalized. *What Does the Future Hold?* serves as an excellent introduction to the subject and would be appropriate for use in both church and college.

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*Alcohol Today: Abstinence in an Age of Indulgence.* By Peter Lumpkins. Garland, TX: Hannibal, 2009. Pp. 152, \$14.95.

To study Church History is necessarily to grapple with the failures of one’s predecessors in the faith; to grow wise from the study of Church History requires that one grapple with one’s own failures as well. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Southern Baptists find themselves in the midst of an ongoing reassessment of their traditions—a reassessment that has yielded helpful correction of past errors. Southern Baptists now reject racial discrimination while no longer looking askance at the use of playing cards or at a waltz with one’s wife. Not all reassessments are equally healthy, however. Bygone convictions about modesty, chastity, marital fidelity, stewardship, regenerate church membership, and memorization of Scripture warranted better treatment from modern and postmodern Southern Baptists than they have received at their hands.



In which of these categories does the doctrine of abstinence from the recreational use of beverage alcohol rightfully belong? The question is important and worthy of careful—dare I say *sober*—thought. *Alcohol Today* prevents Southern Baptists from blithely sweeping away former ideas about alcohol without giving them due consideration.

At the headwaters of the book, Lumpkins's transparent account of his own tragic involvement with alcohol reveals why it was important for him to write this book; his careful historical account of America's post-Prohibition journey demonstrates why it is important for us to read it. *Alcohol Today* next insightfully categorizes the field of opinion regarding beverage alcohol into a continuum of five views: hedonism, utilitarianism, moderationism, the "wisdom view," and abstentionism. The latter, the view Lumpkins advocated, enjoins "total abstinence from intoxicating beverages for pleasurable purposes" (99). The book considers each view in turn, offering Lumpkins's critiques of the positions that rival his own. The book concludes by positing a biblical theology of "wine" in both Old and New Testaments.

Although the book provides five views for the sake of being exhaustive, the clear objective of *Alcohol Today* is to convert evangelical inerrantists from the moderationist position to the abstentionist position, seeking along the way to inject those advocating the "wisdom view" with a little convictional courage. The key strategy of the battle plan is to confront inerrantists with the fact that the Bible in multiple places uses plain language to condemn wine itself, and not the abuse of wine. On the other hand, the Bible in multiple places uses plain language to praise wine itself, and not the responsible use of wine. Is the Bible self-contradictory? As if ethical questions were not serious enough, Lumpkins demonstrates how this is a question of the nature of the Bible.

The moderationist position, Lumpkin's argues, offers no good solution to this problem other than to explain away or disregard the anti-wine passages in favor of those that praise it (130-31). The abstentionist solution to the problem comes through acknowledging that the various Hebrew and Greek terms translated "wine" actually convey a range of meaning more similar to that of the modern English word "cider," which may refer to a fermented beverage or may equally well refer to a beverage that is not fermented. The range of authorities cited to confirm this point of linguistics, from Aristotle to John Owen, is overwhelming. Lumpkins then cuts the Gordian knot of these seemingly contradictory verses by proposing that the anti-wine verses refer to fermented wine while the pro-wine verses refer to non-fermented wine.

The occasionally repetitive nature of the book, which Lumpkins himself acknowledges in the text (130), reflects the surprisingly beleaguered status of the abstentionist viewpoint just a single generation after it held nearly universal hegemony among Southern Baptists. Those who find little moral value in the Old Testament will not be persuaded by Lumpkins's arguments, for much of what the Bible says about wine it says between Genesis and Malachi. Likewise, those who reject biblical inerrancy will remain largely unmoved by Lumpkins's arguments. Other Southern Baptists will face the task of determining whether the growing dalliance with beverage alcohol among Southern Baptists represents the correction of our fathers' fault or the indulgence of our own. That task cannot be addressed well unless the substance of Peter Lumpkins's *Alcohol Today* is met and answered somewhere along the way.

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*From Creation to New Creation: Making Sense of the Whole Bible Story. 2d ed. Revised.* By Tim Chester. United Kingdom: The Good Book, 2010. Pp. 176, Paperback \$12.99.

Tim Chester serves as co-director of The Porterbrook Network which equips individuals and churches to rediscover mission. He also serves as director of The Porterbrook Institute which provides integrated theological and missional training for church leaders. Having received a Ph.D. from The University of Wales, Chester is a co-leader of a group of church-planting networks called The Crowded House. He is the author of more than a dozen books.



The old saying that it is hard to see the woods for the trees may be true of the Bible. Many people read the Scriptures as a collection of individual and possibly unrelated parts, rather than an ongoing and unfolding unified story. *From Creation to New Creation* is Chester's attempt to assist believers in seeing the Bible as a whole rather than a collection of individual parts. His underlying assumption is that "the whole Bible is about Jesus, from beginning to end" (7). The whole story of the Bible makes sense only as one understands how each individual part points to Christ in whom God purposed to sum up all things.

Chester traces the unfolding story of the fulfillment of God's promises to send a Deliverer, to develop a people who know God, to provide a place of blessing, to send a King and a kingdom, and to bless all the nations of the earth. Each specific promise is developed in a corresponding chapter. The reader is made to understand from the Scripture that the promises are never fully realized until the coming of Christ. God fulfilled His promise of a Deliverer and a King in Christ Jesus. God fulfilled His promise of a people who know God in Christ through the Church. God's promise of a place of blessing was fulfilled, not in physical Israel, but in the spiritual Israel of Christ. God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham's seed is being fulfilled as the gospel is preached to all nations.

Chapter six provides a short conclusion to this work. People can escape the terrible curses pronounced in Deuteronomy and receive the blessings promised to Abraham only through faith in the death of Christ. Through Christ, the curse is reversed for all who embrace the Savior and Lord.

Dr. Chester fulfilled his purpose of providing readers with a lens to see the Scripture as one unified story about Christ. *From Creation to New Creation* is an easy read. Brevity, clarity, and simplicity characterize Chester's writing style. Readability should not be confused with lack of substance. Readers are confronted with important biblical realities worthy of discussion and debate. Some ideas worthy of future study include the kingdom of God realized in Jesus, the church as the new Israel, Apostle Paul's conception of God's promise to Abraham as the basis for missions, and the messianic theme of Psalm 2 as it applies to Christ and the church.

One should note that *From Creation to New Creation* is not primarily an academic work. The notes that ultimately became this book were prepared by the author for a seminar to train missionaries. Thus, Chester did not attempt to build a case for academic debate. Rather, he

purposed to present, from the Scriptures, his view that the Bible can best be understood when we see the different parts of the Bible as one unified, unfolding story of the fulfillment of all of God's promises in Christ. No references outside the Scripture were provided.

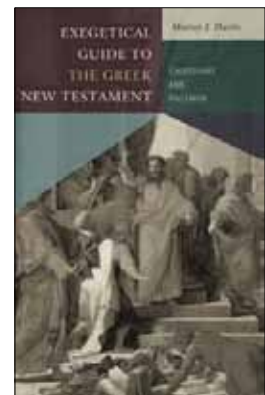
The conclusion was the weakest part of this helpful book. The six-page conclusion was short and inadequate. A logical progression of thought flowed in every chapter and tied all the chapters together except the conclusion. The author failed to answer the critical question posed by the previous chapters: "So what?" After outlining how God fulfilled five specific promises, the author gave a generalized conclusion and failed to capture his momentum. A stronger conclusion would include a specific correlation of each chapter's promise to an appropriate response demanded by the fulfillment of that promise. Instead, the writer lumps all implications into a brief observation about the necessity of faith in the death of Christ as a means for escaping and appropriating the curses and blessings of Deuteronomy. One wonders if the conclusion was added as an afterthought.

*From Creation to New Creation* will be helpful for all who want to understand the Bible and the plan of God throughout history. Though not primarily a scholarly work, this is an important work that raises many issues to be considered in both popular and scholarly arenas. This book should be of particular help to new believers and prospective believers who need to see the big picture of how the Bible fits together.

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*Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Colossians and Philemon.* By Murray J. Harris. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010. Pp. 272, Paperback \$24.99.

This volume on Colossians and Philemon is the first in the projected 20-volume EGGNT series to be published by Broadman and Holman Academic with the ambitious goal of addressing the interests of three disparate groups — ministerial student, professor, and pastor — by connecting careful grammatical analysis with exegesis and exposition. If this volume is in any way representative of the entire series, this ambitious goal will be achieved.



The readers find in this volume a "one stop" resource that addresses the kind of focused technical discussions in different areas of expertise for which the expositor must normally peruse three or four books -- textual criticism, literary structural analysis, grammatical analysis, a paraphrase of the text, a new translation of the text, theological topics raised in the text, a list of recommended bibliographical resources and reference works on disputed exegetical and theological issues, and expositional/homiletical suggestions. Not only can the expositor find all

these resources in this single volume, but by putting them side by side as they relate to each phrase in the biblical text, Harris provides a synergism between these varied issues which is unfortunately lacking in grammars or even most commentaries. Thus, in one volume the scholar finds rich resources for further research, and the preacher finds helpful exegesis and homiletical outlines to assist in sermon preparation.

This is not a quick read, and it is not for shallow devotional reading. Though the book is less than 300 pages and comparatively small in size, every page is packed with information (the list of abbreviations is 10 pages). This is a book for a thoughtful pastor/scholar/expositor and requires knowledge of the biblical languages to maximize its value. Anyone who loves the careful exposition of God's Word, however, will find this to be a gold mine of information that is incredibly useful on multiple levels.

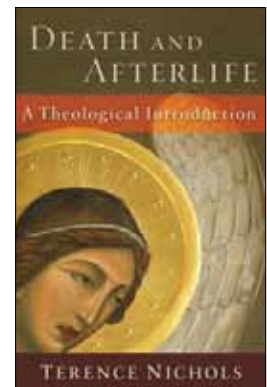
The discussion of each phrase of the text includes structural analysis, careful grammatical examination of each word in the text, parsing of the words, a survey of various alternative translations, a discussion of any significant textual variants, a list of recommended reference works addressing the key exegetical or theological issues which arise in the text, and some suggested homiletical outlines to consider for exposition. In addition to this phrase-by-phrase exegesis, the book includes a translation and paraphrase of the complete biblical text and a thorough glossary of terms, which are helpful reminders for those whose Greek skills are rusty.

This is an incredibly valuable volume for scholar and pastor alike. Its great strength is the gold mine of exegesis and resources of each phrase of the text. The sermon outlines are adequate but may need to be expanded and sharpened to be appealing to congregations. Of few books do I say it is a "must buy" addition to one's library, but this is such a volume. I highly recommended it for serious students of the Bible.

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*Death and Afterlife: A Theological Introduction.* By Terence Nichols. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010. Pp. 224, Paperback \$22.99.

Terence Nichols, professor of theology and chair of the department of theology at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, leaps into the ongoing debate over the nature of the human body and soul. With several books and articles published on the intersection of religion and science, he presents his own model of the soul, which he claims fits both the scriptural and scientific data.



Nichols begins with the obligatory survey of the history of the issue. He begins in ancient Judaism, then moves through the New Testament and Christianity, before discussing recent developments in

science, ending with a close look at near death experiences. While the history is well trodden, Nichols wisely guides his readers through the most important developments. Since this is designed as an introductory book, the author is careful not to overload his readers with too much information but points them to broader horizons with expansive endnotes.

Around the midpoint of the book, Nichols gets to the heart of the matter. The theological discussion begins with various views of the soul and focuses on the five most provocative developments: reductive physicalism, emergentism/nonreductive physicalism, substance dualism, holistic or emergent dualism, and reincarnation. For each of these, he outlines prominent representatives, strengths, and weaknesses.

At the end of chapter six, Nichols presents his position (129-33). He claims that he is attempting “to synthesize the biblical and traditional understanding, incorporate the findings of neuroscience, and also incorporate the evidence of NDEs [near death experiences]” (129). The result of this synthesis is a form of holistic dualism, which means that there is a unity of soul and body until death at which time the two separate until reunited at the resurrection. Nichols wants to remind us that the soul is in relationship with God and it is on the strength of that relationship that we are capable of surviving from life, through the intermediate state, and into eternity.

Following the climax of the book—the presentation of his view of the soul—Nichols applies his view to some of the more difficult doctrines in this field. In his discussion of the resurrection, he confronts the debate with a fair representation of both sides. Drawing heavily upon Thomas Aquinas and John Polkinghorne, Nichols makes his case for a Catholic view of the resurrection which will sound comfortably familiar to conservative evangelicals. The comprehensiveness of the work is evidenced by his inclusion of the issue of continuity of body into his discussion. The careful handling of this material is perfectly weighted for the stated audience.

The last two chapters are where the Catholic roots become much more noticeable. In his discussion of heaven, purgatory, and hell, Nichols ecumenically softens the Catholic dogma and broadens his vision for the sake of open discussion. The only places where Baptists might feel a little uncomfortable is whenever justification and sanctification are mentioned, but any wise reader should acknowledge the position of the writer and allow for a differing point of view.

The book fulfills its title. It serves as a work carefully written to introduce readers to a complex and hotly contested segment of theology. In his historical work, Nichols is fair to both sides of the debate, and I would recommend this book on the strength of the first chapters alone. The rest of the book is equally balanced in its depictions of the various models of the human constitution. And for those conservative evangelicals who are able to overlook the minor intrusions of Catholic dogma, the book is an excellent primer on the subject.

The book, however, has a few weaknesses. First, is the way Nichols presents his concept of the soul. He does so with little fanfare. The title of the section (129) does not suggest that he is concluding

the chapter with his own position, and the explanation of his holistic dualism is relegated to one page (133). I would have preferred to see a much more direct and thorough presentation. He mentions the importance of “the soul as subject in relation” (129) but does not explain what he means. He suggests that we are in relationship with God but goes no further. But Nichols may be right. A much more lengthy and thorough going discussion has the potential of betraying the purpose of the book, so presenting an excessively brief presentation might serve the book better. I just wish he had not been so brief.

A second and much more devastating problem with the book is that it sounds like a Catholic version of the work presented by John W. Cooper in his 1989 book (updated in 2000), *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting*. Similarly, Cooper begins with a Thomistic view of soul and body, presents the soul in terms of holistic dualism, and emphasizes the importance of the divine-human relationship. I question whether Nichols brings anything new to the discussion. Maybe a more detailed presentation of his position would answer this question. I hope a fully formed presentation of his position is on its way.

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