

BOOK REVIEWS

Nettles, Thomas J. *James Petigru Boyce: A Southern Baptist Statesman*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2009. 616 pp. \$29.99.

Many Baptists possess no knowledge of James P. Boyce. Some might be able to identify him as the namesake of a college in Kentucky. Still arguably others could identify him as one of the past presidents of the seminary he helped found. Few, however, enjoy the familiarity with Boyce that Tom Nettles displays in this his latest book *James Petigru Boyce: A Southern Baptist Statesman*, the first major biography written about Boyce in over 100 years.

Nettles's knowledge of and influence upon the Southern Baptist Convention are undeniable. In the 1970s, his seminal work, co-written by the late Russ Bush, *Baptists and the Bible*, provided the historical argument for inerrancy that the blossoming Conservative Resurgence needed. In the thirty years since, Nettles has taught generations of Baptist pastors and theologians, first at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, then Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Theological Seminary, and finally Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where he currently serves as professor of historic theology.

The treatment of Boyce's life begins as he lived it, with Scripture. Citing 1 Corinthians 4:2 and Paul's admonition to live a life of faithful stewardship, Nettles turns the reader's attention to the great gifts of money, station, and ability with which Boyce was endowed. Thus, the entire biographical enterprise is cast in the light of the Bible and Boyce's attempt to live in faithful obedience to it.

For those not versed in Baptist history, Nettles begins not in the century of Boyce's birth but in seventeenth-century Charleston, South Carolina, placing him in the larger context of Baptist life and the birth of the movement in the South. From there the audience is treated to a flowing narrative of Boyce's life and thought. Considerable attention is given to those matters for which Boyce perhaps is most well known, his role in the founding vision for a Southern Baptist seminary—a school that saw its fulfillment under his guiding hand in 1859—and his lifelong dedication to that institution.

Nettles dedicates nearly one-third of the volume to Boyce's theology, both his personal beliefs and his exposition of those beliefs in his text, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*. In these, the author argues, Boyce held and taught a system of theology grounded in the Reformed tradition and informed by contemporary evangelical thinkers, factors that give testimony to the premise that his were the beliefs of "true Baptist theology" (396). The biographer takes his time with Boyce's theology, devoting an entire chapter to his Christology and soteriology, what Nettles calls the cornerstones of Boyce's entire theological system.

I find much to commend here. First, Nettles's efforts represent the first book-length attempt to deal with this influential Southern Baptist in nearly 100 years. Given Boyce's role in the life of the denomination's earliest days, any right understanding of the movement must acknowledge his influence. Second, unlike the 1893 biography by his friend John

Broadus—which has been labeled as hagiographic by some—this work ably deals with the nuances of Boyce’s life and thought and reflects both a heartfelt appreciation for the subject and a scholarly discernment for the foibles and failings of the man.

Readers will appreciate the deftness with which Nettles intertwines historical explanation and biographical detail. Nettles carefully places Boyce within his cultural and theological context in such a way that a novice can follow the flow of history and understand Boyce’s place in it. Likewise, Nettles’s grasp of Boyce’s theology and his own ability to explain the nuanced arguments will aid comprehension and illustrate the importance of theology and the intersection of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. As Nettles argues, Boyce lived the life he lived because of the doctrines he believed, a point well made throughout the book.

Finally, readers should recognize Nettles’s grasp of the historian’s craft. Working from a wide variety of primary source materials—letters, memos, newspapers, etc.—Nettles has crafted a highly readable, engaging story of the life of a man largely. Thus, with good cause, *James Petigru Boyce: A Southern Baptist Statesman* was chosen as one of three finalists for the 2010 John Pollock Award for Christian Biography.

Tom Nettles’s latest effort proves that history does not have to be a simple recitation of facts and dates. Good history is good storytelling. This work proves that sometime the best stories are true life stories.

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Rolnick, Philip A. *Person, Grace, and God*. Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age series. Gen ed. Alan G. Padgett. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. Pp. 280. \$28.00.

Philip A. Rolnick serves as Professor of Theology and as the Coordinator of Exploring Ethics across the Disciplines program at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. His previous publications include *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God* (Oxford Press, 1993). *Person, Grace, and God* is a part of the Eerdmans’ series Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern World. With this in mind, Rolnick sets out to discuss how postmodernism has encroached upon traditional positions within the doctrine of Christian anthropology. He surveys the challenges of postmodernism and includes an examination of the work of theologians and philosophers who have embraced neuroscience and have incorporated the findings of the science into their theology.

Two underlying threads are weaved throughout this work: gift and *incommunicabilis*. For Rolnick, personhood is a gift that comes from God, and personality cannot be communicated; it is “unique and non-transferable, unlike a property such as kindness or an essence such as humanity, which innumerable individuals can share” (11). These threads form the foundation of his argument.

After a lengthy discussion of the etymology and history of the theological concept of “person,” Rolnick investigates the challenges brought by postmodern scholars. He examines

the views of Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Rorty, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida on the self (ch. 4). From his inquiry, Rolnick concludes that the question of person is not a question of “what” but of “who”; and “the question of ‘who’ cannot ultimately be deconstructed” (120).

A large portion of the book is dedicated to a discussion of “gift” as “grace.” According to Rolnick, we cannot be persons except through the grace of the creator: “If personhood is possible, then gift is likewise possible. The confluence of personhood and gift is no mere happenstance. If either personhood or gift were found to be impossible, the other would share its fate” (158). He also states that “to recognize God as creator is to recognize ourselves as recipients of creation, that our very existence and the world in which we live it are gifts. Because we ourselves are gifts, we are persons spiritually predisposed to giving and receiving” (167-68). The concept of giving and receiving is expanded upon later in the discussion.

Delving into a discussion of trinitarian personhood, Rolnick draws upon Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas for support. The challenge, as he sees it, is how we should understand the tension between divine simplicity and the threeness of a triune God. He defines simplicity as “the infinite unity of essence and existence so that what God is and the way God is are one” (192). In this discussion Rolnick unfortunately gets bogged down in philosophical double-talk. Two examples are, “Uniquely, in God the real relations among Father, Son, and Spirit are a ‘between’ that is also an ‘in’” (195) and “God wills Trinity as exceeding the highest good, even exceeding the infinite realization of the highest good in the divine nature” (198). After several readings, these sentences and others remain opaque.

As Rolnick merges his discussion of divine personhood with human personhood, he brings in the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Zizioulas. Continuing with giving and receiving, the author explains that gift giving is reciprocal thus relational on an individual and communal basis: “Receptivity should not be understood as poverty or need, but as active contribution to interaction and thereby to community” (202). Therefore, we are beings in communion. For him, “gift” is “grace”: “Grace [is] the pure gift of self for the other, the Trinitarian life of God is infinite and eternal grace” (205). From this he correctly concludes that “grace is not only soteriological; it is soteriological because it is first and foremost ontological” (213) and he adds “The capacity to say no, both to God and to our fellows, supercharges the encounter of ‘yes.’ Because relationship can be denied, those relations that are freely chosen can become events of grace” (218). For Rolnick, the gift of grace links humanity and divinity both in relationship and in being. In this way, we are created in the image of God.

While this book draws from a vast array of resources and advances the discussion in its field, it is not without flaw. First, the writing was written at such an advanced level that it will leave most of its readers behind. The terminology seems to be pointed toward philosophy grad students rather than at theology grad students. The book demands that the reader bring a lot of knowledge to the reading. It also was somewhat repetitive in its presentation, which further decreases its enjoyment.

The second flaw is a common problem found in most presentations on the human constitution. He explains that personhood requires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

“Personhood does not emerge, at least not in a sustainable manner, apart from the Spirit” (217). Is he suggesting that only believers are persons? Are we not persons because we are created in the *imago Dei* by God?

The third flaw is his lack of differentiation between humans and animals. The only reference to this point is found near the end of the book: “Forgiveness is not something that animals do or need to do, but it is a distinguishing mark and practice of humans and a centerpiece of Jesus’ teachings” (236). Often, presentations on the human constitution are derailed by postmoderns’ claims that we merely are high functioning animals, nothing more. In a book specifically aimed at fending off postmodern challenges, I would expect a more detailed defense than is provided by a single sentence.

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Blomberg, Craig L., *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*. 2d ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic 2009. Pp. 500. \$26.39.

Blomberg has served as Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary since 1986. He published the original version of *Jesus and the Gospels* in 1997. The first edition was well-received. The Evangelical Christian Publishers Association awarded it the Gold Medallion Award, and many evangelical professors adopted it as their primary textbook for survey of Gospel courses.

The most notable changes between the first and second edition include the incorporation of insights from scholarly publications of the past decade; the expansion of material, especially the newer critical methods, the Gospel of John, the quest for the historical Jesus, the canon, and the historical reliability of the Gospels. Also, bibliographies found at the ends of the chapters were updated to 2008. The second edition is about fifteen percent longer than the first edition.

The intended audience is theological students, namely upper-level college students and beginning seminary students (1-2), though he is mindful that scholars, pastors, and laypeople also will be interested in his work. To guide theological students in their reading, he includes questions at the end of each chapter that identify the most important points.

The author describes his perspective as “broadly evangelical” (3). Generally speaking, the positions he adopts are theologically conservative, especially in comparison to the larger world of critical NT scholarship. One aspect of *Jesus and the Gospels* that illustrates Blomberg’s perspective is his concern to demonstrate the historical reliability of the events recorded in Scripture (e.g., 243-244, 257, 259, 261, 266, 281-283, 296, *et al.*).

Blomberg’s purpose in *Jesus and the Gospels* is to provide a concise introduction to the Gospels, giving special attention to five foundational areas: 1) the history of the intertestamental period; 2) the critical methods employed in studying the Gospels; 3) the basic issues tied to the history, literature, and theology of each Gospel; 4) a survey of Christ’s

life with particular concern for his teaching and actions; and 5) a synthesis of the issues linked to the historicity and theology of Jesus himself. Since the original publication of *Jesus and the Gospels*, new works related to the study of the Gospels have appeared, including Jarl Fossum's and Phillip Munoa's *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction to Gospel Literature and Jesus Studies* (2004), Frederick J. Murphy's *An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels* (2005), Clive Marsh's and Steve Moyise's *Jesus and the Gospels* 2d ed. (2006), Mark L. Strauss's *Four Portraits, One Jesus: An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels* (2007), and Charles B. Puskas's and David Crump's *An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts* (2008). However, even with these recent publications, Blomberg's work still retains a degree of uniqueness because it is the only one to explore these five key areas of Gospel research in a systematic manner.

Some will criticize Blomberg's work. For instance, his comments regarding the woman at the well in John 4 will strike some as speculative (77-78). Others will be hesitant to follow him completely in his comments related to Christian social concern (456). Nevertheless, if you view the work in its entirety, you will find that it is an exceptional resource. First, the book provides a concise overview of the Gospels and the major issues related to their interpretation. To be sure, this is no small feat for the information is vast and the issues are exceedingly complex. However, Blomberg is able to present the material in a succinct and accessible manner. He excels in his attempt to provide a "one-stop shopping" textbook for courses on the Gospels (1).

A second commendable feature of *Jesus and the Gospels* is Blomberg's discussion of the history of interpretation of crucial topics (e.g., 102-108, 209-17, 300-3). He gives his readers a sense of perspective regarding the key debates and major approaches employed by scholars. Another positive aspect of the writing is the helpful up-to-date bibliographies at the end of each chapter. The author lists titles topically and according to their degree of difficulty. Furthermore, he is quite thorough, for he includes quality works from diverse theological perspectives.

I highly recommends the second edition of Blomberg's *Jesus and the Gospels*. It is a superior survey of the Gospels written by an evangelical scholar.

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Beeley, Christopher A. "Theology and Pastoral Leadership." *Anglican Theological Review* 91, no. 1 (2009): 11-30.

Christopher Beeley is the Walter H. Gray Assistant Professor of Anglican Studies and Patristics at Berkeley and Yale Divinity Schools in New Haven, Connecticut. He is an Episcopal priest, a founding member and theological consultant for the "Gathering of the Leaders," and the author of *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford, 2008). He is currently writing a book on pastoral leadership in the early church (11).

In 1991-92 Julius del Pino, director of Supervised Ministries at Yale Divinity School, conducted a survey. He discovered that students desired more theology and less practical ministry classes after entering the church field. From the results of this survey, Beeley was inspired to “reflect on the theological heart of pastoral leadership per se, and on the principles of biblical exegesis that inform such leadership” (14). To disclose these principles, he examined the preaching of Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine. He communicated the importance of these preachers for observing a connection between theology and practical ministry.

Beeley’s summary of Gregory showed that pastoral ministry shares the aim of preaching, which is to give the soul wings, rescue the soul from the world, enhance the Christian in his walk, and defy the heavenly realm upon those committed to Christ (17). The Cappadocian shared the chief function of Christian leadership was to guide the baptized believer through ongoing transformation as the individual came to participate deeply in the eternal life of the Trinity. He possessed a rigorous schedule of preaching, teaching, counseling, and the celebrating of the mysteries. He stressed congregation rule and exhorted Christians to remember they aided in God’s healing (20). Beeley related that Gregory understood the importance of Scripture for teaching, preaching, and biblical interpretation.

After spending over half of the article on Gregory’s position, Beeley turned his attention to the preaching of Augustine. He disclosed the importance of Scripture in the preaching of Augustine based on his book *On Christian Doctrine* (23). He rightly concluded that Augustine held to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture and concluded that the canon of Scripture held a summit of authority for salvation (28). However, Beeley did not show the depth in this section that he did concerning Gregory. His limited use of Augustine showed a lack of balance between the two-featured theologians.

In his conclusion, Beeley mentioned John Chrysostom as an example of an individual open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He also expressed Chrysostom taught on the importance of preparation for the preaching event as did Gregory and Augustine (28). Thus, Beeley gave his theory that strong pastoral leadership was a lifelong process that continued after seminary education ended. To address the initial problem, Beeley suggested for pastors and lay leaders to root themselves in the theological core of their identity. Thus, empowering all baptized believers to live out their ministries for the sake of Christ’s kingdom (30).

Beeley’s use of Gregory and Augustine brought out the characteristics of preaching: healing, teaching, comforting, supporting, and directing, which contributes to the field of patristic preaching. He also explored insights on the importance of ordination, the role of the Holy Spirit, apostolic doctrine, and congregation rule. The article lacked interaction concerning the leadership style of the preachers. Since the title of the article claimed an investigation that included pastoral leadership, an examination of some of the major leadership theories would have enhanced the study. However, the article contributes to the discussion on the integration of theology and practical ministry.

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Bass, Christopher D. *That You May Know: Assurance of Salvation in 1 John*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008. 240 pp. \$24.99.

That You May Know is the fifth in the Studies in Bible and Theology series produced by Broadman and Holman in connection with the New American Commentary. In this volume, Christopher Bass, pastor of Redeemer Fellowship Church in Boston, provides a careful exegetical study of the issue of assurance of salvation in 1 John.

Although this book is published by the denominational publishing house of Southern Baptists, its author appears reluctant to embrace a Southern Baptist identity. This new church at which Bass serves as pastor mentions its identification with the Baptist Association of New England, but it never identifies the Southern Baptist Convention among its affiliations. Its greater identity appears to be with two nondenominational groups, the NETS Institute of Church Planting, and Converge Northeast. Likewise, the church chooses an alternative doctrinal confession over the SBC's *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Indeed, though Bass references the *Reformed Westminster Confession* in this book, he never references the *Baptist Faith and Message*, the confession of the largest Protestant denomination in America.

Bass identifies himself as a biblical theologian rather than a systematic theologian. He acknowledges that the doctrine of assurance has primarily been addressed through systematic theology, and that he is aware of just two book-length works in biblical theology on the subject of assurance of salvation (3-5). Unfortunately, this somewhat myopic focus on biblical theology overlooks the fact that most works of systematic theology, not to mention Bible commentaries written by theologians, offer extensive and direct exegesis of biblical material addressing the doctrine of assurance of salvation. Which is more important – the label of biblical theology, or basing one's perspective on a careful exegesis of the text?

Bass describes biblical theology as beginning with the text and allowing it “to speak for itself” (5) – a rather self-congratulatory statement by a biblical theologian – which seems to suggest the implication that systematic theologians may characteristically and intentionally do violence to the text of Scripture. Actually, biblical theologians do not own a privileged corner on truth. Biblical theologians are no more exempt from hermeneutical presuppositions and interpretive filters than are systematic or historical theologians. We all struggle through the hermeneutical arch or hermeneutical spiral to remove our own hermeneutical filters in order to get back to the authorial intended meaning of Scripture. Bass appears to be naively ignorant of the degree to which his own Reformed theological presuppositions play in coloring his exegesis. For example, consider Bass's treatment of 1 John 2:2, which affirms that Christ went to the cross “not for our sins only, but for the sins of the entire world” (1 John 2:2, NASB), a verse which is often cited as evidence against the limited atonement doctrine of Reformed theology. Bass never examines the lexical meaning of the phrase *bolou tou kosmou*, but he rejects the interpretation that Christ's sacrifice was sufficient for all who believe in Him because “it is difficult to support theologically” (82). Bass, thus, does not begin with the text but immediately goes beyond the biblical evidence to an extended quotation from Calvinist writer John Owen who argued strongly for a limited atonement interpretation which Bass describes as the “definitive statement on the issue” with “irrefutable” logic (82-83). (Interestingly, Bass then proceeds to argue that Owen's interpretation is flawed). Bass, then, proposes a similar interpretation in which the “whole

world” refers just to the elect, i.e., the limited atonement view he brought to the text. “Let the text speak for itself,” indeed!

Despite Bass’s assertion of a focus on biblical theology, he begins the book with a rather disappointing survey of views of assurance from systematic theology. Bass’s survey of views is rather truncated and one-sided in that it is limited only to the “historical trajectories” of medieval Roman Catholicism, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Later Calvinists, and Jacobus Arminius. He does add the “Grace Movement” in a later section as something of an afterthought. Bass would have served his readers better by focusing on the views that have had the most impact the contemporary church. Bass’s book was unfortunately published before Ken Keathley’s chapters on assurance of salvation in two books – *Salvation and Sovereignty*¹ and *Whosoever Will*,² which offer a more robust explanation of the theological options available regarding assurance. Bass could have profited from Keathley’s delineation of nine separate views on assurance of salvation (including Keathley’s own “evidence of genuineness” proposal).

The great strength of *That You May Know*, however, is in its exegesis of 1 John. The faith of the early church was evidently called into question by some incipient form of Gnosticism leading to a loss of assurance about salvation. First John addresses this issue, and thus offers our most thoroughgoing treatment of the doctrine of assurance of any book in the Bible. In Bass’s second chapter, he investigates John’s purpose for writing the epistle, including external evidence (the identity of the heretical “secessionist” group addressed by John) and internal evidence (John’s own six stated purposes for writing the epistle). It would have been helpful if Bass had been more specific in exploring how the text addressed the Cerinthian, docetic, proto-gnostic heresies, particularly in relation to the doctrine of the incarnation, but he provides an excellent survey of John’s purpose statements.

In chapter three, Bass builds a strong case from 1 John that assurance is grounded in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Bass also adds a helpful exegesis of John’s description of what it means for believers to be in fellowship with the God who is Light. The rather abrupt shift from a discussion of the supreme sufficiency of Christ’s atonement to the necessity for human good works foreshadows Bass’s endorsement of the view endorsed by his doctoral supervisor Thomas Schreiner, which, though ambiguous at points, has been described as a “means of salvation” approach because good works is a necessary component of salvation, and salvation cannot be won or assured without such good works.³ In fact, Bass’s perspective is virtually indistinguishable from that of his dissertation supervisor Schreiner.

¹Kenneth D. Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 164-90.

²Kenneth D. Keathley, “Perseverance and Assurance of the Saints,” in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism, Reflections from the John 3:16 Conference* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 163-87.

³Thomas Schreiner and Ardel Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 40, 45, 89, 200; Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty*, 166-67, 179-84; Keathley, *Whosoever Will*, 165-66, 177-83.

First John famously presents three tests to assure believers of the genuineness of their faith – the tests of righteousness, love, and belief. In chapter 5, Bass provides a careful exposition of these tests in 1 John, including an excellent discussion of six various views of whether John actually advocated sinless perfection, and Bass's own eclectic proposal (134-42). A more thorough discussion would have been helpful in this chapter of the distinction between the condemning heart and the confident heart in 1 John 3:20-21, and the five marks of a confident heart before God that follow in vv. 22-24 connected by a string of conjunctions.

The sixth chapter provides Bass's proposals about the application of these teachings for the church. He provides five brief case studies to apply these teachings. Unfortunately, like the early Puritans who struggled with assurance because they never knew if their good works were good enough to warrant salvation, the application of Bass's principles does not produce assurance. Indeed, according to Bass's recommendations, professed believers who are unloving, guilty of a besetting sin, or guilty of some particular publicly scandalous sins like adultery should be confronted with the charge that they are not truly saved. This immediately raises two questions. First, it promotes a judgmental culture in which Christians are constantly being judged by fellow believers – not a positive atmosphere for Christian fellowship! Who gave us the right to usurp the place of God and judge each other's salvation? Not Jesus or the Apostles (Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 6:37; Rom. 14:4, 10, 13; 1 Cor. 4:5; James 4:12)! Obviously, not all people whose name is on a church roll are truly saved. But churches should be fellowships of loving encouragement and exhortation, not of judgmental questioning and condemnation (particularly questioning and condemnation made by other sinners!).

Second, all honest Christians are unloving at times, and suffer from besetting sins. We may not commit sins on a short list of publicly scandalous sins, but we sin repeatedly and all too frequently. To deny this is to deny John's admonition against lying by saying we are not sinners (1 John 1:8, 10). Therefore, like the Puritans, Bass's proposal provides virtually no realistic assurance to the believer. Keathley notes that this "means of salvation" view advocated by Bass, as expressed by his mentor Schreiner (and Caneday) in a book subtitled *A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance*, is "long on perseverance and short on assurance."⁴ As Roy Zuck noted in a review of Schreiner and Caneday, this view "comes dangerously close to salvation by works, and it fails to give absolute unqualified assurance of salvation for any believer."⁵ Ironically, was not the basic purpose of the writing of 1 John to provide assurance for believers whose salvation was being questioned by others? And yet this proposal places the current day believer in a no-assurance position not unlike those to whom John sought to bring assurance!

That You May Know is probably too technical for most laypersons, and some of its fruit will be lost to ministers who have some theological training but no facility in the biblical languages. To the expository preacher who enjoys drinking deep from the Word of God,

⁴Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty*, 184; and Keathley, *Whosoever Will*, 182.

⁵Roy Zuck, "Review of *The Race Set Before Us*," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (April-June 2003), 241-42; cited in Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty*, 167, and Keathley, *Whosoever Will*, 165.

however, this book is a very useful resource. Despite its shortcomings, it provides a helpful exposition of 1 John on a subject of great significance in the church. Recommended for expositors.

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Witherington, Ben III, *Jesus and Money: A Guide for Times of Financial Crisis*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010. Pp. 192. \$18.99.

A common ‘preacher joke’ depicts Satan firing multiple attacks at a Christian only to see each attack repelled by the armor of Ephesians 6. The Adversary then sneaks around behind the Christian, fires an attack at the person’s wallet and the Christian falls over in defeat. Ben Witherington III, in his most recent book *Jesus and Money*, aims to help Christians guard against attacks on the wallet and move toward faithful stewardship and radical self-sacrifice for the good of others and the honor of Christ. The author senses that both the recent downturn in the worldwide economy and the “persistence of a distorted prosperity gospel” (57) make the times right for a book of this sort.

Books aiming to help Christians face financial challenges generally fit one of two patterns: either practical advice for implementing budgeting and stewardship habits or general principles derived from the Bible. Witherington’s work fits the second category, though his expertise as a New Testament scholar helps him avoid the trap of offering proof-texts, contrived sound bites, or overly generalized wisdom that could have come from any number of spiritual sources. Instead, Witherington offers a book that is part historical-grammatical hermeneutics, part New Testament theology, and part ethics. The result is a balanced approach to the Bible that takes seriously the counter-cultural stance of Jesus and the early Church, while incorporating a wide variety of witnesses within the canon.

Jesus and Money begins with a prequel that establishes the purpose, framework, and guiding principles for Witherington’s argument. The subsequent 8 chapters provide a roughly diachronic survey of biblical texts and themes pertinent to money and possessions. Chapter 9 summarizes how one should develop a New Testament theology of money, stewardship, and giving; chapter 10 offers practical advice for moving beyond a lifestyle consumed by materialism and greed. Witherington also provides two appendices: one represents his attempt to dispel ten common myths about Christianity and money, and the second is an edited sermon from John Wesley entitled “The Use of Money.” Finally, endnotes are available for those wanting to trace Witherington’s main lines of research. Unfortunately, the book does not contain what otherwise would have been a very helpful index of Scriptures.

Each core chapter is organized according to general introduction, exegesis of relevant passages, and a concluding “And So?” section devoted to the hermeneutical task of bringing the biblical text to bear on issues, both practical and theological, facing Christians and the church. Chapter 1, which looks at Genesis/Old Testament in general, lays the foundation for Witherington’s argument throughout the book by focusing on a creation theology exemplified by Psalm 24:1—“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the

world and all who dwell there.” In Chapter 2, Witherington draws heavily from his book *Jesus the Sage* to elucidate the differing views on wealth within Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on Jesus and the Gospels, though Witherington does not follow the lead of some historical Jesus scholars who depict Jesus as a poor peasant. Instead, Witherington focuses on the choice Jesus made in leading the sort of life that he did and the ramifications of this choice within his teaching and ministry.

In Chapter 5, Witherington moves to Jesus’ brother James, who seems to be carrying forward the counter-cultural teaching of Jesus on financial matters, especially as they affect the relationship between rich and poor within Christianity. Chapter 6 moves the conversation to Luke-Acts; the Gospel of Luke focuses on care for those in need and the early chapters of Acts offer a picture of financial ups-and-downs within the early Christian communities. Chapter 7 is devoted to the apostle Paul, and as part of this chapter, Witherington helpfully provides an extended discussion on remuneration for ministers. Finally, chapter 8 discusses the critiques of materialism and systemic economic injustice set forth by John of Patmos in Revelation 2–3 and 17–18.

Several threads run through the book. Students and pastors should not miss the way Witherington integrates social-science criticism, theological reflection, historical-critical analysis, and ethics. In addition, he frequently reiterates the importance of reading Scripture in context; though the mantra can become wearying. The damage done by those who fail to incorporate the historical and canonical context of a passage justifies the author’s emphasis. Also, Witherington refuses to romanticize poverty and consistently eschews any hints of communism/socialism. These cautions, though, do not prevent him from advocating the radical self-sacrifice geared toward providing for those truly in need, which he characterizes as “community-ism” and “theology of enough.” This balanced approach is perhaps the hallmark of the book and should prove helpful to pastors who must daily deal with people on one side or the other of the financial spectrum.

Readers accustomed to scholarly works should be aware of Witherington’s colloquial style of writing, some of which fails to satisfy. For example, he consistently makes reference to prosperity preachers to the point that these caricatured figures begin to take on the role of the Jews in the Gospel of John. The author could have provided more definition and fewer stereotypes in this regard. Also, Witherington offers a necessary critique of legalistic tithing, though his lack of interaction with the end of Matthew 23:23 may leave some readers wanting. Finally, a few of the exegetical discussions in the core chapters wander afar before returning to their original purpose, but engaged readers will gain a primer in exegesis for the journey.

In the end, at less than 200 pages *Jesus and Money* is an accessible, solid, and timely book. My hope is that we heed Witherington’s advice to not allow the Adversary to move behind our backs and attack us through our wallets.

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Powell, Doug. *Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics*. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006. Pp. 375. \$14.99.

Doug Powell's *Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics* is about just that—apologetics for the Christian. The writing is to the point, accurate, orthodox, in-depth, and easy-to follow. Furthermore, *Christian Apologetics* covers most of the “hot topics” one would encounter from skeptics and the like.

Powell's thesis is that Christians who do not know why they believe what they believe are usually uncomfortable around unbelievers. They often get defensive and belligerent or develop a “fortress mentality.” Instead, believers should embrace the Great Commission, which itself is an offensive strategy, and learn to use the information pertaining to the rationality of the Christian faith (7). Agreeing with this assessment, I submit that *Christian Apologetics* is a timely tool for the Church.

The topics range from “Does God Exist?” to “Is the New Testament Reliable?” In the first section, Powell arms novice apologists with the cosmological (Kalam, Thomist, Leibnizian), design, and moral arguments, respectively. In the moral argument, he gives a brilliant illustration of objectivity within relativism. He provides an example in which shampoo is tested by rubbing it into the eyes of the relativist's dog (86). Another example, this one from J. P. Moreland, exposes the inconsistency of the relativist and involved attempting to hijack a relativist's stereo from his college dorm. Predictably, the supposed relativist objects on the basis of *his* morality (stealing *his* property is wrong). Powell concludes that “relativism . . . isn't merely emotionally offensive. It doesn't hang together logically. As a worldview, it cannot be sustained” (92).

On miracles, Powell begins by defining and giving criteria for what constituted a miracle in the Bible. First, the source of a miracle is God alone. Second, the purpose of a miracle was to prove Jesus' claims. Third, the character of a miracle was good (213-14). Interestingly, and perhaps uniquely, Powell discusses miracles in other religions, namely Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. In each, Powell shows that the origin, purpose, and result of the miracles were not similar to those found in Christian Scripture (224, 228, 232). In the case of Islam, Powell declares that the issue of miracles and the Quran is circular, and furthermore, the revelation is suspicious since it was received in secret—as opposed to Moses receiving revelation in full view of a nation (231).

Regarding the resurrection of Jesus, Powell presents many of the classic arguments (swoon, twin, stolen body, wrong tomb, etc.). The uniqueness of his work (besides presentation and packaging) is found in his conclusion. Because of the context of the resurrection, including the time and the person (especially his fulfilling prophetic utterances), the resurrection cannot be dismissed out-of-hand. Alternative explanations are left to shoulder the burden of proof.

The only drawback to Powell's *Guide to Christian Apologetics* is its brevity. The endnotes could be expanded and a bibliography could be added. Overall, a more comprehensive version of this well-written, brilliantly-illustrated work would serve well as a textbook.

The current volume is very attractive and would incite conversation anywhere the reader is found. I highly recommend Powell's book to all Christians wanting to understand their faith and discuss it with others.

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