

BOOK REVIEWS

Dustin G. Burlet. *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of Noah's Flood in Genesis*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022. Pp. 306. ISBN 978-1-6667-3672-4. \$40 (USD) paper.

Dustin G. Burlet's *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of Noah's Flood in Genesis*, with foreword by August H. Konkel, is a revision of his 2019 dissertation "Cosmos to Chaos—Chaos to Covenant," from McMaster Divinity College, with August H. Konkel and Mark J. Boda as first and second reader, respectively, and Carol M. Kaminski as external reader. By examining the narrative of Genesis 6:5–9:17 through rhetorical criticism (rhetoric as persuasion), Burlet displays the intention of the Flood as predominantly redemptive, countering common assumptions of divine wrath and retribution. Through rhetorical analysis, Burlet's research demonstrates that despite the devastation of the deluge, the emphasis of the Flood narrative points toward 1) God's unwavering creational intention and 2) God's salvific goal to restore goodness and blessing to the earth through humanity. The book contains seven chapters.

Chapter 1 "The Genesis Flood Narrative: General Orientation" situates the Noahic Flood within its larger preceding literary context of Genesis 1:1–6:4. Burlett provides a general account of predominant scholarly views of the Flood, its cause, purpose, and effect. He begins by addressing the diachronic (source-critical) and synchronic (literary-critical) divide in scholarship, offering rhetorical criticism (rhetoric as persuasion) as a model which "fills in the void" between the two approaches. The setting of the Flood narrative contrasts God's creational intent of goodness and blessing for all with "all life" (כל בשר) in turn corrupting the earth (ארץ) with violence (חמס) (Gen 6:12–13). The cause for the "hydrologic disaster," therefore, is "moralistic" (2). Instead of God's image-bearers using their divinely appointed responsibility to extend divine flourishing and blessing throughout the earth, "all life" corrupted (שחת) God's creation through their intentions which had become "only evil all the time" (Gen 6:5). God, therefore, announces his consequent intention to destroy (שחת) all life (כל בשר) by covering the earth (ארץ) with water. In Genesis 1, God looked at the earth he made and "saw that it was good." Now, the LORD looked at the earth and "saw that the evil of humanity was great" for they corrupted creation through violence (Gen 6:5–12). God's response is grief (עצב) in his heart (Gen 6:6; see Gen 3:16, 17). But the

glimmer of hope immediately appears, for Noah found grace in God's eyes (Gen 6:8). The plan to preserve life ensues. Burlet addresses the questions surrounding the Flood narrative, particularly, how can the Flood as God's judgment correlate with an expression of God's salvation. He starts with the observation that the toledot unit of the Flood begins and ends with Noah (Gen 6:9–9:29) (2).

Chapter 2 "Methodology Rhetorical Criticism" describes Burlet's rhetorical-critical analysis approach. He notes James Muilenburg's presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature (December 18, 1968), which time stamps a move toward incorporating literary criticism, and specifically rhetorical criticism into the study of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in order to discern the biblical text as a "unified whole" (31). Burlet provides the two major branches of rhetorical criticism as rhetoric as "the art of composition" and as "the art of persuasion" (32–36). Burlet explains his particular methodology as a modified form of George A. Kennedy's model of rhetorical criticism. The steps of Kennedy's approach are: 1) determining the rhetorical unit; 2) determining the rhetorical situation (the problem, audience, and circumstantial constraints); 3) determining the rhetorical species (or genre, which Burlet modifies for his study as "worldview formative rhetoric"); and 4) assessing the rhetorical strategy, which includes stylistics, plot structure, and composition; 5) determining the rhetorical effectiveness (36–82).

Burlet's rhetorical critical analysis of Genesis 6 through 9 are provided in chapters 3 through 6. In chapter 3, "The Corruption of Humanity — Hope and Covenant (Gen 6:5–8 // 9–22)," Burlet begins with Genesis 6:5–8 as "The Prelude to a Disaster" (84), continuing through 6:9–22 as the rising action of the toledot's narrative plot. In the prelude, Yahweh is the subject of each of the wayyiqtol (structural verbs), which emphasize his character and response to the evil and corruption of "all life." Yahweh "sees," "regrets," is "caused pain," and "does." Genesis 6:9a introduces the toledot unit, thus delineating the start of the new rhetorical unit, which focuses on "the life, lineage, and person of Noah" (Gen 6:9b–10) before returning to the description of humanity's depravity and the ruin of the earth and its creatures (87–89). Yahweh then speaks to Noah, telling the problem, the consequent solution, instructions, and covenant declaration (Gen 6:13–21). This section concludes with Noah's obedience (Gen 6:22). In-depth analysis demonstrates Burlet's modified Kennedy method in conversation with broad scholarly literature and other ANE flood accounts (86–124). While violence defiled God's good creation, requiring commensurate judgment, the emphasis turns to the salvific sparing of the life of Noah, his family, and representatives of creatures from the land and the air through Noah's obedience in building the ark and supplying it with food. Burlet notes a continuity between the destructiveness of the deluge and postdiluvian brutality, which are both met with God's compassion

and plan to prevent utter annihilation and a renewal of covenant relationships for a future enduring peace (125).

Chapter 4 “It Cometh! (Gen 7:1–24),” affirms the salvific nature of the ark and the divine intent to save life. The deluge comes with Yahweh personally closing the ark’s door for the inhabitants inside. The rain then falls for forty days and nights. The narrator does not withhold the extent of the devastation, which is complete as the life-breath of all outside the ark are extinguished. The next literary sub-unit is marked by divine speech, “then the LORD said to Noah” (Gen 7:1) and concludes with a string of wayyiqtol ending with the waters prevailing over the earth for one hundred and fifty days. Rhetorical analysis points to Yahweh’s protective directive to “Enter” the ark (7:1), Noah’s faithful obedience (7:5), the obedience of his family and the animals (7:6–12), repetition of the obedience of his family and the animals (7:13–16), and the ark safely rising over the flood (7:17–24). Although Genesis 7 details the ordeal, the sub-units point to the narrative’s emphasis on the security of Noah and those inside the ark. The significance of the number forty is noted for its association “with hardship, affliction, punishment, and judgment (Ezek 4:6; cf. Jonah 3:4 and Matt 4:2)” (142). Potential import of other numbers in the narrative and their occurrences outside of biblical literature add additional points of interest. Burlet points out the predominance of the word “all” (כָּל in the Hebrew) and implications for the universal scope and impact of the flood. God’s commitment to the “salvage operation” of the Flood and priority of preserving human and animal life emerges through numerous literary and rhetorical strategies (154).

Chapter 5 “After the Rain — The Flood Subsides (Gen 8:1–22),” is “the pivot point” in the Noahic Flood narrative. Genesis 8:1 is at the center of the entire narrative: “God remembered Noah” and all the animals in the ark and sent a wind to cause the waters to recede. In this unit, the waters abate and the new creation narrative begins. Burlet notes that the phrase “God remembered” does not mean “coming to mind” but rather recalls covenant language and Yahweh’s commitment to fulfill his earlier promise to Noah. God’s covenantal remembering initiates redemptive action (170). Although Burlet refrains from using the term “chiastic structure” in this section, he points out the progressive parallels moving backward and forward from Gen 8:1 (159–161). Rhetorical-critical methodology continues to show the emphasis upon salvation of human and animal life as the waters recede, and they move from inside the ark to dry ground. Burlet observes that although Noah sent out the raven and then the dove, he only exited the ark after Yahweh told him to, along with his family and all the animals (8:15–18). Analysis shows that “the vast majority of verses in this pericope (Gen 8:1–22), i.e., eighteen verses (roughly 82 percent) relate to a hope-filled, new creation (Gen 8:1–5, 10–22)” with roughly 18 percent “directly pertaining to judgment”

(187). Creation – UnCreation have been completed, and the narrative next moves toward ReCreation. Noah’s sacrifice and God’s promise mark the final sub-unit in this chapter (8:20–22).

Rhetorical analysis of Gen 9:1–17 in chapter 6 “The Covenant — Conditions and Assurances” confirms restoration of the creation blessing to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. However, there are new adjustments, responsibilities, and covenant commitments based upon God’s recognition and acceptance of humanity’s propensity toward evil coupled with his commitment to redemption. In the final unit of the Flood narrative, the presenting problem of “violence” (חמס) in Genesis 6 is met with God assigning humanity “the privileged responsibility to mitigate blood-thirst through a special provision that empowers mortals to act for God—as his image—to the extent of even being able to take human life (Gen 9:1–7)” (189). The remaining passages that close out this unit contain Yahweh speaking blessings, expressing covenant commitment to his creation’s well-being, and giving the sign (bow) of his promise to all living (Gen 9:1–7, 9–11, 12–16). Burlet notes that “This is the third time humanity has been told to ‘multiply’ (רבה) by God (Gen 1:28; 8:17; 9:1) and the third time they have been ‘blessed’ (ברך) by him (Gen 1:28; 5:2; 9:1)” (200). This chapter underscores the findings of Burlet’s rhetorical analysis and circles back to the presenting evils precipitating the deluge, bringing a redemptive conclusion to the narrative sequence.

Chapter 7, “Conclusion,” summarizes the major findings of the research, clarifies comments concerning its distinctive contributions, and, lastly, makes suggestions for further study. The language of the Noahic Flood is helpfully analyzed, demonstrating that the covenant language with Noah and all life is a reaffirmation of God’s original commitment to creation and humanity. The covenant forms a bridge, re-establishing the original covenant blessing upon humanity and the kinship relationship broken by rebellion and sin. It also designates humans to mitigate on behalf of God to take action against violence, the very thing that precipitated the Flood (Gen 9:4–6).

Burlet provides a compelling analysis of the controversial biblical text of Noahic Flood, convincingly opening the door to read the narrative in light of God’s grief toward human evil, and his purpose for the Flood as redemptive and salvific rather than wrathful and retributive. In sum, Burlet’s exegetical and rhetorical-critical analysis in conversation with a significant breadth of scholarly work in biblical studies and ANE literature lends strong credibility to his research and the convincing nature of his conclusions regarding God’s commitment to his intentions of creation, and the salvific focus of the Noahic Flood narrative.

*Ingrid Faro
Northern Seminary*

Martin W. Mittelstadt and Caleb Howard Courtney, eds. *Canadian Pentecostal Reader: The First Generation of Pentecostal Voices in Canada (1907–1925)*. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2021. Pp. xii + 507. ISBN 978-1-9533-5808-0. \$26.95 (USD) paper.

In the *Canadian Pentecostal Reader*, Mittelstadt and Courtney have collected and republished nearly every Canadian Pentecostal newsletter (prior to 1925) for the first time (1–2). By gathering these valuable primary sources, the editors aim to make them easily accessible, not, as they write, “in an attempt to ‘bring back the good old days’, but to understand better the way things were” (1). They explain that they have chosen 1925 as an end date because it marks the independence of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) from the Assemblies of God in the USA and the uniting of Pentecostal groups in Eastern and Western Canada (2). The republished newsletters have a consistent format and style, with only minor alterations, such as spelling corrections and consistent formatting for dates and Bible verses (3). This reader is an invaluable new resource for future research on Pentecostalism in Canada.

The volume includes almost every Pentecostal newsletter published in Canada between 1907 and 1925, except *The Pentecostal Testimony*, the main PAOC publication, which is already available online through the PAOC archives (2). The book is divided into eight chapters, and each chapter contains the available issues of a different newsletter (as an exception, the third chapter contains two different, but related newsletters). It also includes a comprehensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources related to Canadian Pentecostalism between 1907 and 1925 (see 493–507). Each chapter begins with a brief, theologically neutral introduction to the newsletter(s) to follow, which “allow[s] the resources to speak for themselves” (3). Each introduction also includes short biographies of the newsletters’ publishers and relevant historical context (“The People”), a summary of the newsletters’ contents and highlights interesting or important ideas (“The Publication”), a list of suggested further reading, and a small selection of related primary source excerpts and photos.

The book is mostly organized in geographical (and somewhat chronological) order. It begins with *The Promise* (1907–1910), published by Ellen and James Hebden. Ellen was likely the first person in Canada to experience the Pentecostal phenomenon of Spirit baptism with the sign of speaking in tongues (5). Next in the reader is *The Gospel of Sunshine* (1924), a later Toronto publication. The next section contains two Winnipeg newsletters, *The Apostolic Messenger* (1908) and *The Revival Broadcast* (1923) from the Argue family, prominent early Pentecostal leaders. The focus on Winnipeg continues with Oneness Pentecostal

leader Franklin J. Small's *Living Waters* (1918–1924). The geographical order is interrupted by *The Good Report* (1911–1912) from Ottawa leader R.E. McAlister. The last three sections include later publications from Saskatchewan (O.J. Lovik, *Saskatchewan Revival News*, 1924) and British Columbia (Margaret Peden and Ella Andrews, *The Good News Bulletin*, 1925; H.B. Taylor, *The Pyramid Temple Bulletin*, 1925).

The sources themselves provide several insights into early Canadian Pentecostalism. One of the most prominent themes is the fragmented development of theological distinctives over time, since the early days of the movement were “pre-denominational” (3). For example, Franklin J. Small's *Living Waters* allows the reader to enter the earliest days of the Oneness Pentecostal movement, during the tumultuous period as it separated itself from trinitarian Pentecostalism. A 1918 issue contains a letter supporting the formation of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (257–58), while an issue from 1920 boldly opposes trinitarianism (262–65). The PAOC had affirmed trinitarianism just a few months prior, in late 1919 (228). Women also feature prominently in these newsletters: *The Promise*, *The Revival Broadcast*, and *The Good News Bulletin* all highlight the leadership of women in early Pentecostal publishing. These themes are, of course, not unique to Canadian Pentecostalism, but gathering the Canadian primary source material together will help researchers discern any elements that are unique to the Canadian context.

The *Canadian Pentecostal Reader* is logically organized and easy to use. The chapter introductions are informative yet brief enough to keep the focus on the primary sources. Each newsletter is neatly formatted and beautifully reproduced, and the search function in the electronic format is effective for locating anything within the sources. The bibliography is an excellent starting point for further research on the publications themselves and on several related topics. These factors make this reader an excellent resource for students, teachers, and researchers alike.

One limitation in this otherwise excellent reader is the lack of an index. The editors have explained that the electronic format of the book is searchable and recommend using this search function in lieu of an index (4). However, it can be challenging to find accurate pagination in certain electronic book formats such as Kindle, and so a researcher may be required to cross-reference between both the electronic format (to search for a certain article or phrase) and the paper format (to record an accurate page number). An index would therefore be more effective for some users. Nevertheless, this is only a minor problem with an otherwise outstanding resource.

The *Canadian Pentecostal Reader* provides its users with easy access to early Canadian Pentecostal history and theology. It allows one to easily compare

ministry testimonies, measure changes in theological emphases over the years, and discover little-known figures from the early years of Pentecostalism in Canada. The newsletters in this reader provide insight into the unique circumstances of the early movement in Canada and will help determine to what extent one can speak of a particularly *Canadian* Pentecostalism. What remains now is to see what interesting discoveries will emerge from those who utilize this resource.

Kathleen Krynski

Wycliffe College, University of Toronto

Michelle Knight. *The Prophet's Anthem: The Song of Deborah and Barak in the Narrative of Judges*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2024. Pp. 206. ISBN 9781481321594. \$64.99 (USD) hardcover.

The song of Deborah and Barak in Judges 5 is a soaring and strong declaration of the wonders of YHWH's provision for the Israelite people, but what role does it play in the overall narrative? Is it simply a synoptic poetic recounting of Judges 4 or does it offer more to the Kishon narrative, or perhaps even the book of Judges as a whole? These questions have surrounded this poem's inclusion in the book of Judges. Michelle Knight in her book *The Prophet's Anthem*, seeks to answer these questions by highlighting the narrative role of the poem in both its immediate context of the Kishon narrative as well as in the broader context of the savior stories that make up the bulk of the book of Judges. Knight is an Associate Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Knight begins her book with a brief introduction that traces the route of her book. In her first chapter, she tackles the groundwork by providing her own translation of Judges 5 and formal analysis, genre, and an interpretive summary. The results of this groundwork that will inform the rest of her study are summarized by Knight's insistence that calling Judges 5 "embedded poetry" is not enough. Instead, due to its prophetic role in the narrative by highlighting YHWH's active role in the conquest, she agrees with Serge Frolov that the genre is better to be understood as a "prophetic historical exemplum" (25).¹ Knight draws the conclusion that Judges 5 operates as a prophetic recounting of Judges 4 that highlights not only YHWH's salvific actions but also provides a divinely authorized assessment of the faithfulness of the people of Israel.

In chapter 2, Knight notes that one of the most troubling features of interpretation around Judges 4–5 is the tendency for scholars to treat the two chapters as synoptic from one another instead of as one literary unit. In response to this concern, Knight meticulously traces the plot features of Judges 4–5. By tracing

1 See Frolov, *Judges*, 366.

the plot of the two chapters, she concludes that Judges 5 supplements the narrative in Judges 4 by highlighting the theological and covenantal implications. In this chapter, she also traces the narrative characterizations of the Israelites, God, Jabin, Sisera, Deborah, Barak, and Jael. Knight summarizes that the characterization of the characters is not synoptic, but rather enhanced when we read the two chapters as one literary unit. By also drawing on the major themes of these chapters, Knight finally concludes by stating that Judges 4–5 in its plot mirrors the macroplot of all Judges by highlighting God’s faithfulness and Israel’s hesitancy to trust in him.

Chapters 3 and 4 then trace these themes in both the broad characterization of the characters in the entirety of Judges’ savior stories as well as the major plots and themes. What Knight notes is that Judges 5 acts as a transition from the first three savior stories to the last four. In the first three savior stories, there is little focus on the abilities of the Judges themselves and rather a focus on God’s ability to utilize them for his salvific purposes. Instead with Gideon, there is now a distinct shift in the narrative to focus on the people’s rejection of Yahweh and the growing desire for human leaders who are often imperfect and do not lead Israel to victory or peace.

In chapter 5 Knight provides a short conclusion based on the previous argument. She notes that Judges 5 operates as a hinge in the book of Judges. The people have seen YHWH’s providence and ability to use any tool for his mission of salvation, but the people’s hesitancy to follow YHWH will ultimately be their downfall as it is highlighted by Gideon’s narrative as the people highlight their preference for a human leader. This reading integrates Judges 5 seamlessly into the book of Judges. Knight then ends her work with a lengthy appendix that highlights her lexical and text-critical analysis of Judges 5. This is helpful for any reader wanting to dig deeper into her justifications and argumentation.

Knight should be commended on her ability to move Judges 5 from the sideline of Judges study and highlight how it integrates into the key narrative themes in a way that has not been previously recognized. Through her study, there is now a convincing argument for further research on both the role of integrated poetry in the biblical narrative and the role the Song of Deborah and Barak plays in the overall narrative of Judges. Her ability to interweave a close reading of a text and connect it to the broad theological themes of its literary context in a way that is not arbitrary, but provides insight both into the surrounding context and the text itself, should serve as a model in exegesis integrated with biblical theology done well.

The Prophet’s Anthem is a proud call to review the location of Judges 5 in its place among the savior stories of Judges. It is an accomplishment that should soon see wide usage and readership from students of the book of Judges. Although this

is too technical for a wide readership, as the book will require the reader to have familiarity with biblical Hebrew and the arguments around the book of Judges, this book will be immensely useful to anyone seeking to do serious scholarship on Judges or the role of integrated Hebrew poetry. I am eager to see how Knight's work will continue to push the conversation surrounding Judges as it will certainly continue to open new avenues for study.

Levi Moberg
New Covenant Academy

Mark A. Noll. *C.S. Lewis in America: Readings and Reception, 1935–1947*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023. Pp. 156. ISBN 978-1-5140-0700-6. \$20.00 (USD) paper.

In the book *C.S. Lewis in America: Readings and Reception, 1935–1947*, American historian Mark Noll captures the thoughts of Roman Catholics and Protestants on the works of C.S. Lewis through the trying years of 1935–1947. Conveying the various audiences of thought, Noll seeks to demonstrate the historical contrasts between groups, while at the same time discovering the ways Lewis brought a freshly renewed imagination into the centers of Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions, during an era dominated by national crises—Great Depression and World War II. To shed light on the critical reception of C.S. Lewis in the era of World War II, Noll devotes a chapter to each group to gain deeper insight into both Lewis and America: Roman Catholics, secular and mainstream media, and Evangelicals.

To properly explore the area of reception history for Roman Catholics as Lewis's first readers, it must begin with an account of the church's state in the 1930s and 1940s. This account highlights the features Catholic authors received warmly in Lewis, and the influence later exerted on American evangelical protestants that were taking place in the American church. Recognizing the work of Thomas Merton and the union of Catholics and Protestants around defeating fascism, Noll asserts it was not until 1949 and the creation of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) that distrust between the two groups would resurface. Until that time, out of Lewis's ten works noticed by Catholics, five were positively or even enthusiastically noticed: *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *Perelandra*, *The Great Divorce*, and *The Abolition of Man*. Noll states that "although Catholic criticism was important for what is said about Lewis, for our purposes it was even more important for what it revealed about those who penned that criticism" (14).

In chapter 1, Noll asserts that Catholics appreciated Lewis's works with recognition for their literary energy, academic depth, creativity, and sincere Christianity.

The major critique, directly or indirectly, was simply how the works of Lewis neglected the importance of the church. However, Noll proclaims that the ability of Lewis to bridge the gap between Catholics on the emphasis of natural law served as a final approval of his works. C.S. Lewis created a seismograph that served as a foundation to spur a change beyond the church's wall: an absolute moral order that created or made evident the new tremors in society and the church. A response by Karen J. Johnson also brought to light the consideration of how race shaped religion in America, and thus shaped the racialized essence of the reviewer's lives, even if race was not a forefront thought.

Chapter 2 brings to the foreground a critique on the reception of Lewis in secular and mainstream media. Through the reviewers came the conclusion that effective Christian allegory to the American mind may not be an out-of-date remnant of the past and that literary science fiction is more than a hypothetical analysis of the future. Instead, Lewis writes as a layperson to laypersons, expressing works of literary and theological rigor with a humorous flair, which brought secular and mainstream readers into relatable circles. The increased media presence of Lewis in *Time* and by reviewers into laymen circles, preempted the increased imaginative ability of the public to relate with an academic and see Christianity in new creativity. A response by Kirk D. Farney further articulates Noll's view into a positive American response of Lewis's works. Not only were readers open to be challenged in personal conduct, commanding attention from both the body and soul; the editors of this period saw C.S. Lewis as one who placed old modern idioms into an understandable diet for religion-hungry readers (95). Lewis crossed denominational and theological circles to bring truths to a plethora of readers.

The final chapter brings the final approval of Protestant readers with the slow arrival of Evangelicals. The verdict from several Protestant establishment representatives said Lewis was brilliant, persuasive, inspired the imagination, and represented orthodox Christianity intelligently. Evangelicals, according to Noll, took longer to convince, when in 1943 the first review of Lewis's *The Case for Christianity* appeared in the *Moody Monthly*. The view toward Lewis would begin to change with Elisabeth Howard (Elliot), *The Christian Herald*, and the *Sunday School Times* further indicated the widespread hearing of Lewis was gaining within presentation, favorable even to nonfundamentalists. Elisabeth Elliot, the student from Wheaton College, would continue writing about Lewis, moving beyond the hagiography usually accorded within fundamentalist circles. C.S. Lewis's reputation among evangelicals, while it lagged Catholics and other media in engagement, still showed that change was in the air. Even with the change, Noll reminds readers that the 1940s have passed and the appreciation among the multitude of readers in the public sphere has changed, as the number of insistent

public voices has increased and become louder. A final response by Amy E. Black concludes that even in a pluralistic and secular society, the popularity and fullness of Lewis's work should inspire us.

This book prompts the practical and complex question: how does this book aid academic and laypeople throughout Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical circles within a pluralistic society? It must be said that for a brilliant scholar like C.S. Lewis, Mark Noll has provided a gift to the academic community for a deeper view into the acceptance of Lewis's works in America. The flow of the chapters with the responses between provides a smooth transition into the historical and theological thought. As such, I can easily recommend this work to those in higher education interested in further explanation of Lewis within American scholarship. Ultimately, Mark Noll has provided a purposeful resource, one that I hope will prompt further thought into the works of C.S. Lewis and conscious scholarship acceptance between differing traditions.

Jacob M. Padgett
Medfield, MA, USA

K. Scott Oliphint. *The Faithful Apologist: Rethinking the Role of Persuasion in Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022. Pp. 224. ISBN 978-0-3105-9010-1. \$22.99 (USD) paper.

The world of apologetics and evangelism is (all too often) unnecessarily compartmentalized; effective persuasion is often considered 'malicious.' Evangelism is only given to the 'outgoing' while apologetics is reserved for the 'scholar.' Nevertheless, these are disciplines that every Christian ought to develop. Moreover, they ought to be applied together. Enter *The Faithful Apologist: Rethinking the Role of Persuasion in Apologetics*, written by K. Scott Oliphint.

In this accessible work, Oliphint lays out a united philosophy of apologetics and rhetoric (persuasion), making the case that "these two are at their biblical and theological best when they merge together" (xi). Oliphint offers this not as a rigid evangelistic pattern or methodology but rather "as a Bible study on persuasive apologetics. It is a biblical and theological introduction to a persuasive apologetic" (xiii).

Apart from a brief introduction and conclusion, *The Faithful Apologist* is separated into two parts: part one establishes the "Biblical Foundations of Apologetics and Persuasion," while part two establishes the "Parts and Principles of Apologetics and Persuasion." They each contain three chapters. Chapter 1, entitled "The Divine Persuader," argues that persuasion (as bridging the gap between people and God) is ultimately done by the Son (Jesus) through the institution of language, wherein he acts as Messenger, Word, and Image of the Father (10, 28). Chapter

2, “The Divine Persuader,” argues: “the goal of apologetics is to defend the honor and glory of the Lord, as we fight with and for Him, in the midst of this cosmic war,” (44) which “rages in the realm of the invisible” (53). Additionally, it demonstrates that the battle is God’s, it is already won, and that in his grace and providence God has chosen to use us (55, 57). “The Divine Sword” (chapter 3) argues that when we wield the Sword of the Spirit, i.e., the Word of God, faithfully, we can “be confident that the Lord’s Word will never fail; there is no possibility it will not accomplish His divine purposes” (92).

Chapter 4, “Ethos,” maintains a duality within the persuader: (1) the uniting aspect, which is the general nature of human beings in bearing the Image of God and having general revelation, and (2) the separating aspect, which is the Christian character, imitating Christ’s gentleness, fearing God as sovereign judge, and wielding the full Armor of God (113, 127).

Chapter 5, “Pathos,” enters into more pragmatic domains, analyzing the biblical models of Christ and Paul within their apologetic encounters (146, 162–3). It demonstrates how one must first understand, question, and only then bring another into one’s state of mind. Finally, chapter 6, entitled “Logos,” contains the more “traditional” apologetic material, as it deals with the very words of the interaction. To be clear, Oliphint argues: “the better we know the faith to which we are committed, the better we are able to explain it” (185). In other words, Oliphint states that a knowledge of the truth is of utmost importance for a proper apologetic and that as one grows in Christian maturity, one’s ability to do so increases (cf. 180).

While Oliphint does consider some traditional arguments (such as the argument from the First Cause for example), he argues that contextualization is the most important. That is, one must first understand and then show the impossibility of the false worldview with apt evidence.

To summarize, part one establishes the proper context for persuasive apologetics, while part two establishes the necessary components of a successful apologist, success being “not measured in the number of minds we change but in our faithfulness to God, the Divine Persuader and the Faithful Apologist” (back cover).

This work deserves high commendation. Oliphint lays out a framework firmly rooted in the Scriptures that significantly applies to the modern Church. One of modern evangelism’s greatest flaws, perhaps, is its focus on ‘conversion.’ This work makes it clear that the goal of evangelism and persuasive apologetics is the “glory of God, fulfilled via our obedience” (xiv, 44). Said otherwise, Christians ought to be great rhetoricians (that is, persuasive apologists) not so that more people can be saved, *per se*, but as an expression of our love for Christ. If success is defined any differently, then evangelists often become prone to go out with a corrupted mentality and are much more likely to be discouraged by seemingly ‘unsuccessful’ encounters.

I appreciate Oliphint's emphasis on the necessity of understanding others. He states:

The challenging aspect to this kind of argument is that it is not a "one size fits all" argument. It cannot be prepared beforehand in such a way that it will apply to every person in exactly the same way. While certain principles and processes can certainly be anticipated beforehand, it is usually best, in an argument like this, to talk with the person first, in order to see more exactly what the precise commitments are, and to ascertain what this person believes and maintains (194).

Incontrovertibly, not a few debates and controversies would likely be resolved if we took the time to 'seek first to understand, then to be understood.' As a sort of evidence-based presuppositionalist, Oliphint argues that the best form of argument is to demonstrate the inconsistencies in another's worldview, which he calls "a persuasive pinch" (192). This method eliminates the often-stark division between answering objections and preaching the gospel.

One of the most novel aspects of this book, perhaps, is its focus on apologetics as "spiritual warfare." To be clear, Oliphint cogently and judiciously maintains: "even though we engage the battle with other people who oppose our Savior and His reign, we should recognize that the battle rages in the realm of the invisible" (53).

This book leaves little to critique regarding purport, but there are, however, certain other nuisances. As a book accessible to a broad audience, there is little to help the readers orient themselves in the book. This is particularly significant as the book contains only six brief (!) chapters. There are also no indices or even a bibliography. While the purport is correct, it is sometimes difficult to understand the purpose of a given section in its relation to the whole. Furthermore, while the book provides an excellent framework for the pragmatic side of the discussion, it gives little direction on how one might delve deeper into the material. Would not an annotated "recommendations" section at each chapter end prove helpful for the uninitiated?

Moreover, some content is simply unnecessary. For example, in the section entitled "The Word of the Lord," Oliphint spends six pages (!) arguing the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament "word of the Lord" is the Word himself (the Son). Regardless of whether Oliphint is correct in this argument, the necessity of such to his argument is dubious, as he himself seems to acknowledge by his tentative conclusions: "[it] is *likely* the very same Word" (16, emphasis added) and "in a way that *may* point to the Lord Himself" (20, emphasis added).

Everything considered, however, *The Faithful Apologist: Rethinking the Role of Persuasion in Apologetics* by Scott K. Oliphint remains a solid introduction to

a persuasive apologetic. Its ability to explain a united philosophy of evangelism, apologetics, and rhetoric (persuasion) in a way accessible to most interested readers is (quite) impressive. This book will likely be used by any inquisitive student of apologetics and is most useful to the beginner. Heartily recommended!

Joel Lacroix

Millar College of the Bible

Andrew Remington Rillera. *Lamb of the Free: Recovering the Varied Sacrificial Understandings of Jesus's Death*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2024. Pp. 356. ISBN 978-1-6667-0304-7. \$39.00 (USD) paper.

Lamb of the Free offers a new paradigm by which to understand the meaning of Jesus's death and provides an instructive analysis of the sacrificial imagery and understandings surrounding the crucifixion. By examining the sacrificial practices within Judaism, Rillera seeks to gain knowledge and appreciation of the varied ways in which the Hebrew Scriptures would have contributed to the concept and practice of sacrifice via the Levitical system. He then offers an analysis on how these sacrificial understandings can be considered in the light of the crucifixion.

Rillera begins with an analysis of the Levitical sacrificial system and uses both positive and negative arguments to dispel the common misunderstandings of the practice. By investigating "what sacrifice is not," he argues that within the confines of Levitical Judaism there is no such thing as a "substitutionary death sacrifice" (10). He also notes that the hand-laying/scapegoating sacrificial rite is also inadequate to describe the circumstances that surround Jesus's death (10). He argues that because neither of these methodologies fit with the idea of how Jesus's death should be understood, they cannot lead to the crucifixion as being a sacrifice of atonement.

With an atoning sacrifice being ruled out, he then focuses on non-atoning sacrifices within the Levitical system, reemphasizing that the assumption that all sacrifices are atoning is a misconception (28). He notes that the purpose of the non-atoning sacrifice is to bring God closer to the people. Rillera uses the burnt offering sacrificial rite as an example of a practice that does not atone, but instead brings God to the metaphorical table where the people receive God's blessing. This rite is neither a saving event nor the catalyst of future salvation, but instead the celebration of a past saving event (39). These observations rule out the idea that Jesus's death can be understood as a part of a non-atoning sacrificial rite, because the end result of the sacrifice does not match the desired outcome.

Rillera next explores if Jesus's atonement can be situated within the Levitical ritual cosmology. He separates the ideas of ritual impurity from moral impurity, noting that ritual impurity, which is associated with objects and places, can be

“decontaminated” (69). Moral impurity however can never be “decontaminated” (69) because it is beyond the sacrificial system to achieve this result. Since Jesus’s sacrifice was to reclaim a moral purity for the people, before God, it cannot be placed within the ritual cosmology of the Levitical practice.

His last exploration of Levitical sacrificial understandings centres around atonement and the prophets of the Old Testament. Rillera notes that because sacrificial atonement can only decontaminate places and things, not people, (88) there is a break between what the system as stated by the prophets can accomplish and what the people desire it to accomplish (89). The prophetic atonement sacrificial system can bring about forgiveness, but it cannot bring about the moral purification that is needed and provided by Jesus’s death.

Having examined the Levitical system for a suitable description of how the death of Jesus can be understood and finding the ritual practice incomplete, Rillera moves to the New Testament (NT) to assess its understanding of the saving significance of Jesus’s death. He suggests that there is promise in considering Jesus’s death as a well-being sacrifice and a covenant inauguration sacrifice (150). Because Jesus operated within the Old Testament purity laws and was a source of contagious holiness for both ritual and moral purity, his sacrifice fits within the framework (150). This realignment of the sacrificial practice offers a participatory sacrifice in opposition to a substitutionary one (151). Rillera suggests that the concept of participation in Jesus’s sacrifice is illustrated in the Lord’s Supper, where participation brings about a cruciform life change for the participant who then partakes in Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection (151). The institution of the Lord’s Supper as the primary understanding of Jesus’s death allows his followers, partaking in the ritual, to become a collective living sacrifice, all while living out Jesus’s cruciform life.

Rillera argues that this conceptual change from atonement to participation makes sense because the idea of atonement theology is not part of the Gospel message (209). It is instead “a theological innovation based on prior ‘ingredients’ from the Gospels” (209). Based on Rillera’s re-evaluation, Jesus’s death no longer fits neatly into any sacrificial category. And because Jesus’s work fulfills the entirety of the Levitical sacrificial and purity systems, it is difficult to classify his salvific influence in traditional systematic ways. In order to find a suitable understanding, Rillera looks to the Epistle to the Hebrews, which offers a mode of practice by suggesting that the people are to become fellow priests with Jesus and suffer for his sake so that they may become part of a participatory sacrifice rather than a substitutive one.

Lastly, Rillera examines how Jesus’s death can be understood if it is not considered a sacrifice. He notes that what Christ did on the cross does not work as a sacrifice, because in bearing our sins he could not be an acceptable offering,

as sins are not offered on the altar (244). He instead proposes that Jesus's death was a pattern for discipleship, because he was treated unjustly and yet bore his burden well. In this action, Jesus is an exemplar for all the suffering righteous people (245). Rillera notes that this paradigm shift will affect the exegesis of the NT but suggests that, because sacrificial imagery is rare in the NT, the effect may be minimal.

Rillera concludes by suggesting that, in light of the analysis of Jesus's death, Christians should not comprehend the atonement as a substitutionary death but instead view it as a participatory action (282). By making the action of Christ's death participatory, it logically follows that the people are to be included in Jesus's life, work, death, and resurrection. This is a methodology that substitutionary death does not allow for.

Lamb of the Free is a valuable work of biblical theology. Rillera introduces new methodologies for examining the death of Jesus and how that death might affect Christians in their worldview and conception of their faith. This new paradigm for understanding Jesus's death does not do away with the classical and Anselmian theories of sacrificial atonement. It instead invites us to partake in the larger story of Jesus, one in which we are invited to become living sacrifices ourselves. This book is a good reference for soteriological study, both within and outside the biblical and constructive theology disciplines.

Gregory Paranuk
Huron University

Michael B. Shepherd. *An Introduction to the Making and Meaning of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024. Pp. xiii + 209. ISBN 978-0-8028-8393-3. \$26.99 (USD) paper.

Written for undergraduate and seminary students, this new textbook by Michael B. Shepherd offers an orientation to two subjects typically handled separately: matters of text and canon on the one hand, and of hermeneutics and exegesis on the other. The author's expressed objective is to demonstrate "how comprehension of *the making of the Bible* informs interpretation of *the meaning of the Bible*" (ix, italics added). Overall, Shepherd skillfully showcases the potential value of treating these subjects in dialogue with each other and successfully delivers both a unique and compelling introduction to these areas of biblical studies.

The book opens with an introduction designed to disclose its undergirding hermeneutical framework by clarifying the author's views on the nature of Scripture, the terminology for and relationship between the Testaments, and the formation

and structure of the canon.¹ Following this, the book's first two chapters concentrate on the *making* of the Bible. Chapter 1 is devoted to helping readers become attuned to literary and compositional strategies built into biblical texts. Shepherd accomplishes this by defining a concept and then providing extensive textual examples, beginning with techniques occurring at the "microlevel" (from words, phrases, and clauses to paragraphs and chapters). Next are the compositional strategies present at the "macrolevel" (entire books and canonical divisions), which reflect the fact that biblical texts are composite works put together in a meaningful and strategic way by their authors. The last part of the chapter covers the essentials needed for grasping the function of the various literary genres and forms found across biblical compositions. In a crisp yet informative overview, readers are introduced to the basic features of narrative, poetry, genealogy, law, and epistles.

Chapter 2 addresses the history of the Bible's text, transmission, and translation. After a review of witnesses to the Hebrew text, Shepherd provides a fascinating and detailed treatment of the variant literary editions of books in the HB. Throughout, attention is drawn to the value of the different text traditions for both textual criticism and the early history of interpretation. Next comes a very short overview of the Greek texts of the NT, with quick mention made of only two (out of many) ancient versions of the NT. The chapter concludes by addressing modern translations, covering matters such as the history of English versions, translation philosophy, and the pros and cons of various types of translations.

The next two chapters explore how an understanding of the Bible's making informs its *meaning*. Surveying the entire Bible at the macrostructural level, Shepherd emphasizes how its compositions have been purposefully designed to communicate theological messages. Chapter 3 reviews the compositional strategy of the HB and is by far the book's longest chapter, spanning sixty-four pages. The discussion is divided into sections following the canonical units of the HB in its tripartite structure (i.e., *Torah–Nevi'im–Ketuvim* or "Tanak"), which Shepherd views as possessing hermeneutical significance (see 4–13). Each section typically covers the major compositional techniques and theological message(s) of both the unit as a whole and the books within that unit, as well as their relationship to other parts of the HB (i.e., "intertextuality").

Chapter 4 attends to the compositional strategy of the NT. Despite its similarly stated aim, this chapter differs noticeably from the preceding one. Here, Shepherd concentrates chiefly on the extensive intertextuality latent in the NT documents and their exegetical relationship to the fixed canon of the HB. While this unique and important aspect of the NT merits consideration, it is surprising that

1 Shepherd prefers the designation "Hebrew Bible" (HB) over "Old Testament" (see pp. 2–3), which I will therefore follow throughout this review.

Shepherd only occasionally highlights the matters of compositional strategy and structure that were pervasive in chapters 1 and 3. Texts are handled individually across three sections (Gospels and Acts, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Revelation), with some enjoying heavy coverage and others receiving little or none; notably, there is no discussion of the NT's composition beyond the level of individual books.

The fifth and final chapter looks at the Bible holistically. It begins by describing the textual world of the Scriptures, defined as "the world as constructed by the biblical authors in the tapestry of their compositions and in the intricate web of intertextual relationships that exist among those compositions" (147). Readers are invited to embrace this textual world by faith, allowing it to explain, represent, and dictate reality. The rest of the chapter focuses on intertextual connections across and between books, which are "an essential part of the making of the Bible's textual world beyond the level of individual compositions" (153). With an eye toward how intertextuality contributes to developing a biblical theology, two examples are expounded at length—namely, the kingdom of God and divine-human covenants.

Given the nature of its subject matter—much of which will likely be new to students—this work is neither a simple nor an easy read. However, the content's complexity is mitigated by the author's clear and straightforward prose: Shepherd does not waste words and articulates ideas in an accessible manner, making material as understandable as possible for the beginner. Key concepts and sections are regularly summarized, and definitions found in the textbook's glossary also provide a useful (even if at times overly simplistic) aid for the novice student.

Throughout the work, Shepherd does an excellent job of selecting instructive and interesting textual examples, leaving readers with ample exegetical insights and hermeneutical tidbits. Also commendable is the honest and accurate account of the HB's textual and literary history (45–58). While unequivocally holding to a high view of Scripture (see 1–2), Shepherd does not shy away from evidence for textual plurality in antiquity or for the complex and lengthy compositional processes behind the final form of biblical books. In this way, he displays a solid grasp of recent scholarship on the textual traditions of the HB.²

The book's major weakness is its treatment of the NT. Despite its presentation of handling the whole Bible, coverage is weighted heavily in favor of the HB. This is palpable in the disparity of length and detail between analysis of the

2 However, the early section on the canon and structure of the HB (4–13) would have benefited from far more nuance. Unless otherwise attune to the academic discussion, readers will not gather from the presentation that this topic is actually one of considerable debate among scholars. Despite subscribing to a similar canonical approach, I recognize that some of Shepherd's generalizations are problematic—especially concerning the evidence cited in favor of the early attestation of a tripartite canon and the specific arrangement of books within the Tanak.

respective Testaments, as well as the imbalance of sources for textual examples. Given Shepherd's established expertise and publications on the HB and not the NT specifically, this is perhaps unsurprising. Yet such incongruence may raise questions about the legitimacy of applying his central thesis universally: perhaps the interconnectedness of the Bible's making and meaning is only a feature of the HB?

Beyond the unevenness in attention, this concern is further provoked by Shepherd's apparent incredulity toward the idea that the NT exhibits macrostructural compositional features of the same kind or degree as those found in the texts of the HB. This is revealed in chapter 4 by the lack of consideration given to the NT's composition at the levels of canon or sub-collection. More explicitly, Shepherd asserts early on that the NT *does not* possess features comparable to the HB's "canonical seams." Consequently, he expresses skepticism toward arguments for a deliberate or meaningful arrangement of the material in the NT canon (13–14). In these ways, Shepherd exposes either an unawareness of or rejection of growing streams of research in NT scholarship. This includes recent developments in the study of the NT canon and its sub-collections, with researchers identifying hermeneutical and theological significance behind the structure and message(s) of these corpora based on evidence from composition, compilation, and reception.³ Others have begun attending to features spanning the NT canon as a whole, while some have pursued presentations of the NT's theology according to its received shape.⁴ On another note, it is somewhat ironic that the same objections Shepherd raises against seeing significance in the structure of the NT could be—and indeed, frequently are—applied to the HB by critics of canonical approaches.

Additionally, there are cases where material on the NT reflects misinformation or oversimplification—particularly in the discussions on its text and canon (13, 58–60). Space precludes a thorough review of the issues, but a few warrant brief mention: (1) The recounting of the various arrangements of the NT canon requires further qualification and, at present, suffers from information that is potentially

3 For the state of research and further bibliography, see the recent volume by W. Edward Glenny and Darian R. Lockett, eds., *Canon Formation: Tracing the Role of Sub-Collections in the Biblical Canon* (London: T&T Clark, 2023), which includes essays on the whole canon and each sub-collection. Also deserving mention but published too late for inclusion in that volume: Jacob A. Rodriguez, *Combining Gospels in Early Christianity: The One, the Many, and the Fourfold*, WUNT 2/597 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023); Benjamin P. Laird, *The Pauline Corpus in Early Christianity: Its Formation, Publication, and Circulation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2022).

4 See, e.g., Tomas Bokedal, *Christ the Center: How the Rule of Faith, the Nomina Sacra, and Numerical Patterns Shape the Canon* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023); Gregory Goswell, *Text and Paratext: Book Order, Title, and Division as Keys to Biblical Interpretation* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022); David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Trobisch, *On the Origin of Christian Scripture: The Evolution of the New Testament Canon in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2023); Matthew Y. Emerson, *Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

misleading and/or anachronistic.⁵ (2) The complexity of the NT's textual situation is downplayed drastically; although distinct from and facing different issues than textual criticism of the HB, the topic is nonetheless extremely intricate in its own right.⁶ (3) A severe oversimplification occurs with the reiteration of a claim from a popular NT introduction about the percentage of the text that is completely stable across the manuscript tradition versus the tiny fraction that remains in question. (4) The handling of the three main NT text types does not reflect the latest scholarship in the field, which has nuanced this typology considerably and even rejected it at points.

Given its scope and attempt to bridge the gap between textual history and hermeneutics, this book cannot be expected to provide comprehensive coverage of either subject. For this reason, instructors may want to consider supplementing their courses with resources that deal more thoroughly with the field of hermeneutics or text and canon.⁷ That being said, it would be remiss to not conclude by reiterating my general appreciation for this work, which I recommend highly. Notwithstanding certain deficiencies, Michael Shepherd's *An Introduction to the Making and Meaning of the Bible* will serve as an excellent textbook for undergraduate or seminary students and could also be used with profit by pastors and leaders in an ecclesial context. Even the scholar will find much to glean from this erudite and insightful primer on the origins and interpretation of Scripture.

Matthew B. Quintana
McMaster Divinity College

Jeffrey M. Robinson. *Persuasive Apologetics: The Art of Handling Tough Questions Without Pushing People Away*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023. Pp. 150. ISBN: 978-0825448300. \$35.14 (CDN) \$21.99 (USD) paper.

Apologetics, or the discipline of making a coherent defense of the Christian faith, is an increasingly relevant area of academic study as our society drifts from its Christo-centric foundation. Authored by Jeffrey M. Robinson, *Persuasive Apologetics: The Art of Handling Tough Questions Without Pushing People Away*, is a popular level guide to this important topic.

Aside from a fine foreword written by Thom S. Rainer and a brief introduction, the book spans six chapters in length. While it is unnecessary to cover the minute

5 On this topic, see especially Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

6 A superb resource here is Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry, eds., *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

7 There are many solid introductions to the field of hermeneutics available. For text and canon, consider the excellent, recent work by John D. Meade and Peter J. Gurry, *Scribes and Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022).

details of every chapter, a brief overview remains in order. In chapter 1, *Call of Duty (Not the Video Game)*, Robinson asserts that we are to engage in apologetics “because of the gospel’s eternal ramifications ... because it glorifies God” (24) and because it is “quite simply obeying God’s directive” (26). As the author lays out how Christianity alone is able to furnish the ability to understand the complexities of the world in which we live, drawing, in particular, on the noteworthy contributions of Francis Schaeffer (among other), Robinson maintains: “If the God of the Bible exists, then Christianity provides a helpful grasp not only of how the world came to be but also of the character of the one who brought it into existence” (27).

Chapter 2, “Loving People Well—Worldview Presuppositions,” notes well the place of presuppositions. Robinson explains: “If a worldview is the lens through which we see the world, then presuppositions are the granular data that forms the foundation.... Presuppositions are simply assumed” (40). Elsewhere, Robinson cheekily opines: “Nobody is as blind to biases as those who think they have none” (44). In this way, Robinson demonstrates some of the power of the presuppositional method. Much to the chagrin of most presuppositionalists, however, more work could be done in assuring readers that Scripture alone is the absolute standard by which we are able to see and understand reality, since human subjectivity is an extremely poor measure of discerning how to clear out the “intellectual cobwebs” (47).

In a similar way, while chapter 3, “Apologetics Tactics” is a reasonable discussion of various approaches to apologetics such as evidentialism, classical apologetics, reformed epistemology, presuppositionalism, etc., he fails to ground these methods within an overarching framework that starts with the authority of Scripture. One notes that Robinson argues for a kind of ‘eclecticism’ with which I take no issue.

In terms of practical application, chapter 4, “Undercutting Defeaters,” is easily the most helpful for Christians doing street-level evangelism and the like being, perhaps, worth the price of the book alone. To be clear, this chapter involves Robinson offering some typical objections to Christianity (e.g., Christianity is irrational; there are too many hypocrites in the church) and offers succinct, cogent answers to each example objection (108–112). The strongest part of this chapter is where it shows how Christ Himself not only answers objections but uses the momentum of His opponents against them (97, 98). Naturally, in a book this size, space will not permit a comprehensive rebuttal on every point, but the author does a good enough job in each case to give the reader a ‘feel’ for how to handle such objections.

Chapter 5, “The Historical Jesus and the Competition,” contrasts the historical Krishna (126), Buddha (127), Muhammad (129), and Jesus (130). Herein

Robinson does a good job of showing the objective and historical claims of Christianity in contrast to the relative indifference toward history shown by the “eastern mystery” religions, and the lack of supporting historical case for Islam (130). The historicity of Jesus is also well attested to, and the author correctly points out that the scales of skepticism are often tipped against Christianity, i.e., a hermeneutics of suspicion versus a hermeneutics of charity, since many (unbelieving) scholars are (relatively speaking) much more eager to accept as “truth” not a few persons and events that are attested to by much weaker evidence (131).

The concluding (sixth) chapter, “Jesus and Hope,” ends on a sound theological note. Robinson states: “If God exists, then all truth is ultimately his truth. Find common ground and start there. That’s what persuasive apologetics is all about. Leverage what you need to leverage and do what you can with what you have. However, the destination never changes. Repentance from sin and faith in Christ – to the glory of God – are the goal” (139). Amen (and amen!).

Textbook wise, there is much to commend here. Robinson is readable, accessible, and (overall) quite enjoyable. I appreciated his pastoral heart (and pedagogical sensitivities). It is also clear that Robinson loves the Scriptures. Many students will benefit from reading this work. Its brevity (and thorough but not exhaustive level of documentation) is also easy to appreciate.

That said, however, the greatest weakness of the book is that it fell short of offering the kind of greater apologetic confidence that Scripture can provide. Many people are coming of age at a time of great upheaval and turmoil where even basic truths of objective reality are being assaulted. It is my contention that this cultural milieu and society-wide confusion offer wonderful, unique opportunities for both epistemological certainty and a coherent worldview that can encompass all reality. The Triune God of Scripture alone furnishes this worldview, and Robinson’s *Persuasive Apologetics* would have been strengthened by leaning in more heavily to this concept.

At the risk of belaboring things, while Robinson clearly acknowledges the existence of presuppositions and the importance of a Christian worldview and while he certainly regards Scripture as his own personal authority, he fails (in my view at least) to fully connect the final and certain character of Scripture to the task of apologetics. In brief, Robinson inadequately shows Scripture’s authoritative nature over *all spheres and all disciplines*, including unbelievers themselves (cf. Prov 1:9; 9:10; Matt 28:18; 2 Cor 10:4–6). I found this extremely disappointing.

Despite these infelicities, there remains much to commend in this slim text. While I believe it would appeal to all forms of curious people, whether they have grown up in the Christian faith or not, its most likely audience will be Bible

College/Christian University and Seminary students alongside, one hopes, interested laypeople and Christian ministry leaders.

Matthew F. Plett
Millar College of the Bible

Miles V. Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Aramaic: Complete Grammar, Lexicon, and Annotated Text*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023. Pp. xv + 236. ISBN: 978-0-310-14112-8. \$70.29 (CDN) \$34.49 (USD) paper.

Less than 2% of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT) is written in Aramaic. To be clear, this includes Genesis 31:47 (two words), Jeremiah 10:11, Daniel 2:4b–7:28, and Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26. Given that some Scriptures, such as Psalms 2:12 and Proverbs 31:2, for instance, are heavily debated within HB/OT scholarship, this amounts to about 269 verses *in toto*. While significantly less—both numerically and proportionally—than either of the other two biblical languages, namely Hebrew and Greek, this small portion of the HB/OT is roughly equivalent to the combined texts of Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Psalm 1. With respect to the New Testament (which in and of itself also contains a notable amount of Aramaic), this would be roughly equivalent to the book of Philemon and the Pastoral Epistles. Miles V. Van Pelt poignantly underscores the significance of these statistics, stating (xi): “Certainly none of us would want to be without the required skills to faithfully interpret these portions of the biblical text . . . Faithfulness in the littlest thing is no little thing (Luke 16:10a).”

Historically, when *Basics of Biblical Aramaic* was first published (Zondervan, 2011) there was something of a ‘poverty of choice’ concerning accessible resources. While Greenspahn (Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) and John’s brief grammar (Andrews University Press, 1972) were both widely used, the former was sometimes viewed with suspicion by the more ‘conservative’ audience while the latter was recognized as being somewhat ‘long in the tooth.’ In contrast, the 7th ed. of Rosenthal (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006) continued to be widely respected as an ‘S Tier’ resource. Within this context, Van Pelt’s initial contribution, while not without its critiques, filled a not insignificant gap within confessional, evangelical scholarship.¹

Much has changed, though, in the last decade or so. For example, Andreas Schuele’s *An Introduction to Biblical Aramaic* (Louisville: Westminster John

¹ Compare the following notes and reviews written by Daniel R. Watson, *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 1 (2012), 103–05; Hywel Clifford, *JSOT* 42.5 (2018), 259–60; and Andrew W. Litke (Academia.edu). For even more details, see ‘Daily Dose of Aramaic’ alongside the following (simply exquisite—bar none!) website: <https://truthonlybible.com/2018/09/29/resources-for-biblical-aramaic/> by Steven Anderson (Ph.D. Dallas Seminary). See too his superb interview with Scott Callaham (from DDA) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFvpYff1bc>

Knox, 2012) is especially notable for its accessibility. In addition to its ease of entry, Schuele's fantastic appendices include non-biblical Aramaic texts—such as the Zakkur Inscription, Qumran fragments, and sayings from The Wisdom of Ahiqar. Other helpful additions, such as compilations of Persian and Greek loanwords, 'Idiomatic Expressions,' and a comparative Hebrew-Aramaic word list, make Schuele's grammar uniquely valuable—and, in my opinion, worth the price of the book alone!

Takamitsu Muraoka's *A Biblical Aramaic Reader: With an Outline Grammar*, 2nd revised ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 2020) has firmly established itself as being something of a modern Rosenthal with respect to reference purposes.² Scott N. Callaham's *Biblical Aramaic for Biblical Interpreters: A Parallel Hebrew-Aramaic Handbook* (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2021) is unquestionably the best resource available for learning biblical Aramaic via the biblical Hebrew 'contrast/comparison' method.³ Additionally, Andrew E. Steinmann's *Fundamental Biblical Aramaic*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2022) deserves special mention. Of course, Edward Cook's *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) has set a new standard for reference grammars.⁴ Meanwhile, Benjamin E. Noonan has given students (and scholars!) a particularly valuable resource with *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020).⁵ Finally, Holger Gzella's contributions—including *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 16 – Aramaic) and *Aramaic: A History of the First World Language* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021) remains *sui generis*.⁶ In short, we now face an embarrassment of riches and are "spoiled for choice" with resources.⁷

Given these developments, where does Van Pelt's second edition fit? Prior to elaborating on some of these matters (including the not insignificant but still relatively minor differences between the text's first and second editions), it remains prudent to give a general overview.

2 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Muraoka within *Canadian-American Theological Review* (forthcoming).

3 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Callaham within *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 29 (2024), 122–24.

4 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Cook within *Canadian-American Theological Review* 12 (2023), 97–102.

5 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Noonan within *Journal of Language, Culture, and Religion* 5 (2024), 81–84.

6 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Gzella within *Studies in Religion* 52 (2023) 625–26 alongside my Logos article "The Lexicon Landscape: A Critical Survey of Hebrew & Aramaic Dictionaries [and Resources]" (forthcoming).

7 John F. Evans *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works* 11th ed. (Zondervan, 2025), 528.

Aside from the basic front matter, i.e., preface, acknowledgments, abbreviations, introduction, and additional resources (more on this later) *Basics of Biblical Aramaic* (BBA) is comprised of 22 chapters with seven major sections: (1) Aramaic Phonological System, (2) Aramaic Nominal System, (3) Aramaic Verbal System: Peel, (4) Aramaic Verbal System: Derived Stems, (5) Charts and Paradigms, (6) Annotated Biblical Aramaic Text, and, finally, (7) an Aramaic-English Lexicon containing all of the biblical Aramaic words (derived from *HALOT*).

Those familiar with Gary Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt's exceptionally popular *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, 3rd ed. (Zondervan, 2019) will recognize substantial overlap between the two. The most significant (but also most welcome!) update is the inclusion of red font to highlight key aspects of phonology, morphology, and syntax. This addition greatly enhances both teaching and learning while creating a much clearer correlation with the PowerPoint lectures employed within the *Basics of Biblical Aramaic Video Lectures* (also provided by Zondervan). This second edition is also a "higher quality printing than the first edition, with stronger, whiter pages."⁸ Some other refinements include (see p. x): the addition of an annotated list of important Aramaic resources that appeared since the first edition's publication (more on this later), certain small changes concerning nomenclature and the labelling of the verbal stems (see especially 78), the reordering of pronominal suffixes and personal pronouns (§8.2, 4; §9.2) in order to correspond with the presentation of the so-called 'Perfect' and 'Imperfect' conjugations in the categories of person, gender, and number, an improved correspondence between the definitions appearing in the lexicon and the vocabulary sections throughout the grammar. Lastly, all proper nouns in the grammar's exercise now appear in a gray font for ease of use (a fantastic touch!). One will also note how Van Pelt sometimes changed the word "literally" for "woodenly" in the Annotated Reading Section(s) with respect to translation (see, for instance, 191–92).

To critique, those familiar with the original edition of *Basics of Biblical Aramaic* will recognize both its strengths, namely its exceptional pedagogical sensitivity and its thorough, clear chrestomathy for effectively reading all the texts associated with biblical Aramaic, and its limitations, including the sheer number of chapters/exercises and certain linguistic insensitivities.

One also wonders why Van Pelt has overlooked Vogt's *Biblical Aramaic* (Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011) and digital lexicons like the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*, or why he omits any references to commentaries. Even so, I am convinced that Van Pelt's work remains one of the most accessible resources for learning to read biblical Aramaic with fluency. As such, the second edition (with the new red ink and significantly higher quality printing) is a solid step forward

8 This wording comes from *Resources for Biblical Aramaic* by Steven Anderson from the following website: <https://truthonlybible.com/2018/09/29/resources-for-biblical-aramaic/>

(and an invaluable contribution to Aramaic studies *in toto*) even if it is not without some flaws.

Of course, no single tool/workbook is sufficient on its own. Students would benefit from consulting multiple grammars (and other reference works) and instructors will likely need to supplement Van Pelt with other resources to provide a more comprehensive, balanced approach.

Its primary users will likely be Bible College/Christian University and Seminary students.

Dustin G. Burlet
Millar College of the Bible