

## Book Reviews

*Early Christian Mission (Volumes One and Two)*. By Eckhard Schnabel. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2004, 1,928 pp., \$90.00 hardcover.

Eckhard Schnabel's two-volume set *Early Christian Mission* humbly yet authoritatively reveals the author's unapologetic, intelligent, exhaustive, and very lucid defense of his conservative understanding of the Christian church's early evangelistic mission. The sheer scope of Schnabel's research and presentation is daunting to the most energetic reader because of its breadth and scope.

*Early Christian Mission* is comprised of two volumes and thirty chapters, the first volume regarding primarily Israel's eschatological expectations as well as Jesus' and the Twelve's mission, and the second volume regarding Paul and the Early Church. The introduction for volume one consists of three chapters exploring the history early Christianity as the history of missions, questions and issues of method, and chronology and events. Part one presents chapters dealing with God's promises reflected in Israel's eschatological expectations and expansion of the theme of 'God's people' in early Jewish texts and the Second Temple period. Part two reveals God's fulfillment of the promises through the mission of Jesus (including in and to Israel, the mission of the Twelve, and Jesus and the Gentiles). Part three presents new beginnings as reflected in the mission of the apostles in Jerusalem. Part four discloses Schnabel's viewpoints on the mission of the Twelve from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Volume two continues with part five, beginning with pioneer missionary work as reflected in the mission of the apostle Paul. Part six promotes the theme of growth as revealed through the consolidation and challenges of the early Christian churches. Part seven concludes with some implications, namely, the identity, praxis, and message of the early Christian mission. Back matter includes maps and figures, a very extensive bibliography, and equally extensive indices.

There are many strengths in Schnabel's text. First, Schnabel shows clear support for the precedent of house church planting which he exegetes especially from the Pauline writings, while also showing balance by noting that house church planting is not the *only* legitimate form of New Testament church planting, making clear that house church planting is not the de facto or default approach in each respective church planting situation. This shows the author's balance, practical honesty, and openness. Based upon Schnabel's textual research, I counted at least *thirty* references or inferences to house churches revealed in the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles.

A second strength is Schnabel's extensive use of primary sources (the Scriptures themselves) and also secondary sources such as the early church fathers, especially from the earliest centuries of church history. This is

especially important for Western evangelical workers serving in Eastern, Greek, and Russian Orthodox contexts.

A third strength is shown by how Schnabel gives reasonable, logical alternatives when addressing, questioning, and refuting historical-critical liberal scholars and their challenges, rather than merely spouting pre-understandings and presuppositions as so many classical and current liberal scholars tend to do in their writings. When Schnabel offers alternatives or critiques to the viewpoints of others, he is intellectually and historically honest enough to term conjecture as conjecture or hypothesis, especially when it is his *own* conjecture about a matter. When he calls the hand of liberal scholars, Schnabel does so with humility and with level-headedness as he offers reasonable alternatives and lucid defense of the historicity of Lukan and Pauline accounts. He offers firm yet fair refutations of critical scholars who speak (regarding missiological and evangelistic points in scripture) from the confines of declining state churches. There is strong implication in such rebuttals that such scholars really are not qualified to be speaking to the issues of church planting, church growth, missiology, etc., when in fact such scholars themselves are not part of vibrant churches practicing intentional obedience and discipleship regarding the missionary task of the church. How can a scholar or leader point someone in a direction in which they have not been themselves, or genuinely and intelligently speak to a discussion of such things?

A fourth strength is Schnabel's extensive use of citations, especially of the annotated type. I found myself often highlighting the annotated citations as much as the text itself in order to aid later follow-up research.

A fifth strength of the text is the theological and missiological depth of the listed bibliography. It is a treasure trove in and of itself and has already shown itself useful to me within my own church-planting context of Russia. The bibliography includes various useful lists and appendices such as extensive charts and maps, sources referenced in both volumes including Second Temple literature, New Testament-era Apocrypha, Apostolic Fathers, Church Fathers and Christian authors, pagan authors, inscriptions, and papyri, names referenced within the text, all subjects referenced, an index of scriptural and ancient text citations, and a geographical index assisting with the multitude of references made regarding actual and possible sites visited by Paul and the other apostolic leaders. Additionally, Schnabel includes many very useful lists especially relating to Paul's church planting work and missionary journeys.

A final strength is that the text regularly impacts the reader with its devotional nature and tone, even providing seed material for missiological sermons. Schnabel adds tremendous value to the text via presentation of his exhaustive research within a myriad of disciplines as well as an excellent grasp of a plethora of extra-biblical and rabbinic literature which can be brought to bear upon the subject of early Christian mission. These are fields in which there seems to be a contemporary dearth of competent, published, conservative, evangelical missional scholars willing to reference such literature while at the same time maintaining a reasonable and conservative evangelical balance in hermeneutic and application balance in using such sources.

A prime reason which Schnabel gives for writing his text (with which many will agree) is that contemporary mission proponents, especially mission societies and sending agencies, in his words, “are not seeking to provide exegetical explanations or to engage in theological discussion when presenting models for missionary work and paradigms for effective evangelism . . . typically, understanding among evangelicals about the early Christian period and about the endeavors of the earliest Christians is, more often than not, unconsidered, and sometimes naïve or romanticized.” This is why Schnabel goes into such exhaustive detail exegeting pertinent Biblical texts along with presenting his research concerning the historical and social conditions of life in the first century. The author admirably fulfills the purpose of building a solid exegetical and theological base for mission. In this sense, his work fills a sizable gap (especially in the conservative evangelical realm) that has existed primarily since the last full study of the early Christian missionary movement was published a little over 100 years ago (Adolf von Harnack’s *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*). *Early Christian Mission* integrates old and new insights and both historical-geographical and exegetical-theological material into a comprehensive description of the missionary movement of the first Christians. Schnabel has provided the modern evangelical church with a crucial, up-to-date resource to better ground mission efforts.

A few limitations should be observed. *Early Christian Mission* is a formidable text because of its length and scope of issues treated, and therefore is more suited to doctoral-level students and perhaps some upper-level master’s students in the fields of church history, missiology, and mission praxis courses. The breadth and the depth of the material at times can be overwhelming and may seem superfluous, until the reader remembers that Schnabel is systematically not only making his own points, but also methodically refuting well-entrenched moderate and liberal viewpoints within the world of academia regarding the accuracy and historicity of the biblical books of Lukan and Pauline authorship. Such a meticulous presentation of a myriad of well-documented, well-thought out, and well-presented scholarship is necessary in order to reasonably and effectively interact with other scholars holding such differing positions. Further, at times it is difficult to follow the paragraph structure of the text because of the use of different text fonts and sizes, causing confusion as to whether the discussions presented are wholly Schnabel’s arguments or those of someone else. Additionally, if the reader is not familiar with the Apostolic Fathers, early church Fathers, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and strategic Hebrew-language material such as the Targums, Talmud, Midrashim, etc., the full usefulness of Schnabel’s work cannot be realized.

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*Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*. Edited by Herbert W. Bateman IV. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2007, 480 pp., \$29.99 paper.

*Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* is a compilation of papers delivered to the Hebrews Study Group at the annual ETS meeting in 2004, and was edited by Herbert W. Bateman IV (Professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute). Bateman identifies four warning passages, noticed in a chiasmic structure, under the headings: “Warnings to Hear” (2.1-4; 12.14-29), and “Warnings to Trust and Obey” (3.7-4.13; 10.19-39), centered around “A Harsh Warning” (5.11-6.12). Given that Arminian and Reformed systems differ in their conclusions on any number of passages—and the Epistle to the Hebrews contains several interpretive difficulties in its own right—the warning passages in Hebrews provide an apt ‘playing field’ of discussion. Generally the four presentations range along the spectrum of Arminian and Reformed thought (averaging forty three pages each), and are followed by responses from the other three participants (average fifteen pages each). Author, Greek Word, Scripture, and Subject indices compose the back matter.

Bateman’s aim here is to “expose existing tensions and provide various ways in which four scholars with differing theological grids interpret them in the literary and historical context of Hebrews” (83). In the conclusion George H. Guthrie states that “more discussion on the problem of apostasy in the church” would be an apt outcome of this volume (435). *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* accomplishes both the editor’s aim, and sets the stage for further dialogue and study. It is a work related to systematic, biblical, and pastoral theology, placing in one publication what those in biblical studies would have to gather from a number of commentaries and/or journal articles. The limits of this review do not permit extended interaction with the four interlocutors; the briefest of summaries will have to suffice, followed by a statement of Guthrie’s concluding remarks, and criticism.

Grant R. Osborne (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) provides “A Classical Arminian View.” Osborne takes a “commentary” approach, analyzing the various texts under the headings: “The Danger of Drifting Away,” “The Greater Danger of Losing God’s Rest,” “The Danger of Apostasy,” “The Consequences of Apostasy,” and “Facing the Consuming Fire.” Osborne concludes that several propositions should be set aside, including that the warnings are merely hypothetical and intended primarily to stimulate endurance, and that any who commit apostasy were not true believers in the first place—since they didn’t persevere (the Calvinist position). In the end Osborne argues that “Hebrews is describing a very real danger of apostasy that true believers can commit, and if they do so it is an unpardonable sin from which there is no possibility of repentance, but only of eternal judgment” (128).

“A Classical Reformed View” is presented by Buist M. Fanning (Dallas Theological Seminary). Fanning takes a synthetic approach, analyzing the five warning passages in light of five themes apparent in each: “Description of Those Who Fall Away,” “Nature of This Fall,” “Consequences for Such a Fall,” “Desired Positive Response,” and “Encouragement to the Readers About God’s Faithfulness.” He proposes that “The warnings in Hebrews about falling away and the exhortations to endure are intended to urge the readers to maintain faith

in Christ's high priestly work, not to provoke fear that they may lose their standing with God, nor primarily to test the genuineness of their faith" (218).

Gareth Lee Cockerill (Wesley Biblical Seminary) presents "A Wesleyan Arminian View." He begins by citing that "The author of Hebrews has formulated these passages as part of his pastoral strategy in addressing the condition of his hearers" (257-258). The structure of his comments follow Osborne's, analyzing the five warning passages and providing a conclusion. Cockerill concludes that "Hebrews envisions the possibility of an apostasy from which those once in faith cannot or will not return because they have severed themselves from the culmination of God's plan of salvation in the Son of God" (289).

Randall C. Gleason (The International School of Theology—Asia) provides "A Moderate Reformed View." At the outset he states that "it is critically important to exhaust our understanding of the original context of the book" (337)—which in his view was written "to genuine Jewish believers facing persecution by their countrymen prior to the destruction of Jerusalem" (337). Gleason's major chapter headings: "The Historical Setting of Hebrews," "The Old Testament Background of Hebrews," "The Nature of Judgment," and "Assurance in Hebrews" provide the basis for his conclusion: "I offer my treatment as a means to achieve a greater balance between warning and assurance by interpreting the warnings in light of the author's primary Old Testament example—the Exodus generation" (377), which leads him to believe that Hebrews' warnings concern "the threat of covenant discipline rather than the loss of salvation" (171).

George H. Guthrie (Union University) presents the conclusion, which in itself is a critical review of the book. He begins by rightly commending the contributors for their passionate analysis of the text, and ethos toward one another. He admits that while his views parallel Fanning's, he is not the referee of the presentations, but simply one "attempting to cast light on the broader canvas, along the way raising a number of open-ended questions for further reflection and study" (431). This reviewer agrees with Guthrie's suggested areas of further study and dialogue: 1) Discourse-Analysis, 2) the "echoes" (437) of the Old Testament, 3) identification of the original audience, and 4) Hebrews' corporate, eschatological, and spatial tensions.

While the variegated structure of the presentations prevented the book from becoming dull, for greater clarity on the matters one wishes that the four contributors were forced to follow the same format (i.e., commentary or thematic), and/or come to terms on the same issues. This would have reduced the need for each contributor to re-qualify their ideas when responding to each other; while these responses were insightful, at times they were also redundant. Nevertheless, due to the quality of scholarship and courtesy of dialogue, this reviewer finds *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* a valuable resource for biblical studies, and recommends it to every student of the book of Hebrews.

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*Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities*. By Roger E. Olson. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006, 250 pp., \$25.00, Hardcover.

Surely no controversy has foisted itself upon the Protestant psyche and ethos so persistently and tenaciously as the Calvinist/Arminian debate. Roger Olson does not believe the differences between these two theological camps, tracing back at least to the Arminian Remonstrance of 1610 and the Calvinist response at the Synod of Dort (1618 & 1619) are ultimately bridgeable. But he does believe that much ignorance and confusion prevails on both sides of the chasms separating these fellow believers. Olson argues that those chasms are real but fewer and narrower than most realize. He is convinced that a fresh attempt to recover something of the full-blown shape of Arminian theology on the basis of its historical roots and subsequent development according to primary sources will prove his point.

A quick review of the ten myths Olson attempts to de-bunk make clear the provocative, fascinating and, I believe, timely and welcome nature of this volume: Myth 1: Arminian Theology Is the Opposite of Calvinist/Reformed Theology; Myth 2: A Hybrid of Calvinism and Arminianism Is Possible; Myth 3: Arminianism Is Not an Orthodox Evangelical Option; Myth 4: The Heart of Arminianism is Belief in Free Will; Myth 5: Arminian Theology Denies the Sovereignty of God; Myth 6: Arminianism Is a Human-Centered Theology; Myth 7: Arminianism Is Not a Theology of Grace; Myth 8: Arminians Do Not Believe in Predestination; Myth 9: Arminian Theology Denies Justification by Grace Alone Through Faith Alone; Myth 10: All Arminians Believe in the Governmental Theory of the Atonement.

Olson's audience includes both Calvinists and Arminians. Neither group evidences the kind of clear grasp of the controverted issues needed where the unity of the body of Christ is threatened and where the Golden Rule in theological converse ought to be practiced. Calvinists need to know what they are shooting at so that they can shoot straight and Arminians need to recover the breadth and depth of their own tradition.

Olson acknowledges that one often encounters semi-Pelagian and even Pelagian ideas sporting around as Arminian theology. But rather than acquiesce to such theological amnesia, drift, or distortion, Olson believes in "turning to history for correct definitions and not allowing popular usage to redefine good theological terms." Thus Olson "turns to leading Arminian theologians past and present to define true Arminianism." Surely Calvinists caricatured as hyper-Calvinists can empathize with these sentiments on a personal level. In many ways, Olson is simply calling for and contributing to the possibility of fair play where the inevitable Calvinist/Arminian controversy plays itself out.

Olson's treatment of this very relevant theological controversy provides a major and illuminating contribution to all who wish to clarify the issues involved. As a reformed theologian, I found myself both chastened and better educated upon reading Olson's clear delineation of the Calvinist/Arminian divide. The great strength of the volume is simply the light it sheds on the character of classic Arminian Theology. But the by-products of Olson's work

promise equal benefits. Oslon's treatment offers welcome warnings to those who carry the label of Arminianism but actually hold semi-Pelagian and Pelagian views. For Calvinists, the book makes clear that the distance between us and our Arminian brothers is narrower than many of us imagined while sharpening our comprehension of differences that remain.

Chapter Four, which refutes the myth that the heart of Arminianism is belief in Free Will, should prove especially helpful and undoubtedly corrective for many Calvinist readers. I published an article several years ago in which I designated Arminian protectiveness of libertarian free-will as "the Arminian holy of holies." I was wrong. Olson makes it clear that the crux of Arminian antipathy for Calvinism stems from the threat it poses to their notion of God's loving character. Over the years my own suspicion has grown that something like this tends to simmer just below the surface, sometimes even unconsciously, where Calvinism is encountered.

Such protectiveness for the loving character of God, expressed in a desire to see all sinners saved, presents a much more formidable challenge to Calvinism than mere fixation upon the wholly extra-biblical notion of libertarian free will ever could. From both a Calvinist and perhaps even more so, from a Barthian standpoint, the question arises as to whether "loving character expressed as a desire to save every sinner saved" arises from biblical teaching or actually comes from outside the witness of scripture and then functions as an alien norm before which difficult passages such as Romans 9 and Ephesians 1 (and arguably the whole trajectory of biblical teaching on election in both testaments) are compelled to yield.

But never mind. Olson's purpose in this volume is not to engage in the inevitable and ongoing contention between Calvinists and Arminians, but rather to make that debate more honest. And Olson has succeeded. Fair reading of classic Arminianism proves the orthodox and evangelical character of this stream of Christianity. Further, it argues for the possibility and wisdom of accommodating Calvinists and Arminians within a denomination such as for example, the Southern Baptist Convention, to which I belong. I heartily recommend this book to all who wish gain a true grasp of authentic Arminianism. Olson provides an opportunity to get the facts "from the horse's mouth" as it were.

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*Mary for Evangelicals: Toward an Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord.*  
By Tim Perry. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006, 320 pp., \$24.00, Paperback.

Over the last twenty years Protestants, especially evangelical Protestants, have given new and serious attention to Mary, the mother of Jesus. This new look at Mary represents one stream within the now rising tide of evangelical voices determined to participate in ecumenical engagement with both Roman Catholic

and Orthodox theology. Timothy George, J. I. Packer and Charles Colson among many others have embraced such dialogue as the necessary response to biblical concern for unity within the body of Christ. By surveying key Marian Scripture texts and the development of Mariology from the patristics to the present, Perry has made a genuine contribution such ecumenical conversation.

Perry argues that the New Testament treats Mary in two distinctly different ways; as person and as symbol. The development of Marian doctrine has seen the virtual eclipse of Mary the person by Mary the symbol. Such loss of the person of Mary compromises evangelical faith because of her significance for the doctrine of the incarnation. The centrality of both the incarnation and Christology and their interrelatedness for any authentically biblical, or indeed any historically grounded Christian theology, seems secure within the evangelical psyche and ethos. What has not been sufficiently realized, according to Perry, is the crucial role Mariology must play in any fully biblical comprehension of the Incarnation. For evangelicals, a robust biblical Christology provides the chief protection against the lapse of Mariology into unbiblical encroachment upon the soteriological and mediatorial turf reserved for the one mediator between God and humanity, Jesus Christ. Faithful reading of scripture and survey of historical theology, Perry contends, will provide resources for such evangelical re-assessment of Mary, the person who always “leads us to Christ.”

Mary “the person” provides an abiding model for believers of all times, primarily in terms of her perseverance in faith. Mary believed God’s word to her and clung to His and her son in the face of extraordinary declarations by God’s messengers, her own inability to see the whole picture of God’s doings, and plans for either herself or her son, and eventually, threatened persecution. Mary the symbol, as depicted in Luke, John, and Revelation, serves to model the corporate body of Christ extended in space and time.

In a controversial concluding chapter entitled “Advocate: Toward a Doctrine of Mary’s Work” Perry offers some preliminary musings regarding what he calls “an attenuated Mariology.” Perry defends the notion of viewing Mary as in some sense an “advocate” and “mediator!” Such a brief and provocative crescendo seemed somehow disappointing given the lengthy biblical and historical theological foundation already in place. One expects that Perry will explore and defend his provocative conclusions more fully in future publication.

Perry approaches the possibility of intercession by departed saints by first noting the universal practice of intercession for fellow believers here on earth, even at great geographical distance. Such intercession is not considered either remarkable or as an encroachment upon redemptive or mediatorial prerogatives achievable only by Jesus Christ. Against this background, if one believes that departed saints enjoy an awareness of earthly believers, the suggestion that they might intercede on behalf of their earthly brothers and sisters seems likewise unremarkable. Whether earthly prompting of intercession should obtain is another matter but, according to Perry, not obviously outlandish either. Perry does concede that no direct biblical mandate or even sanction for such advocacy or intercession exists. Still, on the basis of “cumulative evidence” within the

scriptures, he defends the practice of expecting and even prompting such intercession as at least plausible.

The church militant might count on intercession by the church triumphant if such departed brothers and sisters are, as the scriptures teach, one with the church universal and a “great cloud of witnesses.” Our communion with any believer anywhere rests upon the sole basis of our communion with Jesus Christ. The possibility of intercession implies no mediatorship except by the one mediator, our savior and lord Jesus Christ. The One who intercedes for us is not only our way to Him, He is our way to them, and theirs to us. Still, Perry concedes that, lacking biblical injunction to seek intercession from the “saints above,” most protestant theologians would not sanction the practice, especially given the history of idolatrous attachment to such saints by many who plunge headlong into such practices.

Perry finally argues for the relegation of this practice as a matter of secondary importance; thus allowing for both its practice and its denial within the church. For those who choose to make use of this possibility, requests for intercession by Mary rests upon the same basis as does such access with regard to other saints, only that, as with other saints, the intercessor is a specific person with a unique history, not a generic intercessor. And, what a unique history Mary brings to the table! Still, Perry does view as blasphemous the notion that Mary is in a position to sway or overturn verdicts of God the Son against which Luther railed so insistently.

On the highly contentious notions of Mary as mediator and co-redemptorist, Perry offers serious and typically Protestant refutations but also notes that these matters remain mired in older discussions and thus cry out for a fresh look. Explicit calls for non-Roman Catholic contribution regarding these subjects issued in Vatican II ought to be embraced, contends Perry, if for no other reason than to ensure that current Protestant rejection of the controverted titles for Mary rests not upon blithe and sloppy adherence to “the faith of our fathers” but upon our own convictions, confirmed by the fathers but also authentically ours.

Perry’s effort does provide a serious contribution to current re-appropriation of the doctrine of Mary, especially in his tracing of the history of development of Marian doctrine. And Perry’s consideration of the possibility of Marian intercession and even a kind of mediation by Mary models a kind of openness of spirit without which the pursuit of Christian unity cannot advance, much less succeed. Nevertheless, as Perry concedes, unity at the expense biblical truth, where primary tenets of faith are in view, can never be truly “Christian.” Perry’s attenuated Mariology will likely prove unpalatable in certain key respects by both Protestant and Roman Catholic observers; a plight that often befalls would-be peacemakers within the church. The usefulness of Perry’s work for the advancement of ecumenical understanding or even achievement will depend not only upon its openness to Roman Catholic sensibility but first and foremost, its serious comprehension of Protestant sensibility.

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*God, Marriage, and Family*. By Andreas J. Köstenberger, with David W. Jones. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004, 448 pp., paperback, \$15.99.

Andreas J. Köstenberger serves as professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. David W. Jones serves as assistant professor of Christian Ethics at Southeastern. Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern, wrote the foreword for the book, and the preface lists others who made significant contributions. The front matter of the book opens with nearly six pages of commendations from such noteworthy evangelical names as J. I. Packer, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, and Paige Patterson.

The authors wrote *God, Marriage, and Family* out of conviction that the cultural crisis in this arena is in fact a spiritual one, and that “the only solution is a return to, and rebuilding of, the biblical foundations of these institutions (p. 19).” They purposely placed “God” at the forefront of the title to reflect their goal of putting God “back at the center of marriage and the family (p.20).” Chapter 1 is merely six pages and clarifies the purpose, approach, and scope of the book. The authors note not only the cultural confusion and decay with regard to marriage and family, but also the lack of distinction between the world and the church. Their solution is an attempt to provide a “biblical theology” of marriage and family, one that investigates and is founded upon the Bible itself.

Chapters 2-4 deal with marriage in the Bible. Chapter 2 examines marriage in the Old Testament as the authors explore Creation, Israelite history, the wisdom literature, and numerous Old Testament examples. Chapter 3 examines marriage in the New Testament as the authors explore Jesus’ view on marriage, Peter’s comments on marriage, Paul’s vision for marriage, and the paucity of specific New Testament examples. Chapter 3 deals primarily with Paul’s contribution since his is by far the most extensive treatment in the New Testament. Chapter 4 evaluates three commonly held views on the nature of marriage: marriage as a sacrament; marriage as a contract; and, marriage as a covenant. After making a biblical case for marriage as a covenant, Chapter 4 finishes with some specific implications of this view for today.

Chapters 5-8 look beyond the marriage relationship to biblically answer the question, “What is a family (p. 93)?” These chapters cover several issues, but the bulk of the material relates to children and parenting. Chapter 5 explores the Old Testament view of family by examining the Israelite conception of family, the roles of fathers, the roles of mothers, procreation, the roles of children, the training of children, and specific examples of families. Chapter 6 explores the New Testament view of family by examining Jesus’ example, Paul’s teaching, more specific examples, and the implications for today. Chapter 7 tackles contemporary issues such as childlessness, abortion, contraception, artificial reproduction, and adoption. The authors evaluate several methods and options relating to these issues in light of biblical principles. Chapter 8 discusses special issues in parenting (discipline, single parenting, etc.) and spiritual warfare as it relates to marriage and family. Chapters 7 and 8 essentially deal with contemporary issues and dilemmas in light of principles gained from previous chapters.

Chapters 9-12 attempt to provide a biblical guidance for specific issues. Chapter 9 deals with singleness. The authors examine singleness in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the early church while carefully noting differences between the ancient and current situations. Chapter 9 then addresses some specific issues and groups. Much of Chapter 9 deals with sexual concerns.

Chapter 10 deals with homosexuality. The authors critique the morality of this issue against the nature of marriage and family, the Old Testament teachings on the subject, and the New Testament teachings. Much of chapter 10 interacts with and evaluates contemporary material and stances on this issue. The chapter ends with a summary of the biblical verdict against homosexuality.

Chapter 11 deals with divorce and remarriage by examining the Old Testament, the teachings of Jesus, and the teachings Paul. The authors basically examine New Testament teachings in light of Old Testament precedent, paying particular attention to the “exception” clauses that allow for divorce. Chapter 11 interacts with and critiques a plethora of contemporary positions. The authors are careful not to be more demanding or vocal than Scripture, yet they are equally careful not to ignore scripture.

Chapter 12 deals with qualifications for church leadership that have to do with marriage and family. The authors discuss marital faithfulness, divorce and remarriage, children, and singleness as these issues pertain to church officers. Chapter 12 demonstrates that church leaders must exemplify the principles drawn out in the Chapters 2-11.

Chapter 13 is merely six pages and “synthesizes” the material in Chapters 1-12. The book contains a great deal of back matter: an extensive, chapter-by-chapter bibliography (pp. 277-300); a personal and group study guide (pp. 301-352); in-depth notes pertaining to each chapter (pp. 353-416); and, multiple indexes (pp. 417-448). The back matter totals 171 pages and constitutes more than one-third of the total book.

There are no major weaknesses in *God, Marriage, and Family*. The authors accomplish what they set out to do—provide a biblical, God-centered foundation for this arena. In so doing, they also prove their thesis—the cultural problems (and church problems) in this arena are essentially spiritual problems. The primary weakness of the book is its personal and group study guide. Many of the questions simply ask for participants to look up and regurgitate statements or definitions in each chapter. At times this section seems more like preparation for a weekly quiz than guidelines for a group study. That said, the application questions and weekly assignments should provide, respectively, some nice group discussions and some effective conversation starters for couples at home.

*God, Marriage, and Family* certainly has its strengths. First, the format is appealing. The flow of the chapters is logical. The headings and subheadings are clear, making it easy to find specific material later. The charts are clear and help visualize the argumentation. Due to the exhaustive nature of the notes, the book helpfully uses endnotes instead of footnotes. Busy pastors or teachers who might use this book will definitely benefit from this format.

Next, the authors display a thorough grasp of and interaction with contemporary views and stances on each topic. The reader gets the feeling that the authors have really “heard” those with whom they disagree and understand their argumentation. Although the authors clearly disagree with many

contemporary views, they are gentlemen about it and manage to evade simple “straw man” depictions. In short, the authors are fair.

Finally, the conclusions are biblical. This aspect of the book is by far its primary strength. The authors examine specific passages and are careful to place texts within contexts. Surely not everyone in Evangelical life will agree with each interpretation (a staple of Evangelicalism), but no one can accuse the authors of making the Bible say what they want it to say. They provide clear reasoning and argumentation for their interpretations of texts and for their disagreements with other interpretations. The book aims to provide a biblical foundation and it accomplishes this goal.

*God, Marriage, and Family* will make a nice reference volume for the pastor or teacher who wants to explore these issues and educate the church on them. Each chapter provides a starting point for study and the format provides a nice outline for teaching. Plus, the teacher will find an incredibly helpful bibliography for further, more in-depth study of each issue. The bibliography alone is a tremendous asset. The book would also make a fine addition to a Christian ethics class, particularly as outside reading to supplement classroom discussion. I recommend *God, Marriage, and Family* as a starting point for study and as a useful format for teaching.

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*Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures*. Edited by Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden. Leiden / Boston: E. J. Brill, 2006, xvi + 416 pp. € 155.00 / US\$ 209.00 hardcover, cloth binding.

This captivating volume stands as one of the clearest proofs to date of just how much the Septuagint studies have evolved in recent years. Only a few decades ago one could hardly find a comprehensive, reliable guide to the field of Septuagint research. Today the same reader would stand amazed at the variety and usefulness of resources available to a wide range of readers and interests. The volume edited by Kraus and Wooden continues and complements the steady stream of earlier studies focusing on the Septuagint, such as N. Fernández Marcos *The Septuagint in Context* (ET; Leiden: Brill, 2000), M. Müller *The First Bible of the Church* (Sheffield: SAP, 1996), M. Hengel *The Septuagint as Christian Scriptures* (ET; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), E. Tov *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem: Simor, 1997), K. Jobes and M. Silva *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000) and most recently T. McLay *The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). The editors designed their volume primarily for the more advanced reader, student and scholar alike, collecting the most recent developments in the field as well as exploring their importance for a

variety of adjacent fields: biblical theology, textual criticism, and the theory of translation, to name just a few.

The task of bringing an up-to-date presentation of the field is undertaken by the editors themselves in the opening study, "Contemporary 'Septuagint' Research". They divide the issues and challenges in the study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures into four domains of research, highlighting the recent progress in the area of LXX translation and interpretation of either the LXX as a whole or of its individual books, charting the theological landscape of several particular books or passages, and ending with a pertinent analysis of the history of the LXX reception in Early Judaism and Christianity. Each of these major fields of inquiry are treated in turn in the four major sections of the book.

In the first section, the reader is introduced to one of the most recent developments in the Septuagint studies, the much needed and overdue modern translation(s) of the Septuagint. The seminal work *La Bible d'Alexandrie* originated under the guidance of Marguerite Harl, with over 14 volumes already published, is now reciprocated by the English language effort of New English Translation of the Septuagint (very recently published by Oxford University Press in 2007) and the German project *Septuaginta Deutsch* (LXX.D). Several cardinal issues regarding the very essence of the Septuagint as translation are rehearsed in W. Kraus' article "Contemporary Translations of the Septuagint: Problems and Perspectives", in which one finds an overall, informed presentation of the problems and challenges involved in translating the Septuagint. Equally relevant and astute is the contribution of A. Pietersma addressing the tension between those who see in the LXX primarily an exegetical-theological reworking of the source text as opposed to those who see it simply as the result of bona fide translation done with the best tools available at the time. In their respective chapters, C. Boyd-Taylor explores further the importance of the Septuagint as a theological mirror reflecting the beliefs of its times and translators, while B. Wright probes the LXX influence on the pseudepigraphic *Letter of Aristeas* and the writings of Philo.

The second section of the book will be of particular interest for the researcher dealing with case by case matters emerging either from various books: R. Hiebert on Genesis, K. De Toryer on Joshua, G. Wooden on 2 Esdras, and A. Schart on Amos; or from various passages: W. White on Job 1:8b and P. Ahern-Kroll on Zechariah 1-6.

The third section assembles studies that cast a wider net on the theological data-base provided by the LXX. While each individual LXX book deserves to be approached in its own right, room must be made for a more comprehensive understanding of various LXX theological themes, such as the studies of Messianism in the Septuagint, by H.-J. Fabry, or idol worship, by C. Bergmann. S. Kreuzer traces the intricate history of the Septuagint *qua* text from the Old Greek to the various recensions. Particularly engaging is the contribution of M. Rösel in "Towards a 'Theology of the Septuagint'". His convincing case that such a theology not only ought to, but also can be written rests on two cardinal requirements: no forced uniformity across the books, and no failure to recognize the distinctive nuances of a Greek based text as opposed to a Hebrew based text. This latter issue has to be one of the most fundamental questions confronting

those undertaking a comparative study of the Hebrew and Greek textual traditions in which the Jewish Scriptures have been preserved.

The last group of articles explores with sharpness and clarity the importance of the Septuagint as a theological text in the furnace of ideas of the Early Judaism and Christianity. It would be difficult to find a finer collection of analyses on the use of the Septuagint in the New Testament: from its use in Paul (F. Wilk), to its use in Hebrews (M. Karrer); from the use of LXX Minor Prophets (H. Utzschneider), to the investigation of a potential allusion to Ps 40 in Mark (S. Ahearne-Kroll) and the study of the reception and development of the Psalms in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity (R. Brukner). The complexities involved in tracing textual relationships are handled with mastery by K. Jobes' analysis of the textual traditions in 1 Peter, and by B. Ego in a study of textual variants in Tobit.

Compared with the suffocating density of activity in both research areas of Hebrew Scriptures and Greek New Testament, the field of Septuagint studies, hardly out of their infancy, offers the biblicist opportunities and challenges available only in the open spaces not yet overcrowded. Guided by the eloquent contributions presented in this volume, the future participants will find a worthy and reliable chart for the research awaiting them as they push the frontiers even further. The editors are to be congratulated for mapping the field with both rigor and enticement. The enthusiasm in recommending this volume is tampered only by its sizzling price tag for the cloth edition, as impeccable as it stands. E. J. Brill succeeded in maintaining their reputation of offering valuable resources for biblical studies at very challenging prices. Fortunately, the SBL, as the copyright holder for the volume, has stepped in and reissued a paperback edition in their Septuagint and Cognate Studies series at a much more affordable price tag (details available at [www.sbl-site.org](http://www.sbl-site.org)). Regardless of the reader's choice for either one of the editions available, the substance of the studies in this collection makes it imperative reading for any serious student of the Septuagint.

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*Come Out From Among Them: 'Anti-Nicodemite' Writings of John Calvin.* Translated by Seth Skolnitsky. Dallas: Protestant Heritage Press, 2001, 317 pp. \$22.00.

*Come Out From Among Them* includes translations of several writings of John Calvin that, amazingly enough, have not yet appeared in English, gathered under the sub-heading of 'anti-Nicodemite' writings.

It's hard to believe that there are any writings of John Calvin that have not yet been translated into English. However, Seth Skolnitsky is to be congratulated, not only for finding these untranslated pieces, but also for the potent content of these writings.

*Come Out From Among Them* gathers two letters, two treatises, and four sermons of Calvin directed to those who had tasted of the Reformation and yet remained within the Roman Catholic church. The first letter was written in 1540, a year which included two French Protestant martyrs as recorded in Jean Crespin's 1570 Martyrology. The next writings were written in 1543, 1544, 1552, and 1562 respectively. From this vantage point they overview Calvin's thinking from four years after his first edition of the *Institutes* (1536) to two years prior to the death of the Reformer in 1564. Regardless of the dozens of French Protestants martyred almost every year during this entire time, Calvin's arguments became more lucid and forceful over time—"Come out from among them!"

The book begins with a 23-page introduction by the publisher. The remainder of the book comprises the translation into English of the primary material from the French, as found in the standard source for Calvin, *Ionnis Calvinii opera quae supersunt omnia* (1863-1900). Skolnitsky included the occasional explanatory footnote providing the French original and an expansion on his translation.

The translation style is quite literal for the most part. In several instances, as compared to the original in my possession (a reprint with notes from Albert Autin [Paris: Brossard, 1921]), there may have been noted some rounding off of forceful figures of speech. For example, "there is none that would like to chew on it" is rendered "there is none who shows himself to have understood" (99). Also, "they cannot suffer that one scratches their itch" is translated "they cannot bear for anyone to cross them" (100). While these slight differences may betray different originals, they may also note some dynamic influence on some points. For the majority of the text, however, the translation is clear, lucid, accurate, and sound.

*Come Out From Among Them* may in fact provide insight into several contexts. First, it provides the polemical context from and for which Calvin's theology was developed. As such, it speaks of evangelism and worship, fellowship and separation, and persecution and martyrdom during the Reformation era. Second, it reminds a contemporary audience of the reasons for the Protestant Reformation. Third, it provides a lens through which to view some current theological fads.

I heartily recommend *Come Out From Among Them* as a singular primary resource for all students and scholars interested in the shoe leather issues of the Reformation era.

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*UnLearning Church: Just When You Thought You Had Leadership All Figured Out.* By Michael Slaughter with Warren Bird. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2002, 224 pp, \$19.99 hardcover.

The title of the book *UnLearning Church* is captivating. This is particularly true at a time when many churches find themselves in the midst of cultural changes

and some are unable to contextualize the Gospel to the culture. This is a book that you will love or hate but nevertheless one that clearly calls the church to be on mission.

Michael Slaughter is the Chief Dreamer (Pastor) of Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio. He has pastored the church since 1979 and seen the attendance grow from 100 to 4,000.

The purpose of the book is threefold. One, it is an urgent call for spiritual and prophetic leadership. Two, it is a call to break the rules of conventional wisdom in order to translate God's ancient purposes to today's postmodern world. Three, it is about visualizing and articulating alternative pathways of ministry. Slaughter provides a framework for the journey by dividing his book in three sections. The first section shows how unlearning churches are connecting people with a high-touch experience in a high tech-world. The second section shows how unlearning leadership empowers the people of God to be on mission. The final section shows how unlearning life creates an authentic demonstration of kingdom living.

Slaughter writes from the perspective that the church must move past the jargon of church to the practice of our faith in Jesus Christ within the context of our culture. He states, "It's time to go beyond knowing and believing God's truth to experiencing and demonstrating God's presence" (front flap). While this book dates back a few years it is worthy to review in light of the changing cultural setting in North America. This is one book of many that has been written in the last few years calling the church to be on mission. Others include, Reggie McNeal's *Present Future*, George Barna's *Revolution*, Bob Roberts, *Transformation* and Jim Wallis *Irresistible Revolution*, to name a few. Though not all are anchored on sound theology, each of these is calling the church to be a participant rather than a spectator.

One of the strengths of the book is the practical section at the end of each chapter asking "How are you unlearning? It calls for the reader to think through their journey and identify what are those things that perhaps need to be unlearned. A second strength is the short stories at the end of each chapter. The reader is introduced to people that are learning to "unlearn church." His examples are drawn from various denominations and pastors of different age groups. I find this section particularly helpful and at times thought provoking. A third strength I found was Slaughter's emphasis on discipleship. He calls for the development of leaders as trainer-coaches. He highlights the importance of the relational aspect of mentoring. This, unfortunately, is one of the missing links of many churches. Slaughter's contribution in this area is valuable.

Some weaknesses of the book are the different size fonts throughout the book making reading difficult. While it may highlight areas of importance and may be appealing to a younger generation it was distracting. I felt, at times, as if someone was shouting at me-which may have been the author's intent. The spiritual thread that is found throughout each chapter unravels with the lack of a solid biblical anchor. This was disappointing to me. Slaughter calls the reader to develop spiritual discipline. "Leaders influence people most through integrity of heart. Spiritual influence goes beyond methodologies to the passion of the Spirit.

UnLearning leaders begin to smell like God” (117). Each of these statements, by itself, creates excitement. However, Slaughter seems to talk about spirituality and Christianity as the same thing. Slaughter rightly recognized that the modern world was “either/or” and the postmodern world is a “both/and” world. There seems to be a movement to syncretism and at the least openness to it. When statements such as “Postmodern churches are both Catholic and evangelical . . . Many [members of Ginghamburg Church] go to Mass as well as participate with us in the same weekend . . . their number included our assistant music director, who remains an active Catholic” (49) one cannot help ask if our anchor is relevancy or the Word of God?

I believe that the single strength of the book is the urgent call for the church to be authentic and on mission. This includes churches that seriously embody Christ in a way that intentionally responds to their cultural context.

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*Intelligent Design: William A. Dembski & Michael Ruse in Dialogue.* Edited by Robert B. Stewart, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007, 257 pp., paperback, \$22.00.

Robert B. Stewart, the editor, is associate professor of Philosophy and Theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he is Greer-Heard Professor of Faith and Culture. He is also director of the Greer-Heard Forum, an annual event organized to provide a forum for an evangelical and a nonevangelical scholar to publicly dialogue on a particular issue of religious or cultural significance. The dialogue between Dembski and Ruse occurred at the 2006 Greer-Heard Forum held in Atlanta.

In 1859 and following Charles Darwin provoked a long drawn out cultural war in Western culture over creationism versus evolution. In the last decade or so, particularly in the USA, this war has greatly intensified. Many leading scientists and others have fueled the flames by advocating a very compelling, revitalized, “intelligent design” (ID) argument challenging the validity of evolution at its core. Evolutionists and atheists have responded vehemently to the ID challenge.

Combatants in this war are both numerous and diversified. No less than 80+ works dealing specifically with the revitalized intelligent design argument have been published in just the last two years (according to the relevant Library of Congress catalogues). These works have been penned by scientists, philosophers, lawyers, educators, journalists, and theologians. Thus, this war engages combatants from all cultural domains, indicating the tremendous degree of importance the conflict’s outcome is to the future establishment of our country’s cultural norms.

To the many works already published dealing with ID, Robert Stewart has added yet another very important work. Stewart’s work is a standout from most of the others because in one volume he clarifies “what the fuss is all about” and

then allows individual combatants on both sides to “speak for themselves.” Rather than argue for either position, thus introducing personal bias, his approach to the overall conversation allows the reader to form his/her own opinion based on leading combatants’ individual arguments. The book consists of an Introduction by the author, twelve chapters involving fourteen different contributors, and an Afterword by the renowned German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg.

Subjects broached in the book include: “The Evolution Wars: Who is Fighting with Whom about What;” “Naturalism and Intelligent Design;” “The Collapse of Intelligent Design;” “Dawkins, God, and the Scientific Enterprise: Reflections on the Appeal to Darwinism in Fundamental Atheism;” “The Universe as Creation;” along with many others. These discussions cover almost every aspect of the debate including philosophical, legal, educational, scientific, and theological issues. The documented dialogue between William Dembski and Michael Ruse is especially illuminating concerning the foundational issues between the two sides in the war and the tone of the combatants.

Contributors to the book are typically well-known and well-published professionals representing both sides of the war. These include mathematicians/philosophers William Dembski, Michael Ruse, and John C. Lennox; lawyer/philosopher Francis J. Beckwith; theologian/philosophers William Lane Craig and Nancy Murphy; molecular biophysicist/theologian Alister McGrath; particle physicist/theologian John Polkinghorne.

Two contributors, Wesley R. Elsberry and Nicholas Matzke, are associated with the National Center for Science Education, an organization created specifically to maintain the hegemony of evolution in the science classroom by excluding any other theory of origins as “religious” in nature. To include these voices attest to Stewart’s sincere attempt at remaining unbiased in revealing “what the fuss is all about.”

Stewart’s book is particularly valuable in presenting succinctly both sides of the debate for each reader’s own assessment. What is at stake? The outcome of this war will determine, I believe, whether our nation remains a truly Christian nation that continues to embrace its historic Judeo-Christian values as its cultural norms or becomes a totally secular nation that fully embraces modern and postmodern relativistic values—derived from secular humanistic and naturalistic worldviews—as its cultural norms. The stakes are enormous. Therefore, I highly recommend this book as a primary source for gaining insight into the key issues surrounding the Intelligent Design movement.

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