

Book Reviews

James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage. By Richard J. Bauckham. London: Routledge, 1999, x + 246 pp., \$26.99, paper.

James has generally languished on the sideline of biblical scholarship, but several recent monographs and commentaries have now focused upon this General Epistle. Of particular note is Richard Bauckham's work appearing in the New Testament Readings series edited by John Court. Though the history of interpretation regarding James has been dominated by the comments of Martin Dibelius in the early twentieth century, Bauckham consciously sets out to consider the epistle in the light of current research which is, in many respects, free from previous assumptions regarding the nature of paraenesis and the pseudo-epistolary character of James forwarded by Dibelius. From this fresh starting point Bauckham offers a helpful work which advances an exegetical and theological understanding of the letter.

Bauckham introduces the reader to a dialogue carried on throughout the book between the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and the Epistle of James. Bauckham juxtaposes Kierkegaard's appropriation of the text of James with the lack of appropriation exhibited by many modern biblical interpreters immured in a historical-critical framework. Here the reader is invited to share in the "hermeneutic of personal engagement" which Bauckham states will make the "difference between learning the life-story of someone one loves and learning the life-story of someone one has never met in order to write a biographical dictionary entry" (9). Here the reader is challenged to consider not only the nature and characteristics of the mirror (the text of James), but also to examine the image reflected in the mirror which James calls the perfect law of liberty. The personal engagement in the text of James promoted by Bauckham sets the tone for the remainder of his comments.

The book itself may be outlined in two sections: (1) chapters one and two consider some of the epistle's traditional historical-critical issues, and (2) chapters three and four engage with the wider canonical and theological context of James. Chapter three addresses the epistle's relationship with the Pauline corpus and the Old Testament, and chapter four considers the issue of the theological application of James to contemporary context.

Bauckham interacts with two prominent concerns voiced in recent discussion on James: (1) the question of whether or not James constitutes a genuine letter, and (2) the need to understand the function of paraenesis. First, taking the epistolary character of the work seriously, he argues that James was sent as "an official letter or encyclical, in which James as head of the Jerusalem church addresses all of his compatriots and fellow-believers in the Jewish Diaspora" (13). Bauckham plausibly argues that James, the Lord's brother wrote this "encyclical to the Diaspora" (chapter one). Secondly, Bauckham wrestles with the genre of James (wisdom paraenesis) and how it provides a general structure

for the epistle (chapter two). He rejects the notion that James lacks any situational immediacy and logical coherence, while avoiding the trap of forcing a Pauline epistolary structuring upon James. To situate James firmly within the Jewish Wisdom tradition, Bauckham offers several literary forms common both in Wisdom literature and in the teaching of Jesus (e.g. aphorisms, similitudes and parables, examples, judgment oracles, and diatribe). Bauckham understands the structure of the letter to be formulated around distinct units of wisdom teaching punctuated and rounded off by wisdom encapsulated in an aphoristic sentence. All of this supports Bauckham's main thesis that "James, as a disciple of Jesus the sage, is a wisdom teacher who has made the wisdom of Jesus his own, and who seeks to appropriate and to develop the resources of the Jewish wisdom tradition in a way that is guided and controlled by the teaching of Jesus" (30). Bauckham is then able to avoid the difficulties identifying gospel "allusions" or "echoes" by referring to the appropriation of Jesus teaching as James' own "creative re-expression" of his brother's wisdom. This indeed is one of the work's great achievements.

In chapter three, Bauckham considers James' most significant canonical relationships by first considering the "Pauline perspective on James." He draws attention to this relationship not because it is primary in the text but because James has been read from a Pauline perspective. That is, James has been understood largely in the light of the Pauline corpus rather than on its own terms. Bauckham maintains that the traditionally held notion that James writes to counter Paul or a misrepresentation of Paul's theology is unnecessary. James discussion is "entirely intelligible and explicable, against a Jewish background, without reference to Paul" (127). On the contrary, he argues that Paul and James stand upon common ground and that the canonical relationship between James and the Synoptics, Torah, Wisdom, and 1 Peter should be emphasized.

Finally, Bauckham offers a theological reading of the text within a modern context. Space is given to the specific appropriation of the text in the Copenhagen of Kierkegaard's day. Though this discussion is interesting, more of the insightful theological analysis found in the next section would have been preferred. Bauckham then turns to consider the reading of James at the turn of the millennium. He marks out the emphasis the epistle lays upon the wholeness and integrity of the believing community in contrast to divided loyalty (double-mindedness). This wholeness is expressed through solidarity with the poor, concern for speech ethics, and prayer. On the whole, this final chapter is a fine piece of theological reflection which contains many treasures of application and ethical formation.

Particularly intriguing is the thesis forwarded here that James, as the Lord's brother, re-expresses the wisdom teaching of Jesus. Understood in this way, James shifts closer to the center of the New Testament proclamation regarding the nature and character of Jesus Christ. This work is not designed to be a verse-by-verse commentary but rather seeks to situate the text literarily, historically, and theologically. The book offers one of the clearest and most helpful attempts at identifying an overall structure for James accounting for both the larger conceptual units and the actual word connections between them. Key in Bauckham's structuring of the epistle is James' use of aphorisms, which encapsulate his teaching in compact, memorable form, in strategic locations

within the text. This structuring appears natural and unforced in contrast to other attempts to identify a Pauline epistolary structure within James. Most importantly, Bauckham has provided a way to view the overall intent of James without forcing an unnecessary historical situation or literary structure upon the text. This book will be a helpful guide to those engaging with James either in the church or the academy, and it would be a welcome read alongside a more verse-by-verse type commentary.

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The Book Study Concordance of the Greek New Testament. By Andreas Köstenberger and Raymond Bouchoc. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003, viii + 1528 pp., \$59.99 hardcover.

This is a fantastic book in a never-before-seen format. With the help of computer technology, Andreas Köstenberger and Raymond Bouchoc have compiled a concordance for each book of the New Testament, based textually on the electronic version of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th edition). The authors point out that their work is “not designed to replace conventional concordances,” but is to be used in conjunction with them (vii).

The work’s format follows the canonical order of the NT, and thus, is comprised of 27 concordances. Each concordance begins with the following statistics: (1) total word count; (2) number of words occurring at least 10 times; (3) number of words occurring once; and (4) words whose usage in that book comprises 25 percent of the total NT occurrences. Next, each concordance lists in alphabetical order every Greek word used in that book. Each Greek word entry contains: (1) an English transliteration; (2) the number of times it is used in each book and the entire NT; (3) a basic meaning; and (4) the verses where it can be found. At the end of each concordance are helpful word frequency lists in both alphabetical order and order of occurrence.

The advantages of this concordance are obvious. The most notable benefits are, as the authors rightly point out, that it enables you to see word usage in particular books or by a specific author, allows you to see distinctive vocabulary easily, and provides you with an overview of each book’s vocabulary.

I cannot think of anything that I do not like about this book. Only time will tell, as word lists are pored over, whether or not all of the data contained in this work is accurate. The authors humbly invite readers to make them aware of any inaccuracies so that they may correct them for future editions.

Since this book was compiled using computer technology, why not just instead use any one of the various Greek NT computer concordances available? *Answer:* Having a book in hand and doing the work without relying entirely on computer technology is rewarding. Also, a big difference exists in price between this concordance and the various computer concordances and software. Computer concordances of the Greek NT can be quite expensive. Though the price of this book might seem quite steep, it is actually quite affordable for a work of this magnitude and even less expensive than some of the other Greek NT concordances in book form, e.g. the Moulton-Geden.

Köstenberger and Bouchoc have done a great service for those who do research in the Greek NT. This work will quickly become a standard reference tool. I highly recommend it to anyone who seriously studies the NT.

Will someone now compile a Hebrew OT counterpart?

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Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews." By David A. deSilva. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, xix + 560 pp., \$40.00 paperback.

After a period of notable neglect, the late eighties and early nineties have proven to be productive years for *PROS EBRAIIOUS*, with five major commentaries in less than a decade—Attridge, Ellingworth, and Lane in English, and Weiss and Grässer in German. One would have thought that due to the quality of the scholarship in these commentaries, some time would pass before new commentaries on this epistle would appear. It seems, however, that these commentaries have only paved the way for a generation of new approaches to the epistle, all building on the impeccable textual and exegetical work of their predecessors.

Among this generation of commentaries, David deSilva's work recommends itself as worthwhile contribution, proposing an approach to the investigation of the epistle from a socio-rhetorical perspective. The commentary continues the series inaugurated by Ben Witherington III in the mid-nineties, with the stated goal of engaging the NT writings within the socio-rhetorical context of their writers and original readers. This commentary is an outgrowth of deSilva's doctoral work at Emory. DeSilva's dissertation, the more technical precursor of the present commentary, was published earlier as *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the epistle to the Hebrews* (Atlanta: Scholars 1995).

According to deSilva, Hebrews is essentially an exercise in rhetorical persuasion harnessed in the service of theology. The author encourages his addressees, the beneficiaries of divine grace, to persevere in their gratitude to God in the midst of increasingly difficult social challenges as a better and more reasonable response to their divine Benefactor. In order to derive this meaning from the epistle, de Silva undertakes a careful examination of the language of honor and shame, which he proposes as the most appropriate background against which Hebrews should be read.

The first 80 pages are devoted to introductory matters regarding the recipients of the epistle (especially their ethnic background and history), its author (his identity, worldview, use of the OT, and expertise in rhetoric), and, most distinctly, the rhetorical goal and socio-rhetorical strategy of the author of Hebrews. This last part of the introduction includes a very helpful survey of pertinent aspects of ancient rhetoric, with ample examples that underscore its relevance and usefulness for NT studies.

While the commentary remains in line with much of the scholarly consensus in these areas, it brings fresh perspective on each one of them via the socio-

rhetorical instruments. Thus, the community, whose ethnic background seems to be not crucially important for deSilva, had a history “of humiliation, rejection and marginalization. . . . [t]he Christians lost their place and standing in the society, stripped of their reputation for being reliable citizens on account of their commitment to an alternate system of values, religious practices and social relationships” (16). Their challenge was to not allow “society’s means of social control to deflect them from their faith” (16).

Likewise, the author, a “member of the Pauline mission” (39), was in charge of the nurturing and preservation of the apostle’s work in this community of believers. He employs the “resources of the authoritative scriptures and the full spectrum of rhetorical tactics” (39) to challenge his readers to stand firm in their prior commitment to Christ, regardless of social ostracization. It is this reaffirmation of the Christian worldview and culture that will lead his readers “to lasting honor” (39).

The clearest statement of the importance of socio-rhetorical aspects in reading Hebrews comes in the third part of the introduction. De Silva contends that the epistle is a document of deliberative rhetoric which repeatedly presents two opposing courses of action for its addressees, dissuading them from the one less honorable, i.e., turning away from the living God, while persuading and pleading with them to continue in pursuit of the more honorable, the course they chose at their conversion. Everything in the epistle, deSilva argues, from the rhetorical strategy of the author, to the very nuances of the lexical stock employed by him (terms such as *charis* and *pistis*) is best understood against the background of the “social code of reciprocity, the mutual expectations and obligations of patrons and clients” (59). Christ has provided the greatest benefit for his clients, the access to the very presence of God: “He is the broker, the mediator who secures favor from God on behalf of those who have committed themselves to Jesus as dependent clients” (62). In this way, the language of honor and shame, “the primary tools of social control in the ancient world” (64), forms the backbone for the ideological and social strategies of the author.

The commentary proper is divided into ten chapters, following the natural divisions of the epistle: the two opening appeals (1:1-2:18, 3:1-4:13), the central exposition (4:14-10:18), and the climactic exhortation (10:19-13:25). Each chapter begins with an overview of the passage, dealing primarily with its literary structure and role within the book as a whole. The commentary then explores the text of Hebrews, one paragraph at a time, with a fair amount of attention to exegetical details. DeSilva accomplishes this in critical dialogue with other commentators, and consistently within the framework of the honor and shame discourse. Each chapter ends with a brief summary and a very helpful section, “Bridging the Horizons,” an insightful and balanced attempt to explore the relevance of this ancient letter for 20th century Christians. Several issues that deserve more extensive treatment—*inter alia*, angels, priestly Messiahs, minority cultural values, “perfection”, and apostasy—are treated separately in 10 excursus-type analyses, labeled “A Closer Look.”

Reading Hebrews against the background of honor discourse is indeed one of the main strengths of deSilva’s contribution. This background informs and explains several passages in the epistle that usually puzzle today’s reader unaware of the social realities of the 1st century. At the same time, however,

focusing on a rather narrow background for a NT document creates an exegetical risk that renders deSilva's analysis particularly vulnerable.

First, there is the delicate balance between the text itself and the alleged background informing the text. The proposed background, while indeed revealing nuances in the author's argument, at times becomes the controlling factor in exegesis, to the extent that it forces the commentator to reach exegetical conclusions that are not supported by the text itself. As a case in point, the author of Hebrews presents Jesus' affirmation of his association with his brothers by means of three quotations in Heb 2:12. The middle one from Is 8:17, *egō esomai pepoithōs ep' autō*, is construed by deSilva as an affirmation of trust not in God (as the LXX or MT texts and most commentators suggest), but in the believer. DeSilva explains his choice in terms of the intricate relationship between the benefactor and his clients, "the danger of Jesus' honor in associating himself with human beings is that they might fail to prove just and reliable in regard to their obligations to the Son" (116). While this meaning of the text is grammatically possible, it is exegetically the least probable—indicating that the commentator preferred it on ideological, not exegetical grounds.

Second, the proposed background becomes so dominant that other possibilities are not explored or given due consideration. Quite often, for example, one reads statements such as "[this] description of God ... recites a familiar expression from Stoic thought" (113), or "this elliptical phrase echoes yet another Stoic idea" (114), or "this concept resonates strongly with Stoic discourse" (117 n. 70). Even though deSilva adduces evidence from classical rhetoric to support his statements, in all three cases, one can argue, with a higher degree of plausibility, that the Scriptures (LXX), especially the Psalms—where these ideas are profusely represented—constitute the formative and informative influence.

While these aspects of fine exegetical points will continue to be debated by scholars, deSilva's study offers a very readable and illuminating commentary, an important contribution to unlocking, by means of the socio-rhetorical investigation, the meaning of this important 1st century document.

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Paul in the Roman World: The Conflict at Corinth. By Robert M. Grant. Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 2001, viii + 181 pp., \$19.95 paper.

Intended to shed new light on 1 Corinthians, *Paul in the Roman World: The Conflict at Corinth* examines the political, religious, and social contexts of the newly Romanized city of Corinth. The book is divided into three sections: *Business and Politics, Religion and Ritual*, and *Paul on Sexuality*. In part one, *Business and Politics*, Grant affirms what many commentators have observed, namely that Paul's primary concern in writing to the Corinthian Christians is that they be in agreement and that there be no divisions among them (1 Cor. 1:10). What is provocative about Grant's position, however, is that Paul's motivation for concord is political in nature rather than theological.

Grant's builds his case upon two presuppositions. First, he states that Paul was insecure about his apostleship and thus needed to defend it. Second, he claims that Paul envisioned a monarchical form of church government where God has appointed the apostle to rule as king (24). Because of these two foundational axioms Grant concludes that the disagreement in Corinth over leadership offers the primary clue for why Paul wrote to the church: *he wanted to re-establish monarchical rule*. The image that Paul uses to describe his ministry, that of an architect, confirms this conclusion, since "[a]n architect chooses subordinates and workmen who will not spoil his work but will best labor together" (29). Other examples of Paul's apostolic insecurity and his desire to maintain monarchical rule can be seen in the following ways: his unwillingness to let women lead or even speak in the church, his refusal to let Christians settle cases outside of the church, and his emphasis on love being "the tie that binds."

Two weaknesses in this section of the book should be noted. First, Grant's two significant presuppositions are just that, presuppositions. Accordingly, he offers almost no argumentation for their validity. Second, and related to the first, Grant neglects to interact with or even mention the recent work of Andrew Clarke in *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians As Leaders and Ministers*, whose research calls Grant's second presupposition into question. Clarke comprehensively analyzes Paul's teaching on church government and concludes that Paul's vision of Christian leadership is quite distinct from the hierarchical/monarchical patterns of leadership modeled in his surrounding contexts (Graeco-Roman city, Roman colony, voluntary associations, households, and synagogues). This distinction explains why Paul preferred to use the terms 'service' and 'co-worker' to describe leadership in the church, rather than more common terms that evoked the hierarchical concepts of power and status.

In Part II, *Religion and Ritual*, Grant turns from his discussion on politics to illuminate the religious context of 1 Corinthians. He does this in two ways. First, he gives his readers a guided tour of the various "lords and gods" that existed in Corinth (1 Cor. 8:5). Using his literary and geographic familiarity with the city, he gives a sort of play-by-play of what it would have been like to walk down its streets, highlighting the various temples and inscriptions along the way, and enticing the reader to sense the drastic contrast between Paul's one God and the Corinthians' many gods.

Second, he offers an exposition on liturgy in the early church, beginning with an analysis of 1 Corinthians, which he considers to be the earliest information we have on the practice of Christian baptism and the Eucharist. However, because Paul's account provides us with only the meaning of baptism and the Eucharist, Grant calls upon the Didache, 1 Clement, Pliny, Livy, Ignatius of Antioch, and Justin for details of what may have actually taken place in these sacraments. Through all of the sources we learn that Christians remained suspect in the Graeco-Roman world because of their liturgical practices. While Grant's description of the practice of the sacraments was quite interesting and informative, his emphasis on the second century failed to shed new light on 1 Corinthians.

Grant's last section, Part III, *Paul on Sexuality*, is also his briefest. In it he uses the early Christian writings of Justin, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, as

well as the Didache and contrasts them with a variety of Roman literature to show how different Christian morality was from its host culture. Grant concludes his discussion stating that Paul's ideas with regard to morality and sex partly replaced and partly assimilated those of the Graeco-Roman world. For example, both Paul and the Roman Empire were trying to make moral pronouncements to promote marriage and the raising of children. However, Paul did not join Diogenes the Cynic in claiming that sex was for the body, the body for sex.

The strength of *Paul in the Roman World* is characteristic of all of Grant's works. He has imaginatively called upon his encyclopedic knowledge of early Christian and Graeco-Roman literature and his intimate understanding of the social, political and religious make-up of the Graeco-Roman world to elucidate the context of the New Testament. However, those who come to the book to see how Graeco-Roman backgrounds help us better understand the specifics of 1 Corinthians may also want to turn to the recent works of Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change*, David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The social and literary Context*, Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, Anthony Thiselton and his introduction in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, and as has been mentioned, Andrew Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians As Leaders and Ministers* for a more detailed argument of the social, political and religious contexts of Corinth and their pertinence to the message of this fascinating letter.

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Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context. By Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003, xvi + 538 pp., \$30 hardcover.

The Sermon on the Mount is the ethical pinnacle of the Bible. Yet, Christians have been divided over the modern application of its ethical injunctions. In *Kingdom Ethics*, Glen Stassen and David Gushee attempt to let the Sermon on the Mount set the agenda for a cohesive approach to Christian Ethics. Stassen teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary while Gushee is on the faculty of Union University. Both formerly taught at Southern Baptist Seminary.

Stassen and Gushee choose to focus on the Sermon on the mount because "the way of discipleship and the commands of Jesus are most explicitly taught in this Sermon" (30). Throughout the work, Stassen and Gushee argue that we should follow the approach to ethics that Jesus demonstrated in the sermon. Emphasis is placed on God's reign, deliverance and justice.

Kingdom Ethics has several strengths. First of all, Stassen and Gushee should be commended for their insistence that the Sermon on the Mount has a continuing relevance for Christian ethics. Different schemes from both the theological left and right have attempted to remove the ethical force of Jesus'

teaching concerning neighbor love, forgiveness of enemies, and non-retaliation. Though I do not agree with all of their conclusions, the authors are certainly correct to emphasize the primacy of this passage for modern Christian ethics. Second, Stassen and Gushee reflect a high regard for the sanctity of human life. They take a very dim view of both abortion and euthanasia. Gushee argues forcibly against a developmental view of personhood underlying much pro-abortion rhetoric and says, "I would rather be wrong in attributing too much personhood to the fetus than in attributing too little" (222). They also reject euthanasia and say, "There is no right to assisted suicide that can be conjured up from the founding documents or principles of medical responsibility" (250). The authors can also be commended for presenting an approach to sexuality that includes abstinence outside of marriage between a man and a woman and fidelity within marriage. Finally, the authors underscore the need to examine systemic evil as well as personal sin, a constant challenge for evangelicals.

I found myself in strong disagreement with the authors at several points. First of all, though both authors affirm that they are comfortable with the label "evangelical," some of their comments about Scripture itself seem to be influenced by non-evangelical approaches. Most significantly, the following quote illustrates my concern:

The Hebrew Scriptures [Old Testament] are a rich and diverse narrative. The people of Israel were a diverse people—originally an idolatrous people who worshiped and served many gods, including gods of war—who debated with each other how to interpret God's word to them. Jesus showed how to interpret that rich narrative. He never quoted passages that favor killing, war or national supremacy. He quote only the passages that favor peacemaking. Our method of interpretation is to affirm Jesus Christ as fully Lord and fully Savior, and as the key to interpreting the Scriptures (154).

This approach seems to favor the Documentary Hypothesis at some level while perhaps indicating that Jesus viewed some of the Old Testament as more inspired than other parts.

The authors also appear to reflect a certain level of influence from liberation theology. They state, "In the Bible, the poor rely more on God. Just spend some time serving the poor in a homeless shelter and talk with people long enough to get to know them. The poor—as a whole—do have less pride that gets in the way and really do trust more in God" (38). At other places in the book, the bulk of the problems experienced by poor are laid at the door of American capitalism. But do poor people really trust God more? I think the authors to go too far. Stassen and Gushee could strengthen this work by acknowledging more forcefully that many people are in fact poor because of their individual sin and not because of patterns of systemic evil.

Stassen and Gushee appear to downplay the radical nature of the homosexual movement. I do not mean to suggest that either author affirms that homosexuality is within the parameters of acceptable behavior. They say that homosexual conduct "is one form of sexual expression that falls outside the will of God" (311). However, they also say, "It is at least arguable from the fact of Jesus' silence—and the limited discussion in Scripture in general—that the

contemporary fixation on homosexuality in some Christian circles is misplaced” (307). In contrast, I contend that the radical homosexual movement is indeed the most crucial place for a well-informed and extensive Christian response. This issue is the one point where the battle rages most fiercely. The radical homosexual agenda involves eliminating moral absolutes and redefining the family. Both are cause for alarm.

Finally, the work seems to reflect a less than satisfactory view of the force needed to combat evil. For example, they criticize the United States for the 1991 Gulf War because Iraq allegedly agreed to “meet the conditions and get out of Kuwait” (162). In reality, Iraq never made the first effort to leave Kuwait until forcibly removed by coalition forces. Certainly, the authors are correct when they argue that nations are too quick to find a reason to go to war, but the argument at this point seems more like wishful thinking.

Kingdom Ethics reflects a pro-life theme while accentuating the broader problems of systemic evil. Overall, the work is somewhat unique and will likely be influential.

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Ten Lies The Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage. By J. Lee Grady. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2000, 222 pp., \$12.99 paperback.

J. Lee Grady is the editor of *Charisma* magazine, a publication dedicated to promoting charismatic interests. In *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women*, Grady summarizes the significant mistakes he believes the church makes in relation to women. Grady could perhaps re-title the book, *Ten Lies the Church and the Southern Baptist Convention in Particular Tells Women*, for the one denomination that he critiques by name far above any other is indeed the Southern Baptist Convention.

Grady begins his presentation with a summary of the bizarre cultic practices of Steven Butt of Be Free Patriarchal Church in Utah. As one might surmise from the name of his church, Butt advocates polygamy as a universal standard and has three “wives.” After summarizing Butt’s position, Grady states, “[Butt’s Church] is cultic to be sure, but the sad truth is that many bible-believing Christians have ignorantly misinterpreted or intentionally misused the Scriptures to justify a prejudiced view of women that *is just as* misguided as the doctrine Rev. Butt spreads in Utah” (2). A thorough reading of Grady’s work reveals that the ignorant misinterpretation he has in mind is the Complementarian position that women may not serve as pastors. I have added emphasis to the phrase “just as” in Grady’s quote: Complementarians are just as deceived as polygamists! This disappointing introduction sets the tone for the rest of the book. Overall, the book’s flaws can be summed up in three categories: Lack of original sources, factual errors, and logical fallacies.

Grady has done very little original research. Throughout the book, he cites Christian sources such as Augustine, Tertullian, John Knox and the like. However, a brief survey of the end notes reveals that his sources are secondary

citations. For example, he draws most of his quotations from Tucker and Liefeld's *Daughters of the Church* and Carrol Osborn's (ed.) *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*. Occasional secondary source citations are acceptable, but Grady's total absence of primary sources for his quotations from early church history weakens the overall presentation. Over-reliance on secondary sources means one is not certain if quotes are taken in context.

Perhaps Grady's failure to search original sources himself leads him into several factual errors. Grady argues that Paul's purpose in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 was to combat Christian Gnosticism in Ephesus (129). He says, "There is ample historical evidence to prove that at the time Paul's first epistle was written to Timothy, a blasphemous cult had developed in or near Ephesus that taught that Eve was really the "Great Mother"—an incarnation of the goddess" (130). Grady borrows this argument from Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger's *I Suffer Not a Woman*. The problem with this argument is that it assumes a much more developed form of Gnosticism than what existed in the first century. In fact, the evidence contradicts Grady and the Kroegers: Christian Gnosticism was *very* incipient at this stage. Beyond Biblical backgrounds, Grady is also in error about Lottie Moon's position on women in ministry. On page 192 he infers that Lottie Moon would approve of women pastors. While Moon did argue for greater involvement by women, she did not argue for women pastors.

Beyond his poor research and factual errors, I found the logical fallacies to be the most disturbing aspect of *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women*. First of all, Grady presents multiple straw-man arguments. On pages 1-2, he compares his opponents to polygamists. In chapter four, he recounts a terrible story of a husband who refused to let his wife give a child medicine and implies this is the natural result of the Complementarian approach to marriage. On pages 119-123, he compares ancient witch trials to modern opponents of women pastors. On pages 171-173 he tells the tragic story of an abused wife who was murdered by her husband as evidence against a Complementarian understanding of Ephesians 5:22. Most strikingly, he makes no reference to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, the definitive statement of the Complementarian position.

At the end of each chapter, Grady includes "questions for discussion" which are rife with "question-begging." For example, Grady suggests this question, "In light of the fact that the church at Ephesus was threatened by strange Gnostic doctrines, why did Paul have to explain that Eve, and not Adam, was deceived in the Garden of Eden?" (135). But this assumes the point in question, mainly, was there a Gnostic cult of Eve at Ephesus?

Grady utilizes *ad hominem* arguments at several places. For example, he says that the SBC is "anti-women" because it asserts that men should be pastors. At times, Grady commits a false cause fallacy. He says that wife-abuse is swept under a rug in evangelical churches "because their own teaching about marriage relationships . . . is an underlying cause of this ugly dilemma" (185). Thus, his argument appears to follow this syllogism: "Some Evangelicals teach that wives should submit to their husbands. Some evangelical women are abused. Therefore, the church's teaching on submission causes abuse." However, the causes of abuse are multitude. While I do not deny that some crude men have twisted Scripture to justify abuse, I reject the premise that a proper understanding of the Complementarian model leads to abuse.

I have only touched on a few of the problems with this work. At times, Grady moves beyond poor argumentation to sloppy thinking. For example, he suggests that Christian women who affirm the Complementarian view do so “either because they are intimidated by a male-dominated religious system that claims God’s favor rests only on men or because they have swallowed the lie that tells them they are second-class citizens in God’s kingdom” (2). Grady claims that women who disagree with him are intimidated or deceived! This is offensive to the intelligent and bright women who affirm the Complementarian model because they believe it is consistent with Scripture.

Throughout the work, he misrepresents his opponents. He says the first lie women are told is “God created women as inferior beings, destined to serve their husbands” (19). The implication of Grady’s work is that this is what Complementarians believe. But no legitimate Complementarian asserts that women are inferior. Furthermore, he lumps orthodox, Christian women with the doctrinally aberrant. For example, on page 65 he mentions, in this order, Amy Carmichael, Bertha Smith, *Aimee Semple McPherson* and Henrietta Mears as examples of great women ministers. It is offensive to the legacies of Carmichael, Smith and Mears to imply that they would affirm the same view of ministry as Aimee Semple McPherson.

Grady’s work is two hundred and twenty pages of *non sequitur*. The arguments he makes do not warrant his conclusions. This work is fatally flawed by poor research, factual errors and multiple logical fallacies.

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The Gospel According to The Simpsons: The Spiritual Life of the World’s Most Animated Family. By Mark I. Pinsky. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, 193 pp., \$14.99.

The Gospel According to The Simpsons is second in a series of books exploring the spiritual metaphors and theological musings found in some of today’s most popular cultural icons. Others in this series include a reprint of the 1970’s classic, *The Gospel According to Peanuts*; the soon to be released *The Gospel According to Harry Potter: Spirituality Behind the World’s Most Famous Seeker*; *The Gospel According to J.R.R. Tolkien* and an upcoming volume *The Gospel According to Disney*.

The thirteen chapters in this volume explore the various ways in which *The Simpsons*, the most successful animated series in television history—examines the subject of religion and American Christianity. For the those unfamiliar with the television show—such as this reviewer—it might come as a surprise to discover that many religious leaders, including Tony Compolo, who writes the forward—consider *The Simpsons* one of the most faith-friendly shows on television. For the enthusiast of this pop culture phenomenon, the book provides a summary of the major religious and spiritual themes presented during the first fourteen seasons on the air.

The first three chapters looks specifically at the spiritual life of the members of the Simpson family. Those not familiar with the program might be surprised

to learn that Homer, the overweight, lazy, beer-drinking, donut-eating father, attends church regularly. Likewise, the “star” of the show, his underachieving, mischievous son, Bart (an anagram for Brat), prays at meal times and times of distress, and in one episode becomes a Pentecostal. Just as in many families today, Marge, the long-suffering stay-at-home mom, assumes the role as the real spiritual backbone of the family. The other main character, Bart’s sister Lisa, is the spiritual and social conscience of the family. Pinsky validates the extent of *The Simpsons* spiritual attributes by noting that religious content occurs in seventy percent of *The Simpsons* episodes. In addition, ten percent of the shows were constructed around religious themes.

Like many families, the Simpsons hold to a works-based religion. Tony Campolo writes in the forward, “In the popular mind, salvation is earned, in spite of all our preaching to the contrary. If the writers did the grace thing, as we evangelicals believe it, I am not sure most of the audience would get it...” In one episode, Homer and Bart are watching a Bible based movie where God says, “Remember, the key to salvation is . . .” Just then, a news story interrupts the show. As such, the key to salvation remains ambiguous episode after episode.

Two chapters are devoted to exploring the spiritual dimensions of the Simpson’s neighbors and community. Significant ink is devoted to Ned Flanders, the evangelical, fundamentalist neighbor of the Simpson’s. The writers portray Ned as a good-hearted, somewhat boorish character. His faith and commitment almost always stand firm—even in an episode where he loses his wife to cancer. Another character that appears frequently is Reverend Lovejoy, the pastor of the Springfield Community Church where the Simpson’s and Flanders’s attend. Lovejoy is a caricature of the mainline Protestant minister who treats his calling as a job and has lost his zeal for ministry.

The chapter on the Bible provides more than enough examples of how the characters quote, misquote and make up biblical sounding verses season after season. Just as in real life, the Bible is used (and misused) by the characters to provide comfort, reinforce virtue, win arguments, castigate others, and reprove friends. Other than Ned, most of the characters on *The Simpsons* are biblically illiterate, including the pastor of the Springfield Community Church.

Three chapters explore the show’s treatment of Catholics, Jews, and Hindus. Although special attention is given to these three groups, it should be pointed out that over the years the laughs have come at the expense of Protestants, Pentecostals, Mormons, Atheists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses as well. Pinsky points out that the show has chosen not to address Islam—possibility to avoid a confrontation with the fanatical factions within Islam. This does not mean the show’s creators have avoided the ire of religious leaders. Orthodox Hindus were offended by what they consider to be the show’s promotion of unfair stereotypes, doctrinal error, and distortion. Other who have complained include the Catholic League, Lee Strobel of the Willow Creek Association, Baptist pastor Dan Burrell, former Secretary of Education William Bennett, and former President George H.W. Bush.

The occasional generalizations about evangelicals and Southern Baptists in the book may disturb some readers. It should be noted that Pinsky is a practicing Jew and member of the Congregation of Liberal Judaism. His writing displays respect, understanding, and admiration towards most in the evangelical

community. In the book, he frequently quotes Christians friends and sources, and his esteem for those who practice a living faith in Christ is evident.

Who should buy this book? First, anyone who enjoys *The Simpsons*, but is uncomfortable admitting it to their friends. This volume will provide you with enough information to convince a deacon board that watching *The Simpsons* should be included in the pastor's job description. A second audience interested in purchasing this book would be those ministering to youth or college students, who are looking for ways to connect spiritual truths to a postmodern popular culture. Finally, the pastor whose library budget is more than ample and whose interests are indiscriminate may be persuaded to add it to his collection. If these criteria only partially fit your case, consider instead a subject search on the Internet. Such a search will turn up many of the same "wisdom" identified in the book. Who should not buy this book? Those expecting some good laughs should look another direction. *The Gospel According to The Simpsons* is a commentary on the spiritual aspects of the program and not a rehash of puns and pundits that are the hallmarks of the show.

Rodney A. Harrison
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The Listener's Bible. Narrated by Max McLean. Morristown, N.J.: The Listener's Bible Company, 2002, \$149.99.

Paul instructs Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13, "Give attention to the public reading of scripture." Sadly, however, many evangelical churches—including those renowned for defending the inerrancy of Scripture—ignore this command about publicly reading the Scripture. Contrast this with most mainline denominational churches, including many who deny the inerrancy of God's Word. In following the Lectionary as a guide in public worship, not only do they "Give attention to the public reading of scripture," they read it *four* times. Every Sunday morning they will read from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles. Shame on those churches who claim a high view of Scripture, and then make room for almost anything in a worship service except the reading of the Bible in obedience to 1 Timothy 4:13.

One of the possible factors contributing to the decline of public Scripture reading is the fact that when the Bible *is* read in worship, it is read with the same enthusiasm as reading the phonebook aloud. In other words, the *way* in which the Bible is read often conveys the impression that neither reading the Scripture publicly nor listening to it is very important. One of the benefits of hearing Max McLean read the Bible is the recovery of the vision of how meaningful and worshipful public Scripture reading can be. McLean reads the Bible like it *is* the Word of God. When he reads it, you *want* to listen to it.

Max McLean's path to his life work started at the University of Texas where he enrolled in an oral interpretation course in order to overcome his fear of public speaking. Not long after college he attended a Bible study and through that influence became a follower of Jesus. He pursued an acting career, and although he performed for several years at such noteworthy venues as the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh, the Riverside Shakespeare Festival in New York, and

Olympia Dukakis' Whole Theater Company, Max found acting to be unfulfilling. According to his website (<http://www.listenersbible.com/maxmclean.asp>), McLean "realized that an actor is nothing more than a hired hand whose job is to communicate other people's ideas regardless of his own feelings about them. Aware of the fact that 'you can not serve two masters,' he made the decision to leave the theater." He enrolled in seminary, and while there a faculty member encouraged him to use his dramatic skills in ministry. "At that time," says McLean, "drama in the church was starting to get quite a bit of attention. But it was mostly sketches to illustrate sermons. I wasn't motivated to go in that direction." Instead, he began to think, "Why not use the skills and techniques developed from acting and the theater, integrate it into what I had learned from preachers and teachers, and apply all of that into word for word dramatic presentations of the Bible?"

Since then, McLean has been presenting dramatic readings (often in costume) of the Scriptures. In a typical performance, McLean quotes an entire book of the Bible—such as the Gospel of Mark or the Acts—from memory. At this writing his radio program of Scripture reading is heard on more than 600 stations.

McLean has a deep and pleasant voice, but not as arresting as the narrators in some other recordings of the Bible. For sheer vocal power, who can excel James Earl Jones' timbrous bass? But what sets McLean's efforts above all others I have heard is his interpretive skill. McLean doesn't sound as though he is reading anything. Rather he sounds as you might expect the writers of the text to sound if they were speaking instead of writing. For instance, hearing McLean read Acts 2 almost has you believing that you're listening to a recording of Peter preaching (in English, of course) at Pentecost. His ability to pause and add inflection to the words spoken by different characters in a dialogue makes you more aware of the give-and-take of conversation in a passage. His enunciation is crisp without sounding contrived. His manner of precisely articulating with lips and teeth, such as the way he bites off words in the imprecatory psalms, adds to the realism and believability of McLean's work.

After all, McLean has been "practicing" for this presentation of the Bible for more than two decades. Unlike some who are paid to read the Bible in a recording studio simply because they have a remarkable voice and years of wide theatrical experience, Max McLean has been traveling the country since 1983 giving dramatic readings of this same Book. Moreover, unlike some professional readers whose Christian credentials and previous private experience with the Bible are dubious, McLean is an active member of an evangelical church, has been ministering in local churches for most of his adult life, and comes recommended by trusted Christian leaders like Ravi Zacharias and R. C. Sproul who have a long-standing personal knowledge of him as a follower of Christ. As opposed to some who might rehearse for a one-time reading of the Bible, McLean says: "I try to devote quality time in the Bible daily . . . in personal study to understand the Bible better and allow the Holy Spirit to evaluate my life." His theology of Scripture is summarized in the statement, "If you want to know the mind of God you must go to the Bible." And his ministry purpose is this: "Our mission is to serve the church by presenting compelling and culturally engaging presentations of the Bible that evoke a deeper desire to know and serve

God. We want to present the Bible in a way that is engaging and enjoyable so that people will be encouraged to devote more time in the Word of God and, therefore, give the Holy Spirit more opportunity to speak through His Word.”

My only criticism of *The Listener's Bible* is a personal preference. The aimless, ethereal sound of a synthesizer serves as a background for McLean's reading. At least one person has commented to me that it enhances the experience. I found it both unnecessary and distracting.

The Listener's Bible comes on sixty-six compact discs and in a vinyl case about the size of the NIV Study Bible. In addition to the entire Bible, the producers of this product also make it available in the following divisions: the Old Testament, the Psalms and Proverbs, and the New Testament. McLean's reading of the NIV is also available on cassette. Listeners who prefer a translation other than the NIV, or who have adopted the English Standard Version, will want to know that Crossway released McLean's reading of the ESV New Testament in November 2003. A sample of McLean's skillful reading of Scripture can be heard on www.listenersbible.com.

I devote one of the days in my Worship Leadership class to the subject of reading the Scripture well in public. At the end of the class, I let the students hear McLean read a psalm, a chapter of a narrative passage, and a chapter from an epistle. Once they hear classroom theory become reality, their view of the power of the public reading of Scripture is never the same. Whether it's just for your own edification or for what McLean can do to transform the public reading of Scripture for yourself and your church, I recommend *The Listener's Bible*.

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Eerdmans Publishing Company, 255 Jefferson Avenue S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, (800) 253-7521

InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515, (630) 734-4000.

The Listener's Bible Company, Fellowship for the Performing Arts, P.O. Box 230, Convent Station, New Jersey 07961-0230, (973) 984-3400, (888) 876 5661.

Westminster John Knox Press, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40204, (800) 227-2872.

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