

BOOK REVIEWS

Joshua D. Chatraw. *Telling a Better Story: How to Talk About God in a Skeptical Age*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. Pp. 240. ISBN 978-0-3101-0863-4. \$23.99 (CAD) \$15.19 (USD) paper.

Postmodernism has become an integral part of the philosophical climate of Western civilization, impacting those both inside and outside the Christian faith. In his book, *Telling a Better Story*, Joshua Chatraw suggests an effective way forward for the regenerate to positively present the gospel to a world that is rapidly growing dissonant with traditional apologetic arguments. His aim is to equip Christians to identify the deepest longings of those outside the faith, and then present the gospel as an alternative script that better fits those longings than what the secular worldview can offer (7).

Chatraw believes that the future of apologetics and evangelism lie in the church's ability to present the Christian worldview as a story; reasoning: "even when a culture seems to have abandoned the gospel, they haven't abandoned story. They can't. Stories, both big worldview stories that remain unarticulated by many and the small micro-stories we interact with in our daily lives, provide a way into their world—and a bridge into sharing God's story" (7). One of the great shared experiences of humanity is its fascination with stories. They are foundational to shaping our imaginations and have the unique ability to challenge our philosophical biases and presuppositions in a disarming manner.

Of course, 'Gospel as story' is not unique to Chatraw as the biblical writers themselves communicated primarily through narrative—a point which Chatraw freely acknowledges: "Persuasion through narrative is a profoundly biblical pattern that finds precedent in Jesus himself. Jesus entered a first-century Jewish context with its own cultural stories" (45). Chatraw's 'storied' apologetic has also been shaped by St. Augustine's *City of God*, as well as the works of Christian thinkers like J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, for example. Lewis, in particular, seemed to recognize the compelling rhetoric of story as an apologetic tool. Foundational to Lewis' theology was the fact that Christianity is the One True Story that contains within it all the resources needed to "out-narrate the ideologies of the world" (49).

Stories are rhetorically powerful because they speak not just to the intellect but also to the imagination. As John Goldingay eloquently puts it, Scripture itself may

rightly be perceived as being world-view formative rhetorical literature—not in a “bad way, in order to manipulate, but in order to move... rhetoric is not a way of getting people to avoid thinking but a way of getting them to think.”

For this reason, one of the strongest points of Chatraw’s book is his insistence on Christians *embodying* the gospel message, and not merely preaching it, i.e., the key to his apologetic approach is being a *winsome, trustworthy* person of *integrity* and personal *character*:

First and foremost, our lives are to be a kind of friendly, otherworldly ‘haunting,’ as our priorities are set by a King who is not of this world. *Cultivate friendships with your neighbors and coworkers, identify as a Christian, live out your faith, invite them to your home to spend time with you and your friends, live sacrificially, and be ready to speak into their lives...* If you have been a friend and have consistently modeled hope in the midst of sorrow and bold humility during difficult times, doors are more likely to open for you to give “the reason for the hope that you have” (77, emphasis mine).

While Chatraw’s vision for apologetics is quite commendable, there are, nonetheless, still some weaknesses in his ‘storied’ method. To begin, how does one effectively assess whether unbelievers are looking for ‘something more’ to give their life meaning? For example, even when describing the apathy of some secular people in response to questions of God’s existence, Chatraw suggests that believers should not be discouraged because “there tends to be more going on beneath the surface than people admit” (76–77). While this might often be the case, it remains important to acknowledge that *not everyone* is conscious of some ‘secret burden’ they are longing to be relieved of. While Chatraw’s storied approach shows much promise, the reconstruction of a person’s worldview is a process that can take months, even years to complete.

The second major weakness of *Telling a Better Story* is that it offers little in the way of practicable application. Throughout his work, Chatraw often uses the image of “trying on” the biblical story to invite the secular person to consider the Christian faith (21, 68, 143), but he does not offer any concrete ways to facilitate this invitation. Given the tremendous emphasis the author places on ‘entering into’ the biblical story this is a surprising (and unfortunate) omission. Speaking pointedly, postmodernism contains within itself a high value of authentic experience; this seems, therefore, like a missed opportunity to merely *tell* the secular person about the story we live in without also offering to *show* them what it is like to know the Author.

Undoubtedly, however, the most significant contribution Chatraw brings to the apologetic discussion is the importance of “liveability” as the litmus test for a

worldview. Logic and reason alone are incapable of evaluating things like morality and beauty, as these are not empirically testable criteria (150). This is why Chatraw's narrative apologetic is so compelling—it provides an intuitive way to evaluate the truth or falsity of a worldview by interpreting whether it is a “livable” story (67). On this front, the Christian story is unmatched in its explanatory power. Chatraw points to the biblical narrative as the truest expression of what a livable story looks like: “The story of Christ is the true story of the God who is behind all that is true, good, and beautiful – ‘inside out’ is about helping others see that what they have always been longing for can only be found in him” (74). Many other stories possess shards of goodness, truth, and beauty, but these are only present because they copy from and/or are shadows of the Great Story. Some other minor critiques include the unfortunate lack of indices and the somewhat ‘work-man-like’ presentation of the material at hand, i.e., there are no charts/diagrams/graphics.

To close, this book is a valuable resource for those seeking to engage the secular world in conversations about Christianity and the Gospel. It is especially geared towards pastors and church leaders (alongside Seminary/Bible College/Christian University students), but Chatraw is also well-researched, and his integration of several disciplines provides useful insight for the academic world as well. Highly recommended!

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John Frederick and Eric Lewellen, eds. *The HTML of Cruciform Love: Toward a Theology of the Internet*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019. Pp. xx + 187. ISBN 978-1-5326-0936-7. \$39.76 (CAD) \$30.00 (USD) paper.

The digital realm has proven to be a critical frontier in the 21st century. In light of its astonishing development and proclivity for rapid change, *The HTML of Cruciform Love: Toward a Theology of the Internet*, edited by John Frederick and Eric Lewellen, seeks to bring together a range of distinguished voices to begin “a larger conversation in the church and in the academy that works towards a Christian theology and praxis of the internet” (xii). In many ways, the book achieves the desired result.

Comprised of twelve essays, the collective work examines the profound, multifaceted impact of the internet on Christian theology and practice, exploring themes such as the moral implications of visual consumption, the theological significance of digital interactions, the enduring influence of online personas, and the changing nature of community and identity in the virtual world (xiii–xx). The editors propose that two prominent themes emerge, namely *community* and

character (xiii). I propose, however, that the latter might be more accurately replaced with *technological formativity* for reasons that shall become apparent.

Given the diversity of topics covered, the following review will be selective. Regarding personal identity, T. C. Moore suggests the internet exacerbates the individualistic tendencies toward Scripture that began with the printing press (53). For Chad Bogosian, this relatively new landscape encourages the pursuit of “disordered or vainglorious praise” (66). Jen Gilbertson argues that gospel-motivated self-denial (rather than self-representation) is a healthier approach to internet praxis. She helpfully reminds believers, “... it is *Jesus himself*—not one’s personal autobiography—that takes center stage” (95; italics original). Of course, as inclinations toward individualism increase in light of internet realities, effects on community are unavoidable.

More than two-thirds of the essays address the communal impact of network socialities. Particular attention here is paid to the geographical realities of internet-based community, highlighting what may be called a fragmented and “disembodied intersubjectivity” (42), which Mark D. Baker opines, “teaches us that [physical] presence does not matter” (158). Like the community around Jesus, Gilbertson asserts that the network sociality of the internet is “no longer based on geographic proximity” (97). But, oppositionally, she also (rightly) emphasizes that the community of the Scriptures ensures “Jesus is the center and not the self or one’s own interests” (99). Scott B. Rae explores the impact of this “excarnation” on meaningful work (84), while Clark J. Elliston concludes by asking whether online communities (such as Massive Multiplayer Online games, or MMOs) are sufficient, using Bonhoeffer as a foundation (163, 166).

As noted above, perhaps more prominent than “community” is the theme of *technological formativity*. Winston Churchill famously said that humanity shapes buildings, and those buildings shape humanity. The central thesis of *The HTML of Cruciform Love* applies this to technology, specifically the internet. Walter Kim suggests this is not unprecedented, arguing for a technological-theological formativity in the Solomonic Temple, where humans shaped technology and were subsequently shaped by it (103). Moore extends this idea, showing that in the printing press, “the way people accessed and interacted with the Bible was fundamentally altered,” inadvertently encouraging a distinct individualist hermeneutic (54).

In sum, *The HTML of Cruciform Love* is exceptionally well-researched. The authors interpose pressing moral issues with matters such as realities of work, physical interface with the digital world, personal identity, and network sociality in relation to community formation without losing focus on the matter at hand. Although such breadth is welcome, it presents a notable challenge to adequately do justice to the ideas presented in this short review. However, in the absence of space, Baker’s work warrants specific mention.

Since the book's publication, growing studies have shown the detrimental impact—or formativity (principal theme two)—of social media on both mental health and one's sense of community (principal theme one). Indeed, the common notion that the internet is an indifferent tool is put to the sword, perhaps most vociferously by Baker, who prefers the terms “active” and “passive” rather than neutral. He adeptly dismantles any idea of a passive medium and does so “*because it leads to ignoring the medium itself and only evaluating whether the intended purpose for using it is good or bad*,” a shortsighted endeavour at best (154 – italics original). Baker's reasoning—aided by Stoddart (128) and Wallenfang (142)—lays the foundational groundwork for an important reflection on the internet's formative nature that could easily escape notice in the blistering pace of contemporary life. Baker furthers this end with a poignant reminder that despite contrary opinions, “Efficiency is not synonymous with best” and that one “can be effective without being efficient, and at times efficiency might hinder effectiveness” (151–52). It is a much-needed clarion call echoed elsewhere in the book for believers to give the Potter formative prominence over the clay rather than allowing it to be fashioned instead by humanity's binary digital output. As such, Baker's work well summarises broad sentiments from the book.

While these collected essays have much to commend, the work is not without room for growth. There is a commendable draw from many philosophers and theologians; however, given the stated objective work towards a Christian theology and praxis of the internet, *The HTML of Cruciform Love* is curiously thin on scriptural engagement. In the same vein, some essayists are perhaps guilty of shoehorning their specific area of expertise into the topic rather than allowing the topic to direct their approach—this is perhaps most notable in Gilbertson's Markan focus, Kim's centring on the Solomonic Temple, and Elliston's zeroing in on Bonhoeffer's work. At times, the essays appear so “deep in the trees” that they occasionally “miss the forest” and inadvertently pursue convolution over clarity.

These challenges are somewhat compounded by the reality that the digital landscape has profoundly changed in the years since the book's publication. The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) is already transforming how people interact with the internet; as mainstream AI technology matures, its impact will undoubtedly be vast. While *The HTML of Cruciform Love* lays some reasonable foundations with its core themes, it is unfortunate that it pre-empts these sweeping changes and thus loses a degree of impact by missing them. For example, is visual asceticism a realistic objective in an increasingly AI-driven world? What does Callaway's discussion regarding excarnation versus extension mean in light of growing transhumanist ideologies? Do large language models (LLMs) alleviate or exacerbate Moore's concerns about growing tendencies to view the Bible as a database? As humans shape AI, how much will it shape humans in return as it

progresses towards artificial general intelligence and possibly beyond? What do advanced AI chatbots mean for network socialities? These questions were cresting the horizon at publication but warrant answers today—such is the nature of the digital world’s rapid changes. For this reason, perhaps an updated edition would be welcomed.

While *The HTML of Cruciform Love* is not without flaws, it provides much-needed food for thought regarding internet realities and opens the door for broader future discussions that will serve laypersons, seminary students and pastors well in these ever-changing times.

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John Goldingay. *The Book of Lamentations*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022. Pp. xix + 228. ISBN: 978-0-8028-2542-1. \$53.52 (CAD) \$25.28 (USD) hardcover.

Duanne Garrett and Calvin F. Pearson. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*. Kerux Commentaries. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2022. Pp. 499. ISBN: 978-0-8254-2567-7. \$49.97 (CAD) \$26.98 (USD) hardcover.

Michael B. Shepherd. *A Commentary on Jeremiah*. Kregel Exegetical Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2023. Pp. 928. ISBN 978-0-8254-4608-5. \$75.50 (CAD) \$39.07 (USD) hardcover.

The Book of Lamentations, alongside its historically and literarily related counterpart, The Book of Jeremiah, is among the most vivid representations of grief, suffering, and trauma within the whole of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT). In the wake of the Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonian Empire, Lamentations is a *tour de force* of literature composed of five (mostly acrostic) poems of twenty-two stanzas each, written in a manner of tight formal unity simply unparalleled by any other canonical book. Jeremiah’s (similarly poignant) lament over Israel’s sin reflects Yahweh’s own pathos-laden yearning for them to “return to Him” as evident in the unique hope of eschatological salvation and the New Covenant cocooned in the book’s centre.

No matter what type of commentary one envisions, it is impossible to cover everything comprehensively. The three (separate) volumes covered in this review reflect a variety of goals. That said, they each seek to make the HB/OT relevant to the spiritual Christian community of today. This review will start with Goldingay, note Garret and Pearson, and end with Shepherd.

To begin, Goldingay's *Lamentations* volume is a relatively succinct counterpart to his robust (1000-page plus!) Jeremiah NICOT (Eerdmans, 2021). A surprisingly thorough (33 pages) introduction opens things. Concerning Lamentations and canonicity, Goldingay opines:

So one or more poets (who might have been people such as Levites with authoritative status in the community or their wives) wrote the individual poems that we now call Lamentations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. These commended themselves to influencers and ordinary people by facilitating their response to the Fall of Jerusalem, as different psalms commended themselves to people's praise and prayer and gained a place in their worship and spirituality (20).

A five-page bibliography and three indices (Author, Subject, Ancient Text[s]) round things out. Unlike Goldingay's other NICOT, there is no Hebrew word index. There is also no sigla guide.

Those used to Goldingay's other (numerous!) works are likely aware of his impressive erudition. The author's engagement with the text is *par excellence* including copious (but in no way unnecessary) references to high-quality lexicons (*DCH*, *HALOT*, *BDB*, *TDOT*, etc.) and grammars, such as *GKC*, *JM*, *DG*, and *IBHS*. Goldingay's text-critical work is also bar none. Aside from the Targums, Vulgate, and various Greek sources (Sym, Aq., and LXX for example), Goldingay also surveys the *ketiv/qere* variants of the MT and is deftly aware of how the pointing (accentuation) of the Masoretes clarifies and sharpens exegesis (see 49, 95, 107, 133, 174, 185).

Goldingay also has no misunderstanding(s) of how word-meaning is determined, i.e., his work is free from the exegetical fallacies that plague far too many commentaries and other original language-resource works (see 171 for a particularly notable example of his astuteness).

Each chapter of text ends with a "Reader's Response" wherein Goldingay encourages his audience to imagine themselves as someone who has taken part in a reading of a portion of the Book of Lamentations at a worship gathering in Mizpah or Bethel. This unique (but most welcome!) thought experiment is especially valuable for communal lament services and the like.

Incontrovertibly, there is no better text on the market for this book for both pastors and scholars.

Similar (though not quite as high) accolades can also be given to Garrett and Pearson's work. *Kerux Commentaries* were uniquely and specifically designed (see 7–8) to enable pastors and teachers to better understand (and to effectively present) the main message in every biblical text through their dual authorship (one exegesis expert/one experienced homiletician).

The book begins with an overview of all preaching passages (in total, there are thirty-one units for the Book of Jeremiah and five sections overall for the Book of Lamentations). ‘Notes’ for translation appear throughout the work and there is a helpful ‘glossary’ for common Hebrew syntactical terms that utilizes precise nomenclature (*qatal*, *weqatal*, *yiqtol*, *wayyiqtol*, etc.) which also functions as something of a ‘mini grammar’ (41–42). The commentary itself is quite well done. There are references here and there to certain grammars (GKC, JM) and astute attention given not only to the *ketiv/qere* variants of the MT (see 94 for a fine example) but also to the not insignificant textual differences between the LXX and other manuscript witnesses. A five-page bibliography rounds out the volume. There are no indices (author/subject/Scripture).

The pedagogical (and pastoral sensitivities) of both authors are quite prominent. The writing style, for instance, is clear and lucid and things are pitched ‘just right’ for the books’ target audience. Incontrovertibly, the editorial team was careful with presentation, layout, etc.

Where the book truly shines, however, is in those (latter) section(s) that especially focus on teaching and preaching. To be clear, the “Exegetical and Theological Synthesis” portion(s) are exceptionally cogent (particularly given their conciseness) and the ‘big picture’ perspective of each “Preaching Idea” provides more than enough direction and clarity for the task at hand. The “Contemporary Connections” are deftly framed vis à vis three questions: (1) “What Does It Mean?,” (2) “Is it True?,” and (3) “Now What?” (NB: the order of questions varies somewhat).

With respect to the “Creativity in Presentation” guides there is quite a bit of food for thought. By way of example, this portion of the book relating to Lamentations 1:1–22 reads:

Our culture seems to quickly run away from the pain of lament. But this first lament calls us to the hurt... The temptation is to suggest specific actions or steps to take after reading the first lament. What does God want us to do? He wants us to hurt. God invites us to share the hurt, the pain of the tragic consequences of sin that result in the loss of so much in lives all around us. It is not so much that he wants us to do something rather, he wants us to feel something (452).

The end of every major section also includes five well-crafted “discussion questions.” From personal experience, I have found the conversations that follow to be stimulating and engaging.

In sum, one would be hard pressed to find a more thorough exposé of these books for these purposes, particularly given the now defunct “Teach the Text” series (Baker Academic).

The last book here is *A Commentary on Jeremiah* (Kregel Exegetical Library) by Michael B. Shepherd (his second contribution to the set). The publisher describes the series this way:

Written by evangelical scholars, the Kregel Exegetical Library (KEL) benefits pastors and students while also contributing to the scholarly dialogue on each book of the Bible. The commentaries in this ongoing series provide careful, in-depth exegesis and homiletical guidance for each passage.

This focus is notable throughout the commentary proper. For instance, Shepherd states:

It is recommended here that readers should take a faith stance toward the book of Jeremiah not in order to read dogma into the text but because the book itself requires it. In other words, the reader who reads the book without faith does not read it according to the author's intention (60).

Perhaps the most unique thing to be aware of concerning this fine work is that the base text of the commentary is the Hebrew source text behind the "Old Greek of Jeremiah" (11). To be clear, while a significant number of commentaries on Jeremiah primarily follow the MT, Shepherd maintains: "the growing consensus among textual critics is that the Hebrew source of Greek Jeremiah is the earlier edition" (11). Though some may quibble, it is worth quoting Emmanuel Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* Revised and Expanded 4th. ed. (Fortress 2022):

The LXX of Jeremiah differs much from the MT-Jeremiah in length and sequence. LXX-Jeremiah is shorter than MT by one-sixth. It lacks words, phrases, sentences, and entire sections that are found in MT... The question that has preoccupied scholars for centuries is whether the translator changed his source or whether he had a different Hebrew text before him. This question has been resolved with the discovery of the Qumran scrolls 4QJer^b and 4QJer^d dating to 200–150 BCE, which, though fragmentary, reflect the two main literary characteristics of the LXX (shortness and different sequence). It seems likely that the LXX was translated from a Hebrew text that was close to these two Qumran texts (232–33).

While Shepherd's references are consistently keyed to Tov's third edition (Fortress, 2012), his predilections are (in my estimation) well-vindicated through Tov's superb, more recent work.

Scholars will note that the standard Hebrew lexicons employed are BDB,

TLOT, and *HALOT* with some (exceptionally sparse!) references to Muraoka's exquisite lexicon for the LXX specifically. I could not, though, find reference(s) to Lust's fine work. Grammar wise, there are copious references to GKC but precious little else. NB: while *BHRG*¹ and *IBHS* are both bibliographically listed, I failed to locate them in the text. Given the author's fondness for the LXX, it is also a shame Muraoka's *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* (Peeters 2016) fails to appear.

Linguistically, full attention is paid to differentiating between Hebrew stems (some good examples include 72, 108, 110, 162, 509, 664) and to the MT *ktiv/qere* variants (85, 123, 130, 342, 677). Typographically, all Greek text is in the original characters and the Hebrew (original character) text is only pointed when necessary. I did find an odd mixing of transliteration and original language font once in the commentary portion, but I deem(ed) it an anomaly (43–44).

Concerning rhythm, cadence, and/or stress, one should note that the author has a good sense for poetry versus prose and that he (rightly) questions the type-set of the *BHS* (and its apparatus) at times when it seems that the poetry format is “driven by a foreign conception of meter” (81). Such judiciousness on the part of Shepherd is highly commendable (and quite rare!).

Format wise, the translation is rather ‘messy.’ By way of example, Jeremiah 3:1 reads:

3:1 “[MT] (> Ms) and Tg. Jon. add: Saying; Vulg.: It is commonly said; Luther: And he said] If a man sends his wife away [GKC §159w], and she goes from him and becomes another man's [Luther: and takes another man], will she indeed return to him again [MT: will he return to her again; Tg. Jon.: is it possible that he could return to her again]? Will not that woman [MT: land] surely be polluted [Tg. Jon.: become guilty; Vulg.: Will not that woman be polluted and defiled; GKC §112p]? And you, you have fornicated with many shepherds [cf. Syr.; MT: companions; Tg. Jon.: you have gone astray and been joined to many peoples], and you return to me [Tg. Jon.: and return from now on to the worship of me;¹ GKC §113ee]? ' the prophetic utterance of the LORD.

Clearly, there are a lot of text-critical details (and other information) that are of great import being presented by Shepherd in these sections—all of which (of course!) are most welcome. That said, it should be abundantly evident how extremely cumbersome and tedious it is in practice to actually work through this material given the specific layout/arrangement. Would that the editor(s) had found

1 The Targum makes this clause imperative rather than interrogative (cf. Syr., Vulg., KJV, ASV) (80; the footnote reference to the Targum and all the italics here are original)

a more user-friendly and intuitive approach to leverage Shepherd's astute exegetical acumen. The problem is only exacerbated (!) by the unfortunate lack of indices.

Aside from the bibliography (911–28), the book closes with “The Hebrew Source Behind the Old Greek” (873–909). Shepherd consistency notes both overlaps and differences. For instance, concerning Jeremiah 25:13b2; 49:34–39; 46:1 (= LXX 25:14–19; 26:1) he writes:

The Göttingen Septuagint and the NETS make the last verse of this unit the first verse of chapter 26 (= MT chapter 46), even though this verse clearly belongs with what precedes it rather than with what follows it. It is not equivalent to MT Jeremiah 46:1. Rahlfs more appropriately makes this verse the last verse of LXX chapter 25 (i.e., verse 20) and leaves LXX chapter 26 without a verse 1. The verse has no exact equivalent in the MT (but see MT 49:34). It is counted here as 46:1 only because of the arrangement in the Göttingen Septuagint and the NETS and because there is no way to indicate equivalent versification in the MT (889).

In sum, those doing serious text-critical work of Jeremiah cannot afford to be without Shepherd.

To close, given the relatively high costs of reference materials, alongside the limited time, energy, and funds faced by many people, it is essential for individuals to extract maximum value from each book they choose to invest in. One thanks God for the embarrassment of riches now available to those working with the Book of Lamentations and the prophetic corpus *in toto* of the Book of Jeremiah with the publication of each of these new resources. Bible College/Christian University College and Seminary students, alongside ministry leaders (pastors/teachers), and scholars will all be well served by many different aspects of these works. Highly recommended!

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Scott J. Hafemann. *Paul: Servant of the New Covenant, Pauline Polarities in Eschatological Perspective*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (WUNT I) 435. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019. Pp. xvii + 420. ISBN 978-3-16-157702-4. €179.00 (EUR) paper.

It is a tall order to effectively articulate the theology of Paul, the apostle to the nations, in a coherent and unified manner that can stand the scrutiny of the polarities in his writings; yet this is precisely what Scott J. Hafemann has undertaken in his decades-long work *Paul: Servant of the New Covenant*. This collection of

essays incorporates elements of the conclusions reached in his earlier monograph *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3*, WUNT 81.

Throughout this volume, Hafemann seeks to communicate “a consistently eschatological, covenantal reading of Paul’s theology” (3). The primary thesis is as follows: “Paul’s life and theology, like that of the church as a whole, encapsulate an ‘inaugurated eschatology’ that longs for its consummation” (4). As such, Hafemann (rightly) rejects the notion of a material or theological contrast between the Old and New Covenants, rather seeing Paul as serving to bring into existence the eschatological people of God in the overlapping of the ages of the old and new eras of Israel and the church (3).

Within the introduction, Hafemann takes pains to show that the past indicatives of unconditional grace secure the hope of future indicatives which motivate the present imperatives of the obedience of faith across the old and the new (13). In this manner, the newness of the New Covenant is not to be seen as a replacement of the Old Covenant (qualitatively) but rather in a renewed expression within the people in the covenant. Simply put, the new covenant is fulfilling the old in the eschatological people with transformed hearts (14).

Hafemann cleverly titles his opening chapter “*Yaein*” to Luther, as he engages with the famous reformer in his reading of Galatians 3:6–14, agreeing in points with a “yes” (*ja*), but also pushing back with a “no” (*nein*) in his conclusions. As Hafemann interacts with some of the leading new perspective voices in relation to “works of the law,” he comes to agree with Martin Luther that *erga nomou* refers not to a perversion of the law into legalism or to an overemphasis of Jewish identity per se as represented by some subset of the law, but rather to what the Torah *itself* commanded, taken as a whole” (38). That said, Hafemann also disagrees with Luther in that the contrasts are anthropologically focused as two different ways of relating to God; active by righteous deeds versus passive in gospel grace reception (39).

In agreement with the New Perspective on Paul (hereafter NPP) Hafemann takes a non-legalistic understanding of the Torah, but goes beyond in that he comes back to grounding his reasoning in the unity of the covenant structure of God’s relationship with his people throughout redemptive history. In doing so he transposes Luther’s need for faith in Christ into an eschatological key, where the Torah and its history-of-redemption fact of exile are the evidence of it (as a whole) not being of the era of faith (45).

Chapter Two titled *Israel’s Judgment and the Ante-Climax of Eschatology* looks at Israel in relation to the present habitus of the church in her role as slave-child awaiting the inheritance in the second exodus. The future salvation of Israel and subsequent inheritance requires her embracing the era-changing Messiah by faith,

which Hafemann believes is proleptically secured in the “already” of the eschatological people, the Jewish/Gentile church. As such, “eschatology has only reached its ante-climax (86). Chapter Three titled *Paul’s New Covenant Ministry in Eschatological Life* explores the present reality of the new covenant in Paul’s ministry as “servant(s) of the new covenant” (2 Cor 3:6), as he is compared and contrasted with Moses’ face-veiled ministry to hard-hearted people (103–109). Paul’s apostolic legitimacy by means of his “missionary work” argued from 2 Corinthians 10:12–18 and the role suffering plays within it (Gal 4:12–20; 2 Cor 4:7–12) is tackled in chapters four and five titled *The Legitimacy of Paul’s Apostleship*, and *Paul’s Apostolic Suffering in Eschatological Perspective*, respectively (136).

The controversial sixth chapter that is sure to invite engagement is found in Hafemann’s treatment of Philippians 3 titled *The One Righteousness of the Two Covenant Epochs*. Hafemann sees Paul’s understanding of righteousness as not having been changed materially, but rather by means of source and where he finds himself in history (196). Careful exegesis is displayed as he seeks to prove that “Paul’s having become blameless was in accordance with the righteousness revealed in the Torah *in the same way* that his persecuting the church was in accordance with the zeal it manifested” (177; emphasis original). As such, it is not two kinds of righteousness that are being contrasted by Paul; one “a sham, illusory... severe over-confidence,” and the other based on grace (174). Rather, Hafemann sees the instrumental function of Paul’s righteousness (real under both covenants) as moving from the source of the Law to the infinitely greater source of Christ’s work, which alone is now “in any theologically significant sense [the instrument] to the righteousness of God” (196).

Sure also to cause a stir is Hafemann’s take on Romans 2:12–16 within chapter seven *The New Covenant Obedience and Paul’s Gospel of Judgment by Works*, where he contends that 2:14 should be understood as Gentile Christians having the New Covenant work displayed on their hearts and that their “Torah-obedi[ce]... will be the criterion of final, eschatological judgment... God will use to judge those who sin,” whether unbelieving Jews or Gentiles (236). His solid work on Romans 11 in chapter eight, *Paul’s Hope for Israel as the Consummation of the Covenant*, sets the stage for the chapter that follows, *The Future of Israel and Paul’s Hope for the Nations*, where the OT quotations in Romans 15 are looked at in their original context as Hafemann persuasively argues that the “link between the covenant promises to the patriarchs and their intended (but not realized!) fulfillment in the Sinai covenant” is found in the inauguration of God’s eschatological people which has its culmination to follow (278). In logical progression, chapter ten ties together the connection of the New Covenant with the new creation with texts from Galatians 5–6, 1 Corinthians 7, and 2 Corinthians 5:17, in which “Paul understands his apostolic mission to be the beginning fulfillment of

Isaiah's hope for the eschatological restoration of Israel" (328). Hafemann closes with comparing the thoughts of the Qumran community to those of Paul in the final chapter, titled, concluding the monograph in a convincing fashion that, the "unexpected element of the mystery of the Gospel is the proleptic inclusion of the Gentiles into the remnant of the faithful seed of Abraham *prior* to the final restoration of Israel and the nations" (359, emphasis original).

Hafemann's work deserves much commendation and is surely a 'must-read' for any serious student in the school of Pauline thought. The emphasis on highlighting the inextricable link between trusting the promises of God and obeying his commands under both the Old and the New is refreshing, as his goal of consistency in reading through the eschatological perspective is reached. A few points of contention would be the lack of engagement with current scholarship in some of the essays, a point that Hafemann himself acknowledges as the "major weakness" (xiv).

One is also left with wondering where the doctrine of imputation fits into Hafemann's understanding of righteousness and if it is still compatible with the eschatological judgment according to faith-works presented in the monograph. Lastly, one point of inconsistency appears to be the conclusion he reaches concerning a future temple in Jerusalem, as he presents Paul as "harbor[ing] no expectation for the rebuilding or restoration of a future temple" (371). This is something that is *contra* the Qumran community. With pains having been taken to show the irrevocable patriarchal promises still remaining to be fulfilled in consummatory fashion, one is left wondering why the expectation of a temple rebuild appears not to be part of this agenda in God's *Heilsgeschichte*. These (relatively minor) infelicities notwithstanding, this *magnum opus* of a seasoned scholar shows remarkable exegetical skill, even though not all readers will be left convinced of every conclusion reached within. Hafemann's future-oriented redemption leaves one anticipating the return of the Saviour-judge with strengthened resolve for perseverant faith.

Highly recommended!

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Brian P. Irwin with Tim Perry. *After Dispensationalism: Reading the Bible for the End of the World*. Lexham Press, 2023. Pp. 328. ISBN 978-1-6835-9681-3. \$29.99 (USD) hardcover.

Dispensational eschatology has been the subject of intense criticism over the past few decades. Concerns about the overemphasis on prophetic end-times speculation in the Evangelical church and critiques of dispensational interpretations of the

Bible have resulted in several critical volumes. The book *After Dispensationalism* is the latest among these volumes that seeks to provide a look at dispensationalism's rise to prominence and offer an alternative way to look at prophetic texts in the Bible.

While written by a theologian and a Bible scholar, this volume is intended for a generalized audience. Its tone is reasoned and accessible. Though it provides critiques of dispensational ideas, these critiques are primarily dispassionate and fair to the positions under scrutiny. The authors hope to persuade the reader to a more reasonable position, not to tear down dispensationalism as an enemy.

Chapter One sets out a history of end times prediction by tracing various shifts in day-age theories that led interpreters to anticipate when the end might occur. From the Rabbinical teachings to early church fathers to medieval and Reformation theologies, Christians have speculated on when the church age would end, and the new eschatological age would begin. The chapter concludes with a practical tone that allows for avoiding end-time speculation.

Chapter Two narrows down to the development of Evangelical end-times teachings by identifying the primary teachers who articulated and popularized dispensational views of premillennialism. This involves a helpful summary of the dispensational framework as expressed by J. N. Darby and C. I. Scofield. From these beginnings, it shifts to those who created the "end-times entertainment industry," such as Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, and Tim LaHaye (59–62).

Chapters Three and Four provide helpful summaries of each of the key tenets of dispensationalism, such as the restoration of Israel, the Rapture, the Tribulation, Armageddon, and the Millennium. These chapters accurately and fairly summarize commonly held beliefs about these themes without rebuttal. They conclude this historical section with a warning to pastors not to "write off" these beliefs "as a mild nuisance" (107). Instead, they must fully understand the frameworks many members may adhere to.

The second half of the book takes a biblical approach to understanding prophetic and apocalyptic literature, particularly the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation. Chapter Five discusses the literary genre of prophecy and discusses misconceptions about the nature of prophetic in biblical literature. It also discusses the nature of apocalyptic literature and its function in the intertestamental and biblical worldview. Each of the insights into this literature provides an alternative but is not necessarily done so in a way that engages the fundamental assumptions of dispensational interpretations.

In this effort, the tone of the book changes when looking at the prophetic and apocalyptic books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation in Chapters 6-8. Each of these chapters aims to instruct the reader in critical insights into historical context, characteristics of prophetic and apocalyptic texts, and alternative readings to

dispensationalism. For example, the authors compare a dispensationalist understanding of Gog and Magog as Russia with exilic interpretations rooted in the Assyrians and captivity of Israel (179–80). Engaging the book of Daniel, they note the common interpretation of Daniel’s seventy weeks (included with classic dispensational charts by Clarence Larkin) as compared with historical commentary on these main passages from the perspective of the original readers. They conclude, “The book of Daniel was not written to us,” but its message of hope for a coming kingdom and how Christians should live today is timeless (213–14).

The final chapter outlines the classic interpretive approaches of the Book of Revelation, including historicist, futurist, preterist, and idealist. However, which of the four methods is the basis for the author’s interpretation is unclear. Somewhat like the approach in the chapter on Ezekiel, the authors avoid contrasting dispensational views (which are mentioned in only one section) with their historical context-based commentary on Revelation. This chapter reads more like a commentary than the other chapters. Significant attention is given to the letters to the seven churches, a chiasmic structure to the body of the work, and jumps over chapters 13–20 to the New Heavens and New Earth. This chapter is engaged in much deeper biblical scholarship than the other chapters, which changes the book’s overall flow.

Looking at the overall contributions of the book, the reader can expect high levels of appreciation mixed in with moments of methodological confusion. First, the book is clearly designed to explain dispensationalism and offer interpretive alternatives for these biblical texts. In this goal, it succeeds. It has solid research with well-articulated concepts and summaries of the issues covered, yet at an approachable level. Academically, it makes no particular academic contribution to dispensational studies or interpretive approaches to prophetic and apocalyptic biblical texts. But it does help the reader understand dispensationalism overall.

However, the confusion comes with the interpretive moves in the second half of the book. The authors do not disprove dispensational readings as much as they give alternative historically-based commentary on three prophetic books of the Bible. But, in doing so, the dispensational readings of those texts are left unaddressed. Without that consistent dialogue between interpretations, the book feels more like two separate books. That said, the lack of a clear interpretive rebuttal to dispensationalism feels intentional.

The second observation is that the authors seem to want to rescue eschatology from the well-presented theology of dispensationalism. Yet, the interpretations of prophetic texts end up lacking an eschatological orientation. Ezekiel’s message is “ongoing life and purpose is possible because of God’s Holiness” (183). Daniel’s message is about how Christians shall live in persecution and “how we should act out our identity as members of the Kingdom of God” (213–14). Revelation

reminds us that “we belong to God and not to the world” (283). While helpful and needed, these conclusions and interpretations struggle to accomplish the book’s mission of “reading the Bible for the end of the world.” While succeeding in offering alternative interpretations of prophetic and apocalyptic texts, it struggles to leave the reader with an eschatology to replace dispensationalism.

Despite these easily tolerable shortcomings, Irwin and Perry should be commended for avoiding the diatribes against dispensationalism by accurately conveying the tenets of dispensational eschatology in a way that is both fair and helpful. This accomplishment is rare in this era of open critiques of this eschatological paradigm. It also provides insightful interpretations of key prophetic and apocalyptic texts that are a refreshing alternative to end-times proof texting. It would be a provocative text for any pastor or seminary student looking to understand these issues better and perhaps gain a new appreciation for prophetic books of the Bible.

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Gregory David Soderberg. *As Often As You Eat This Bread: Communion Frequency in English, Scottish, and Early American Churches*, Reformed Historical Theology, Volume 74 (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023). Pp. 280. ISBN 978-3-525-56070-9. €120 (Euro) hardcover.

As Often As You Eat This Bread: Communion Frequency in English, Scottish, and Early American Churches, by Gregory David Soderberg, is an insightful and well-researched examination of communion frequency for Reformation and Post-Reformation churches.

Sixteenth century reforms for communion took place in a context where “people were accustomed to a process of preparation before communion” (25). These practices included confession to a priest, penance, and fasting. An interesting observation about late medieval communion was the lack of congregational participation and questions as to what happened that led to infrequent participation. Soderberg notes factors like priestly participation as standing in for the congregation, rigorous standards of being “worthy,” and the development of “spiritual communion” or a visual participation in the Eucharist that became a common practice throughout late medieval congregations. Soderberg points out that no matter the differences the Reformers held about the nature of communion, they generally agreed that both clergy and laity should receive both elements of communion more frequently than what had been practiced.

The political dynamic to the Lord’s Supper for early Magisterial Reformers cannot be overlooked. These churches were closely tied to the state. Soderberg

points out Martin Bucer, Huldrych Zwingli, and John Calvin as a few noted Reformers balancing between implementing changes to the church and receiving permission from civil authorities. “Thus, even if various Reformers believed that more frequent communion was expedient and desirable, this belief was held in check by the desire to work within the boundaries of the God-ordained civil authorities” (36).

The Lord’s Supper stood at the heart of Christian worship and community, so who was able to access and how frequent became important questions. Soderberg noted that early Reformers “were not simply trying to purify the worship in the church. They were—in varying degrees—trying to reform society and construct cities and nations in accordance with God’s Word” (55). Church discipline would coincide with communion, and for many communities, civic discipline would coincide with church discipline for state-church relations. To partake in communion was an important aspect of being a part of the larger society. To keep communion pure was important for community holiness. Soderberg notes the infamous Geneva Consistory, “devoted much time before quarterly communion services to facilitating the reconciliation of offended parties, and to drawing up a list of those who were unrepentant, and thus barred from communion” (67).

As the Reformation continued after Luther, many Reformers discovered that the frequency of communion and who received it were not clearly defined. Those who desired frequent communion as the ideal (such as Calvin) settled for more infrequent participation, due to the issue of preparation for taking the Lord’s Supper. There was a concern that frequent communion would lead to an abuse of participation without right repentance, reflection, and in an “unworthy manner” as is stated in 1 Corinthians 11:27. This led to communion being celebrated more often than had been in the Pre-Reformation church but less than weekly or monthly. Biblical debates became common, with those in favor of infrequent communion citing the Old Testament practices of feast days and seasonal celebrations, and those in favor of frequent communion emphasizing New Testament passages.

For Protestant thinkers in the colonies of North America, the debates concerning frequency and preparation continued. Puritan thinkers held to a strong belief in preparation and an inquiry as to who was “worthy” of communion. Throughout Soderberg’s work, there is a connection between preparation and communion frequency. How do Christians know if they are prepared to take communion? For centuries, many Christians went through a catechism before taking the Lord’s Supper. Surprisingly, Puritans and other English Reformers had a similar practice that specified certain criteria. Catechism, quoting the Apostles Creed, confession, weeks of repentance, fasting, and purifying were conducted to lead up to the moment a community participated in communion.

Reinforcing social bonds was an important reason for those in favor of infrequent communion. For example, during the Pre-Reformation period, annual communion during the high point of the church calendar at Easter was not considered a spiritual problem but an annual celebration that brought people together. Some of this thought continued. While being steeped in the Reformed tradition, the Scottish church stands out as having very intense “communion seasons” (178). These times involved congregations gathering for multiple days of preaching, prayer, and fasting in preparation for the *annual* celebration of the Lord’s Supper. These times became intense days of spiritual renewal for Scottish congregations.

These meetings of Scottish Christians would influence the revivalism that spurred the first and second Great Awakenings. Although later revivals would not be centered around preparation for communion, they would still involve a time of people gathering for repentance and spiritual renewal. This precursor to American revivalism is easy to see as it was common in Reformed churches for the responsibility to be placed on parishioners to prepare themselves. Figures like Matthew Henry, Cotton Mathers, and Jonathan Edwards instructed people to “soul search,” and “examine themselves,” to see if they were ready to partake. These same concepts of personal introspection can be seen in modern revival language.

New England Puritan standards for communion were important to creating and maintaining a “holy” community, but many times these high standards for participation in communion deterred people. Not all ministers in American Reformed churches had the same strict views regarding communion frequency and who could participate. One example can be seen in the theology of Solomon Stoddard, the grandfather of Jonathan Edwards. Stoddard “questioned the tight restrictions that had been placed on participation in communion” (158). Pastoring in what was at the time the frontier in 1670s’ North America, Stoddard taught that the Lord’s Supper was a “converting ordinance” inviting those who were not truly regenerate to participate and fully repent. Stoddard’s stance created a theological controversy with other Reformed ministers in the colonies.

It is common to think of debates about communion to be solely concerned with what is happening to the elements. Soderberg’s work helps us to ask questions of how often, who should, and how should we partake? To partake in communion is to prepare oneself to receive and participate in an act of Christian worship that Jesus established. While Soderberg’s work specifically reflects those in the Reformed Protestant tradition, other Christian traditions can take away that participation in communion should not be taken lightly. There is a spiritual depth taking place during communion.

This depth is something that the New Testament and Reformers grasped and emphasized. A participation in communion connects Christians with Christ and the larger universal church. But churches also do not want to become “puritanical”

with the Lord's Supper. Only for those who think of themselves as "worthy." The practical focus should not be on checking a list to see if one is ready for communion but asking the question in the first place. Soderberg eloquently paraphrases Jonathan Edward's thoughts on feeling qualified to come to communion. "If we feel a deep sense of our unworthiness to come, then we should definitely come" (174).

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Carmen Joy Imes. *Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023. Pp. 231 pp. ISBN 978-1-5140-0020-5. \$22.00 (USD) paper.

Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters is a captivating work that seeks to make the complicated task of understanding the *Imago Dei* (image of God) simpler to grasp in its relation to human identity. Quickly differentiating being God's image and bearing God's name, author Carmen Joy Imes articulates the deliberation to refrain from utilizing the bearing God's image language to avoid the construct that humanity simply bears the image of God rather than is the image of God. Separating the book into three parts, part 1 begins in Genesis 1–11 taking a detour through the Bible to explore one vital question: "What does it mean to be human?" Part 2 introduces the focus for living a meaningful life through the Wisdom books of the Old Testament—Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Job—and the ever-present existence of human suffering. Part 3 moves towards the New Testament, focusing on how Jesus' incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension relate to what it means to be human in an idolization of Jesus as the ultimate portrait. Contrasted with the human identity remains the profound discovery that creation still matters and serves as an essential part of humanity's vocation.

Imes from the beginning reminds readers that creation still matters. Creation matters now and for eternity, as followers of Christ wrestle with what it truly means to be the image of God. To explore the question of what it means to be human, Imes provides a dissected articulation of Genesis 1 and the beginning of creation, providing readers with a simple yet profound analysis of ancient Israelite cosmology and the importance of Sabbath as the culmination of creation. Recognized through the explanations provided stands the indication that one's human identity is being God's image, carrying an opposition to the profits of consumerism in the present world. As those created in the image of God, we are stewards over the land provided, recognizing humans as companions sharing equivalent status before God. Fulfilling a care of creation features more than simply an ecological view of sustainability (though this must be a priority), but Imes places an

overwhelming emphasis that living the *Imago Dei* recognizes that all humans are created as God's image, deserving of dignity, rather than humanity's pattern of violence and human exploitation. Building empires of security manifests an idolatry reflective of an inversion of humans' creation purpose, instead of submitting to creation and relying on the Creator.

Shifting to the wisdom books, Imes teaches that wisdom should be wanted, not as an achievement but a muscle that must be exercised demonstrating a choice to trust God. Including words from scholars such as James K. A. Smith and N. T. Wright, Imes determines loving God and neighbor are sure ways to help discern what is best. Mirroring the life of Solomon and David, serves the reminder that we are not enough without God, matching the expressions in the Psalms and Proverbs inviting a longing to deeper relationship, raising humans to wrestle with emotions as a path of human suffering and vulnerability. Recognizing human suffering in our inabilities is humbling according to Imes, curbing the expectation to consider oneself superhuman or indispensable. The purposes of God's creation are larger than one person. This is a community project.

In the last section, Imes engages a path forward, focusing attention on Jesus incarnate opening a new future for humanity. Jesus' ability to defeat temptation and being full humanity according to Imes, serves a profound implication, pointing a way to our embodiment. From each human's embodiment and the life of Jesus, Imes identifies the right to feel passion towards abuses of power, though anger must be checked under the cover of justice, human flourishing, and environmental health. The key is the resurrection of Jesus, indicating God's continuing purpose for embodied humans on this earth, as human mortality provides a vision towards future restoration. Imes recognizes the sociological and political structures that have blocked a path toward embodied humans living in community, reckoning with the histories of racism and disability that have not promoted full inclusion, seeing fellow image bearers as disembodied. Reminding readers "on earth as it is in heaven," Imes concludes with a focus centered on the future restoration of the kingdom, while encouraging followers of Christ to turn from sin and exercise the human task as stewards of all creation.

The importance of the subject of the *Imago Dei* prompts the question: how should we live? Throughout the book, Imes provides readers with a simple storyline, using questions, key ideas, and Bible Project resource videos as opportunities to answer this very question. The selective researched accounts are expertly reflected and decisively articulated. Additionally, despite the complexity and scope of research, Imes provides a balanced work that builds continuously for readers that may not be as familiar with the research or the theological background of the conversation. Imes brings a theological topic into the minds and hearts of the readers, exegeting how embodied humans should live towards all

humanity. As such, I can freely recommend this work to scholars, pastors, and all seeking to live as embodied humans recognizing the *Imago Dei* in each individual. Ultimately, Imes has provided a valuable resource, one that I can say will enrich and transform the way humans live and care for one another, recognizing the *Imago Dei* in all and why creation still matters.

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Jennifer M. Matheny. *Judges 19–21 and Ruth: Canon as a Voice of Answerability*. Leiden: Brill, 2022. Pp. 296. ISBN 978-90-04-521740-4. \$155.00 (USD) hardcover.

Judges 19–21 and Ruth: Canon as a Voice of Answerability by Jennifer M. Matheny is an intriguing volume that sets out to examine the possibility of there being a canonical voice(s) of answerability for the voiceless and marginalized women of the Judges 19–21 narrative. Matheny Holds a PhD from the University of Kent and is currently Associate Professor of Christian Scriptures at George W. Truett Theological Seminary. Matheny begins her search for this canonical voice of answerability by turning to the book of Ruth, due to its presumed historical setting as well as place in the canon after Judges in the Septuagint, while using a Bakhtinian literary framework. Bakhtin’s dialogism becomes the main hermeneutical lens in which Matheny approaches these two works. Matheny, in the vein of Brevard Childs, takes a canonical approach to the Old Testament by seeing these texts in polyphonic dialogue. For Matheny her goal is to research and provide an examination of the intertextual possibilities between Judges 19–21 and Ruth which have long been hinted at or presumed by scholars, but never fully examined. The crux of Matheny’s work is her identification of genre for these two narratives as dialogic מַשָּׁל. For Matheny these two narratives are meant to be read as parables that leave narrative gaps for the audience to reflect on their own ethical responses to the narratives. Matheny utilizes her Bakhtinian framework to examine each of these stories in isolation from one another. She chooses to focus on the intertextual canonical possibilities of each of these narratives as she examines many of the confusing vocabulary choices and narrative oddities in canonical context (ex. the use of הַמָּאֲכָלֶת in Judges 19 and Genesis 22). It is at the end of her work that she finally brings the two narratives into discussion with one another. Her main interests are in the dichotomy between the two books. There are the voiceless women in Judges 19–21, but female agency and speech in Ruth. There are extreme and grotesque examples of חֶרֶם in the Judges narrative in which the Israelites practice “ban” against their own people, but examples of חֶסֶד expressed in familial terms as well as opened to the foreigner and other. There is the role of the woman in

Judges as פילגש (concubine), which are often treated poorly, and the role of Ruth as אשה המת (wife of the dead), which Matheny argues seems to act as a reversal of the פילגש as Ruth is instead honored and treated as “better than seven sons...”. Through this close reading of intertextual utterances, Matheny places Ruth as a text that acts as a voice of answerability to the silenced and abused women of Judges 19–21. The book then ends with a brief biography of Mikhail Bakhtin that traces the broad movements of his work and life.

The first thing that needs to be praised for this work is Matheny’s willingness to sit in tension. She never seems to rush her own work or feel like it is required of her to smooth out the polyphonic nature of her work. This allows her to thoroughly examine each of the narratives within an intertextual canonical framework that seeks to not only view each of these narratives as a part of the canon, but also as supporting or contrasting voices to other portions of the canon. As the horrifying tale of Judges provides a view of degradation and violence, the voice of Ruth may provide an answer or ethical response of female agency and shared *hesed*.

Matheny also does an excellent job of interacting with Mikhail Bakhtin’s often complicated and extensive literary framework. She not only utilizes it holistically in her work to draw attention to the polyphonic nature of the canon and each of the narratives themselves, but she does so in a way that invites her reader to share in her joy of Bakhtin’s work. Even readers who are not particularly familiar with a Bakhtin literary framework should be able to follow along with Matheny’s examination and argument well, due to her careful explanation and examination of Bakhtin’s work as it is used to undergird her own work.

My main concern with Matheny’s work is her identification of Judges 19–21 and Ruth as being dialogic משל in form and function for Judges and function for Ruth. For Matheny identifying these two texts as dialogic משל enables her to view them as “parables” that are meant to have ethical responses derived by the reader due to the “gaps” in the Hebrew narrative that provide and allow for places of ethical consideration. This is an interesting framework, but the concern is her lack of boundaries as to what is defined as a משל and what is not. Broad literary genres can be helpful, and necessary. But when there are no strict boundaries placed as to what does and does not qualify as a משל and the boundaries become so elastic it can become difficult to explain the significance of Judges 19–21 and Ruth as a dialogic משל. I do think that within her Bakhtinian literary framework, Matheny has correctly identified these two narratives. However, her lack of qualifiers may leave the reader wondering about the significance of this. If everything is a משל then nothing is a משל.

In conclusion Matheny presents an incredibly engaging work on the relationship between Judges 19–21 and Ruth. Her insistence on the polyphonic nature of the canon helps to open-up the canon as a place of both conflicting and

harmonizing voices that provides answers to passages in which there seems to be none. However, her lack of definition of what a dialogic מַשַּׁל is and is not remains problematic. Without this clear definition it becomes difficult to truly ascertain how helpful her framework may be for examining other passages in canonical context with each other. Matheny does provide an interesting conclusion and adequately brings these two texts that have long teased scholars with their seeming connections. This book will certainly be of interest for scholars intrigued in the overlap between biblical studies and Bakhtinian literary frameworks as well scholars doing work on the books of Judges and Ruth, specifically from a canonical perspective.

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Leah Payne. *God Gave Rock and Roll to You*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. 248. ISBN 978-0-1975-5524-8. \$29.95 (USD) paper.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I lived through plenty of Pentecostal youth gatherings. Since most services included a heavy dose of Pentecostal holiness, postures toward music proved critical to formation. I obsessed over my love for “secular” music, yet in a moment led by the Spirit – or a moment of weakness, I threw my secular music into a “sin bin” (a hockey metaphor for the penalty box), turned from my evil ways, and became an avid first-generation consumer of “Contemporary Christian Music” (CCM). While I have long since repurchased my “evil” music and defiantly raised my children on secular music, I reflect often on my teenage and young adult experience. Leah Payne traces the story and impact of a radical music movement, and along the way, she invites me – and other readers – to discern yet again if “God gave rock and roll to [us].”

Payne merges her craft as an American religious historian with insider credentials. She is not only the daughter of a Foursquare pastor, but she married an aspiring CCM artist and moved to Nashville in 2002. She surely enjoys her careful research on the top twenty-five albums on *CCM Magazine* and *Billboard* Christian music charts from the late 1970s through 2023. She interviews an array of CCM artists, producers, and journalists as well as businesspeople, church leaders, politicians, and activists throughout the industry. In 2020, Payne initiated a survey on CCM that garnered more than 1200 responses, a veritable collection of CCM testimonies. She then locates this data within the larger story of late-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century Evangelicalism.

Payne offers a page-turning history of CCM, one of the largest mass media markets in the twentieth century, and captures its impact on the shaping of suburban, middle-class American adolescents and young adults. According to Payne,

CCM reveals the face of white evangelical beliefs and practices and trumpets evangelical values about gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, social issues, and the rise of nationalism. This message begins with the private and public life of every artist: “Record labels included morality clauses that would ensure their roster would live up to evangelical moral standards, which usually included faithfulness in marriage, modest clothing, and abstaining from drugs and drunkenness” (64). Successful artists must make muster with white evangelical mothers and youth pastors before their music could be consumed by daughters, sons, and students. If not, artists would fail to launch. CCM becomes an “invaluable tool for molding” Evangelical children “socially, spiritually, and politically” (2).

Historians will resonate with Payne’s ability to provide an interdisciplinary web on the impact of CCM on Christian America. She locates CCM emergence within the surge of Pentecostals and Charismatics of the 1960s and 1970s. Larry Norman’s song “Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?” captures the pragmatic impulses of aspiring artists. Payne walks through a nostalgic “who’s who” of first-generation solo artists such as Larry Norman, Marsha Stevens, Andraé Crouch, Mylon LeFevre, Daniel Amos, Randy Stonehill, and Keith and Melody Green and bands such as Children of the Day, Agape, Love Song, 2nd Chapter of Acts, and Resurrection Band. These artists emerge out of the long-haired, psychedelic aesthetics of the Jesus movement, and some of them, like Norman, literally testify to “No More LSD for me, I met the man from Galilee” (41). The unassuming rise of CCM begins with ambitious artists and bands who play at youth meetings, church basements, campuses, coffee shops, and church camps across the country. Artists soon teamed up with churches for denominational gatherings and joined forces with ministries such as Youth for Christ (YFC), Campus Crusade for Christ, and Youth With a Mission (YWAM). Successful artists would secure labels and move into full-time business.

The prototypes for the second wave of artists are Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith. They offer a more polished look than Jesus rockers: “if Grant was the evangelical Barbie of CCM, the unattainable ideal of beauty and virtue of her generation, her friend and collaborator Michael W. Smith was the complementary Ken doll” (62). CCM delivers wholesome models for beauty, health, and prosperity. Male artists like Smith, Steven Curtis Chapman, Leon Patillo, David Meece, Bryan Duncan, and Benny Hester provide a Christian alternative to George Michael, Lionel Richie, or Bryan Adams. Similarly, Grant, Debby Boone, Twila Paris, Michelle Pillar, Lisa Whelchel, and Leslie Phillips, with their hair scrunchies and shoulder pads, rescue teenage girls from the likes of Madonna and Cyndi Lauper. Of course, artists like Petra and Stryper and theatrical performers like Carman will not allow for the demise of rock. The CCM lineup affirms parental and pastoral values, encourages evangelism, strengthens family, promotes

holiness and sexual purity, elevates spiritual warfare, enlivens social concerns, and bolsters patriotism. In recent decades, more artists push toward progressive boundaries of social justice (e.g., racism, violence, LGBTQ+), while others join their voices with “apostolic, prophetic, wonder-working, dominion-seeking, Zionist” messengers.

Payne parallels the rise and decline of CCM to the plight of Christian bookstores. By the 1980s, Christian bookstores thrived across North America, and they sell more than books! These stores capitalize on the sale of CCM albums and merchandise. Performance tracks soon pave the way for a new era of special music. These “tracks” run their course until they give way to praise and worship bands with rock instruments in church! The sudden rise of global charismatic worship events ushered in by the likes of Hillsong and Bethel becomes the paradigm for weekly worship performers/ministers in mega- and smaller local churches. While choirs, organs, and hymnbooks prove no match for rock-band liturgies, the rise of worship bands leads to the collapse of bookstores like Family Christian Bookstores and Lifeway, the Southern Baptist Convention chain, and it results in the subsequent demise of CCM. When vinyl, cassettes, and CDs give way to audio and video streaming, CCM and Christian bookstores suffer a near fatal blow.

Throughout this work, Payne tells wonderful tales familiar to many insiders but startling to outsiders. Payne narrates countless stories that stir nostalgic laughter and tears, joy and anger, and pleasure and groans – often at the same time. For example, what’s not to love about band names based on Scripture: 2nd Chapter of Acts, Skull Crushers (Rom 16:20), and Stryper (Isa 53). How is it that significant leaders such as Billy Graham endorse Christian rock and Foursquare icon Jack Hayford mentors 2nd Chapter of Acts, while the likes of Jimmy Swaggart (cousin to Jerry Lee Lewis!) and Bill Gothard find the “devil” in every rock band? Who can forget Amy Grant’s three-button controversy, the ironic conversion of Stryper band members by way of Jimmy Swaggart’s TV program, or Michael W. Smith’s song “There She Stands”, a tribute to the American flag raised by firefighters following September 11 and the oft-used soundtrack for George W. Bush’s “War on Terror”? Payne provides readers a timely and entertaining (!) volume that engages carefully and simultaneously several academic domains including worship, liturgies, Evangelicalism, politics, and entertainment. And one more thing: Readers should renew Spotify before opening the book. You have been warned.

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