

BOOK REVIEWS

Travis Dickinson. *Logic and the Way of Jesus: Thinking Critically and Christianly*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2022. Pp. xii + 367. ISBN 978-1-5359-8327-3. \$37.93 (CDN) \$21.99 (USD) paper.

In an age of information saturation, the regenerate are constantly assailed with different ideas demanding them to make an intellectual decision. Travis Dickinson in *Logic and the Way of Jesus* provides some much-needed clarity by guiding Christians through principles of critical thought which find their expression (and motivation) in Jesus. Dickinson approaches this task by: (I) demonstrating the tremendous need for critical Christian thought (5), (II) encouraging readers to pursue critical thinking in the light of Jesus (31–52), and (III) delineating key stratagems of deductive/non-deductive standards of argumentation (119–232).

Dickinson begins (Chapters 1–3) by laying a clear foundation for critical thinking. This is primarily done through examining the Church’s intellectual impact and resulting contemporary cultural erosion (1–8), Scriptural imperatives relating to our intellectual pursuit of God (17), Christ’s example of using logic/critical thinking (36–51), and, lastly, how these points can together lead to a thoughtful worldview so as to not be “accidental Christians” (75). Chapter 4 is both a primer to logic and an argument for God through the existence of logic principles (87).

In chapter 5, Dickinson defines critical thinking as, “Thoughtful evaluation of ideas and the reasons we have for holding those ideas” (101). Dickinson then explores the three principles of logic one uses when thinking rationally: (1) the Law of Identity, (2) the Law of Excluded Middle, and (3) the Law of Non-Contradiction (107–109). Dickinson also covers the interpretive tools needed to parse logical statements from mere prose (109–15). Chapters 6–8 cover validity, soundness, and other principles related to deductive logic (131–38) and the function of truth tables (155–72). The section on Categorical Logic (173–98) includes Venn Diagrams, thereby representing such statements in a helpful visual fashion.¹

Chapters 9 and 10 explain non-deductive standards of argument and the scientific method, i.e., abductive reasoning (224). Chapter 11 includes definitions of

¹ While other works, such as David Carl Wilson’s *A Guide to Good Reasoning: Cultivating Intellectual Virtues* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Libraries, 2020), for example, follow a similar format to this, Dickinson’s text is far clearer as he covers both complex and simple arguments that use either Universal or Particular statements or a combination thereof.

evidence, what counts as proper reasoning, various kinds of evidence(s), and how these contribute to background knowledge (246).² Chapters 13 and 14 delineate a whopping 25 (!) formal/informal fallacies (251–86) alongside a detailed outline of intellectual virtues (287–300). Dickinson concludes with this motivator: “Thinking well and critically is a crucial part of loving and knowing God” (309). A useful appendix of “practice problems” and a subject index round things out.

Dickinson has done an immense service to the Christian community at large with this work. While, perhaps, similar to other volumes, such as Moreland’s *Love Your God with All Your Mind* (Navigators, 2012) and Holland Jr. and Forrest’s *Good Arguments: Making Your Case in Writing and Public Speaking* (Baker, 2017), for instance, Dickinson makes a novel contribution by focusing on Christ as our example for the intellectual life prior to discussing the merits of critical thinking. Dickinson’s approach of essentially surveying all core aspects of logic/critical thought is also highly beneficial as readers will be well-equipped to handle the many questions arising from living in a post-Christian cultural environment. Similarly, the author’s superb handling of the Scientific Method (and the theoretical virtues involved therein) empowers Christians to cogently engage a society increasingly enamored with scientific pursuit.³

Typographically speaking, *Logic and the Way of Jesus* is easy to appreciate with ample margins, sufficient white space, and effective use of boldface type. Dickinson also writes well, pitching things just right for the uninitiated. The length of the book itself (367 pages plus!), however, may be off-putting for some students and instructors.

To critique, *Logic and the Way of Jesus* unequivocally accomplishes its primary aims, i.e., to encourage Christians to use reason and evidence in the development of their beliefs with Christ as their model and to positively influence the culture around them with Christian intellect (back cover). That said, it is not without fault. While (fortunately) quite rare, Dickinson’s definitions were, at times,

2 Dickinson takes an Evidentialist position regarding knowledge. He defines that view as follows: “The thesis of *evidentialism* says that one is not rational in believing some claim unless one has good evidence for that claim.” (236, italics original). The author’s adherence to such a position can be seen through his definition of ‘intellectual assurance,’ such as when he states, “if one has sufficiently good evidence for a belief, then one has intellectual assurance for that belief” (237). By defining evidence this broadly, Dickinson successfully avoids the false charge of putting justification for the beliefs of the average churchgoer out of their reach. Given, however, that his view makes evidence “easy to come by” (214) and that belief in God is (in Dickinson’s mind) a “belief of consequence” (242) such that we should not “settle for easy” (242) it is unclear what actually has been gained. Cf. John DePoe, “What’s (Not) Wrong with Evidentialism?” *Global Journal of Classical Theology* 13 (2016): 2–7.

3 Some ‘classic’ texts that also leverage this highly-effective approach include Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Another contemporary voice in the debate is Gerrit F. Lewis and Luke A. Barnes, *A Fortunate Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

somewhat ambiguous, thus impeding understanding. Some examples include his discussion of reason being the basis for our choice to put faith in Christ (21). To be clear, Dickinson fails to sufficiently delineate between good and bad reasons (aside from intuitive considerations such as believing in Christ due to fear of Hell) until chapter 11 where the nature of evidence and intellectual assurance is made clear. This unfortunate oversight is unlikely to have helped the reader track the author's (main) argument(s).

Other challenges include certain formatting issues. These include such things as the truth tables being broken-up on to multiple pages (see, for example, 170–71) and the lack of clear section headers to organize and differentiate the author's progression of thought. This problem is compounded by the sheer volume (and diversity!) of content. Would it not have behooved Dickinson to have leveraged a formal, overarching rubric to categorize and present his content?

Another quibble involves the choice to cover Categorical Logic rather than Predicate or Second-Order Logic. While the former is easier to translate into prose given the lack of symbols, quantifiers, etc., it is reasonable to argue that a small dive into the latter would have significantly assisted readers in their critical thinking journeys.

In conclusion, Travis Dickinson's *Logic and the Way of Jesus: Thinking Critically and Christianly* is not only an ideal text for introductory courses on critical thinking but also a great book for Christians seeking to become more intellectually responsible. Its primary users will likely include Bible college/Christian university/seminary students, certain Christian educators, pastors, and, one hopes, the invested lay person. For anyone interested in becoming salt and light in a culture gone stale, *Logic and the Way of Jesus* is a breath of fresh air. Highly recommended.

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Bruce W. Longenecker. *In Stone and Story: Early Christianity in the Roman World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. Pp. 292. ISBN 978-1-5409-6067-2. \$35.00 (USD) paper.

The last decade has seen several NT scholars write works in a variety of genres to help students and other non-specialists understand the historical background of the earliest Christian communities and the texts they produced.¹ To this body of literature, Bruce Longenecker, professor of religion at Baylor University, provides

1 See especially Craig S. Keener's *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, second edition (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014) and the seven-volume *Week in the Life* series of historical novellas set in the NT era (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012-2020).

a unique contribution in light of recent archaeological excavation at the Vesuvian towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

As a historian of early Christianity well acquainted with these historic sites,² Longenecker seeks to relate “texts of the early Jesus-movement to selected Vesuvian resources” in order to “explore ways in which Jesus-devotion was getting a foothold within that world” (1). Not intending to propagate a new historical thesis, Longenecker rather showcases points where “the world of the Vesuvian towns intersects with themes and issues evident in New Testament texts” (24).

Longenecker’s expansive text is spread across nineteen chapters, divided into four parts. In the first part (“Protocols of Engagement”) he introduces the basic facts of the Vesuvian towns (including their tragic end), the importance of honour and “status capture” in the Roman world, and other relevant information dealing with the vision of his book.

The second part (“Protocols of Popular Devotion”) deals with the intersection between religious and political devotion in Pompeii, the larger Roman world and the NT texts. The place of temples, popular deities, the imperial cult, mystery religions, Roman imperial ideology, Epicurean philosophy and other related topics are all illuminated.

In the third part (“Protocols of Social Prominence”) Longenecker details such diverse topics as the inner workings of politics, literacy, gladiator spectacles, law-courts, and business. Again, beginning with concrete archaeological data from Pompeii, the author then broadens his view to the larger Roman world. With this foundation set, Longenecker presents a variety of NT texts that relate to how the early Jesus-devotees accommodated, differed, or contextualised the larger cultural attitudes towards these matters.

Part four (“Protocols of Household Effectiveness”) similarly discusses the topics of slavery, family order, household worship, spiritual powers in daily life, and memorials for the dead. Longenecker extensively discusses the way that slaves in Pompeii and the larger Roman world were used for the personal sexual gratification of their masters and for the pursuit of sex trade business interests. Subsequently he explores how the early Christians may have re-imagined and revised the master-slave relationship in light of texts like Galatians 3:28 and Revelation 18:13.

Longenecker concludes *In Stone and Story* by briefly discussing important topics that did not arise from the Vesuvian archaeological data but were important for the early Jesus-movement (their relationship with the Jews, Stoics, and the destitute). The book also includes a helpful appendix of further questions to consider that probe more NT texts in light of the historic data presented in each

2 See his *The Crosses of Pompeii: Jesus-Devotion in a Vesuvian Town* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

chapter. Although there are no footnotes offered in the main body, there is an extensive reading list organised by chapter that directs the still curious reader to a plethora of relevant materials.

While focusing mostly on archaeological data from Pompeii, Longenecker also helpfully includes many quotes from ancient authors like Cicero, Epicurus, Plutarch, and Seneca which augment his purposes. These two approaches (“Stone [archaeology] and Story [texts]”) are proven to be complementary in presenting the historic data in a memorable and engaging way. Longenecker’s “tour” through Pompeii complete with reoccurring historic “characters,” makes the literary data (both NT and other) become more concrete and relatable to the experiences of daily Greco-Roman life. His inclusion of Pompeii graffiti was especially constructive in showcasing perspectives from the lower socio-economic classes, whose voices have not been preserved in historical texts.

Longenecker further includes valuable timelines that trace the composition of NT texts, and events regarding the Vesuvian towns (35–36). Another beneficial feature of the book is that nearly every spread contains at least one colour image of Pompeii sites, inscriptions, graffiti, and frescoes relevant to the text, most of them photographed by Longenecker himself.

Longenecker undoubtedly fulfills his goal of “assembling a helpfully creative resource for interested learners” (24). With great skill he smoothly weaves together concrete historical data from Pompeii with writings from the Greco-Roman world, culminating in engaging discussions of the early Christian communities and NT texts. For example, an understanding of the Egyptian Isis cult (which alongside Christianity rapidly grew in the first century) forces the reader to consider anew the Gospel of John’s familiar themes of eternal life, resurrection, and living water. Likewise, understanding the ubiquitous belief in (and fear of) spiritual forces in the first century Greco-Roman world helps the reader to see in new light Paul’s imperative for Christians to bless and not curse their persecutors (Rom 12:14). Longenecker engages with almost every NT book, giving the reader a myriad of thought-provoking connections to consider.

Longenecker’s understanding of the NT documents and timeline of early Christianity understandably guides his analysis, which becomes clear throughout the book. For example, his conclusion that Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, (parts of) 2 Timothy, Titus and possibly 2 Thessalonians were written by disciples of Paul in the 80s–90s CE; and that the gospels, Acts and non-Pauline epistles were written between 70–130 CE, influences his discussion of the historical development of Christianity throughout the book. These judgements and their implications (understanding a loss of eschatological urgency and the gradual accommodation to Greco-Roman culture) will not sit well with some readers.

Despite many of Paul’s actions and statements running contrary to the grain of

Greco-Roman culture (in regards to marriage, his support of women's active role in the Christian community) Longenecker interestingly and consistently describes Paul as a "relatively conservative Roman citizen" (78). For example, he concludes that "the overturning of slave status was a rather peripheral matter in Paul's strategic thinking about the advancement of his mission" (192) and that his "radical inversion of social relationships" was mostly contained to the gatherings of the "Jesus-devotees" (191).

On a related note, Longenecker is most adept at demonstrating how other NT authors differed "in their assessment of how the novelty of their worldview was to take shape in concrete form in their first-century world" (250). For instance, he gives a fair amount of discussion to the author of Revelation's more radical attitudes towards the economy and slavery.

Whether one agrees with Longenecker's views or not, his unique and engaging tour through the Vesuvian towns in conversation with NT texts is an incredibly instructive resource for understanding the world of the NT. *In Stone and Story* would be a well-suited supplemental text for NT introductory classes and is highly recommended for any non-specialist interested in Pompeii and/or the NT.

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Edward Cook. *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 416. ISBN 978-1-1087-1448-8. \$51.43 (CAD) \$44.99 (USD) paper.

Aramaic is a language of central importance for a close study of the ancient world (1). Aramaic is also indispensable for effective exegesis and interpretation of Scripture. While its influence is keenly felt in the Greek text of the New Testament, the basis of the grammatical description in Edward Cook's book, *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects: An Introduction*, is primarily the Aramaic sections of the canonical books of Ezra and Daniel (being aware that Aramaic also appears in Jeremiah 10:11 and Genesis 31:47). Cook states: "this introductory grammar will bring students to a reading knowledge of these important texts, as well as others written in the same dialects, and enable them to move forward, well equipped, to more advanced study" (ix). While Cook ably meets this modest objective, it remains prudent to outline how this work distinguishes itself from the plethora of other volumes currently flooding the market. Prior to offering a full-scale critique, however, a brief overview of the text, as a whole, is in order.

Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects is divided into two main parts: (1) the grammar and (2) the readings. In the first chapter, "Aramaic and Its Dialects," Cook explains his understanding of the beginnings of Aramaic, its different stages

throughout history (more on this later on), and various artifacts comprised of Aramaic, such as, for example, the Elephantine Papyri, the Arshama Letters, and the Hermopolis Papyri, alongside different documents found in the Qumran area, such as the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen) and the Targum of Job (11QtgJob).

A handy annotated “tools for research” section—comprised of Bibliography Resources, Text Editions, Dictionaries and other Lexical Resources, Grammars, and Concordances—concludes this section (16–18). Despite its usefulness, would that the author had showcased the immense help for students provided by a number of other guides to Aramaic which (seemingly) were overlooked. John A. Cook’s *Aramaic Ezra and Daniel: A Handbook of the Aramaic Text* (Baylor University Press, 2019), for instance, is an indispensable resource for all serious scholars and Scott N. Callaham’s *Biblical Aramaic for Biblical Interpreters: A Parallel Hebrew-Aramaic Handbook* (Glossa House, 2021) is also *sui generis* vis à vis his unique method of direct comparison/contrast with (biblical) Hebrew. At the risk of belaboring things, James A. Swanson’s *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Aramaic (Old Testament)* 2nd ed (Logos Research Systems, 2001) remains the only lexicon of its kind for biblical Aramaic but (regrettably) it, too, was glossed over by Cook. Lastly, briefly highlighting the most helpful original language commentaries would surely have benefited the reader. Alas, Edward Cook fails to highlight any commentaries whatsoever within his “tools for research.” Why?

Concerning the grammar itself (chs. 2–17), which constitutes the bulk/main portion of the book, Cook begins with the basics (orthography, phonology, etc.) prior to delineating the fundamental elements of nouns, adjectives, prepositions, numerals and the like. With respect to verbs, which the author judiciously labels as the suffix and prefix conjugations as opposed to the linguistically inaccurate “imperfect” and “perfect,” respectively, Cook thoroughly covers tense, aspect, and mood (TAM) alongside valence, voice, and *Aktionsart*, that is, “type of action.” While, perhaps, not as pedagogically sensitive and/or intuitive for the uninitiated reader as using the traditional names, i.e., Pə‘al, Pə‘il, (H)ithpə‘el, Pa‘el, (H)ithpa‘el Haph‘el (or Aph‘el), Hoph‘al, and (H)ittaph‘el, *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects* leverages alphabetic abbreviations (letters) for all stems, namely G (*Grundstamm*), Gp, tG, D, tD, C, Cp, and tC.

The last three chapters of the grammar proper (Ch. 15: Clause Combining: Coordination, Ch. 16: Clause Combining: Subordination, and Ch. 17: Discourse Markers (Half-Conjunctions)) warrant extended discussion. Cook’s analysis is not only markedly superior to anything else on the market but also quite nuanced. As such, readers will profit from an especially close read here.

For clause combining (see p. 243) Cook notes that coordination is “to be distinguished from the mere succession of clauses; it refers to clauses that are joined

with some kind of cohesion between them, whether semantic (e.g., dealing with the same events or entities, or the same causal forces) or structural (with, e.g., pronominal reference, parallel syntax).” On subordination, i.e., the linking of a main clause to a second, dependent clause which modifies the main clause adverbially, Cook cogently reports: “The linking is usually marked by a subordinating conjunction, although in some cases a coordinating conjunction is used, and the subordination is semantic rather than syntactic” (247). Lastly, Cook (astutely) understands that discourse markers, or half-conjunctions, “do not link two sentences together. Rather, they link a sentence to a preceding discourse, logically or temporally” and that “unlike ‘full’ coordinating conjunctions, they do not mark the B-clause of coordinated pairs” (261). To conclude, Cook’s descriptions of these grammatical functions are truly outstanding in their depth and specificity.¹

Ch. 18. “Reading Guide for Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects” includes portions of biblical text, namely Daniel 3, 4, 6, 7, and Ezra 4:24–5:17, selections from the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as the Targum Job from Qumran (cols. 37–38) and the Genesis Apocryphon (cols. 21:23–22:26) alongside certain papyrus discoveries from ancient Egypt, such as the Seventeen Proverbs of Ahiqar and the Petition to Rebuild the Temple in Elephantine (TAD A4.7). Cook maintains: “The guide is meant to direct the reader through an inductive reading of Biblical Aramaic. For most effective use, consult the indicated sections of the textbook whenever they are mentioned, even if it seems repetitive. Repetition is the point” (264). This is a fair assessment as indicated by my own teaching experience and Second Language Acquisitions research (among other things).²

Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects rounds off with: (A) a set of two appendices comprised of extensive, clear, paradigm charts (355–63) and a reproduction of the Genesis Apocryphon (cols. 21:23–22:26) with the added (hypothetical) Tiberian Vocalization (364–65), (B) a complete glossary (which includes all of biblical Aramaic, including passages not included in the guided readings) as well

1 Do note, however, that there is some not insignificant discussion concerning the *waw* consecutive with *yiqtol* that Cook fails to delineate for his readers, the gist of which may be adequately summed up in the following. See, J. A. Emerton, “New Evidence for the Use of *Waw* Consecutive in Aramaic,” *Vetus Testamentum* 44 (1994) 255–58; Victor Sasson, “Some Observations on the Use and Original Purpose of the *Waw* Consecutive in Old Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew,” *Vetus Testamentum* 47 (1997) 111–27; Takamitsu Muraoka and Max Rogland, “The *Waw* Consecutive in Old Aramaic? A Rejoinder to Victor Sasson,” *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998) 99–104.

2 On the latter, see, for instance, Jennifer E. Noonan’s *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies: Insights of Modern Language Instruction for Teaching Biblical Languages* (GlossaHouse, 2022). For more details on “Teaching and Learning the Biblical Languages,” see Benjamin J. Noonan’s *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the Old Testament* (Zondervan, 2020), 261–77 alongside Paul S. Evans’s “Teaching Biblical Hebrew: Practical Steps for Introductory Courses,” in *Those Who Can, Teach: Teaching as a Christian Vocation*, edited by Stanley E. Porter (Wipf and Stock, 2013) 135–57. NB: I am indebted to Benjamin J. Noonan (private communiqué) for helpful tips about this paragraph’s phrasing and these resources.

as the required vocabulary for the Elephantine Petition/Ahiqar Proverbs and the Genesis Apocryphon/Targum Job, each of which are divided section by section (384–88), (C) a remarkably up-to-date bibliography (389–95), and, lastly, (D) two indices, namely: (1) Scripture/Other Literature, (2) Subject. Disappointingly (inexcusably?), however, despite the large number of cross-references to different Bible passages included within the Reading Guide (ch. 18), the Scripture index fails to include any citations from that entire section, thus severely impeding the overall effectiveness of the text. Could not the editors have provided some sort of method (such as special shading and/or italicization, for example) to have helped differentiate between the two sections if they were, perhaps, concerned about any potential confusion on the part of the user? It is also disheartening that there is no author index.

Typographically, the extensive use of headings/sub-headings (in the main text of the grammar itself), alongside an effective use of white space, bold typeface, and the like make for an exceptionally pleasing format. The MT pointing on all canonical texts is quite clear, the font size is sufficient in all regards, and the numerous charts/tables etc. are all very well formatted. Another nice touch is the special shading on each page edge (marking chapter numbers).

That said, “cruising” the grammar is incredibly tedious and unnecessarily cumbersome. This is primarily because there are no “main” subject headings (adjectives, prepositions, etc.) at the top of each page. The fact that none of the book’s copious section markers (435 in total!) appear at the top of each page as well only exacerbates this (highly irksome) problem.

NB: black ink with white background is used throughout, i.e., all diagnostics are not color-coded.

Pedagogically, I feel somewhat conflicted. While the subtitle marks this book as “an introduction” the back cover also boasts that it “provides more detail than previous textbooks” and “offers a comprehensive view of ancient Aramaic.” Veritably, this is a fair assessment. Cook has truly outdone himself! *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects* is one of the most informed (and informative!) grammars ever printed that is sensitive to contemporary linguistics. That said, while many advanced students will readily appreciate the wealth of technical detail(s) that are provided throughout the text there will also be (from my experience) quite a few students (and not just the fledgling ones!) unable to see the forest through the trees. Sometimes, less is more.

This is especially so, I believe, for so-called “introductions.” As a reference grammar, however, which is (I maintain) more or less how Cook’s book will be practically used, this is a strength.

One last thing to note concerns the dating of the book of Daniel. Cook (10) opines: “Despite the setting in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian period, it is clear

from internal evidence (particularly the prophetic visions of chapters 2 and 7, and the Hebrew of chapters 8–12) that the real time of composition was the 2nd century BCE against the backdrop of the Antiochene crisis (166–164 BCE).” For the sake of clarity, while 537 BCE is the last (exact) date given in the book (see Dan 10:1) it is not the last event as the fifth, fourth, and third centuries, not to mention, also, (even) some of the second century, are all covered in the latter half of the book (Dan 7–12).

Other key calendar references include the first year of Cyrus, i.e., 539 BCE (Dan 1:21) and the third year of that great Persian ruler’s reign, i.e., 537 BCE (Dan 10:1). It is thus reasonable to conclude that the purpose of these statements is to indicate that Daniel’s (long) life “spanned the entire period of the neo-Babylonian empire” including some of the “early years of the Persian control of Babylon. However, by that time his age was quite advanced; he probably died sometime in the 530’s B.C.”³ Scholars calculate that Daniel was likely over eighty years old.⁴

Were this only a question of chronology/calendar it need not detain us here. The question, though, centers on whether or not Aramaic Daniel (Biblical Aramaic) should be classified as Imperial Aramaic, i.e., *Reichsaramäisch*/official Aramaic (600–200 BCE) or Middle Aramaic (200 BCE–250 CE).⁵ Speaking pointedly, the date of Daniel “cannot be decided upon linguistic grounds alone. It is equally obscurantist to exclude dogmatically a sixth-fifth (or fourth) century date on the one hand, or to hold such a date as mechanically proven on the other, *as far as the Aramaic is concerned*.”⁶ In brief, while the Daniel text exhibits an Aramaic that is in some ways more idiomatic than Ezra’s there are hardly any real

3 See the NET Bible study notes (Dan 1:1).

4 See Joyce Baldwin, *Daniel*, (IVP, 2009), 35.

5 See Noonan, *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 245; Andreas Schuele, *An Introduction to Biblical Aramaic* (Westminster John Knox, 2012), 2; Alger F. Johns, *A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic: Revised Edition* (Andrews University Press, 1972), 1. Holger Gzella’s *Aramaic: A History of the First World Language* (Eerdmans, 2021) is currently the most exhaustive resource concerning the most minute of these matters.

6 K. A. Kitchen, “The Aramaic of Daniel,” in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, edited by D. J. Wiseman, (Tyndale, 1965) 31–79 (quote from pg. 79). All emphases original. For more linguistic details, especially about the particle *’äšer* (which had become rarer in the Maccabean period and had essentially dropped out of the Mishnaic Hebrew which flourished in the first to fourth centuries AD), the *nā* suffix (which Mishnaic Hebrew lost for the second and third feminine singular verb forms, yet cf. Dan 8:22), and the (Danielic) spelling of Jerusalem, see Paul J. Tanner, *Daniel: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham, 2021), 80. For (yet more!) details, see Benjamin J. Noonan, “Daniel’s Greek Loanwords in Dialectal Perspective,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (2018) 28:575–603, alongside Noonan, *Non-Semitic Loanwords in the Hebrew Bible: A Lexicon of Language Contact* (Eisenbrauns, 2019); Noonan, *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 244–60. NB: I am indebted to Benjamin J. Noonan (private communiqué) for helpful tips concerning the many varied resources in this paragraph.

differences in morphology and syntax.⁷ If only Cook had rightly appropriated such linguistic insight/nuance in his analysis of Daniel.

To conclude, despite the (not insignificant) dearth of detailed, technical grammars for Aramaic and despite the remarkable benefits Edward Cook's *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects: An Introduction* provides, the sheer thoroughness of this text makes it something of a challenge to wholly commend it as an introduction and not as a reference grammar *per se*.

One also hopes that new printings/editions will correct some of the text's infelicities, especially those relating to its user-interface and typography (see above) so that all serious expositors and teachers of Scripture can benefit as much as possible from Cook's notable work. Its primary users will likely be advanced language students of Christian University College/Bible College/Theological Seminaries alongside many (research based) faculty/professors of Aramaic.

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Jeffrey P. Bishop, M. Therese Lysaught, & Andrew A. Michel. *Biopolitics After Neuroscience: Morality and the Economy of Virtue*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Pp. 304. ISBN 978-1-3502-8844-7. \$115 (USD) hardcover.

One does not have to look far to recognize the saturating presence of neuroscientific discourse, which now extends into conversations regarding morality, criminality, and state intervention. Bishop et al. interrogate the subaltern foundations of the economic theories which undergird the present scientific discourse, ultimately finding the assumed anthropology to be “a mutation in the relatively recent construct of the *Homo economicus*” (16, emphasis original). Bishop et al. follow this anthropology in reverse to map its historical development, exposing neuroscientific discourses surrounding morality as built upon neoliberal capitalist theories of political economy, a theory which is reified in the scientific understandings of social and anti-social behavior.

The first chapter interprets contemporary neuroscientific literature and its theories surrounding so-called “anti-social behavior,” which Bishop et al. argue is the neuroscientific narrative of *vice*. These contemporary studies theorize that

⁷ Schuele, *Biblical Aramaic*, 2. Another (biblical) scholar (pg. 120) states: “Comparisons of the Aramaic of Daniel with the material from Elephantine (fifth century BC), Samaria (fourth century BC and later) and Qumran (second century BC and later) suggest that Daniel's Aramaic is closest to that of the Samaritan papyri than that of Qumran . . . Overall, it is clear that Driver's claim that the linguistic evidence demands a second century BC date is no longer valid, though it does seem to favor a late postexilic date.” Ernest Lucas, “Daniel: Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, edited by Mark. J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (IVP Academic, 2012), 110–23.

antisocial behaviors can be traced through the genetic traits of the brain, or as Bishop et al. summarize, “genes ‘make’ the brain; genes confer ‘bad’ behavior” (31). Ideally, the neurosciences are able to discover the correlative traits of these “bad” behaviors and subsequently intervene to prevent them. However, as Bishop et al. illustrate, the standard for what counts as “anti-social” behavior is largely constructed along economic lines, with the primary “causative variable” in neuroscientific studies of environmental impacts on the brain being socio-economic status (33). The concept of socio-economic status is contested and reveals a reliance in the neurosciences on a socially informed conception of the relationship between environment and various genetic traits of the brain. In other words, the “operational definition” of socio-economic status becomes self-perpetuating, rooted in a particular history of the notion of “poverty” (39, 45) and reified into diagnostic criteria.

Chapter two then traces the neuroscientific narrative of virtue, exploring the various genetic traits which the neurosciences theorize cause the virtues of prosocial attitudes. These prosocial attitudes mirror the accepted behaviors in Western liberal society (69). Bishop et al. chillingly survey various influential thinkers who advocate for the screening of these genetic traits, concluding that “we have a biopolitics, in which the political economy of the dominant and powerful create new knowledge that further reinforces the dominance of those in power” (71). In sum, society can manipulate and control life according to the economic aims of the social body. The popular dissemination of these ideas is traced in chapter three, where the roles of brain chemicals (84) and Western capitalist economy (89) are shown to shape concepts of prosocial attitudes and justify social control (99) in popular media. This concept is related to the concept of a “thought-community” (16), which forms the relationship between the social imagination and scientific thought.

The subsequent chapters trace the moral anthropology of this neuroscientific biopolitics, and the political justification for intervention on the poor. Chapter four follows the development of morality in neoliberal economic theory. The concept of *Homo capitalus*, the human person as capital, develops from the Chicago School of economics (114). Figures like Gary Becker argued that social behaviors and their improvement were tied to capital, encouraging forms of social control (124). Other figures, like Milton Friedman, developed a moral anthropology free from others (129), positing the human person and all her activity as economic (134). Poverty is thus a vice which requires biological intervention and enhancement.

Chapter five explores the philosophical background to this *Homo capitalus* and the Western concept of social management of the poor. Through an analysis of social engineers like John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, Bishop et al.

illustrate how contemporary neuroscience's conceptions of poverty, prosocial, and antisocial traits are linked to Bentham and Mill's advocacy for a political economy tied to the social control of citizens (143). Here, we see the birth of *Homo economicus* (149) as the ideal human person, morally restrained and economically mobile. Unlike this ideal human, the poor are less rational, "antisocial," and only deserving of charity if they "conform to the biopolitical economy" that Bentham, Mill, and others developed (167).

Perhaps the most complex portion, chapter six returns to the Chicago School's claim to draw their capitalist anthropology from both David Hume and Adam Smith. Bishop et al. complicate this narrative lineage, arguing that Hume and Francis Bacon are the primary originators of the social anthropology of political economy. Bacon's conception of "power ontology" (mastery through knowledge and force) was mobilized in Hume's scientific notions of wealth as the key to social and moral transformation (172). Bishop et al. argue, in contrast, that Smith's anthropology has more room for the agency of the poor, and sympathy as the driving force for human social relations and equality (191). Finally, a brief conclusion details Bishop et al.'s calls for a tempered science which acknowledges "that human knowing is a social activity embedded in a cultural context" (207). They conclude that the solution is "an aspirational vision of what it means to be fully human" (214).

This book is a necessary read for anyone interested in theological ethics, bioethics, or the neurosciences. Bishop et al. weave a complex yet clear narrative of the underlying anthropologies which govern the contemporary political economy and its relation to the neurosciences. By exposing the reality that the neurosciences are not value-neutral, they are able to detail the fluid history of political economy and science which justifies a biopolitics of social control. Bishop et al. have staged a worthwhile intervention by undermining neoliberal capitalism's totalizing claims on human life.

While Bishop et al. display the deep social embeddedness of biopolitical regimes and their disciplinary power, their recommendations to individual neuroscientists seem to lack a certain robustness. Is a more carefully thought-out anthropology and a cautious awareness of the relationship between thought-communities enough to rearrange such ingrained techno-scientific economies? If neoliberalism is indeed all encompassing, it seems that calling for tempered practices in the sciences might emphasize the individual as a primary actor, reifying neoliberalism's notion of the human person. Lastly, while Bishop et al. do not fully endorse Adam Smith's anthropology, they fail to acknowledge the role it plays in establishing an impetus for the moral formation of the poor. Relying on the work of Michel Foucault as they do, it is surprising that Bishop et al. do not extend Foucault's genealogical critique to the concept of disciplinary power as not only

tied to the management of biological life but also to discipline as moral formation. Moral intervention through formation of the poor too represents economic disciplinary power, an idea that genealogically seems in line with Smith's views on poverty as primarily due to moral habits and customs (191–92). Despite this, Bishop et al. provide theologians in particular with tools to assess the modern neoliberal moral anthropology, inspiring new conversations around ways that Christian theological anthropology can resist the totalizing force of biopolitical economics. Theological resources in formulating such an anthropology are plentiful and provide an avenue for expanding on the work initiated here.

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James Crossley and Robert J. Myles. *Jesus: A Life in Class Conflict*.
Winchester: Zer0 Books, 2023. Pp. xiv + 281. ISBN 978-1-8034-1082-1.
\$25.95 (USD) paper.

This volume by James G. Crossley and Robert J. Myles stands as a powerful corrective, in many respects, to the traditional and neoliberal biographies that have been written about Jesus of Nazareth, and the general perception and representation of him within the category of “great men,” a view of history which promotes the achievements of singular individuals as these exceptional figures, excised from the context and communities which allowed these figures to actually come forth to begin with. The principal theme of this book is that Jesus, the person, was in fact rooted in the historical circumstances (particularly class conflict) of his day. Instead of the “overemphasis on isolated and entrepreneurial initiatives of atomized individuals” (254), Crossley and Myles present a human Jesus whose life and movement came about due to the circumstances around them, and disavows this attempt to see an isolated “great man” figure. In many respects, one is reminded that this volume offers the corrective that activists such as Angela Y. Davis have called for, to “resist the depiction of history as the work of heroic individuals,” which itself serves what she labels “the insidious promotion of capitalist individualism.”¹ The volume promotes Jesus as a millenarian prophet who expected a new theocratic dictatorship to occur that would have immense ramifications on the economic and social world he lived in, and this dictatorship would serve “the interests of the peasantry” (21).

In this volume, the life of Jesus emerges as one of the intense economic conditions which affected the peasantry. According to Crossley and Myles, for instance, Jesus was raised in Nazareth where Jesus was exposed to the effects of

¹ Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2016), 1–2.

Imperialization and gentrification. The Romans sacked Sepphoris, and life was no doubt hard. As Crossley and Myles note, the peasantry at any time was likely “one crop failure away from famine or a life of banditry” (33). Galilee itself was going through notable economic changes, notable enough that a figure like Jesus could become the vehicle for the concerns of the peasantry. Further, the millenarian ideologies which were associated with a liberation of the peasantry through divine intervention would no doubt have been quite attractive to the peasantry given the conditions under which they suffered. The time was, essentially, set for this type of a movement to emerge. For instance, the authors push back against attempts to view Antipas’ building projects as having been a positive, noting this has a “trickle-down’ logic” (40), and note these arguments of a “tranquil” (41) Galilee are based entirely on an argument from silence (i.e., that previous scholars saw no evidence for class conflict in Galilee at this time). These building projects and other changes would lead no doubt to people observing the changes, and resentment and discontent were sure to be among those feelings, knowing that their resources, land, and money were being taken and competitions introduced (39–49).

This volume has a number of qualities to praise. The focus on the economic disparities, the gender norms and expectations, millenarian ideologies, etc. and how these all intertwined with the movement create a complex and engaging view of Jesus and the emerging Jesus movement and offer numerous correctives to how biographies of Jesus have been written up to this point: by presenting Jesus and the Jesus movement as the product of class conflict, not as an isolated great man, whose entrepreneurial behavior was special and unique in history, as so many have attempted to make him out to be. The unique focus on the various dynamics of the ancient world Jesus grew up in (gender, class, ethnicity, imperialism, etc.) all coalesce and intersect in this volume to create perhaps the most feasible and convincing reconstruction of Jesus’s life that I have read.

Nonetheless there will be of course points to criticize in any volume on Jesus. On occasion, Crossley and Myles are arguably far too trusting of their sources, and do not engage them enough as highly literate and even fictional in nature. As a few examples, they elaborate in detail about Jesus’ role as an artisan (*tekton*) and his potential literacy and specifically ask questions such as “how did someone from Jesus’ unremarkable background come to have a movement form around him?” (39). But questions like these are perhaps betrayed by analyzing these texts as literary products and looking to other Greco-Roman *bioi*. There we find the “humble beginnings” trope to be a fairly consistent feature of the genre, for instance, Romulus and Remus being raised as swine herders, and very little being known of their childhoods (see Plutarch’s *Life of Romulus*). Perhaps we simply have the Gospel of Mark utilizing these tropes to great effect in his own volume,

and then Matthew and Luke attempting to renegotiate this. Was Jesus an artisan? Arguably not.

Similarly, one can argue this is also the case with the baptism of Jesus. In this case, we have a problematic usage of the criterion of embarrassment emerging (though not by name), noting how Matthew, Luke, and John all seem to show discomfort at the idea of Jesus baptized, since it (A) implies his sinfulness, and (B) his subordination to John the Baptist (67–68). Likewise, they contend it is “difficult to see why John baptizing Jesus would have been invented” (68). Contra this remark, however, it does not seem that particularly difficult. Mark, in particular, as they admit (68), firstly shows no embarrassment at the story. Secondly, we can see several literary devices occurring. As there was a known belief that the Messiah must be anointed by Elijah (cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8), and John is specifically modeled on and identified with Elijah in Mark’s text (Mark 9:10–12), we can see one specific reason he could invent the text. John would provide a convenient way of having Jesus anointed as the Messiah, by John, and because John’s identity as Elijah is not known for sure, this would maintain the messianic secret theme of the gospel. Additionally, recent studies have also noted the Imperial imagery in the passage, which calls to mind adoptionism. Notably, many of the most well-known Caesars are all adopted figures. Thus, it implies Jesus as both Messiah and Caesar. Lastly, choosing John (who had a last-ling movement that, even after his death, seemed to continue if the Mandaeans are to be believed) would also give Jesus more historical authority, by having Jesus become the divine authority anointed by a somewhat well-known individual. It serves Mark’s literary aims quite well to invent the passage if we look at what Mark stands to gain literarily. This means the other Gospels are not “embarrassed” by historical fact but by Mark specifically. It appears that on these occasions, Crossley and Myles have spent so much effort in analyzing and elucidating material and social conditions around Jesus and which he took part in, that they do not attend to the literary qualities and contexts of the Gospels as sources, which are written in a later time, with perhaps very different motives and material conditions surrounding them (especially in a world post-Jesus, where the millenarian revolution failed and where the world was being overturned as Imperial forces destroyed the Temple and ransacked the country).

These are, of course, the critiques of one much more skeptical and minimalistic, but I also do not consider these critiques remotely detrimental to the volume, nor do they detract from it substantially. There are other minor quibbles one could remark upon, such as their use of the Q document (is it methodologically sound to use a completely hypothetical document as equivalent to an extant one, such as p. 70), or other disagreements on what is or is not historical. But none of these significantly detract from the volume.

Even with the above remarks about occasional instances where their reconstructions may falter, the volume itself is perhaps one of the most important and satisfying biographies of Jesus written in the last twenty-five years. This volume undermines attempts to subsume Jesus through seeing him as a “change agent” (254), something of a “fetish” in the neoliberal world, and instead sees him as very much the product of his age, and how class conflict, oppression, gender, and more all intersected in curious ways to produce this movement and how it ultimately failed in its revolution. As Crossley and Myles note, “Jesus and his associates were changed by and through history from below” (254). This is a volume not about how great men changed history, but instead how history created these men. It stands as a powerful corrective to Jesus research and comes highly recommended.

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Douglas Groothuis. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022. Pp. xiii + 834. ISBN 978-1-5140-0275-9. \$69.97 (CDN) \$36.99 (USD) paper.

Comprehensive apologetics books are rarer than one might assume. Still, there is value in bringing the various strands of conversation together into a single ‘master-textbook’ type of resource as such which can serve as a roadmap, of sorts, providing an overview of the apologetic journey and identifying specific routes of exploration which can then be supplemented by more specialized resources and discussions. Douglas Groothuis’ *Christian Apologetics*, now in its second edition, provides just such a roadmap. Not only does this work guide us along the well-tread roads of standard issues and arguments, it also explores some less common pathways, all without losing sight of the Christian worldview it defends. Prior to elaborating on the particulars of what distinguishes this second edition, a brief overview of the book, as a whole, is in order.

Christian Apologetics is divided into three main sections: (1) “Apologetic Preliminaries,” (2) “The Case for Christian Theism,” and (3) “Objections to Christian Theism.” Two appendices, “Hell on Trial” and “Apologetic Issues in the Old Testament” (written by Richard Hess) round out the volume. The back matter includes three thorough indices (names, subject, and Scripture), a three-page glossary, and a seventy-five-page bibliography organized by chapter. Chapter twenty-one, “Jesus of Nazareth: How Historians Can Know Him and Why It Matters” was written by esteemed New Testament scholar, Craig L. Blomberg.

Section One, “Apologetic Preliminaries,” lays the foundation for Groothuis’ case with discussions on truth and worldview, as well as a “prudential” appeal

drawing on Pascal's Wager to "invoke a healthy self-interest that encourages unbelievers to inquire into Christianity" (158). While the author's apologetic strategy has obvious affinities with classical apologetics, Groothuis frames it as a "worldview hypothesis evaluation and verification through a cumulative-case method" (41). Groothuis' contention is that the Christian worldview best satisfies the necessary criteria for a viable worldview, making it most likely to be true.

The second (and largest) section, "The Case for Christian Theism," contains the so-called 'classic theistic arguments' (ch. 10–12, 14–16) plus additional appeals to religious experience (ch. 17), consciousness (ch. 18), and "deposed royalty," i.e., humanity as great-yet-wretched (ch. 19). New (and welcome!) to the second edition are an argument from beauty (ch. 13), an argument for primitive monotheism (ch. 9) as "the original religion of humanity" (174), and an exploration of doubt and the hiddenness of God (ch. 20).

From here the case moves to the question of Christ. Again, we find usual suspects: reliability of the Gospels (ch. 21), the incarnation (ch. 25), the uniqueness of Jesus (ch. 22), and the resurrection (ch. 27). The second edition also extends the discussion on miracles (ch. 26), offers a brief apologetic for the Church as evidence for Christianity (ch. 28) and adds a two-chapter defense of substitutionary atonement (ch. 23–24).

While atonement may seem like an odd topic, Groothuis' project is to defend Christian orthodoxy (67, 71), not some vague Christo-Theism. Pluralistic and relativistic incursions into Christian doctrine require today's apologists to identify orthodoxy as well as defend it. Also, given the popularity of criticisms like penal substitutionary atonement constituting "Divine Child Abuse," an exploration of Christ's sacrifice is quite appropriate.

In Section Three, "Objections to Christian Theism," Groothuis compares Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism (ch. 29) to demonstrate that all religions are *not* essentially the same (630). He also compares Christianity to Islam, addressing Muslim critiques and presenting the Christian worldview as the more satisfying solution to human brokenness and estrangement from God (ch. 30). Groothuis then tackles the question of suffering and evil (ch. 31), offering a greater good defense as the primary way forward (685–94). Finally, a new chapter (ch. 32) proposes Christian lament as a form of apologetic, in that Christianity alone "gives meaning and purpose to suffering such that the human lament [when grounded in the narrative of creation, fall, and redemption (698)] does not end in frustration or final defeat" (702).

The appendix on Hell is a biblical and logical defense of Hell. Eternal conscious torment is assumed rather than defended explicitly, which may disappoint those hoping for a discussion of various positions. Richard Hess' essay involving the Old Testament defends its historical reliability and addresses criticisms that it

contains questionable ethics and a genocidal God. For example, he criticizes the “new atheists” (specifically Harris, Dawkins, and Hitchens) for regularly misreading the content and/or intent of Old Testament passages (719–23) and argues that the Canaanite cities attacked in Joshua’s campaign, like Jericho and Ai, were military targets, not civilian centers (728–31).

The comprehensiveness of Groothuis’ *Christian Apologetics* is quite impressive and demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the apologetic enterprise. Groothuis’ worldview-analysis approach, while not laying entirely new tracks, provides an accessible pathway for evaluating Christianity against its competitors. While his arguments are primarily rational and evidential, Groothuis recognizes the legitimacy of intuitive and experiential pathways to faith. For example, the author acknowledges the “existential bite” of moral argument (362), and shares how his own lived lament over his own wife’s illness and death added existential weight to his philosophical position on evil and suffering (695–96).

As for revisions to arguments found in the first edition, most are relatively minor. For example, in chapter two (Apologetics Method) one notes an increased emphasis on cumulative case worldview, additional comments concerning the critique that apologetics is too tied to modernism, and a more careful distinction between Groothuis’ approach and Classical apologetics. In chapter fourteen (Origins, Design, and Darwinism) where one might anticipate significant revisions in light of new data, Groothuis indeed cites a number of new works and studies, mostly from Intelligent Design authors, but his general arguments do not substantially change. Groothuis’ revisions elsewhere are also fairly incremental. Yes, there are newer sources in the footnotes and the bibliographies of most chapters, but the most significant updates are his new chapters.

To critique, while it may seem like nitpicking to suggest that an already massive book should have even more material, nevertheless a few items deserved some more attention. Groothuis’ engagement with alternatives to Big Bang cosmology is disappointingly minimal. His discussion on consciousness does not wrestle with animal sentience (ch. 18) and his chapter on suffering skips both natural evil and animal suffering (ch. 31). Finally, given its current popularity, perhaps Jesus Mysticism could have been directly addressed.

A few arguments could also have benefited from increased clarity. Groothuis’ argument from objective beauty seems to assume rather than define objective beauty—but why, *precisely*, is a van Gogh more beautiful than a Kincaid (259)? While intuitively appealing, and seemingly self-evident to those who claim artistic taste, the objectivity of beauty remains notoriously elusive, weakening a transcendental-type argument. The exploration of Jesus’ view of Scripture also seems underdeveloped. Groothuis’ claim, that Jesus “anticipates the divine inspiration of the New Testament through his authorization of the apostles,” needs more

apologetic than is offered (509). Jesus nowhere explicitly predicts the writing of new Scriptures, and the majority of the New Testament was not written by his twelve apostles. Lastly, Groothuis' apologetic for the Church (chapter 28), is underwhelming. Perhaps he could have dispensed with the description of the Church and written more about how the church, specifically, "through the ages has, on balance, made the ages far better than if the church been snuffed out . . ." [sic] (619).

Nevertheless, Douglas Groothuis' *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* *Christian Apologetics* is a pleasure to read and sets the bar for comprehensive apologetics books going forward, particularly now that its second edition is available. Groothuis' coverage of issues is superb, and the inclusion of less common topics provides fresh lines of thinking and thoroughly enhances the cumulative case he builds. *Christian Apologetics* has shot to the top tier of my recommended apologetics textbooks and is a great one-stop resource for any reader wanting a strong and lucid overview of evangelical Christian apologetics.

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John G. Stackhouse Jr. *Evangelicalism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 160. ISBN 978-0-1900-7968-0. \$11.95 (USD) paper.

During a trip to Washington in 1969, the former Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Trudeau famously described Canada's relationship to the United States as like being in bed with an elephant. This is certainly the case when it comes to evangelicalism, as Canadians are bombarded by media reports on the latest political antics of American evangelicals, churches are submerged in the musical offerings of CCLI, and many parishioners devotedly follow their favourite American celebrity preacher on various platforms. John Stackhouse's *Evangelicalism: A Very Short Introduction* provides us with a salutary reminder that while American evangelicalism may be an elephant, the evangelical bed is much larger than we often imagine, and it is filled with all sorts of magnificent and unusual creatures.

Stackhouse presses this agenda right out of the gate by asking his readers to imagine an evangelical. While many in North America will instinctively picture a white, wealthy, male pastor of a large Southern church, this is a stereotype. The typical evangelical is more likely to be a gainfully employed woman somewhere in sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America. This opening salvo sets the tone for the discussion of evangelicalism that follows, a discussion that provides much-needed historical depth and global breadth for frequently myopic North Americans.

The opening chapter traces the historical developments behind evangelicalism. The players, events, and movements presented in this chapter are standard fare in most accounts of evangelical origins. There are brief discussions of the biblical term *euangelion*, the proto-Reformers, and the Protestant Reformers, the latter of whom preferred to be called evangelicals. Attention is then turned to the Pietists and Puritans, and finally those caught up in the revival movement of the eighteenth century, whom Stackhouse calls “ur-evangelicals”—notably Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley.

Stackhouse begins the second chapter by suggesting that there are three ways of thinking about what distinguishes evangelicals from other Christians. The first is to think of evangelicals as representing the true Christian faith and the second is to construe evangelicalism as a movement. Stackhouse dismisses the first on social-political grounds as being unnecessarily divisive, while the second does not ring true in Stackhouse’s opinion because historically there have been no evangelical institutional bodies that have provided a common umbrella under which all groups that might be identified as evangelical have gathered. (At this point a question arises about the presumption that a movement requires exhaustive institutional unity. For instance, a variety of different, sometimes overlapping but not mutually exhaustive groups, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Nation of Islam, and the Black Panthers, could be considered to have been part of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.) Instead, Stackhouse suggests that evangelicalism is best thought of as a style. Whereas conservatism defers to the tradition and liberalism prioritizes the experiences and demands of the present day, evangelicals “attempt to construe and to practice Christianity in the creative tension between the heritage they inherit and the challenges they now face” (24). While seeing the Christian playing field as a continuum between liberalism on one pole and conservatism on another has its advantages, on its own the previous quote is not particularly helpful, as both liberals and conservatives would see themselves as inhabiting the same type of creative tension in their own particular way. To further substantiate these distinctions Stackhouse turns to a discussion of the things evangelicals “characteristically care about” and what “they typically do” (24). He presents six key adjectives that define evangelicalism: Trinitarian, biblical, conversionist, missional, populist, and pragmatic. It is the commitment to a biblically-informed, robustly Trinitarian faith that sets evangelicals apart from liberals. It is the conversionist and missional impulses, alongside the corresponding populism and pragmatism, that distinguishes evangelicals from conservatives. Coming to grips with evangelicalism thus involves the study of beliefs, convictions, and practices, as evangelicalism is nothing other than “*authentic, vital, and missional Protestantism*” (45, original emphasis).

While the historic and conceptual frameworks laid out in chapters one and two are necessary and helpful, it is in chapters three to five where Stackhouse makes what may be his most important contribution. In chapter 3, Stackhouse traces the spread of evangelicalism through the 19th and 20th centuries, tracing revivalist movements, missions, and the rise of Pentecostalism. The discussion features prominent Western names and movements with equal attention paid to concurrent global developments, often with an eye to how global expressions of evangelicalism subvert Western assumptions. Along these lines, the account of the Indian-born woman and missionary Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati was particularly illuminating.

In the final two chapters, Stackhouse considers the contemporary challenges facing evangelicalism and ponders its future. As “the distinctively modern form of standard Christianity” (85), evangelicalism has both uniquely benefited from and is uniquely challenged by the modern soil in which it has taken root. The rise of historical criticism and liberal theology have threatened to undermine evangelicalism’s core theological commitments, while the rise of the scientific worldview and secularism have raised their own sets of problems—problems that, Stackhouse notes, are not nearly as acutely felt in the Two Thirds World as in North America. While the ‘ur-evangelicals’ demonstrated a robust commitment to social engagement, the twentieth century witnessed an eclipse of social action among evangelicals. Stackhouse’s narrative would seem to suggest that contemporary evangelicals would do well to find a way to minister to the whole person, while avoiding the pitfalls of the Imperialism that some evangelicals have been ensnared within in the past and present.

Stackhouse concludes his book by sketching four quagmires that evangelicals must find a way to faithfully navigate through or else, as the title of the chapter implies, risk facing “the end of evangelicalism.” The first has to do with the question of the authority and the place of Scripture, as occasioned by debates over same-sex marriage. The voluntaristic and populist character of evangelicalism contributed to the neglect of the intellectual life and left little defense against appeals to the experience of the autonomous self, in effect, “rendering evangelicals liberals in all but name” (116). Stackhouse also points to the challenge of mission in a post-colonial age, the opportunities and dangers of political involvement, and the consequences of success, warning evangelicals to seek first the Kingdom of God, “rather than settling for, and even celebrating, a pale, narrow approximation . . . or an idolatrous one” (124).

Funded by the author’s long and personal engagement with the world of evangelicalism, Stackhouse’s *Evangelicalism* is a welcome contribution to the field. Throughout the book Stackhouse draws upon his own immersion within the cultural forms of North American evangelicalism, while also demonstrating that he

has his finger on the pulse of global evangelicalism. He writes with a light touch, rarely offering prescriptions to his readers, but instead allowing readers to draw their own conclusions from the narratives of historic and global evangelicalism he has winsomely presented. The format of the book, as part of the *Very Short Introductions* series is both a strength and weakness. Lay people, pastors, and hopefully journalists, alongside of other interested non-specialists, will find the brisk pace of this short book engaging and come to the realization that evangelicalism is a much deeper and broader phenomenon than whatever manifestation of it they are familiar with. Specialists will long for footnotes, and perhaps larger type.

The word “evangelical” is too important to allow contemporary Americans to determine what it means, while the rest of the world, past and present, stands on the sidelines. Thanks are due to John Stackhouse for entering the arena.

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Nijay K. Gupta. *15 New Testament Words of Life: A New Testament Theology for Real Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022. Pp. 240. ISBN 978-0-3101-0905-1. \$19.99 (USD) paper.

Nijay Gupta, a professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary, transforms fifteen word studies from mundane examinations of the history of language to a life-transforming series of biblical interpretation and application that is accessible to a large diversity of readers. The thrust of this book is simple, going through most of the New Testament books in groups of one, two, or three, selecting one key word from the biblical text, and examining it in the contexts of the Old Testament, the Greco-Roman world, the chapter’s focal book(s), another New Testament passage, and contemporary applications. Gupta shares his heart for this work in his introduction, saying, “The gospel is greater than the words we use to describe it; and yet those words are still the way we give and receive that life” (xiv). He explains how he wants to inspire his students and those in his life to stop viewing the Bible as “irrelevant or antiquated” but to turn instead to the life-giving power of the Scriptures as they apply to our lives today.

By individually looking at words that Gupta believes have become mundane “Christianese”—flimsy words thrown around in the church without any real impact or purpose—he shows a new, life-filled way of reading the Bible. In Matthew, Gupta looks at *righteousness*, focusing on how this concept is much more than religious piety but instead teaches justice, honesty, and integrity. In the next chapter, studying Mark, he presents *gospel* as a transformative idea, more than merely a means to get to heaven but as a way Christians can live each day in hope and victory over the evil of the world. Then, examining both Luke and Acts,

forgiveness is presented as a way that believers are embraced into the family of God and, consequently, are bringers of healing and restoration to the world. Turning to John, Gupta examines *life*. He pushes back on the idea that the “eternal life” promised in this Gospel is simply a future promise of heaven but is truly about abundant life found in walking with Jesus, connected like a fetus to its mother or a branch to a vine.

Next, Gupta looks at *the cross* in 1 and 2 Corinthians, presenting the idea of cruciformity, that is, obedience to God’s will that results in sacrificial love, humility, and hope. The next chapter turns to both Galatians and Romans, examining the concept of *faith*. Gupta demonstrates how faith is not simply a set of religious beliefs, but instead, throughout the Bible, is a lifestyle of prayer, worship, and love, foolish by the world’s standards. In the next chapter, which looks at Ephesians, Gupta discusses *grace* and the way that Paul teaches about God’s character as one who gives undeserved, unifying grace. In Philippians, Gupta looks at *fellowship*, rebelling against the shallow connection of believers in the modern American church by presenting Paul’s vision of fellowship, one that shares in the Spirit in sufferings, uniting in life and mission for Christ. Next, studying 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Gupta looks at *hope* in spite of death and persecution, encouraging believers to live boldly and confidently, knowing that sin and evil are ultimately defeated. Turning to the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, Gupta talks about *salvation*. He rejects the narrative of salvation being an end unto itself. Instead, he argues that Paul teaches of a salvation “for a new life and calling . . . to contribute to the overall welfare of the community” (128).

Turning to Hebrews in the next chapter, Gupta looks at *peace*. He examines how, with Jesus as the High Priest and mediator, believers have a peace with God that they then must spread in the world. He calls believers to be “a peace-waging people,” actively choosing to bring peace into a broken world. The next chapter looks at *religion* as found in James, reworking the idea that religion is simply a personal choice or an antiquated set of rules. He shows how James teaches that the religious must live ethical lives, caring for those in need, especially in financial matters. His next topic is *holiness*, as seen in 1 Peter, which Gupta explains is a life set apart and different from the world. This difference is not a mindset of superiority; instead it is gentle and inviting to others. In looking at 1 John, Gupta talks about *love*, calling believers to reaffirm that they are loved by God and thus love God, one another, strangers, and enemies, giving attention to the tension of truly being transformed by love without allowing abuse or mistreatment to continue. Finally, he looks at Revelation, examining the concept of *witness*. He urges believers to recognize that their lives are witnesses to the gospel and must live differently as a result, being marked by accountability, justice and respect, simplicity and generosity, and attempting great things for God.

Gupta's book does not need to be read directly through; each chapter could be studied on its own. Yet throughout the entire book, Gupta returns to two key themes that are foundational to his understanding of New Testament theology and show the strength of the book's structure. First, he continually emphasizes that faith must move into action, creating lifestyles that reflect Jesus instead of living only for the future promise of heaven. He calls his readers to practical applications, seeing that they need to have transformed lives that are radically different from the surrounding world. Second, he emphasizes the unity of the entire Bible. The book contains frequent reminders that preconceived separation of the Old and New Testament is incorrect. God's character and message do not change. By showing how each key word is found throughout all of Scripture, Gupta transforms how people view the large story of God's people and ultimately, God's character.

This book is an incredible resource to all believers that would be an excellent addition to personal devotions, Sunday school classes, or introductory university New Testament courses. It is modern and approachable. Gupta includes numerous pop culture references—from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* to Lin Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*—that are sure to connect to readers at a popular level. Although the modern references and contemporary applications may become outdated in coming years, I believe that the discussions of the themes will remain relevant and helpful. There is certainly much more that could be said about each topic and New Testament book (as some are not even covered), but Gupta's book succeeds as a clear introduction to strong exegetical reading of the Bible, demonstrating how to connect passages throughout the Bible without cherry-picking verses and logically applying it to one's life. By modeling these important skills, Gupta will transform readers' approach to Scripture.

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Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson. *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. 2nd ed. Invitation to Theological Studies Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. Pp. 704. ISBN: 978-0-8254-4676-4. \$67.56 (CDN) \$33.34 (USD) hardcover.

Regardless of the student's earnest desire to learn the subject at hand or the instructor's eminent experience in the classroom, teaching the intricacies of effective biblical interpretation can be an extremely taxing process for many educators. Enter Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson's *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* now in its second edition. Köstenberger and Patterson state:

This book is trying to teach a simple method for interpreting the Bible. It involves preparation, interpretation, and application. The method for interpretation is built around the hermeneutical triad, which consists of history, literature, and theology. In essence, our core proposal is this: for any passage of Scripture, you will want to study the historical setting, the literary context, and the theological message (21).

Though (unequivocally) succeeding in this matter, to what degree does the second edition of this volume differ from the first and in what capacity do the authors utilize and/or leverage the most recent resources that are available? Prior to offering a clear delineation of these things and a full-scale review, though, it is prudent to first provide a general orientation to the text, as a whole.

Invitation to Biblical Interpretation is comprised of three main sections: (1) Preparation: The Who, Why, and How of Interpretation (chapter one), (2) Interpretation: The Hermeneutical Triad (chapters two to fourteen), and (3) Application and Proclamation: God's Word Coming to Life (chapter fifteen). To be clear, Section 2 has three main parts: (1) The Context of Scripture: History (chapter two), (2) The Focus of Scripture: Literature (chapters three through eleven), and (3) The Goal: Theology (chapter fourteen). More specifically, part 2 also has three main units: (1) Canon: Old and New Testament (chapters three and four), (2) Genre: Old Testament Historical Narrative, Poetry and Wisdom, Prophecy, Gospels and Acts, Parables, Epistles, Apocalyptic (chapters five to eleven), and (3) Language (chapters twelve and thirteen).

Each chapter begins with a thorough list of objectives and a detailed content outline. They conclude with an overarching set of interpretive guidelines, a glossary of key words, some well-crafted study questions/assignments (more on both of these later), and a bibliography—all of which have been tailored to the subject of that particular chapter. The book rounds off with a thirteen-page glossary (no words from any of the previous listings are included) and three indices (Scripture/Author/Subject). While some may quibble over the small size of the subject index, the extensive table of contents and complete outline for each chapter should more than compensate.

With respect to the primary differences between the two editions, the authors claim:

For this second edition, all chapters have been thoroughly updated. Chapter 2, in particular, was thoroughly reworked and updated in light of the latest scholarship in chronology and archeology. Chapter 3 on the Old Testament canon is completely new. . . . The chapter on figurative language was assimilated into chapters 6 (Old Testament wisdom) and 13 (language), respectively. Chapter 14 (previously chap.

15) was expanded to include Old and New Testament themes (Old Testament themes [were] previously included in chap. 3) as well as a discussion on the relationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology. Chapter 15 (previously chap. 16) on application and proclamation was [also] significantly reworked and recast (20).

Another substantial change is to the actual shape of the book itself. While the first edition of *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* was 6 ¼ inches wide and 9 and ¼ inches tall, the second edition is an impressive 7 and ¾ inches wide and 9 and ½ inches tall. This new format is quite pleasing to use, lays flat well, and conforms now with the rest of the Kregel ‘Invitation’ series.

Despite these welcome and (relatively speaking) rather robust changes to the text, many long-term users will likely be disappointed that the authors did not do a more extensive revision.

To begin, one laments that there is still no effective discussion about how the growing field of linguistics can distinctly and directly influence and impact exegesis and interpretation. As such, true discourse analysis (involving register, field, tenor, mood, etc.) is often brushed to the side (cf. pg. 474–75, 487–501). In addition, while the author’s discussion of the basic characteristics of New Testament Greek (478–87) is fittingly appropriate to their target audience, the absence of Constantine R. Campbell’s *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2015) and Stanley E. Porter’s *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament: Studies in Tools, Methods, and Practice* (Baker, 2015) causes one to firmly question the idea that each chapter has, indeed, been “thoroughly updated” (20). It also seems injudicious that there is no comparable type of discussion concerning biblical Hebrew (or biblical Aramaic).

The inexplicable absence (yet again!) of the *crème de la crème* work concerning the meaning of words (linguistics, semantics, exegetical fallacies, and figurative language), namely Moisés Silva’s *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* revised and updated edition (Zondervan, 1995), which, in my opinion, ought to be required reading in any course on effective biblical interpretation alongside Benjamin L. Baxter’s ‘*In the Original Text It Says*’ (Energion, 2019), is also (quite) odd and difficult to appreciate. In addition, the fact that the acclaimed five volume *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* 2nd ed. (Zondervan, 2014) edited by Moisés Silva, now available as *The Concise New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Christopher A. Beetham (Zondervan, 2021), is altogether not mentioned forces one to reconsider the overall effectiveness of their guidelines for doing “semantic field studies,” i.e. “word studies” (517).

One also notes that David Cline’s *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield,

1993–2016), HALOT, and *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Zondervan, 1997) edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, are all conspicuously absent but the hopelessly out-of-date BDB is explicitly mentioned as being a standard reference lexicon (see pg. 544). Needless to say, far more work could have been done in helping students learn, step-by-step, how to use up-to-date language works. There is also no mention of STEP (Scripture Tools for Every Person).

More details concerning English translations, in general (arguably the first step for most student's engagement with biblical interpretation), would surely have proven beneficial to have included as would have been a section specially devoted to Old Testament Apocalyptic literature. NB: for further details on this subject, see Richard A. Taylor's *Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature: An Exegetical Handbook. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis* (Kregel, 2016). The lack of inclusive language may also be grating to some readers (see, for example, pg. 56).

Pedagogically speaking, while the study questions/assignments are well-constructed and clear they vary quite widely (wildly?) in number. Some chapters have four assignments while others have eight. Some chapters have five to eight study questions while others have twelve (!). While such differences may be justifiable given the subject matter at hand, might it not have been more effective to have had a standard allotment devoted to each chapter? In a similar way, while students are likely to appreciate the inclusion of various 'key words' within any given chapter, would it not have made more sense simply to have included one large(r) glossary? Who could possibly be expected to remember what specific chapter any given 'key word' appears in?

Lastly, while it makes sense for the second edition of *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* to have deleted the appendix i.e., "Building a Biblical Studies Library" (pp. 809–32), at least some annotated reference(s) to certain specialized volumes which offer assistance to that area, such as John F. Evan's superb (and affordable!) volume, *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works* 10th ed. (Zondervan, 2016), would surely have helped the fledgling student(s).

To conclude, despite these infelicities, I heartily recommend Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson's *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. While I am not persuaded that it is "destined to become the standard textbook for colleges and seminaries" (see back cover) it remains "an invaluable guide for the student working through the labyrinth of issues that make up the task of biblical interpretation" (back cover). One can only hope that future edition(s) might be able to correct and/or augment some of the challenges involved in this second edition so

that all serious students of Scripture can benefit as much as possible from Köstenberger and Patterson's notable work.

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Mitzi J. Smith and Michael Willett Newheart. *We Are All Witnesses: Toward Disruptive and Creative Biblical Interpretation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023. Pp. 174. ISBN 978-1-6667-1463-0. \$24.00 (USD) paper.

We Are All Witnesses is a provocative volume by Mitzi J. Smith and Michael Willett Newheart that seeks to decenter biblical studies by placing forward a model of disruptive and creative biblical interpretation. Smith is J. Davison Philips Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary and Newheart is professor emeritus of New Testament at Howard University School of Divinity and is an interim ministry specialist for American Baptist Churches of the USA. They begin their book by “testifying.” The first chapter of *We Are All Witnesses* acts as both a thesis statement and a beginning memoir. Both authors share not only their faith histories, to provide better contexts for themselves and this book, but also their deep-seated conviction that the Bible is best read when one’s context is set in as a centerpiece to biblical interpretation, and this then leads to “testifying.” Chapters two and three then begin to develop the methodology that the two authors will showcase in chapters four through nine.

Chapter two discusses the importance of context when reading. For Smith and Newheart context is the backbone of all biblical interpretation, but that is not limited to solely historical and literary context, but rather it also includes the social context of the audience, who ultimately determines how the text is “testifying.” Chapter three then begins to further develop how the two authors will view the New Testament texts. They take the position that the New Testament texts are testaments that the authors were wishing to share with the result of sharing the contextual message of the biblical author amidst the original intended audience. This “testifying” is the biblical author attempting to achieve a change or response in the community that received their message. These texts, based on the witness of others, were then later canonized as Scripture. It is also here that the authors place forward their method and desire to read the New Testament text in a justice-focused hermeneutic as a way of testifying to the injustice that they either have seen or experienced.

Chapters four through nine then shift into the main section of the book. Each chapter follows a similar pattern of the author choosing a New Testament text and then sharing as to why they chose the text they did, usually due to personal importance. Then they examine the text and raise preliminary questions regarding the text

from reading with a justice-centered hermeneutic. Lastly, they examine the text in its literary context and draw conclusions based on the reading that took place. Each chapter also has a section for further reading. These sections are also carefully curated to include resources from female and BIPOC authors. These chapters are the body of the book and seek to show Smith's and Newheart's vision for a justice-centered hermeneutic that is centered in the context of the reader. The book then ends with a brief conclusion summarizing the importance of "testifying."

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of *We Are All Witnesses* is the model it provides for asking questions that go against the grain of traditional readings. This is also a deeply intentional feature. As Smith states in chapter three, "We must read against the grain, employing a deconstructive and/or oppositional justice-focused hermeneutical perspective" (55). As someone who has been reared and educated in more traditional approaches to biblical hermeneutics their modeling of disruptive questions was informative and helped me to begin to more carefully examine how I read the Bible and the questions that I am conditioned to ask of the text. Their sections for further reading/research that accompanied each of the body chapters (chs 4–9) were also a wonderful addition for students who have not been provided the experience in reading minority interpretations or the knowledge of how to find the spaces where these minority voices write.

The deeply personal nature of *We Are All Witnesses* serves to its benefit often. Smith's and Newheart's honest and raw testimonies help to provide context for the rest of the book and its purpose. It also encourages the reader to search their own life and seek how the experiences that have shaped them as a person also shape how they testify to the biblical text. Smith and Newheart's testimonies help them to become living people on the page of the text. I left *We Are All Witnesses* with a deeper appreciation for their work and them as scholars by way of their personal stories and conversation with the audience.

However, *We Are All Witnesses* is not without shortcomings. Despite the affective relationship between the authors and the reader that is built by the person writing, there never seems to be a well-defined balance in tone. Smith and Newheart's best attempts at this hybrid of memoir and textbook are disappointing. It seems as if there is never a clear distinction between the multiple genres. The result is a charming but ultimately disjointed product that leaves the reader without a clear sense of the writing tone.

Another shortcoming of *We Are All Witnesses* is the lack of a defined audience. The back cover of the book claims that it is accessible to laypersons, college students, and seminary students. However, this is only provisionally true. Throughout the body of the book Smith and Newheart appeal to a contextualized reading that considers both the historical and literary context of the passage. Although each chapter offers a dedicated section to the literary context of the passage, the

historical context is noticeably absent in their interpretation. This is not to say that they do not consider it, but rather it hides away implicitly in their conclusions. The college and seminary students who have had prior exposure to biblical interpretation will likely have the training to do independent research on the historical context, but the layperson with no such training may feel lost attempting to wade their way through the sea of sources or material available. There seems to be a desire from the authors to have written for too wide of an audience that now leaves *We Are All Witnesses* as a serviceable volume to many but lacking the nuance or intentionality of a specific audience.

However, despite these shortcomings, *We Are All Witnesses* is an experimental work that should be applauded for what it does well. It provides a model forward in biblical interpretation that seeks to ask disruptive questions, not with the intention of provocation but for further research. It breathes new life into how academia can consider teaching and introducing biblical interpretation to first-time students. It is a brave and necessary call for the need for inclusion of minority voices in biblical interpretation. Although not everything comes together as intended, this is a useful and recommended book for those who take an interest in biblical interpretation and its current trends. *We Are All Witnesses* will pave the way forward for more works of its kind and help open the doors to continuing disruptive biblical interpretation.

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Wendy E. S. North. *What John Knew and What John Wrote: A Study in John and the Synoptics*. Interpreting Johannine Literature. Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2020. Pp. 174. ISBN 978-1-9787-0881-5. \$39.99 (USD) paper.

With her opening six words (“It is a truth universally acknowledged”) Wendy North captured my attention, and the rest of the book did not disappoint. Dr. North, Honorary Research Fellow at Durham University, attacks the perennial question of the relationship of the Gospel of John to the Synoptics. She first asks how the author of the Fourth Gospel handles already-recognized allusions: to his own writing, to the LXX, and to the Synoptics. With a resulting list of ten elements of a pattern in hand, North examines the way these play out in four specific Synoptic references. This approach struck me from the beginning as so eminently sensible that I was eager to see how it developed.

Although there is some agreement between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics, John does not consistently follow Mark, Matthew, or Luke. He acknowledges (20:30–31; 14–16) that he is not only culling the Jesus-memories but interpreting them. The question that North intends to tackle, however, is not whether John

relied on memories or traditional material, but rather whether the evidence suggests that he also had access to the Synoptics in some written form.

North's approach is particularly incisive: John is not categorized as a Synoptic Gospel because John does not use Mark in the same way that Matthew and Luke do. It is therefore useless to use the way Matthew and Luke use Mark to determine whether John uses Mark (or Matthew or Luke) at all! In fact, dependence such as we find in Matthew and Luke is quite unusual among ancient authors.

John's repetition of his own material, usually with some sort of extension or creative alternations, is a part of his particular style. In chapter 2, North examines material that reappears later in the Gospel, often far outside of the original context. Nicodemus, for example, appears three times; each time his character is useful for a point John is making in that later context. Key vocabulary links associated sections, and early contexts may be relevant in later passages although often with variety in purpose and creativity in referents. North wraps up this second chapter with a summary of the ten characteristics of John's reuse of his own material (38).

In this chapter, as throughout the book, North's thorough knowledge of the Gospel means that she makes connections with facility. However, North's facility is also sometimes a drawback, as when John's purposes are asserted rather than argued or observations are made but their relevance is not explained. Regarding Caiaphas, I wondered if his sole purpose in the later passage was to introduce Annas, and I would have liked to understand better how North's "two further observations" (22) related to the discussion. I am sure this is obvious to North, and probably to some readers, but not yet to me.

Because she is trying to establish patterns based on uncontroversial passages, in chapter 3, North relies on Maarten J. J. Menken to identify both "formal quotations" (43) and allusions. This allows her to focus on *how* John alludes to (mostly) the LXX rather than *whether* he does so. North works through ten examples and in each case notes the "signal," the "echoes," and the "relevance" (45, following Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*) of the references. Although this skeleton of Hays' work certainly functions well for many analyses, I wonder if in general Ziva Ben Porat's framework might not more neatly set out equally useful categories. Ben Porat ("The Poetics of Literary Allusion") offers a structure that focuses more on function than on form, but that nevertheless prioritizes the "marker" (similar to Hays' "signal"), the original context, and the effects of the use of the marker in the new context.

After an analysis of eleven of John's scriptural quotations, North looks at eleven passages with similarities to the Synoptics. In these quotations, John follows eight out of the ten characteristics discovered in chapter 2. In order to focus on John's reuse of Synoptic material, North regularly sets out her assumptions. Those assumptions, of course, determine in part how she proceeds, so those

wishing to adopt her thesis will need to either agree or determine how different assumptions might or might not impact the viability of her thesis. This process may be somewhat hampered by the location of some debates in end-of-chapter notes. This choice creates a book that is clear, concise, and progresses logically. However, I often found myself missing a more robust discussion within the chapter itself. Such are the vicissitudes of authorial decisions.

In chapter 4, then, North describes the way the feeding narrative in John (6:1–15) follows first Matthew, then Mark with echoes of 2 Kings, then Matthew again with an emphasis on oneness. John’s conclusion emphasizes Jesus’s superiority to Moses and a reference to the Passion with the misunderstanding of Jesus’s kingship. In the anointing, John (12:1–11) borrows from Mark and Luke but adapts the story for his very different narrative. John’s distinctive purpose is a narrative of self-giving love. Jesus’s trial (18:12–19:16) shows elements of all the Synoptics. John focused his passion narrative mainly on the trial before Pilate while nevertheless targeting ‘the Jews.’ And in the race to the tomb (20:3–10), John has nine words in common with Luke, words and phrases otherwise unusual for John. Clearly, John did not use Mark in the same way Matthew and Luke did, but narrative passages found in the Synoptics as well as the Fourth Gospel reflect the by-now-familiar pattern of John’s use.

North has not attempted to prove that John knew or used the Synoptics. What North has persuasively shown, however, is that John has a pattern to his style of reusing material. John creatively retells (#5 in North’s list) and may amplify (#6) material from sometimes several (#8) sources, integrating them into his own themes and purposes (#10). He often only gives an abbreviated form of the original (#4) but may revisit part of the original story in some other context (#2). Elements surrounding the Synoptic stories find their way into John’s recompositions (#3). However, this creativity does not preclude an attention to source details. Catchwords from the original are retained in the new version (#1). Vocabulary or grammatical details may allow John to concatenate several different texts (#7), but this practice sometimes results in unevenness in John’s own work (#9). Although all ten elements may not appear in every example, this pattern suggests that more of the Synoptics echo through John than has previously been recognized.

The analysis is deft and North’s familiarity with the Gospels and with Johannean research provides a smooth, clear discussion. Furthermore, the bibliography could easily provide a reading list for new students of John. I look forward to future scholarly discussions of these characteristics North has elucidated for us which go a long way towards explaining why and how John composed this most spiritual of Gospels.

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