

Scott Swain tackles Trinitarian Christology in a reading of Mark 12; Michael Horton reads Ephesians 4 in dialogue with a theology of the ascension and the nature of ministry in the church (which I would say is another highlight of the book—this is a wise discussion of ministry of various kinds in the light of this text); and Andrew McGowan gives a good reading of options for tackling theosis, deification and other matters in Colossians 3.

Two ‘response’ essays round out the collection, though neither was in fact written from a position of having seen the other essays, so they are more like general reflections on theological interpretation. Walter Moberly sketches out some of the many factors one must keep in play in reading the Old Testament theologically (with the assumption that ‘Old Testament’ indicates a Christian readership of texts which predate the church). His thoughtful and irenic tone may be markedly contrasted with D A Carson’s ‘Yes, But...’ piece in which he lists six aspects of theological interpretation and takes each in turn with a brief positive response and then a ‘but’ section of negative interaction. This, if I may be so bold, is one of the most spectacularly grumpy pieces I have ever read in a serious theological book, mixing extraordinary generalization and barely concealed irritation with a thesis which seems to boil down to saying that anything good about theological interpretation was already being done by conservative evangelicals in dialogue with the Reformation, so why all the fuss? This is the only really disappointing piece in the book.

As a collection of essays this is never going to be the book to pull together all the issues currently vexing the various kinds of participants in discussions about theological interpretation. It is not programmatic about what makes an evangelical interaction, and it is by nature piecemeal in making progress (though this is not a negative). There are a lot of strong and helpful essays here, and some fine orientations to specific theological topics which will repay the reader willing to follow up the footnotes. It is also worth noting that the book trails in various places the forthcoming T&T Clark series of International Theological Commentaries, intended as heavyweight contributions to this field. In the meantime, I would recommend this to those wanting to explore the issues from an evangelical perspective.

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(Note: I would like to offer one caveat, which should not detract from the *content* of the book. The book is presented with various unfortunate errors: Hebrew is routinely mangled; even transliterated Hebrew often turns an intended aleph into a bracket or omits it; Treier’s chapter refers to ‘the present commentary’ (from which it is now extracted); and while the kinds of errors found in footnotes are mainly limited to things like wrong initials (‘Stephen S Fowl’ for example), the book’s penultimate footnote renders Richard Hays and Ellen Davis as ‘Richard Hags and Hellen Dau’ and suggests that they have published a book not with Eerdmans but ‘Earchmas.’ It would also have been good to have an overall bibliography; or failing that an index which includes name references in footnotes. Instead there is only reference to names appearing in the main text, with the result that short-form references have to be tracked back for an unknown distance to find the details. All this and the small print throughout seems designed to break the golden rule I always impress upon students: keep the reader happy! It is odd to see such little attention to the presentation of theological work. Can anyone account for it?)

News and Notes

Former BSB editor Mike Thompson (Ridley Hall, Cambridge) writes: Richard Bauckham recently drew my attention to a fantastic tool now available on the web to help people get a more realistic idea of distances and how long it took to get from A to B in the ancient world. It is something I wrote about originally in my essay, 'The Holy Internet' (in *The Gospels for All Christians*, edited by Richard Bauckham [T&T Clark, 1998]), looking at travel and communication in the early church. I think BSB readers would be interested to know about the website: <http://orbis.stanford.edu/>

And in response to last issue's 'dialogue' between William Barclay and Tom Wright, BSB reader John Baigent wrote in to point out that 'Barclay did produce his own translation of the NT: (i) in the volumes of The Daily Study Bible, beginning with Acts in January, 1953; and (ii) in (a presumably revised form) *The New Testament: Vol 1, The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles; Vol 2, The Letters and the Revelation* (London-New York, Collins, 1968, 1969). So in this respect Tom Wright has followed in his footsteps!' Many thanks to John for setting that straight: it proved surprisingly difficult to get information on the publication of the DSB, with even an email to the publishers providing no results...

Quote of the Quarter

This seems worth pondering as we think through questions of the Bible and the 'natural world' around us:

It is interesting to note that very few of those biblical scholars who write about the phenomenon of natural disasters ask the question of when the expression 'natural disaster' entered our language or when the concept of 'natural disaster' as distinct from divinely caused disasters became part of our worldview. A number of scholars not involved in biblical studies have traced these origins to the period after the classic seismic disaster in Spain in 1755. This development, I would suggest, needs to be taken into account as we dare to speak of so-called 'natural disasters' in the Bible.

(Norman Habel, review of Terence E Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters*, *Review of Biblical Literature* [<http://www.bookreviews.org>] (2012), 4)

Fretheim's book, incidentally, is a very impressive discussion of its chosen topic, and may be recommended to interested readers. The *RBL* website is also worth recommending to those who do not know it: you can subscribe for weekly emails telling you which reviews have been posted online.

Book Reviews

Carlos R Bovell (ed), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture: Historical, Biblical, and Theoretical Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011; pp xxiii + 399, pb, ISBN 9781608993475; \$47.00)

The title of this book suggests a worthwhile discussion of biblical authority, and it is one I would rather like to read, but this is not in fact it. Instead, this is a collection of 18 essays on inerrancy, mainly focused on its internal problems and damaging side-effects. Oh well. Perhaps it says something a little disappointing that arguing over inerrancy might be thought to equate to debating the question of authority. But if one can get past that, what is there here?

Five essays look at 'historical perspectives.' The usual suspects here are Old Princeton (Hodge, Warfield), and the birth of Fuller Seminary, which finally wrestled its way out of the inerrancy paradigm. The history in question is US fundamentalism over the past 100+ years.

Six essays then follow on 'biblical perspectives', mainly focused on OT questions. The pick of them, I think, is Richard Schultz's rather impressively framed 'Theological Diversity in the Old Testament as Burden or Divine Gift?', which takes up and runs with some ideas of Kevin Vanhoozer (and to some extent John Goldingay). Whether what Schultz ends up describing has quite as much to do with inerrancy as he thinks might be a question. There is also a thorough survey of inerrantist work on Daniel (extraordinary), as well as a strong piece by Stanley Porter on NT pseudonymity and its relationship to doctrinal concerns. Porter thinks there is no good reason to think of any NT book as pseudonymously authored.

Finally, seven essays offer 'theoretical perspectives.' These seemed a little vague overall, though an interesting short piece by Harriet Harris sets itself to ignore inerrancy and see how far one can get in talking about 'Scripture and prayer.' It turns out one can get as far as one needs to: inerrancy is 'irrelevant' she concludes. Her tone is matched by a wise foreword by William Abraham which tries to keep the focus on constructive matters.

The editor is worried that the upholding of inerrancy is practised in spiritually and pastorally damaging ways in America today, and doubtless there is truth in that. And although the term 'inerrancy' does not seem to me to have much life here in the UK, some of its concomitant attitudes are often found. Anyone pondering that phenomenon will find much of value here: mostly (though not all) pushing against inerrancy. Meanwhile, a volume on interdisciplinary perspectives on the authority of Scripture would be much appreciated.

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Marvin A Sweeney, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012; pp xv + 544, hb, ISBN 9780800637439, £38.99)

One of the many things Christian readers should be doing with respect to the Old Testament is listening to how Jewish readers handle their sacred scriptures (the 'Tanak', as the name of this book has it, from the acronym for torah-prophets-writings in Hebrew). Marvin Sweeney's compendious new volume offers one way into such a

project, and may be commended for its thoroughness and even-handed critical reviews of issues. One needs to realise that the key word in the title is 'introduction': this is a book in the genre of 'introduction' with a view to making theological capital out of standard critical approaches, filtered through a Jewish interpretive framework. There are places where the treatment comes close to being a running summary of contents, which I noticed most in the discussion of the Torah. Sometimes critical perspectives offer ways of handling difficult issues (eg with Joshua, written not to encourage attacking the Canaanites, but as a later—anachronistic—attempt to assert Israelite identity). The discussion of the Torah is strongly arranged around the 'generations of' formulae, notably including Numbers 3.2 in this arrangement to stretch to cover the whole 5 books. After this, the units of discussion break into the familiar canonical books.

A fine 40-page introduction discusses Christian and Jewish approaches to the same texts (though different canons, as Sweeney is keen to emphasize). A very brief conclusion posits that (a) Jews should indeed study biblical theology, (b) the Tanak overlaps with the OT but is a unique Jewish book, (c) there is no one consistent viewpoint on many major issues, thus feeding into the diversity and dialogical character of Judaism today, and (d) the Tanak offers the basis for a robust Jewish dialogue with other religions. More on these framing issues would have been good, but perhaps would have taken the book further away from being an introduction.

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Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011; pp xxx + 497, hb, ISBN 9780802826275, £35.99)

The *New International Commentary on the New Testament* has earned long-standing respect as a series both evangelical and learned. Sustaining this standard requires the replacing of older volumes with works that can respond to current scholarship. So Scot McKnight's new volume succeeds the 1976 commentary on this epistle by James Adamson. As one would expect, it is a careful, clear and dependable piece of writing.

McKnight thinks that the letter was written by the Lord's brother, during the fifties, to groups of Jewish messianic believers outside the Holy Land who were suffering persecution and poverty. There are two main overall themes: God and ethics; and the topics of particular sections are trials (1.2–18), partiality (2.1–13), works (2.14–26), teaching for teachers (3.1–4.12), and wealth (4.13–5.11). There is no governing rhetorical structure; in some respects the letter is miscellaneous. In his second chapter James may well be responding to an early and even a distorted version of Paul's teaching.

The exegesis is thorough. Sentences are segmented into clauses, and their sinews of connection made plain. There is plenty of scriptural cross-reference, regular comment on the Greek in footnotes, and a steady concern to show how the various paragraphs hang together. I did wonder if there could have been sharper engagement with some of the theories about James' context. But McKnight resists any precise analysis of the letter's circumstances. His commentary is attentive to text rather than speculative about context. So it will serve very well, wherever pastors, teachers and students want to work tightly with the text and to nurture the virtues of which it speaks.

We may need James in the coming years. It surely offers important insights about faithful living in a day of recession.

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Judith M Lieu, *I, II, & III John: A Commentary* (New Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008; pp xx + 300, hb, ISBN 9780664220983, £32.99)

This commentary in the New Testament Library series draws on Lieu's extensive knowledge of New Testament texts and her specialist interest in the so-called Johannine tradition to produce a commentary that is both detailed and succinct. Following a considerable Bibliography, the Introduction comprises approximately 30 pages of discussion on the setting of the Letters, their structure, background and thought and their reception and importance in recent study. Lieu's consideration of authorship explores the possible cultural and social background of the letters and cites relevant early patristic material, but she concludes that the anonymity of the Letters is a deliberate technique and one that should be respected, as she proceeds to do in the commentary. Discussion of the relation between the Letters (particularly 1 John) and the Gospel of John is brief and perhaps dependent upon Lieu's prior determination that 'there is not compelling evidence of a direct literary relationship between 1 John and the Gospel in anything like the latter's current form' (p 17). The commentary itself is a detailed, verse by verse exegesis of the text, with attention to nuances of the (transliterated) Greek text. It makes extensive reference to other biblical texts—both Old and New Testament—where relevant, as well as extra-biblical material, in particular the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which, in Lieu's opinion, offer close parallels to the thought of 1 John (pp 24–25). Because of its rigorous adherence to the text itself and the way in which each point is explored from all possible angles, this commentary is a valuable resource for theology students and preachers alike, one that will undergird more theological expositions of the texts.

Hilary Marlow, Cambridge Interfaith Programme, University of Cambridge

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