

BOOK REVIEWS

Evangelical, Sacramental, & Pentecostal: Why the Church Should be All Three. Gordon T. Smith. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017. ISBN: 9780830851607. Pp. 132. Paperback. \$18.00 (USD).

For many adherents of the Christian faith, the very title of Gordon Smith's work may sound like something of an oxymoron. Within Pentecostal circles, sacramentalism is frequently dismissed as a euphemism for empty ritual, the rejection of which was one of the very catalysts that gave rise to the movement in the first place. Conversely, Pentecostalism has dismissed by some within more liturgical churches as a capitulation to unrestrained emotionalism, negligent of the profound sense of the Spirit experienced through the ordinary means of grace such as baptism and the Supper. Still others, in the evangelical tradition, assert that the primary way in which believers should expect to encounter the living God is neither via one's personal experience nor participation in the sacraments, but through the knowledge of his written Word.

In Smith's view, however, the church need not default to one of these three paths. On the contrary, he asserts that the church must be all three at once, "if we want to appropriate as fully as possible the grace of the ascended Christ" (3). Grounding his case in the triune nature of God himself, in his introduction Smith labels the "Word, sacrament, and immediate presence of the Spirit" as the three prongs of "an ecology of grace" crucial to the church's fullness in Christ (4). This "ecology"—inspired by the likes of Calvin and Wesley, to whom Smith appeals to demonstrate its consistency with an evangelical ethos (50–51)—is the means by which the church ought to understand its union with Christ (7). His first chapter, a discussion of John 15:4, surveys the various ways the church has traditionally understood the call to abide "in Christ", concluding that, "the three—Spirit, along with Word and sacrament—are the means...by which we abide in Christ as Christ abides in us" (21). Each of these means is the focus of a chapter; 4–6 are entitled the Evangelical principle, Sacramental principle, and Pentecostal principle, respectively.

Each tradition would likely find certain points of contention with Smith. While appreciative of his emphasis on the pneumatology of Luke-Acts in chapter 2, and on the Spirit's work in Jesus's earthly life (23), the Pentecostal would like him to explicitly affirm their doctrine of Spirit baptism in calling for the church to be

authentically “Pentecostal.” The evangelical would applaud his assertion that pneumatology must ultimately “be thoroughly Christological,” that the Spirit “glorifies Christ” among God’s people (26). However, low church evangelicals in particular may be skeptical of his position that the Supper should be celebrated weekly, as in liturgical settings (40). Moreover, in Reformed evangelicalism, his statement that “Luther and Calvin could not incorporate into their own teaching a legitimate expression of the inner illuminating grace of God” (104) would like meet with protest—particularly since the latter has frequently been praised as “the Theologian of the Holy Spirit” by devotees. The sacramentalist, certainly, would wholeheartedly concur with Smith’s proposal “that conversion to the Christian faith necessarily includes baptism” (38) and his caution to those evangelicals and Pentecostals who mistakenly believe “that it is possible to have a full-orbed Christian life with minimal exposure to the sacraments” (45). On the other hand, some sacramental communities may balk at his assertion that the Scripture readings for a particular service necessarily ought to have some connection with the sermon preached (90), or find odd his insistence that the Spirit’s work should always to be highlighted when the Lord’s Supper is celebrated (93).

However, all things considered, Smith’s volume is quite generous and refreshing, constructively offering a much-needed corrective to the imbalances that characterize many local congregations. It identifies the greatest strengths of these three ecclesial traditions and consistently highlights how they are, despite their differences, well positioned to complement each other. His analysis of Acts 2, which depicts the preached Word and the Lord’s Supper as the core of Spirit-empowered church’s gathering (32), serves as a powerful reminder that, though intriguing to the contemporary reader, his vision of the local church is hardly a revolutionary concept—it is, rather, an ancient model. Though Smith may appear rather charismatic in his assertion that, “We are only truly the church when we live, together, in the fellowship of the Spirit” (98), this fellowship is firmly grounded in the constant celebration of the sacraments and preaching of the Word. His discussion of Christian initiation (129) is also timely; while Smith notes that the church of Acts viewed reception of the Spirit and water baptism as “the basics of initiation” for new converts (28), this concept is largely lacking in the contemporary Western church—particularly in evangelical circles which so strongly affirm the sole authority of Scripture, ironically. It seems a direct link may be drawn to this phenomena and the question of community he frequently raises; while few orthodox churches would deny the absolute necessity of Scripture for Christian vitality, Smith reminds his readers that “to be truly the church is to be a community immersed in a sacred text”—not simply a weekly gathering of persons who interact with that sacred text privately (37). On these two points, then,

Smith's work seems to push back on the rampant individualism of Western Christianity, for which it ought to be commended.

Moreover, his appeal to Wesley, Calvin, medieval mystics, and the Fathers to bolster his case reinforces the fact that authentic Christian community requires not just appreciating the voices of other believers within the church today, but those from ages past. Perhaps the prime example of this is his sixth chapter, "The Pentecost Principle," in which he draws the bulk of his discussion concerning Christian experience not from the contemporary Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, but figures like Bernard of Clairvaux (101) and Ignatius Loyola (103). Indeed, both the critical Pentecostal and sacramental reader ought to consider the rich spiritual experience of such individuals as evidence their distinct branches of Christendom may hold much more in common than at first glance. One would imagine this is Smith's goal given his assertion that, "The Spirit is an ecumenical spirit; if we are in the Spirit, we are committed to working with and fostering the unity of the church universal" (120). Thus, a deep reverence for tradition and community, coupled with a high premium on personal experience, serve to greatly enrich one another.

Yet, perhaps the greatest strength of this title is its accessibility; Smith's writing is truly within reach of the wider Body of Christ that he wishes to address. Constructed in such a way that the informed layperson may understand the content, yet with enough depth to satisfy the ordained minister or ecclesial focused academic. On the one hand, Smith's work is theologically rich, grounding his case in the core Christian doctrines of the Trinity, union with Christ, and the incarnation, while also highlighting how they are vitally connected with one another (106). Yet, it is intensely practical, drawing on his own experiences in congregational settings, on the mission field, and his career in theological education. In short, this volume reads as one not merely written about the church, but ultimately for the church.

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Wright, N.T., and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019). ISBN: 0310499305. 987 + xviii pages. Hardcover. \$32.99 (USD).

Hailing from the hallowed halls of St. Andrews to the metropolitan streets of Ridley College, Melbourne, *The New Testament in Its World* (hereafter NTIW)¹ is a truly mammoth achievement. Clocking in at nearly one thousand pages of

1 For the sake of continuity, I will refer to Bird and Wright, NTIW, and the plural "they" interchangeably to refer to the same authorial entity.

text with over two hundred and thirty colored images², one can scarcely imagine a more comprehensive and extensive summation of the work of N. T. Wright—if anything else the fact that Bird and Wright were able to condense Wright’s thousands and thousands of scholarly materials into a single volume is nothing short of extraordinary. As has been acknowledged in the preface, instead of Bird and Wright authoring distinct elements of the work separate from the ground up, both Bird and Wright chose to collaborate in this “joint effort” (26), working together to integrate Wright’s past work into a coherent and readable volume. However, any reasonable person is forced to wonder—does NTIW a worthy addition to the already saturated “New Testament introduction” market? How does NTIW compare to recent academic works from Donald Hagner (2012), David DeSilva (2018; 2nd ed), M. Eugene Boring (2012), Mark Allan Powell (2018; 2nd ed) Luke Timothy Johnson (2010; 3rd ed), D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo (2005; 2nd ed), as well as the classic work by Raymond E. Brown (1997)? The answer, by and large, is NTIW holds up *quite well* although there are some reservations. For the sake of keeping this review from delving too deeply into the weeds, I will focus my attention on the various parts (there are a total of 9) rather than highlighting the isolated chapters (of which there are 37).

To give the reader a sense of the majesty and enormity of NTIW, the reader must travail over one hundred and sixty pages of background details before she even begins a discussion on the Historical Jesus (171ff.). While this is certainly relevant and vital material the immensity of the material will be difficult for any beginning reader or seminarian. For instance, NTIW purports to be a “robust and user-friendly introduction” (26) and while this is indeed noble, the sheer amount of text and concepts will make for a difficult ascent even for the most theologically proficient undergraduate.

After a rather arduous tedious list of the aforementioned illustrations and a preface (13–36), NTIW commences with an introduction to theological and historical method (38–83). Educated readers will already be aware of Wright’s view of critical realism and such a view—contested or otherwise—remains continuous and consistent at this point. NTIW affirms three specific elementary realities for their understanding of the study of the New Testament: history (“the past”), literature (“the text”), and theology (“understanding God and the world”). While many evangelical theologies originate with assertions and arguments about the existence of God, NTIW eschews that sort of method in favor of a more grounded and less apologetic approach. The definition offered for *critical realism* centers on

2 This does not include tables, chronologies, text grids, emails from the edge, and portals and parallels and other such imagery. If one were to include them, the numerous would likely double.

The process of “knowing” that acknowledges *the reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower* (hence “realism”), which also fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiraling path of *appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known* (hence “critical”). (54; emphasis original)

The remainder of part 1 fleshes out these specific topics with characteristic clarity and passion, and the conclusion drawn is finally centered on a desire to bring one closer to God. It is in this section where NTIW is most explicit about its audience: it is primarily although not exclusively written *for* the church (83).

Part 2 is a wide-ranging exploration of the Jewish and Greco-Roman world of the New Testament (86–171). While some New Testament introductions offer perhaps a single chapter on this comprehensive topic, NTIW delves deeply and exhaustively into critical establishing the bedrock world that birthed the New Testament. Special attention is paid to the Jewish framework of this world (108–141). As already mentioned, this section is feasibly necessary for situating a reader within the world of the text, one is already aware of the mammoth mountain they must climb over—hence this section, while well-written and engaging, is imaginably too sizeable to have the necessary impact. The forest is far too large and far too dense for the average reader to travel without getting lost amidst the historical woodland.

Part 3 (172–215) brings readers up to date on the question of quest for the Historical Jesus. The customary questions concerning the identity of Jesus (including extended work on his prophetic calling) are all addressed. Of special note is the messianic nature of the Synoptic traditions (Son of Man imagery) as well as the notorious theological question; “did Jesus think he was God?” is at the center of the climactic chapter of part 3 (231–41). Bird and Wright avoid easy categorizations (calling it a “flattened out modern question,” 238), instead opting to incorporate temple imagery and the theological-cultic nature of such imagery as exemplified in Jesus’ passion and trial. As the exalted Son of Man (or Human One per the Common English Bible), NTIW argues that Jesus sees himself not only as having authority over the temple but to *be* the one who replaces the temple and is enthroned alongside God (239). Such argumentation is far more persuasive from a historical perspective than easy insinuation of about various notions of “divinity,” and NTIW is restrained but compelling in its presentation of the evidence. For Wright and Bird, the seeds of this historical reality are the source of the theological bloom we find in the later creeds, where Jesus “would embody in himself the returning and redeeming action of the covenant God” (241).

Beginning with the end of the beginning, part 4 is quick to locate the notion of

resurrection and the afterlife in the ancient world (264–336). Anyone familiar with Wright’s *The Resurrection of the Son of God* will immediately recognize the same style of argumentation and assortment of evidence from that classic work of historio-theology. A brief primer on Paul’s conception of the resurrection and the afterlife form the center of this segment. Specifically, Paul and the earliest followers of Jesus believed that “the Christian life belonged within a historical narrative which began with Jesus’ resurrection and ended with the resurrection of all believers” (315). Paul, as the theological of the first fruits of the resurrection, is then the foundation that NTIW builds upon as the Gospel tradition is established via the writings of the Evangelists (316–33).

Paul and the faithfulness of God is the largest chapter by page count in NTIW, clocking in well over two hundred pages (336–553). While the layout is common enough in New Testament introductions, focusing on an epistle-by-epistle survey of the writings of Paul, NTIW is unique in that the epistle to Philemon is at the front of this exploration; most theologies of Paul focus on other epistles like Romans (ala James D.G. Dunn’s work). This is a fresh and nuanced take on Pauline theology and the starting point of theological construction. Concerning the thorny issue of Pauline chronology, Douglas Campbell’s provocative work *Framing Paul* is not consulted in NTIW’s reconstruction (336–65) of the life and travels of Paul. Additionally, NTIW’s places a high (though critical) view on the authenticity of Acts in describing Paul’s travels (347–49), fitting the insurgence of scholarly opinion that the Book of Acts is far more historically precise than previously affirmed (c.f. Craig S. Keener’s massive four-volume commentary). Moving on from this point, NTIW segues into three select Pauline-centric topics: monotheism, election, and eschatology (370–95) synthesizing and summarizing Wright’s massive section in PFG on this particular triad of topics. Space permits me only to note the various conclusions drawn by Bird and Wright on the contentious issues in the Pauline epistles:

- They prefer the south Galatian hypothesis (399–400) and date Galatians to 48/49.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and the phrase “caught up in the air” refers to “royal arrival” (424), not the so-called “rapture” motif that some evangelicals have seized for theo-political reasons.
- Concerning the “Lawless One,” NTIW concludes that this figure “is probably built up from various ancient, scriptural, and contemporary figures who set themselves up against God” (428).
- The epistle to the Philippians and perhaps 2 Corinthians are both unified letters, not composites of numerous documents (441, 484–85).
- The Christ-Hymn in Philippians 2:6–11 affirms the preexistence of

Jesus (v. 6), as well as his incarnation (vv. 7–8) and exaltation (vv. 9–11), avoiding the Adamic arguments of Dunn et al (443).

- Regarding the issue of authorship in the Deutero-Pauline corpus, they affirm the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians (420–21), Colossians & Ephesians (458–59), and perhaps the Pastoral Epistles (530–40).
- The authors are essentially egalitarian in their view concerning women's equality within the church concerning women in worship in 1 Corinthians (491–92) as well as the deacons and apostles and co-workers named in the Roman church (525). The more contested passage in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 2:12) is addressed specifically as women being welcomed within the assembly and challenged to learn: “. . . men and women alike can develop whatever gifts of learning, teaching, and leadership God is giving to them” (544).

The remainder of the New Testament is explored in parts 6 and 7, specifically as it relates to Gospel studies (554–701) and the so-called “Catholic” epistles (702–849), with part 8 being concerned with the construction of the New Testament as a whole—including text-critical matters and the canonization process (850–77). Part 8, outside of the conclusion (part 9) is the shortest and least involved part of NTIW, although it certainly is up to date in terms of where textual criticism is going. For example, the inclusion of the *Coherence Based Genealogical Model* (CBGM) is a welcome addition (858).

As previously mentioned, there is a great deal to commend about this stellar work. Without a doubt, the aesthetic nature is appealing, the charts and images and tables engaging, and the prose is naturally captivating and easy to read—as one would expect from Wright and Bird's other works. The mere fact that Bird and Wright were, as also mentioned, able to summarize and condense and nuance the thousands and thousands of pages of previously written material into a coherent whole is itself a wondrous feat. The consistency across the writing itself is also to be commended, as having two authors writing together on any project—much less a project of this size and scope—likewise deserves a note of high praise. However, there are some lingering issues. I highlight two specifically.

The first issue is that the scope of the work is enormous and thus requires some abridgment at certain junctures and this, unfortunately, results in some odd editorial and explanatory choices. For instance, a survey of the actual contents of 1 Corinthians is less than 10 pages long (not accounting for page space that has been utilized by select images), resulting in a too-brief exploration (985–94). While this condensed reality is perhaps necessary, the specific controversial parts of the epistle that are often the focus of scholarly and ecclesial debates are not explored in any great detail (i.e., the issue of prophecy in 1 Cor 11:2–16). Another

example of this odd abridgment is the particularly truncated explanation of perhaps one of the most difficult passages in all of Paul—Romans 9–11—where all three chapters are summarized in less than a page and a half, whereas Romans 1–4 is given around seven pages of detailed attention. This seems disproportionate considering the importance of Romans 9–11 to the discussion of Israel, election, and the future.³

A second issue, outside of the first one mentioned, is the nature of the assumed reader. There is a lack of clarity concerning precisely *who* NTIW is intended for. Were I privileged to teach a seminary course introducing the New Testament, I would heartily recommend and require the use of NTIW. However, if I were teaching a similar course for undergraduates and beginning readers of the New Testament, I do not believe the size and scope would be conducive to said learning environment. This is not a criticism of the book *per se* although I do note that I do believe certain sections are needlessly long above, but a point for future professors and teachers about some mild misgivings.

All in all, this work holds up quite well against all of its faithful New Testament introduction competitors, and one can scarcely find a more widespread work that seeks to address all of the critical issues in New Testament studies—all while seeking to build up the Christian for a life of knowledge, learning, and faithful service to God-in-Christ. To that end, may this book do just that.

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The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief. James R. White. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2019. ISBN 978-0-764233821. Pp. 231. Softcover. \$16.99 (USD).

Amidst the endless recent theological books on the Trinity, there is an angle for everyone. In the case of James R. White's *The Forgotten Trinity* (revised and expanded), the approach is different than typical university academics or local pastors, since it is the approach of conservative evangelical apologetics.

White summarizes and defends a cogent and scholastic Trinitarian dogma. While the tone seeks to be generous, the overarching, functional framework naturally remains one of entrenched warfare about false teaching and heretics vs. truth and the orthodox, where both the author and implied reader are already familiar with this orientation. White's contention is that "the doctrine . . . is so misunderstood that a majority of Christians, when asked, give *incorrect* and at times downright *heretical* definitions of the Trinity" (13). "*Wrong* information"

³ The debate over the meaning of "all Israel" (Rom 11:26) is summed up in a single unqualified sentence: ". . . all Israel . . . consists of all believers" (522).

(193) and incorrect definitions are no small issue in this doctrinal debate. “We hang a person’s very salvation upon the acceptance of the doctrine,” readers are told on the second page, “yet if we are honest with ourselves, *we really aren’t sure exactly why*. It’s the topic we won’t talk about: no one dares question the Trinity for fear of being branded a ‘heretic,’ yet we have all sorts of questions about it, and we aren’t sure who we can ask” (10).

This perspective is peculiar, indicating much about the author’s own experience and perception (and perhaps the book’s original 1990s date). For this reader, it was all questions: *do Christians really hang anyone’s eternal salvation upon the simple “acceptance of a doctrine”? And if we aren’t sure why, why are “we” doing this?; Given the endless conferences, books and symposia, confessions and liturgies, Bible studies all focused on the Trinity, who is it that “won’t talk about it”? And, how is it (and why are) Christians afraid for asking such theological questions to begin with?*⁴

Questions only multiply as readers encounter one puzzling assertion after another. “The Trinity is the highest revelation God has made of himself to His people” (10), leaving readers to ask, *According to whom?* and, *Isn’t the Christ event the highest revelation of God (assuming there legitimately exists such a superlative)?*⁵ White’s reasoning is “the Incarnation . . . [is] that one act revealed the Trinity to us in a way that no amount of verbal revelation could ever communicate” (10–11). The Christ event is subservient to the more ultimate and grand revelation of God as Trinity. White also laments that the Trinity is “rarely the object of adoration and worship—at least worship in *truth*” (13). In reading the book, it was hard to discern the difference between worshipping God as Trinity and worshipping *the doctrine of the Trinity*.⁶

The perspective is also noticeably modern and rationalist in its anthropology,

4 The answer to this last one is obviously a historical ethos of coercion and threats of violence—whether in the long story of the institutional church burning heretics at the stake specifically for questioning Trinitarian dogma, or the more common threats of eternal hell from the pulpit. *The Forgotten Trinity* implements the standard strategy of various sectarian, religious, and fundamentalist movements by *mixing subtle threats with love*. “I wish to invite you, my fellow believer, to a deeper, higher, more intense love of God’s truth” (14; cf. 9, 18)—but “we must be willing to love God *as He is*” (14). A mental mistake, a faulty “image of God in our mind” (14) on the level of God’s nature, has the worst of consequences. One is here reminded of Marcella Althaus-Reid’s “T-Theology,” as quoted in Linn Marie Tonstad, *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 85–86: “Theology is a grand imperial narrative of power. It seeks to classify all reality systematically . . . T-Theology [teaches people] . . . how to justify . . . acts of brutality as, in a sense, acts of Christian love.”

5 The use of the male pronoun for the Trinity as the whole, is also noticeable for a contemporary work in theology. Even the most conservative and reformed of systematic theologians writing in the most conservative and reformed publishers are at least critically aware of this issue and its importance. E.g. Douglas Kelly, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2008).

6 Cf., “The object of [Jonathan Edwards’] reflection is in changing, for it is nothing other than the eternal truth of God. The world, and his circumstances, cannot take away from him what is most precious: his God” (16).

allergic to anything subjective. “The deepest feelings and emotions evoked by the Spirit are not direct toward unclear nebulous, fuzzy concepts, but toward the clear revealed truths of God concerning His love, the work of Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit” (12); “We do not just sit back and expect God to zap us with some emotional surge” (13); “this work . . . is written from a position of ‘passion.’ Passion not in the sense of unordered, chaotic feelings . . .” (13), etc. In reading the book, it seems unfathomable to the author that a person could worship something genuinely mysterious, or that human feeling and intuition might indicate truth,⁷ or that the clearest theological truths may not have anything to do with the Trinity, or that God might primarily be understood as a person to be experienced and not an object to be systematically comprehended.

Indeed, the perspective is extremely dogmatic. “If one denies any of the preceding truths upon which the Trinity is based, one will end up rejecting the entire doctrine *en toto*” (17). Despite cheap talk of theological thinkers having “clouded minds” (15), there is no middle ground, and the situation is knowably black and white. The thick theologizing of Nicaea to Chalcedon can all be found somewhere, somehow, in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament⁸ while the specific opinions of the author are given the weight of timeless orthodoxy. A paltry few pages are given to “mystery” and the limits of language before brushing all that aside to define the Trinity in contemporary, propositional English language: “Within the one Being that is God, there exists, eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (23). The author is so confident of this stated doctrine that “Christians who accept all of the Bible believe this doctrine” (25), and “*Every error and heresy* on this doctrine will find its origin in a denial of one or more of these truths” (25; emphasis mine). Furthermore, “An unwillingness to worship God *as God is and has revealed himself* lives behind every denial of the Trinity that appears down through history” (17). Thus, if readers raise any questions about the proposed definition, one already knows in advance that their eternal salvation may be in question.

7 The author is part of the reformed anti-empathy movement, which prides itself on the coarse preaching of judgment and predestination and discourages any substantive appeals to “emotion” in rational discourse, especially in the face of minorities (e.g., African Americans, non-heterosexual persons, etc.) who are suffering social oppression. The movement finds its most recent contemporary inspiration in the work of psychologists Jordan Peterson, and Paul Bloom, *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016).

8 Hence “forgotten” Trinity: “Most Christian people, while remembering the term ‘Trinity,’ have forgotten the central place the doctrine is to hold in the Christian life” (12). It escapes White that these unfortunate Christians include those of the first two centuries CE, and that the official acceptance of Trinitarian dogma in Christendom (to whatever extent it was in certain periods) is not proof of its concrete impacts on “the Christian life.” The rise of Nicene orthodoxy over Arianism is also said to be proof that “political power cannot overthrow scriptural truth” and evidence of “the irresistible force of truth” (189). But this (problematically) suggests that the doctrine’s *political success* is an indicator of its *theological truth*, not to mention that orthodoxy is rightfully coercive.

The approach of the book is typical of such cheap apologetics: the orthodox idea is defined, followed by proof-texts and additional evidence showing that it's correct, and refuting dissenters along the way (in this case, primarily Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons). Although readers are reminded to love God, experience proper emotion, and not just obtain "good ammunition to use the next time I debate the Trinity" (15), the book essentially functions in precisely this way.

For an explicitly popular level work (19, 29) of (American) evangelical fundamentalist apologetics, one therefore unfortunately witnesses what one might expect: a near total absence of relevant secondary sources,⁹ prevalent use of outdated biblical studies resources,¹⁰ and an astounding degree of isolation and ignorance on the primary subject matter.¹¹ Without any literature review, bibliography, justification of method, and familiarity with developments or debates on the

9 White implements Hodge, Warfield, and Berkof (all from the early 20th century). Remarkably, one of the only contemporary persons cited (and favorably) is Wayne Grudem—whose notorious views on the Trinity have been the object of repeated criticism by fellow conservative evangelicals, reformed theologians, and traditional Trinitarians. See Kevin Giles, *The Rise and Fall of the Complementary Doctrine of the Trinity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017); *idem.*, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012); *idem.*, *The Trinity & Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God & the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002); Millard J. Erickson, *Whose Tampering With the Trinity?* (Louisville: Kregel Academic, 2009); Michael Bird and Scott Harrower, *Trinity Without Hierarchy: Reclaiming Nicene Orthodoxy in Evangelical Theology* (Louisville: Kregel Academic, 2019); D. Glenn Butner, *The Son Who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case Against the Eternal Submission of the Son* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018). White somehow manages to sidestep this debate of two decades that consumed conservative evangelical discussions on the Trinity—and sidestep the implication: that internal consistency within this "orthodox" group is an illusion.

10 E.g., the second edition of Bauer and Danker's *Lexicon* (1979), Kittel's *Theological Dictionary*, Thayer's *Lexicon*, the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, etc.

11 The book shows virtually no familiarity with the theology of and debates about the Trinity outside the narrow confines of Old Princeton and post-reformation scholasticism. Barth, Moltmann, Rahner, other giants on the subject of the Trinity are not mentioned. The problem of "Arianism" in scholarship is nowhere referenced (on this, see in particular David Rankin, "Arianism," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philp Esler, 2nd ed. [New York: Routledge, 2017]). And note that the last several years saw the release of several evangelical-Protestant books on the Trinity such as Bird and Harrower, *Trinity Without Hierarchy*; Butner, *The Son Who Learned Obedience*; Keith Whitfield, *Trinitarian Theology: Theological Models and Doctrinal Application* (Nashville: B & H, 2019). This isn't to mention significant evangelical-Protestant works on the subject after the initial release of *The Forgotten Trinity*, such as Stephen Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), or significant works prior to its release, such as T. F. Torrance's seminal *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016, orig., 1996). Other recent works on the Trinity include Paul Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017); Dick Eugenio, *Communion with the Triune God: The Trinitarian Soteriology of T. F. Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014); Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, *The Oxford Handbook on the Trinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Lincoln Harvey, *Jesus in the Trinity* (New York: Blackwell, 2020); Harriet Baber, *The Trinity* (New York: Blackwell, 2019). White appears to be in dialog with none of these conversations, much less aware that they exist and/or might be relevant to his studies.

Trinity over at least the last thousand years, it's as far away from academia as one can imagine.

How bizarre, then, that *The Forgotten Trinity* successfully served as ("Dr.") White's dissertation for the obscure and unaccredited Columbia Evangelical Seminary.

It is unfortunate that a critical review like this has to be written. But it is more unfortunate (and baffling) why a division of Baker House would publish (and re-publish!¹²) such phony scholarship to begin with (and by a publicly notorious figure no less).¹³ But my bigger concerns are more practical: the book will put Christian readers in an incredibly vulnerable place, leaving them with a superficial account of theological development in church history and misplaced priorities about the nature of worship, theologizing, and biblical study.¹⁴ They are also left without any clear direction for more substantive study of the Trinity.

It should go without saying that there are dozens of Christian doctrines and models of the Trinity,¹⁵ and that they are frequently complementary, not in competition.¹⁶ Furthermore, churches are free to identify themselves with Nicene orthodoxy, implement some other articulation,¹⁷ or do the work of the church without a creedal requirement at all. If discerning what can rightly be called "Christian" on this subject is White's primary concern, then we will have to do more than close our eyes and ears, circle the wagons around shameless ignorance, and proclaim

12 Other than vague remarks on the back cover, there is no clear indicators as to what was changed or why in the 2019 edition. (It is ironic that something similar happened with Grudem, who changed his views on the Trinity and promised to emend them in a revision of his popular *Systematic Theology*, but never did.)

13 Note observations in Jamin Andreas Hübner, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism* (Rapid City, SD: Hills Publishing Group, 2020), 25–28; 45–47. White serves as a pastor of the infamous Apologia Church in Mesa, AZ.

14 Early Christians frequently (and perhaps most commonly) worshipped and prayed to God through Christ. See Piotr Ashwin-Siekjowski, "Creeds, Councils, and Doctrinal Development," in *The Early Christian World* in conjunction with Larry Hurtado, *The Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). For White, this (and the general fact of doctrinal development) is automatically discounted as significant because of some theoretical final revelation of Trinitarian dogma unveiled in the Constantinian and/or post-Constantinian era.

15 These would include all those in the first five-hundred years of the church, to the more recent ones like Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987); Raimon Pannikar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993) and *Trinitarian and Cosmotheandric Vision (Opera Omnia, Vol. VIII)* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019); Peter C. Hodgson, *Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "God in Communion With Us: The Trinity," in *Freeing Theology*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

16 This is true for many concepts, theologies, and doctrines—but all the more true for something as deep, mysterious, and complex as the nature of God's existence. If there is one area of human knowledge where a person should *not be dogmatic*, wouldn't it be on the nature of God? ("Trinitarian dogma" is, perhaps indeed, an oxymoron.)

17 The Brief Statement of Faith (1981) comes to mind as a modern-day equivalent to the Nicene Creed.

certain knowledge about perhaps the most notoriously complex topic of Christian theology.

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Amanda W. Benckhuysen. *The Gospel According to Eve: A History of Women's Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. Pp. x + 262. ISBN 978-0-8308-5227-7. Paperback. \$25.00 (USD).

In *The Gospel According to Eve: A History of Women's Interpretation*, Benckhuysen examines what more than sixty forgotten female interpreters from the fourth to the twenty-first century said about what it means to be male and female, based on their interpretations of Genesis 1–3 and Paul's writings. The book is arranged thematically rather than chronologically, each chapter functioning as an independent article with its own thematic concerns. The book's appendix fleshes out the biographies of individual women interpreters.

Chapter 1 introduces the history of the interpretation of Eve by well-known male interpreters and by forgotten or ignored women. As Benckhuysen points out, women writing on Eve usually interacted with the dominant interpretive tradition of their time, providing alternative views from a female perspective. While many early interpreters negatively portrayed Eve as “an inferior and secondary creation who bore primary responsibility for plunging the world into sin and strife” (8), several male interpreters, such as Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, Basil of Caesarea, and Lombard, viewed Eve more positively, suggesting that Eve like Adam was created in the image of God and was equal to Adam in dignity and virtue (18–19). Benckhuysen's brief survey reveals that some of the female interpreters who accepted the traditional representation of Eve in Genesis 1–3, also pushed back in subtle and not-so-subtle ways (22)."

Chapter 2 focuses on the literary defenses of women in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, when women began to write and circulate their responses to the resurgence of misogynist texts (24–25). Benckhuysen highlights Christine de Pizan's first published defense of women. In her positive reconstruction of the image of women, Christine portrayed women as human beings beloved by the Creator and found no biblical basis for arguing that women were secondary or inferior to man (28). Following Christine's lead, many other women writing poems, prayers, treatises, dialogues and devotionals to promote “a more godly, redemptive and liberating view of women in home and society” (26). Weighing in on the common mediaeval debate about “who sinned more,” Nogarola reasons that if women are the weaker or less intellectually capable sex, Adam is more culpable for sin (31). On the basis of their close readings of Genesis 1–3, many women

advocated for “a more biblical gender ideology where male and female were partners and companions, lovers and friends” (51).

The primary focus of chapter 3 is the question of women’s education during in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Traditional arguments against women’s education throughout much of Western history were based to prescribed views of women’s nature and women’s roles, which in turn were influenced by the negative perceptions of Eve (53). Based on their more positive views on Eve, women from this period began to use the creation story to support their arguments for women’s moral improvement through education. Bathsua Makin did more than recommend female education, she insisted that it be required (71). Mary Chudleigh went further to suggest that educated women would make better wives as they could become “true partners and friends” (73).

Chapter 4 surveys women’s biblical interpretations from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries related to the theme of marriage and motherhood. While Protestant theologians “encouraged a companionate vision for marriage, the reality played out quite differently” (85). By law and social custom, a wife was expected to surrender her will, desires, and needs to those of her husband to make him happy. Mary Astell, one of many women interpreters to address the issue of female subjugation in marriage, argued that the New Testament exhortations (Eph 5:22; 1 Pet 3:1–2; Col 3:18; 1 Cor 11:1–16; 1 Tim 2:13–14) for wives to submit to their husbands indicate nothing about the inferiority of women, and that Gen 3:16 be understood as a prediction and not a divine prescription (83, 87). So instead of finding biblical warrant for men to rule over women, women interpreters found textual support for more egalitarian marriage that was based on “friendship, founded on mutual esteem, fixed by gratitude, supported by inclination, and animated by the tender solitudes of love” (97). In her related discussion of motherhood, Benckhuysen raises the issue of maternal breastfeeding (101), and though it is intriguing, it seems to distract from the focus of this chapter.

The book’s last chapters turned to a discussion of women in the public sphere. Chapter 5 focuses specifically on women’s preaching and teaching in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Benckhuysen’s discussion the hermeneutical approaches women used to justify women’s preaching and teaching is illuminating as women all read the difficult Pauline texts (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:11–12) in the context of the whole canon (111). Some also drew support for their call to be “the various of the truth of God’s word” from other texts including the creation story where Antionette Bourignon in particular believed that “Eve’s true purpose was to turn Adam toward God” (119, 121). During the period of revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women as well as men were urged “to bear testimony to their faith” (125). The strong support for women’s preaching and teaching was withdrawn in the late nineteenth century, when male church leaders

of an increasingly individualistic and materialist society pushed back against women preacher's frequent emphasis on sin, repentance, submission, and self-sacrifice. Instead they encouraged women encouraging to serve God in other ways (134).

The focus in chapter 6 shifts to a consideration of the new roles women took on as educators in the nineteenth century. Women became both consumers and producers of women authored Children's Bibles, Bible histories, and devotionals (144–45). Women's interpretations of Genesis 1–3 are embedded in this material. This chapter on women educators sets the ground for chapter 7, which focuses on social reform. In their discussions of the question of the equality of the sexes, many women interpreters cited Gen 1:26–27. Some, like essayist Hannah Crocker, “stop[ped] short of promoting full cultural equality, maintaining stereotypical distinctions between men and women that gave rise to and were reinforced by separate sphere ideology” (177). Others began to see themselves not as the property of men but as image bearers of God who had responsibilities for the care of the earth (198).

Chapter 8 brings a long debate about the roles the nature of women into the present in light of current divisions between complementarians and egalitarians in the contemporary evangelical church that center around the interpretation of key biblical texts. Benckhuysen introduces forgotten women interpreters who used their knowledge of the original languages to engage in rigorous textual criticism and come up with fresh readings of the controverted texts (203). Katharine Bushnell (1855–1946) and Lee Anna Starr (1853–1937) who believed in the spiritual and social equality of men and women also regarded the Bible as women's greatest advocate (208). Their published linguistic and structural analysis of Genesis 1–3 demonstrates the lack of good support for Adam's superiority in Genesis 2 and argues that the biblical texts support the full equality and rights of women. Many more women scholars joined this important conversation later in the twentieth century using new scholarly tools and archaeological data (222–24). European and majority world voices have also joined the choir of those who proposed alternate readings of Genesis 1–3 that support the biblical truth that calls for women's full —spiritual, social, and ecclesiastical—equality with men (229).

In her invaluable work that introduces the forgotten voices of women interpreters Benckhuysen unveils the women's forgotten counter readings of biblical texts that as traditionally interpreted had negatively affected women's lives. Benckhuysen concludes her book that recovers these veiled voices throughout history with a call to listen to both men and women's perspectives on the Bible: “If this history of interpretation on Genesis 1–3 has taught us anything, however, it is that we need both men's and women's perspectives to help us gain a deeper understanding of the truth” (232). The study questions at the end of the book are

especially helpful for readers who are interested in pursuing the many questions that the book raises about the roles of women and men in the home and society, about how the Bible has been interpreted historically, and about why women's voices in particular were often silenced. All in all, Benckhuysen's *The Gospel According to Eve* is a compelling read. It is a very informative and educative resource that both women and men will benefit from reading.

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Kevin Hargaden. *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age: Confronting the Christian Problem with Wealth*. Theopolitical Visions. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018. ISBN: 1532655002. Pp. 234. Paperback. \$21.68 (USD).

There is a longstanding practice in the Christian tradition which highlights the problem of poverty, resulting in appeals to care for the poor and the oppressed. Far fewer, however, are writings on the problem of wealth, which is exactly the problem that Kevin Hargaden sets out to wrestle within his book *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age: Confronting the Christian Problem with Wealth*. Hargaden, Social Theologian at the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice in Dublin, Ireland, claims that for Jesus, “wealth is depicted as a master, or a lord, or an idol whose quiet power can surreptitiously claim our allegiance” (xv). There is an “inherent risk in wealth,” and *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age* “intends to be a constructive work of Christian ethics that presents a theological analysis of wealth, and by reference to the parables, charts an alternative approach to being rich and following Jesus” (xii, xvi).

Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age is divided into four chapters and proceeds as follows. In chapter 1, drawing predominantly on the work of the twentieth century theorist Karl Polanyi, Hargaden puts forth the argument that today we live in an economic age governed by a nexus of factors that he refers to as “neoliberalism.” In neoliberalism, the market economy is the driving force of society.¹⁸ Those under the rule of neoliberalism find themselves in an enterprise society where the identity of each citizen is as a “man of enterprise and production” (11).

18 Garrett Brown, Iain McLean, Alistair McMillan, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations (Oxford Quick Reference)*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 368: “Here [“neoliberal”] is often linked to the so-called ‘Washington Consensus’ (privatization and deregulation; trade and financial liberalization; shrinking the role of the state; encouraging foreign direct investment) and to the structural adjustment programmes promoted by the IMF and World Bank. More recently, it has been used (for example, by the anti-globalization movement) to characterize the economic ideology behind capitalist globalization. Whilst all of these usages are related, the economic use of the term neoliberalism is somewhat general and imprecise.” For a further delineation and direct critique of neoliberalism by a Christian philosopher, see Daniel Bell, *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

However, the commercial aspect of neoliberalism is only one facet of Hargaden's argument. It would be one thing to argue that there is a force governing *part* of today's world that we define as neoliberalism. Yet, this is not Hargaden's argument. Rather, he posits that neoliberalism is an all-pervasive force that shapes economic and political policy on both the right and the left (14). Thus, neoliberalism's omnipresent rule should provide cause for alarm to Christians, for blind adherence and allegiance to neoliberalism is nothing short of idolatry. "To enjoy the rights and freedoms of neoliberalism is to adopt the belief that our deepest desires can be expressed through commodities. To accept such an account of reality is to reject the claims of the one Christians call Messiah" (31).¹⁹

In chapter 2, Hargaden suggests that the parables of Jesus depict a reality that is in direct conflict with the order of neoliberalism. If neoliberalism provides western society a guiding story of wealth, "Christianity is an alternative story about wealth: what it is, how it happens, and why it exists." (35). The parables are particularly pertinent to this alternative story of wealth, for "it is in the parables that we find some of Jesus's most striking words about money, wealth, and the economy" (41). Yet, it is not just any reading of the parables that shape Hargaden's second chapter, but rather particularly Barth's apocalyptic reading of the parables that set the course of this chapter. "Barth's interpretative method for the parables involves reading the tales through a christological lens, attuned to the presence of the kingdom of God" (48). Barth's reading of the parables do not prescribe standard left/right dichotomous responses, but rather present a vision of the inbreaking kingdom of Jesus that destabilizes our systems that comfort us. Thus, a Barthian reading of the parables refuses to let one get too comfortable with the dominant system of neoliberalism that guides our lives.

Chapter 3 is the most contextual chapter of the book in the sense that it seeks to narrate a particular story within neoliberalism, that of Ireland's Celtic Tiger. Hargaden's rationale for engaging in an explicit narrative is purposeful. He recognizes that just as the parables tell particular stories of particular people, when engaging ethically with theology, we too much begin with the particular and avoid the risk of obfuscating theological points. Thus, by examining Ireland's Celtic Tiger—specifically three "parables" of Ireland's economic history—the

19 Cf. The 24th Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (2004): "We believe in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world... We believe that God is sovereign over all creation. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' (Psalm 24:1). Therefore, we reject the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule." Cited in Douglas Hicks and Mark Valeri, eds. *Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 155.

particular is brought to the foreground, and real explicit theological engagement with the parables is able to take place.

Chapter 4 is *Theological Ethics*' constructive chapter. Here, Hargaden weaves together the generalities and particularities of our neoliberal story along with Barth's reading of the parables in an attempt to offer a prophetic vision of how Christians may respond to the problem of wealth today. Hargaden begins the chapter with a bold and forthright claim that expresses the pinnacle claim of the book: "worship can be an exercise of our liberation from Mammon's claim over our lives" (131). Drawing heavily on the work of William T. Cavanaugh to further his Barthian proposal, Hargaden's claims that Christians are retrained to see the world through the act of worship. The call to worship, which begins not with religion but with God's self-revelation, is the place where this retraining begins. Thus, Hargaden does not say that simply by going to church that one will be retrained to combat the problem of wealth. Church history has exhibited far too much corruption for that to be true. However, this does not mean that one is to dispose of worship. It remains true for Hargaden that worship as a response to God's self-revelation is the catalyst which enables Christians to confront the problem of wealth.

In *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age*, Hargaden has crafted a poignant, in-depth, accessible argument on why wealth is a problem for Christians, and how we may move forward to dealing with this problem.²⁰ While contextually it deals specifically with Ireland's Celtic Tiger, readers throughout the western world, who similarly find themselves living under the guise of neoliberalism, will be able to draw positively from Hargaden's work. *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age* will benefit scholars, pastors, and lay readers as we continue to discern what it means to follow Christ in the age of neoliberalism. As many churches continue to avoid conversations about wealth and financial prosperity, *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age* can serve as an entry point into these hard conversations, as it does not seek to provide a definitive answer to how each Christian must approach their individual financial situation, but does provide enough engagement for Christians to wrestle with their place in this neoliberal world.

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20 In addition to the previously cited works, other volumes make similar contributions on this subject such as Peter Heslam, *Globalization and the Good* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) and Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward an Economy of Care*, trans. Mark Vander Vennen (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991).

Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible. Mark Ward. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-68359-055-2. Pp. 154. Paperback. \$10.49 (USD). (Audio version includes appendix, pp. 1–6).

Translation is a tricky process. Words are slippery things. As an old Italian complaint goes: *Traduttore traditore*—“A translator is a traitor!”²¹ Is the King James Version (KJV), a venerable translation of ancient scripture that has shaped the church and the very *ethos* of the English language itself for over four hundred years, exempt from this maxim? In the introduction to the King James Bible, the translators state that Christians must “hear CHRIST speaking unto them in their mother tongue” and, elsewhere, “we desire that the Scripture may speak like itself . . . that it may be understood even of the very vulgar.”²²

Within *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible*, Mark Ward, academic editor for Lexham Press at Faithlife and author of multiple high school Bible textbooks, including *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption*, demonstrates “what exclusive readers of the KJV are missing as they read God’s Word” (back cover). His primary thesis is that “language change has made the KJV, not entirely unintelligible, but sufficiently unintelligible for today’s plow boy that it is time for change” (6; appendix in audio version).

In this way, *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* stands apart from the plethora of other works that center on the King James debate. Unlike, for instance, certain other volumes that trace the history of the King James Bible and its not insignificant influence within Western culture and society at large, such as the esteemed monographs of Ryken²³ or McGrath,²⁴ for example, *Authorized* is not a “biography” of the KJV. Alongside this, it is also worth noting that Ward claims to maintain “a studied neutrality on the question of textual criticism” throughout his work (115). As such, *Authorized* does not particularly focus on the textual question(s) of the King James Bible, i.e., the *Textus Receptus* and/or the Byzantine text type(s), as do, for instance, Carson²⁵ and White.²⁶ Alongside this, Ward’s book is not a compilation of sundry essays on the KJV.²⁷

21 See Moisés Silva, “Are Translators Traitors? Some Personal Reflections,” in Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, and Steven M. Voth, eds., *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God’s Word To the World*, 37–50 (quotation from p. 37), (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

22 See Miles Smith, “Translators to the Reader,” in David Norton, ed., *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible with the Apocrypha: King James Version*, rev. ed., vol. 1, xxxv (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

23 Leland Ryken, *The Legacy of the King James Bible: Celebrating 400 Years Of The Most Influential English Translation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

24 Alister McGrath, *In The Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

25 D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea For Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

26 James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations: Updated and Revised Second Edition* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2008).

27 This is unlike, for instance, Roy E. Beacham and Kevin T. Bauder, eds., *One Bible Only?*

Instead, Ward's volume primarily focuses on the English language. Because of this, *Authorized* fills a great lacuna in scholarship with respect to the KJV since (to my knowledge) it is the only work that not only clearly distinguishes between "dead words" and "false friends," thus rendering the old adage to simply "look it up, dear!" (19) null and void but also effectively addresses the readability problems that are caused by four-plus centuries of change(s) within the English language.²⁸

Prior to offering a critique of the book, it is prudent to give a general overview of the volume and a synopsis of each chapter. Aside from a short introduction and epilogue (regrettably, the volume contains neither index or a bibliography), *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* consists of seven chapters of varying lengths.

In chapter 1 "What We Lose as the Church Stops Using the KJV," Ward queries whether "any venerable thing can survive the age of the tweet" (16). He also maintains that there are five main things that society loses "if we all decide to let the KJV die and another takes its office" (5). These things, Ward asserts, include: (1) losing inter-generational ties in the body of Christ, (2) losing scripture by "osmosis," (3) losing a "cultural touchstone," (4) losing some of the implicit trust Christians have in the Bibles in their laps, and (5) losing some of the implicit trust non-Christians have in Scripture. Concerning this, Ward ponders "do the negatives of losing the KJV outweigh any positives that might be gleaned from reading newer translations? Everyone who cares about reading the Bible in English needs to answer the healthy, diagnostic question: *What do we do with the KJV in the twenty-first century?*" (16; emphasis original).

Within chapter 2 "The Man in the Hotel and the Emperor of English Bibles," Ward makes clear that "objections to the readability of the KJV are not beside the point. They *are* the point. We need to examine KJV English to discover whether its difficulties outweigh all the values of retaining it" (21; emphasis original). In brief, Ward asserts that not only do many regular KJV readers often fail to notice what they're missing when they're reading from the King James Bible but that "habitual exposure did not work for me . . . I can't deny my experience: I thought I knew what the KJV was saying, but . . . I've discovered that, far too often . . . I did not" (28). The primary culprits for Ward's troubles are also the title of chapter three of the volume, namely "Dead Words and False Friends."

Arguably, chapter 3 "Dead Words and False Friends" is among the most stimulating and, perhaps, the most persuasive of each of the chapters within this

Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible (Grand Rapids: Kregal, 2001)

28 In contrast, a few scanty pages (293–96) are devoted to the subject of "The Changing English Language" within White's volume and of Part Two of Carson's volume, "Nontextual Questions," only passing remarks are made about the changes in English language, mostly with respect to matters of style (see 96–102).

volume. In this section, Ward delineates, at length, a plethora of examples from within the King James Bible where, even if one did bother to take the time to look up the word(s), most people do not have access to the kind of dictionary that could truly help them with the archaic KJV words (namely the *Oxford English Dictionary*—now in its third edition of revisions). The reason for this, according to Ward, is that “the biggest problem with KJV vocabulary is not actually the dead, obsolete words . . . the biggest problem . . . comes from ‘false friends,’ words that are still in common use but have changed meaning in ways that modern readers are highly unlikely to recognize” (31; emphasis removed).

That is to say, according to Ward, many readers of the King James Bible do not realize that they would actually need to look up many “common” words in order to ascertain their true meaning. Some examples that Ward provides includes “halt,” a word that in 1611 meant “lame” not “stop,” “commendeth,” “incontinent,” “convenient,” “remove,” “spoil,” pitiful,” “issues,” “miserable,” “watchings,” “meats,” “overcharge,” and more. In sum, Ward states: “You can teach people to look up unfamiliar words, but *the issue here is not words you know you don’t know; it’s words (and phrases and syntax and punctuation) you don’t know you don’t know*—features of English that have changed in subtle ways rather than dropping completely out of the language” (49; emphasis original).

As noted above, Ward’s argument to this end is especially persuasive since the common-place, “traditional” attitude of “Just look it up!” is highly ineffective in this regard.

Chapter 4 “What is the Reading Level of the KJV?” first details the rubric(s) that are often involved in determining computer-based readability analytics, such as Flesch-Kincaid, ARI, SMOG, Coleman-Liau, and Gunning fog indices, then delineates why they are (mostly) irrelevant to KJV English for three reasons: (1) these tools measure a word’s complexity by syllable count (but that’s not a reliable way of judging whether a word can be understood), (2) word order (syntax) plays no role in these reading-level analyses, and (3) typography plays no role in these reading analyses (see 54–59). The author poignantly opines: “The mere fact that I own a four-hundred book called *The King James Bible Word Book: A Contemporary Dictionary of Curious and Archaic Words Found in the King James Version of the Bible* suggest rather strongly that the KJV is above a fifth-grade reading level” (59; emphasis original). Ward also, tongue-in-cheek, chortles: “No, you can read the KJV just fine. My computer says so” (59).

In chapter 5 “The Value of the Vernacular,” the author uses the following syllogism to further his argument: (a) “we should read the Scripture in our own language; (b) the KJV is not our language; (c) therefore we should update the KJV to be in our language, or we should read vernacular translations” (79). Chapter 6 “Ten Objections to Reading Vernacular Bible Translations” addresses many

concerns that are raised with respect to this issue. Of each of these objections, point 9 “The Modern Versions Are Based on Inferior Greek and Hebrew Texts,” (114–17), however, requires some further comments. To begin, Ward claims to maintain “a studied neutrality on the question of textual criticism” throughout his work (115). To this end, Ward also states:

Textual criticism is complicated. I think scholars should continue to debate their viewpoints, but I don’t think it’s wise for non-specialist to have strong opinions about the topic . . . I encourage people whose pastors use the King James Version to graciously (and privately) ask those pastors one question: “Can you help me find a translation of the Bible I can read in my own language?” If they bring up textual criticism, ask nicely again: “Can you help me find a translation in my own language of *whatever Greek and Hebrew texts you prefer?*” (116; emphasis original).

Elsewhere, the author also maintains:

Textual criticism has no bearing on my overall argument, which is . . . *English translations ought to be made into the current English vernacular because, through no fault of the KJV translators or of us, KJV language is no longer completely intelligible.* Modern readers of the KJV . . . quite literally do not know what we are missing (117; emphasis original).

The final chapter “Which Bible Translation is Best?” turns the whole question on its head by arguing that “English speakers are looking for the wrong thing when we look for *best*. We need to look instead for *useful* . . . [and] because of our embarrassment of financial and translational riches, we can even get very specific in our search for useful (127; emphasis original). Given such, Ward encourages readers to “make the most of our multi-translational situation, because it’s a truly great problem to have” (137).

In sum, Ward is not a “KJV—Only” nor is he a “KJV—Never!” (1; appendix in audio version). In point of fact, the author explicitly states, “I will not tell any individuals who have grown up on the KJV to close its covers forever. I still use the KJV daily in Bible study.” But I ask: is it inconsistent to tell existing readers to hold on to the KJV but nonetheless to help engineer a change for the next generation? If the plow boy is struggling with the KJV, when will Protestant institutions (churches, schools, camps, publishing houses), heirs of the Reformation, see the need for change on his behalf? (2; appendix in audio version).

Veritably, it is hard not to like this slim but sagacious volume. The author’s refreshingly witty sense of humor and cordial attitude, combined with a number

of engaging, personal anecdotes, does much to disarm the reader and foster a “comradely spirit” with all those who might wish to disavow the (numerous) benefits of this book. The author’s expertise in this area must also be commended. As D. A. Carson notes in his blurb to *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible*: “this lightly written and frequently amusing book gently hides the competent scholarship that underlies it” (1; endorsements).

In addition to this, Ward’s volume also has a pleasing format with ample, but not too much, white space, easily identifiable headings and subheadings, a thorough table of contents, and a sufficient amount of charts, graphs, tables, etc., all of which are offered in a remarkably clear format. Alongside this, each chapter is also of a reasonable length, as is the book itself. As such, it is my opinion that no one would feel overwhelmed or unnecessarily burdened if they were given this volume to read by a friend or co-worker or if one was required to read this text in its entirety for a small group Bible study or college level course, even if an additional text (or two) were also assigned in conjunction with it.

To critique, as noted above, one may begrudge the lack of indices (subject, author, and scripture) and the general absence of a thorough bibliography. Alongside this, I was also somewhat surprised that some other KJV “infelicities” were not mentioned, such as the King James Bible’s “howler” of a man’s breasts being “full of milk” (Job 21:24) and the oddity of one being able to hear “the voice of the turtle” in the land (Song 2:12). The reticence of the author to make more extended comments concerning certain “mythological” animals, such as the “cockatrice” (Isa 11:18; 14:29; 59:5; Jer 8:17), “satyr” (Isa 13:21; 34:14), “screech owl,” (Isa 34:14), and “dragon” (cf. Job 4:5), for instance, were also difficult to appreciate, although his discussion of “unicorn,” a semi-technical term that has nothing to do with “My Little Pony®” was quite good (30).

Alongside this, given the heavy influence of the King James Bible upon the Mormon “Inspired Version” by Joseph Smith,²⁹ it, perhaps, may have behooved the author to include at least a few comments to this end somewhere within the volume.³⁰

On a different note, while some may quibble with how the author seemingly chooses to “deflect” certain textual-criticism debates (including the place of the Apocrypha), this criticism is “off-track” since the author makes ample mention of various monographs and resources that effectually contribute to this discussion,

29 As one apostle of the Mormon church states (383): “At the command of the Lord and while acting under the spirit of revelation, the Prophet [Joseph Smith] corrected, revised, altered, added to, and deleted from the King James Version of the Bible to form what is now commonly referred to as the Inspired Version of the Bible.” Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1966).

30 Cf. “A Warning About Cultic Translations,” 247–53, especially 247–50, in Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Bible Translations* (Eugene OR: Harvest House, 2009).

including *KJVParallelBible.org*, a site set up by the author to “show English readers . . . all of the differences between the two major Greek New Testament textual families” (153). In addition, one should note that by focusing on ‘just the English,’ the debate is available to all. This prudent decision of the author helps to avert the unproductive “proxy wars” of textual criticism where, usually, “one blind guide strains at a gnat and swallows a camel.”

To conclude, *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* makes a compelling case that has not been made at length until now, thus justifying yet another book on the King James debate, namely that (as noted above) “language change has made the KJV, not entirely unintelligible, but sufficiently unintelligible for today’s plow boy that it is time for change” (6; appendix in audio version). In this way, Ward’s volume is clearly the most accurate, up-to-date, cost-effective, and accessible resource that is available on the subject. Its primary readers will be all serious expositors and Bible teachers who have a vested interest in the subject. Highly recommended!

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Milstein, Sara. *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision Through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN 9780190205393. Pp. Xx + 244. Hardback. \$106.94 (USD).

In this intriguing study of Akkadian literature and portions of the book of Judges, Milstein manages to present very clearly and concisely a great deal of relevant data from Mesopotamian literature to readers of the Hebrew Bible.

Milstein begins by situating her work at the intersection of literary criticism, surveys of small-scale revision in Mesopotamian texts, and a growing body of work on the historical development of Hebrew Bible texts. Literary criticism and psychology support the notion that “initial content” plays a “key role in the evaluation of subsequent material” (3). “This tendency reflects what neuroscientists call ‘predictive coding’: the brain uses stored knowledge regarding the world and the probabilities of one event following another to generate predictions about what the current state is likely to be” (3).

Milstein acknowledges significant differences between the corpora of Mesopotamian texts—which are attested in multiple clay tablets between the third and first millennia BCE—and the fixed consonantal text of the Masoretic Text of which only later copies are available (4–6). Nevertheless, evidence of textual development in Mesopotamian texts can provide worthwhile comparisons to Hebrew literature. A relatively closed corpus of Mesopotamian texts had developed by the first millennium BCE, such that Assurbanipal’s libraries at

Nineveh contained basically the same corpus of literary texts (11), “‘reference libraries,’ in that they were surely used by magicians, diviners, and doctors that attended to him” (10). These libraries allow us to observe the development of specific texts (e.g., Gilgamesh Epic) over the span of a thousand years; “knowledge regarding tablets that were stored together” (12).

Whereas the literature on textual change in Mesopotamian texts has focused mainly on small-scale variation; Milstein hopes to demonstrate the value of analyzing large-scale revisions, for which there is “hard evidence,” for modeling the development of biblical texts (21). The lack of tangible evidence of textual development in the Hebrew Bible, she observes, “has not deterred biblical scholars from reconstructing older phases of biblical texts in painstaking detail.... Without hard evidence to substantiate these claims, it can be difficult to adjudicate among the dozens of hypotheses for reconstruction. This has led some scholars to abandon literary-historical pursuits altogether and to focus on the final form alone” (27). Milstein sees her own work “in line with David Carr’s call for a ‘methodologically modest form of transmission history’” (28³¹). Milstein helpfully surveys the most important recent studies in the transmission process of the Hebrew Bible (28–35).

In chapter 2 Milstein prepares for the detailed analyses in chapters 3–6 by presenting four widely-recognized examples of “revision through introduction”: the Sumerian King List, the Epic of Etana, the Community Rule document, and the biblical books of Esther (MT and LXX). Milstein prefaces the last two with a suggestive list of others in the Hebrew canon, along with a wealth of references to secondary literature. In each of these examples, the common thread is that the introduction(s) serve to cast the old material in a new ideological frame: 1) for the SKL an introduction replaced a linear sequence of history and kingship with a cyclical pattern of history (49), and “aimed to enhance the authority of Sumerian rule by situating its origins at the beginning of time” (50); 2) the new prologues of the Epic of Etana support the kingship of Etana and the primacy of his city, Kish (54).

Chapter 3 concerns the story of Adapa, which exists in several separate tablets (Fragments A, B and D). Adapa is a fisherman who somehow “breaks the wing” of the South Wind, causing the wind to cease for seven days (bad news for fishermen and sailors!). He is summoned to appear before the god Anu to account for and remedy this situation; he is advised in preparation for this audience by the god Ea. Milstein suggests that the so-called Fragment A attempts to frame the narrative tension in terms of a grander philosophical purpose than was perhaps intended by the original: “In this light, Fragment A represents an effort to repackage the

31 Quoting David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford and New York: OUP, 2011), 40.

Adapa tradition in the context of wisdom and immortality” (85). Fragment D, in Milstein’s estimation, is intended as a second conclusion that “preserves a different resolution to the conflict” between Anu and Ea over mortal Adapa (93).

Chapter 4 addresses the Gilgamesh Epic. Though her treatment takes account of earlier studies such as Tigay’s, Milstein notes that her hypotheses are based on close readings of evidence [relatively] newly available, including George’s two-volume edition of the OB Akkadian Gilgamesh³² and a recently published MB prologue from Ugarit (123). Each of these developments represents a different framing of the philosophical questions at the heart of this legend: “The Gilgamesh of the OB version (and in SB I after the prologue) is a relentless boundary-crosser with people and gods alike. . . .” By contrast: “The Gilgamesh of the MB and SB prologues is . . . wise not simply because he realizes that immortality is unattainable, but also because he finally realizes that he, too, has limits.” (145–46).

The strength of Milstein’s work in the Mesopotamian texts is the meticulous attention to the philosophical and political interests reflected in the various stages of revision to which we have access. In Chapters 5 and 6, she then ventures to suggest multiple instances of “revision through introduction” by dissecting Judges 6–9 and 19–21.

Accepting W. Richter’s basic idea that the “hero stories” of Judges 3–16 are fronted by a Deuteronomistic introduction in 2:6–3:6 (148), she proposes that Judges 8:4–21 and 9:26–54 are the original units in the “Gideon Abimelekh block,” which were separately supplemented at the beginning, “buttressed” by 7:1–22, and then further introduced in chapter 6. The main criteria she uses to identify these layers are: 1) affinities between the governance structure represented in these “earliest” texts and the evidence from Amarna; 2) a trajectory from local leadership toward centralized political leadership; and 3) the hypothesized tendency of later texts to portray Abimelekh negatively but to “purge the name Jerubbaal of improper affiliations” (154–70).

In chapter 6 Milstein takes up the well-known narrative connections between Judges 19–21 and the stories of Saul: references to Gibeah, Jebus (David’s capital), Jabesh-gilead, and the muster of Israelite tribes using a dismembered body (175–78). Whereas many redaction-critical analyses start with Judges 19 as the original story and consider Judges 20–21 as added subsequently for polemical purposes (179), Milstein argues instead that “in its early form, without Judg 19:1–20:13, this complex was pro-Saul; at a later point, with the addition of Judg 19:1–20:13, the block was rendered anti-Saul.” (174) Milstein contends that while the Judges 19 episode “cannot stand on its own,” Judges 20:14–48 could have

32 *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts*, OUP, 2003

originated as an independent account of a war between Benjamin and other tribal entities, which was then “revised by introduction” through the Gibeah Outrage story, which shifts the focus from Benjamin as a whole to Gibeah in particular (180). Milstein then argues that Judges 21:1–14 “revises” the Shiloh episode (21:15–24).

Convinced that 21:15–24 is the original story connecting Gibeah and Saul to Shiloh, Milstein transitions to the second case made in the chapter: “Shiloh and Benjamin: Evidence for an ‘Old Saul Complex’” (185–192). Milstein adopts the common (but questionable) view that the Samuel birth narrative originally pertained to Saul (based mainly on the association of שָׂאֵל with the stated source of Samuel’s (שְׁמִי) name: “from YHWH I have asked for/borrowed him” שְׂאֵלְתִּי מִיְהוָה, v. 20) (187). From this questionable starting point she argues for an original connection between Saul and the House of YHWH at Shiloh, suggesting that Judges 20:14–48, 21:15–24 and 1 Samuel 1 originally “circulated together” (190). Such a story originally connected Saul to Shiloh as (possibly) an Ephraimite, whom the Benjaminites later claimed as their own (192). The reader may well ask whether it is reasonable to postulate so many steps backward into the production of this piece of literature and suggest such contrasting purposes for these texts which were later combined by editors.

The remainder of the chapter (“Conclusions”) casts the polemical nature of Judges 19–21 in the context of Davidide/Saulide struggles of the Babylonian and Persian periods (200–206), a view which has broad acceptance apart from the detailed dissection that Milstein has performed. She allows for late editing of the stories, in the Persian period (203), but sees the original “Old Saul Complex” as reflecting an early period: “Though a range of dates is possible for this phase, the origins of such a complex may be best suited to the period prior to or shortly following Benjamin’s alliance with Judah, at a time when the Benjaminites were still capable of producing their own literature” (204).

Milstein concedes that these stages of development are “not indicated in hard evidence, as in the case of the Gilgamesh Epic and Adapa” (171). Yet she still maintains “with relative certainty that the complex as a whole includes a range of ‘types’ of revision through introduction by master scribes” (171). Her suggestion of “revision through introduction” presumes in each section (Jdg 6–9; 19–21) that these tales existed in early form, underwent revision-by-introduction to reach a secondary independent state; and then were incorporated into the final form of the text (further revised and supplemented). How then can we be sure that the sources and layers she identifies are in fact “introductory” and not simply woven into the overall text—understood either as the received book of Judges or a so-called Deuteronomistic History? The model itself when applied on multiple dimensions

within a text (without hard evidence) seems to undermine the contention that the hypothesized layers of supplements are in fact “introductory.”

Biblical scholars and informed lay readers interested in literary structure and comparative studies will find much to appreciate about Milstein’s book. Theological readers will find in Milstein’s work and the stream of books on textual development of the Hebrew Bible an important reminder—dare I say, a corrective—concerning the significance of diachronic studies for theological readings of the Hebrew scriptures, amid the recent turn toward “Theological Interpretation” and other synchronic readings. In particular, *Tracking the Master Scribe* has drawn attention to the significance of introductory material in framing the body of a text—as a complement to significant studies that focus on narrative endings.

Even the reader who does not share all of Milstein’s conclusions will appreciate her contributions to close readings of the texts and her compelling comparative evidence from Mesopotamian literature, which remains relevant to non-diachronic readings of biblical texts. Finally, Milstein is a genuine pleasure to read for her brevity, her style in prose, her sense of humor, and the clever stories and sayings that frame the chapters—usually as part of the introduction, of course.

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