

Book Reviews

The Case for Biblical Archaeology: Uncovering the Historical Record of God's Old Testament People. By John D. Currid. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020, 288 pp., \$22.50 paper.

John Currid wrote *The Case for Biblical Archaeology* to show the usefulness of archaeology in biblical studies. As Currid points out, his goal is not to prove the Bible but to show that it is grounded in history. This is an attempt to push against the modern tendency to view the world in an ahistorical way and the increasing biblical illiteracy in the western world (3-4).

The Case for Biblical Archaeology is intended to be an introduction to the field. The first section is an overview providing a geographic description of the land of Israel, a history of modern archaeology, and the development of the current excavation techniques. The final chapter of this introductory section is a brief history of the Near East from the Neolithic period to the Iron II period.

After the introductory surveys, Currid delves into the heart of the book: excavations. The second section is a list of archaeological sites organized by region (Galilee, Jezreel, Negev, Shephelah, Jordan river valley, southern coastal plain, and central highlands). Significant sites are listed in each region with a couple paragraphs about the dating of each site and the important discoveries there. At the end of each description is a short list of recent publications about the site, both excavation reports and more specialized studies.

The final section of the book is about society. Currid examines the developments of specific cultural aspects like architecture, ceramics, and agriculture. These specialized discussions are not tied to any specific site but instead trace general trends in ancient Palestine for each time period from the Neolithic to the Iron II.

The layout of the book is inviting to readers who are new to Near Eastern archaeology. Currid utilizes many photographs from excavations as well as maps of the ancient Near East and Israel/Palestine throughout the chapters. The appendices also contain tables to show the chronology of the ancient Near East and extrabiblical texts that mention Israelite and Judean kings. The additional information helps to orient a reader who may be unfamiliar with

the land of Israel, and the interspersed photographs brings the archaeological site to life for those who have not seen an excavation before.

Though the book is designed to be introductory, readers might not be prepared for the contents of the book based upon the title. *The Case for Biblical Archaeology: Uncovering the Historical Record of God's Old Testament People* may give the impression that Currid is concerned with history or the biblical text, but these concerns are treated as secondary to archaeology. The format of the second section of the book is by region but the sites within the region are organized alphabetically. The result is that a site like Tel Kinrot, which is most significant in the Iron age, is followed by Sha'ar Hagolan which is a Neolithic site (82). With this type of organization, a coherent history is difficult to construct. Since most sites contain remains from multiple time periods, the time period under discussion changes every paragraph or two, as each site is examined from the earliest strata to the latest strata. In addition, the references to biblical events are only presented in some of the sites either because the identification with a biblical city is unknown or the time period is outside of the biblical range (like Neolithic sites).

A final note on the secondary nature of biblical history is that many major events are not addressed. For example, it seems that Currid assumes the late date for the exodus (ca. 1200 BC) because it is mentioned under the Iron I period (1200-1000 BC). However, it is treated in a single phrase, "the Israelites escaped from Egypt and subsequently conquered Canaan/Palestine from the east" (65). The only additional information is a footnote stating that there has been much discussion and to see Waltke's work on the date of the exodus. The exodus is not discussed any further in the book. Many other major historical events in the Bible are similarly treated with only a passing glance.

The critique of Currid's emphasis on archaeology, is not meant to undercut the value of the work. Currid provides a great introduction to the history of archaeology and current research being done in modern Israel/Palestine. The challenge of being so archaeologically focused is the audience. This work is perfect for archaeology students who are interested in the history and practice of archaeology. However, it would be much more challenging for someone expecting a work on Old Testament history. For an Old Testament class, this is an excellent resource for further study on a specific site or region rather than a text to read cover to cover. For example, if someone is studying

Shiloh and desires to connect the biblical text with the archaeological record, Currid provides a brief overview of the site and further resources. This could help the non-archaeologist quickly discover if the site contains significant occupation levels from the period that they are studying and what further resources have been published on that site and the broader region. Currid's archaeological survey is a great resource for those who are desiring a deeper understanding of archaeology and the land of Israel.

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Genesis. By John Goldingay. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020, 832 pp., \$59.99 paper.

In *Genesis*, Goldingay attempts to provide the church a resource that enables readers to understand the foundational work to the First Testament in particular as well as the entire Bible as a whole. John Goldingay is a well-known scholar in Old Testament literature. A committed churchman, Goldingay is ordained in the Church of England. Goldingay uses his substantial knowledge, love for the Scripture, and work in Old Testament studies to provide a wealth of information to the studies of Genesis.

Goldingay structures his work in a recurring pattern. He first provides a translation based upon previous work (xi). After he translates a section, he utilizes an abundance of resources to provide a running commentary. These resources range from early Jewish and Christian works, Reformation theologians and Medieval Jewish works, to the theologians of the 20th century, and finally to 21st-century studies.

He begins the work with the standard introductory remarks found in commentaries. He addresses the setting of Genesis within the Pentateuch, the First Testament, and the Bible, describing it as “both complete and incomplete (2).” Though noting the standard division of Genesis with the Hebrew word *tôlādôt*, Goldingay organizes it into four parts (1:1-11:26, 11:27-25:11, 25:12-35:29, and 36:1-50:26). He also acknowledges his understanding of the book including “fact and fiction . . . historical narrative and works of the imagination” (4). He briefly discusses the use of stories,

the origin of Genesis (including a reformed view of the JEDP theory), and the discussion of the text chosen for the commentary (the MT).

The four parts are structured in the same way. A brief treatment of the contents and their relation to the Scripture is provided as an introduction to that section. The part is then divided into sections as represented in the MT (though exceptions do occur, such as his decision to divide 2:4b-25 from 3:1-24, 49). Goldingay then provides his translation. He includes his reasoning for translations in substantial footnotes (or, alternatives found in other versions). Following his translation, he interprets the section. He offers an overview of the material and then divides it into sections of Scripture (e.g., 15:7-12, 249). Next, Goldingay briefly discusses the implications of that section. The depth of treatment, and the length of each part, are determined by the text and the issues related. For example, Goldingay devotes four and a half pages to discussing the implications for “Fall, Original Sin?” (83-87) and nothing to death of Abraham.

Goldingay’s work demonstrates an intimate knowledge of studies in Genesis, extending beyond the textual work by including pertinent areas of research (for example, Goldingay discusses Melchizedek and God’s relationship to people of other religions, 239). He weaves germane social issues into his implications from the text (304). Concerning the creation account, Goldingay ties humanity’s responsibility to live in conjunction with creation, “as a citizen of the world,” not ravishing the earth for its resources (40). He brings to light connections to other Scriptures outside of Genesis (357), draws out inferences from Jewish literature (709), and includes discussions where scholars hold differing views (303-304). It is a well-rounded commentary, providing a wonderful balance between scholarly material and treatment and practical discussions for the church. In this, John Goldingay has achieved his purpose.

One benefit of Goldingay’s work is the canonical approach he takes in his commentary and interpretation. He draws out parallels between accounts such as Abram’s experience with famine in Gen. 12 and the future interaction between Egypt and Israel (217). He also presents the distinctions in accounts. For example, he contrasts the experiences with Sarah and Abraham in 12:10-20 and 20:1-18. Another helpful contribution of this book is the adherence to the text. While he briefly discusses the trinitarian implications of the three men in Gen. 19, he reminds readers that there is nothing definitive by which

to make this reasoning (310-312). His work also displays appropriate timeliness. While not neglecting the issues related to the text and culture, he draws implications that are relatable today. His discussion of women in general, and Hagar specifically, benefits the scholar and the church (270-271).

However, Goldingay does draw confusion at times. One is left wondering at his comments at the outset, “Genesis tells a story . . . One way of categorizing them is to divide them into fact and fiction” (4). He denies that Genesis is bound to either one, ultimately determining them to be similar to a TV sitcom. He states, “It thus combines factual data with the fruits of the author’s active imagination and reflection” (5). It is difficult to determine how one can view something written as fact or flourishment. For example, the reader is left to doubt the actual age of Abraham and Sarah (218, 316). His referral of certain accounts as “historical parables” may increase that confusion (102, 125). Though this confusion appears, it does not diminish Goldingay’s contribution to Pentateuchal studies, nor does it defy orthodox beliefs.

John Goldingay offers the church and the academy a fresh and timely work on a timeless book of Scripture. His familiarity with multiple areas is displayed throughout his work. Scholars will be led into further fields of research, while those who love the book of Genesis will be reinvigorated with the biblical account. While not always conservative, his work is orthodox and will prove to be a well—used tool for years to come.

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The Person of Christ: An Introduction. By Stephen J. Wellum. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021, 206 pp., \$18.99 paper.

Christological confusion abounds! From secularists to evangelicals, Jesus’s question— “Who do people say that I am?” (Mark 8:27)—resounds still today. The confusion is evident as divergent answers proliferate both inside and outside the church. Stephen J. Wellum—professor of Christian theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, author of *God the Son Incarnate* (Crossway, 2016) and *Christ Alone* (Zondervan Academic, 2017) and co-author

of *Kingdom through Covenant* (Crossway, 2012/2018) and *God's Kingdom through God's Covenant* (Crossway, 2015)—summarizes the biblical answer: “Jesus is the divine Son, the second person of the triune Godhead, the Lord of glory, who in time assumed a human nature, so that now and forevermore he is the eternal ‘Word made flesh’ (cf. John 1:1, 14)” (14). Wellum has written *The Person of Christ* as a concise introduction to the doctrine of Christ “to equip the church to know the basic biblical teaching about who Jesus is *and* how the church has theologically confessed the identity of Jesus throughout the ages” (16). To accomplish this task, Wellum has laid out the doctrine of the person of Christ in nine chapters grouped into three parts: (1) the biblical data, (2) the historical development, and (3) a theological summary.

In Part 1, Wellum begins unfolding the biblical data with a brief methodological excursus highlighting the necessity of doing Christology from above, which “starts with the triune God of Scripture and *his* word, and it seeks to identify Jesus’s person and work from within the truth of Scripture” (24). Doing Christology from above necessitates an intratextual approach to Scripture that seeks to understand and articulate Jesus as he is presented in Scripture’s own framework and categories. From there, Wellum expounds Christ’s identity as constructed upon four central themes running throughout Scripture—God, humanity, sin, and redemption—as well as the major covenants comprising the biblical storyline (chap. 2). Narrowing in on the New Testament, Wellum elucidates Christ’s implicit and explicit claims found throughout the Gospels (chap. 3) and the apostolic affirmation and exposition of Christ’s self-identification (chap. 4).

Part 2 begins with a concise explication of the rise of extrabiblical terminology (i.e., “Trinity” and “hypostatic union”) from the early church’s struggle to faithfully proclaim all that Scripture teaches regarding the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The process of doctrinal formulation often occurred in light of and in response to heresy—expositions of the faith deemed to be deficient deviations from sound theology (chap. 5). This process eventuated in the Chalcedonian Definition, which serves as “the benchmark of orthodox Christology” (102). However, Chalcedon itself was not the final word on Christology as various points required further clarification. Wellum highlights four such points—*enhypostasia*, the *communicatio idiomatum*, the *extra Calvinisticum*, and dyothelitism—which the church saw as necessary entailments of Chalcedon for the maintenance of a fully divine and fully

human Savior (chap. 6). Part 2 concludes with a critical examination of recent Christological proposals—ontological and functional kenoticism—which, Wellum argues, fall short of the bar set by Chalcedon (chap. 7).

In Part 3, Wellum brings all of the biblical and historical data together in a theological summary of the identity of Jesus Christ (chap. 8). He introduces and explains ten propositions regarding the person of Christ grouped into five subsections: “The Divine Son,” “The Incarnation,” “The Two Natures,” “A New Covenant Head,” and “Lord and Savior.” Responding to various objections and answering certain conundrums, Wellum brings all of the data together to explain what it means that Jesus is God the Son incarnate. This whole project is grounded upon the centrality of Christ in the revelation and plan of the triune God (chap. 9), with the foundational aim of calling “the church back to what is central: the glory of Christ” (179). The glory of Christ is beheld through meditating on the biblical and confessional portrayal of Jesus, and when churches maintain Christ’s glory as the center, they enjoy greater life and health.

Throughout *The Person of Christ*, Wellum adroitly weaves the biblical data, historical theology, and clear theological insight into an eminently accessible introduction to Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Despite employing specific parts to treat different topics, the author never gives the impression that any topic is detached from the others. Rather, throughout the volume, Scripture is the ground from which tradition arises and as the source from which tradition draws its vitality. Wellum deftly illustrates how the extrabiblical categories did not arise as an imposition upon the biblical text but as necessitated by a proper interpretation of the text itself. Thus, Scripture is clearly portrayed as the norming norm (*norma normans*) with tradition as the normed norm (*norma normata*). This style results in a robustly biblical presentation of the necessity of Chalcedonian categories, which bolsters Wellum’s critical evaluation and rejection of kenotic Christologies on those very grounds. Wellum’s work serves as an excellent example of how to move from biblical text to theological formulation. By way of minor critique, however, though this concise work is thoroughly trinitarian—emphasizing the processions and missions, inseparable operations, subsisting relations, and the like—it offers scant data concerning eternal generation. Wellum clearly affirms and utilizes this category throughout, but the readers are left wondering what eternal generation actually entails. As discussion regarding this doctrine has proliferated in recent years, Wellum’s clear writing and emphasis on biblical

theology would be an interesting and helpful contribution to this discussion.

In conclusion, *The Person of Christ* is an exceptional introduction for “the average reader” (16) and—if employed—will accomplish its goal of equipping the church for deeper and richer reflection on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Such reflection is a much-needed anchor and will bring with it health and vitality for individuals and churches.

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How the Body of Christ Talks: Recovering the Practice of Conversation in the Church. By C. Christopher Smith. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2019, 207 pp., \$16.99 paper.

In *How the Body of Christ Talks*, C. Christopher Smith provides the church with a healthy reminder of conversation’s intrinsic role in the transformational well-being of the church. Smith believes that all Christians are “created to live most fully and most healthfully in conversation” (6). The impetus for this work is Smith’s desire to find answers to the question “How do we learn to talk together in our church when we have been formed by a culture that goes to great lengths to avoid conversation?” (8). Ultimately, Smith argues for lifestyles disciplined in the art of conversations that reflect God’s loving care and that cultivate growth and flourishing within the church and in society (8, 181-182).

As a Christian and active participant at Englewood Christian Church in Indiana, Smith has experientially noticed our disjunctive cultural and ecclesiastical moment, and he seeks to speak into the church’s relational deficit by focusing on how we ought to converse with others inside and outside of the church. *How the Body of Christ Talks* is a beneficial resource for bridging interpersonal communication gaps, and the writing itself models what an irenic tone can sound like.

His aim in catalyzing transformational conversations in communal settings begins with God. Chapter one sketches Smith’s theology of conversation. From there, he divides the book into three sections or aspects along the conversational path to communal flourishing. Section one, “Setting Out on the Journey” covers conversational dynamics, complexities, conversational manner, and

techniques. Section two, “A Spirituality for the Journey” addresses how one exists in our world at the spiritual and conversational levels of human existence by highlighting the concepts of “prayer, abiding, and preparation” (83). Section three, “Sustaining the Journey” covers how to continue in the journey of conversational communities of transformation even when it’s hard. Lastly, Smith concludes by holding up for us the “radiant life” of living in intentional relationships built from meaningful dialogues (185-186).

Smith’s book deserves a wide reading among church leaders and laymen interested in developing healthier, transformative conversations that lead to a fruitful belonging within the body of Christ. He compassionately writes to men and women who are ostensibly unaware of the damaging neglect that comes from personal and relational withholding. He wants his readers to understand that they exist as social, conversational beings whose conversational comportment impacts individual and communal flourishing (92).

The author wisely emphasizes the neglect of Christian imagination in living out the church’s presence among each other in the world. Perhaps more than any other cognitive faculty, the imagination gets underwhelming attention in fostering healthy ecclesiastical culture, and therefore one can appreciate Smith’s insightful point. He maintains that the church’s common malady is that “[w]e rarely have meaningful, sustained conversations” in the body of believers that make up our local churches (7). We can receive excellent Bible teaching and hold membership in a church founded on good doctrine, but we can fall prey to a lack of “imagination for how to embody” godly relationality and caring conversations (7). What ideas could our churches come up with if we encouraged space and time to practiced imagining what might be if we take God’s words seriously? I believe taking Smith’s warning seriously can foster more meaningful participation in the lives of others to the glory of God.

While this work merits attention for those involved in practical theology and church life, I am not convinced there aren’t better resources on conversation available for the church. Anyone interested in picking up this resource is invited to consider the following observations.

This book will likely have you resonating with Smith’s value for fostering belonging within the church. However, his portrayal of belonging faintly connects to the gospel throughout his book. I think that his conversation about how “we belong to one another in Christ’s body,” while absolutely true and glorious, is a proposition that must be built on, and not isolated from,

the explicit gospel message which necessarily connects a sinner's belonging to God through the cross to a sinner's belonging in God's family (8). This is reality we must consistently get right in church life because, if we're honest, we don't want to belong to or create a culture of belonging for people who are *too* different from us. Belonging to and being part of the diversity of people who comprise the church is too risky and uncomfortable to handle a part from the gospel that secures our acceptance in Christ. The incohesive aspects of a local body of believers can only grow more fragmented when the gospel is inconsistently and implicitly related to the church's people.

Lastly, *How the Body of Christ Talks* is a book we disjunctive churches should care about but should read carefully. Smith presumably holds to some theological distinctions that he outright affirms or at least tips his hat to. First, Smith clearly constructs his approach to human conversation from social trinitarianism (see 12ff. in his book). Secondly, Smith exemplifies a non-complementarian church model that may be foreign to churches of reformed traditions (see 160). Lastly, Smith implicitly condones the acceptance of homosexuals (practicing or celibate?) into church membership (see 159). Whether you stand in defense of or in disagreement with Smith's convictions on these points, there is much in his book which equips Christians for more conversationally skillful ministry practices.

Christians have many good things to learn from C. Christopher Smith in *How the Body of Christ Talks*. His insights are thought provoking and relevant to our current context, and his book provides helpful instruction on how to practice conversing with intentionality.

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The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith. By Donald Fairbairn and Ryan M. Reeves. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019, vii + 396 pp., \$34.99.

Donald Fairbairn and Ryan Reeves are both distinguished historians in church history. Fairbairn currently teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological

Seminary where he focuses on salvation, Christ, and other church doctrines as they were handled in the early church (*Grace and Christology in the Early Church*). Reeves is professor of Historical Theology at Gordon-Conwell as well. His academic interests and research include Reformation studies, specifically Calvin and Luther, and the English Reformation (*English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, c.1527-1570*). This book seeks to answer the question of the value of creeds and confessions in the Christian tradition since they often do not have the language of scripture. The thesis of this book is that these confessions and creeds are “indispensable” because they draw the believer into greater understanding of the Christian faith and guide the believer in reading the scriptures.

This book is divided into five sections that categorize five time periods in Christian history. Parts 1 and 2 are to assess the development and overview of creeds in the first 500 years of the church and then the late Patristic period from 600-900 A.D. Specifically, part one describes the eb and flow of the development of the trinity and Christology in the early creeds and how that was impacted by the Roman government. In Part 2, the authors then describe the process that took place to clarify those creeds and give stronger definitions as to ease confusion between various bishops and sects within the Christian church. As these definitions begin to be parsed out, the church (east and west) is using the government to drive their desired outcome for these definitions which in the end causes a rift between the Latin West and the Greek East. Some of this conflict, as noted by the authors, is driven by the various emperors of Rome for the sake of unity within the empire.

In Parts 3 and 4, the book walks through the difficulties and challenges of a consistent faith. When Martin Luther inaugurated the Reformation, various communities and cities around Europe took hold of this momentum and broke from the Roman Catholic church, which left these new groups with a need to define their faith. Since the church was so interwoven with the state, the various groups had to put forth a document in their cities explaining what they believed and “confessed” so that they were considered acceptable. Parts 3 and 4 explain the shift from “creed” to “confession” by detailing that the Reformers were not creating a different religion and moving from the ecumenical creeds of the early faith. Rather, they were arguing against false doctrines that had arisen in the church and defending their positions according to Scripture.

Finally in Part 5, the authors conclude the discussion of the creeds and confessions by discussing how they are used in our contemporary context. As the Reformation in Europe began to slow down, the writing of confessions only increased in England and the Americas. The authors point out that as denominational fragmentation increased in the American colonies, so too did the confessions fragment and multiply to fit the needs of the various denominations and churches. This same sentiment resonates with the rest of the world, as social justice issues and issues of morality continued to grow and expand globally, churches began to write various confessions in response to the needs of the community.

Reeves and Fairbairn have done an excellent work to present the development of creeds and confessions throughout the church's past. This book lends itself to be somewhat introductory but has deep insights into the doctrinal disputes that lead to forming various distinctions in denominations and beliefs through time. The book presents the history of the world through the lens of the church's dogmatic debates and somewhat proves that from the early church through the late Patristic period the development of politics and government was more so led by the church's debates and credal development rather than the emperor's power. The book's layout is helpful because of its division into five parts that focus on specific time periods; this is beneficial for those who are looking to study a specific time frame. One of the other major strengths of this book is the distinction between creed and confession. The emphasis on creeds as the development of essential faith helps distinguish the use of confessions as a guide that was only developed in response to the needs of the society of the community.

Reeves and Fairbairn's work is excellent, but due to the amount of time periods that the authors try to cover through this book, it seems to be lacking at various sections. Part three of the book, which focuses on the Middle Ages, lacks the most. More work done here would have helped bridge the gap in the conversation between the end of the creeds and beginning of the confessions. There is only one page that is dedicated to the work of Aquinas and there is little other conversation in regard to the work of other authors during the Middle Ages, aside from Peter Lombard. The time period between A. D. 900 and 1500 was pre-reformation, yet it was not without doctrinal development. The majority of the chapter focuses on the papal upheavals that occurred during this time that helped cause the fracturing of Christendom.

Aside from this, the book is contributing a great addition to the history of credal development and how confessions have impacted the church. The book gives guidance to the reader in the conclusion as to how confessions can still shape the church today and how they will continue to influence the church in years to come. The conclusion is also helpful because it describes how the contemporary confessions seek ecumenicism and a return to the credal statements of the early church.

Overall, this book is a wonderful addition to any church historian's library. This book is a fine resource for students who are working through creeds and confessions, as well as researchers who need something to give an overview through various centuries. This book will serve the field well in providing perspective on the unity of the church throughout history and how there is a common creed among all Christians.

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Street, John D. *Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019, 308 pp., \$15.00 paper.

Passions of the Heart by Dr. John Street is a helpful, informative, and soul-searching work for counselors, pastors, and Christians seeking help or seeking to help those entrapped in sexual sin. Street received a D.Min. from Westminster Theological Seminary and is currently a professor of biblical counseling at the Master's University and Seminary in Southern California. He is also the president of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors and has more than twenty years of study, teaching, and professional counseling of experience.

The book was written to take what Christ has done in his life, death, and resurrection and apply it diligently to the lives and hearts of those who wish to grow in the grace of Jesus Christ in their sexual lives. In other words, it is about "the struggle of fighting by faith, to grow increasingly in the grace purchased for us so that we look more and more like Christ who died for us" (xii). Street notes that sexual sin is like an animal ensnared in a trap. It is that feeling of being ensnared or enslaved. It is to this kind of person Street writes this book for, "perhaps you have tried everything you know to break the defeating grip

it has on you, yet your entire struggle has simply served to tighten its crippling hold” (xvi). In a word, this book’s purpose is to free those in stubborn bondage.

Section One is designed to help the reader understand the complexities of the human heart. Street begins by stating that the Bible tells us that the human heart has an immense capacity for self-deception. Here he notes, “It is commonplace for the heart to assume that it is better than it really is; it is customary for the heart to believe its own innocence and then presume the goodness of its own motivations” (3). Not only is the human heart self-deceived it is a perpetual idol factory. It intends to worship itself rather than its creator, this is what he calls ‘functional idolatry of functional gods.’ The human heart is the control center or “the dwelling place of your thought life” which lead to passions in the heart. These passions “will consume your thinking, determine your plans, form your intentions, master your cravings, and focus your purpose” (33). For those who feel the sense of sexual captivity with their sin, Street speaks directly to them who might experience the death of hope, usefulness, the conscience, relationships, time, resources, the body, and godliness.

Section Two identifies eight critical predispositions of the heart that set the stage for sinful sexual indulgence and bondage. It is here in section two where Street’s contribution is most evident. Street tells the story of a counseling case he had years ago in which a counselee had memorized verses, had a robust understanding of the biblical worldview, and had taken intentional steps towards repentance, yet was still enslaved to his habitual sin of masturbation. It wasn’t until Frederick (the counselee’s name) mentioned that he sinned sexually when he got angry or frustrated that Street had his “a-ha” moment. This led him to the conclusion that, “sexual idolatry always has a heart context that can come from a wide range of idols” (91). Or again later, “A heart problem of idolatry without a context is a formula for continuing idolatry” (91). Street argues that undergirding all sexual sin is the sin of covetousness or self-gratification. This kind of covetousness expresses itself in at least one idol of desire (“I hurt” or “I hunger”). These idols of desire give birth to two sets of maturing idols of desire. Anger, self-pity, fear, or discontentment become the underlining heart idols for those seeking solace from past hurt. Flattery, power/control, self-reward, and comfort become the underlining idols of those who hunger and want satisfaction in life.

In other words, Street wishes pastors, counselors, and Christians to know that at the heart of all sexual sin is a covetous heart ruled by sensual, self-seeking greed (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21; Rom. 1:28-29; Col. 3:5). Such a truth can bring

great enlightenment to the passions of the heart as it tries to fight sexual sin.

Section Three concludes the book by addressing biblically the motivations that fuel sexual sin. It presents a robust and clear doctrine of sanctification with an emphasis on sexual sin and achieving a pure heart. There seems to be nothing new or novel here except for the fact that it provides a helpful reminder that the gospel of Jesus Christ requires repentance of sin and rest in the finished work of Christ. However, the reader may find helpful Street's comments at the end of Chapter Ten on dating and sex education for children as well.

Passions of the Heart is a book worth reading and worth reading slowly with someone who is trapped in sexual sin. The book is biblically rooted and theologically sound. It is a most helpful resource for counselors and pastors seeking to help those entrapped in sexual sin. Scripture fills every page and well-known biblical stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon are used as timely illustrations to the concepts of the book. Each chapter ends with a list of helpful resources, study questions, and a list of key concepts for further study. The list of key concepts can be found in a helpful glossary of terms in the back of the book. The book also contains helpful tables and figures that aid the reader as they seek to understand the nature and effects of sexual sin. As for weaknesses, there are times that the concepts of the book feel over-argued and for that the book could have been shorter. However, the book does accomplish its most important goal namely that the reader is counseled by Street. It is a genuine prayer that many would take and read and be counseled by someone who knows the Bible, the human heart, and Jesus Christ so well.

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Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture. By Madison N. Pierce. (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 178) New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020, 237 pp., \$99.99 hardcover.

Madison Pierce, in her published dissertation, argues that the book of Hebrews represents an example of *prosopological exegesis* within the very early Christian movement. The prosopological method has been recognized by patristic

scholars in the writings of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Augustine, and other early church leaders. Pierce convincingly demonstrates that this technique was in use by at least one of the biblical authors himself. In this way, Pierce builds on the work of Harold Attridge, David DeSilva, Michael Theobald, Matthew Bates, and many others. Bates, in particular, has advanced the analysis of this ancient technique in the last few years, with his *Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation* (Baylor University Press, 2012) and *The Birth of the Trinity* (Oxford University Press, 2015). While Bates focuses largely on Paul, Pierce extends research of prosopological exegesis to—and concentrates exclusively on—the book of Hebrews. In defining the prosopological method, Pierce asserts that the New Testament’s writers assigned “faces” (Gr: πρόσωπα), or characters, to “ambiguous or unspecified personal (or personified) entities” represented in verses of the Hebrew scriptures, developing and illuminating those texts by identifying them with the persons of the Trinity (4). In other words, New Testament writers and early interpreters—looking back to the Hebrew Bible in light of Christ—understood unidentified speakers to be, in fact, *divine* speakers. Most often, these passages were read as intra-divine discourse between the Father and the Son.

In the book of Hebrews specifically, Pierce identifies a clear pattern of divine speech. Nearly all of the thirty plus scripture citations in Hebrews can be attributed to one of the three “divine participants” (22)—Father, Son, or Spirit. In fact, the heart of Pierce’s book (chapters 2-4) is arranged according to divine speaker, not according to the chronological appearing of texts in Hebrews. One chapter is devoted to each speaker, which, Pierce argues, allows her to highlight the patterns developed by the author’s uses of scripture for each person of the Trinity. Pierce goes on to demonstrate how the citations identified as divine speech appear in a repeated pattern: the Father speaks, then the Son speaks, then the Spirit speaks.

The first chapter of *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews* is appropriately devoted to defining terms and methodology. The last chapter (six) of ten pages offers a brief conclusion. In between, Pierce commits one chapter to each of the divine speakers and one chapter to demonstrating how the structure of Hebrews was built around three repeated cycles of divine speeches. More specifically, chapters 2 and 3 feature examples of “intra-divine discourse” in which the Father addresses the Son and the Son responds to the Father—all through unclear or unspecified Old Testament citations the

author identified and characterized with divine speakers. Chapter 4 highlights “extra-divine discourse” in which the author of Hebrews characterizes the Holy Spirit speaking to the community of believers. For example, Hebrews 3:7-8 declares, “So, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.’” Pierce argues that it is almost always the case that the Spirit is the divine speaker who addresses the community (though there is the likely exception of Hebrews 13:5, in which it may be all three divine persons speaking directly to believers). Chapter 5 dives into the oft-debated issue of the structure of Hebrews. Pierce maintains that “one proposal in particular, one that shows Hebrews to be one letter in three sections, is to be preferred” (175).

Overall, Pierce’s monograph is thoroughly researched and covers a good amount of ground with an efficiency of words. At a practical level, reading through the monograph at times feels like taking a deep into the finest nuances of a given text and periodically coming up for air and to reconnect to the overarching issue of divine discourse. Pierce explores numerous facets of each text—the semantics and syntax of its original context, its reception history and translation to the Septuagint (and the complex factors involved with this history alone), and the finest details of the citation in Hebrews itself. She uses this deep-dive technique to her advantage, however, in that she demonstrates how the author of Hebrews appropriated each citation uniquely. There was no one-size-fits-all approach to “recontextualizing” biblical texts to fit a theological schema. Pierce gives detailed attention to the unique challenges related to each verse and to the theological ramifications of appropriating it in the particular place the author did so. In this, Pierce avoids both an overly generalized treatment of citations and an atomistic reading of original texts.

Perhaps the greatest criticism of the monograph is one Pierce acknowledges herself—she concentrates attention on key passages that fit the pattern of intra- and extra-divine discourse through the first ten chapters of Hebrews but spends little time devoted to the scriptural citations in the last three chapters of Hebrews. Giving less attention to these latter passages presents a challenge to the pattern of divine speech that Pierce presents (Father speaks to the Son, Son responds to the Father, Spirit addresses the community), although it does not thereby undermine her thesis. The limited treatment Pierce gives to Hebrews 11-13, however, does appear as an afterthought; and more attention to these substantive verses would have considerably improved the overall analysis.

Pierce's monograph will be of special interest to at least three distinct groups of scholars. First, anyone studying the book of Hebrews' use of the Old Testament will want to engage seriously with this volume in order to better understand the author's complex handling of the Hebrew Bible. Second, those engaged in researching the development of Trinitarian theology will find Pierce's work insightful, as it firmly grounds such theological understanding in the development of the New Testament itself, not in some sort of retrospective bias. Third, scholars seeking to understand the exegetical methods of the earliest Christian church will benefit from the careful and meticulous research packed into this relatively short book.

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A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies: Understanding Key Debates. By Nijay K. Gupta. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020, xii + 196 pp., \$24.99 paper.

Nijay K. Gupta is currently Professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary and is Editor-in-Chief of the *Bulletin for Biblical Research*. This present volume is geared toward those who are new to the field of NT studies and would be well-suited for seminarians or Bible college students who are just beginning their studies. Specifically, it intends to introduce new students to some major issues in NT scholarship as well as the key players in those discussions. As a work meant for beginning students, it does not require any knowledge of the biblical languages to be read profitably.

The book is divided into thirteen short chapters, each dealing with a major topic of debate. These chapters cover a wide range of topics, ranging from source criticism to justification in Paul. Each chapter spans approximately thirteen to fifteen pages. The short length of each chapter is intentional since Gupta aims to simply introduce his readers to the debates and not to win them over with argumentation.

Each of these chapters contains at least two perspectives on the issue at hand as well as Gupta's concluding remarks. After surveying the major positions, Gupta also includes further reading which ranges from beginner

to advanced level and he also includes literature written by proponents of those views so that students can read the arguments for themselves. At the end of the book, there are two indices, one for authors and another for Scripture. Overall, the organization of the book is clear and easy to navigate.

In general, Gupta does an excellent job of organizing his material in a clear and accessible manner. For example, in his discussion of the Synoptic Problem, Gupta not only describes the various hypotheses, but he also provides some illustrations of the models of literary dependence which provides clarity for the new student (6-7). In other places, Gupta helpfully provides tables and charts so that the reader can quickly see, for example, a comparison between Matthew and Luke on the Lord's Prayer (10) or the allusions to Jesus's teachings in Paul (49). Pedagogically and organizationally, the book's presentation is praiseworthy.

On the whole, Gupta even-handedly represents the major perspectives before offering his own comments on the topic under discussion. For example, in his chapter titled "Paul and the Jewish Law" in which he discusses the "New Perspective," Gupta introduces the reader to the chapter by presenting various tensions and questions that scholars have raised about Paul's views on *torah* and the Mosaic law (74-75). He then proceeds to summarize the significant contributions that scholars such as Krister Stendahl, E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, and N. T. Wright have made to the field (74-76), before discussing the criticism that such scholars and their work have faced from the likes of Frank Thielman, Simon Gathercole, Stephen Westerholm, D. A. Carson, Peter O'Brien, and Mark Seifrid (77-78). Regarding his own concluding thoughts at the end of each chapter, Gupta does not "take sides" in the debates. The tenor of his reflections is that the debates are complicated and lively, and the reader will be hard-pressed to identify Gupta's own position.

As a modern introduction to NT studies, *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies* also seeks to introduce readers to newer trends in scholarship such as empire studies. Although the "kingdom of God" has been a subject of earlier scholarship, Gupta notes that NT scholars have only recently begun to develop more interest in the political and religious data of Roman antiquity (121). Specifically, Gupta understands the rise of empire studies as being correlated with the rise of postcolonial criticism, and he notes that scholars engaging in empire critical work have taken an interest in the ways in which the NT and early Christian writers have either been supportive or critical of the Roman empire (122). Gupta sees empire studies in a positive

light because “attending to the imperial context of early Christianity and the apostolic writings . . . has brought fresh readings to all kinds of texts . . . and it has helped to fit these works into a wider sociopolitical context” (130). For Gupta, empire studies have implications that extend beyond the realm of scholarship. These implications have a bearing on church life, particularly as it concerns the relationship between church and government.

Gupta has undertaken an ambitious project to present some key debates that have been ongoing in NT studies, and he does so in a way that attempts to be even-handed to all of the perspectives that he has included in his work. It is accessible for beginning students who are studying the NT, Gupta has clearly written this book with pedagogical effectiveness in mind. This succinct book serves as a complement to those larger, more text-oriented introductions to the NT by allowing students to understand issues in NT scholarship from a birds-eye view, and both professors and students would benefit from having this book on a class syllabus.

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Living in Union with Christ: Paul's Gospel and Christian Moral Identity. By Grant Macaskill. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019, xvi +157 pp., \$24.99 cloth.

Living in Union with Christ: Paul's Gospel and Christian Moral Identity is a popularized version of Grant Macaskill's *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 2013) which previously explored how union between God and the redeemed is represented across the theology of the New Testament, setting systematic and historical theology in dialogue with biblical studies. Integrating robust biblical exegesis and theology, Macaskill introduces his current work as an “exercise in the practical theological interpretation of Paul's Epistles” by asking: “As Christians who are committed to seeing Scripture as normative for our thought and practice, how then must we think and act today?” (vii).

Speaking primarily to evangelical pastor-theologians, Macaskill argues that popular evangelical subculture “does not necessarily sustain the theological heritage that lies behind it” (40). Consequently, this subculture's account of the

gospel has developed the wrong view of the “Christian self” because it assumes that morality depends on one’s own efforts and downplays how the Holy Spirit realizes the moral presence of Jesus in one’s life (40-41). Moreover, Macaskill argues the church’s neglect of classical trinitarian theology in both academic and popular evangelicalism often leaves Christian morality “functionally Christless” (viii) with a “devastating effect on concepts of discipleship” (43). In other words, for Macaskill there is “a functional neglect of the place of Jesus” in the reality of one’s saved life to the point that Paul’s statement, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me,” (Gal. 2:20) loses meaning. Essentially, Paul’s gospel has morphed into “a deficient understanding of the Spirit, seen as a kind of independent force of transformation rather than one who very specifically realizes the moral presence of Jesus in our lives” (41). In addition, Macaskill illuminates the problem of Charles Taylor’s “buffered self”—the modern concept of individual identity which masks our relational encounters with others. For Macaskill, this buffering turns us inward into ourselves rather than opening us to the “indwelling presence of another,” such as Jesus “who has the power to transform us” (7). He concludes that such inward turning results in deterioration of ethics and discipleship, and thus, this form of individualism is itself sin, causing further sin.

The first chapter offers a critical analysis of recent scholarly developments in Pauline ethics, which Macaskill contends have become influential at the popular level, but fail to adequately deal with Paul’s understanding of moral identity or agency. These academic debates include the “New Perspective on Paul” (E. P. Sanders and N. T. Wright), Virtue approaches to Pauline theological ethics (Adasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, and James K. A. Smith), the “Apocalyptic Paul” School (J. Louis Martyn, Douglas A. Campbell, Susan Eastman), and “Imitation of Christ” scholarship (Richard Burridge), which is popularly conceptualized as the “What Would Jesus Do?” movement. Macaskill illustrates how many current gospel versions originating from New Testament scholarship commodify righteousness as capital (i.e. social status) in exchange with God. This exchange is tantamount to legalism because moral identity becomes separated from Jesus and laced in a self-understanding which assumes the self can make autonomous moral choices.

Chapter 2, “Paul’s Moral Crisis,” is foundational for the remaining book, laying out how Paul represents Christian moral identity “in Christ,” linking imputation language with identity. Chapter 3, “Baptism and Moral Identity,” and Chapter 4, “The Lord’s Supper and Someone’s Else’s Memory,” consider

the core symbolic practices of the Christian community as grounds for moral conduct. These, he says, shape believers' identities as they identify with Christ, experience baptism, and remember his death. Chapter 5, "Crying 'Abba' in the Ruins of War," focuses on Galatians 4 and Romans 6–7, examining the concept of adoption and Christian identity in the here and now. Macaskill contrasts this new self with the mistaken notion of "becoming better versions of ourselves" (112). Chapter 6, "One Little Victory: Hope and the Moral Life," examines the retrospective shaping of lives in light of past struggle and conflict compared to the prospective view with the hope of ultimate transformation.

Chapter 7, "Concluding Synthesis," continues to unpack the meaning of Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Macaskill stresses Paul's "disruption of his sense of self-subsistence as crucial to his new identity," meaning that Paul is no longer self-contained despite retaining his particular identity (128-129). In other words, one's diverse identity is not simply absorbed or dissolved in the process of uniting with Christ. This is because a relationship with Christ involves "indwelling" which is distinct from ordinary relationships where the self is not determined by one's self but by the Spirit who "works to unite an individual self to the goodness of Jesus" (130). The chapter is conceptually rich, ranging from Macaskill's quibble with John Barclay's *Paul and the Gift* to a "provocative" example of the church's debate with same-sex relationships and LGBTI identity. Whatever the issue, Macaskill encourages Christians morally identified in Christ to care for others with love rather than dismissing or labeling other members with whom they disagree (140).

Committed to the theological interpretation of Scripture, Macaskill integrates biblical and theological studies with practical implications applicable to the contemporary life of the church. He critically engages opposing positions with a profound awareness of the surrounding background debates while presenting convincing exegetical evidence. Thus, his dialogue with weighty scholarship aids readers less familiar with pertinent academic debates.

Macaskill orients the book for practical theology and the life of the church. For example, he strategically limits footnotes and biblical scholarship and transliterates Greek for those without language training. Even so, his discussion regarding Greek grammar can still prove challenging for non-specialists. One key example comes in chapter 3, when understanding the importance of the aorist tense or reflexive verbs with middle voice is important for grasping the significance of his exegetical analysis.

Nevertheless, pastor-theologian Macaskill's scholarship offers a timely gift to both the academy and church—a deceptively small, yet densely-packed and critically robust practical biblical-theological treatise. It is best suited for pastors and seminary students seeking to: 1) deepen an understanding of union with Christ, and 2) evaluate discipleship programs from a Trinitarian framework by re-considering the Holy Spirit's agency in Christian moral development.

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Analyzing Doctrine: Toward a Systematic Theology. By Oliver D. Crisp. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019. 280pp. \$39.99, hardcover.

Oliver D. Crisp is Professor of Analytic Theology and Director of the Logos Institute for Analytic and Exegetical Theology at the University of St. Andrews (UK). Crisp is a prolific author and thinker, publishing numerous works in the realm of analytic theology and serving as the Senior Editor of the *Journal of Analytic Theology* and co-editor of the *Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology*.

As the sub-title of *Analyzing Doctrine* indicates, this is Crisp's initial foray into creating a traditional systematic theology canvassing the various loci of Christian doctrine. As this suggests, Crisp isn't attempting to provide a complete magnum opus with this work—it is the beginning of a project. As he notes, he hopes to “provide something like a dogmatic sketch of some of the main load-bearing structures around which a systematic theology would be built” (2). Given this goal, he begins with a brief defense of analytic theology before examining those “main load-bearing structures.” He begins with the debate over classical theism and theistic personalism wherein he opts for a via media—what he calls “chastened theism.” Next, he examines divine simplicity and suggests a “cut down model” that can jettison some of the more difficult aspects of the doctrine such as the pure-act distinction without losing the core claim of simplicity (54). Following these chapters, he writes on God's eternal purpose, Christ's incarnation anyway, original sin (where he offers a “moderate Reformed account”), the virgin birth (where he interacts with Andrew Lincoln, agreeing that the virgin birth isn't necessary but arguing that it is true and fitting), dyothelitism, theosis (or salvation as participation), and resurrection.

Given this brief overview, I intend to spend most of the review critically interacting with the book as it deserves. Anything Crisp writes is of the highest academic quality and warrants serious interaction. I begin with areas of either disagreement or modest dissatisfaction. First, I think his definition of classical theism is curious. He is right that classical theism is “a term of art that encompasses a family of views” but his formal definition for the Trinity is odd (39). He defines classical theism as confessing the Trinitarian belief that God exists “eternally as one entity” (41). Nowhere does he previously use the language of “entity,” so it is difficult to firmly ascertain what he means here. Moreover, the classical tradition typically uses “being” rather than entity. Maybe Crisp means the same thing, but it’s not clear. Furthermore, most definitions of classical theism focus on the divine attributes rather than trinitarian views. Crisp may be right that the Trinity should be included in the definition, but if he is, I would prefer a clearer definition and reasoning for including the Trinitarian content.

Second, and in the same vein, I’m worried about his definition of theistic personalism. He claims that they “regard God as a person like human persons, only greater and more perfect” (42). Essentially this means they deny divine transcendence. But I don’t think all theistic personalists are trying to deny transcendence or bring God down from heaven to be a creature only greater and more perfect. This may be what is implicit in many of their views but I don’t think all of them are explicitly attempting to do this.

Third, Crisp argues that original guilt is unjust but doesn’t critically interact potential rejoinders or with the federal headship account that purports to explain just this. For example, he claims that “For surely the ascription of moral properties and responsibility to a particular agent requires the agent in question to be the proper subject of such properties” (149). For those coming from the Reformed tradition, I think Crisp needs much more argumentation to make a convincing case. Now, to be fair to Crisp, he *does* provide a more detailed argument along these lines in other works. Therefore, if one is committed to reading further, they can uncover some of the loose ends left here.

Fourth, I am unconvinced by his claim that the virgin birth is unnecessary (though it is true for Crisp). It appears that Crisp is only able to make this claim by begging the question on original sin. If original sin is propagated as much of the Christian Tradition has suggested, the virgin birth is indeed necessary to avoid sin in Christ. Therefore, his claim that it is unnecessary is unmotivated for a large segment of Christianity.

Moving from the potential negatives, I want to highlight several strengths. First, as always, Crisp's writing style and clarity are superb. Reading Crisp is a delight, whether you agree with him or not. While he writes and engages thinkers at the highest intellectual level his explanation and prose are largely accessible. Second, for those seeking a moderate Reformed account of various important dogmatic loci, Crisp is a great model. He offers modified versions of classical theism, simplicity, and original sin. These are likely of great interest to those that find critiques of classical theism as serious but are unwilling to desert the larger Christian tradition. Third, due to his desire to modify various traditional doctrines, Crisp has actually done a great service in distilling the various "core claims" of these essential doctrines. No matter one's opinion of his conclusions, their own understanding of the necessary conditions for each doctrine will be greatly sharpened.

In sum, I would largely recommend the book—particularly for undergraduate or graduate students in either systematic theology courses or those focusing on the doctrine of God or Christology. Crisp is a serious thinker and provides serious content worthy of contemplating and wrestling with. His approach to focusing on the "main load-bearing structures" is also beneficial for undergraduate students who don't have the bandwidth to engage a fuller systematic theology. With this volume they will be introduced to the key debates that should first be engaged by any student. While I have my quibbles with some of his conclusions as noted, the writing style and overall interaction and summary with the material is invaluable.

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The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution. By Carl R. Trueman. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020, 432 pp., \$34.99.

Every generation needs individuals like the men of Issachar in David's day, "who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron 12:32). These men knew their contemporary culture and historical situation, which, in turn, guided them to properly respond to it. Christians

today should take time to understand the contemporary culture so that they might respond in the most biblical and responsible way. A plethora of resources and books exist today to aid in that work. One new contribution is Carl Trueman's, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*. Insightful and stimulating the whole way through, this book chronicles the rise of a concept of the self that permeates our culture today. Trueman is a professor of biblical and religious studies at Grove City College. He has previously taught church history at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and is a well-published and widely respected evangelical church historian.

At the heart Trueman's project is to answer the following question: How is the statement 'I am a woman trapped in a man's body' a coherent and meaningful statement in our culture today? Trueman notes that, for previous generations, that statement would not be coherent. In fact, it may invite laughter. And yet, in our culture, to even challenge the validity of that statement has the potential to invite fierce reaction. A massive intellectual and cultural shift has occurred to create a change in the mind. Trueman asserts that it is a certain shift in the understanding of the self that has opened the door to allow (even demand) coherence in the above statement. He explains his thesis: "At the heart of this book lies a basic conviction: the so-called sexual revolution of the last sixty years, culminating in its latest triumph—the normalization of transgenderism—cannot be properly understood until it is set within the context of a much broader transformation in how society understands the nature of human selfhood" (20). By 'self' he means how people understand themselves in relation to others; how they understand their purpose, or what makes them happy.

To summarize the evolution of the modern concept of the self as told in this book is beyond the contours this review. One must read the book itself to learn this history. However, by highlighting some of the key figures featured in this book, one may begin to grasp where certain ideas came from in modern society. Some key thinkers and their influence on modern society that Trueman examines are as follows: With Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Romantic poets, identity took an inward psychological spin. According to these writers, human beings must look inward to understand who they are. In fact, society is often to blame for their shortcomings and they must be liberated from it. "If individuals today – be they avid sports fans, shopaholics,

or transgender people – place an inner sense of psychological well-being at the heart of how they conceptualize happiness, then they stand in a cultural line that includes Rousseau and the Romantics” (194). Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Charles Darwin make their contribution by bringing the death of the metaphysical and teleology in human nature. Nothing outside of the individual contributes authoritatively in understanding his identity: “If society/culture is merely a construct, and if nature possesses no intrinsic meaning or purpose, then what meaning there is must be created by human beings themselves” (195).

The next set of thinkers tie identity to sexual expression. Sigmund Freud, Trueman argues, is arguably “the key figure in the narrative of this book” (203). Freud’s influence does not come from his view of psychoanalysis, which is now mostly defunct, but rather from providing the West with a “compelling myth That myth is the idea that sex, in terms of sexual desire and sexual fulfillment, is the real key to human existence, to what it means to be human” (204). Freud convinced the West that sexual expression is the key to understanding human identity. Later thinkers accept Freud’s assertion that humans are inherently sexual and marry that to Marx’s understanding of history as a history of oppression. The history of oppression becomes the history of sexual oppression by society that has placed limits on individuals’ sexuality. Moreover, that oppression is psychologized. Because human identity is understood as internal and psychological, to challenge someone’s sense of identity by, say, forbidding or frowning upon certain sexual acts, is seen as oppressive.

What this leaves modern society with is a concept of human identity that is self-defined; moreover, it is defined fundamentally by sexuality. This helps explain certain realities of modern culture. First, given the history just summarized, it is not surprising that there are groups of people today who see their identity at its core to be centered on their sexual identity. For example, if someone identifies as gay, he is not saying something merely about his sexual preference, but rather he is saying something about the core of who he is. His sexual orientation is central to his identity. Moreover, if sexual expression and pleasure are central to human identity, it makes sense of the rise of pornography and no-fault divorce. Sex is no longer seen as part of a larger committed relationship that centers on duty and family. Rather, sex is merely recreational pleasure.

The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self is an excellent piece of cultural analysis. Trueman succeeds at his goal of explaining how the statement “I am a woman trapped in a man’s body” has become meaningful and coherent in today’s society. This statement is coherent today because today’s social imaginary accepts a view of the self that has deep historical roots. Trueman finds those roots and tells the history well. He illuminates for the modern man more about the world he lives in and helps him to understand his culture better. The fact that mere verbal dissonance to the sexual revolution can be seen as “oppressive” did not merely come from nowhere. A long history of thinkers have contributed to this reality. Despite the length and complexity of Trueman’s argument, he tells the story clearly and he tells it well. As a master teacher, he often circles back and recaps points to help the reader keep the larger narrative in mind. Finally, although the realities that this book chronicles are not something Christians celebrate, Trueman avoids being pessimistic or succumbing to diatribe. He soberly defines our current situation and challenges the church to respond faithfully. All too often, believers merely want to lament over the modern world. As Trueman points out, “Simply lamenting that we are not holding better cards is of no practical value” (384). This book helps believers understand the cards they are holding so that they might better play them. Although not so much a critique, a question that came to mind while reading was this: How will the modern self clash with Islam in the future? With the rise of Islam in the West, particularly in Europe, how might Islam’s social imaginary, much different than the modern secular West’s, clash together? The answer only time will tell.

Any Christian (or even non-Christian) who wants to better understand modern society, particularly the issues surrounding the sexual revolution, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* is a great resource. Pastors and Christian leaders especially should take the time to read this book as it will help them to grasp more thoroughly the various issues that they must confront in the modern world. Trueman has given the church an illuminating and stimulating work.

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