

## Book Reviews

*Taking Your Church to the Next Level: What Got You Here Won't Get You There.* By Gary L. McIntosh, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, September 2009, 215 pgs, \$16.99

How can you turn around a church that has stopped growing? That is the question raised by Gary McIntosh in his latest book. Based on national trends, this is also a question on the minds of pastors, denominational leaders and church members. Ed Stetzer, President of LifeWay Research, notes that 80-85% of churches in North America are plateaued or declining. Thus, the market for this book is significant. As president of the Church Growth Network and a professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership at Talbot School of Theology, McIntosh is well known in the church growth circles. But does his latest work deliver on its promise to help leaders take their church to the next level?

The first chapter challenges the reader to recognize what worked to get your church to where it is (or *was* in the case of a declining church) will not get you where you want to be in terms of growth. The next eight chapters deal with the congregational life cycles of various size churches. Appropriately, McIntosh tips his hat to those who have helped previous generations understand that churches, like people, are living organisms and as such, have predictable lifecycles. Several receive credit as pacesetters, including Robert Dale, whose book "To Dream Again" is still in print and Lyle Schaller, whose leadership books challenged a generation to seek a balance between servant hood and results-based leadership. These chapters are laid out in such a way that a pastor of a church of 15 or a church of 1500 can turn to the appropriate chapter and immediately find resources and insights that shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities of each growth phase.

To enhance the reading experience, McIntosh has chosen to use an on-going conversation between three pastors, Mike, Wes and Phil, who meet regularly at the Holy Grounds coffee shop. Each chapter continues the conversation, providing the reader with a light-hearted introduction to the weighty subject of non-growth.

So, should you read this book? Yes, in fact, I would recommend buying it simply for the diagrams, charts and indicators. The pastor or staff member will find these useful in the assessment process.

Pastors of small churches (those under 150) may embrace or bemoan McIntosh as he makes statements about the smaller church. For example, in contrast to commonly accepted wisdom that says a church can support a full-time pastor and provide for basic ministry programs with fifty or so people, McIntosh contends that churches with fewer than 150 worshipers

often find they must employ the services of a bi-vocational pastor or perhaps pay a pastor a lower than average wage. He also writes that a church needs at least fifty adults to have a public worship service that is celebrative and attractive to new people. For McIntosh, attendance of twenty adults or less is a strong indication the church should be closed.

A key to growth and transitioning through the life-phases of a church is to successfully navigate the *choice points* at each phase of the life-cycle. Choice points are those times when the church makes choices about its future. Unlike the human lifecycle, the church can have an effective and fruitful ministry that may be renewed by leadership to help the church strategically move through the choice points. *Taking Your Church to the Next Level* is a valuable tool for the pastor willing to pay the price to lead a church in growth.

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*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Wide Margin Edition. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007, lxxii + 1574 pp., \$69.95.

Before 1929 available texts of the Hebrew Bible were essentially reprints or edited versions of Jacob ben Hayyim's *Second Rabbinic Bible*, first published by Daniel Bomberg in Venice in 1524/25. Ben Hayyim based his work on late medieval manuscripts and other earlier printed editions. This text probably served as the *textus receptus* behind most early Old Testament translations, such as the King James Version.

Rudolf Kittel utilized the Ben Hayyim text as a base for the first two editions of his internationally acclaimed scholarly work known as the *Biblia Hebraica* (first published in 1906). But beginning in 1929, Kittel decided to jettison the medieval eclectic ben Hayyim text and adopt in its place a text rediscovered by Paul Kahle in 1926 in the Leningrad State Public Library (B 19<sup>A</sup>). According to its colophon, this forgotten codex was copied out in AD 1008. It remains the earliest complete text of the Hebrew Bible. The Aleppo codex is earlier in date, but incomplete. An excellent facsimile edition of the Leningrad codex (L) was published by Eerdmans and Brill in 1998 (*The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition*, D. N. Freedman et al., eds.).

Kittel died in 1929, but several years later Albrecht Alt and Otto Eissfeldt were able to revise and publish the completed fascicles as the third edition of the *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibleanstalt, 1937). Although Kittel only edited five of the twenty-one fascicles, the work soon became known as Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*

(BHK). BHK has often been criticized for its frequent willingness to correct and emend the B 19<sup>A</sup> text based on conjecture and theory. BHK had an important influence on the Revised Standard Version and other translations of the Old Testament of the same period.

A revision of BHK was undertaken from 1967-77 to reflect more faithfully the text of the Leningrad manuscript. Work on the fascicles of this fourth edition began in 1967. The revision was published in 1977 by the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft in Stuttgart as the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). In 1997 the text of BHS was corrected and published as a fifth “emended edition.” This has been the last edition of BHS to be issued.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the study of the transmission of the text of the Hebrew Bible and the consequential shift in the understanding of the aims and limits of textual criticism made another revision of the *Biblia Hebraica* series desirable. As a result a version called *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ) was announced and started; five fascicles have now been released. (See for example, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta: General Introduction & Megilloth* [Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 2004]). Technically, BHQ is to be the fifth “edition” of *Biblia Hebraica*; students must not confuse it with the fifth “emended edition” of BHS. BHQ will probably be published as a complete volume after 2014.

The BHS was initially published in a large easy to read format (9.4 x 6.5 in). This large format is now identified in the literature as the *Editio Maior*. A compact version (7.6 x 5.6 in) labeled *Editio Minor* first appeared in 1984. This small print edition was less expensive and consequently made BHS more accessible to a larger audience. However, the smaller print made a few accents, vowel signs, and some sigla and text of the critical apparatus more difficult to read with the unaided eye.

The smaller *Editio Minor* has proved to be very popular and has been reprinted in various formats. In 1994 it was bound together with the 27th revised Nestle-Aland New Testament Greek text in the somewhat expensive *Biblia Sacra Utriusque Testamenti Editio Hebraica et Graeca* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft). In 2007 an inexpensive paperback edition of the fifth edition of BHS was released. In my personal experience the bindings of both of these reprints have not stood the test of time very well.

Hendrickson Publishers offered the academic world a reprint of the fifth emended edition of the BHS text as a “wide margin edition” (9.4 x 7.1 in) in 2007. This is sometimes misleadingly referred to as a “large print edition.” But this is incorrect because Hendrickson reprinted the smaller *Editio Minor* text as the basis for its edition. The text is exactly the same, except that Hendrickson added 1½ to the outside of the page

and nearly 2½ to the bottom. The edition contains a number of welcome additional blank leaves at the beginning and the end of the volume. If they were able, I would have preferred a reprint of the larger *Edition Maior*, even if it meant a loss in the space available for notes.

Hendrickson also published a wide margin edition of the 27th Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (2007). It is tempting to think that Hendrickson may have intended on publishing a complete Hebrew/Greek wide margin edition. Such a combined text would be very welcomed.

The quality of the binding in Hendrickson's wide margin edition of BHS is good and strong and reassuring as well. However, the weight of the paper is light and consequently thin. The average pen or highlighter bleeds right through the paper. This is somewhat disappointing in light of the fact that the intent was to give the user adequate space to add notes and comments on the side and bottom of the text. Gel pens bleed through quickly and ballpoints leave a tell tale heavy impression on the reverse side. Several writing implement manufacturers (like G. T. Luscombe and Zebra Pen Corp.) make pens and highlighters specifically designed for the thin papers used in Bibles published today. These work better on the Hendrickson reprint.

Hendrickson's wide margin edition remains a serious option for the student or pastor who desires to annotate the Hebrew text as they study. The price is reasonable and comparable to the hardcover *Editio Minor*. Despite the thin paper, I would prefer Hendrickson's wide margin edition to the *Editio Minor*. Nevertheless, there are a few other issues that students may want to consider before purchasing a Hebrew Bible.

It took Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft ten years from the beginning of publishing fascicles to complete the publication of BHS. Five fascicles of BHQ have now been published. If the same time schedule is maintained the final publication of BHQ could be accomplished by 2014 or thereafter. A less expensive version of BHS might do until BHQ arrives on the scene.

The wide margin edition might not appeal to all students. Bible software has made it easier to add notations and comments to the electronic text of the Hebrew Bible. This is true for a number of Bible texts as a whole. My students are more electronically connected, and some prefer reading and translating the Hebrew text right from the computer screen. In this case, hyperlinks are very productive on the computer, but not available in printed formats.

While Hendrickson had no control over the matter, the nature of the BHS text must also be considered before making a purchase. It is true that BHS is the only "critical" option that we now possess in the translation and study of the Hebrew text. But, depending on the needs and interests of the student, other texts may prove more fruitful.

BHS is not a perfect text; nor is it necessarily any better in bringing us closer to the autographs than the *textus receptus* of Ben Hayyim's *Second Rabbinical Bible*. There are small oddities in BHS. For example, the editors chose to place Chronicles as the end of the Writings just like Ben Hayyim's version. But in the Leningrad Codex B 19<sup>A</sup> Chronicles starts the Hagiographia. The editors also introduced sigla for *petuhot* and *setumot* where they were lacking in L.

Even more serious is the eclectic nature of G. E. Weil's edition of the Masorah included in BHS. The Masorah Parva in the margin of BHS is an edited version of the Masorah of L, and must be used with caution. The first apparatus under the text contains references to the Masorah Magna (MM) as collated by Weil in a separate volume. Unfortunately, this very helpful resource is hard to find and not available to most pastors, making it basically useless.

Finally, the text critical apparatus of BHS follows text critical methods essentially practiced before the last century. The editors of each fascicle gave only what they deemed important of the ancient texts and versions with their own preferred suggestions and conjectural readings. Little consideration is given to inter-textual errors and problems within a given version. In addition, BHS was published too early to take advantage of the full impact of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the discipline of textual criticism of the Bible.

Despite these problems, BHS is still the best academic text available. Consequently, Hendrickson's wide margin edition will appeal to students and scholars alike. Being aware of the peculiarities of BHS should alleviate for a period any mistaken conclusions concerning the Masorah and the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. At least, this would be true while we wait for the publication of BHQ. But even then, there will be no guarantee that all our problems will be solved.

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*Baptism: Three Views* by Sinclair Ferguson, Anthony N.S. Lane, and Bruce A. Ware, ed. David F. Wright. Downers Grove: IVP Press, 2009, 200 pp., \$16.00

In the book *Baptism: Three Views* Dr. Bruce Ware, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, and Dr. Anthony Lane spar with each other over the issue of baptism, but specifically infant versus believer's baptism. A side match that takes place during the course of the book is the issue of immersion versus some other form of baptism. In the introduction to the book the

editor David Wright lets the reader know both the importance of this book and the reason behind why just these three views have been selected. For many in our Western culture the issue of baptism seems like a fairly minor dispute in and of itself, and this is often true even among evangelical believers. Wright, however, makes it clear that the issue of baptism is often an extremely important issue in other cultures. For many around the world, it is the act of baptism that sets a person apart from the surrounding culture and it is this act that causes one's friends and relatives to distance themselves from the one baptized. Baptism does not cost us much in our culture and for that reason it is often not given much thought, but it is definitely an area in which we need to think deeply, if for no other reason than to help support our brothers and sisters in the faith around the world who put their life on the line when they step into the baptismal waters.

As to the reason for just these three views, Wright informs the reader that the book is aimed at the mainstream evangelical market and that the three views presented are the most common in that market. It is an interesting combination that has been put together for the book. We have the believer's baptism position supported by Ware, the infant/believer's baptism position supported by Ferguson and then a hybrid position support by Lane in which both views are acceptable. It is Lane's third position that is probably most often held by the average church member, not because they have studied the subject and come to this conclusion as Lane has done, but because they see the issue of baptism as insignificant and they therefore see no reason to invest much energy into determining the how and the why of baptism. The path of least resistance is to then conclude "to each his own." While Lane does come to a conclusion that says to each his own, he does not come to it as a path of least resistance, but based upon his "seismological" reading of the history of baptism in the first five centuries of the church. We will come back to Lane later in this review.

As is the case in all multiple view books, each author presents his position and then the other authors reply to that position. A nice feature of *Three Views* is that after the two replies from the other writers the author of the chapter under consideration is given an opportunity to respond to the critiques about his work. Since the book only deals with three views the format is practical and does not cause the book to swell to an inordinate size. By reducing the number of perspectives to cover the book is able to cover the chosen topics in a deeper manner than is normally given in this type of format. Haven given a quick overview of the structure of the book, a look will now be given to the three views in the book.

Dr. Ware presents the position for believer's baptism in a fairly straight forward manner. He relies heavily upon the Bible as the basis for his belief that baptism is reserved for those who have believed in Jesus Christ. According to Ware, there is no indication in the biblical text that baptism is ever administered to someone who is not a believer. It should come as no surprise that Ferguson disagrees with this assessment. On this issue, Ferguson has to argue from silence in that those instances that speak of a household being baptized could have possibly included infants, but the text does not explicitly say as much. Ware does a commendable job refuting this claim by Ferguson. Another conflict that arises between Ware and Ferguson is over whether baptism is a seal of faith or a seal to faith. Not surprisingly, Ware argues that baptism is a seal of the faith that a person has in Christ, while Ferguson argues that baptism is a seal to faith. The exchange between both authors over this issue is enlightening as they work through the deep theological issues regarding covenant theology and the relation of baptism and circumcision. Another issue dividing Ware and Ferguson is what the historical record reveals. Ware argues that the early church evidence does not support infant baptism, while Ferguson argues that it does support it. Ware only gives a few pages to the historical evidence, while Ferguson begins his discussion with a historical treatment of baptism. While this reviewer agrees with the conclusion of Ware over Ferguson, both authors give a good presentation of the respective traditions that they represent.

As you might have noticed, so far in this review Dr. Lane's position has not been discussed and that is intentional. Dr. Lane presents a Dual-Practice view of baptism in which both infant baptism and believer's baptism can be supported. He does this by what he calls a "seismological" reading of church history. Lane wants to see history in a way that is analogous to how seismologists record earthquakes. A seismology station can be hundreds and even thousands of miles away from the epicenter of a quake and yet the station can still give an accurate reading of the intensity of the quake. In a similar manner, Dr. Lane argues that what is happening regarding baptism in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century are seismic readings from earlier in time. While this historical method has validity, there is the danger that as we attempt to read the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century practices backwards that we fill in the gaps with information that is incorrect. While Dr. Lane spends quite a large portion of his chapter dealing with the historical evidence with the conclusion that in the earliest church there was a dual practice of both believer's baptism and infant baptism and that the Bible's ambiguity on this issue is the reason for the dual practice that we see in the later church. Lane argues that this dual position is indeed the correct position, and Dr. Ware rightly

responds that if Lane is correct, then both Ferguson and he are wrong. It is for this reason that both Ware and Ferguson reject Lane's dual practice conclusion. While Ferguson argues that a church can both baptize infants and believers, he rejects Lane's position that says that the church accepted both a believer's baptism and a paedobaptist position. It is not that different churches can choose different practices, but that the same church could adopt both positions and still be theologically correct. Likewise, Ware rejects Lane's position, but his rejection stems from his rejection of Lane's conclusion that history shows infant baptism as an early practice of the church. Ware always argues that the Bible is not ambiguous on the issue as Lane argues, but is indeed quite clear that baptism is only for believers.

In our ever more diversified society, books that deal with various views on a topic are proliferating like bunnies. While this is a good thing, there is a danger that as the books take on widely disparate views that each view is watered down to such an extent that the reader is not given a robust presentation of the various views. It is a strength of *Baptism: Three Views* that only three views are presented and that these three views are presented by theologians who have a similar position regarding Scripture. It is the commonality of the writers that allows them to delve into the topic on a deep level. If one is looking for a good read on the issues surrounding believer's baptism versus infant baptism, with a hybrid third option thrown in for good measure, then *Baptism: Three Views* is a recommended place to start.

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*Why Johnny Can't Preach* by T. David Gordon. New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2009, 108 pp., \$8.95.

Dr. Gordon was diagnosed with stage III cancer. Uncertain of how long he had left to live, he wrote what he thought could be his last contribution to the world, *Why Johnny Can't Preach*. He survived the cancer, but his last 30 years of sermon analysis reveals a worse disease that persists. As a conservative Christian who loves Jesus and the preaching of the Word, his diagnosis is that the American Church is plagued by ministers who cannot preach.

He writes from within the Reformed and Presbyterian world where pastors are required to be seminary graduates able to pass Hebrew and Greek exams. Within that tradition, with its high regard for the original texts of Scripture, he concludes that most ministers are not skilled in

handling the Bible. It is not the fault of the seminaries, he argues, but the fault of the students who arrive at seminary incapable of dealing with literary works.

Our image-based systems of communication have shaped the culture, and that culture is the matrix from which we obtain pastors. Pastors are not conversant in written texts because they swim in images. The rub comes when they try to converse about the sacred texts.

An unskilled preacher reads the Bible the same way he reads a computer manual, sports magazine or newspaper. The bible, it turns out, is not read with the regard one would give to Shakespearian literature because there is no enjoyment of Shakespeare or literature. Instead, the Bible is culled for data, quotes or proofs to be dumped into a sermon machine. A sermon machine generates the exact same sermon for John 3:16 as for Romans 5:8. The minister who is insensitive to the significant differences between John 3 and Romans 5 will produce the same sermon regardless of the text.

The sermon becomes the point, and the Scripture is incidental. The preaching is not shaped by the text, for the text is only the prompt that reminds the preacher of what he already thought. The text does not shape the sermon because it has no moving pictures to shape the minister, and that cascades down to the hearers. *Johnny Can't Preach* because Johnny cannot read literature. He is not skilled in any literature, including the Bible, because the dominant media has nourished him with constantly switching camera angles, tempo-intense music, pithy dialog, and now multi-sensory white-board markers that are scented in order to distract him from the pain he experiences when slowly writing actual words. (Scented markers are a sign of the end of our civilization.)

Americans read but they do not read literary works. Dr. Gordon calls this *aliteracy*: the ability to read, but not reading well. Being aliterate, the pastor is able to see the text and not see it. The sermon is preached, but it is not a sermon. The lauded sermon has become a media event that resonates with an aliterate culture.

The church can help solve this problem by preparing seminarians for seminary. Johnny can help too. Before entering into biblical studies he should turn off his television and adopt a life of reading and writing. Dr. Gordon's most controversial suggestion is a system of sermon reviews. I happen to agree, and I would love for more people to scrutinize what I am trying to preach. However, the problem will be with the reviewers themselves who are also immersed in the dominate media ecosystem. Are they above the fray? Are they in a better position for analysis than the man incapable of preaching? I ask because if *Johnny Can't Preach* then it probably goes unnoticed since Sally cannot hear.

By measuring and observing the sad state of preaching, Dr. Gordon is helping to change it with a happy instance of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. I have the members of our church read *Why Johnny Can't Preach* because it is medicinal. It promotes Christ-centered preaching as the cure for the disease.

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*New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ.* By Thomas R. Schreiner. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008, 990 pp., \$ 44.99 hardcover. ISBN: 978-0-8010-2680-5

Judged by the number of books published at the time, the field of New Testament theology was quite barren only two or three decades ago. Those completing their theological training in the seventies and eighties remember well the shortage of reliable books on this topic. Especially for the evangelical students, the works of G. E. Ladd (1974) and of D. Guthrie (1981) were among the few valuable treatises in print. In them, the student was able to find the voice of the Center on a theological spectrum that was far better served by the agendas set by theologians on the Left, among them the acclaimed work of R. Bultmann (1951-55).

How radically the situation has changed in just three decades. Beginning with the early nineties, the discipline of NT theology seems to have started a period of vitalization, albeit not without a fair amount of skepticism or even rejection. As a result of this renewed interest, these decades have seen some of the greatest evangelical NT minds producing such valuable tomes that now the decision to assign a textbook for a NT Theology class has become a virtual nightmare. At least six books with that title have been published: L. Morris (1990), G. B. Caird (1992), B. Childs (1992), G. Strecker (2000), I. Howard Marshall (2004), and F. Thielman (2005). Just as important, one must acknowledge the significant series *New Testament Theology* of Cambridge University Press under the editorial work of J. D. G. Dunn, as well as the works of N. T. Wright and James D. G. Dunn, each one of them being engaged in writing a comprehensive *New Testament Theology*.

Of course, in such a crowded field, the legitimate question is how could one justify yet another book on the theology of the New Testament, one just shy of 1000 pages? Even as I am writing this review, I see on the advertising brochure of the same publishing house, Baker Academic, an announcement that by the end of the year the *magnum opus* of Udo Schnelle will be made available to the English readers. Its

title? *Theology of the New Testament*. Their rival company Zondervan has just embarked on a new series of eight monograph-size volumes, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, under the editorial work of Andreas Köstenberger. Why, then, another book on NT Theology? The answer given by the author in the Introduction of the volume as well as the book as a whole will have to be assessed by each reader. To that end, the present review aims to highlight the distinctive elements of this most recent New Testament Theology, written by a well known and respected evangelical scholar, Thomas Schreiner, the James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The author advances and defends the thesis that “the New Testament theology is God-focused, Christ-centered, and Spirit-saturated, but the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit must be understood along a salvation-historical timeline; that is, God’s promises are already fulfilled but not yet consummated in Christ Jesus” (p.23). This undergirding theme is traced in the major corpora of the NT writings: the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine Literature, the Acts of the Apostles, The Pauline Literature, Hebrews and James, 1-2 Peter and Jude, and Revelation.

The book is divided into four parts, each one dealing with a particular aspect of the concept of “promise”, the theme which, in Schreiner’s synthesis, best captures the essence of God’s revelation in the events unfolding in the New Testament times, which subsequently became the New Testament Scriptures. The theme is reminiscent of the theological center chosen by W. Kaiser for his Old Testament Theology, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*. Unlike Kaiser who traced the theme of “promise” diachronically throughout the Old Testament, Tom Schreiner advances a thematic approach, a decision that does justice to the unified nature of the New Testament writings, highlighting the overarching theme reflected in the various subdivisions of the New Testament. This indeed is the most distinctive feature of the present volume.

The first part, “The Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises,” lays out the conceptual framework needed for a proper understanding of the New Testament theology when a concept of such as “Promise” is set at its center. The dual aspect of fulfillment of God’s promises, on the one hand, already fulfilled in Christ, but on the other, yet to be fully consummated, is central to every aspect of the Schreiner’s work. Schreiner summarizes, “The promises made to Abraham have been fulfilled in a decisive way through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but the end of history has not arrived. ... the final curtain has yet to come down of the last act” (p.116).

In part two, the author develops his perspective on the saving work of the Godhead from the assertion that the “centrality of God in Christ is the

foundational theme for the narrative unfolded in the NT,” (p.119). From the very beginning, Schreiner distances his approach from that of a standard systematic theology, arguing that his analysis pursues the inner agenda found within the New Testament itself, and not that of a philosophical or dogmatic system imposed for the exterior. This, indeed, constitutes a safe and secure foundation for biblical theology, carefully guarded by Schreiner. Theology proper is treated as an inseparable tandem with the Christology espoused in the New Testament: “Separating the revelation of God in the New Testament from Christology, as if God is central and Christ is secondary is impossible” (p. 120). Subsequently, the topic is explored at length in the span of ten chapters. The first and last of these are allotted to the persons of God the Father and God the Spirit, respectively, while the remaining eight are devoted to the person and work of Christ. The partition of the material in the Christology section is not always clear, since the two main foci of the analysis, the person and the work of Christ, are not uniformly divided among the major NT corpora.

Part three, “Experiencing the Promise: Believing and Obeying” focuses on the “work of salvation that is accomplished by Father, Son and Spirit” (p. 509). The argument is built on three distinct stages. It starts with an analysis of the problem of sin, the condition of mankind for which salvation was necessary. The response to God’s salvific work is then summarized in the call to faith and obedience, seen primarily as a personal and individual responsibility. Finally, these important theological concepts are framed in the specific timeline of salvation history, the proper place to discuss the topic of the Mosaic Law and related issues.

The fourth and last part presents the theme of the people of the promise and the future of the promise. Three chapters are set aside to unfold Schreiner’s perspective on these topics. The first one delineates and defines the people of the promise; the second scrutinizes the social work of God’s people; lastly, the third looks forward to the consummation of God’s promises. A variety of subthemes pertaining to ecclesiology and eschatology are treated within the textual perimeter of their canonical placement.

For the reader who will find an overwhelming amount of material covered, the volume includes useful conclusions at the end of each chapter. In fact, an abridged version of Schreiner’s theology is already in the editorial plans of Baker Academic. An appendix charting the development of the NT theology as a bona fide theological discipline is a good guide for the readers new to the field. The book also includes an author index and a Scripture index, as well as a bibliographical list of almost 50 pages, no doubt a selective one, showing the daunting task

awaiting any author attempting to write a NT theology at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Will this book become *the* definitive evangelical voice in the area of New Testament Theology? This is unlikely, if not simply for the abundance of the sources already available. As other reviewers remarked, Schreiner's book stands tall within the evangelical and Reformed theological traditions, and yet, the decision to choose between the volumes of Marshall, Thielman and Schreiner, to name only three representatives, is never going to be an easy one. I have found many brilliant passages in Schreiner's volume, particularly in the Introduction and the Pauline chapters that indeed show the mind of a seasoned NT theologian at work. In other parts, however, especially in the areas not known to be of prime interest for Schreiner's research, his analysis amounts to a mere enumeration of ideas drawn from relevant biblical passages, without any particular fine tuning. As a case in point, one finds that Schreiner's treatment of the people of God, of their social world, and the consummation of the promise within the epistle to the Hebrews corpus, lacks the depth of theological discourse that his treatment of Pauline corpus, for example, has made us expect.

Schreiner's volume, however, has no competition among the thematic approaches to the biblical theology of the New Testament. As such, it is a worthy and timely replacement of D. Guthrie's classical treatment for the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and every student and pastor will benefit immensely from reading it and using it.

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*The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of Empires.* By Leo G. Perdue. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008, 502 pp., \$38.00

Leo G. Perdue's *The Sword and the Stylus* is meant to serve as an introductory handbook on wisdom literature. By "wisdom literature," Purdue means not only the biblical books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Qohelet, but also includes the deuterocanonical books of the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach.

Perdue hopes his text will fill what he believes is a gap in the majority of texts on wisdom literature. He believes that most treatments have viewed the wisdom literature idealistically as "disconnected ideas that are seen as eternal thoughts the savants understood to be true" (1). His text regards wisdom literature as a socio-political development of ancient

Near Eastern cultures. Central to his thesis is that wisdom literature served the purpose of propping up and legitimizing the political power of the ancient Near Eastern empires.

Perdue begins his discussion with a lengthy Prolegomenon. In this first chapter he explains his method of approaching wisdom literature and how it differs from the investigation of the same subject by other scholars. He also surveys the wisdom literature of the great Near Eastern empires from the early Egyptian period until the Hellenistic era. Included in this survey is an overview of the various texts, their peculiar terminology and general themes, as well as the function of the scribe in each of the societies.

In chapter two, Perdue discusses the biblical book of Proverbs which he views as a representative of wisdom during the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which received its final form during the Second Temple period. Perdue's examination of the various collections which comprise the book has convinced him that Proverbs was internationally influenced. He concludes the chapter with a discussion of the role that the scribes played during Israel's monarchy and the major themes that are found in the book of Proverbs.

The subject of the third chapter is Job which Perdue identifies as a representative of wisdom during the Exile. Following a discussion of the date and literary structure of the book, Perdue discusses parallels between the book of Job and Babylonian wisdom literature. Perdue concludes the chapter with a discussion of the role of the scribe in the Neo-Babylonian Empire and the theme of the book. Perdue believes that Job should be understood "as a response to the devastation caused by a traumatic national experience in the life of the community of Judah," i.e. Judah's fall and the pursuant exile (148). The conclusion which Job draws in the face of this tragedy is that God does not rule the world in righteousness and is generally unconcerned by the plight of humans. According to Perdue, this questioning of God's justice is the only proper recourse in the face of the tragedy of the Exile (149). While I agree that the Jew in exile would have questioned the justice of God, I think Perdue is wrong to date Job to this time period and to conclude that Job presents a picture of God as one who is unconcerned with human misery.

Perdue turns next to the Psalter which he believes developed over a long period of time, and includes numerous hymns that would have been a part of the liturgy at the Temple in Jerusalem. Perdue does not concern himself with the entire Psalter but limits himself to one particular genre of psalms, the wisdom Psalms, which he claims is representative of wisdom literature during the Persian period. The basis of this identification is the focus on the Torah in these psalms, which Perdue believes is the result of the developing importance of the Torah during

the time of Ezra. The prominence of Torah in this period is due to the role of Torah as the basis of Israelite society and piety, and the role of the scribe as its official interpreter.

Chapter five is dedicated to the book of Qohelet. Perdue argues that the central feature of Qohelet is skepticism, which he believes makes this book a representative of Jewish wisdom literature during the early Hellenistic period (which Perdue identifies as the Ptolemaic Empire). He argues that during the Hellenistic period Greek philosophical skepticism along with other Greek philosophies were introduced into Palestine. Qohelet was influenced by this skepticism. The search for meaning and the conclusion that man must seize the day (*carpe diem*) are seen as further indications of Hellenistic influence.

Hellenistic influence upon Jewish wisdom literature extends into the Seleucid Empire with Sirach, which is the subject of chapter six. While Sirach was composed in Hebrew, Perdue demonstrates that it was heavily influenced by the Greek language, literature, and philosophy. Rather than advocating a wholesale adoption of Hellenism or a full scale rejection, Sirach attempts an adaptation of traditional Judaism to Hellenism which results in the importance of the Torah and temple observance in order to participate in the continuing order of the universe.

Perdue also writes about another deuterocanonical book, the Wisdom of Solomon. Perdue believes that the Wisdom of Solomon reflects wisdom among the Diaspora during the Roman era. The purpose of the book is to encourage loyalty to traditional belief in the face of persecution and Greek xenophobia.

In his final three chapters, Perdue discusses the continuation of wisdom. In chapters eight and nine he connects wisdom with the apocalypticism of Daniel and Enoch, and Qumran. In chapter ten Perdue views the Tosefta and Midrashim as rabbinic continuations of wisdom literature.

*The Sword and the Stylus* is a reminder of the importance of the historical, literary, and social setting in the interpretation of biblical literature, including biblical wisdom literature. The Prolegomenon will serve as a valuable resource for those needing a quick overview of the wisdom literature found throughout the ancient Near East. Perdue does spend a disproportionate amount of time discussing Greek wisdom which had the least impact on biblical wisdom. The extensive bibliography and multiple indices (modern authors, scripture references, and nonbiblical ancient literature) are a great help.

However, the late dates which Perdue assigns to most of the wisdom material are questionable. This is particularly the case with his dating of Job to the time of the Exile and his dating of Qohelet to the early Hellenistic period. Of course, accepting earlier dates also challenges the

detailed settings he constructs for these books, as well as his interpretation.

Perdue's central thesis that wisdom served the legitimization of the "institutions of wealth and power, in particular monarchies and temples" of their time is also questionable. Much of the biblical, and even some of the nonbiblical, wisdom literature can be seen as critical of the political structures of their time. This would be true of Perdue's understanding of Job as well as Qohelet and Sirach, but also the Admonitions of Ipuwer, in which Perdue states "the king is also roundly condemned" (22).

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*The Power of Multisensory Preaching and Teaching.* By Rick Blackwood. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008, 208 pp., \$19.99, hardback.

What began as an observation in Rick Blackwood's personal devotion time became a preaching experiment in his Miami, Florida church, developed into the regular practice for preaching and teaching in his church, became the topic for doctoral research and a resultant dissertation, and finally the subject of his book, *The Power of Multisensory Preaching and Teaching*. The observation involved Jesus' use of multisensory elements when preaching and teaching. Blackwood's observations and research led him to the conclusion that "the more senses we stir in the learner, the higher the levels of learning" (17). His book is based on that premise. Blackwood's goal is to encourage the reader to implement multisensory elements that will help him or her move from being a good communicator to a great one, from being a great communicator to being a phenomenal communicator (13).

Blackwood divides his book into three parts. The first introduces multisensory communication. After telling of how he came to be aware of this communication mode, Blackwood explores the benefits of multisensory communication and the neurological explanations of why this is an effective means of preaching and teaching. Further, he examines objections that some have raised about this methodology and offers responses to those objections. Blackwood closes his first section by explaining how expository sermons can integrate multisensory elements, and how together these can result in increased retention and life change. Concerning expository preaching and multisensory communication, Blackwood says, "Let's connect these two God-given forces so that we can be more effective for the kingdom's sake" (87).

The second part of Blackwood's book offers the method for beginning to implement multisensory communication. He reassures readers that the task is not complicated and advises the pastor and the church to implement changes gradually. Pragmatically, Blackwood offers what is almost a chronological check-off list beginning with the idea and developing it through a worship and sermon series. In doing so, he explains who needs to be involved in the process at every step and stage. Finally, Blackwood explores various multisensory elements and how to incorporate them.

The third part targets pastors, offering them instructions for preparing a multisensory sermon. Blackwood presents examples of multisensory sermons, explains how to plan them according to a text, and lists various elements to incorporate and how to do so. In this last section, Blackwood emphasizes how multisensory preaching achieves what every communicator wishes to accomplish: increasing attention, elevating comprehension, and strengthening the audience members' retention. Using the same pattern, Blackwood offers full text manuscripts of sermons that demonstrate these three benefits.

The book contains an epilogue and two appendices. The epilogue offers a testimony from Blackwood, describing an opportunity he had while sitting in the back of the church to observe the effect a multisensory sermon had on a nonbeliever. The first appendix offers details of Blackwood's doctoral research design and his methodology for statistical data gathering and evaluation. The second describes a sermon series the author used that involved visual art.

*The Power of Multisensory Preaching and Teaching* has many strengths. The first is Blackwood's consistent passion and conviction about the effectiveness of this communication method. His conviction is based on biblical study, personal experience, and empirical research. This triumvirate of support solidifies his passion for multisensory communication.

Second, Blackwood consistently elevates the Word. He emphatically states that the *method* of communication should never eclipse the scriptural message:

I am not saying that visual aids and interaction should dominate the sermon. In fact, let me be clear. Textual accuracy is the most critical portion of biblical teaching. Second to that is the need for verbal clarity. Sound biblical teaching must begin with sound exegesis followed by verbal clarity. Visual aids and interaction with the audience should be viewed as aids to that process. (38-9)

Blackwood clearly explained how he began to hypothesize that multisensory communication increased the listeners' attention, comprehension, and retention levels. The book's third strength is the way Blackwood explains how he went from having a hypothesis to having statistically significant data. Throughout the book, he offers glimpses into how he came to his conclusions without ever allowing his research information to become cumbersome for the reader. Then for those who would want to know more about his data collection and analysis, Blackwood offered an appendix to describe the details.

Finally, for those wanting to incorporate multisensory communication in their teaching and preaching, Blackwood offers step-by-step instructions. Generously, he is willing to share not only important information but also practical advice. He offers: "Please feel free to use any and all sermon materials presented in this book" (90).

Two omissions, though, weakened the book. Although Blackwood offered biblical support for many of his points and offered responses to possible objections, he failed to address those who might object using Romans 10:17: "... faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (NKJV). Those offering a narrow interpretation to that verse might object to multisensory preaching and teaching. I wish Blackwood would have offered a response to those who might raise such an objection. Second, I thought Blackwood failed to explain how to implement multisensory preaching and teaching in a small church. He explains the many teams and staff members who need to be involved in the process and even diagrams it (122). However, he offers no scaled-down parallel advice for pastors who serve smaller churches.

*The Power of Multisensory Preaching and Teaching* comes in a long line of books on preaching. The classic work by John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (originally published in 1870), set the standard for generations of preachers. Edwin C. Dargan's work, *A History of Preaching* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), offers a look at homiletic style and trends from A.D. 70 to 1900. Blackwood's work, though, is different in that it does not explain how to preach or prepare sermons nor does it offer an overview of sermonic methods. Instead Blackwood uniquely offers a handbook for implementing a single communication style, a style derived from his personal observations and empirical research.

Several books have come out recently that highlight preaching. Examples include: *Communicating for a Change: Seven Keys to Irresistible Communication* by Andy Stanley (Multnomah: 2006); *The Preacher as Storyteller: The Power of Narrative in the Pulpit* by Austin B. Tucker (B&H; 2008); *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with our Culture* by Zack Eswine

(Baker: 2008); *Preaching on your Feet: Connecting God and the Audience in the Preachable Moment* by Fred R. Lybrand (Nashville, B&H: 2008). Blackwood's *The Power of Multisensory Preaching and Teaching* highlights a different facet than any of these others. The overarching message from this many books, though, is that preaching is still vitally important in today's churches and for today's culture. Methods vary; the unchanging message, however, still has the power to change lives. And Blackwood's multisensory method can help take this Sunday's sermon from good to phenomenal.

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