

Book Reviews

Rethinking the Filioque with the Greek Fathers. By Giulio Maspero. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023, 336 pp., \$49.99.

Giulio Maspero is a professor of theology at the Pontifical University. His work has specialized in two areas: Gregory of Nyssa and rethinking the traditional doctrines surrounding the Trinity. Thus, his most important works prior to this one are *The Trinity and Man*, *Rethinking the Trinity*, and serving as the coeditor of *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*. In this work, he brings that expertise and spirit to bear on the question of the Spirit's procession and how it was perceived in the early church to argue that we should return to a premedieval version of the *filioque*.

Maspero begins his work with the thought of Origen since his works have a profound effect on the writers who came after him. Although there are questions of subordinationism in the writings of Origen, Maspero shows that Origen places the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on the Creator side of the Creator-creature distinction. He does this through a combination of two models: the *linear* and the *triangular* (43). However, Origen lacked the metaphysical tool of *Physis*-theology. To examine this development, Maspero transitions from Origen to his reception by thinkers such as Eusebius and Athanasius (45). It is Athanasius in particular who marks a clear shift from the *Logos*-theology of early thinkers to the *Physis*-theology that would come to dominate Christian thought (53). While this turning point is remembered positively by orthodox Christians, it was not without controversy. The interactions with the Pneumatomachians both highlighted these growing pains and gave the church the opportunity to clarify its thoughts on the relationship between the divine persons. Maspero sees this interaction reaching its zenith in the work of Gregory of Nyssa. It is Nyssen's emphasis on glory and *Schesis*-theology that allows for a truly "active but not causal" role of the Son in the procession of the Spirit (140). This role allows the Greek fathers to place the Spirit between the Father and the Son who acts as the bond between the Father and Son (173).

With the view of the Greek fathers laid out, Maspero turns to the Syriac tradition to show that many of the developments of Latin theology with

regard to the *filioque* are present there as well. This is particularly important as Syriac, like Latin and unlike Greek, has a single word for procession (177). Yet, this is not the only surprising similarity that Maspero will pull out between traditions. While some have claimed Augustine's *filioque* comes from his psychological analysis, Maspero shows that these analogies are also present in the Greek fathers. This leads him finally to Augustine. Rather than painting Augustine in a negative light, Maspero points to the Latin West's metaphysical constraints, particularly with regard to language, highlighting where problems elicit the same response in Augustine and the Syriac tradition. Thus, the problem for Augustine was a lack of developed metaphysical tools to answer the problems common to the Christian tradition (265).

As a work of historical theology, this book boasts several strengths. First, Maspero does an excellent job of situating thinkers in their historical context. Particularly impressive, he does this without sacrificing the details of each thinker's thought. This allows Maspero to paint the controversies of the time as a conflict between metaphysical systems while highlighting how each thinker contributes to this conflict. Secondly, Maspero is deeply connected to the primary sources. The choice to include the original language texts in the footnotes is fantastic for scholars. Finally, his inclusion of the Syriac tradition significantly strengthens his grammatical argument. The combination of these elements creates a particularly strong work.

With that said, this work has one major weakness: the relationship between the relational approach that Maspero advocated for and what he terms the "medieval *Filioque*" (277). It seems that he has made a chronological fallacy in his approach to rejecting the "medieval" version of the doctrine. While I agree with the author that we should return to an "active but not causal" explanation of the Son's role in the Spirit's procession, Maspero does not explain how that differs from the thought of a true medieval such as Thomas Aquinas. The fact that a view was held at an earlier point is not enough to necessitate preferring it to the later view. To truly round out this work, Maspero should have included a chapter showing the differences between the two, preferably by responding to a medieval thinker. Until this happens his appeal to "Drop the medieval *Filioque* and let's keep that of the (Greek) fathers" will struggle to gain appeal (277).

Overall, this work provides immense value to any student of patristic pneumatology, ecumenical dialogue, or even the controversies of the third and fourth centuries. Not only does Maspero offer deep insight into the controversies that drove the church to clarify its doctrine of the Trinity, but he also is continuously engaging with the primary sources. This allows the scholar or student to see where Maspero is drawing his ideas and to track down any future research opportunities that may arise from this work. Thus, this is an excellent resource for both students and professional scholars.

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The Beginning of the Gospel: A Theology of Mark. By Peter Orr. Wheaton: Crossway, 2023, 192 pp., \$22.99 paper.

In more recent times, Mark's Gospel has enjoyed both pastoral interest and scholarly debate. The enigmatic nature of Jesus's ministry, the blindness of disciples, and Mark's abrupt conclusion have made it ripe for debate and pastoral reflection in the life of contemporary listeners. How should aspiring scholars and local pastors attempt to make sense of Mark's Gospel theologically? In *The Beginning of the Gospel: A Theology of Mark*, Peter Orr (lecturer in New Testament at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia) has provided an excellent foray into a theology of Mark's Gospel, one that benefits both student and pastor.

Part of the Crossway New Testament Theology series, *The Beginning of the Gospel* is an attempt to capture some of the main themes in Mark's Gospel. An insightful introduction is supplemented by ten chapters and a conclusion which cover Jesus's divine identity, the relationship between the Gospel and the Old Testament, the kingdom, salvation, discipleship, Jesus's relationship to the law, and of course, his death and resurrection.

A novel aspect of *The Beginning of the Gospel* is the presentation of Mark's Gospel in conversation with Paul, "Mark's theological partner" (20). Orr argues that Mark's Gospel offers a "detailed backstory" to the message of Jesus, the same message that comprised Paul's verbal proclamation. This symmetry between Mark and Paul is seen in how both use the word *gospel* (21). Both tend to use the term without any modifiers and typically utilize

it in what Orr refers to as “episodic narrative” (21). What Paul has built his ministry on is now put into written form in the Gospel of Mark.

Additionally, Paul and Mark share considerable theological emphases: the enigmatic nature of the cross, attitude to the law, and mission to Israel and the nations, as well as the relationship between Jesus and Rome. (21) Both also share a focus on the “apocalyptic event” (22) that is the “gospel” (Mark 1:1, 11, Rom 1:1–4) (23). As such, *The Beginning of the Gospel* carefully traces the unfolding of Mark’s Gospel, understanding that its message shares considerable theological synthesis with Paul’s own message (24). This means, fundamentally, that Mark’s Gospel was written for Christians. Reading Mark’s Gospel is thus itself an invitation to read in conversation with Paul, and the rest of the New Testament (25–27).

Written for pastors and aspiring scholars, Orr’s *The Beginning of the Gospel* sticks close to the text and follows the narrative structure of Mark’s Gospel. Orr does not propose any radical rereading of Mark but instead offers a wholesome, faithful, and accessible introduction to Mark’s theology. *The Beginning of the Gospel* does not shy away from scholarship but distills contemporary and historical debates, leaving readers informed but not overwhelmed. In a short amount of space, Orr is able to tackle complex ideas like the “Son of Man” (34–36), the nature of the kingdom (71–87), and Jesus’s relationship to ritual impurity (124–27) and to draw out their theological significance.

Pastors and students wishing to understand Mark’s major theological themes would want to start here with Orr’s *The Beginning of the Gospel*. It is a perfect introductory volume. Given the Gospel’s episodic structure, its allusive intertextuality, and the inherent ambiguity of narrative, it can be easy to provide a lopsided “theology” that fails to adequately account for the narrative elements of the text while favoring the teaching of Jesus, for example. When compared to other NT texts that are more propositional in nature (such as Paul’s letters), attempting to construct a “theology” from a Gospel can prove challenging. However, with both skill and clarity, Orr’s work offers pastors and students a valuable contribution on Mark’s portrait of Jesus.

By way of critique, Orr’s aim to read Mark in light of Paul is somewhat of a novelty, providing a breath of fresh air to the discussion of Mark’s Gospel throughout. While this certainly has historical precedent (2

Tim 4:11) and, as Orr demonstrates, textual support (20–27), I was left wondering if perhaps Orr overstated the idea. In keeping with *regula fidei*, we as readers rely on the entire witness of the Spirit in the canon. However, in evangelical—and especially Reformed—circles, where a strong history and emphasis of Pauline theology abound, I cannot help but think that we in our present moment need not a Pauline reading of Mark but its *opposite*. We need the Gospels to enlighten our reading of Paul and the rest of the New Testament. Here are two brief reasons to consider: First, that Paul must be read as a “control” for Mark assumes, in part, that we must first interpret Paul (25). Secondly, does this approach sufficiently allow for Mark to truly speak on his own terms? *The Beginning of the Gospel* itself evidences a reading Mark on his own terms, sensitive to narrative dynamics and a close reading of the text. Of course, both Paul and Mark speak of the same “good news” in light of Jesus, but the former is writing to address specific situations in his letters, and thus, to import theological ideas from Paul back into Mark may prove unhelpful to the task of theology.

The Beginning of the Gospel serves as a thorough and well-rounded theology of Mark. Readers are introduced to Mark’s main themes, recent scholarly discussions, and most importantly, the person and work of Jesus as the apocalyptic event of God’s deliverance for Israel and the nations. In reading Mark’s Gospel we, like the first hearers, are invited to participate in Jesus’s own mission (121).

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Engaging the New Testament: A Short Introduction for Students and Ministers.
By Miguel G. Echevarría. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2024, ix + 240 pp.,
\$24.99 paper

Based on his observation of the predominantly uncritical approach over the history of New Testament introductions, Miguel G. Echevarría argues in this monograph that “too often ... introductions focus on critical matters, with only cursory discussions of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament” (2). The result is that the material that students and laypersons focus on is often disconnected from the priorities of those who serve in the church.

Instead, as an alternative method, he contends that the New Testament books should be interpreted as *canonical*, with “each contributing their individual voice to the collective message of Scripture” (3).

Chapter 1 introduces his thesis on the necessity of a canonical reading of the New Testament along with a brief overview of the distinctive structure and content of this monograph. Chapter 2 provides the canonical context for reading the New Testament. A focus on the structured order of the New Testament books allows the reader to grasp how the purposeful sequence supports the development of the covenantal storyline extending from the Old Testament to its fulfillment in the New Testament. Chapter 3 discusses the hermeneutical foundation to interpreting the New Testament authors’ uses of the Old Testament. Chapter 4 commences the canonical analysis by assessing the contribution of the Gospels and Acts, considering their placement in the canonical order. Chapter 5 addresses the undisputed and disputed Pauline epistles with equal significance, irrespective of authorship debates, because the key factor in the canonical reading approach is the Christian community’s recognition of a book’s authoritative status. This principle is consistently applied to all contested books discussed in chapter 6, which focuses on the Catholic (or General) epistles. These epistles, positioned after the Pauline letters in the canonical sequence, provide crucial perspectives on eschatology, holy living, and warnings about false teachers, particularly in anticipation of Christ’s second coming. Chapter 7 explores the book of Revelation, a fitting conclusion to the New Testament and the entire canon of Scripture. Its canonical position allows readers to weave together the various threads of the scriptural narrative. Appendix 1 covers critical information about the relationship between the Gospels. Appendix 2 deals with the text of the New Testament and textual criticism.

Echevarría primarily contends that a canonical reading of the New Testament involves reading its books on the premise that the themes and structures within the canon are intentionally designed to guide the reader in understanding the overarching story of salvation history and its progress. However, it may be more accurate to view this monograph as one that highlights a particular reading method among the many discussed in various introductions, whose emphasis on canonical reading promotes a more practical approach to engaging with the New Testament. Yet, in practice, many believers are already accustomed to a form of canonical reading that

does not heavily rely on historical context. Consequently, recognizing that various commentaries offer background information and an overview of theological debates may provide a more comprehensive perspective, an approach that remains closely aligned with practical church realities.

Nevertheless, this book makes a significant contribution by focusing on the canonical function of the New Testament books, an area often overlooked in many New Testament introductions. As Echevarría argues, the canonical reading approach provides a fresh perspective on biblical interpretation. He presents a framework that allows for the rational analysis of manuscript traditions while recognizing the authority of modern texts, regarding such issues as the customary titles associated with the Pauline corpus, for example (120). Moreover, the canon itself, as it has been handed down to us, can offer new insights. For instance, the genealogy of Christ at the beginning of Matthew is emphasized as crucial to the New Testament's overall structure, serving as a thematic introduction to the entire text. Echevarría also explores the connections between the purposes of various letters and how these purposes contribute to the composition of the canon (129). For instance, by adopting a canonical perspective, Echevarría concludes that references to the recipients in most letters can be understood as addressing all Christians (88). Furthermore, the author underscores the significance of quotations and allusions to Joel, Ezekiel, and Isaiah in John and Romans as evidence of canonical consistency (92–95).

The strength of the canonical perspective lies in its ability to contextualize the differences or continuous themes across letters or books within a single cohesive framework. For example, while there is little mention of the incarnation of Jesus in Romans, this theme is introduced in 1 Corinthians (100). However, one potential issue is that when connections between New Testament books are suggested indirectly through intertextuality (for example, the intertextuality between James 2:11 and Matthew 5:48) a clear definition of intertextuality from the canonical perspective may be required (158). Similarly, it seems that a broader range of interpretations could be possible if these connections were viewed as reflections of genre characteristics rather than strictly through the lens of covenant-fulfillment (191).

Overall, Echevarría's work is significant in that it simplifies complex controversies and focuses on the overarching canonical flow, ensuring

that the discussion remains grounded in the fundamental premise of canonical reading.

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Concise Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief. By John Frame. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2023, 560 pp., \$39.99.

John Frame is one of the most influential theologians in our day. He has been prolific in writing and theological education in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. At the time of this book's publication, Frame is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology and Philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. The book is a revised and enhanced edition of Frame's previous book *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*. Why do we need an enhanced edition of a previous book? Frame explains it is "an introductory survey to Systematic Theology and will not cover each topic in great detail" (4), but he does seek to touch briefly on the whole of Systematic Theology in his twenty-four chapters. This is a foundational book written with the purpose of motivating the reader to embrace and move forward in the study of Systematic Theology.

Frame divides the book into ten parts, each dealing with a crucial element of Christian theology. The book has in total twenty-four chapters, following a classical approach to the structure of Systematic Theology. Part 1 deals with Theology Proper. In this section, Frame addresses the person and the works of God in chapters 1 and 2, finishing with the doctrine of the Trinity in chapter 3. The second part of the book is about the doctrine of the Word of God and comprises chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 is about the doctrine of revelation. In chapter 5, Frame focuses on the written Word of God. In the third part, he introduces Systematic Theology in the sixth chapter. Because this is an introductory book, and readers may not know much about theology, he introduces them to the theological world. In the fourth part, Frame deals with the doctrine of man in chapters 7 and 8. The seventh chapter handles the creation of human beings and the implications of bearing the image and likeness of God. Chapter 8 unpacks the reality of sin and evil and how humanity fell from the perfection of creation. In the fifth part, Frame

deals with God's covenants. The purpose here is to demonstrate how God deals with humanity. God reveals himself progressively, and he does this through different covenants. In the sixth part, Frame focuses on the doctrine of Christ. Chapter 10 is about the person of Christ. Frame's argument is that Christ is the eternal Son of God having both a human and a divine nature. Based on the Chalcedonian definition, Frame builds his Christology. In Chapter 11, he addresses the works of Jesus, focusing on Christ as prophet, priest, king, creator, sustainer, and redeemer. From chapter 12 to chapter 17, Frame covers the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, addressing topics such as the person of the Holy Spirit and his role in election, calling, and regeneration, faith and repentance, justification and adoption, sanctification and assurance, and perseverance and glorification. Chapters 18 to 21 cover the doctrine of the church. Here Frame focuses on its nature and tasks, the means of grace, and the sacraments. Chapters 22 and 23 deal with eschatology. Frame surveys the doctrine of heaven and hell and the events of the last days. Finally, chapter 24 gives a practical application of how Christians must live out their lives on the basis of this theological understanding.

Frame has provided a great resource in a proper time. Theological education and doctrinal conversations are alienated from the church more than ever. The contemporary tendency is to delegate theological debates to seminaries and academia. However, theology is life. Churches cannot praise nor serve God if they do not have the proper knowledge of God. It is theology that provides such knowledge. Therefore, churches need more theological conversations in their pews. Frame has provided such a resource in this book.

Theology tends to be dense in the language used in academia. However, Frame has done a great job in his attempt to explain complex theological terminology and put it in words easily accessible to those who may not have a deep theological background. Furthermore, Frame provides an audio lecture link for every chapter in the beginning of the book. In so doing, he makes theology even more accessible to the people in the pew. Frame provides an easy-to-remember method for readers that may be new in theological formulations, using a method of "triperspectivalism" throughout, as Sinclair Ferguson labels it in the book's forward (xx). This consists of using the number 3 to help the reader to remember theological formulations difficult for beginners to assimilate.

Frame does a good job in the structure of the book, beginning with theology proper and then moving to the doctrine of the Word of God. This approach to Systematic Theology is in accordance with most such books in Reformed circles. The order demonstrates that it is God who is the source of theology and the Scripture that is the only way to know such a source of theology. Those who do not have a solid theological background will be in the right and orthodox track following the order Frame uses.

Regarding baptism, Frame is openminded concerning its method. Evaluating Romans 6, he argues “that immersion, sprinkling, and pouring are all legitimate means of baptism and that none should be excluded” (346). Furthermore, Frame argues the word βαπτίζω does not always mean immersion (345), quoting Luke 11:38 where it is used for the washing of people before dinner, which is not necessarily immersion but rather enough water to wash oneself (345). The phrase “going down to the waters” is not an indication of immersion either. It could be interpreted as simply coming into the stream of waters but not immersing in them (346). Perhaps the text *par excellence* that provides a warrant for immersion as the method of baptism is Romans 6. Frame argues that from “the nonimmersionist view, Paul’s argument in 6:2–6 would turn on our crucifixion with Christ, not his burial, and that is not particularly relevant to immersion.” However, the text seems to imply otherwise. Paul uses Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection as an analogy to Christian life. Paul uses baptism as the method that actualizes both realities in believers. When believers are baptized, they are united with Jesus in his crucifixion, as Frame rightly argues. Baptism is not used only in our union with Christ in death but in his burial (6:4). Immersion provides the perfect illustration of both realities. Frame argues for a paedobaptist position on the basis that the Bible never discusses the issue explicitly (346). He provides arguments favoring infant baptism based on New Testament household baptisms. However, although it is not always the case, the pattern in the New Testament seems to be the baptism of believers and not necessarily infants.

Frame’s book is a great resource. It will be beneficial for pastors who want to elevate the theological knowledge of their church members. New believers who may be thinking on how to understand theology may find this book helpful also. As may teenagers and youth groups, especially in our day, when theology is not the coolest topic for next-generation ministry. The

promise of serving a starting point for a theological curriculum is one of the greatest benefits this book may provide.

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Religious Experience and the Knowledge of God: The Evidential Force of Divine Encounters. By Harold A. Netland. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022, 262 pp., \$29.99 paper.

Harold Netland's book addresses key issues in the current debate regarding the epistemology of religious experience. It argues that specific experiences provide positive data for religious truth claims (12). A professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Netland's unique credibility in writing such a work is present in the Introduction. He opens by recalling an encounter his wife had while the couple were missionaries in Japan in which another woman, originally from the United States, began explaining her conversion to Buddhism and the benefits that it brought her life. What is interesting, they observed, is that with a few simple changes, it could very easily have been a Christian testimony. Netland then uses this story as a springboard into the broader discussion of religious experience and why such experiences provide support for Christianity.

Netland adopts a critical-trust approach to religious experience, by which he means that what appears to be an experience of God can be taken as such if there are no compelling reasons to think otherwise (13). The acceptance of a religious experience depends partially on the broader epistemic context in which the experience takes place. This is true both for the person having the experience and those hearing reports of such an experience.

The book is composed of seven chapters. In the first chapter, Netland establishes what he means by religious experience by exploring the concepts of religion and experience. Chapter 2 examines various kinds of religious experiences while emphasizing the role interpretation plays in the experience. In chapter 3, Netland introduces, defines, and defends the critical-trust approach to religious experience. Chapter 4 examines some historical influences of the discussion, focusing on the writings of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley regarding experiences of God. This is followed in chapter

5 by the examination of thinkers such as Alvin Plantinga and William Lane Craig on the influence of the Holy Spirit in religious experience, providing a basis for Christians to claim their belief as properly basic. Chapter 6 examines the idea of mysticism and the influence of previous centuries on contemporary understanding with special attention given to William James and Rudolf Otto. The final chapter concludes the argument by addressing the many disagreements over the critical-trust approach Netland has employed throughout the work, concluding that some form of natural theology must be employed if the critical-trust approach is to be accurately applied.

Some readers may object to the idea of personal experience as valid evidence for objective truth, particularly those from more Reformed traditions. However, these readers will find that Netland provides detailed historical, philosophical, and sociological support for his analysis. Even so, some readers may argue that the book still lacks sufficient biblical support. This is a fair criticism because if one claims that subjective religious experiences support the truth of Christianity, the epistemological standard of Scripture could only add to that support. Regardless of one's position on this point, the conclusion is thoroughly biblical, and Netland achieves his goal of showing the value of religious experience for validating Christian truth claims.

Other readers may object to his critical-trust approach and other assumptions Netland carries into the book. Admirers of Plantinga should feel at home as much of Netland's argument finds consistency with his line of thought, and Plantinga is explicitly used for support. However, Netland also considers the views of William Lane Craig, showing a blend of Reformed epistemology and an evidentialist apologetic method in an area where these two men find harmony. Most likely, those familiar with the arguments of Plantinga or Craig will not be swayed in either direction by this portion of the book (chapter 5). Additional support from Scripture would have been helpful in this regard.

Returning to one of the main qualifiers of the critical-trust approach, Netland's caveat regarding the interpretation of the experience should not be overlooked, as it is one of the most important points of the argument (chapter 2). Addressing the interpretation of the experience allows for an objective standard to re-enter the discussion: what is the correct way to interpret such experiences? Once again, additional biblical support would

aid this discussion, as the Christian worldview has a distinct epistemology, an assumption Netland presumably must hold to even write this book.

The questions of contemporary culture have become increasingly more existential, centered on topics such as meaning, purpose, and identity. Whereas traditional debates in Christian apologetics involved the use of historical or scientific evidence as support for Christian claims, modern apologetics has seen a shift towards more existential discussion and the human experience. As such, Netland's discussion of religious experience should warrant the attention of Christian philosophers, theologians, and apologists who are taking seriously the questions and concerns of a secular culture becoming increasingly disenchanted by the assumptions of its worldview.

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Resolve: The Church that Endures Onward. By Luke H. Davis. Scotland: Christian Focus, 2024, 172pp., \$12.99 paper.

In a challenging time for the church, Luke H. Davis presents *Resolve: The Church that Endures Onward*, the latest book from his series *Risen Hope*, encouraging readers to live a faithful life with hope set on God. The book offers short biographies of memorable Christians from 1880 to the present. Davis, a professor of church history at Westminster Christian Academy in St. Louis (a private Christian school for grades seven to twelve), appears to target pre-teens and teenagers, as some concepts might be complex for younger children but not thorough enough for an adult audience.

The purpose of this book is to encourage Christians to resolve to endure difficulties while living in this world. Davis writes, "If there was one thing that marked the disciples' experience after Jesus' death and resurrection, it was that they had to endure many troubles and trials" (9). Based on John 15:18–20a, Davis reminds readers of the Lord's words, warning his disciples that the world would hate them because the Lord chose them. He emphasizes that "followers of Jesus should be willing and ready to endure trials and hardships" and that "the Church endures forward. But

by God's grace it does endure" (10). Davis presents the lives of many faithful Christians who resolved to remain faithful to the Lord in difficult times.

At the end of the book, Davis shares his reflection on the future of the church. He expresses concern about the decline of Christianity worldwide, illustrating this trend with poll results from the Pew Research Center (168). In 2020, 64% of Americans identified as Christians while 30% identified as nonreligious. Researchers estimate that by 2070, there will be an equal number of Christians and nonreligious people. While acknowledging that the Holy Spirit can reverse this trend, Davis notes that this is what the future looks like "for now" (168). He points out that although the gospel is growing in some regions, this growth is often accompanied by persecution, such as in the Middle East and Communist countries. Davis emphasizes that "the Church that serves her Lord will be an enduring Church, and believers will have to go through trials, and persecution" (169). However, recalling Revelation 7, he reminds readers that the ultimate hope of all Christians is to meet the Lord on the glorious day of his second coming, where the Lord will guide his people as a shepherd, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. Davis concludes that "although we may go through great hardship, we have a Savior who rescues His people out of adversity" (170). He ends with words of encouragement to endure, having confidence in God who guides the story of the world to its conclusion.

Each person's story begins with a brief but significant event in his or her life, highlighting a great difficulty and how the individual endured by holding firmly to the Lord. A brief biography follows at the end of each chapter. Davis shows his expertise in the area of church history by carefully choosing one event that illustrates well the life of the person he is presenting. The book is easy to read for youth groups, but adults may also enjoy the vivid stories Davis presents. It may inspire adults to explore the lives of the people described further. Davis also includes four "Fact Files" chapters, which differ from the biographical narratives. In these chapters, he shares thoughts on particular topics, such as preaching and apologetics. He gives examples of people related to each topic and briefly presents their contribution.

Because the book targets youth groups, some adults may not be initially attracted to it. Adults might prefer a book with fewer biographies but more thorough descriptions of each life. Additionally, Davis does not always clearly indicate whether the dialogues in the stories are real conversations

or fictional recreations. For some stories, like that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Davis adds a note clarifying that it is a “reimagining” of a particular event (61). However, for stories without such clarification, it is unclear whether the conversations are real or fictional. Moreover, while Davis includes a bibliography of his research, he provides few citation references, mainly in his “Fact Files” chapters. This issue might not be relevant for preteens but could frustrate some adults who would like to distinguish between fictional and factual elements.

Overall, the book achieves its goal. It has great potential to encourage many young Christians to reflect on the difficulties that come with following Christ, as well as on the assurance and great hope in our Lord who cares for his church. Although some adults might not be fully satisfied after finishing the book, it will hopefully spark their curiosity to continue exploring and learning from the lives of the people Davis describes.

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