Book Reviews

Talbert, Layton. *The Trustworthiness of God's Words: Why the Reliability of Every Word from God Matters.* Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2022. 240 pp. + 40 pp. (back matter).

Christians recognize that God is jealous for his glory, but they sometimes forget that God is also jealous for his integrity. In *The Trustworthiness of God's Words,* Layton Talbert reminds us that God's glory is at stake if we do not trust what God has said, since the person of God is inseparable from his words. Talbert does not try to guilt us into trusting God; rather, he meticulously shows from Scripture itself that God is true to his word, and that great blessings and comfort come to those who trust him.

In Part 1, Talbert lays a theological foundation that provides a bedrock for a believer's unequivocal trust in God's words. Trust, he argues, is more than belief. Building from Reformation thought, Talbert suggests that biblical faith moves past mere knowledge (*notitia*) to assent (*assensus*) and a kind of confidence (*fiducia*) that results in action (19–20). "Believing and trusting are twins," Talbert suggests—"Believing (*'āman*) is predominantly an act of thinking and deals with processing information (facts or claims). Trusting (*bāṭaḥ*) is the choice to act on that knowledge. . . . But trusting also denotes an emotional experience," an "inner peace" (23–24). He demonstrates from Scripture that to distrust God's words is to question God himself. He explains that trustworthiness is essential to the character of God—God always tells the truth (77–78), he always knows the truth (78–79), he always has the power to do what he promises (79–80), and he has clearly communicated those promises in his Word (81–83). Thus, Talbert suggests that "God's trustworthiness is at the root of our confidence in all his other attributes" (36), and this is why repeatedly in Scripture God "has expressed a compelling interest in demonstrating the integrity of what he says" (37). If God were not trustworthy, he would cease to be God. Since his words are integral to who he is as God—he is "inseparable from his words" (58)—Christians should "lean all their confidence on the trustworthiness of God's words in every circumstance, just like Jesus did" (86).

Part 2 builds on this foundation with practical applications for how Christians can and should trust God's words. Talbert argues that we must trust God's words in Scripture about past history (chapter 7), his own character (chapter 8), and even "unbelievable" promises (chapter 9). He explores how the events recorded in Genesis are particularly under attack, but then he astutely notes that this questioning of God's words was at the root of the first sin: "God's testimony regarding the progression of the Fall reveals that the reason they sinned is because they were persuaded that God's words were not reliable" (123). From that point on in human history, God's people have struggled with trusting God's words; but using examples of Jacob (130), Naomi (131), Job (133), David (134), Habakkuk (135), Lamentations (138), and Martha and Mary (141), Talbert admonishes believers that "because all God's words are trustworthy, we can always rely on God to be exactly what he says he is, even when it doesn't look to us like he is" (130). This kind of trust in God's words, as Talbert demonstrates in chapters 10 and 11, "inevitably manifests itself in how we live life" (174).

In Part 3, Talbert steps back to cap the practical discussion with firm support from the overarching narrative of Scripture. "The Bible is God's record of reality," Talbert notes, "to help us see and interpret our experience through his eyes, because he is the only one who sees everything, and sees it as it really is" (207). This is why we must immerse ourselves in Scripture, allowing the larger story of God's Word to fortify our hearts to trust his words in our everyday lives. Chapters 13 and 14 trace that biblical storyline in more detail through the Old and New Testaments. Ultimately, as Talbert argues in his final chapter, a Christian's response to the steadfast faithfulness at the core of who God is should be an equally fitting steadfast trust in him.

At times the reader may begin to feel like the trees are lost for the forest in some of Talbert's broader discussions of Scripture's metanarrative and worldview, especially in Part 3, yet he skillfully connects the broader story to the particular issue of God's trustworthiness in just the right places. The value of Talbert's approach is that he does not treat distrusting God as a mild ailment with a simple remedy; rather, he painstakingly shows how serious a vice it is and offers the only real solution—a complete worldview reorientation based on God's view of reality as expressed in his Word. Helpful definitions throughout and "Review and Reflect" questions at the end of each chapter make this book ideal for use in a small group or other teaching settings. Deeply biblical and thoroughly pastoral, this book is a must-read for every Christian.

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Fanning, Buist. *Revelation.* ZECNT. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. 575 pp. + 46 pp. (back matter).

Buist Fanning's commentary on Revelation is the most significant futurist, premillennial commentary since Grant Osborne's commentary in the Baker Exegetical Commentary series and the most significant Revelation commentary from a dispensational perspective since Robert Thomas's two-volume set.

In the introduction Fanning discusses authorship, date, interpretive matters (genre, symbolism, use of the OT, etc.), text, style, and structure. Placing more weight on internal rather than external evidence, Fanning concludes that Revelation was written by "a prophet known to the churches of Asia Minor" rather than the Apostle John, though he is careful to emphasize that this conclusion does not detract in any way from the book's status as inspired Scripture (28). In his brief discussion of the book's date, Fanning does not take a hard position between a date in the late sixties or a date in the late nineties, though he leans toward the latter.

Fanning includes an up-to-date discussion of the state of textual criticism in Revelation, including the unique challenges that textual critics face with Revelation as well as a discussion of the unique style of Greek in Revelation. Fanning proposes that Revelation's Greek is idiosyncratic because Greek is John's second language, though he is quick to clarify that John remains a competent writer in this second language. Fanning grants that John's allusions to OT texts account for some of his Semitic style—a point made by G. K. Beale. However, Fanning thinks that Beale presses this observation beyond the evidence when he claims that John was trying to evoke the feel of the OT Scriptures throughout. Fanning also thinks that some of John's style can be accounted for by changes occurring in Hellenistic Greek.

The most helpful parts of the introduction are the discussion of literal and symbolic language and the discussion of typology and OT allusions. Fanning recognizes the problem of insisting on "literal" interpretations that are insensitive to intentional metaphor and symbolism while also critiquing those interpreters who think that the symbolism in Revelation itself indicates that the judgments in view are spiritual rather than physical. In his discussion of typology Fanning observes that Beale and McDonough (representative of many recent interpreters) create a false dichotomy when they propose that the OT promises and predictions are either understood "in a pedantically 'literal' fashion" or in light of the progressive revelation of the NT (44, citing CNTUOT, 1088). Fanning argues that it is possible to read OT texts in way that takes into account both their original setting and progressive revelation.

Fanning's discussion of typology includes five helpful guiding principles (47–48):

> (1) Typology is not just a matter of Old Testament to New Testament relationships. . . . (2) Typology is not limited to features of Christology and soteriology, although these are common topics. . . . (3) Typology does not necessitate a metaphysical shift from physical, geographic, or historic entities in the Old Testament type to spiritual and eternal realities in the New Testament antitype. Sometimes the typological escalation works this way, but it is not necessary for it to do so. . . . (4) Typology does not

> necessitate the abrogation of the type in favor of the antitype. . . . (5) The future counterpart or antitype may not be limited to a single, climactic exemplar, although this is often the case. It is also possible for an Old Testament pattern to find more than one future replication on the way to its ultimate fulfillment.

Finally, the introduction deals with the structure of Revelation. Fanning follows Merrill Tenney, Richard Bauckham, and others in identifying a prologue (1:1–8) and epilogue (22:10–11) that bookend four major sections (1:9–3:22; 4:1–16:21; 17:1–19:10; 19:11–21:8; 21:9–22:9), marked by the repetition of key phrases. Within chapters 6–16, Fanning argues for a chronological sequence (as opposed to recapitulation) interspersed with "interludes or digressions," which "pause the chronological progression" (62). Fanning recognizes that the third major section (17:1–19:10) overlaps in time with some of the events described in the second major section (4:1–16:21).

The commentary proper unfolds according to the format of the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series. The commentary contains twenty-eight chapters, each of which include the following sections: Literary Context, Main Idea, Translation, Structure, Exegetical Outline, Explanation of the Text, Theology in Application.

"Literary Context" is typically a paragraph that describes how the verses under consideration fit into the larger structure of Revelation and what they contribute to the book's development. The "Main Idea" summarizes the verses under consideration in a single sentence. The "Translation" provides Fanning's own translation laid out as a clause display so that the logical flow of the passage is evident. The "Structure" describes the flow of the passage under consideration in paragraph form. The "Exegetical Outline" presents the structure of the passage in outline format.

The "Explanation of the Text" section is the heart of the commentary. Fanning's translation of a verse or two is followed by the verse or verses in Greek. Pastors will appreciate that Greek terms appear in Greek characters throughout (not in transliteration), and those without the knowledge of Greek will appreciate that Greek words are accompanied by English translation, making the commentary accessible to all serious students of Scripture.

The heart of the "Explanation" section consists of Fanning's summary of the meaning of the text under consideration. On key points of dispute, he will summarize and evaluate alternate interpretations. In the footnotes Fanning deals with text-critical issues and matters of Greek grammar. Fanning is a recognized expert in Greek grammar, and his numerous grammatical footnotes have great value for the student of Greek while not obscuring the commentator for other readers. Fanning's comments in the "Explanation" section are concise but full of good sense. Some futurist commentators develop idiosyncratic interpretations by interpreting symbolic language "literally" contrary to authorial intent. Idealist commentators similarly write themselves into oddities by wrongly insisting that *all* the language in Revelation is symbolic. Fanning avoids both these errors.

A sample of Fanning's interpretive choices will give a sense of his approach to the book. Fanning understands the angels of the seven churches as "supernatural messengers or instruments of God, who serve as guardians or representatives of the congregation" (107). He persuasively argues that Revelation 3:10 supports a Rapture that precedes the Day of the Lord judgments described in the book. He understands the white horse and rider to symbolize a "destructive conquest" that begins the

judgments of the tribulation period; he does not identify the rider with an individual since the riders of the following three horses do not represent specific individuals (240). He understands the 144,000 in chapter 7 to refer to ethnic Israelites who are distinct from the numberless multitude from every nation mentioned later in the chapter. He understands the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments to unleash physical calamities upon the earth. Even the demons released in the later trumpets bring about physical torment. Fanning understands the temple in Revelation 11 to refer to a physical temple structure in Jerusalem, and he understands the two witnesses to be two latter-day prophets whose work is described in terms of the ministries of Moses and Elijah. He does not understand the prophets to *be* Moses and Elijah or Enoch and Elijah. He interprets the woman clothed with the sun to be ethnic Israel. He links the number 666 to Nero, whom he takes to be a type of the eschatological Antichrist. He understands Babylon in Revelation to be a type of evil opposition that was manifested in Rome in John's day and that will also have a last-days manifestation. Fanning interprets Revelation 20 in a premillennial fashion, and he understands the Millennium in continuity with the new creation described in chapters 21 and 22.

Following the "Explanation of the Text" is the section "Theology in Application." In this section Fanning develops two theological ideas from the preceding exegetical material and applies them to Christians today. This section addresses in practice the objection that futurist interpretations of Revelation have no applicatory value to Christians today.

The lucid brevity of this commentary will make it a helpful resource for pastors who are preaching through or from the book of Revelation. It is also a commentary that idealist and preterist commentators should reckon with. Too often those opposed to futurist readings of Revelation or pretribulational, premillennial eschatology use Hal Lindsey or Tim LaHaye as their foils rather than interacting with pretribulational, premillennial, futurist scholars. This should not be. The greatest fault with this volume (leaving aside the inevitable interpretive disagreement) is that Fanning is sometimes too brief.

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Jamieson, Bobby. *The Path to Being a Pastor: A Guide for the Aspiring*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2021. 124 pp. + 23 pp. (back matter).

How does a man know whether to pursue pastoral ministry, and how should he move towards that goal once he is persuaded to do so? Is the answer as simple (or complicated) as his sensing a call, enrolling in a Bible college and seminary, then serving as an assistant pastor while waiting for a church to call him as a lead pastor? Is this even the right approach? In a biblical and methodical manner, Jamieson attempts to answer this question with *The Path to Being a Pastor*. With this book he hopes to guide a man's desire to be a pastor "from seed to fruition," offering guidance for taking deliberate and meaningful steps towards achieving this aspiration.

To accomplish this task, Jamieson follows a Scripture-oriented strategy. He titles and focuses each chapter (twenty-seven in total) with an imperative, which he either draws from Scripture directly or "distills and deploys" from the "sense of Scripture" as he understands it. He maintains this focus consistently throughout the book by quoting the Scripture verse(s) that undergird each chapter at the outset of each chapter. Then he develops a key truth from these verses throughout each respective chapter. If the reader expects a rigorous exegetical or technical examination of these key verses, he or she will be disappointed. Jamieson is not writing for an academically sophisticated audience. He is writing to men who are considering pastoral ministry, whether they have acquired advanced linguistic and theological skills yet or not. Consequently, he has chosen a winsome, insightful, compact, and accessible style that accentuates biblical truths and applies them to the question of pursuing pastoral ministry.

The author arranges his material into three main parts: Finding the Path (four chapters), Walking the Path (nineteen chapters), and Approaching the Destination (four chapters). He also provides a thorough general index and extensive Scripture index afterwards—the latter revealing a strong reliance on NT references, which corresponds suitably to the NT nature of his topic. Many chapters, though not all, feature a set of standard endnotes—some of which commend additional resources pertaining to the topic addressed in the chapter. Each chapter is both brief and substantive, and each is well-suited for brief mentorship or training discussions, though suggested discussion questions are absent from the end of each chapter and would be a welcome addition to any future editions.

In Part 1, Finding the Path, the author encourages an aspiring pastor to foster heartfelt humility, which invites outside criticism and crucifies prideful ambition. He also upholds biblical, epistolary qualifications and promotes seeking wise counsel, especially from within a man's current congregation—offering a helpful diagram that demonstrates the value of balancing ability, desire, and opportunity within the local church. But the author offers his most helpful (or controversial) perspective of Part 1 in Chapter 1 when he says, "Instead of saying 'I'm called to ministry,' say 'I aspire to be a pastor" (17). Jamieson observes that the NT nowhere uses "call" language to describe God's leading into pastoral ministry. He further suggests that to say, "God has called me to be a pastor," is presumptive and that this phraseology fosters an unhealthy sense of entitlement. Therefore, he recommends replacing "I am called" with "I aspire," terminology that he believes is more biblical,

humble, accurate, fruitful, and freeing. In Chapter 1, it is worth noting that the author presents "elder," "overseer," and "pastor" as interchangeable terms for the same office, while also recognizing that some—though not all—pastors should be remunerated.

In Part 2, Walking the Path, the author offers an extended series of points of advice for men who "aspire" to become a pastor. He presents this advice in no apparent order or priority—whether logical, chronological, or otherwise. Nor does he develop each point or follow any clear persistent theme. Even so, core values such as personal preparation and practical experience repeatedly shine through in tangible and concrete ways. This observation makes clear that Jamieson strongly recommends an active approach rather than a passive "wait and see" one— an approach that will require patience and persistence on the part of an aspiring pastor.

In the opening chapter of this section, Jamieson urges an aspiring pastor to be an observant, involved member of a church. This is crucial advice for sure, but some pastors may pause when he says, "If you desire to pastor but are not, and have never been, a member of a healthy church, I would strongly urge you to join a thriving, mature church" (45). Though this advice should cause nonmembers to join a biblical church, will it also embolden some aspiring pastoral candidates to abandon a good church for another that they deem to be more "thriving" and healthy? By failing to give a clear explanation of what constitutes a "thriving, mature" church, apart from being a church that develops and mentors aspiring pastors, Jamieson leaves this detail open to interpretation.

Despite this minor quibble, Jamieson provides a wealth of advice that, if embraced, will equip a man to pursue his pastoral aspirations with godly maturity and wisdom. At one point he even offers helpful guidance to pastors who intend to mentor aspiring pastors by detailing the process of an effective apprenticeship model, citing Andrew Wilson: "I do—you watch—we talk. I do—you help—we talk. You do—I help—we talk. You do—I watch—we talk. You do—someone else watches" (69). Jamieson's advice is thorough, spanning church, family, and personal zones. The reader will especially appreciate his three-chapter focus on attending to family duties. Regarding the role of seminary training in pastoral preparedness, Jamieson states: "My counsel in this chapter is simple: if you can, make the most of seminary." Then he qualifies his counsel by saying, "Not everyone can or should" (98). With this advice, he offers a thoughtful and reasonable perspective that encourages seminary training without insisting on it universally.

In Part 3, Approaching the Destination, the author gives final recommendations for aspiring pastors to consider when the opportunity arrives to step into a pastoral role. He differentiates between godly and ungodly ambition and makes perceptive points about accepting an assistant pastor role only after the pastoral candidate has determined that he and the lead pastor will be compatible. For instance, he warns well when he says, "Beware of the vague succession plan" (116). He also offers valuable guidance for "candidating candidly" and concludes with a crucial reminder to "cherish Christ."

Jamieson writes this book with the advantage of experience. Though not a lead pastor himself, he writes as one of the pastors at Capitol Hill Baptist, a church which hosts an intense, full-time, reputable pastoral training internship program, which the author himself oversees. Furthermore, he "aspired" to be a pastor for eleven years before becoming one; so a healthy dose of empathy permeates the biblical advice that he shares with his readers. These factors qualify Jamieson to write this book.

Though many books have been written about how to be a godly and effective pastor, few have been written about how to *become* a pastor. This book fills that void and therefore meets a real need in the church today. It will help any man who wonders whether he should pursue pastoral ministry and will make both an excellent reading assignment for pastoral church interns and a worthy undergraduate- or master's-level textbook. It will even help a lead pastor or pastoral team develop a philosophy or strategy for guiding, training, and mentoring pastoral candidates within the church.

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Garrett, Duane. *The Problem of the Old Testament: Hermeneutical, Schematic, and Theological Approaches.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2020. 355 pp. + 40 pp. (back matter).

The Problem of the Old Testament is Duane Garrett's prolegomenon (354) to his forthcoming multi-volume series addressing biblical theology and hermeneutics in the OT. Garrett, an OT professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, seeks to solve the Church's challenge of reading, defining, and reconciling the OT with the NT. He desires to remedy the problems by identifying a unifying theme in the OT and introducing a hermeneutic that bridges the gap between the NT Christian and the OT text.

Chapter 1 defines the three problems that are advanced throughout the volume. First, how are readers to understand Messianic prophecy? Specifically, what was the hermeneutic of NT authors in their use of OT prophecies? Second, how does the Mosaic law relate to NT believers? Third, what is the relationship between ethnic Israel and the NT Church? Acknowledging that these questions are not new, chapter 2 surveys the unsuccessful answers of Justin Martyr and Tertullian.

Chapters 3–6 evaluate three spheres of inadequate solutions: hermeneutical, schematic, and conceptual. In chapters 3–4 the *hermeneutical* solutions of the Alexandrian and Antiochian traditions are contrasted. Garrett exposes the dangers of historic allegory, noting that "an allegorized text loses all authority" (74). He further applies his warning to advocates of the current theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS) movement. His appraisal of the Antiochian school is more positive. He commends their attempts at a literal hermeneutic but expresses disappointment that the result was often a displacement of the OT within the life of a believer (100).

Chapter 5 quickly dismisses covenant theology and dispensationalism as *schematic* solutions to problems in the OT. Regarding the former, Garrett finds no biblical justification for a covenant of works or grace (115). He also dismantles dispensationalism for creating such separation between the Church and Israel that the OT is rendered as "someone else's mail" (127) with no New Covenant implications for NT believers (126).

Chapter 6 addresses *conceptual* solutions that seek to find a unified theme within the OT via biblical theology. Three factors are considered: "the nature of the canon," "the meaning and focus of biblical theology," and "the models for organizing an Old Testament theology" (129). A survey of various methods of biblical theology results in the conclusion that no model is adequate, and a "hybrid approach" is necessary.

Chapter 7 introduces Garrett's new approach. He defines the unifying theme of the OT as the "election of Israel" (169). He divides the OT into Election Literature, which "tells Israel's history" (165), and Wisdom Literature, which is universally applicable since God "made the world according to wisdom" and thus "its teachings are timeless and not governed by the progress of salvation history" (166). Within this framework NT believers find meaning in the OT as being grafted into Israel (Rom 11:17–19) and thus fellow family members who can experience and apply the OT by "family identification" (173).

Chapter 8 argues against a progressive view of OT covenants, suggesting that the theme of covenant is secondary in biblical theology and proposing that each covenant is individualized to its

context (175). Chapter 9 maintains the OT law as a unified whole and posits four functions of the law (234). First, the law is a covenant document (234). Second, the law is a demonstration of the need for New Covenant (235). Third, the law is an ideal of righteousness and basis for judgment (237). Fourth, the law is a teacher, leading those who meditate upon it into righteousness (238). He notes only the fourth function as "abiding" and the previous three as "in some sense obsolete" (238). The final application of Garrett's new approach focuses on reading OT narrative (chapter 10). Garrett warns against reading each OT story exclusively through the lens of the biblical metanarrative lest it lose its authorial and contextual intent. He develops a grid for interpretative intertextuality defined as "allusive patterns" (272), which allows for connective hope as one reads the "dark" literature of the OT. The final chapters (11–13) and appendix represent Garrett's application of his principles through case studies in Hosea, Joel, and Isaiah 7:14.

This work is self-defined as prolegomenon, but Garrett does more than introduce topics for his upcoming series. He attempts in a single volume to deconstruct long-standing theological perspectives and reconstruct his own model for reading the OT. In deconstruction the book is expansive in its breadth, but it fails to accomplish its purpose. In less academic terms, Garrett attempts big-game hunting using buckshot from long-range. The result is minor injury, but no substantial harm. As he communicates his own model, valuable insights are shared, but they lack enough development to form a cohesive hermeneutic or biblical theology.

The weaknesses of the volume can be categorized by both style and content. In style, Garrett develops his argument unevenly, makes overstatements, and misrepresents those he deems incorrect. First, the space given to significant topics is underweighted. Little time is spent on covenant theology, dispensationalism, the use of types and anti-types, biblical theology, or the use of fulfillment language in the NT. Second, overstatements are laced throughout the book. For instance, Garrett says, "The apostles give few guidelines about how we are to handle the Law" (33), without noting Acts 15, Romans 7, or the Book of Galatians. Third, Garrett's explanations of dispensationalism and covenant theology are misrepresentative. For example, he suggests that two of the essential distinctives of dispensationalism are a pre-tribulation Rapture and the absence of the NT Church from any aspect of the New Covenant (125–26). Yet a reading of dispensational literature would evidence that these two issues are not considered distinctives. Garrett's attempt to quickly dismiss dispensationalism without valid warrant creates within the reader a spirit of distrust. His equally dismissive handling of covenant theology would no doubt meet with similar cries of "unfair" from proponents of that system.

The weaknesses in content center on Garrett's development of his own methodology. His most important decision is to make the election of Israel the dominant and unifying theme of the OT. Garrett presents this conclusion in three paragraphs of explanation with no corresponding exegesis (165–66). His choice is based on the chronology of Genesis 12 and 15. Yet Garrett's claim of priority by chronological order only suggests that election preceded covenant. He does not consider other unifying options. He simply states, "In short, Israel is the elect people of God. All the laws, history, prophecy, and psalmody of the Old Testament build upon this foundational idea, that God chose Israel for a specific purpose" (166).

A second weakness in content is Garrett's understanding of the Church's relationship with Israel. He declares that the Church "partake(s) of the collective experience of Israel. We recognize ourselves not just by analogy but by family identification—we have been adopted into this people" (174). By this "family identification," Garrett surmises that OT texts now have new significance within the NT community. The Church can "recover a lost memory, recapitulating the experience of sin, punishment, and repentance of the elder members of our family" (174). To understand the OT fully, Garrett sees a need for NT Christians to identify with OT Israel in a visceral, family manner. Such a conclusion seems hermeneutically unnecessary. Christians can identify with all OT characters as fellow fallen creatures. There is no need for family relationship outside of common humanity. Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 10 that OT stories were written for our "example" not for our experience.

The strengths of the volume are numerous. Historically, Garrett traces the challenges of reading the OT from the early Church era, through the Reformation, and into the contemporary Church setting. In doing so, he connects the fallacy of allegorizing with the current reoccurrence of those failures in TIS. He also challenges extremes within the dominant theological systems of dispensationalism, covenant theology, and progressive covenantalism. Garrett's dismissal of each is too hurried and uneven, but his explanatory work through the OT covenants, Mosaic law, and OT narratives remains helpful. His delineation of the three types of covenants, the development of the Hebrew structure, and the evidence for the mutual independence of each covenant is worthy of consideration. Garrett's perspective of the Mosaic law grounds it in its historic context and theological distinctiveness. He critiques the threefold division of law into moral, ceremonial, and civil, and he properly reminds readers that the law is a unified whole and a singular covenant with Israel. His development of the four-fold role of the law is effective. He emphasizes that the law declares the fullness of God's character and encourages meditation on it without adherence to it.

Garrett's understanding of the role of OT narrative is cognizant of the current conversation on metanarrative. While embracing the metanarrative of Scripture, he emphasizes the place of an OT story it in its historic and canonical context. This preserves the author's original intent prior to envisioning the broader redemptive framework. Also of value, though not equally so, is the attempt to address the current movement toward intertextuality. He rejects the language of type and intertextuality for his own term, "allusive pattern" (272). He also provides ten principles that govern the use of the tool (285–88). This safeguards from other forms of intertextuality that provide no means of evaluating a biblical warrant for textual connections.

Garrett's volume is both satisfying and unsatisfying. The "buckshot" nature of the writing stirred unanswered questions, unresolved conundrums, and underdeveloped arguments. What is appreciated is the awareness of the current trends in OT hermeneutics and commitment to an accurate handling of the Word. The attempt to make the OT attainable to the Church prompts valuable reflection even if there are disagreements.

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Craig, William Lane. *In Quest of the Historical Adam: A Biblical and Scientific Exploration.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. 380 pp. + 21 pp. (back matter).

William Lane Craig is Professor of Philosophy at Houston Baptist University. Craig studied at Wheaton College for his undergraduate degree and earned master's degrees in both Church History and Philosophy of Religion at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Birmingham, England, and a Doctor of Theology from Universität München, Germany. He is a prolific author of journal articles and works on apologetics.

In his latest book, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, Craig seeks to harmonize Scripture and science regarding the existence of Adam. Craig sets out to "pursue the hermeneutical task first and independently of an examination of scientific evidence pertinent to human origins" (20). But throughout the book he unquestionably adopts the evolutionary theory of origins, which requires him to deny Genesis 1–11 as literal history. Craig holds that Genesis is "mytho-history." It is history in that it contains fragments of truth, but whereas it is myth, it is not to be understood literally. Craig does believe that Adam and Eve existed but not in the near past.

Craig arranges the book into four parts. Part 1 discusses the importance of the historical Adam. Part 2 examines the biblical data concerning the historical Adam. Part 4 examines the scientific evidence relative to the historical Adam. In Part 4 Craig brings together his research and draws his conclusions.

In Part 1 Craig notes that traditional theologians hold that the historicity of Adam is a vital part of hamartiology, but he maintains that making "the doctrine of sin a necessary condition of the doctrine of atonement is, however, an overreach" (5). He advocates that "Christianity need not embrace the traditional doctrine of original sin but may content itself with affirming the universal wrongdoing of human beings and their inability to save themselves" (6). He agrees with Peter Enns that Paul's interpretation is for theological purposes and goes beyond a "plain reading" of the story (6). Craig does argue that because Christ believed in an historical Adam, "denial of the historical Adam threatens to undo the deity of Christ and thus to destroy orthodox Christian faith" (8).

Craig says that while the authors of Scripture may have believed in a literal reading of Genesis 1–11 (six-day creation, worldwide flood, etc.), "we are not committed to the truthfulness of the author's personal beliefs" (10). He holds that young earth creationism's hermeneutic is "eminently plausible," but its science is "wildly implausible" and "places Genesis into massive conflict with mainstream science, not to mention history and linguistics" (13).

According to Craig, the narratives of Adam and Eve must be read "within the context of the primaeval history of Gen 1–11" and "the primaeval history within its ANE cultural context" (31). This leads Craig to consider Mesopotamian and Egyptian myths more closely to see how Genesis 1–11 conforms to the nature of ANE myths.

In Part 2 Craig explores the nature of myth. He adopts the approach that myths are "stories that expressed the faith and worldview of a people and so would have much to say about their view of origins" (36n1). Craig labels Genesis 1–11 as primaeval history and 12–50 as Israel's history. He dismisses the *tôlədôt* formulae ("these are the generations of") that argue against such a divide (132–

137). He agrees that the formulae constitute a timeline, but he holds that it does not determine the structure of the book (47–48). Relying on tradition criticism, he holds the text of "Gen 1–11 has a different history of tradition than Gen 12–50 and the rest of the Pentateuch" (52). And this tradition was changed and adapted over hundreds of years before it was written down. Craig concludes that because Genesis 1–11 is a sacred narrative meant to be believed by its target audience with a deity as a main character and set in a primaeval age, it therefore has the characteristics of myths of origination (64). This primaeval narrative lays the "foundations of Israel's worldview" (65).

Craig calls the anthropomorphisms of God's forming man with dirt, breathing into man, and strolling in the cool of the day as "incoherence" and "storyteller's art, not serious theology" (102). Perhaps one unique contribution to the discussion is Craig's concept of *fantastic elements*—elements that "if taken literally, are so extraordinary as to be palpably false" (104–105). The original audience might have believed them to be true, "but in light of our increased knowledge of the world," we do not (106). Craig holds that six-day creation (109–110), original vegetarianism (111), the talking snake (111–113), the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil (113), the rivers of Eden (113ff), the Cherubim (119), and even nonmiraculous elements in the narratives are *fantastic* and therefore "palpably false" (131).

Craig returns to the *tôlədôt* formulae and holds that they "help order the primaeval narratives chronologically" (136), but chronology does not necessarily "indicate a historical interest" (136). He continues, "It is important not to confuse an interest in history with historicity" (137). He concludes that the genealogies evince "a historical interest but not relating straightforward history" (151).

In Craig's mind, Genesis 1–11 with its *fantastic* elements is myth and with its genealogical records it is history. He holds that "myth is combined with history" (157) and labels it as "mytho-history." Craig then wrestles with the truthfulness of myth. In his mind, "the language of myth is figurative and therefore need not be taken literally" (198). But there are fundamental truths found in Genesis 1–11, and "such truths do not depend on reading the narratives literalistically" (202).

When Craig approaches the references to Adam in the NT, he appeals to "truth-in-a-story." Craig says that it is essential to determine whether the references to Adam "assert truths or merely truths-in-the-stories-of-Genesis" (207). He says that when Jesus is discussing marriage and refers to Adam and Eve, Jesus is "not asserting its historicity" (221). In other words, Jesus is not confirming that it is true in history, but that it is true-in-the-story. Craig holds that Paul on the other hand, does "assert a historical Adam (224ff, 241f), but the result of Adam's sin was only spiritual death and not physical death (235). Adam and Eve were mortal and required the tree of life to be rejuvenated (236).

In Part 3 Craig seeks to determine when Adam lived. He turns to "modern science" because of "the mythical nature of the primaeval history of Gen 1–11" (245). Craig accepts the evolutionary process without question. Within the evolutionary framework, he details various pre-human ancestors. He wrestles with determining what it is to be human. He concludes, "Human beings, in the full sense of organisms anatomically similar to ourselves and capable of abstract thought; deep planning; behavioral, economic, and technological innovativeness; and symbolic behavior, therefore originated on this planet sometime between the Lower and Middle Paleolithic" (264). After a lengthy analysis of

palaeoneurology and archaeology, he concludes that "Adam, then, may be plausibly identified as a member of *Homo heidelbergensis*, living perhaps >750 kya" (336).

In Part 4 Craig asserts that "Adam and Eve emerged from a wider population of hominins" (376). But their "contemporaries were not human and therefore not in the image of God" (376). The change from hominin to human required biological and spiritual changes that were "perhaps divinely caused" (376). The cognitive capacity of the brain was most likely increased and would "equip the organism with the neurological structure to support a rational soul" (377). Out of several thousand hominins, God chose Adam and Eve. They sinned and brought on spiritual death.

Although Craig does hold to a historical Adam and Eve, his position has several serious flaws. First, Craig repeatedly refers to modern science as defining the factual history of human origins. But "science" is a method and not a conclusion. Scientists, not *science*, draw conclusions about the past. Furthermore, the historicity of any event does not have to be confirmed by the scientific method. The scientific method focuses on repeatable events and not historical events.

Second, Craig's view of Genesis 1–11 as mytho-history does not reflect the language or content of the text. The waw-consecutive and other elements show that the author wrote it as historical narrative.

Third, Craig marks any elements in Genesis 1–11 that fall outside of what science can explain as *fantastic*. Other miracles throughout Scripture exist that are far more *fantastic* than those found in Genesis (i.e., resurrection from the dead). With this logic, what is to stop someone from going past Genesis 11 and declaring everything in Scripture as *fantastic*?

Fourth, if an account is true, truth-in-story and truth are equivalent. Craig does not prove that Jesus thought of the creation account as non-literal history when he referred to the foundation of marriage. There are no indicators in the NT that any of the authors saw Genesis as anything other than literal history.

Fifth, Craig's view that Adam's sin brought about only spiritual death does not align with 1 Corinthians 15. Paul clearly refers to physical death with a physical resurrection (1 Cor 15:21). Paul also sees physical death as the "last enemy to be destroyed" (1 Cor 15:26), which is part of Christ's work in redeeming God's creation.

My brief summaries of each part and the rebuttals do not adequately cover the overwhelming amount of detail that Craig delves into regarding ANE myths, palaeoneurology, and ancient archaeology. I was disappointed that Craig so quickly dismisses the effects of the Fall as merely part of the evolutionary process. Concerning the creation/Fall/redemption narrative of Scripture, Craig downplays all three. His book provides an excellent example of what lengths theistic evolutionists will go to accommodate Scripture to modern pseudoscience.

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Smith, Steven D. *Fictions, Lies, and the Authority of Law.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021. 224 pp. + 49 pp. (back matter).

Steven D. Smith is a penetrating legal and moral thinker whose interests in religious liberty, textual interpretation, and secularism make him an able biblical worldview assistant. Smith—like the somewhat similar thinker whom he thanks in his acknowledgments, Stanley Fish—tends to stick to critical analysis and to defer concrete claims. But, again like Fish, Smith's analyses are so sharp, and so cognizant (and respectful) of the claims of Christian theism, that his books are like quasi-Christian commentaries exegeting the signs of the times. While the lenses through which one views the world may be of first importance, Christians must actually get around to viewing the world, not merely staring at and polishing those lenses. Smith is an expert world-viewer.

Smith's *Fiction, Lies, and the Authority of Law* is almost two books in one, both of which are highly interesting for and relevant to Christian thinkers. The book is an exploration of the difficulties attendant to the interpretation of legal documents, and it is a rigorous yet entertaining effort to answer the question posed by the title of the last chapter: "Is Genuine Authority Possible?" It is that question that sets up the book's program.

Smith opens his prologue with a quotation from Hannah Arendt: "Authority has vanished from the modern world. . . . Practically as well as theoretically, we are no longer in a position to know what authority really is."[1] A statement like this immediately raises powerful and important worldview questions: In a materialist universe, what does it even mean for an intangible authority to "be"? If matter and energy are all that exists, then "authority" has no ontological substance; it is simply what lions in press conferences claim to have over weaker animals. "Authority" is window-dressing for "power," nature red in tooth and claw.

As Smith points out, the modern liberal West cannot permit authority to be *real*, something that makes people have to obey "just because" an authority figure expresses a particular desire. Such an authority does not square with the West's "commitment to freedom . . . understood in terms of individual autonomy" (3). People have to obey out of self-regard, or out of some independent judgment about morals (though how real are *those* in a materialist world?). Heirs of the Enlightenment are supposed to Question Authority, as the bumper sticker says. How indeed can a government exist among autonomous agents?

Democratic Western societies have a neat answer to this apparent conundrum, an answer they insist is "self-evident": the American founders' "consent of the governed." Autonomous beings can *choose* to be governed for their own good.

Fictions

But here Smith switches on his relentless, analytical jackhammer, the noise of which resounds throughout his book. He notices, for example, the rather obvious fact that none of us (aside, perhaps

[1] "What Was Authority?," in *Authority: NOMOS I,* ed. Carl J. Friedrich (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 1:81–82.

from naturalized citizens?) is ever asked to give his or her consent to the powers that be. Even the first generation of citizens to live under the US Constitution did not exactly provide individual consent. Some were Tories! And the rest of us were born into the system. We have not consented to be ruled; we have not signed a "social contract." Does this mean, then, that the US government has no authority over us? The "flags, anthems, uniforms (including police uniforms with badges and judges' robes), stately or majestic architecture, rituals and ceremonies (such as presidential inaugurations and solemn swearing-in ceremonies), and ponderous official language" (16) that lend an "aura of authority" (16) to the US government—are they only so many clever talking points on the lion's teleprompter, meant to convince the wildebeests in the press corps that they are being despoiled for their own good?

Smith has an answer that provides one of the words of his book's title: the origin myth of the US government is a beneficent *fiction*, not unlike a good movie. We suspend disbelief for our own enjoyment; the story does not work if it does not feel real on some level. Political authority in the American legal and political system, and probably in other liberal democracies as well, has a fictional quality. Authority itself is a fiction, perhaps, or at least it is grounded in fictional foundations (xii).

It is when we must leave that level and ask specific questions the fiction cannot answer that its character as a fiction is most clearly revealed. How did Darth Vader not know he had twins? Was Dumbledore gay? Likewise: Did the framers' intent include women's suffrage—or gay marriage? Smith argues: "When we ask what the Constitution means or what some statute means with respect to some contentious question, experience shows that notwithstanding all of our debate and research, we are unlikely to agree. An important reason for this impasse . . . is that we are trying to squeeze factual-type answers out of things that are, at their core, fictions" (27). Smith points out that in fictions, there is no "fact of the matter," no baseline reality to which one might appeal. And this presents a problem for government.

Government

First, government. It turns out in Smith's telling the intent of legislatures is ultimately a fiction, too: how can a body of more than one person have a clear intent? The Supreme Court is ultimately a fiction for the same reason. Smith calls this the "aggregation error."

The textualist tradition of legal interpretation, says Smith, responds to the aggregation error with this argument: "We will not concern ourselves with the motives of the framers of any given law, but only with the final text they produced." But, Smith says, you cannot say this, because when you sever authorial intent from the law, you also sever the authors from it—and with them any reason you might have for regarding their text to hold authority. (Smith's book can be mind-bending, but for the same reason that Pilates is body-bending: good health requires it.) Smith calls this the "separation error."

I am a grateful citizen of these United States, and of course I found myself hoping that Smith would neatly explain in the final chapter why governmental authority is *not* an ultimate fiction and how we may come to the *right* interpretation of any given legal document. But I read the entire book, and no such explanations were forthcoming. Under the sun, at least, authority in liberal democracies is a fiction. That is, true authority may exist in republican/democratic governments (I believe it does, as I

will explain momentarily), but they cannot give an adequate account of this authority on their own "lower-story" terms, to borrow from Francis Schaeffer. Governmental authority can also be expected to falter when projected into ensuing generations. How indeed could we expect fallen, finite framers to form a Constitution that accounts for all future possibilities?

I cannot give a blow-by-blow of Smith's intricately argued and brilliantly written book. I must already cut to the final scene, the one he did not write.

God

I felt as if Smith, whose religious affiliation I do not know (I have reason to believe he is a theist, perhaps a cultural Mormon), wrote a book in which he kept pointing members of modern liberal democracies to their Unknown God. He kept pointing to a God-shaped hole in their logic about authority. Like a Sunday school teacher, he kept raising questions to which the children were supposed to answer, "God!"

God solves the aggregation problem. When God speaks, he speaks with unified intent: though he is three, he is also one. And though the Spirit of the Lord spoke using human agents ("our father David . . . said by the Holy Spirit," Acts 4:25, ESV), there were no contradictions in their respective motives. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: he made sure of that.

God solves the separation problem, too, because his Spirit goes with his word. But we suffer from that problem when we try to make his word into a mere object of analysis and not something living and active, not divine speech. As Smith says, "A mode of interpretation that severs the connection between the text and the legal authority that enacted or promulgated that text will in effect deprive that designated legal authority of actual lawmaking authority. It will take away with the left hand what the right hand purported to give" (35).

God also solves the authority problem. And he does so rather neatly: *The powers that be are ordained by God.* There may be a sense in which governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, but that sense is not the ultimate sense. Authority, as theologian John Frame says, is a personal relation. What Smith calls "just because" authority—an intangible something that means I have to do something "just because" an authority figure said it—is precisely what God has over us as his image-bearing creations. And he invests that authority in countless offices in government, the family, education, the church, and other creational spheres. Also: God's authority is not a fiction, and he can write authoritative texts that can account for all future possibilities.

God also solves the common problem of authority turning into authoritarianism—because he is love. Our Authority became man and laid down his life for those whom he would make his friends. Christians can know what authority really is, and we can know that Authority really *is*.

Conclusion

It is bad book-review practice to write out the ideas the author did not. So let me close by mentioning again what Smith did say, what he did do.

I have long felt that there were ties between the hermeneutical debates over the interpretation of laws—debates into which Antonin Scalia famously waded—and debates over the proper methods for interpreting Scripture. Smith, a legal scholar, helped me immensely by drawing out these connections at key points.

He also helped me by explaining how and why debates over the present meaning and application of the US Constitution are so intractable. We are asking a human document to be divine.

No: I come away from Smith's book certain again that we need a divine document in order to be truly human.

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