

# Reviews



**THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: THE STAGES OF GOD'S PLAN**, by Stephen B. Clark. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2017. Pp. 576. \$24.95 (paper)

One of the problems that often perplexes readers who are beginning to read the Bible seriously is how to connect all the dots that make up bigger picture. The first instinct is to consult commentaries and handbooks. Surely, we think, the experts can tell us what to make of such diverse texts! Therein lies the problem: commentaries all too often miss the forest for the trees—and even general handbooks leave the readers perplexed about how to thread together far-flung passages into broader themes and then stitch themes into the message of the whole Bible. Stephen B. Clark's *The Old Testament in the Light of the New Testament* addresses this problem of fragmentation by appealing to a theological and holistic perspective.

At first glance, it would not seem that a unified message should be hard to show. After all, most church liturgies and calendars assume that the Scriptures cohere as they track the lived-out experience of faith in the form of storytelling and corresponding

prayers and rituals. Moreover, we wonder, don't the luminaries of Christian tradition—venerable teachers like Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and the Puritans—make such similar hermeneutical assumptions? Clark takes his cue from these observations and discerns that the very literary markers and canon of the Bible point to an overall schema or plot begging to reveal its purpose.

Based on such cues, *The Old Testament in the Light of the New Testament* relies on a method of biblical “meta-thinking” that may not please everyone: Clark calls it “stages” of revelation, but it often goes by the label “dispensationalism.” His thesis is that there are seven basic and progressive typologies of divine intervention that unfold within the covers of the Bible, and he uses the first part of his book to explain what these stages are and how they begin, develop, and end.

While such an explanation or interpretive key is not outlandish to someone like nineteenth-century preacher John Nelson Darby and his ilk among more conservative seminaries in the United States, Clark rather points to a pedigree going back to Augustine of Hippo for a less controversial teacher. In fact, while his own layout of seven stages is nifty, Clark

himself is not dogmatic either about the precise number or about the organization and boundaries of said literary structure as long as the core message and the integrity of the Bible is obtained.

The contours of Clark's typology largely develop from his emphasis of the Pentateuch and Joshua in the Old Testament (the Hexateuch) and the Gospels and Revelation in the New Testament. Other textual supports for his schema come from First Samuel and various historical narratives in the Bible, although his book largely ignores the order of Prophets and the Writings. The problem here is not that these books are alien to his interpretation, but *The Old Testament in the Light of the New Testament* simply says little about them. While this book—extensive as it is (576 pages)—cannot handle all the biblical materials, it is implicitly asking its readers to take the author's word that the evidence for his hypothesis exists all over the rest of the Bible. On the other hand, what Clark presents is easy for a novice to follow, persuasively written, and extremely organized.

The book displays a wide array of tools and interests that Clark has obviously spent years researching and processing for the benefit of readers, for there is a trail of earlier books connected to his name. Here are a few of the assets this *magnum opus* provides: First, it is eminently pastoral and useful for churchgoers and non-scholars who have always sensed that the Scriptures are not just for specialists. Second, Clark shows familiarity with resources biblical scholars sometimes ignore, especially in the world

of rabbis and Jewish sages. What other handbook shows knowledge of Jewish sources, stretching from Mishnah to mystics to Maimonides, and can explain these historical sources to lay readers? Traditionally pious Jews also lay hold of gematria—a fascinating but often arcane study of how the Bible utilizes numbers and numeric patterns—and so does Clark. Finally, Clark ushers much of his research into easy-to-read charts and tables that illustrate a bird's eye view of his thesis. My one complaint is that there is no index that pulls together all the print data under specific topics—ironic for a book that otherwise seems to do so for the Holy Book.

The second and shorter part of the book, a series of appendixes that explain Clark's philosophical underpinnings, merit a comment. *The Old Testament in the Light of the New Testament* presents the view that Scripture is perspicacious (a theological and historical word Clark does not use but seemingly would endorse) and authoritative. In our postmodern age, the hermeneutics of suspicion and deconstruction commonly cloud the scholarly guild, and this interpretive perspective often rejects the traditional claim for the Bible's unity and inspiration.

In these last hundred pages or so of appendixes, Clark shows a rare talent for addressing broader implications and assumptions of biblical criticism. He breaks down underlying philosophical issues of epistemology, semantics, theories of language, and hermeneutics in a way that biblical scholars often ignore or assume. Herein is the final contribution that

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Acts 2:14a, 22-41  
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by **Scott Shaef**  
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**Psalm**  
Psalm 115:1-4, 13-19  
Commentary  
by **J. Clinton McCann**  
Liturgy Psalm 115: Psalm 115 is a psalm of thanksgiving that is part of the Epistle reader's lection for Psalm 115:1-2, 14-24, Resurrection of Our Lord.  
Commentary | Bible Text

**2nd Reading**  
1 Peter 1:17-23  
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makes this book worth its price: Clark understands how the modern and postmodern world thinks and imposes its judgments, and he suggests how the nonspecialist should respond. While his book may not find many enthusiasts among more skeptical scholars, it cheers the hearts of those who believe that “faith seeking understanding” also applies to the study of the Scriptures.

Mark Whitters  
Eastern Michigan University  
Ypsilanti, Michigan

**REFORMATION COMMENTARY  
ON SCRIPTURE: OLD TESTA-  
MENT, VOLUME 5, 1–2 SAMUEL,  
1–2 KINGS, 1–2 CHRONICLES,**  
edited by Derek Cooper and Martin  
J. Lohrmann. Downers Grove, IL:  
InterVarsity Academic, 2016. Pp. 799.  
\$60.00 (cloth).

As this time of Reformation exuberance winds down, several pastors with whom I meet on a semiregular basis were commenting on their discovery of just how tedious the process of retrieving Bible passages used by that intrepid band of reformers in the sixteenth century can be. To be sure, special volumes are available for Luther and Calvin, but what about the host of other commentators actively plying their trade amid those formative years? Even more irksome are the difficulties encountered in tracking down the context in which the various passages appeared. Nevertheless, all agreed that what the various Reformers thought about the Bible is extremely important for a proper evaluation of their

contribution and impact. The question is: how is this achieved?

According to the series’ publishers, these *Reformation Commentaries on Scripture* were produced with the following four goals in mind:

Renew contemporary biblical interpretation through exposure to Reformation-era biblical interpretation.

Renew contemporary preaching through exposure to the biblical insights of the Reformation writers.

Contribute to a deeper understanding of the Reformation and the breadth of perspectives represented within it.

Advance Christian scholarship in the fields of historical, biblical, theological, and pastoral studies.

Ambitious as these goals might seem, this volume, at least, succeeds admirably on all four fronts. In an age when reader response trumps the history of interpretation in biblical studies, the present volume provides a fascinating take on these historical books of the Old Testament. Unsullied by the frequent excesses of the post-Enlightenment hermeneutics, the histories are frequently interpreted as harbingers of subsequent New Testament passages. As for proclamation, the Reformers tend to see models and negative examples for contemporary Christian behavior in the wide-ranging cast of characters that we encounter in these pages. The breadth of Reformation perspectives is amply attested, as well. We do hear from Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, but the bulk of citations hark back to Luther’s pastor, Bugenhagen, Lucas Osiander, and Viktorin Strigel. Reformed representatives include Konrad Pellikan and Johannes

Piscator. The English reformation is well represented by Andrew Willet and John Mayer. Although the Radicals and Anabaptists eschewed publishing commentaries on these particular books, we are treated to an occasional remark from Menno Simons, Hans Denck, Balthasar Hubmaier, and Dirk Philips with regard to God's promise to David of an eternal dynasty. One might expect only Protestants to appear in these pages; yet commentary from Catholic scholars Alonso Tostado and Cardinal Cajetan pepper the presentation with their rather different point of view. All of this serves to advance scholarship in the fields of history, Bible, theology, and pastoral care, not least by the unearthing and translation of little known works.

When these goals are coupled with an absolutely first-rate introduction to the historical context of the Protestant Reformation, the Reformers and how they read scripture, and the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, the result is a delight. The explicit format is a welcome guide on our journey, as well: (1) Following Reformation era practice, the text is divided into pericopes, or passages, drawn from the English Standard Version of the Bible. (2) These passages are then followed by very useful overviews of the subsequent comments pointing out exegetical, theological, or pastoral concerns by the editors. Finally (3), headings identify the nature of the comments gathered together within their matrix.

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The reviewer's copy was curiously flawed in that pages 475–522 were inserted upside down and backward, right after 2 Kings 17, the description of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria, rendering the so-called “ten lost tribes of Israel” a textual as well as a historical occurrence!

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**SAVED BY FAITH AND HOSPITALITY**, by Joshua Jipp. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. Pp. 220. \$20.00 (paper).

In his most recent work, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, Joshua Jipp has written a stimulating and accessible work that challenges the reader to no longer see hospitality as a mere addendum to the Christian ethic but as an indispensable component of the Christian life. His argument for the book stated simply is that “the God of the Christian Scriptures is a God of hospitality, a God who extends hospitality to his people and who requires that his people embody hospitality to others” (2). Jipp contends that the church must see its identity as a people who have received the hospitality of God for the sake of friendship with him and who share this hospitality with others, thereby transforming strangers into guests who ultimately become friends.

With a stated purpose of equipping the church for the mission of hospitality, Jipp demonstrates the integral role hospitality plays throughout the

biblical narrative and then allows this ancient theme to shape our thoughts and actions on a host of modern, socio-political issues. *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* is a work of both sound, biblical exegesis and insightful, practical theology. The book has a great deal more practical application for parish pastors than the limited space one review will possibly allow me to articulate. Consequently, I have chosen to highlight three ways this book can serve as a major benefit to ministry leaders.

First, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* provides a wealth of beneficial material for sermon preparation. Jipp leads the reader through the diverse terrain of Scripture and illuminates the theme of hospitality at nearly every stop. But what makes Jipp's exegetical analysis most profound is his ability to connect the theme of hospitality to the larger literary purposes of works such as Luke-Acts, the Pauline corpus, and the Gospel of John. The pastor could certainly use this book as a helpful tool for creating a sermon series on God's hospitality to be received and shared.

Second, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* courageously speaks to three current barriers the church and its leaders must overcome if it is to effectively bear witness to the hospitable, triune God: religious tribalism, xenophobia, and greed. Jipp challenges the pastor to see these issues primarily through a lens of biblical hospitality rather than one's personal benefit or even one's political affiliation. Jipp explores not only how these issues should be viewed through a lens of hospitality but also how the church

should actively respond to these issues as well. The hospitality of God calls the church to initiate friendships with the religious other in their day-to-day lives. The hospitality of God calls the church to befriend and fight for justice for the immigrant. Lastly, the hospitality of God calls the church to share its resources and thereby create bonds of solidarity with others rather than participate in the unabated cycle of desire, consumption, and detachment that plagues our society.

Third, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* will challenge pastors at the personal level to willingly enter into the role of guest and not only the role of host. Frequently, ministry leaders are tempted to maintain a position of power as host in their interactions with others. They are tempted to be the ones who always invite people into their homes or invite groups of people to church events or ministries on their own terms and in their own territory. But Jipp challenges ministry leaders to frequently and willingly humble themselves in the position of guest. Grounded in the examples of Jesus and the apostle Paul and their willingness to become guests in the homes of others, Jipp demonstrates that this is an integral way for bonds of solidarity to be formed and the hospitality of God to be shared.

I find myself hesitant to mention a critique of a book that I have found to be so personally illuminating and helpful. Nevertheless, I offer a critique, not aimed at the material included but what I found to be missing. As I

read the book, I craved more practical ministry ideas for implementing a culture of hospitality within a local congregation. I thought of questions such as, “how do I best survey the needs of hospitality in my particular community?” I also thought of practical ministry ideas that could have been mentioned—such as hosting a political forum that discusses immigration policy or hosting a dinner that intentionally brings together a community’s diverse populations with different cuisines—that would have served the book’s purposes well. To be fair, I believe Jipp would applaud such ministry efforts but say that they are best left to the ministry practitioner in one’s local context. This may be true. But the work left me wishing at times for more tools of implementation that could assist pastors and parishes as they seek to improve their ministries of hospitality at the ecclesial level.

In conclusion, I highly recommend *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* for parish pastors and church leaders. The exegetical fruit is bountiful. The practical theology is timely. How well it would serve the church to slowly and thoughtfully digest this book and the biblical theme of hospitality it elucidates. How well it would serve the church if local congregations could put the book into practice by worshipping the triune God afresh for the hospitality we have received and by sharing it with others.

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**GOD AND DIFFERENCE: THE TRINITY, SEXUALITY, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF FINITUDE**, by Linn Marie Tonstad. New York: Routledge, 2016. Pp. 312. \$49.99 (paper)

In her text *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude*, Linn Marie Tonstad employs queer theory as a challenge to both historically sanctioned and contemporary Trinitarian theology, and offers new scriptural metaphors to function as complements and expansions on our narratives of both the immanent Divine and the present ecclesiastical community.

Tonstad specifically critiques the subconscious imposition of hierarchy into the Trinity, as found namely in the metaphor of Father-Son. She expertly outlines how this relational metaphor bears, especially in biblical context, a familial subordination and expounds on how filial obedience as envisioned in kenotic Christology can burden the internal equality of the Trinity with structures of abuse. She also questions the imposition of gendered relationships (namely, heterosexual monogamous marriage) onto the Trinity. She challenges the interpretation of perichoresis as interpenetration, noting that a theology that presupposes fixed boundaries to bodies that must be “penetrated” for one to indwell in another is heavily male-centric. Tonstad also rejects perfect equality between the immanent and economic Trinity; incarnation into finitude, specifically into a creation defined and bounded by sin, necessitates differentiation between the two.

Tonstad walks a difficult line, admitting to the fallibility of human metaphor to capture the relationship within the Godhead yet accepting the necessity of human language as the best conveyor of critical theological work. Tonstad also explicitly rejects the use of Trinitarian theology as a *shibboleth*, a factor by which one’s ideological loyalty might be assessed so that clear lines of orthodoxy can be established. More effectively, Tonstad models an almost pastoral process of theological dialogue throughout her text: affirming nodes of connection and intersection, revealing where the history or metaphor fails, and then confessing her own process as imperfect and likely in need of correction and expansion. This is a truly postmodern method in which theological “conclusions” are ever subject to further transformation. Her example is a wise model for congregational education and pastoral care—namely, that we should be prepared to be “that which [others] grow beyond.”<sup>1</sup> Are we, as professional theologians, amenable to adapting and growing, to accepting that our religious convictions might not be the singular orthodoxy by which righteousness is defined?

In this first book, Tonstad has executed an in-depth study of six contemporary theologians: noted Catholic priest Hans Urs von Balthasar, Anglican priest Graham Ward, Anglican priest Sarah Coakley, Reformed German theologian Jürgen Moltmann,

<sup>1</sup> “We are what they grow beyond; that is the burden of all masters.” Master Yoda, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, directed by Rian Johnson (Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2017)


German theologian Wolfhart Panenberg, and constructive theologian Kathryn Tanner. Tonstad also weaves in the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, whose Trinitarian contributions (she laments) have been neglected because of a seeming lack of practical application.

Tonstad relies most heavily on the work of notable queer theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid, best known for *Indecent Theology* (2000) and *The Queer God* (2003). In the key chapter “Interlude,” Tonstad employs familiar (to queer theorists and theologians) specifically sexual language to communicate key arguments in her new Trinitarian proposal. While the explicit language she employs may shock those less familiar with the practice, it exemplifies a core concern in Trinitarian

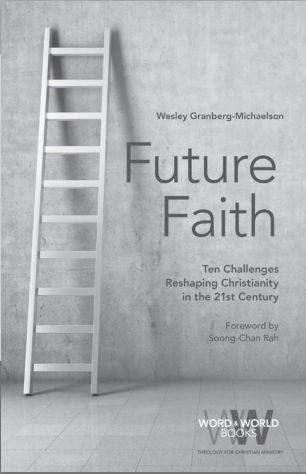
theology: how do we communicate the scandalous nature of a God who is both three and one? Are we open to new metaphors that will startle our congregants from complacent creedal recitation into self-examination and communal reflection?

Although Tonstad aligns herself with radical feminism and with the LGBTQ community, to prescribe Tonstad’s text as the antidote for woman- or queer-exclusionary practices in the church would be a gross misreading of her intent. She states outright that she has no interest in the exclusive/inclusive argument that dominates Christian cultural conversation today. She additionally expresses antipathy toward the “mainstreaming and bourgeoisification” of lesbian, gay, and bisexual lives into a single issue (i.e.,

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marriage equality). Pastors who have actively advocated for the inclusion of members in same-gender relationships may be shocked by Tonstad's aversion, but it serves as a necessary reminder: the queer experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other non-cisgender/heterosexual individuals does not end at the affirmation of marriage. Congregational leaders who wish to offer a welcome to LGBTQ people must be ready for a reconsideration of a number of issues, not only limited to sex and gender.

Tonstad's rich Trinitarian exploration might have been confined to abstract discourse without her final chapters, in which she moves to integrate the foundations she has laid (both theological and queer) with alternative scriptural metaphors and an applied eucharistic theology. She suggests alternate Trinitarian metaphors that sidestep issues of inherent hierarchy, such as light and, in the tradition of Miroslav Volf, dance. She envisions the congregational act of communion as a concrete link between the economic and immanent Trinity, a grand feast in which not only the three of the Godhead are fully united but to which we are invited as adopted coheirs with the nonsubordinate Son. She specifically draws on the medieval eucharistic theory of impanation, in which the eternal Word assumes a bread nature in order to allow (in contrast to Trinitarian models that require penetration) two bodies to exist in the same place without one overpowering the other.

Tonstad affirms the Eucharist as a unity of God and creation with eschatological consequences, driving the worshipping community toward

an end in which we dine together not *on* the body but *as* the body of Christ. Such a vision realized will require the upending of a number of hierarchical structures, both in our abstract theological discourse and in our practical congregational formats. Tonstad readily admits that her own efforts will likely be found wanting when such an end is achieved. But in the meantime, both her theological and anthropological conclusions and her didactic model as exemplified in this first publication serve as an excellent contribution to the way forward in Trinitarian theology.

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**BONHOEFFER'S RECEPTION OF LUTHER**, by Michael P. DeJonge. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 288. \$95.00 (cloth)

Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran. Say it again. Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran. Although his long-standing association with his contemporary Karl Barth has sometimes led us to believe Bonhoeffer was more Barthian than Lutheran, and although evangelicals (Eric Metaxas chief among them) like to claim him for their cause, the truth is simple: Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran.

DeJonge opens his book with simple statistics. Bonhoeffer quotes Martin Luther more than he quotes any other theologian—870 times—and usually approvingly. Karl Barth, by contrast, gets fewer than 300 citations in Bonhoeffer, and theologians

like Augustine, Aquinas, Kierkegaard, and Calvin each get only a few dozen citations.

Frequency alone fails to establish influence, so DeJonge offers a more nuanced and compelling thesis. “Bonhoeffer thought his theology was Lutheran, and he was justified in thinking so” (7). DeJonge believes this thesis has interpretive value, because taking Bonhoeffer’s Lutheranism “seriously generates better interpretations of his texts in their context than readings that do not” (7). It especially facilitates coherently interpreting what are otherwise especially difficult problems in Bonhoeffer scholarship.

Offering this thesis, DeJonge then unpacks first how Bonhoeffer understood himself as a Lutheran, and second what it might mean for Bonhoeffer to consider himself a Lutheran. Much hinges on this method. It offers itself as a compelling model for interpreting any theological figure. Consider first how authors *give* themselves their own self-understanding, engage their self-understanding charitably, then consider more broadly whether their self-understanding comports with a broader historic understanding of the tradition. Or, as DeJonge once more summarizes it, “Bonhoeffer understood his own thinking to be Lutheran (in a narrow, insider sense of Lutheran), and he was justified in that (in a broader, outsider sense of Lutheran)” (10).

Failing to notice the Lutheran character of Bonhoeffer’s thinking results in a variety of interpretive problems. For DeJonge, chief among these is the inattention to the connection between Bonhoeffer’s theology

and Luther’s two-kingdoms thinking. Similarly, attending to the influence of Luther on Bonhoeffer highlights Bonhoeffer’s academic focus on “the church as the present Christ or, what is the same, the place where the gospel is preached and heard” (14).

The book opens with a consideration of Luther Renaissance scholars’ impact on Bonhoeffer, with particular attention to Karl Holl. Although Holl is not widely known today, he is recognized as the initiator of the Luther Renaissance. Bonhoeffer’s close engagement with Holl illustrates how early and deep Luther is in Bonhoeffer’s thinking. Intriguingly, Bonhoeffer even offers a correction to Holl’s hyper focus on conscience, instead grounding justification in Christ, a move that has significantly influenced our theology of justification yet today.

Christology takes center stage in the book as a whole. DeJonge maps the influence of Luther on Bonhoeffer’s single-agent Christology. “The heartbeat of Lutheran Christology is the christological ‘is’—this man is God—which translates into the exclusive agency of the person of Christ. . . . [I]f there is anything about the Lutheran tradition that Bonhoeffer sees with [special] clarity and pursues with abandon, it is the exclusive christological agency of the person of Christ” (67).

Then, from “Christ is,” DeJonge notes that Bonhoeffer moves to “Christ is present” and finally to “Christ is present as Word, sacrament, and church-community.” Sound Lutheran? You bet!

Something I particularly love about DeJonge’s approach: he has a way of situating Bonhoeffer, placing

him within a particular tradition and historical moment while also reading him generously. Having outlined a variety of theologies of two-kingdoms that arose in the twentieth century, he says of Bonhoeffer that his “two kingdoms thinking is of course of a particular type. . . . [F]rom early through the late period of his thinking, Bonhoeffer thinks in terms of the two kingdoms, although his thinking adjusts, to borrow a phrase from *Ethics*, in accord with reality” (102–103). This is the kind of author and scholar you want to spend time with, somebody who generously reads his subject of inquiry and even enlists that author in the interpretation of his own development.

In the late portion of the book, DeJonge takes time to disambiguate Bonhoeffer from the Anabaptist theological lens, especially the work of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas. Such disambiguation is essential, because the association of Bonhoeffer with Anabaptism “leads to a number of misinterpretations.” So he takes time in the Anabaptist chapter to demonstrate Bonhoeffer’s noncommitments to nonviolence over-against the misinterpretations of Hauerwas and Yoder (143).

A book on Bonhoeffer necessarily must include notes on resistance. “There has been consensus for several decades among political historians of the early modern period that European theories of resistance found their first articulation in the Lutheran tradition” (198). So even if much has been and needs to be said about Luther’s influence on Hitler and the system Bonhoeffer was resisting, failures to note the connection between the Lutheran

articulation of resistance and Bonhoeffer’s commitment to resistance result in a misinterpretation of the theological grounding of such resistance.

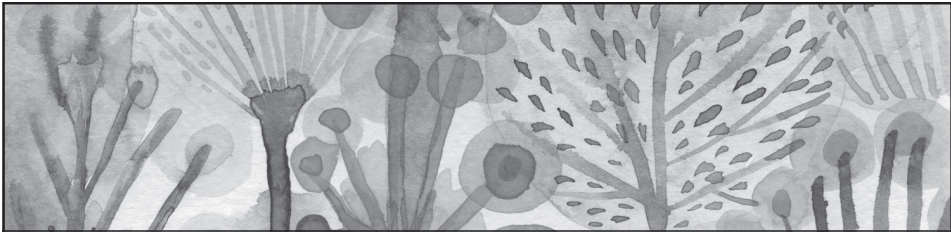
For Bonhoeffer, as for Luther, an authentic understanding of the doctrine of justification results in an abiding commitment to the vocation of a Christian, which Bonhoeffer interprets as responsibility. DeJonge quotes his World Alliance Lecture: “vocation is responsibility, and responsibility is the whole response of the whole person to reality as a whole” (249). Over-against a pseudo-Lutheranism that divides reality into independent spheres, with Christ an authority over only some of those spheres, DeJonge sees that Bonhoeffer, in a deepening of Luther’s key insight, centers in on this concept of responsibility (*Stellvertretung*). Bonhoeffer is not just influenced by Luther. He also offers a “critique of Luther according to what he considers its own best standards” (248). In theology, there’s really no better form of reception than that.

Clint Schnekloth

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**SALVATION BY ALLEGIANCE ALONE: RETHINKING FAITH, WORKS, AND THE GOSPEL OF JESUS THE KING**, by Matthew W. Bates, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. Pp. 256. \$24.99 (paper)

Stanley Hauerwas is reported to have said that he doesn’t much care for Lutheranism because it makes salvation something that happens between



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our ears. Now, Hauerwas is known for witty aphorisms that go to the hearts of matters, but in this case he oversimplifies. Still, one can see in his criticism the long-problematic issue: for many Christians, faith is a matter of intellectual assent (sometimes anti-intellectual assent) or of mere passive trusting. Nothing is required for salvation but for a person to accept that certain facts or assurances are true or to trust in those assurances, to “have faith” or “trust Jesus.” The salvation offered in this call to faith has little existential impact on the believer’s daily living.

In his impressive book *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King*, Matthew W. Bates challenges such an understanding as contrary to the biblical witness on faith. He argues that the word “faith” and its overtones—in such slogans as “saved by faith alone” or “faith in Jesus”—should be replaced by “allegiance.” By a close and critical reading of the New Testament and of literature of the same era (e.g., the work of Josephus), he demonstrates that the Greek word usually translated as “faith” (*pistis*) actually carries more the meaning of “keeping faith with” or “remaining faithful to” or “acting in accord with” than it does of passive acceptance. The response to the offer of salvation, as it is portrayed in Scripture, is not a mere passive acceptance but rather a pledge of allegiance, of discipleship to Jesus the Lord and his way.

Bates is a Bible scholar with a PhD from Notre Dame who teaches Bible at Quincy University, a Catholic college in Illinois, and it is as a biblical theologian that he writes this book.

He closely examines a slew (perhaps most) of the scriptural passages where *pistis* figures prominently—individual verses as well as larger pericopes such as Romans 4 and Galatians 3—and teases from them this deeper, clearer meaning or intention of the word. He acknowledges that there are certainly places where *pistis* may adequately be translated as “faith” or “trust” and understood with the usual overtones of trusting and relying. But he demonstrates at length that in the most important of the passages, the sense that should be conveyed is that of living in a way that is consistent with the example set and taught by Jesus.

To be clear, Bates does not argue for what Lutherans might call “works righteousness” (at least he claims he does not). The call to salvation is always prior to the call to faithfulness, and it comes freely given, irrespective of the status of the hearer. But he is also frank about the conclusions of his research. Reminding one of Bonhoeffer’s analysis of the Sermon on the Mount (to which he curiously makes no mention), Bates asserts, “We are . . . saved by grace through *pistis*. Salvation comes from outside ourselves as the Christ gift. Yet we must respond to that gift by giving allegiance to Jesus as Lord” (104, emphasis added). It is the nature of the response to the offer of salvation that is at the heart of Bates’s critique of the traditional understanding of faith.

Bates founds his assertions in his view of the nature of the gospel. He outlines a quite orthodox and traditional explication of the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed regarding who Jesus is and what he did. But he lays

more emphasis on the ascension of Jesus than does much of theology. The ascension of Jesus is his enthronement as Lord of the universe, his vindication and exaltation by the Father. His offer of salvation must then be seen as directed toward the reclamation and reformation of the entire creation to the original intention of the creation—not just to the salvation of individual souls. The kingdom of Heaven—or the Lordship of Jesus—is to be manifest in a renewed heaven and earth. His authority is already established, and the call to faith in him—that is, the call to salvation—is a call to participate in the new earth and in new structures of relationship now, even before the ultimate denouement.

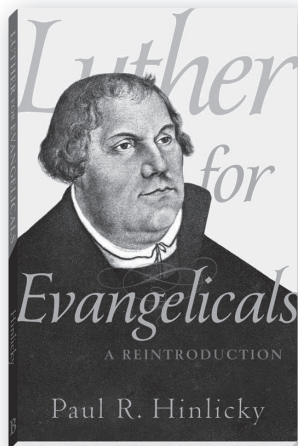
There are some curious lacunae in Bates's discussion. Perhaps they stem from his not wanting to confuse his *biblical* theology with *systematic* theology (at least with systematic theologians who are not Reformed). But it would have enhanced his explanation

at several points to have pointed to the Mannermaa or Finnish School of Luther Studies, Stanley Hauerwas, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For Lutherans, this book will likely reopen neuralgic disputes about “third use of the law” or the “parenthetic sense of the gospel.” But that can only be good, as faithful ones study and reflect on the gospel's call to fidelity in life and thought.

In fact, Bates encourages such discussion. His style is mostly accessible and free of inner-circle jargon. In addition, he ends each chapter with questions for discussion. These questions range from those designed to assure that the discussants understood the chapter in the same way, to those that invite reflection on the practical implications of the book for the individual and for congregations. In this way, he helps make his book even more important and helpful for reflection by people of faith.

Dwight J. Penas  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

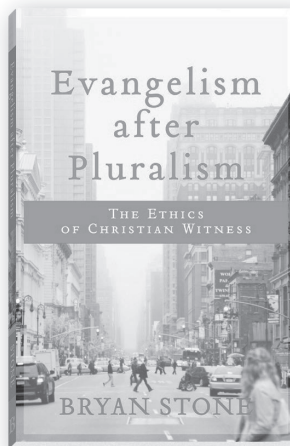
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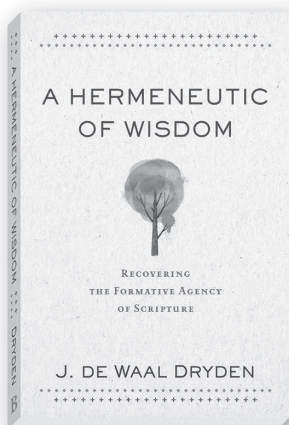
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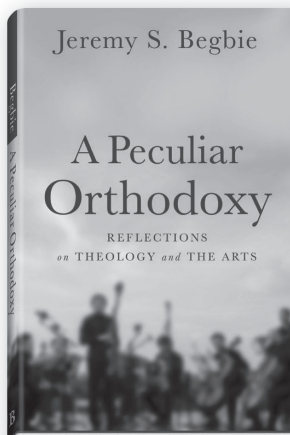
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