

BOOK REVIEWS

Evolution and the Fall. Edited by William Cavanaugh and James K. A. Smith. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. ISBN: 9780802873798. Pp. xxix + 231. \$26.00 (USD).

The fallout from Darwinism continues to keep theologians scrambling. Amid a flurry of fresh literature on this topic,¹ *Evolution and the Fall* comes to readers as a collection of thoughtful essays specifically dealing with the Western theological understanding of the fall and its status with relation to the evolutionary consensus regarding human origins. Contributions come from the editors as well as from Celia Deane-Drummond, Joel Green, Richard Middleton, Aaron Riches, Brent Waters, Norman Wirzba, and Peter Harrison—all Christian thinkers from various disciplines.

After a preliminary chapter outlining relevant issues, biology professor (and former BioLogos President) Darrel Falk lays out the current scene regarding anthropological origins and history. This topic is, of course, the cause for the entire debate and so naturally comes first, so to speak. The scoop is this: the *location* of ancient human fossil remains (i.e., not centralized in the ancient Near East), when combined with their associated cultural/technological *features* (e.g., emergence of language, tools, etc.) and the *dating* of those fossils in association with their expected evolutionary features (e.g., before some species and after others; older samples are less “advanced” physiologically), strongly points to a gradual and evolutionary history of human beings. This also appears to be confirmed by genetic evidence—which converges to support physiological changes in a

- 1 See, for example, J. B. Stump, ed., *Four Views of Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2017); Scot McKnight and Dennis Venema, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017); Kenneth Keathley, J. B. Stump, and Joe Aguirre, eds., *Old Earth or Evolutionary Creation?: Discussing Origins with Reasons to Believe and BioLogos* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017); Denis Lamoureux, *Evolution: Scripture and Nature Say Yes!* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); Kathryn Applegate and J. B. Stump, eds., *How I Changed My Mind About Evolution: Evangelicals Reflect on Faith and Science* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016); Stanley Rosenberg, et. al., *Finding Ourselves after Darwin: Conversations on the Image of God, Original Sin, and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018); Kyle Greenwood, ed., *Since the Beginning: Interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 through the Ages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018); Andrew Torrance and Thomas McCall, eds., *Knowing Creation: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018). Cf. James K. A. Smith and Michael Gulker, eds., *All Things Hold Together in Christ: A Conversation on Faith, Science, and Virtue* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

number of ways. While not air-tight, this modern scientific consensus remains compelling.

Although the idea of human evolution is over a century old, it's important to note that this contemporary evidentiary platform is extremely recent:

[U]ntil just the last few decades, detailed knowledge of our history—how we came to be who we are—only stretched back several thousand years. Suddenly though, as a result of this knowledge-explosion, we can go back millions. We have the bones—the skeletal remains of our ancestors. We can see when and how their anatomy changed, becoming more and more like our own. And we can see that finally about 200,000 years ago, their skeletal features became indistinguishable from ours. (6–7)

Many or perhaps even most Christians have therefore “moved on” to discuss what implications this might have, instead of erecting a new set of barricades surrounding the disintegration of traditional Western thought.

In the next chapter, Deane-Drummond explores Catholic theological boundaries regarding the concept of the fall, arguing for a more communitarian sense, “a strong sense of the moral collective that is common in smaller hunter-gatherer societies” (43). Her own view is “that original sin can be reinterpreted to mean that a person is born in each generation into an imperfect community of others, including other creaturely kinds” (45). Like most authors in the book, she notes that specific views on “original sin” are not “required or necessary for Christian faith” (45). The upshot about redemption, then, is that “sin takes place in a tragic context and the unity hoped for is an eschatological expectation of the end, rather than a return to a paradisiacal state” (46). For readers steeped in creation-fall-redemption narratives, this drumbeat of “the idyllic-prefall-past-is-more-of-a-theological-construct-than-a-biblical-necessity” comes through strongly in the book.

Smith's “What Stands on the Fall?” offers his own two cents on how the traditional Western conception might be reformulated. He summarizes his model in one page (bridging 61–62), asserting God's covenantal election of individuals from an early population of hominids (to be “image-bearers”) and hence—given their new, advanced moral and physical capacities—a new responsibility over creation, such that if they fail, “creation falls” with them. In his own reflections of this view, (1) the fall is “still historical, temporal, and even ‘evental,’ though it is something like an episode-in-process” (65); (2) this model neither ontologizes the fall (i.e., altering nature itself) nor “naturalizes” it (as if it is inherent to creation). Thus, one must be careful neither to reject nor to overstate the apostle Paul's “cosmic” picture of sin's intrusion (e.g., Col 1–2).

Middleton, an Old Testament scholar, then discusses a variety of issues,

including the relationship between domains of knowledge (leaning on Brown's *The Seven Pillars of Creation*) and specific theological import with regard to an evolutionary anthropology. Having studied the Genesis text in detail for well over a decade, Middleton's analysis of Gen 1–3 is saturated with significant exegetical insights—all of which involve considerable “unlearning” for a Christian audience. For example, “humanity as God's image refers primarily to the human *calling* or *vocation* to represent God in the world; we might even call this a *missional* interpretation” (76; italics original), not simply clinging to an understanding of humanity as a static set of physical or intellectual features. Furthermore, “mortality [is] an ordinary and even intrinsic component of the world God made,” though “this does not mean that we should exclude immortality as the ultimate result of eating from the tree of life” (80). As alluded to above, “the text does not actually envision a paradisiacal period” (84). Labor pains didn't originate with the fall, either, he points out, but it led to an *increase* in such pains (92). Sin is also not binary, but *grows with time* (96; cf. James 1:15). In short, a fair reading of the text—and not one that is hopelessly anachronistic, superficial, or forced—provides plenty of room for a much-needed revision to the doctrine of “the fall.”

Joel Green then examines the concept of the fall in the first-century period. He examines *The Life of Adam and Eve* (or *The Apocalypse of Moses*), 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and *Biblical Antiquities*. Then, he looks at the New Testament (mainly James and Paul). His findings?

First, neither Genesis 3 nor scripture as a whole develops much the specific interests that would later coalesce into the traditional doctrine of original sin; that is, scripture does not refer to the Fall, traditionally understood, and nowhere speaks of Adam's sin as a physical inheritance. Second, Jewish literature in the Second Temple period does raise the question of sin's origins, but does not identify sin as an inherent human condition. This literature generally speaks of obedience to God's instruction as the antidote to sin. Third, Paul's more radical view of sin leads him to speak of human servitude to Sin, understood as a power at work in the world, in the fact of which humans stand in need of liberation. Simply put, humans need more than God's instructions; they need God's saving intervention in Jesus Christ. . . . Fourth, . . . James urges that humans need the good news, God's own word, planted deeply inside them. Fifth, . . . Paul and James thus emphasize sin's corporate dimension and assume sin's heritability—not in the sense of passing sin down through procreation, but in the sense of pattern and influence. (114–15)

Again, a revision of traditional Christian theology on this subject seems to be in order. After Green's essay, Riches explores a paradoxical (and less synthetic) approach to sin and death from a Roman Catholic perspective, while Waters discusses death, transhumanism, and concepts of perfection (and risks involved in pursuing it) in the modern world.

In chapter eight, "On Learning to see a Fallen and Flourishing Creation," Norman Wirzba presents a sort of theological reset regarding our entire perception of creation, humanity, Jesus, the gospel, and the meaning of life. It's an "exploration of one compelling theological framework in which creation's *fallenness*, but also its *flourishing*, becomes intelligible" (158; italics original). While not so immediately connected to the main issues of the book, it's one of the best "big-picture" essays I've read in contemporary theology—beautifully written, deeply learned in a wide variety of sources ancient and new, and profoundly relevant to Christians today. Its primary relevance is in helping the audience to rethink how we see the world—precisely because an evolutionary anthropology and its implications require us to do so on some level. In an equally fascinating essay, Cavanaugh discusses the relationship of sin and the fall to the rise of governments and coercive power, surveying how this topic has been understood throughout church history—from Augustine to Locke and Hobbes. One of his conclusions is that the "eclipse of the biblical Fall story was not simply the putting away of childish stories in favor of hard data; the eclipse of the Fall was at least in part political, not scientific" (202).

The final chapter of the book turns back to the issue of science and religion, what these terms/domains of knowledge mean, and how they relate. Peter Harrison's essay is largely based on his monograph, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). He appeals to Augustine in helping to sort out these matters and advocates a "soft irenic approach." In this view, "science is not consistently truth-tracking," and "genuine conflict between science and religion is *never inevitable*, but they differ on whether it is possible at all" (207; italics original). In other words, we can't know in advance (as with a "hard" position) that science and religion never conflict, but such cases "need to be considered on a case-by-case basis" (208). Augustine, he contends, "does indeed offer an exemplary model of dealing with apparent science-religion conflicts" (208–9), and he explains in detail why that is the case.

As a curious onlooker with an ongoing interest in this complicated subject, *Evolution and the Fall* unexpectedly met all of my high expectations. The essay selection was balanced and interesting. The authors got their hands dirty and directly addressed the toughest issues, offered possible answers, and guided readers frankly and honestly throughout various twists and turns. One will always find reason for disagreement here or there. But all in all, *Evolution and the Fall* makes

for an excellent transition into a “post-creationist” theological world that takes the Bible and Christian tradition seriously while bravely revamping stale doctrines.

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Reading Philippians after Supersessionism: Jews, Gentiles, and Covenant Identity. Christopher Zoccali. New Testament after Supersessionism. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017. ISBN: 9781620329580. Pp. xvi + 172. \$24.00 (USD).

Christopher Zoccali succeeds in a tricky balancing act, one that I would think all of the contributors to the New Testament after Supersessionism series would have to perform to an extent: how to offer a reading of New Testament texts in such a way as to *qualify* previous readings, *without supplanting them*, lest the author’s approach appear at least as authoritarian (or even, ironically, supersessionist!) as those earlier perspectives. Zoccali shows that he’s well aware of such ironies in others’ work (13 n. 35, e.g.) and in this new book he steers well clear of that danger.

Zoccali’s argument unfolds in five succinct chapters. In the introduction, he is careful to clarify definitions early (2–3) and often, with reminders later on (“Again, I refrain from use of the term ‘Christian’ in my historical exegetical conclusions only because Paul does not use the term,” 57 n. 13). Labels like “caricature” and “anachronism” are necessarily frequent, as he explains, in keeping with the goals of the series, what supersessionism does (and does not) mean. This gently, implicitly challenges any assumptions that readers may find themselves carrying about the term and related issues, and that challenge grows as the author outlines “scholarly views vulnerable to supersessionism”: the Old Perspective, New Perspective, and “Imperialist Perspective” on Paul (11–14; the last is Zoccali’s label for the “aggressive hermeneutic of suspicion” against Paul’s “engendering of ‘sameness’ within the community,” as typified by Joseph Marchal, 13). Zoccali’s overall thesis is “that through various discursive measures Paul fundamentally seeks to intensify the saliency of the Philippians’ ‘in Christ’ identity,” such that “their prior ethnic identities—though subordinated, relativized, and transformed—nevertheless remain salient and enduring in light of the Philippians’ offering of allegiance to Jesus Christ . . . and consequent entrance into the people of God” (5).

Chapter two uses Phil 1:1, Paul’s first mention of the Philippians as God’s “holy ones,” as a locus for discussion of both covenant identity and first-century expectations for what Zoccali summarizes as “the eschatological restoration of Israel and consequent pilgrimage of the nations” (18). I enjoyed tracing the book’s implicit biblical theology and missiology, hinted at as early as Zoccali’s own acknowledgments (mentioning “God’s redemption program,” xi) and woven through this chapter’s probing of Paul’s “gospel message and mission” as

predicated on “the larger scriptural narrative of God’s relationship to God’s people” (21). Philippi’s “Christ allegiant gentiles,” the author finds, “as members of the nations living in the eschatological age, in embracing Paul’s gospel are envisaged by him as those anticipated throughout Isaiah, and similarly understood elsewhere in the relevant Jewish literature” (44).

Chapters three and four comprise an exploration of “Paul’s Intra-Jewish Rhetoric” in Phil 3, expanding upon some of Zoccali’s relevant publications, while making good on his earlier promise to revisit “key interpretive points that while often used in support of supersessionist conclusions, actually point in the other direction” (19). The first part further undermines the “Imperialist Perspective” outlined above, determining that Paul’s rhetoric is “*not*, then, fundamentally grounded upon an appeal to his authority and presumed domination over the community,” but instead “upon the eschatological orientation of the Philippians’ *own* ‘in Christ’ identity, and its salvific implications”; so “Phil 3:1–9 might be best understood as a cautious, preventative measure” against gentile Christ allegiants’ potential departure from the movement, rather than against Jewish missionary-proselytizers or Jews as “a negative object lesson” (77, 82; italics original).

Chapter four, completing this two-part argument, contains welcome reminders of the book’s thesis: for one, the Philippian Christ community’s place within Judaism, “regardless of the lack of a sizable presence of Jews in Philippi, should be the starting point for understanding Paul’s exhortation” toward a united commitment to the gospel (85). Zoccali can be commended for meeting potential counter-arguments head-on here. As Paul has both stated and flushed away his earlier achievements (Phil 3:8), “it is important for any post-supersessionist reading to explain the way in which Paul could maintain the importance and abiding salience of his Jewish identity, while also regarding his ‘in Christ’ identity to be exceedingly more important” (102). A concluding chapter then rehearses the book’s findings as might be expected, but also drives home other concerns, such as the book’s thoroughgoing interest in intertextuality (127, e.g., linking Paul’s Philippian discourse to Rom 8, to the calling of Israel in Exod19, and to the “ordering of the other nations” in Genesis 10 and Acts 17:26).

One standout feature not previously mentioned is the author’s application of postmodern methodologies to Paul’s first-century rhetoric and social context. Zoccali’s use of Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory (observing and predicting intergroup behaviour and individual self-definition in social contexts, respectively, first introduced on p. 4) is economical, allowing insight without falling into the traps of making his methods bear too much weight, or of overusing unfamiliar technical terms. When he resorts to such terms, he does so in ways that build the reader’s self-confidence and comprehension, such that Zoccali can afford to emphasize *important* words more than *new* ones: “What is found

in Paul's autobiographical account is *not* the *abandoning* but rather the *subordination* and *alteration* of his Pharisaic-Jewish identity to the new superordinate identity he has attained" (104; italics original).

My caveats concerning the book may seem only cavils, though I believe both are more significant than that. First, Zoccali's references to the Roman Empire are sporadic. Granted, Rome is not foremost in Paul's mind as he writes (unless one follows Gordon Zerbe's reading, in his 2016 Believers Church Bible Commentary volume and elsewhere, of Phil 3 as a masked critique of pride in imperial citizenship). But if Zoccali wants to emphasize features like the Philippian Christ community's "*eschatological hope*" that constitutes "*the very antithesis of the eschatology of the Empire*" (78; italics original), then might we not expect to find more than a few sentences and footnotes in support of same, if not some excurses on such points? By the book's end, we may not doubt that Paul's gospel should be for the Philippians "a story of the world and their place in it that was superior to that put forward by the Empire" (135), but we have had to work harder to piece together the Empire-specific threads than we have on others in Zoccali's argument. Second—and perhaps less of a hobbyhorse—Zoccali's repeated description of gentiles as "'pagan' idolaters" and such like seems similarly lacking in support and explanation. As with the empire question, I'm sympathetic: I grant the connection between gentile status/practice and idolatry from the perspective of first-century Jews and Jewish Christ allegiants. I'm just surprised that Zoccali's label of "idolaters" is so consistent, if occasional ("having attached themselves to the God and people of Israel, they were no longer 'pagan' idolaters," 39; cf. 52–53 nn. 81–82; 86; 120), without explanation—assuming I did not miss one. Zoccali rightly focuses on the former idolaters' new commitment to, and self-redefinition within, the Christ community. I only wish that he'd developed somewhat further the discussion of the selves and practices that they shelved. Without such development, we're left tantalized by points such as "any compromising move towards idolatry or Jewish proselytism is not acceptable; it is a *de facto* departure from the *ekklēsia*" (117)—even if we're more than satisfied with the rest of the book.

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For the Life of the World: Jesus Christ and the Church in the Theologies of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Stanley Hauerwas. Robert J. Dean. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016. ISBN: 9781498233194. Pp. xiii + 302. \$35.00 (USD).

In *For the Life of the World*, Robert Dean, currently Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics at Providence Seminary, offers his readers an in-depth comparison of two of the past century's leading voices in theological ethics, Stanley Hauerwas

and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. While the choice of these twin subjects is not particularly daring, one of the blurbs on the book's back cover only slightly exaggerates in claiming that "Hauerwas and Bonhoeffer are *the* major forces in contemporary theological ethics in North America." Dean's five-chapter book, originally a doctoral dissertation, is an attempt to work out some of the similarities and differences between these two important theologians.

I must admit to taking it for granted that people who are interested in the work of one of these theologians are usually interested in the work of the other. Part of this assumption might be drawn from the fact that both Hauerwas and Bonhoeffer tend toward a similarly stern, almost trenchant, style of writing. Both advocate against war in unsentimental terms. Both place much emphasis on the role of the church, which is no small thing for a seemingly irrelevant audience of pastors. Both see themselves as minority voices decrying the dominant ethos. That is my analysis, however, not Dean's.

For Dean, the two voices are linked contextually by worries about the church's performance of the gospel in corrosive environments. In terms of theological genealogy, they are linked by a debt they both owe to Karl Barth: while neither built a career on exegeting the Barthian canon, both were deeply influenced by the Swiss theologian. Both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas, have, as Dean says, "come away from their engagement with Barth firmly convinced that God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ is the presupposition of all Christian thought and action." In response to the apocalyptic character of God's act in Jesus Christ, "the task of the church is not to change the world, but to witness to the fact that the world has already been definitively changed" (12).

What makes the work of Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas intriguing for many of us is the fact that neither settles nicely into a conservative or liberal theological camp. This is partly a function of their Barthian attention to the particularity of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This unwillingness to relegate Jesus to a simple trope of one sort or another cuts against the common tendency to reduce the particularity of Jesus to either the idea of "incarnation" or the machinations of "justification." Thus, what Dean calls the "animating center" of both Bonhoeffer's and Hauerwas's work "is nothing other than the person of Jesus Christ in the irreducible uniqueness of his personal presence" (71). The Barthian through-line in Dean's comparison carries on to the way the latter positions both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas in critical relationship to their mentor on matters of the church.

In Dean's view, both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas "understand that soteriology is inseparable from ecclesiology and that both soteriology and ecclesiology are properly predicates of Christology" (151). Or, to put it more squarely, both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas affirm *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Barth would not. Even when reduced to aphorisms, Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas appear to part ways in

their description of the church's mission in the world. The former emphasizes that "the calling of the church is to be for others." The latter wants us to believe that the "church's calling to be itself" (224). However, Dean is right to recognize this as a difference in accent and not a difference in substance, as both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas believe that the church exists for the world and serves this purpose by being itself.

Dean's comparison is necessarily focused on the two doctrinal categories of Christology and ecclesiology; for reasons of economy, space, and centrality his decision makes sense. However, the drawback of this is that it obscures further important distinctions between Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas. For instance, though Bonhoeffer is obviously critical of aspects of the church and German politics, he retains a deep love for his national culture that has no parallel in Hauerwas's work. Though Hauerwas will speak positively of certain types of art, of baseball, of specific works of literature, his work lacks convincing evidence that he loves a particular place or culture. In addition, the fact that both Hauerwas and Bonhoeffer carry the title "theologian" in Dean's comparison allows us to miss the vast differences in how these two men expressed this vocation. Unlike Hauerwas, Bonhoeffer was ordained, served specific congregations, and taught candidates for ministry in costly and difficult contexts. Dean rightly emphasizes the importance of sermons for both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas; nevertheless, preaching on occasion is vastly different than preaching week-after-week and being immersed in the life of a congregation, as required by pastoral ministry. These differences are important and, had he attended to them, I think Dean's analysis could have been deepened.

Finally, though *For the Life of the World* contains an historical appendix on the ethics of tyrannicide, it would have been interesting for Dean to have applied the theologies of Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas to a problem of some contemporary Canadian—or, a little more broadly, North American—importance. Most of us, whatever our views of various presidents, prime ministers, or provincial premiers, are not contemplating tyrannicide. What then, for instance, would Bonhoeffer or Hauerwas likely say about the church's role in reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous communities within Canada? What possibilities might they voice to congregational leaders in First Nations communities? Both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas did most of their work in the heart of nations with imperial ambitions, but how might their theological convictions be differently inflected in the context of a middle power? Or what wisdom might they offer to churches considering greater involvement in environmental work?

Obviously, the list could go on, and the fact that Dean's book raises such questions is a good thing. He has laid out the architecture of the theology of both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas in such a way that we can begin to see how their work

would engage other ethical matters. That is a testament to the clarity of Dean's writing and his immersion in the work of these two theologians. Even so, some kind of constructive engagement relating to questions like those raised above would have been a welcome way to illustrate still further the function of Christology and ecclesiology in the work Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas. It would also have given us a better sense of why their work might endure and why future readers should be interested in the substance of Dean's already thorough study.

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Know How We Got Our Bible. Ryan Reeves and Charles E. Hill. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. ISBN: 978-0310537205/ Pp. + 197. \$16.99 (USD).

Know How We Got Our Bible is the fourth volume in the new intro-level "Know Series" written by (primarily Reformed) conservative evangelicals. It's a quick introduction to the Bible, including both Testaments, the Septuagint and Apocrypha, Vulgate, and evolution of Bible translations throughout history to the present day.

A quick 200-page read, the book boasts very clear and concise English and concludes each chapter with study questions and recommended reading. The authors have little time to elaborate on specific ideas or make arguments, so mainly aim to convey basic points. Their purpose is clear: to answer the popular questions, "how did a series of ancient texts, written mostly on papyrus in two old languages, get into our hands? How did we get the Bible in *this* format with *these* translations?" (20).

As such, much of the book's content tends to be unoriginal, superficial, and often misleading. The perspectives themselves are highly opinionated, largely isolated from the larger academic community, and based on extremely selective areas of research. In short, the quality, content, and approach couldn't be more different than that of, for example, *Scripture and Its Interpretation* (also reviewed in this journal).¹

The first chapter (on the Old Testament) serves as a fair case study. The opening sentence is noticeably loaded: "As the New Testament was being written, the Jews already possessed books written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (29). Triangulated with later portions of the chapter(s), this suggests that the canon of the Old Testament was fixed and identical to ours today in the first-century

1 Michael J. Gorman, ed., *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). For other excellent introductions to the Bible, see Andrew Arterbury, W. H. Bellinger, Derek Dodson, *Engaging the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); Joel Kaminsky, Mark Reasoner, Joel Nohr, *The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014).

believing communities (and that the opinions of “the canon” were the same then as they are today). Beckwith is well known for making this argument—and McDonald for repeatedly laying it to rest,² but here it is without qualification. On the next page, we read that the role of the Masoretes “cannot be overstated, since the Masoretes were the link between earlier versions of the Old Testament, now mostly lost, and the medieval copies of the Hebrew Bible used today when scholars translate the Bible” (30). But, as textual scholars have argued for decades now, the role of the Masoretes and Masoretic text *can and has been* overstated in a variety of ways, such as dominating textual decisions over readings of the Septuagint and DSS.³ A couple pages later, the authors (predictably) cite the DSS in favor of OT reliability without noting either (a) the hundreds of instances of agreeing with the LXX over the MT, or (b) the misleading nature of these claims in the context of an apologetic argument.⁴ On the next page, Moses is said to have authored the Pentateuch (33), and on the next page, the Pharisees and Sadducees are said to have affirmed the same Torah (“All Jews looked to the Torah,” 34) without mentioning the unique version(s) of the Samaritan Pentateuch, or the DSS and the Qumran community. The remaining pages of the chapter are filled with equally outdated and/or misleading ideas.

As are, unfortunately, most of the other chapters.

Indeed, as much as I was looking forward to perusing it, *Know How We Got Our Bible* was generally a disappointment. First of all, it does not actually address what it is supposed to—how the bulk of the Bible was written. Nothing is said about scribal culture, the nature of ancient writing and concepts of authorship, the dates and origin of narrative and historical literature, sources and their use, why a group of scribes explicitly compiled Proverbs (or anything else) and how they saw the nature of their work, etc. Readers are given the impression that God gave the Ten Commandments and the rest of the books of the OT were generally written after that in the same chronological movement, brick by brick like a wall being built, and finally the “Bible” emerged. Also, the whole idea that some writings were written after the exile (other than the handful that could not possibly have been written before the exile) is pushed out of sight and, evidently, considered irrelevant for either the origin of the Bible or its interpretation. Many of the same problems taint the New Testament section.

2 See Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), and Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Biblical Canon*, 2 vols (New York: T&T Clark, 2017); *idem.*, *The Biblical Canon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); *idem.*, *The Formation of the Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007).

3 See the many works of Emanuel Tov, as well as Timothy Law, *When God Spoke Greek* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

4 Robert Ward (graduate student at McMaster Divinity College) gave a presentation at the 2018 Spring CATA conference specifically highlighting the problematic nature of these claim.

All of this leaves laypeople in a particularly vulnerable position when real questions are asked, and when the Bible is being studied carefully. Are Christians supposed to believe that dead people write their own obituaries (in a Moses authorship view of the Pentateuch)? Are they supposed to ignore the specific, repetitive editorial remarks such as “to this day” and “when there were no kings in Israel” and pretend the author(s) do not have a specific audience and implied readership in mind? Are readers supposed to believe that the Hebrew Bible is more important than the Septuagint, even though most of the quotations in the New Testament follow the Septuagint? And are Christians supposed to believe that the Bible is useless to them unless adopting a verbal plenary inspiration perspective? In short, all of the problems that plague Piper’s *A Peculiar Glory* (reviewed earlier in this journal) plague the book.⁵

Though the intentions appear good (to help the church), *Know How We Got Our Bible* turns out to be a work of shameless theological propaganda. As with similar books on canon and bibliology by this particular school of thought,⁶ recommendations are made only to books that come from the same ideology—not books that are the most significant, in-depth, or reputable by Christian and non-Christians alike. Readers are left in the dark to know what the main contributions in each field actually are. The book generally propagates a bibliology that neither informs the church honestly nor inspires them to engage the biblical story (which is really “the point” anyway). Instead, the volume constitutes a collective codification of some of the least credulous ideas about the Bible wrapped in a package of dubious propositions, superstition, and artificial certainty and confidence.

For better or worse, we can all expect the list of subscribers to Pete Enns’ “The Bible for Normal People” podcast to continue growing by the droves.⁷ In the meantime, there are thankfully many better alternatives.⁸

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5 John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016) reviewed in *Canadian American Theological Review* 5:1 (2016): 91–95.

6 E.g., Steven Cowan and Terry Wilder, eds., *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2013); Craig Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?: An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014); Wayne Grudem, Thomas Schreiner, and John Collins, eds., *Understanding Scripture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

7 See <https://thebiblefornormalpeople.podbean.com/> or <https://peteenns.com/podcast/>.

8 See the already-cited books in n. 1.