

Book Reviews

Paul and His Letters. By John B. Polhill. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999, vii + 485 pp., \$29.99.

John B. Polhill has provided students of the New Testament with a brilliantly researched and highly readable volume on the life and letters of Christianity's great apostle. Building on the widely used work of F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, and his own outstanding exegetical commentary on the Book of Acts in the *New American Commentary* series, Polhill has given us a comprehensive treatment of the Pauline materials. There is no question that this new volume will serve as a standard textbook and resource for years to come.

The author makes clear that he is not writing a "life of Paul." At the same time, the book is laid out chronologically, following the order of the events and travels of the apostle as they are presented in the Book of Acts. Given the disjunction between Paul and Luke often proposed by contemporary Pauline scholars, Polhill's coherent work is a welcomed contribution to the field of New Testament studies.

Polhill is at his best in the early chapters as he surveys the background material behind the life and thought of the apostle Paul. As a citizen of two cities, the apostle's background in Tarsus and Rome is ably portrayed. Next the reader is introduced to the significance of Paul the Jew, Paul the Pharisee, and Paul the Persecutor. By correlating the Pauline materials with the Book of Acts, Polhill sketches the events surrounding Paul's conversion followed by a proposed

(rather traditional) chronology. The apostle's conversion is dated at 32 A.D. and the first missionary journey from 45/46-47/48, with the "silent years" falling in between this period. The second mission is dated from 48-52 and the third mission from 53-57. The Caesarean imprisonment is identified during the years of 57-59, the house arrest in Rome from 60-62, and Paul's martyrdom prior to 68 (see pp. 78-80).

In dealing with the hotly debated Pauline issues, Polhill adopts a "north Galatian" setting for the Epistle to the Galatians (*contra* F. F. Bruce's strong case for south Galatia). Polhill defends the integrity of the Thessalonian letters, dating both early in Paul's ministry. Contrary to the traditional position of placing Paul in Rome (60-62) for the writing of Philipians, Polhill leans toward an Ephesian imprisonment (52-55). Capably discussing the issues surrounding the Corinthian correspondence, Polhill is especially helpful in dealing with the challenges of 2 Corinthians. He presents Ephesians as a circular letter from the apostle to the churches of Asia Minor. This feature plus the doxological language explain the "non-personal" nature of this majestic letter.

Polhill defends the Pauline authorship of the disputed letters: 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles. His arguments are cogent and persuasive, taking seriously the issues of style, setting, content, and the role of an amanuensis. Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians are placed in Paul's Caesarean imprisonment. The comparisons and contrasts between 1 Timothy and Titus will

be extremely valuable for beginning students. The second letter to Timothy and the tradition surrounding Paul's martyrdom conclude the work.

Key issues in contemporary Pauline studies such as the nature of Rabbinic Judaism during this time period, Paul's meaning of law, covenant, and justification/righteousness are thoughtfully presented for the reader. Beginning students are introduced to the more recent proposals of Beker, Dunn, Sanders, Cranfield, Stuhlmacher, Käsemann, Betz, Wright, and others. Polhill is fair and balanced in his treatment of others, carefully demonstrating the strengths of positions he rejects. The treatment of many of these issues is especially prominent in Polhill's discussion of Romans and Galatians.

Every letter is presented with appropriate background material, and a summary of the letter built on Polhill's own outlines. The theme and arguments of each letter are laid out for all to understand. Each discussion is carefully documented demonstrating Polhill's interaction with a wide variety of Pauline scholars. Each chapter concludes with a list of sources for further study including Polhill's choices of the finest commentaries available on the Greek and English text. Obviously written with the student in mind, the book accomplishes its purpose. It is one of the finest textbooks ever published by Broadman and Holman and deserves wide usage (I hope the Broadman & Holman marketing people can get the good word out on this outstanding book).

The shortcomings of the book are few. One could wish for a stronger theological treatment of the letters or of Paul's theology overall, but the fact that Polhill primarily sees Paul as the early church's

great missionary rather than a great theologian may explain this shortcoming (see pp. 440-442). Of course, any serious Pauline student can pick areas where he or she will disagree with some of Polhill's conclusions, but the overall treatment of the life and letters of Paul in this volume is nothing less than outstanding. The work of thirty years of teaching New Testament provides a gold mine for interested readers. I know of no better textbook on this subject for beginning students. I hope the book is also discovered by pastors, for it provides a wealth of information that could enrich preaching week after week in the churches. Certainly, John Polhill is to be heartily congratulated on this significant achievement.

David S. Dockery
Union University

1, 2, 3 John. The New American Commentary, vol. 38. By Daniel L. Akin. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001, 296 pp., \$29.99.

Daniel Akin is Dean of the School of Theology and Vice President for Academic Administration at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His volume on the Johannine epistles is a welcome addition to the New American Commentary series. It is particularly successful in fulfilling the purpose of that series to combine the best contemporary scholarship with a practical application to the life of the church.

Akin provides commentaries on all three epistles with a separate introduction to each. The introduction to 1 John covers 28 pages of which 8 are devoted to the

questions of authorship and place of writing. Akin argues strongly for the apostle John as the author of all three epistles as well as the Fourth Gospel. Typical of his approach throughout the commentary, he presents all viewpoints on the issue in a fair, balanced manner and provides extensive footnotes. The footnotes are one of the most valuable components of the commentary, giving in detail the fine points of issues and pointing the reader to the most valuable bibliography for further research. Akin covers the major literature on the epistles, regularly citing the main commentaries and significant articles. He includes the gamut of scholarship but always makes his own position clear.

Four pages of the introduction to 1 John are devoted to the occasion and purpose of the epistle, which Akin sees as the threat of false teachers who have departed from the Johannine congregations and who espoused a docetic Christology akin to that of Cerinthus. His fullest treatment of the heresy is found in the commentary itself in the relevant passages of 1 and 2 John.

Akin's background as a teacher of Systematic Theology is apparent in the introduction's brief summaries of the major theological themes in the epistle—the doctrines of God, sin, Christ, Holy Spirit, salvation and eschatology.

By far the most extensive treatment in the introduction—nearly half—is devoted to the structure of 1 John. Akin provides an excellent summary of the main approaches and the scholars who represent them, providing detailed outlines. Akin has obviously wrestled with the question of the epistle's structure, done extensive research and given as able a summary of scholarship on the question as is to be found anywhere. His own

conclusion is perhaps best summarized on page 113: "Perhaps John never intended for scholars to outline his epistle nicely and neatly." His own choice is to divide the epistle into two main sections: God is Light (1:5-3:10) and God is Love (3:11-5:122). He admits much overlap between the two divisions.

Akin's commentary is thorough. He covers all the major exegetical issues, giving particular attention to the more problematic passages. For example, he treats in some detail the tension between the statements that the one who claims to have no sin is deceiving himself (1:8-10) and the equally strong statement that no one who sins truly abides in God (3:5-6). Akin deals with this by giving attention to the original setting in the false theology of the heretics and by noting the present tense of the latter statement: no one who truly belongs to God lives a sinful lifestyle. This is a good example of Akin's careful attention to the Greek text throughout the commentary. He often refers to the Greek but always in a clear manner, which should not distract the reader who is unfamiliar with the language.

Akin treats the issue of the atonement at some length. In particular, he deals with the meaning of *hilasmos* in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. He argues convincingly that one must not eliminate the concept of propitiation from these passages as has been done by Dodd in his insistence on translating the word group as "expiation." Akin provides a very helpful excursus on this issue (pp. 253-65).

At the beginning of his first major division of the epistle, "God is Light" (1 John 1:5-3:10), Akin includes helpful excurses on the theme of light in both the Johannine Gospel and first epistle. He

ably demonstrates his own conviction that the Gospel and epistle are by the same author, showing how an examination of the Gospel's treatment of light greatly enhances one's understanding of this motif in the epistle.

Akin insists on understanding the epistles in their original context. A good example of this is his relating John's references to "Anti-Christ" to the false teachers who went out from John's churches. A succinct excursus on the concept of Anti-Christ is provided on pages 267-70.

Akin's commentary is particularly valuable for its discussion of major theological issues raised by the text. For example, he treats the issue of the limitations of Christ's atoning sacrifice as raised by 1 John 4:15. He concludes that "the atonement of Christ is unlimited in its provision (the world) and limited in its application (applied only to those who have faith)" [p. 183, fn. 129]. In connection with the "sin unto death" of 1 John 5:16-17, he demonstrates that this cannot refer to apostasy. After discussing the main suggestions of scholars as to what constitutes this "mortal sin," he concludes it likely refers to one's total rejection of the gospel. Examples of the theological insight provided by Akin could be multiplied. One of his commentary's greatest contributions is that it incorporates the skills of one who is both an informed theologian and an able exegete.

As one who sometimes teaches textual criticism, I would be remiss not to note Akin's fine discussion of the infamous *Comma Johannaicum*, the reference to the Trinity found in the *Textus Receptus* at 1 John 5:7-8, but not included in almost all of the Greek manuscripts and consequently not in most modern versions.

Akin argues against the originality of the disputed lines. He presents the issues clearly and reasonably in an excursus (pp. 198-200), in which he demonstrates in a manner anyone should be able to understand that the issue is not a theological but a textual one.

Akin provides a very thorough commentary for both 2 and 3 John, devoting nearly 20 pages to each of the single-chapter books. He sees 2 John as being written to a single congregation which was being threatened by the same docetic heresy as the congregations of 1 John. The most problematic passage in the epistle is verse 10, where John directs the congregation not to greet or receive the heretics into their homes. The author provides a very helpful appendix, which offers a practical approach to dealing with contemporary sectarian proselytizers who come to one's front door. For 3 John, Akin gives particular attention to Diotrephes, outlining the various scholarly views as to what lay behind his conflict with the elder. A final appendix provides twenty expository sermon outlines, which cover the whole of 1 John. Following the usual NAC format, the commentary concludes with a bibliography and subject, person, and Scripture indexes. The bibliography provides rather comprehensive coverage of the commentaries, monographs, and articles on the Johannine epistles for the past 20 years, as well as a number of significant earlier works. It reflects the depth of Akin's research.

When I first prepared the Johannine epistles for a January Bible Study some thirty years ago, commentary and research sources were limited. The situation has changed radically in the past decade or so, as Akin's bibliography reflects. One now has a wide choice

among the many available commentaries on the epistles. I recommend Akin's commentary as one of the very first choices. It provides a thorough overview of the major scholarship on the epistles, a clear presentation of the significant exegetical issues, an equally cogent discussion of the main theological issues raised by the text, and an able application of the message of the epistles to the life of the contemporary church and individual believer.

John Polhill

The Baptist Reformation. By Jerry Sutton. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000, 542 pp., \$29.99.

The "Conservative Resurgence" within the Southern Baptist Convention was launched in 1979 with the election of Adrian Rogers in Houston, Texas as President. By the year 2000 the movement was solidified with inerrantists leading every denominational agency and institution, and with the overwhelming adoption of the revised *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Baptist moderates have drained many an ink well with book after book giving their perspective on what they call the "Fundamentalist Takeover." Conservatives had been slow to write about the controversy, with only Jim Hefley's *Truth In Crisis* series (5 volumes) telling the story as they saw it. That situation, however, has now changed. If you would like an autobiographical viewpoint of the past 20 plus years, pick up Paul Pressler's *A Hill On Which to Die* (Broadman & Holman, 1999). It is fascinating and provocative. If, on the other hand, you are looking for a history that meticulously details and documents blow by blow the key personalities and

events of the Conservative Resurgence, Jerry Sutton has written just the book for you. It is my hope that this book will sell well and circulate widely for years to come. If it does, future generations may avoid the mistakes of the past, which made the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention necessary. College and seminary classes on Baptist History will neglect this book only at a great loss to the students who need to know *what* happened and *why* it happened.

Sutton's book is well researched and is written by one who often had a ringside seat at the events he describes. The root causes of the conflict are carefully uncovered, dealt with honestly, and interpreted fairly. Unlike most moderate missives, Sutton acknowledges his colors from the beginning. He is a theological conservative and he judges what happened from this vantage point. In my judgment this honest admission enhances the treatment of the history. Facts and perspectives are easily discerned and kept separate.

The book is comprised of four sections with twenty-three chapters. It is endnoted and indexed. A bibliography is not included, though its addition would have been helpful. The book begins by noting "the way things were" (Part I) and why theological erosion and institutional bureaucracy made the Conservative Resurgence necessary. The Resurgence at its heart was a return to our historic roots and a back to the Bible movement.

Part II catalogues "the way the convention changed." Here Sutton examines each president of the SBC from Adrian Rogers (1979) to Paige Patterson (2000), and captures the high points of their terms and the seismic shifts that began to take place. Insightful vignettes of the main characters of the movement and an

eye for detail in the context of the larger picture makes this an especially important and interesting section.

Part III provides a blow by blow analysis of the changes that took place in the institutions and agencies of the SBC. The radical transformations which took place, for example, at Southeastern and Southern Seminaries were things I personally witnessed with my own eyes (I served at Southeastern from 1992–1996 and at Southern from 1996 to the present), and Sutton’s treatment of both are right on target. I am often asked if both institutions were as bad off theologically as I was led to believe and my ready answer for both is the same, “No, it was much worse!” Ma and Pa Baptist, had they known what was being taught, would not have called for a Reformation. They would have declared war.

Part IV provides Sutton’s analysis and interpretation. The crucial issues of biblical authority, the nature of salvation, and the priesthood of believers receive careful attention. Sutton’s study of the Peace Committee proceedings is superb, and here we learn things previously not covered in print anywhere else to my knowledge. The book concludes with Southern Baptists’ search for their identity and what the future may hold.

There are a couple of areas where a word of critique is in order. As a student at Southwestern Seminary from 1980–1983, I found Sutton’s evaluation of her condition too favorable. Things were not as healthy as he indicates. I had professors who questioned Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the unity of Isaiah, the integrity of Daniel, the accuracy of Paul, and miracles in the Bible. They affirmed women as pastors and at best, shied away from confessing a personal commitment

to biblical inerrancy. In addition, some sections of the book do not flow smoothly and on occasions, Sutton assumes a contextual awareness of an issue he is discussing that I am not sure most Baptists have (for example, the Burnett Case, p 287, 297ff). There is also some unnecessary repetition, overuse of certain terms and phrases, and too many typos. A better proofing of the final manuscript should have been done on such a crucially important work.

These minor criticisms noted, Southern Baptists owe Jerry Sutton an enormous debt of gratitude. With the mind of a scholar (Ph.D. in Church History) and the heart of a pastor (Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, TN), Sutton helps us understand better the miraculous and unprecedented theological turnaround that took place in the Southern Baptist Convention. His account is accurate and it indeed provides, as Paige Patterson well said, “the rest of the story.”

Daniel L. Akin

The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity. By James S. Jeffers. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999, 352 pp., \$19.99 paper.

What did a city in the ancient world smell like? How were ancient cities organized? What was it like to live in an apartment in an urban area? How did the rich live and how did their lives differ from the poor? What was the role of women in various geographical settings in the first century? The answer to these questions and many more can be found in this book. The relevant material set forth here would help

one have a much better understanding of the world of Jesus and the early church. Each chapter is replete with examples from the New Testament illustrating their relevance for a more thoughtful understanding of the Bible. The reader of this book will find Biblical narratives come alive. The author is an expert in both Roman history and early Christianity and writes from the perspective of an evangelical Christian.

The author divides the book into thirteen chapters. A cursory survey of chapter two can illustrate the valuable information contained in the book. Chapter two is entitled "Life & Death in the First Century." In this chapter Jeffers gives the reader an idea of what it must have been like to live in the first century, both in a Mediterranean setting as well as in a Greco-Roman setting. He describes how people in the first-century worked, what they did for recreation, how they traveled, what they ate, what they wore, and how they cared for their deceased.

A brief comment on the other chapters will allow one to see the breadth of information the author has brought together in one volume. The first chapter introduces the reader to the cultural and political atmosphere in first-century Jerusalem via a fictional dinner party. Chapter three describes city life in the Greco-Roman world and its impact on the church. While most people in the ancient world lived in the countryside, Paul planted many of his churches in influential cities. The fourth chapter examines how the early believers organized themselves and how other organizational structures in the cities might have influenced them. Jeffers, in chapter five, surveys various religious systems of the ancient world and he examines Rome's

attitude toward religion. Chapters six and seven explore how Rome ruled its massive empire. Topics in these chapters include Roman governance of its provinces, the collection of taxes, its legal system, and military. Chapters eight through eleven explain the social order of the first-century world and how these issues affected believers. The final chapter sets forth the structure of the family including the role of women and education in the ancient world. The author concluded the book with two appendixes. The first is a twenty-eight page summary of Greco-Roman history and the second is a chronology of events from 50 B.C. to A. D. 90.

The book contains a few minor errors. For example, Jeffers refers to 1 Corinthians 7:34-36 as Paul's admonition on the silencing of the women in church; instead it is found in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (p.252). He also attributes Luke's commendation to the Bereans in Acts 17:11 to the Thessalonians (p.257). Nevertheless, despite these minor errors and a few questionable biblical interpretations, the book provides a wealth of insight into the first century world. If you are interested in a book that provides a lucid, straightforward portrayal of life during the days of Jesus and the apostles you will want to read this book.

Bill Cook

The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text. NIGTC. By G. K. Beale. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, lxiv + 1,245 pp., \$75.00.

G. K. Beale is Kenneth T. Wessner Chair of Biblical Studies, Wheaton College Graduate School. This commentary is a worthy addition to the outstanding series,

The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Beale has published extensively, frequently in the area of the use of the Old Testament in the New, particularly with reference to Revelation. He was guided in this area of study by his first doctoral supervisor at Cambridge, Barnabas Lindars.

The 175 page introduction and the 37 page bibliography are sufficient to guide one in a comprehensive study of Revelation, but the book offers much more besides. The introduction focuses on those issues applicable to interpretation of the content, such as date and occasion, structure, argumentation, and the use of the Old Testament in Revelation. Less attention is given to canonicity, authorship, genre, destination, source criticism, rhetorical criticism, and similar concerns, since these are less important for his rigorous, inductive, historical-exegetical approach. Beyond these, important introductory concerns addressed include symbolism, grammar, text-critical matters, major interpretive approaches to Revelation, and the theology of Revelation. The concise explanation of the textual history of Revelation is especially well done.

The heart of the commentary is verse-by-verse exegesis, but there is a conscious effort to follow the thought within paragraphs and from paragraph to paragraph. Main points of paragraphs and longer sections are summarized. Special attention is paid to Jewish interpretation and exegesis of Old Testament passages alluded to in Revelation and the influence of their Jewish usage on Revelation. A prominent feature is that within major divisions and smaller sections are articles of various length pertinent to the interpretation of the section. For instance, within the major division, "12:1-15:4: Deeper Con-

flict," the following articles appear: "The End-Time Exodus against the Background of the First Exodus," "The Desert as a Place of Both Trial and Protection," "The Background of the 'Three and a Half Year' Period," "The 'Place' of Refuge in the Desert as the Spiritual Sanctuary," "How Christ's Redemptive Work Resulted in Satan's Expulsion from Heaven," and "The Jewish Legal Background of Satan as an Accuser and Its Relation to 12:10." Segregated from the exegesis, these articles stand alone and add much to the commentary. The Greek text is treated carefully and fully. Beale provides English translation of most Greek words, so that readers limited to English can follow the argument and benefit from the exegesis.

In Beale's treatment of the interpretive approaches to Revelation, the fifteen or so historic approaches have been reduced to four, plus his own proposal. Seven might be more accurate, but each of the four, as categorized by Beale, are briefly but fairly presented. If his subcategories were divided, the number would be larger. His categories are Preterist, Historicist, Futurist, and Idealist. The Preterist view he divided into two forms. The first sees the book as a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The second sees Revelation as prophecy of the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century AD. Weaknesses include limiting the book's relevance to the first or early centuries of Church history and limiting judgment to Israel. The Historicist view has many versions, with interpreters in each era seeing fulfillment of the book's predictions related to their own times. Numerous examples of this type of interpretation occurred throughout church history. Beale suggests that historical over-specification and an absence of relevance to the first century

are major weaknesses.

The futurist view is divided into dispensational futurism and a modified futurism. The elements of dispensational premillennialism are so well known as to not need explanation here. Modified futurism does not hold as firmly to a chronological sequence of the prophecies of Revelation, sees the church as the true Israel, and does not hold to a pretribulation rapture. Weaknesses include reduced relevance to the first century and not identifying the events of Revelation with final judgment or with any historical events. The idealist view presents Revelation as a symbolic portrayal of the conflict between God and Satan, good and evil.

Beale advocated what he called an “Eclecticism,” or a “Redemptive-Historical Form of Modified Idealism.” He acknowledged a final salvific consummation, with judgment.

No other historical events are seen beyond the final coming of Christ to deliver His people, to judge, and to set up his kingdom. But there are a few exceptions. Symbolic portrayals of historical events demonstrate the sovereignty of the Lamb and his guidance of the events that will unfold before the end. Some events may be depicted by one narrative or symbol. Taking the historicist practice of identifying specific historical events, Beale denied that the identification could be limited to one historical reality. Rather, multiple identifications are possible. He affirms that there are prophecies of the future in Revelation, but suggested that careful exegesis would recognize past, present, and future relevance. The closest interpretive frameworks to his are those of Caird, Johnson, Sweet, and especially Hendriksen and Wilcock.

The editors stated that the design of the

series is “something less technical than a full-scale critical commentary,” but it is difficult to see any deficiencies in that regard with this volume. They further state that these volumes are intended to interact with current scholarship and make a scholarly contribution to New Testament study. This work admirably succeeds in both these regards, treating all important problems of history, exegesis, and interpretation rising from the text. Beale said that his book took seven years to write, and another year to edit and update. The care he took in the preparation of this volume is obvious.

Beale’s personal goals were: to study carefully the Old Testament allusions and their significance; to study Jewish exegetical use of the Old Testament allusions and how Jewish interpretation related to their use in Revelation; to trace precisely the exegetical argument in Revelation; and to interact with the vast amount of secondary literature of the last several decades. These are ambitious goals, but he met his objectives effectively.

The commentary clearly advocates and develops a particular interpretive approach to Revelation, which many readers may not accept. The careful exegesis and thorough treatment of relevant matters, however, may be well used regardless of one’s own view of Revelation. Glowing recommendations of the book have come from important New Testament scholars and their statements are not undeserved. Beale’s commentary will take its place on the front line of recent Revelation scholarship. If careful study of Revelation is the objective, then Beale’s book should be acquired.

Charles W. Draper

Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. The Anchor Bible, vol. 18A. By Michael V. Fox. New York: Doubleday, 2000, 720 pp., \$42.50.

Michael V. Fox is a Jewish biblical scholar, who teaches in the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is well known for his work on Hebrew wisdom literature. This volume is the first of a two-volume commentary on Proverbs. The commentary is divided into a Preface, followed by five parts: Introduction, Translation and Commentary, Essays and Textual Notes on Proverbs 1-9, Textual Notes on Proverbs 1-9 (concerned with textual variants from the Masoretic Hebrew text, mostly LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate), and a Bibliography. Fox has produced an outstanding commentary and every serious reader of the book of Proverbs should have access to it. In a comment about the book, Roland E. Murphy, one of the foremost expositors of the wisdom literature, calls it a “stunning commentary” that “combines erudition with clarity, originality with the necessary dialogue with previous scholarship.” He adds that the essays on wisdom are “masterful, sweeping away past misunderstandings.” Perhaps these words are somewhat too exuberant (and highly pleasing to the publisher!), but this is an exciting piece of work.

Some features of the book seem especially appealing to me. The Introduction contains a very helpful survey and analysis of the words for wisdom (28-43). The reader of Proverbs needs to know these words and how they are used. The Introduction includes, of course, brief attention to matters of date and authorship. Proverbs is traditionally ascribed to Solomon, as in Proverbs 1:1, but the headers and

references in other parts of the book indicate that the book is “a sampling of the collective wisdom of ancient Israel” (6). The reader should note the headers in 10:1 and in 25:1, plus references to unknown “sages” in 22:17 and 24:23, along with the teaching of Agur (30:1) and the mother of Lemuel (31:1). The sayings in Proverbs date from various periods, but Fox agrees with most scholars that Proverbs 1-9 is a later part of the book, serving as a prologue to the rest of the collections, and likely dates from the Persian or early Hellenistic period. Precision in the dating of individual sayings is not possible, according to Fox.

The author is concerned at more than one place in the commentary with the disputes in current scholarship about the social setting of the book of Proverbs and the figure of Wisdom. He concludes that the book was drawn from different social groups and domains, but that “learned clerks” were “the membrane through which principles, sayings, and coinages, folk and otherwise, were filtered” (11). In the case of the personification of wisdom in the figure of Woman Wisdom, Fox forcefully rejects postulations of a setting in the post-exilic period of a breakdown of religion and faith, with the need for a more personal understanding of the presence of God (342-45). He contends that the idea that Yahweh had become less approachable in the postexilic period is the result of “the caricature common among nineteenth-century scholars” who thought of the Judaism of this period as “a cold legalistic formalism” (345). Fox’s point that there was no lack of intense feeling of the presence of God in the later period is well-taken, but he seems to me to take the socioeconomic situation of the exilic experience too lightly and never

seems to come to a satisfying explanation for the development of Wisdom. More attention to the continuing sense and experience of “exile” in the period after 587 BC would help. He also gives only limited attention to the significance of the feminine nature of Wisdom.

The content of Proverbs 1-9 is divided into what Fox calls the Ten Lectures, with five somewhat extensive Interludes. The Lectures are found in 1:8-19; 2:1-22; 3:1-12; 3:21-35; 4:1-9; 4:10-19; 4:20-27; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27. The Interludes are found in 1:20-33; 3:15-20; 6:1-19; 8:1-36; 9:1-18. For each Lecture and Interlude, Fox provides translation, commentary, discussion of the literary design, and other features, including attention to the message of each passage. Textual variations relating to each passage are found on pp. 360-423. Four essays deal with the following subjects: (1) The Formation of Proverbs 1-9, (2) The Origins of Personified Wisdom, (3) Wisdom in the Lectures, and (4) Wisdom in the Interludes (322-59).

In an important introductory note to essays 3 and 4 on page 346, Fox maintains that wisdom is a central theme throughout the book of Proverbs. Wise behavior is a major consideration, of course, but the book is “not only about doing, it is about knowing.” Wisdom is most clearly manifest in Proverbs 1-9, but Fox finds that it is pervasive throughout the book. Indeed, it is “so pervasive that it usually escapes notice.” Fox could have added here what he says about wisdom in the Ten Lectures (347-8). Wisdom cannot be reduced to a collection of precepts and sayings, but it is aimed at a higher goal of “wisdom as power.” The knowledge of wisdom precepts resides in the learner “as a potential and must be activated by God in order to become the power of wisdom, an

inner light that guides its possessor through life.” Wisdom is something to be both learned and loved with desire: “Wisdom is a configuration of soul, it is *moral character*” (348).

The feminine figure of Wisdom is a striking feature of the Interludes. Before coming directly to Fox’s treatment of that subject, I will pause to note his interpretation of the much debated *’amon* in 8:30a. He notes that there are three basic categories of explanation for this word: (1) artisan, (2) constantly, and (3) child/ward/nursling. His solution is to work within the third category and read the *’amon* as an infinitive absolute serving as an adverbial complement, and translates the line as “I was with him growing up.” He reads the next line as “and I was his delight by day,” supplying a “his” to the Hebrew text, as in the LXX and probably implicit in the Hebrew. This means that God, rather than Wisdom is the one who delights. In v. 31, Wisdom is “frolicking” before God and has delight in mankind (Fox takes the ambiguous “my delight” in v. 31b as the delight of Wisdom rather than the delight she gives to humans—God delights in Wisdom and Wisdom delights in humankind). Thus he thinks that the picture here is that of “a little child near her divine paternal guardian as he goes about his great work.” This does not allow for any role or function of Wisdom in creation (see also, p. 354). This may be correct, of course, but the concept of an artisan and co-worker with God does not exclude exuberance, delight and play. The idea that these qualities are restricted to children is obviously false. Furthermore, the strong presence in later traditions of the idea of an artisan or arranger should make one wary of detaching Wisdom from the divine work

of creation.

In understanding the figure of Lady Wisdom, Fox argues that the primary model is that of teacher, similar to that of father in the Ten Lectures (340). However, he wisely contends that no one model is adequate and that Lady Wisdom in reality is a new and independent literary figure, constructed from elements drawn from a variety of models. Lady Wisdom is treated as a “mythos” in the sense of Plato, meaning: “a narrative trope that serves as an explanatory paradigm in areas where literal discourse must be supplemented by poetic imagination” (352). The “mythos” requires decoding, and Fox takes his readers on a turbulent flight of reading through several tightly packed pages of discussion (353-59). If he never quite lands, it is to his credit, in keeping with the nature of the subject as mythos, and with the elusive nature of wisdom/Wisdom herself. Wisdom is greater than the total of all teachings and transcends all human efforts to grasp and hold her in a precise way. My difference with Fox is that he seems to restrict the function of Wisdom as the living presence of God, if he permits it at all. He concedes that she is “god-like,” but limits this to “a literary guise” (354). She is also “a child to God” (366) and has “angelic proximity to God” (359), but her activity is severely limited in the reading by Fox. Undoubtedly, she is a personification of the “actual teaching of human sages” (354), but this does not mean that she is totally other than God. I would prefer to see her as a literary construct whose primary referent is the actual presence of God in the world, apprehended through the teachings of the father, mothers, and sages.

The counterpart of Lady Wisdom is the Strange Woman found in Proverbs 2:16-

22; 5:1-23; 6:30-35; 7:1-27. This figure has been identified in six ways: (1) a foreign, secular harlot, (2) a foreign devotee of a foreign god, (3) a foreign goddess, (4) a social outsider, (5) a native prostitute, and (6) another man’s wife. Fox discusses all of these briefly, but he has no doubt the last one is correct. The Strange Woman is “a type-figure representing any seductive, adulterous woman” (434). He argues his conclusion through the passages with a fervor like that of a Puritan preacher denouncing the evil of adultery. Unlike the case of Lady Wisdom, he allows no “mythos” for the Strange Woman (although this is tempered slightly on page 253, with reference to 7:26-27). His argument seems too constrained to me, especially since he allows that Lady Folly in 9:13-18 has her human counterpart in the Strange Woman (302).

Fox writes in a direct, pithy, and contemporary style of English that his readers will enjoy. His remarks are sometimes pungent, but he is fair when dealing with viewpoints that differ from his own. His style has a clarity that is commendable, and his commentary is an exegetical treasure for which we can all be grateful, even if we may differ with him here and there.

Marvin E. Tate

The Mystery of Godliness and Other Sermons.
By John Calvin. Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999, 212 pp., \$12.99.

No one reads Calvin without benefit. This includes those who do not agree with him on every point of doctrine. This particular work was first published in 1830 by S. & D. A. Forbes and again in 1950 by Eerdmans. The book consists of 14 ser-

mons based on texts in the Pastoral Epistles, and they provide an excellent overview of Calvin's thought in sermonic form on crucial theological issues. A sampling of titles and texts include "The Doctrine of Election" (2 Tim 1:9-10); "The Word Our Only Rule" (Titus 1:15-16); "The Salvation of All Men" (1 Tim 2:3-5); "The Privilege of Prayer" (1 Tim 2:8); and "The Only Mediator" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). The clearness of Calvin's presentations and the cogency of his arguments continue to amaze generation after generation. These particular sermons are among his best, to my mind, and the challenge to honor God and pursue the lost both find a home in these messages. "Those who do not endeavor to bring their neighbors and unbelievers to the way of salvation plainly show they make no account of God's honor, and that they try to diminish the mighty power of His empire ... they likewise darken the virtue and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and lessen the dignity given Him by the Father" ("The Only Mediator," p. 200). This is but a small taste of the delightful delicacies one will find in these fine biblical expositions of the sacred Word. Would to God that more of Calvin's most devoted followers would show the same heart and balance as their hero.

Daniel L. Akin

The Prayer of Jabez. By Bruce Wilkinson. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 2000, 93 pp., \$9.99.

Should a minister, in particular, give a couple of hours to a 93-page book on an obscure prayer found in 1 Chronicles 4:10? You bet your ordination papers he should!

Why? Because nearly one million people in America have and the book has hovered near the top of numerous Bestsellers lists for months. If you want to know and be in touch with what the people in the pew are reading (this alone justifies competent familiarity with the *Left Behind* series), this is something of a no-brainer. Still, there are a couple of additional reasons a small time investment is prudent. First, the book has motivated people to read the Bible. Second, many have been encouraged to a greater devotion to prayer and a greater faith in God. At its best the book hearkens to themes seen, for example, in the writings and life of William Carey: "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." These are obviously good things concerning which we can rejoice and rejoice greatly.

However, the serious shepherd of souls should read *The Prayer of Jabez* because of some real and present dangers as well. What might these be? The book comes close to affirming an almost "magical view" of prayer. Pray the precise words of the prayer of Jabez and get blessed and have your territory enlarged. The appeal of a marketplace prosperity theology is too obvious to ignore and this may explain, in part, the phenomenal success of this little book. One cannot help but wonder why books on our Lord's model prayer (Matt 6:9-13) have never struck such a chord. Now to be fair, I do not think Bruce Wilkinson either holds to or would endorse a "claim it and get it" theology. Still, sections of the book can easily be read this way if one is not careful, and ministers need to be prepared to provide a balanced perspective concerning God's sovereign will, prayer and the Christian life. "It's only what you believe will happen and *therefore do next* that will

release God's power for you and bring about a life change. But when you act, you will step up to God's best for you" (p. 87), is one example of what I have in mind. This comes close to a blanket promise for blessing; does it not? How do we square this with those who suffer for Jesus, some to the point of martyrdom? If they had just prayed the prayer of Jabez, would it have been different? This is problematic biblically and theologically.

So, should we encourage the reading of the little Jabez book? I think so, though not without a warning label being attached. While desiring to break through to the "blessed life" is understandable, breaking through to the "obedient life" is preferable.

Daniel L. Akin

Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction. By Ilham Dilman. New York: Routledge, 1999, 273 pp., \$26.95 paper.

Ilham Dilman, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Wales, offers in this work a helpful and accessible introduction to the philosophical problems associated with human free will. Dilman dedicates a chapter each to surveying the contributions on the subject of free will from the perspective of a variety of thinkers: the classical approaches of Homer, Sophocles, Plato, and Aristotle; the Christian theological approaches of Augustine and Aquinas; the Enlightenment philosophical approaches of Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, and Schopenhauer; the psychological approach of Freud; the existentialist approaches of Sartre and Weil; and the linguistic approaches of Moore and

Wittgenstein.

There is a richness and depth in Dilman's writing that makes this work more than merely a flat historical survey. For example, the discussion includes not only the usual philosophical notions of free will and necessity and the scientific concept of causation, but also considers the bondage of the will to moral evil and compulsion. Dilman engages the views of these thinkers in an ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue of ideas from classical theology and philosophy as well as from literature and modern psychology. While Dilman never fully explains his own position in this historical survey, he does contribute his own evaluation throughout the book. The product is a thoughtful discussion that contributes not only to knowledge of the major issues involved, but also to wisdom for life. In particular, it reminds us that a life dragged down by what Simone Weil calls the "moral gravity" of self-centeredness is not freedom but bondage, and true freedom comes only through submission to the will of God.

This book raises issues that impact Christian theology in dialogue with the broader world of ideas. While some might be reluctant to hear such a diverse menagerie of ideas including many secular thinkers, the book raises important issues worth reflection. Recommended for the thoughtful reader.

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Chaplain to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Life in the Old South. By A. James Fuller. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Uni-

versity Press, 2000, xvi + 343 pp., \$49.95.

Basil Manly, Sr. (1798-1868) was one of the leading Southern Baptists of his day—pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston, co-founder of Furman University, president of the University of Alabama, co-founder of the Southern Baptist Convention, and co-founder of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, A. James Fuller, assistant professor of history at University of Indianapolis in Indiana, offers the first biographical narrative of Manly. Well-researched and carefully written, the biography succeeds as a narrative of Manly's life and the institutions with which Manly was associated.

However, Fuller's book fails to deliver more due to its lack of a thesis. Though Fuller appears to recognize his thesis-less approach in the introduction, where he notes that the book does not trace a "grand argument" from Manly's birth to death (3), he is unable to tie the different parts of his narrative together in any significant fashion. Instead, the reader is led through a forest of historical ideas which are pointed out as the narrative progresses—duty and honor, mastery and slavery, science and religion, revivalism and social control, mercy and judgment, republicanism and states' rights. None of these ideas stands out as a thesis that holds the narrative together. The result is a frustratingly disjointed narrative that careens from event to event without letting the reader know why the reported events are important to Manly's life story.

Moreover, the book reads more like a dissertation than a revised and mature discussion of the subject matter. For example, Fuller offers close textual studies of several of Manly's important

addresses as pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston; these discussions might have been profitably summarized in a single chapter rather than extending them over three. In addition, Fuller refers to the "Charleston style" in chapter three and five without disclosing what he means. It appears that the Charleston style was a southern ethic of honor and gentility that required Baptists to aspire to upward social mobility in order to take part in the city's social order, but this reader had to read between the lines in order to piece that together. This might work in a dissertation, but in a finished biography, it appears sloppy. Another example of this immaturity is the issue of Manly's move from South Carolina to Alabama. Fuller fails to place Manly's migration in the larger pattern of movement during the 1830s and 1840s, in which South Carolinians left for the Alabama frontier in droves. In particular, it would have been instructive to compare Manly with James Henry Hammond, later governor of South Carolina who nearly migrated to Alabama but decided to remain at home. Fuller simply fails to ask the questions that one would expect in a revised project.

Fuller also appears less than confident in dealing with theology and church polity. He identifies Manly as a General Baptist, a strict Calvinist, and a follower of Jonathan Edwards and Andrew Fuller (62-64)—three identifications that would appear to be mutually exclusive. While the Manly papers in the Southern Seminary Archives have several sermons that would assist in portraying Manly's theological position, Fuller spends a scant seven pages on Manly's theology. Surely Manly's theology was more influential than such limited treatment indicates; as

a “public man” who sanctified southern rights and social order, Manly’s theological concerns produced a public theology that undergirded public life in the South. With church polity issues, Fuller highlights Manly’s approach to church discipline as well as his role in the centralizing of Southern Baptist life in the creation of the SBC. However, this reader did not gain a sense of Manly as a pastor or the churches that he served. Short pages were devoted to Manly’s approach to pastoral issues while large sections were taken up with his promotion of revivalism. Perhaps if Fuller had investigated the church minutes books from the churches Manly served, he would have been able better to portray life under Pastor Manly.

What makes Fuller’s life of Manly frustrating is that there are wonderful, fairly recent examples of biographies with theses—one that comes to mind is Drew Gilpin Faust’s *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). Perhaps if Fuller had allowed his book to gestate a little longer, and if he had been prodded more by his editors, he would have been able to produce a first-rate biography of Manly, a historical figure who clearly deserves more. If one does not expect a “grand argument” from *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, then Fuller’s work serves as a useful, though flawed, introduction to this Southern Baptist founder.

Sean Michael Lucas

Mary—Another Redeemer? By James R. White. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998, 158 pp., \$9.99 paper.

The Catholic relationship to Protestantism is certainly a curious topic these days. Over the last half-century Rome has moved from viewing Protestants as apostates, to cousins, to “separated brethren,” whom she now wants to bring back into the fold. Many in the non-Catholic camp have interpreted these shifts as representing a fundamental moderation of some of the more distinctive (and anti-gospel) aspects of Roman Catholic theology. Growing up in a (Landmark) Baptist setting as a youngster, I was taught that the Catholic church was a false church with a false gospel, that it taught many heretical doctrines, such as purgatory, prayers to the saints, and some strange ideas about Mary, and that most if not all of its members were *lost*. In this day of “live and let live,” there has been a tendency in non-Catholic circles to assume that Catholics now are actually becoming more “protestant,” and that they are shedding some of the theological trappings of a bygone era. James White is here to tell us that, at least in regard to Mariology, nothing could be further from the truth. He relates how in a public debate with Catholic apologist Gerry Matatics, that his opponent noted that evangelicals are always asking, “Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?” Matatics then posed this to White, “Well, have you accepted Mary as your Mother?”

White’s introduction to this issue concerns the recent push for the Pope to authorize the doctrine of Mary as coredepress (or coredemptrix). In 1997, 4.5 million petitions from 155 countries were submitted to the pope, asking him to seek the official authorization of this doctrine. Among the petitioners were over 500 bishops, including forty-two cardinals (page 12). No official action has yet been

taken.

White spends most of his effort in the remainder of the book explicating, through Catholic primary sources (mostly official documents from Councils, papal bulls, and other official sources), and through the writings of various Catholic saints and theologians, the Catholic doctrine of Mary. Though I was fairly familiar with this material from previous research, there were a few quotes that raised my eyebrows.

Briefly, White shows not only that the Catholic Church considers Mary to have been perpetually virginal (29-34), immaculately conceived (and therefore completely sinless, 35-43), “assumed” into heaven without dying (51-55), and “venerated” (57-84), but also that official Catholic dogma has made even more extreme asseverations about Mary. They consider her, for instance, to be the “Spouse of the Spirit” or “Spouse of God” (11, 31, 77, 104, 114), and the Mediatrix of the redemptive benefits of Christ’s passion (37, Vatican II called her Mediatrix, 93, Pope John Paul II has so referred to her in his encyclical *Lumen Gentium*, 103).

John Paul II has said in public statements, “There is no better approach to her Son than through [Mary],” and “to Christ through Mary” (112). His personal motto, inscribed on his coat of arms, is *Totus Tuus sum Maria* (“Mary, I am totally yours”). Pope Benedict XV in the 1918 Apostolic Letter *Inter Sodalicia* affirmed Mary’s “atonement” for sinners, “To such an extent did she suffer and almost die with her suffering and dying Son . . . in order to appease the justice of God, that we may rightly say she redeemed the human race together with Christ” (126). Mary is the “ladder to paradise” in Catholic thought (73). God revealed himself to one saint,

telling him, “In vain will he invoke me as a Father who has not venerated Mary as a Mother” (73). According to another saint, along with the text in John in which Jesus says, “No one comes to me unless the Father draws him,” Jesus also affirms, “No one comes to me unless my Mother first of all draws him by her prayers” (76). Other saints write, “At the command of Mary, all obey, even God,” and “Yes, Mary is omnipotent” (79). A major Catholic theologian has written, “We often obtain more promptly what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus.” (71).

White also gives some excellent refutations of these doctrines from Scripture, and shows many of them to be contrary to the gospel of free grace through *sola fide, solo Christo*. This is a very fine little book, one which anyone must read who ministers in a Catholic community. Its use of primary sources, and its demonstration from official Catholic writings of these heterodox views is worth far more than the price of the book (don’t tell the publisher). All of White’s books are excellent, and this little one is a true jewel.

Chad Owen Brand