

## REVIEWS

Ravi Zacharias (ed.), *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith We Defend*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007. xx + 360 pp. Pbk. US\$15.99.

Ravi Zacharias is one of the most well known apologists of today. Even if one does not agree with his apologetic method, it is difficult to not respect his impact both in his own ministry and that of the organization he has founded. Perhaps Ravi Zacharias' most enduring legacy will not be what he has done himself but the network that he developed of both experienced and younger apologists. *Beyond Opinion* reflects that legacy, containing essays by a number of those Ravi Zacharias has been working with. The book has three sections: 1) Giving an Answer, 2) Internalizing the Questions and Answers, and 3) Living Out the Answers.

The first section begins with a chapter on postmodern challenges to the Bible by Amy Orr-Ewing, who sees much hope for the power of the Bible to speak into today's culture. Alister McGrath presents the challenges from atheism, drawing on both research and his own experience as a former atheist. There are some promising opportunities as well as serious challenges from youth culture, as Alison Thomas explains in her chapter. One of the great concerns for many is the impact of Islam, and Sam Solomon presents those in his informative essay. L.T. Jeyachandran deals with the challenges of eastern religions, seeing great hope for those followers to find their aspirations fulfilled in Christ. Challenges from science are summarized by John Lennox, who deals with the presuppositions of all scientists, secular and Christian. Michael Rumsden looks at the common misconceptions about Christianity and how Christians can respond through conversational apologetics. Joe Boot uses Augustine's apologetic method to address the broader cultural and philosophical challenges. Ravi Zacharias addresses the concerns of many when he looks at the existential challenges of evil and suffering. The first section is concluded with a look at cross-cultural challenges by P'Ching Thomas.

The second section begins with L.T. Jeyachandran presenting the Trinity as a paradigm for spiritual transformation. Stuart McAllister deals with a surprising subject as he looks at the role of doubt and persecution in spiritual transformation. Danielle DuRant works through the idolatry, denial and self-deception that people encounter on their journey with God. The third section contains one

chapter: Ravi Zacharias presenting the church's role in apologetics and the development of the mind.

Like any edited volume, each chapter varies in quality by author. Some chapters are quite simple and some readers acquainted with apologetics will find little new. Others reflect a greater scholarship. There is also variety in the approaches. For example, Sam Solomon takes a very strong stand against Islam, while L.T. Jeyachandran seems much more open in embracing those from eastern religions.

If one is looking for in-depth treatments of specific areas of apologetics, they will not find it in this volume. What one will find is a snapshot of the state of apologetics at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The chapters focus on the current trends, with both challenges and opportunities. The final chapter by Ravi Zacharias is particularly helpful. Zacharias takes the reader on a tour of his journey as an apologist, sharing the things that worked and did not work. It is an important moment as Zacharias passes the baton, not just to another famous apologist, but to the church in general. The book is valuable, if only for this chapter.

*Beyond Opinion* is a great book for introducing people to apologetics and the various issues related to it. However, this book is also valuable to specialists who, getting caught up in their own specific area, need to be reminded of the bigger picture. This book is a helpful resource for the church as it takes up its role in defending the faith in a skeptical world.

Stephen J. Bedard

Carl R. Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011. E-Book. US\$3.99.

It's been more than fifteen years now since Mark Noll published his successful *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* in which the (then) Wheaton professor criticized evangelicals for its intellectual obscurantism. Evangelicalism's preoccupation with dispensationalism and six-day creationism, he argued, had left it with no academic, intellectual, or cultural credibility.

We may or may not agree with Noll's specific points of example, but it is difficult to argue that evangelicalism had lost considerable intellectual credibility. In terms of political involvement and personal evangelism, however, his argument would seem to lose much of its force.

But Trueman's objection to Noll falls along more fundamental lines. As he summarizes, "When Mark Noll declared that the scandal of the evangelical mind was that there was no mind, he meant to criticize the lack of cultural and theological engagement among evangelicals. I agree there is a scandal involving the evangelical mind, though I understand the problem in the exact opposite way. It is not that there is no mind, but rather that there is no evangelical." Or again, "The real scandal of the evangelical mind currently is not that it lacks a mind, but that it lacks any agreed-upon evangel."

That is to say, "evangelicalism" means so much anymore that it scarcely means anything. Indeed, in our day one can deny God's knowledge of the future and still be considered "evangelical." Trueman's brief essay (available only as an e-Book) could make one wonder if a genuine "evangelicalism" survives at all. If it will survive, he argues, it must learn to define itself, for if the last hundred years have shown anything, it is that doctrinal indifferentism cannot withstand heterodoxy. Trueman is under no delusion that a mere creedalism will preserve orthodoxy. But he is certainly right in his admonition that apart from a willing and convinced adherence to a Biblically defined faith the "Christianity" of the apostles would disappear.

In short, if (as per Begginton) an understanding of "evangelicalism" in terms of its focus on Scripture, the centrality of the cross, conversion, and activism/evangelism will have any relevance, it will only be as these concepts are given clear and robust Biblical definition.

Perhaps we are overly concerned that to preserve a doctrinal Christianity will leave us perceived as narrow and sectarian. But then perhaps our lack of concern for doctrinal Christianity has left us so broad as to be scarcely other than secular. Certainly no one wishes to be marginalized or considered irrelevant. But being Christian entails a recognition of divinely revealed truth, and it also entails a willingness to bear the reproach of the cross. Yet our outlook must never be doom and gloom, for it is by the faithful proclamation of this divinely revealed truth, in the power of the Spirit of God, that the saints will overcome the world (Rev. 12:11).

Trueman's essay, reminding us of the central importance of Christian truth, deserves to be read widely. It is brief, simple, and easily accessible. Highly recommended.

Fred G. Zaspel

Tom Wells, *The Priority of Jesus Christ*. Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2005. 158 pp. Pbk. US\$11.95.

Perhaps I have forgotten, but I don't recall another book like this — an exploration, exposition, and application of the hermeneutical implications of the dominant New Testament theme of the Lordship of Christ. The cover describes the book as “A Study in New Covenant Theology,” and it is. But it is more. Wells begins with a pointed summary exposition of the New Testament description of believers as “slaves” of Christ and with that a brief explanation of the meaning of Jesus’ “priority.” The rest of the book is an exploration of the apostolic understanding of the significance of Jesus’ authority in relation to the Old Testament prophets and Scriptures, the New Testament writers, Moses and the Law, the Decalogue, and this New Covenant eschatological era inaugurated in Christ. Then he concludes with a study of the New Testament term, “the law of Christ.”

Of course Wells will not convince everyone on every point of application. He acknowledges that himself. But this is the kind of work that we need to do, and Wells deserves attention here. Those on the more traditional Reformed side of things who will find disagreements regarding Moses’ law should nonetheless acknowledge that Wells’ approach is commendable and his primary thesis necessary. And where they find disagreement, I suspect they will find themselves feeling challenged to think through their position more carefully in light of the Christological hermeneutic Wells expounds. Just what is the relation of Jesus to Moses? Does he merely re-issue the old law? Does he merely clarify it? Or in what sense does he possess and exercise authority over it? We who acknowledge Christ as master and name ourselves as his slaves are obliged faithfully to explore and apply the bearing of his “priority” in our hermeneutics as in every area of faith and practice.

Wells argues effectively that the hermeneutic he advances is already acknowledged by all sides, even those who disagree with him in some particulars. That is, approaching the question of ethics and duty we all instinctively turn first to Jesus. We do not turn first to Moses. Intuitively we want to know what our Lord has commanded. This instinct is of course right. It is what our Lord requires of us (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). And whether, then, the question concerns the meaning of end time prophecy or the continuing relevance of Mosaic law, at the end of the day it is from the Lord Jesus that we seek to find our answer. This is Wells' argument. And again, we must all agree that he is right, however we may differ on the application of this rule in some particular questions.

This book provides challenging reading for all sides. Wells helps sharpen our understanding of the surpassing authority of Christ, and that surely is a helpful service to us all.

Fred G. Zaspel

Andreas J. Kostenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*. Downer's Grove: IVP, 2008. 224 pp. Pbk. US\$22.00.

It is common knowledge that both historically and perennially John's Gospel has played a significant role in the formulation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. What is surprising, then, is the scarcity of books given exclusively to this theme — the Trinity in the Gospel of John. This 2008 addition to the *New Studies in Biblical Theology* series (D. A. Carson, ed.) is designed to help fill that gap. Andreas Kostenberger (Professor of New Testament and Director of PhD Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest) and Scott Swain (Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando) bring together mature reflections from the domains of Biblical, Exegetical, and Systematic Theology to provide a helpful model of how Biblical scholarship can move (as Carson describes it in the Preface) "from careful study of biblical text to theological formulation."

Chapter one begins by establishing the apostle John as the author of the fourth Gospel in order to demonstrate, in turn, that the

historical setting and perspective of the fourth Gospel is that of strict Jewish monotheism. Jesus' teaching challenged and stretched the Jewish understanding of that monotheism, to be sure, but a strict Jewish monotheism it was nonetheless. In a way that is very reminiscent of Bauckham's *God Crucified*, Kostenberger and Swain argue that John and the early church understood Jesus as participating in that divine identity. It was a committed monotheism that allowed interpersonal relationship within its divine essence. In other words, John and the early church considered Jesus as included in the unique identity of God as declared in the Shema. In the Gospel of John and the early church, Jewish monotheism, while strictly preserved, was redefined in Christological terms.

The following five chapters explore, in turn, the teaching of the fourth Gospel concerning God; the Father; the Son, the Spirit; and, finally, a synthesis of the teaching regarding the Father, Son, and Spirit. Here we have the exegetical groundwork for the systematic conclusions drawn in the final chapters. Kostenberger and Swain offer no new theology of course. They consciously locate themselves in the mainstream of orthodox Trinitarianism. But they do provide a wealth of exegetical support and, thus, an insightful articulation of this leading mystery of the Christian faith. The varying ways in which John and Jesus speak of the Three Persons are surveyed, and the subtle nuances of each are noted. The authors' study has obviously been careful and thorough, and their results are helpful indeed toward a sharper understanding of the Father-Son metaphor, the significance of the "Son" titles (*monogenes*, Son of God, Son of Man, the Son), the Spirit's procession and mission, and the larger "mission" theme of the Gospel of John.

The final section of the book (chapters seven through ten) provides theological conclusions that arise from their exegetical survey. If earlier the authors argued that John's Trinitarianism is a Christological Trinitarianism, now they emphasize that John's Christology is distinctly a Trinitarian Christology. Both observations are valid, of course, and capture well John's outlook. Further, the authors articulate specifically John's teachings regarding not only the Son's and the Spirit's equal sharing in the identity of "God" with the Father but also the factors that set each apart as distinguishable Persons in their relationships with one another. Their examinations of the "sending" theme, the ontological vs. the economic Trinity, and questions of equality and subordination (in light of the various relevant Johannine expressions signifying dependence, authority, and

such) here are precise and helpful. And special attention is given to John's "mission" theme which the inspired apostle does not present within the framework of a larger Trinitarian theology. Rather, the authors argue, John presents God as Father, Son, and Spirit within a larger mission outlook — reminiscent of Warfield's contention a century ago that God's revelation of himself as Triune was "incidental" to the revelation of his redemptive purpose. This, in turn, is shown to inform the Christian mission as a continuation of a mission begun in heaven in eternity past. And throughout this section the authors provide a treasure of insightful observations regarding specific passages — the "I Am" sayings and especially the "I Am" of John 8:28, the connection of the crucifixion to the Passover, passages which speak of the "sending" and "coming" of the Son, the influence of Genesis 22 on John 3:16, the connection between Jesus' resurrection and our adoption as children, just to name a few outstanding examples.

This book provides a valuable contribution to the study of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Gospel of John. Any study of the Trinity would benefit by it. And certainly no preacher seeking to expound the Gospel of John would want to be without it. If you are intending to preach through the fourth Gospel you will want to read this book first so better to grasp not only the various intricacies of the doctrine of the Trinity itself but also the Trinitarian structure and atmosphere of John's Gospel itself. Then as you preach through each next passage you will want to return to this book again and again to benefit from its insights. Its presentation of the logic of Trinitarian thought in the early church, its unfolding of the divine mission as it relates to the Persons of the Trinity, and its careful exegetical and theological insights into various passages will enrich the study and expositions of John's Gospel for any preacher.

Fred G. Zaspel

Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed With an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, Downer's Grove: IVP, 2007. 247 pp. Pbk. US\$25.00.

In this 2007 addition to the *New Studies in Biblical Theology* series (D.A. Carson, ed.), Paul Williamson (Lecturer in Old Testament and

Hebrew, Moore Theological College, Sydney) traces out Scripture's covenant motif as it advances "God's creative purpose of universal blessing."

In chapter one, Williamson provides a survey of the role of covenant in Biblical scholarship through the past few centuries. The survey is very brief, but it is helpful toward placing his work in historical-theological perspective. He also traces out the role of the covenant concept and the meaning of the covenant terminology in Scripture. This again is brief, but it is succinct and helpfully lays the ground for the rest of the book. One point of particular emphasis here might be noted. After surveying the Biblical teaching regarding covenant he stresses that the solemn oath was a necessary part of covenant making (hence, his title) and that without such an oath there is no covenant, properly speaking. In the Biblical understanding, he argues, a covenant is "a solemn commitment, guaranteeing promises or obligations undertaken by one or both parties, sealed with an oath." He describes the oath as a covenant's "most basic element." He makes his case well, and he draws on this observation to settle certain interpretive questions that arise later in the book.

Chapter two examines the covenant theme with regard to God's universal purpose. Of leading significance here perhaps is Williamson's evaluation and rejection of Federal Theology's "covenant of works." Such a pre-lapsarian "covenant," he notes, is not mentioned in the Genesis account, its "promise of life" must be assumed, and it has never found unanimous consent even among Reformed theologians. The appeal to Hosea 6:7 is likewise plagued with difficulty and, has lacked consensus also. Additionally, Williamson points out, there is no "oath" as marks all other Biblical covenants. In short, Williamson finds no reliable exegetical warrant for supposing a "covenant of works" unless we would resort to (re)defining "covenant" more broadly than Scripture seems to do.

Chapters three through nine examine, in turn, the Noahic, Abrahamic, Old (Sinaitic), Davidic, and New covenants. In the course of this exposition Williamson establishes the role of each covenant in the unfolding of the divine purpose and program and demonstrates that the covenant motif is "a most important bonding agent in the cement that unites Scripture as a whole."

Chapter three takes up the first introduction of the covenant theme in the covenant made with Noah. This covenant, Williamson shows, guarantees the preservation of the created order and of humanity, despite human rebellion and this in order to the eventual



fulfillment of the divine purpose. Within this context, Williamson addresses the proposal of a “creation covenant” advanced by some covenantal theologians. Dumbrell has argued that the expression “my covenant” and the use of “establishing” (*beqim*) rather than “cutting” (*karat*) the covenant in Genesis 6:18 reflect an already-existing covenant which the covenant with Noah is given to perpetuate. Robertson argues that the mention of God’s “covenant with the day and with the night” in Jeremiah 33:20-26 (cf. Jer. 31:34-36) refers not to the Noahic covenant but to the supposed creation covenant also. Williamson determines that this proposed exegetical support is thin at best and flawed at certain critical points. Moreover, Williamson argues, while in Federalism God deals with humanity and creation itself only within the framework of a covenant, the Biblical order appears to be the reverse. Citing Waltke in support Williamson demonstrates that a covenant solemnizes and confirms a relationship “that is already in existence.” Creation, then, is not subsumed under covenant, but rather the covenant motif serves to advance God’s creative purpose of universal blessing — restoration of humanity and the entire created order. “The glue that binds all the biblical covenants together is God’s creative purpose of universal blessing. Each of the subsequent covenants simply takes us one step closer towards the realization of that divine goal.”

Chapter four is devoted to the covenant with Abraham and its promise of national blessing *to* Abraham and of international blessing *through* Abraham. Williamson notes that these two purposes, though distinct, are clearly related in that the promissory goal of the latter is dependent upon the former — perhaps better, that the former is intended as the means to the latter. God’s intent in blessing Abraham is to fulfill his larger purpose to bring blessing to the world. Put yet another way, “God’s plans for Israel were always subservient to his universal purpose, his plans for all the families of the earth.” Williamson’s attention to the details of the Genesis narrative at this point is insightful and helpful. And his tracing of the covenant theme through the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, although very brief, is helpful toward a more informed reading of Genesis as a whole. One peculiarity arises here, however, in his argument that these two related purposes — the national and the international — reflect two distinct covenants. This may not persuade a majority of his readers. Perhaps the bilateral aspects of the covenant may be understood instead within the broader unilateral covenant; i.e., God will see to it that any conditions will be met.

Williamson refers to the Old or Sinaitic covenant (chapter five) as God's national covenant with Israel and describes it as stipulating the responsibilities of that nation through whom God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled. He understands the *kei* phrase in Exodus 19:5 as reflecting this purpose: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, *for* all the earth is mine." "Thus understood, the goal of the Sinaitic covenant was the establishment of a special nation through which Yahweh could make himself known to all the families of the earth," and the covenant stipulations reveal to Israel precisely how Israel would be that special nation. Williamson's treatment of the covenant as bilateral and of the covenantal significance of the Sabbath and the tabernacle are precise and helpful toward a right understanding of this stage of redemptive history.

Williamson's treatment of the Davidic covenant (chapter six) is especially helpful both in his recognition of the historical situation in which the covenant is made and in the connections he makes here with the Abrahamic covenant and the overall divine purpose. The relation of the dynastic oracle to the recent return of the ark to Jerusalem, thus establishing the Davidic kingship in the context of Yahweh's kingship is rich with implications. And his tracing of the Davidic covenant through the later Biblical writings, especially the prophets and the Psalms, helpfully fills out the significance of this covenant and its note of anticipation that is brought finally to fulfillment in Christ.

The covenant theme and the divine purpose for universal blessing culminate of course in the New covenant, which Williams treats at length in chapters seven through nine. Here he examines, in turn, the announcement and anticipation of the new covenant in the prophets, the inauguration of the new covenant in the work of Christ, and the consummation of the new covenant in the eschaton. Williamson finds the "newness" of the new covenant in the new, redeemed community created by God's saving acts. Unlike the Old covenant, in this New covenant God promises unilaterally to make his people a believing and faithful people who know him and serve him from the heart. The attending blessings of the covenant as anticipated in various passages throughout the prophets are surveyed throughout chapter seven. Chapter eight surveys the New Testament teaching, in the course of which Williamson includes a treatment of the New covenant in relation to "covenantal nomism" and the "new

perspective” on Paul. Attention then is given to the question of the Church as the inheritor of this covenant made with Israel. Chapter nine is extremely brief, simply pointing us to the eschaton as the time of climactic fulfilment of the New covenant promises and of God’s eternal purpose.

Williamson finds in the covenant theme not necessarily Scripture’s unifying center but at least *a* unifying theme. He demonstrates this well and thereby enhances the reader’s understanding of the Bible story in large perspective, tracing out each next step in the advance of God’s creative purpose. A study such as this of course bristles with notorious points of continual debate, most of which Williamson touches only briefly at some point in the study. Questions such as the identity of “my law” in Jeremiah 31:33, the relation of Israel and the church, the future of ethnic Israel, the character of the Sinaitic covenant (whether works or grace), Federalism’s covenants of grace and works, and so on, will continue to be points of discussion and disagreement. But Williamson has provided an excellent service and a most helpful aid in the study of biblical covenants and, therefore, of the “big picture” of redemptive history. As Carson writes in the preface, “few will be the readers who will not learn a great deal” from this monograph. Certainly no study of the Biblical covenants would want to overlook this notable contribution.

Fred G. Zaspel

Norman L. Geisler, *If God, Why Evil? A New Way to Think About the Question*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2011. 173 pp. Pbk. US\$14.99.

There are many areas of apologetics that people find interesting. However, there is one area that is more personal and close to the heart and that is the problem of evil. From biblical times down to the present, Christians have wrestled with the problem of evil and suffering. In recent years, treatments of evil have fallen into two extremes: 1) highly technical and philosophical treatises, and 2) popular and rather shallow examinations that offer little more than Christian clichés. Norman Geisler, in *If God, Why Evil?*, is able to bridge the gap between these two extremes. Despite the subtitle,

there is not much new about the questions asked, but the depth and accessibility of the answers is extremely refreshing.

Geisler begins with three views of evil: pantheism, atheism and theism, arguing that the theistic treatment is the best. The nature of evil is the heart of the problem, leaving people wondering how God could create evil. Geisler suggests that evil is not something but is rather the absence of something. Geisler deals with the origin of evil, explaining that it comes from Lucifer and not God. Perhaps suffering in the short-term could be endured but the persistence of evil is a problem. Geisler argues that just because God has not yet removed evil, does not mean that he will not. While from our perspective evil often seems pointless, Geisler demonstrates, both from the Bible and experience, that God often uses evil to bring about a greater good. Geisler brings his philosophical knowledge to bear on the question of why God cannot remove evil while protecting our freedom. As we see so many natural disasters around the world, Geisler helpfully works through a number of the issues that surround physical evil. Part of people's struggle with God is the question of miracles. With great humility, Geisler wrestles with the problem of why sometimes God miraculously intervenes in suffering and why he often does not. The final two chapters are two of the most common and hardest questions: the problem of hell and the problem of those who have never heard about Jesus. Geisler addresses these problems with a strong commitment to the Bible and a pastoral heart toward the difficulty of the answers. The book ends with three appendices: 1) the problem of animal death before Adam, 2) evidence for the existence of God, and 3) a critique of the *Shack*.

The great strength of this book is the balance Geisler is able to maintain between philosophical depth and accessibility. Geisler has thought through each of the questions and he presents his arguments with full philosophical integrity. At the same time, Geisler presents his material with many illustrations from his pastoral ministry and even his own private life. Geisler is well aware that these are not just theoretical issues but that they are causing real pain for real people. Geisler has witnessed and experienced this same pain and it impacts his presentation. Another strength of this book is that Geisler is able to be strong on the issues where there is a clear biblical answer but is not afraid to be flexible in the areas where there is more ambiguity. Geisler, without being dogmatic in this latter category, presents the options with their strengths and weaknesses, and allows the reader to determine their own position.

This is an important and useful book for both skeptics and for Christians who are struggling with suffering. No matter where one is at on their spiritual walk, *If God, Why Evil?* has something to teach all of us.

Stephen J. Bedard

Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010. 224 pp. Hdbk. US\$19.99.

I'm fairly certain that if the average evangelical Christian layman were to hear a respected teacher say that Genesis 3:15 (the promised defeat of the Serpent) is not a messianic prophecy, the response would be one of complete bewilderment: (while scratching their head) "You mean it's not about Jesus?" Then, after the teacher proceeded to say the same about Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (the prophet greater than Moses), Psalm 110 (great David's greater son), Isaiah 7:14 (the virgin-born Immanuel), and Isaiah 9:6 (the son given to rule) the Christian layman would likely be suspicious that something's awry. The fact is that for those who have read "the rest of the story" it is nearly impossible to read such passages and not think that they are intended to point us to Jesus. Such a reading is instinctive to the Christian. And, in fact, this was the view of Jewish teachers (before Christ, at least) also.

Without hesitation I would bet my money with the Christian layman, but the fact is many Biblical scholars — devoted evangelical scholars among them — will argue that this instinct is mistaken. Understanding just how messianic prophecy "works" has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry and debate. And there is a marked hesitation even among some evangelicals to acknowledge that many of these type of Old Testament passages are *directly* messianic. There may be a "double fulfillment" or a *sensus plenior* or even a typological fulfilment, or an outright denial of any messianic connection. But acknowledgment of *direct* messianic prophecy is often difficult to come by.

Enter Michael Rydelnik. Raised in a Orthodox Jewish home these prophecies played a significant role in his own conversion, and

it (rightly) concerns him that such hesitations effectively neutralize the force of the Bible's primary contention about Jesus (that he is the object of Israel's ancient messianic hope) and thereby rob the Christian of a leading avenue of witness and a leading reason for confidence in the divine authorship and trustworthiness of Scripture. So he sets out in this book to establish the messianic hope as the centerpiece of the Old Testament.

In chapter one Rydelnik states his case in brief, providing definitions, stressing the importance of messianic prophecy, and charting the way forward in his study. Then in chapter two he surveys the various approaches scholars have advocated. Here he provides a summary of the major literature of the past two or three centuries and then a general classification of their respective positions. This chapter is very helpful toward bringing the reader "up to speed" in the discussion.

Chapter three treats text-critical issues, highlighting the fact that the Masoretic Text reflects, at times, the theological perspectives of post-Christian (i.e., AD) Jewish rabbinic Judaism; thus, the messianic intent of the original is sometimes found in the critical apparatus. Rydelnik provides several stimulating examples to illustrate his point, which, in the end, serve to strengthen his case regarding the deliberate messianic thrust of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Chapter four investigates three passages from the Pentateuch (Gen. 49:8-12; Num. 24:14-19; Deut. 18:15-19), demonstrating that not only are these passages themselves intentionally messianic in outlook but also that they were treated as such by later Old Testament writers. This chapter is an exegetical gold mine for preachers seeking to expound these passages.

In Chapter five Rydelnik provides some "canonical perspectives" on messianic prophecy, exposing the messianic considerations in the shaping of the Hebrew canon. Again his case is strengthened by his demonstration of a conscious recognition — on the part of the faithful in the centuries before Jesus — of a messianic hope intentionally fostered by the Biblical writers.

Chapter six provides considerations of fundamental significance in this discussion. It is often alleged that the apostles were arbitrary in their treatment of Old Testament prophecy. Rydelnik shows that the apostolic hermeneutic was learned first from Jesus and that it was, in fact, a way of reading the Old Testament that our Lord himself specifically endorsed. The usual passages (e.g., Luke

24) are examined but with more than usual attention to detail in establishing his case.

Chapter seven examines four ways the New Testament uses the Old: “direct fulfillment” (Matt. 2:5-6 / Micah 5:2), “typical fulfillment” (Matt. 2:15 / Hos. 11:1), “applicational fulfillment” (Matt. 2:16-18 / Jer. 31:15), and “summary fulfillment” (Matt. 2:19-23). This again is an exegetical gold mine in regard to these (and attending) passages, and Rydelnik goes further to stress that as followers of Jesus we *ought* to learn to treat the Old Testament in the same way.

In chapter eight Rydelnik seeks to trace out the influence of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzkhaki (1040-1105) on later Jewish and Christian (both Catholic and Protestant) interpreters, thus providing one accounting for the trend away from messianic exegesis.

Chapter nine provides a thorough analysis of Genesis 3:15 in its own context and purpose and in light of the Pentateuch and later Old Testament Scriptures. Chapter ten does the same with Isaiah 7:14, and chapter eleven does the same with Psalm 110. Certainly no preacher would want to overlook the help offered here in handling these prophecies. And chapter twelve concludes with a moving call back to messianic exegesis.

The discussion of the New Testament handling of the Old will doubtless continue, and Rydelnik will not convince everyone at each point of exegesis. Of course. But his work is a helpful corrective to those who are slow to acknowledge direct messianic prophecy in the Old Testament, and it is very helpful toward a right understanding of Israel’s ancient hope. Whether a given prophecy here or there should be understood as *directly* messianic or if more subtle nuances may be involved we may debate, but Rydelnik is certainly right to challenge us to see the Old Testament writers as intentional in their presentation of the Messiah. He certainly succeeds in providing a framework, at least, for understanding specific prophecies, and throughout the book, as I have indicated, he provides a wealth of exegetical aid for the preacher. Not just the New Testament but the entire Bible is a book about Jesus, and Rydelnik deserves our thanks for making that more clear for us.

Fred G. Zaspel

Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011. xi+202 pp. Hbk. US\$22.99

There have been few books in recent times as controversial in evangelical circles as Rob Bell's *Love Wins*. Bell is not some obscure liberal whose views can be easily ignored, but an influential megachurch pastor whose resources are quite popular among evangelicals. Whatever one's theological position, the contents of this book must be wrestled with.

The opening chapter is titled "What About the Flat Tire?", a reference to the question of what happens to an unbeliever who fails to hear the Christian message because the missionary gets a flat tire. In this chapter, Bell asks some important questions about salvation, age of accountability, requirements for heaven and how we portray Jesus. Bell challenges evangelical traditions that have systematized how one becomes a Christian, often ignoring the variety of statements by both Jesus and Paul. Many evangelicals would affirm that one receives eternal life by asking Jesus into your heart through the sinner's prayer, while at the same time struggling to cite a biblical verse in support of this view. This chapter lays the foundation that things are not as clear as many people presume.

The second chapter titled "Here is the New There," challenges the popular theology of evacuation. Many Christians are proud to say that this world is not their home and they look forward to moving on to heaven. Unfortunately, what heaven is going to be like is not always clear. Bell reminds us that the Bible teaches a very "earthly" view of the afterlife, one that takes the best parts of the current world. Bell also points out that the lines between this life and the afterlife are not so well defined. Heaven is meant to encroach on earth and our ethics should be defined by our eschatology.

Bell does not provide any clever titles for his chapter on hell. Bell takes the reader on a tour of the biblical witness of hell, touching on the concepts of Sheol, Gehenna and Hades. Drawing on his pastoral experience, Bell explains how hell is often present in this life through the choices people make. While acknowledging that there is also a hell in the afterlife, Bell suggests that is not a permanent situation, drawing on Paul's statements about handing someone over to Satan for correction and on Old Testament restoration texts.

In the fourth chapter, Bell asks the question: "Does God Get What God Wants?" Bell cites many Bible passages that refer to



God's love, compassion and mercy to "all" people. How literally should we interpret "all"? This chapter hinges on 1 Timothy 2:3, which says "God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." Bell asks the question: If God really wants this, does he get what he wants? God could only get what he wants if everyone will eventually make the decision to accept his offer of grace.

Knowing that this would bring up accusations of the irrelevancy of Christ, Bell deals with Jesus and the cross with his chapter "Dying to Live." Bell does not deny the importance of the cross, but he does question who receives the benefits from the cross. Is it for just a small minority who subscribe to a narrow set of theological beliefs or is it for a much larger and diverse group?

In the chapter "There Are Rocks Everywhere," Bell makes reference to Paul's comment that the rock in Exodus was actually Jesus in some mysterious way (1 Cor. 10:4). Obviously, no one in Moses' day would have pointed to the rock and recognized Jesus. Bell suggests that many more people are experiencing Jesus every day without recognizing him. As Bell points out, "Jesus is bigger than any one religion," (p. 150) and so we must be careful with how we attempt to restrain Jesus within specific religions or cultures.

In "The Good News is Better Than That," Bell contrasts the suffering and evils of the world with the Good News of Jesus. Bell explains that the Good News is better than either the worst things that we can suffer from or our best attempts to be good people. Bell uses the parable of the prodigal son to illustrate the different ways that people see the Good News, suggesting perhaps that exclusivist Christianity may be the older son.

Bell concludes with "The End is Here." Bell reflects on his own religious experience and how he has attempted to grow from a more naive traditional past. Bell opens his heart to the reader and reminds them of his purpose: "Love is why I've written this book, and love is what I want to leave you with." (p. 198)

While many will reject this book in its entirety as "pure heresy," there are actually many good things about this book. First of all, Bell is a talented writer and he is passionate about what he is writing. He has a clarity about his writing that will allow his message to be understood by those both with and without formal training in theology. Bell also has a great love, both for God and for people. His reflections from his pastoral experience demonstrate that this is not just idle speculation for him.

Bell also makes some very good points in his book. Within the evangelical tradition, we have worked so hard to have a tight system that sometimes we rely more on our evangelical tradition than the biblical witness. The first chapter of this book should be mandatory reading for all people studying evangelism, as Bell challenges tradition with Scripture. Bell also helps us to reflect on the type of God that we are preaching. Bell reminds us that if we are preaching a God that would prefer to damn everyone to hell but will reluctantly let a few out of the systematic torture if they pray the sinner's prayer, that our hearers will see through this and likely reject this type of God. Bell does have some good things to say about heaven and hell. As N.T. Wright has recently been stressing, the afterlife is not some ethereal dream world but is something physical, where we will be active (Bell recommends Wright's *Surprised by Hope*). Bell is also correct that hell is not a place of systematic torture run by demons, an error that has stayed with us since the time of Dante.

Although Bell does make some very good points, he also makes some significant errors. First of all, Bell begins with what we wish things were like rather than what the Bible says. Most of us likely wish that Bell was correct and that hell will be eventually emptied and heaven will be one big party with not a soul missing. Unfortunately, the Bible is very clear that not everyone will experience eternal life. Bell quotes the first part of John 3:16, but we need to read the full context. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." (John 3:16–18 ESV) This is a recurring problem in this book. Bell uses a lot of Scripture but quotes it in isolation of context. Restoration texts from the Old Testament are used as if they meant that God was going to restore people from hell, when they refer to Israel's exile by the Babylonians.

There are a number of errors in Bell's biblical interpretation. He misunderstands the use of hyperbole. God's compassion to "all" does not mean that all will avoid his wrath any more than when we are told all of Judea went to hear John the Baptist preach that every home was empty during his sermons. There is also an error in logic in his use of 1 Timothy 2:3. It is true that God wants all to be saved, but that does not mean that everyone will be saved. Theologians will

speak of the difference between God's sovereign and permissive will, but it does not have to be as complicated as that. We would agree that it is God's will that people do not commit murder or adultery. The truth is that these things happen many times each day. Does God get what he wants in terms of a lack of murder or adultery? Not in the narrow way Bell puts the question. However, God does get his way in that he wills for his people to have freedom of choice. God's will that people be saved does not override his will that people choose that salvation.

Rob Bell asks some very important questions and he expresses those questions in a way that this generation can understand. Unfortunately, his conclusion that hell will be eventually emptied as one by one people succumb to God's grace is both unorthodox and unbiblical. This book is worth reading for the questions, but readers must return to the Scriptures to discover a more biblical way to express the truth that love wins.

Stephen J. Bedard

Daniel C. Dennett and Alvin Plantinga, *Science and Religion: Are They Compatible?* (Point/Counterpoint Series) New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 96 pp. US\$ 9.95.

At an American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting in 2009, two starkly contrasting philosophers, Alvin Plantinga and Daniel Dennett, met to discuss the compatibility of science and religion. That context allowed for the beginning of an intriguing debate, but one which needed to be extended. This book allowed Plantinga and Dennett to do precisely that. Transcripts of the original presentations begin the dialogue, followed by responses from each scholar, and final replies.

Alvin Plantinga is undisputedly one of the finest Christian philosophers alive today, and Daniel Dennett is one of the well-known New Atheists. As such, it will probably come as a surprise to many that in this debate it is Plantinga who makes the convincing case that religion and science are incompatible. Plantinga first narrows "religion" to "theistic religion, in particular Christian belief," and goes on to focus "science" on modern evolutionary theory.

Between Christian theism and modern evolutionary theory, says Plantinga, there is no incompatibility. The only real incompatibility would be between Christian belief and "the claim that evolution and Darwinism are unguided." But Plantinga asserts that evolution being unguided is a presupposition, to make evolution exclude the possibility of design is to "confuse a naturalistic gloss on the scientific theory with the theory itself." Here is where science and religion become incompatible. Evolution is science, says Plantinga, and naturalism is the religion with which evolution is incompatible.

Simply defined, naturalism is the belief that there is no God, or anything like Him. But if evolution is joined with naturalism, Plantinga argues the odds of our cognitive faculties being reliable is low. If evolution and naturalism are accepted, and what has just been stated is true, we don't have reliable cognitive faculties. This defeater of reliable cognitive faculties can't be defeated. If reliable cognitive faculties are defeated, beliefs attained through those faculties are also defeated, evolution and naturalism included. Thus, naturalism joined with evolution "is self-defeating and can't rationally be accepted." Since evolution is a pillar of science, and Plantinga asserts naturalism is an unjustified philosophical position, the obvious solution is to give up on naturalism.

Dennett first responds to Plantinga's assertion about the compatibility of theistic belief and evolution by agreeing with him. "Contemporary evolutionary theory," says Dennett, "can't demonstrate the absence of intelligent design." But Dennett goes on to liken design to belief that aliens are the designers, and says this is "an entirely gratuitous fantasy." In short, says Dennett, theism is compatible with contemporary evolutionary theory, but so is "Supermanism" and countless other fictions. Dennett simply asserts theism is no more rational than most science fiction. His response to Plantinga's *Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism* (EAAN) essentially involves pointing out that our brains are "syntactic engines" evolved over millions of years to track truth.

Plantinga, in his first reply to Dennett, concedes that Supermanism might be compatible with evolution. But Plantinga also points out that Supermanism is relevantly dissimilar from theism, and that Dennett can't rely on this analogical argument to discredit theism. Plantinga expresses disappointment in how Dennett misses the point of the EAAN. Plantinga is not asserting that our cognitive faculties aren't reliable, nor that evolution did not happen. Rather, he

is concerned about the chances of having reliable cognitive faculties given both evolution and naturalism.

Dennett's next response is hardly satisfactory, as he simply continues carrying on about Supermorphism and demonstrating his gross misunderstandings of Christianity, at one point stating "God is not Jesus" and likening the relationship of God and Jesus to that of Jor-el and Superman. Dennett makes another attempt to respond to Plantinga's EAAN, stating "hearts are for circulating the blood, and brains are for tracking the relevant conditions of the environment and getting it right." That sounds fantastic, but it seems to simply beg the question against Plantinga's point.

In his last essay, Plantinga is forced to approach Dennett like a school teacher chastising a toddler for misbehaving while playing dodge ball in recess. This might seem amusing were it not for the fact that Plantinga is chastising a professional philosopher for violating basic rules of good argumentation. Lacking anything substantive to which to reply, Plantinga concludes "If this is the best Brights can do, I think I'll stick with the Dims."

Dennett's last attempt at refuting Plantinga's EAAN would leave any professional philosopher speechless, "I have shown that Plantinga's argument depends on a false premise." Dennett simply asserts this in his concluding remarks. He furnishes no additional arguments, but simply relies on the replies to which Plantinga has already responded. This is only a more graceful way of saying "Nu uh!" when faced with a serious argument to which one does not know how to respond.

Overall, this little volume is a good introduction to the compatibility of Christianity and science. It provides a very useful presentation of Alvin Plantinga's increasingly well-known EAAN. This is done in an engaging debate format that pins two leading philosophers against one another.

Disappointment with the book stems from an expectation that Dennett will lay aside the New Atheist rhetoric and seriously engage a colleague the philosophical community at large holds in high esteem. Additionally, both Plantinga and Dennett make several appeals to their previous work, though this doesn't take too much away from the book if one is generally familiar with their major ideas. These negatives aside, the book is enjoyable, and has tremendous apologetic value in a culture that sees science and religion as being at odds. For Evangelicals seeking to regain intellectual credibility in the culture, moving beyond a debate about creation/evolution is useful.

Even for Christians with reservations regarding evolution, it is possible to conditionally point out that the science of evolution is very much incompatible with the religion of naturalism.

Josiah J. Batten

Drew Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith...and How to Bring them Back*. Moody: Chicago, 2010. 208 pp. Pbk. US\$13.99.

*Generation Ex-Christian* is a thoughtful, well-researched, practical guide on why Generation Y or Millennials (those born after 1980) are leaving Christianity at an alarming rate, how they arrived there, and how to work towards getting them back. Although it includes discussions surrounding doctrine, it is not a characteristically apologetic book that highlights differences between Christianity and other religions (or atheists), while sometimes ignoring ways to reach out to others. While a series of basic theistic arguments are put forward, Dyck's primary orientation is to provide concrete and contextualized approaches to equip, engage and evangelize those who have left the faith they once possessed.

After conducting numerous interviews with "Ex-Christians" (a term the interviewees used to describe themselves) and analyzing extensive research conducted by other organizations, Dyck began to establish a number of patterns and categories that characterized the participants, those he refers to as "leavers" - the postmodernist, the recoiler, the modernist, the neo-pagan, the rebel, and the drifter. Using a primary interviewee as a case-study in each chapter, he moves into a discussion about their defining characteristics and concludes by offering a way forward.

Post-moderns are those who have embraced at least some of the basic tenets of postmodernism. First, they are suspicious of and very hesitant to embrace any metanarrative that seeks to contain the whole truth of reality and define it for all people. As a result, truth, reason and reality become radically defined. That is, there is a different truth for each person, and experience, not reason, is the means of determining what truth actually is. As a result, morality suffers the similar fate as truth informs and shapes how one lives.

Postmoderns have also embraced the philosophy of Jacques Derrida called deconstructionism. This idea, when coupled with postmodernism, creates an atmosphere of suspicion surrounding truth claims and beliefs.

Finally, postmoderns have a tendency to embrace a more positive value as well - concern for the marginalized. They believe that the lack of concern and care for the disenfranchised among many of us are in many ways a result of our embrace of metanarratives, where less-fortunate people may sometimes be forced to the margins. By deconstructing these narratives, postmoderns are more able to embrace those who are often excluded.

Simply defined, Recoilers are those who have withdrawn from the faith because of the pain they have endured within the church, often through some form of abuse done in the name of God. As Dyck highlights, those who have been victimized, and who associate that with God, will normally tend to experience struggles with their faith. And, though they may sometimes provide a series of intellectual arguments against faith, those same arguments are often used to hide their pain. The result can be emotional atheism, where those who feel wounded by God conclude that God does not exist.

Modern leavers are those who have left the faith for intellectual reasons. As Dyck posits, “unlike postmodern leavers, they love linear thinking, objective truth, and the Western tradition of rational thought.” They also believe that truth isn’t found through revelation, but through scientific investigation and reason. As a result, there is simply no room for belief in anything outside the physical world, including such things as a spirit, soul or the supernatural. In the end, only those things that can be proven through empirical observation are real.

He also found that many in this camp have a strong tendency to be atheists. With this in mind, he surmised that there would be no better way to find out what they believed and why they believed it, than to seek out ex-Christians at a local atheist meeting.

A primary conclusion that arose from that meeting was that leavers are part of what is commonly referred to as the ‘new atheists.’ While their arguments against God’s existence may not be all that new, what is new about them is their confrontational, angry and militant attitude. Headed by highly recognized authors such as Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*) and Christopher Hitchens (*God is Not Great*), the new atheists have launched a massive advertising campaign against religion that includes the selling of books, tote bags,

coffee mugs, T-shirts, and buttons. Dawkins has even included a 'conversion corner' on his website where those who de-convert can share their personal stories (or testimonies) about their departure from faith.

Dealing with neo-pagans, Dyck focuses on one of the fastest growing religions in America, and quite possibly, around the world - Wicca. Derived from the word witchcraft, it is a neo-pagan, earth-based religion. They worship a god and goddess, practice magic, worship nature and engage in seasonal rituals. They also believe in a unifying energy in nature that "can be manipulated through magic to bring personal rewards such as love, financial blessing and general happiness."

Wicca has benefited from a number of cultural trends, the first being feminism. Its focus on a female deity has made it very attractive against a backdrop of patriarchal religion. Consumerism also works in favor of Wicca's popularity. In terms of spirituality, it doesn't promote a revealed truth to be accepted by everyone, but each person can create their own version of the truth. "Practitioners are free to pick and choose which beliefs and practices to adopt, making Wicca a religion tailor-made for our consumerist age." Nothing has benefited Wicca more than the environmental movement. Wiccans worship the earth, so it is very easy to see why it would be very conducive with the concern to take care of the earth. Finally, secularism is another ally of the Wiccan religion. It has often been perceived as a reactionary movement against the prevailing secularism of the West. Realizing that there is more to life than the 'mechanized culture' that surrounds us, people turn to Wicca as a means of finding answers to quench their souls.

Dyck includes two sub-categories within the rebels classification. The first are "moral rebels." This group forsake the faith to indulge in sinful behaviors. Living apart from their parents for the first time, coupled with an increased sense of freedoms and corresponding temptations, "...it's no coincidence that more people abandon Christianity between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two than during any other four years of life."

The second category is referred to as "spiritual rebels." These people do not rebel against the Christian lifestyle, but against the authority of God. This group normally does not respond favorably to arguments for the existence of God because the very idea of a 'ruler' of all is simply reprehensible.



Dyck characterizes the final group of leavers as those “whose faith is rooted in shallow soil and is ultimately carried off in the wind.” Rather than leaving the faith abruptly, they usually begin to gradually move away over time. Drifters, he claims, have the greatest numbers of all leavers.

Drifters have acted on a tendency inherent to us all; the ‘prone to wander’ syndrome. This view is substantiated by statistics that conclude that 71% of eighteen to twenty-nine year olds departed from their childhood religion gradually.

Drifters are also not prone to seek out opportunities to argue against Christianity, as other leavers are sometimes inclined to do. However, this can create a whole other set of issues, as they may not be as motivated to open up about their beliefs and can seek to avoid spiritual conversations altogether.

Drew Dyck has written an extremely thought-provoking and helpful overview of contemporary ‘ex-Christians.’ What I appreciated most was that he did not rely exclusively on statistics, but actively engaged people where they were, taking the time to ‘hear’ them in their own words. After conducting numerous interviews, compiling data, and analyzing the results, he provides us with well-researched information, real-life case studies and practical guidelines to more effectively engage the ‘leavers’ in our communities and around the world.

I especially appreciated his contextualized approach in defining each subgroup and for providing an individualized approach that sought to equip us accordingly. Why this approach took a considerable amount of time relative to research and analysis, it was well worth the extra effort. Meeting people ‘where they are’ and determining their needs on an individual basis will equip us to help them with a greater degree of effectiveness. A one-sized-fits-all approach rarely works in the world of evangelism, and Drew Dyck has captured this very well.

I highly recommend *Generation Ex-Christian* to every youth leader, pastor and parent who requires an informed and well-researched, practical guide to better engage the ‘leavers’ in their lives. Dyck’s book will also prepare its readers to prayerfully and authentically serve as a catalyst to re-connect others with Jesus Christ and learn to walk with them on their journey to spiritual maturity.

Jeffery K. Clarke

Paul Hughes (ed.). *Think and Live: Challenging Believers to Think and Thinkers to Believe*. Las Vegas: Anderson-Noble, 2011. 161 pp. Pbk. US\$14.99.

The subtitle of this book, *Challenging Believers to Think and Thinkers to Believe*, sets the tone for this book. It attempts to be a bridge between believers and unbelievers. The content of this book comes out of a radio show produced by apologetics.com. Between the radio and Internet activity, the contributors of this book come from the context of dealing with skeptics and seekers with major questions.

The first chapter deals with introducing the identity of Jesus. The teachings and activities are presented in a fresh way. Questions of the deity of Christ are included in this discussion. The conversation continues in the second chapter with the scriptural witness to Jesus. Introductions to the Old Testament prophetic anticipation of and New Testament witness of Jesus are provided. In the third chapter, the vital issue of the resurrection of Jesus is investigated. Having provided some historical background, the fourth chapter introduces the reader to logic, providing the tools to interpret the history. The fifth chapter investigates the nature of apologetics, explaining the importance of the relationship of reason with faith. The sixth chapter continues the examination of reason and how it is useful to addressing questions such as the existence of God. The seventh chapter guides the reader through the different types of apologetics. The eighth chapter looks at the heart issues of morality and miracles.

Whereas the first section of the book is on thinking, the second section is on living. Having laid the theological groundwork, the challenge of the ethical response is put forward. What one believes is very closely connected with what one does. In the second chapter of this section, various ethical systems are put forward. It is concluded that the Christian ethical system begins and ends with Christ. In the third chapter, the Christian life is expressed in terms of adoration and obedience. The fourth chapter urges the reader to pray, do what we can and prepare for more. The fifth chapter works through what the Christian faith looks like in the public square. In the sixth chapter, the subject of natural law is brought forward. The book concludes with an all important chapter on love.

This book is not perfect, although much of that may be from its origin as a series of radio shows. It is not always obvious as to the flow of the chapters or how one argument builds on another. It is

also not always obvious who the target audience is. Is it the non-Christian seeker or is it the layperson interested in apologetics? The subtitle suggests both, although the execution of this plan is not always effective. One of the very distracting aspects of this book is the language. The book attempts to make apologetics understandable to the average reader and so uses extremely contemporary language. The aim is admirable but some of the language, while natural orally, seems awkward on the written page. The book seems to try to hard to be “hip” in its expression of apologetics. Again, this may be because it originated from radio broadcasts.

On the positive side, the book contains numerous topics that both non-Christians and Christians should be introduced to. While this reviewer found the language distracting, many Christians may find that they understand these topics for the first time. This book will likely be effective for those who are put off by traditional apologetics books that are overflowing with technical terms. This book may also be useful for introducing apologetics to youth. While not without problems, this book is different enough from traditional apologetics books that it fills a gap between overly academic and shallow popular books on apologetics. For the right audience, this book has an important role to play.

Stephen J. Bedard

James Hannam, *The Genesis of Science: How the Christian Middle Ages Launched the Scientific Revolution* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2011) 448pp. Pbk. US\$29.95.

With the rise of the New Atheists, the idea that religion “teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding our world” has been branded into our culture, forcing the formation of caricatures that portray religion as a hindrance to human knowledge and scientific exploration. The Middle Ages is often cited as being the epitome of scientific impediment and benightedness, with the church accused of being the primary obstruction to scientific advancement during that age. However, James Hannam, in his book *The Genesis of Science: How the Christian Middle Ages Launched the Scientific Revolution*, dismantles the

distorted views of the Middle Ages, and he proves that Christians were responsible for the advancement of modern science.

James Hannam—a physicist and historian of science—guides readers through a general, historical chronology of the Middle Ages, focusing on key medieval thinkers and highlighting how their work is responsible for many philosophical and technological advances.

The first chapter briefly discusses inventions from the early Middle Ages, the fall of Rome and the rise of Islam, and how the new Roman Empire emerged due to the efforts of Charlemagne.

Next, Hannam devotes the majority of chapter two in describing the life and influence of Gerbert Aurillac. Hannam then leads the discussion towards addressing two myths: the myth that medieval Christians believed the earth was flat and the idea that the earth was in an exalted position in the universe. It is here where Hannam demonstrates the importance of analyzing beliefs and events in its proper historical and cultural context.

The discussion of Gerbert's advances in astronomy and his interest in ancient philosophy carries over to the next chapter, where Hannam examines the rise of reason and the influence of Anselm of Cantbury. Hannam describes how reason and logic began to play a monumental role in understanding orthodox beliefs such as the Eucharist, the Trinity, and combating heresies that arose during that period.

With the rise of reason and its struggle with faith, chapter four continues by explaining how an enormous amount of ancient philosophical, medical, and scientific writings were discovered and translated. Thus the birth of the first universities and the twelfth-century renaissance came about.

In chapter five, Hannam delves deeper into the discussion of heresy and reason. The church was growing increasingly worried with the amount of heresies and unorthodox beliefs associated with Greek philosophy. As a result, a legal process called the Inquisition was formed. Hannam provides a very straightforward and insightful look at many of the myths and false caricatures associated with this controversial legal process.

Next, chapter six focuses predominantly on St. Thomas Aquinas and how his interactions with other controversial thinkers of his day shaped the platform for the church and natural philosophers to pursue the sciences without restraint.

Chapter seven is a brief chapter on magic and medicine during the Middle Ages. Here Hannam describes the common

practices and techniques used to treat various illnesses and the reasons Doctors used to justify their treatments.

In chapters eight, Hannam scans the issues of astrology and alchemy, and how these arts were utilized to study the natural effects of the heavens and the earth. This discussion crosses over to chapter nine as the focus shifts to specific inventions and some of the physics involved to create them. Hannam devotes the latter portion of the chapter to discussing the life of Roger Bacon and how Bacon felt it was imperative that the Church used the “full armory of the sciences to further the spread of Christianity” (p. 137).

Hannam transitions smoothly into chapter ten where he highlights another brilliant scholar named Richard Wallingford. In this chapter, Hannam takes a brief moment to paint the intellectual climate of Europe and how Richard invented the astronomical clock and a new instrument to study astronomy called an Albion.

In chapters eleven and twelve Hannam demonstrates just how profound Aquinas’s Christianized Greek philosophy impacted the church. Hannam’s expertise in physics illuminates as he elaborates on many of the scientific and philosophical breakthroughs made in the universities of Oxford and Paris. Aristotle’s physics, the mean speed theorem, and Ockham’s razor are some of the issues that Hannam breaks down to allow readers to follow the work involved in the mathematical and scientific breakthroughs made during the 14th century.

Chapter thirteen scans some pivotal inventions that had an effect on European society, such as the invention of the printed book, and how ancient geography underwent a giant revision. Moreover, the invention of the printed book helped preserve many philosophical and scientific developments from being destroyed by the Humanists. Chapter fourteen highlights how the humanists—known as being “someone who was interested in classical Greek and Latin literature”—destroyed a lot of their predecessors work because they felt “nothing good could have come out of the early Middle Ages” (p. 211). While discussing the few positive contributions by the humanists, Hannam also introduces the Reformation as another major movement during that time.

Chapter fifteen onward surveys the discoveries of the Middle Ages and how they directly impacted modern science. In chapter fifteen, Hannam connects all the major themes in the former half of the book and thus begins the transition of medieval science into modern science.

The explosion of knowledge in the area of medicine and anatomy is explored in chapter sixteen. Here Hannam discusses how surgeons, who had the freedom to innovate, led to the beginning of human dissection and other medical practices. Inevitably this discussion leads Hannam into debunking yet another myth attributed to the medieval Church. Namely, that the medieval Church was opposed to human dissection. Hannam explains how the assumption that our bodies have been designed by God with a certain telos, or purpose, influenced surgeons and doctors to discover what the “system” of our bodies was created to do.

The life and influence of Nicholas Copernicus is the center of chapter seventeen. Hannam is careful to emphasize the fact that Copernicus was not a “lone genius” but his work was “part of the long-running European school of natural philosophy” that can be traced back to the ancients (p. 279).

Though many rejected Copernicus’ hypothesis that the earth orbited the sun, his idea was taken seriously by Johannes Kepler. If I may pun, chapter eighteen oversees the debate revolving around Copernicus’ ideas and many other discoveries in astronomy, with half the chapter devoted to explaining how Kepler proved Copernicus was correct.

The final three chapters focus on the life of one of the most influential men known to modern science, Galileo Galilei. In the opening of chapter nineteen, Hannam debunks the myth that the inquisition threw Galileo into prison because he proved Copernicus correct. Like Copernicus, Hannam emphasizes the fact that Galileo was dependent upon the work of his predecessors during the Middle Ages. Moreover, Hannam uses this chapter to establish Galileo’s personal background and note some of the contemporary thinkers involved in influencing his work. Chapter twenty focuses primarily on Galileo’s contributions and discoveries in astronomy. The final chapter deals with the trial of Galileo. With the church still arguing over the controversy created by Copernicus’ heliocentrism and Galileo’s work, Galileo was left to defend his conclusions through writing books and demonstrating the science behind his work.

Overall, Hannam does an excellent job of guiding readers through a survey of the Middle Ages and rebutting the claim that religion is a hindrance to science. He captures history in a story like and readable manner, turning a dense and pedantic subject into an enjoyable and informative read, without sacrificing the depth involved in explaining history. This valuable book provides

Christians, whether an academic or laymen, with an enriching look into the medieval history and relationship of science, the church, theology, and philosophy.

During a time in our culture when religion is being pushed aside and secularists are uprooting society from its religious roots in every aspect, Hannam delivers this work which seeks to place religion, more specifically Christianity, in its rightful place as the foundation and queen of the sciences.

David Jr. Rodriguez

Peter Hitchens, *The Rage Against God: How Atheism Led Me To Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 224 pp. Hbk. US\$22.99.

Atheism in the twenty-first-century is a facile form of its counterpart from a previous generation. The abandonment of atheism by Antony Flew before his death in some respects marks the closing of an age of disbelief that at the least offered well-framed arguments against the Christian faith. With the ascendancy of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and others who follow in their procession, arguments against Christianity are often superficial and presented with a force that is unwarranted in light of the weakness of the proposition.

Admittedly, there are aspects of recent arguments that have popular appeal. In the case of Christopher Hitchens, his rhetorically-gifted appeals to throw off the shackles of a totalitarian God; to free the mind from the limitations of religious thought and to reclaim the right to make autonomous moral decisions have a certain ring to them in the opinions of many. The attraction to him amongst the sixties generation and their progeny can be accounted for because Christopher embodies the spirit of that movement—indeed, he was and remains a key figure in that lingering cultural revolution.

Hence why *The Rage Against God: How Atheism Led Me to Faith* by his brother Peter Hitchens is so utile; it strikes at the heart of Christopher's arguments from a common perspective. The two Hitchens', though often at odds with one another, share similar experiences: each went to a respected Cambridge boarding school; both are former Trotskyists who made loud breaks with the Left; are journalists who have reported from conflict zones around the globe;

are masters of English prose; are trenchantly forthright with their views and are committed to independent thinking. In a sense, *The Rage Against God* is like Hitchens battling Hitchens; not in the sense of brother against brother, rather of Christopher against himself.

While Christopher has garnered significant attention with *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, Peter Hitchens remains relatively unknown outside of Britain. He is somewhat notorious as a conservative thinker in England where he writes a column for the Mail on Sunday and is a frequent contributor to politically-oriented talk-shows. As a journalist Peter has reported from Communist Russia and was a correspondent in Washington for the Daily Express. He has written a number of books, including *The Abolition of Britain*, a sociological look at the rapid changes taking place in British society due to the replacement of a Tory worldview with that of New Labour. As well, he has famously taken on high-level British politicians including Labour's Tony Blair and the Conservative's David Cameron; the current English Prime Minister. While a Conservative, Peter is just as scathing in critique of his own party as he is of those of the Left.

*The Rage Against God* is a refreshing and accessible alternative to the dismissible arguments of *God is Not Great*. As well, it shares reflective similarities with Christopher's recent *Hitch-22: A Memoir*. There is overlap between books as they recount stories of life in middle-class twentieth-century England. One could learn a lot about the decline of religion in Britain and the resultant change in culture from reading the three together. They are also an introduction of sorts to twentieth-century literature; the writings of T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell and other recent additions to the western canon loom large in the lives of the Hitchens'.

Peter's book is divided into three sections. The first is autobiographical where he reflects on his upbringing; the failings of a theologically liberal Christian education; the demise of traditional English values; and his embrace of atheism and Trotskyism. In some ways this reads like a summary of *The Abolition of Britain* and one sees that the British subtitle, "Why Faith Is the Foundation of Civilisation," is appropriate. Hitchens excoriates the Left for leading England away from its traditional cultural milieu that once made it a great nation and he chides the Right for its withering and useless class-structured governance. Both are to blame for the relativist mess that has changed Britain, according to Hitchens, for the worse. In the midst of this, Peter explains how he lost his faith, memorably



demonstrated in the burning of a Bible when he was fifteen years old. The chapter on his rediscovery of faith is an especially good part of the book. Peter's conversion involves him being awakened to the reality of his own immanent judgment by God as he contemplated the painting *The Last Judgment* by Rogier van der Weyden in the Musee de l'Hotel-Dieu in Beaune, France.

The second section is apologetic where Peter takes on what he calls "the three failed arguments of atheism" against religion: conflicts fought in the name of religion; morality without God; and atheist states not actually being atheist. Each argument is dismantled using examples from history and common sense. For instance, it is demonstrably reductionist to claim that all religious conflicts are always about religion. In the case of Northern Ireland, says Hitchens, religion is less a factor than the ownership and control of territory.

The third section looks at some of the defenses of atheism, in particular those of Christopher in *God Is Not Great*. This is the part of the book that Peter sees as "the foundation of the answer to my brother's position" (p. 164). Christopher denies that the atrocities committed by atheist states are a result of atheism, even going so far to argue that Stalinist Russia was actually religious. Peter, again using history and common sense, clearly shows that such arguments fail. Not only is Christopher's failure in view, but socialism's as well. One of the final sections of the book highlights the "totalitarian intolerance" of the New Atheists, which is especially true of Christopher, and is an unfortunate and unnecessary correspondent to his critiques of religion.

There are many good things to say about *The Rage Against God*. It is very well-written. Both Peter and Christopher are wonderful writers and this makes reading their books delightful, even if one disagrees with their final conclusions. It has been said that both brothers are great respecters of the English language, and this is borne out in Peter's writing. The tone of the book is noteworthy for two reasons. First, Peter observes the fundamentalist streak of the New Atheists that manifests itself in vitriolic screeds. Instead of fighting fire with fire, Peter writes circumspectly and never deteriorates into personal attacks, even though he makes good use of wit and satire. Second, Peter's columns and television appearances are often devastating in terms of argument and tone; he brooks no quarter with those whom he disagrees. The tone of this book is noticeably different.

Peter also has an excellent grasp of the issues and explains them with clarity. He is not fooled by the rhetoric of the New Atheists and sees past the non sequiturs, the ad hominem, the generalizations, the redundancies and the euphemism of their arguments. He demands honesty from atheists who critique his religion and offers it in turn, even if it hurts.

The book is also a helpful commentary on the role of beliefs in the shaping of national ideologies. Due to his experience in Russia, he can offer first-hand accounts of the devastation wrought by Communism and its atheist hand-maiden. His insights into the cultural changes in the West, that mirror certain aspects of Communist Russia, is a sound warning to those who want to pursue a similar agenda.

A drawback of the book is its lack of theological depth. Hitchens is a journalist, so it would not be fair to expect him to delve into intricate dogmatic issues. However, more interaction with Christian thought is not unreasonable. There is very little mention of Jesus Christ or the gospel message, which is the book's biggest failing. If Hitchens has even the slightest hope that someone would be converted to Christianity as a result of reading the book, he has severely limited the possibilities.

Also, his method of critique follows tit-for-tat responses against popular atheism, but it would have been more effective if he had examined some of atheism's—and his brother's—philosophical underpinnings. For instance, Peter rightly points out that the problem of conflicts in the name of religion are actually problems of human nature. Instead of leaving his answer at this juncture, another step could be taken: what is the atheist's standard for evaluating the value of religious conflict? Given atheism, objective, universal, immaterial moral standards are illusive. An even further step could be taken by pointing out that when an atheist makes a moral statement, he must abandon his precommitments in favour of another that makes sense of morality; in this case, Christianity. In almost every section of the book one wishes that Hitchens went further. While this does not lessen the force of his arguments, he could be more effective if he took this more thorough apologetic approach.

Be that as it may, Peter Hitchens has done a good job at giving answers to the puerile claims of his brother, and basically makes Christopher's book on religion look foolish. It is a shame, because Christopher is an intelligent man and the open flaws of his book, so well pointed out by Peter (and others) is a blight on his

otherwise commendable literary reputation. *The Rage Against God* is a good book to give to atheists who trumpet the arguments of Christopher Hitchens as though they posed a real problem to Christianity. It is also good for those who have doubts about their faith; Peter Hitchens demonstrates the importance of Christianity to a well-ordered society which, in a way, is a proof for its truthfulness.

Ian Clary

Tim Challies, *The Next Story: Life and Faith After the Digital Explosion*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 204 pp. US \$19.99.

Reading Tim Challies' new book, *The Next Story: Life and Faith after the Digital Explosion*, my thoughts kept turning to the Amish. Not perhaps the most expected line of thinking for a book on the digital revolution, but so it was. Specifically I wondered what it was about "horse and buggy" technology that they thought it was a good place to stop. It wasn't like they were some kind of reactionary group who threw off their modern trappings in a fit of primitivism. They simply ceased advancing while the rest of the world around them hurtled on at an ever accelerated pace. Did they see something coming over the horizon that we may have missed?

The Amish dug their heels in technologically several centuries ago; what if we had arbitrarily decided to stop developing say twenty or twenty five years ago? Think of it... no Twitter, no Facebook, no Youtube, no texting, no email, no web browsing at all... maybe even no cell phones. If you are old enough, could you imagine yourself living this way again? If you are young enough that this is all you have ever known, is such an existence even conceivable?

The indispensable nature of social media, or the belief thereof, forms the core of *The Next Story*. Challies opens his book with a series of frank questions concerning technology: "Am I giving up control of my life? Is it possible that these technologies are changing me? Am I becoming a tool of the very tools that are supposed to serve me?" (p.11). What makes this series of questions all the more intriguing is that they come from a writer whose authority, even celebrity, is a direct result of these very technologies.

Tim Challies, for those who are not familiar with the name, is one of the most widely read and followed Christian bloggers. Beginning his online career as an insightful book reviewer and cultural commentator, Challies has become a much sought after conference speaker, media “talking head” and book author in his own right. His daily blog is read worldwide and *The Next Story* is his third published work. In a sense, this gives him an ideal perspective from which to comment on the emerging digital trends.

So then what insights does he offer? In the first three chapters of the book he establishes a “theology” of technology, followed by a quick outline of humanity’s relationship with technology and how that relationship has evolved over the centuries, leading to our present situation. Many will perhaps be surprised, especially coming from a self confessed “techie”, at how suspicious and distrustful he is of new technologies. In his introduction he declares that “technology is a good gift from God”, but his central concern quickly turns to how we have become “slaves to our technology” (p. 13). His intention is not an enthusiastic embrace, but rather that of effective Christian “discernment”.

Chapters four to nine are where discernment plays out in terms of direct application, “showing how we can live with wisdom and virtue in this digital world, using our technologies without being used by them” (p. 17). These chapters comprise the bulk of the book and in them he examines six ways in which the “digital explosion” has altered our lives and suggests appropriate Christian responses.

Beginning with the question of what it is like to live in a world of pervasive communication (Chapter 4), he examines how technology mediates our relationships with one another (Chapter 5), how technology acts as a distraction from what is most important (Chapter 6), the adverse effects of too much information or “informationism” (Chapter 7), its effects on our concepts of truth and authority (Chapter 8), and the question of visibility and privacy (Chapter 9). Along the way, Challies provides many helpful tips for Christians seeking to combat the digital onslaught. For instance, in a world of excess and trivial information and lazy minds, he recommends that Christians should respond by putting more emphasis on memorization, specifically that of scripture (p. 155). He also calls attention to aspects of our digital lives of which we may not be even aware. For instance, he points out that every Google search, every MSN conversation, every email we have ever sent, is fully preserved in the internet ether, and at some point in the future, others

may be able to access that information. For those of us who have been less than discreet or outright sinful in our past online behaviour, this can be a sobering, even chilling, thought.

Challies' ultimate thoughts, however, seem to be directed toward the future. He predicts, and I think he is right in this, that we are on the cusp of very large changes in the way that we live, interact with one another, and even perceive faith. If you think technology is intrusive now, just wait for the next few years. Though this sobering thought underlies the entire book, I found very little to embrace in its possibilities, nor a comprehensive remedy for it being offered. Challies gives many insightful reflections for the individual, but what, for instance, can the church do corporately? Should churches of the future become "technology free" zones, or should we find some accommodation? More importantly, are there ways we can use these new technologies to advance the kingdom of Christ? These are the kind of thoughts which it would have been helpful to expand upon.

As an introduction to a major topic for Christian thinking which has barely been scratched, I believe *The Next Story* is a remarkable start. Tim Challies clearly lays out the major implications of the new digital world for life and faith, and offers responses and remedies that the average reader can implement in her/his own life today. Whether or not this digital explosion will require an outright "Amish" response from Christians is yet to be seen.

Michael Plato

William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint (eds.) *Christian Apologetics: Past & Present: A Primary Source Reader: Volume 1: To 1500*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Publishers, 2009. 498 pp. Hdbk. US\$39.00

Since its start, the Christian church has needed and used apologetics. The New Testament is full of apologetic language, aside from the standard 1 Peter 3:15. Throughout its history, the church has had many noble defenders, the fruit of whose labours remains noteworthy for twenty-first century debates. While apologetic literature is not lacking, a reader of key texts is. This lacuna is now half-filled with the publication of the first volume of *Christian Apologetics: Past & Present*.

The editors are both professors of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, a school notable for its apologetics emphasis.

The book is well-structured and easy to navigate. Each chapter begins with introductory essays followed by annotated primary sources and diagnostic questions. The questions helpfully focus on the issues of the text and how their lessons apply today. It is divided into two main parts, the first on patristic sources and the second on the middle ages. Each of the sixteen chapters, aside from the first, deals with the work of one author. The opening chapter evaluates the various New Testament texts that are apologetic in nature, such as Paul at Mars Hill (Acts 17), or Luke as an eyewitness (Luke 1:1-4). While not in-depth, they are good starting points for further study. Some texts are omitted that would fit well in this chapter like that dealing with the Colossian heresy (Colossians 2) or the Carmen Christi (Philippians 2).

In the first part, the usual suspects of the early church are present such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius and Augustine. The editors happily included lesser-known, but equally important, figures like Aristides and Athenagoras. Curiously omitted are the Apostolic Fathers, especially Ignatius of Antioch and the *Letter to Diognetus*, which are both strong examples of patristic apologetics—especially *Diognetus*, which, it could be argued (anachronistically), fits into the “presuppositional” method that the editors espouse.

The second part, on the middle ages, is useful as it is often thought that this period of “Christendom” had no need for apologetics. However, the major discussions of philosophical theology, like the relationship between reason and revelation or the doctrine of God, were hammered out at this time. The inclusion of Boethius’ “A Treatise Against Eutyches and Nestorius” shows the Christological continuity between the middle ages and the church fathers. In the introduction to this chapter the editors pay attention to the method and terminology used by Boethius in this and his *Consolations*. Of course Anselm and Aquinas are considered, but again the editors introduce their readers to lesser known thinkers like

Raymond Lull and Girolamo Savanarola. In the chapter on Aquinas, his work against Islam is highlighted and has good application for today. The theologians and philosophers dealt with in this part are Western; it would have been good to include those from the Eastern Church for a more holistic treatment.

The editors are presuppositional in their approach to apologetic method and thus point out areas of congruence between their view and their objects of study. However, they do not let this taint their interpretations of history. For instance, in the essay introducing the chapter on Anselm, they do not commit themselves to the sometimes held view that Anselm “presupposed the Christian revelation in his argumentation” (p. 368). This striving for objectivity is commendable and will make this of use to apologists who do not necessarily buy into this school of apologetics.

Having a source reader like *Christian Apologetics* is a tremendous service both to teachers and students. This book should be a standard in college and seminary apologetics courses. It is also handy for those who wish to see how the church has historically defended the gospel for help doing so today. If the projected second volume is as good, this double-resource will prove invaluable.

Ian Clary

Robert Letham, *Through Western Eyes: Eastern Orthodoxy: A Reformed Perspective*. Fern, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2007. 319 pp. Pbk. US\$19.99

Christians in the West have little understanding of Eastern Orthodoxy. Though at odds, Roman Catholics and Protestants have a fairly good take on each others' faith and practice. Both, however, are largely ignorant of their Eastern brethren. All three Christian expressions share in the rich theological tradition of the patristic period and look back to fathers like Athanasius, the Cappadocians,

and the early creeds for their Christology and doctrine of God. After the split between East and West, precipitated by differences in Greek and Latin, the two streams diverged with little confluence. While the West underwent theological growth influenced by medieval and Reformation cultures, and had to undergo the challenges of the Enlightenment, the East was largely untouched by these cultural shifts. As a result, the two sides of the split look very different and often have different ways of expressing their Christian faith.

Robert Letham's *Through Western Eyes* goes a long way to helping Protestants, especially those conscious of their Reformation heritage, understand the theological development and appearance of the East. Letham was a Presbyterian minister in the U.S.A., and has held teaching positions at Westminster Theological Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary. Currently he teaches at Wales Evangelical School of Theology. He has authored important works on the Trinity and Christology that deal well with patristics and is an expert in post-Reformation history. He is more than qualified to write a book of this nature.

While Letham's work does not supersede Timothy Ware's indispensable introduction to Eastern orthodoxy, this is still an important book. The book is divided into three parts, the first on historical matters, the second on theology and the third on the comparisons and contrasts between Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Letham writes with great respect for his subject so that any Orthodox believer could read this appreciatively. He handles the primary source documents, especially of the early church, with precision. The book is clearly written with a glossary of terms provided at the end of the book for help with those difficult theological terms like "substance," "perichoresis," or "filioque." Unfortunately, because the book is geared towards introduction, an index would be useful but is lacking.

The opening part on history works as an introduction to patristics. The early debates over the person of Christ, the resultant creeds, and their significance for the church at large are explored. This is helpful not only for understanding the Orthodox, but church history in general. The fifth chapter carries the story beyond the shared history of East and West into the historical changes in the



Greek churches—this is informative for those who are only familiar with the trajectory that went into the European middle ages. A suggested source that Letham should use but didn't is the work of Baylor's Philip Jenkins, but this does not detract from his overall survey.

The second part on theology is where the issues of what the Orthodox believe is most notable. Letham begins in chapter six with a discussion of prayer and iconography. For Protestants, icons are probably the most visual curiosity of Orthodox practice. It is interesting to learn the craft of iconography where "Novelty is anathema, faithfulness to the archetype all important" (p. 145). This is why characters in an icon all look so similar; it is not their historical likeness that is depicted but the ideal, or archetype of humanity in God's image. Using John of Damascus' early treatise on icons, Letham explains that they are not to be worshiped (*latreia*) but venerated (*proskunēsis*). This is an area of most concern for Protestants who invoke the second commandment against the Orthodox and Roman Catholics. Letham helps us understand that opposition to icons, in Orthodox eyes, is a drift towards Docetism. He also draws some comparison between the Orthodox emphasis on images and the common practice, even amongst the Reformed, of framing photographs or pictures of favourite theologians as means of encouragement in the faith. Letham rightly asks the Orthodox, though, whether the line between worship and veneration is as clear as they believe it is, especially in popular practice.

In this second section readers also learn of the Orthodox emphasis on Scripture, how their services and space are saturated with it. He deals with the cantankerous issue of the *filioque* controversy and the question of theosis, or deification. The final chapter in this part centers on the gospel and the way Orthodox Christians understand how a sinner is justified before a holy God. Letham quotes from early Orthodox theologians like Simeon the New Theologian and Mark the Ascetic to demonstrate the early belief in justification apart from works. While contemporary Orthodox thought does not speak of justification in the juridical terms emphasized at the Reformation, for all intents and purposes, Letham

sees little barrier between the Orthodox and the Reformed view. The Orthodox concern for one who converts from Protestantism is that they adhere to their sacramentology and renounce any memorial view of the Eucharist and affirm transubstantiation and the five sacraments. Justification itself does not come in for questioning or change.

The final part helps readers put everything that they have read thus far into perspective. Letham points out areas of agreement, misunderstanding (both for Orthodox and Reformed) and disagreement, and concludes with suggestions for future discussion between Protestants and the Orthodox. This section summarizes comments that Letham has made throughout the book. For instance, areas of “critical concern” from the Reformed perspective include the Orthodox’s downplaying of preaching, the relationship between Scripture and tradition, the doctrine of the Trinity as influenced by Gregory Palamas, the veneration of Mary and the saints, and the Orthodox’s Arminian-style synergy in salvation. Letham concludes that “Orthodoxy is closer to classic Protestantism than is Rome” (p. 285).

Letham writes from the conviction that the gospel and the Word of God must not be compromised and writes as a committed Reformed Protestant. At the same time, he is also concerned for ecumenical issues of unity across the East/West divide. This book goes a long way towards opening up the doors of understanding between the Orthodox and Protestants. It is a model of fair-mindedness without compromise. *Through Western Eyes* will be of great benefit to students of world religions, missiology or ecumenics and should be read by all who desire to know about those Christians who worship in large buildings, sometimes in different languages, with different dress and a reverence for the early traditions.

Ian Clary