Grudem, Wayne. *What the Bible Says about Divorce and Remarriage*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2021. 93 pp. + 16 pp. (back matter).

This is the fourth book in a series by Grudem focusing on a specific ethical issue facing the Church. These "booklets" are composed largely of excerpts from Grudem's book, *Christian Ethics.*[1] The impetus for this book is a change of the author's position on what qualifies as biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage (39). In 2020 Grudem published an article on his change.[2] In addition, portions of this booklet were adapted from an essay found in *The ESV Study Bible* (9).[3] This work brings Grudem's most current understanding of the biblical data on divorce and remarriage into one source. In the introduction, five key questions are presented that require careful consideration (9).

> According to the Bible, what are the legitimate grounds for divorce, if any?
> Is divorce morally acceptable in the case of physical abuse or neglect?
> If a divorce is granted for biblically legitimate reasons, is remarriage always allowed?
> Can a divorced person become a church officer?
> What reasons are given for the "no remarriage" view?

The booklet follows an outline format rather than chapters. Outline point A clarifies some of the misleading statistics concerning divorce and remarriage in American culture. The best reading of the data suggests that among unbelievers twenty to twenty-five percent of first marriages end in divorce (11). Grudem suggests that the divorce rate among evangelical Christians is less than five percent and that more than eighty percent of Christians would describe their marriages as "happy" (13). He provides several helpful studies to support these claims and rightly asserts that our culture would be greatly benefited to know that most marriages last a lifetime (11). Grudem then turns our attention to the tragic consequences of divorce upon the family. This includes the abiding anger in the hearts of divorcees toward their former spouses and the intense feeling of rejection experienced by their children (15–17). Only one out of seven remarriages proves to be stable, and nearly one-third of children between ages nineteen and twenty-nine have no ambition ten years after their parents' divorce (17).

Outline point B examines God's original plan for marriage. Grudem points to Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees in Matthew 19, asserting that he avoided the debate raging between the rabbis while affirming God's original plan for lifelong monogamous marriages (19). He suggests that any couple contemplating divorce should be asked, "Is it possible that this marriage can be restored and preserved?"

Outline point C presents OT examples in which divorce was allowed. The key text presented here is Deuteronomy 24:1–4. Grudem does not attempt to identify the "indecency" that gives rise to the

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[1] *Christian Ethics: A Guide to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018).

[2] "Grounds for Divorce: Why I Now Believe There Are More Than Two," *Eikon, A Journal for Biblical Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 71–79.

[3] "Divorce and Remarriage," in "Biblical Ethics: An Overview," ed. Lane T. Dennis, et al. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 2545–47.

divorce nor offer any explanations for the abomination that would take place if the first husband took the divorced wife back after her second marriage ended (21–22). He simply asserts that the certificate of divorce gave the wife the right of remarriage and that the remarriage was not considered adultery (22). A series of other texts that mention divorce are cited as proof that divorce and remarriage existed under the Mosaic Covenant (Lev 21:7; Num 30:9; Deut 22:19; Jer 3:8). Grudem ends this section by declaring that the Mosaic Covenant does not have binding authority over this New Covenant age (23).

Outline point D documents two specific cases presented in the NT that allow for both divorce and remarriage. Grudem works through these texts: Matthew 5:32; 19:3–9; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18; and 1 Corinthians 7:10–15. He supports his "brief summary" by demonstrating that the position is consistent with the Westminster Confession of Faith (37–40). He notes that the position of Jesus was far "stricter" than what was being taught by many rabbis in his day (24). At the same time, Jesus broke with the OT law, which called for the stoning of those caught in adultery (27). While the penalty for adultery is no longer physical death, Jesus teaches that adultery may bring death to the marriage (28). Grudem carefully demonstrates that the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 includes both divorce and remarriage. In the discussion of 1 Corinthians 7, Grudem asks and answers this question: "Would this passage apply to desertion by someone who professes to be a Christian?" He suggests that those in such a circumstance need wise counsel from the leaders of the church and where possible, "the steps of church discipline should be followed" (36–37). If the professing Christian is placed under church discipline, then "it would seem appropriate to treat the deserting spouse as an unbeliever" (37).

Outline point E asks if there are additional "legitimate grounds" for divorce and remarriage. This section begins with Grudem's new understanding of 1 Corinthians 7:15 and is followed by a presentation of seven additional circumstances that "may" warrant the claim to being a biblical divorce. Grudem asserts that the historic understanding of "in such cases" is wrong. He suggests that the phrase "in such cases" was never researched and was assumed to be referring to the cases of desertion like this one (39). In his research Grudem found "several examples where this phrase clearly referred to more kinds of situations than the specific situation that the author was discussing" (40). He researched fifty-two examples of the Greek phrase *en tois toioutois,* "in such cases," and chose three that establish his new position (40–42). Grudem offers this conclusion from his research: "He (Paul) implies that divorce is a legitimate possibility not only in cases of desertion by an unbeliever, but also in other circumstances that are similar to but not necessarily exactly like desertion" (42). He suggests that Paul reasoned that desertion by an unbeliever destroys marriage just as much as adultery (44). Thus, Paul added to Jesus' teaching. As Paul reasoned to add desertion, we too can reason other cases that would break the marriage bond. The seven categories that come to Grudem's mind are as follows (45–48):

Abuse of the spouse (physical or emotional)
Abuse of children
Extreme, prolonged verbal and relational cruelty
Credible threats of serious physical harm or murder
Incorrigible drug or alcohol addiction

Incorrigible gambling addiction
Incorrigible addiction to pornography

Who gets to decide whether a believer's circumstances rise to the level of "in such cases"? Grudem's solution is for pastors, elders, and Christian counselors to seek wisdom as they prepare to discern which cases provide warrant for a biblical divorce (48). A biblical divorce means that the local church is saying that the innocent party is not sinning to obtain a divorce. Grudem answers several objections he anticipates to his expanded understanding of "in such cases" (51–52).

This section moves to two other suggestions for expanding biblical grounds for divorce that Grudem does *not* accept. He provides a detailed dismissal of David Instone-Brewer's assertion that material or emotional neglect are grounds for a legitimate biblical divorce (rooted in Brewer's understanding of Exod 21:10–11). He lists six reasons why Brewer's argument fails and should not be found convincing. Grudem strongly asserts that "Jesus did not teach that divorce was allowed for material or emotional neglect" (58). He concludes this point by showing that divorce cannot be justified on the basis of incompatibility or irreparable damage. He asserts that Craig Blomberg is wrong to suggest that the Church consider these as legitimate grounds for divorce (60).

Outline point F seeks to answer three specific circumstantial questions. The first question concerns the responsibility of those who have divorced on unbiblical grounds. Since their remarriage was an act of adultery, how do they now move forward? Grudem offers wise counsel warning couples not to pursue a second unbiblical divorce. They cannot undo their prior sin, but they can confess it and be cleansed (63). The second question asks whether divorced people can become church officers. Grudem suggests that the demands for pastors to be the husband of one wife does not exclude those who have been part of a biblical divorce/remarriage. He asserts that Scripture "refers to the present status of the man, either to his character of being faithful to his wife, or else to the fact that he is not a polygamist" (65). He dismisses the parallel often cited between the requirement for a pastor (1 Tim 3:2) and the requirement for a widow to be supported (5:9). He concludes that Paul is "not prohibiting from church leadership a man whose wife has died and who has remarried, or a man who has been divorced and who has remarried (these cases should be evaluated on an individual basis)" (71). The last question concerns the need to advocate for laws in society that reflect biblical standards. Grudem helpfully articulates that marriage is a creation ordinance and asserts that God's teaching on divorce and remarriage are not limited to believers (72). He concludes that God's standards for marriage and divorce are "ultimately best for all people" (72).

Outline point G provides a brief evaluation of the more restrictive views on divorce and remarriage. Grudem quickly dismisses Carl Laney's argument for a no-divorce, no-remarriage position. Such a position teaches that all divorces and all remarriages are sinful and should never been engaged in by believers. Grudem demonstrates that Laney's argument concerning the Greek word *porneia* meaning incest cannot stand up to honest exegetical or lexical scrutiny (75). The second position he refers to as the divorce-but-not-remarriage position: some divorces are not sinful, but all remarriages after divorce remain sinful. The only way a remarriage is not sinful, according to this position, is remarriage after the death of the spouse. Grudem addresses the leading advocates of this position,

Gordon Wenham and William Heth. Heth, as he notes, changed his position in 2002 and has written a lengthy article explaining his change.[4] Grudem provides a compelling discussion concerning the harm inflicted on the innocent party of an unbiblical divorce. The innocent party, according to Wenham, must pursue a life of singleness and can never remarry as long as their former spouse is alive. Grudem suggests that this wrongly forces the innocent spouse to be a continual victim ("enslaved") of the sin of their former spouse (82–85).

Outline point H offers practical counsel to people who have experienced painful divorces. Grudem suggests that the Church needs to minister to them by providing opportunities for them to safely discuss their feelings and be helped to the place of genuine forgiveness (86). He encourages all who have been divorced and remarried, even those done unbiblically, to remain in their present marriage. He concludes with this admonition: "If you are married, you are now married to the right person, and God wants you to make that marriage a good one for the rest of your life" (88). The book ends with an appendix addressing the translation of Malachi 2:16 and a series of questions for personal application.

The strength of this work is its relative brevity in addressing this important issue. It carries a pastoral tone throughout and strongly encourages the Church to protect God's institution of marriage and those victimized by abuse. Grudem clearly establishes that God's plans and purposes for marriage are for the good of all people. God's revelation concerning divorce and remarriage is for all people. All people need to hear it and would be helped if their culture honored it as well. Grudem is deeply concerned that the Church help any woman who has been victimized by abuse. All the cover-ups that have been exposed in recent years provide compelling reasons for the Church to move quickly.

In addition, this booklet provides a great primer to larger study of this important issue. Grudem documents well the various exegetical issues that are involved in most of the key texts dealing with divorce and remarriage. He does not shy away from the difficult questions. He provides a valuable interaction with the positions of both Instone-Brewer and Blomberg on the legitimate grounds for divorce and remarriage. The summary of the more restrictive positions on divorce and remarriage is very brief—providing an introduction to some of the arguments by a few leading proponents of these positions.

The primary weakness in this volume is narrow support offered for such an expansive suggestion concerning what qualifies as a biblical divorce. Grudem's suggestion that Paul merely reasoned his way to desertion as a new ground for divorce and remarriage is rather insulting. Paul's teaching on divorce and remarriage was far more than his personal reasoning; Paul is giving us the very Word of God. God gave the nation of Israel very clear instruction about marriage within the covenant community. The closest OT parallel to 1 Corinthians 7 would be Israel's putting away of their covenant wives to marry pagan women. In both Ezra and Nehemiah, God commands the Israelites to put away their unbelieving wives. Malachi confronts marriage to pagans as an abomination (Mal 2:11) and a profaning of the covenant (Mal 2:10). Paul provides the Church much-needed clarity

[4] "Jesus on Divorce: How My Mind Has Changed," *SBJT* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 4–29.

concerning the unequally yoked marriages that were taking place as people were getting saved. The Church needed divine revelation on how a new believer should respond to their unsaved spouse.

The suggestion that "in such cases" must allow for us to reason our way into other legitimate grounds for divorce and remarriage sets too much confidence on human reason and too little confidence on the sufficiency of God's revelation. Grudem anticipates this objection to his new position and declares that he is not trying to open the flood gates but to "save thousands of sincere Christian believers from suffering horrible abuse for decades" (52). It should be said that his reasoning regarding what he calls possible grounds for biblical divorce will provide "justification" in the mind of many believers for an unbiblical divorce, which as Grudem notes, God hates.

The new categories suggested by Grudem as potentially legitimate grounds for divorce are sins the Church should confront through the divinely ordained means of church discipline. Grudem repeatedly urges those considering divorce for these other grounds to consult their church leaders. While encouraging church leaders to make reconciliation a first goal, Grudem taxes those leaders with the responsibility to determine what qualifies as "in such cases" (30n25). It is far better to admonish the Church to be serious about the responsibility of member care/discipleship that includes the practice of church discipline. Church discipline is hard work, but we have clear revelation from God on how to navigate this hard work. Sin confronted through the process of church discipline brings a decisive response on the part of the ones sinning. They will repent and be restored or continue in their sin and be removed. Instead of creating hypothetical categories that *may* resemble desertion of an unbelieving spouse, the Church is better served to hold fast to the revelation that it already possesses.

A second weakness is Grudem's handling of the "husband of one wife." His argument that this text was meant to prohibit polygamy has very little support. He acknowledges that polygamy was not a significant problem then or now, yet he limits the significance of the qualification to that issue. He places the emphasis on pastoral qualifications as dealing with their present circumstances and not their past. The ideas of blamelessness, ruling one's house well, and having a good reputation with those outside the church cannot exclude one's past. In fact, novices are excluded from the pastoral ministry because there is not enough data on their life to discern their qualifications. A church holding that a divorcee could serve in the role of pastor/elder or deacon must establish that the divorce was biblical. This would need to be done before the congregation so there would be no question as to the blamelessness of the candidate. It would be impossible for one who had sinfully divorced his wife to have a good reputation with those outside the local church (which includes the ex-wife).

The title of this booklet is *What the Bible Says about Divorce and Remarriage*. There are certainly some valuable discussions in this volume that help any reader to understand more about the issue. However, Grudem's reasoning to new legitimate grounds without divine revelation makes this volume more of what Grudem has to say about divorce and remarriage than what God has said.

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Marsh, Cory M. *A Primer on Biblical Literacy*. El Cajon, CA: Southern California Seminary Press, 2022. 89 pp. + 20 pp. (frontmatter) + 38 pp. (backmatter).

Cory Marsh's church ministry and academic roles have situated him to observe a gap in teaching emphasis in relation to Scripture. Systematic theology tends to convey formal bibliology. Hermeneutics details the formal principles of Scripture interpretation. And most scholarly books explore these same academic issues. The topic of biblical literacy for its own sake receives much less attention. In his short work, *A Primer on Biblical Literacy*, Marsh offers a lay-level reflection on the importance of biblical literacy among the people of God. He argues on *a priori* grounds that "it is not only *possible* for Christians to understand the Bible but, in large measure, they are *expected* to understand it" (86). God would not have given us his written word unless he intends for us to read and grasp its meaning. Marsh divides his argument into three chapters that examine the need for biblical literacy (ch. 1), the definition of biblical literacy (ch. 2), and the method of biblical literacy (ch. 3). He closes with an appendix that provides the full text of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy followed by recommended resources.

Common human experience demonstrates the need for biblical literacy. Eras of significant biblical illiteracy (e.g., the Middle Ages) have always led to the captivity of the Church and of the individual human conscience to the whims and manipulations of unbiblical leaders. When the people of God do not know the Scriptures for themselves, they are unable to ferret out false teachers. If they do not know the truth, they cannot hold others to the truth. In Marsh's words, "The wolves are never held accountable to the Scriptures by their sheep" (9). Nationwide surveys reveal that the average churchgoing Christian today remains contented with whatever information a pastor dispenses from the pulpit. Many "*sincere Christians simply do not study the Bible for themselves*" (16, emphasis original).

Chapter two defines biblical literacy through the phrase "achievable awareness and proficiency" (21). That is, literacy does not equal scholastic training or comprehensive knowledge. Instead, it is a familiarity that runs deeper than a Sunday-school-level awareness of basic stories to an understanding of how Scripture fits together, what it teaches, and what it means for us today. Literacy exhibits an adequate proficiency that recognizes when someone is misconstruing a passage (29). Marsh observes that a portion of this literacy stems from the character qualities of believers. They must be "regenerate, prayerful, humble, obedient, and diligent" in order to grow in discernment (33).

The third chapter introduces the reader to the value and necessity of hermeneutics in the process of acquiring biblical literacy. Since biblical hermeneutics involves the study of the principles utilized in the combined art and science of interpretation, it encompasses a broad field of academic study. Nevertheless, Marsh effectively summarizes a series of key principles—the necessity of determining the original author's meaning and intent (52–58); grasping and submitting to the context (59–64); attending to history, literature, and theology (64); observing the progress of revelation (65–67); retaining the natural sense of the text and its single meaning (69–71); and extending that meaning by recognizing the text's significance (71–72). The remainder of the chapter (75–81) offers two biblical examples of the process of sound interpretation.

A few details in the book could use greater clarity. For instance, chapter 2 claims that "half [of American Christians] can't name *even one* of the four Gospels" (25, emphasis added). The accurate current statistic is that half of American Christians cannot name *all four* Gospels.[5] Chapter 3 uses the phrase "begs the question" (the name of a logical fallacy) when it means "raises the question." Although this expression has both the technical and common functions, the reader might expect greater precision in a chapter that relates to hermeneutics. Chapter 3 also refers unnecessarily to a specific country music singer and song, although other examples of distinctive genres are readily available. A conservative reader might misunderstand the point of the example and question the author's purpose in the citation. Finally, the author briefly quarrels with the expressions *hermeneutical circle* and *hermeneutical spiral* (61), but on this point he is somewhat unconvincing. A "cycle" expresses forward progress no more clearly than a "circle" does, and a "spiral" readily implies directionality and growth. While of course an author must use his preferred wording, Marsh's critique seems out of place.

Several facets of *A Primer on Biblical Literacy* exhibit particularly commendable qualities. First, although footnotes appear only occasionally, they point lay readers to constructive resources that are accessible to Marsh's audience. The author wastes no time trying to impress the reader with his own significant knowledge. Instead, he focuses on communicating succinctly what the reader needs for growth in biblical literacy. Marsh demonstrates a solid understanding of a writer's responsibility—to keep his primary audience in mind and to write so that the reader may understand. Second, the work exhibits a strong devotional tone. It urges believers to choose greater intentionality in their knowledge of the Scriptures. It invites the lay reader to experience deeper understanding of God's Word without becoming an academic professional. Anyone who "hears" the book correctly must sense Marsh's devotion to the inspired, inerrant Word from a wise and gracious God.

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[5] A. W. Geiger, "5 Facts on How Americans View the Bible and Other Religious Texts," Pew Research Center (April 14, 2017); https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/14/5-facts-on-how-americans-view-the-bible-and-other-religious-texts/#:~:text=But%20fewer%20than%20half%20of,to%20God%20despite%20 extraordinary%20suffering.

Millar, J. Gary. *Changed into His Likeness: A Biblical Theology of Personal Transformation*. NSBT. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021. 243 pp. + 29 pp. (back matter).

This book is the fifty-fifth in the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, of which D. A. Carson, renowned New Testament scholar, is the editor. Carson notes in the series preface, "Contributions to the series focus on one or more of three areas: (1) the nature and status of biblical theology, including its relations with other disciplines (e.g., historical theology, exegesis, systematic theology, historical criticism, narrative theology); (2) the articulation and exposition of the structure of thought of a particular writer or corpus; and (3) the delineation of a biblical theme across all or part of the biblical corpora" (vii). It is the third of these three areas, the study of a biblical theme, that Gary Millar pursues in expounding the doctrine of personal transformation as taught in the canon of Scripture.

Dr. Millar has served as the principal of the Queensland Theological College in Brisbane since 2012. The college is the ministry training institution of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, where Millar teaches OT, pastoral ministry, and preaching. He came to his present ministry by way of studies in theology in Aberdeen, Scotland; ministry in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as a pastor in church planting and church revitalization for seventeen years; and Oxford, where he earned a DPhil on Deuteronomy. Principal Millar is the author of several commentaries and other scholarly works on Scripture. He travels widely in Australia and beyond, encouraging local churches through the ministry of the Word. He also is the co-founder and chair of The Gospel Coalition Australia.[6] This brief biography is important to understanding the scholarly but pastoral tone of his book.

Millar's strong pastoral connection to the real world, his fervency of spirit, and his impassioned love for Christ reveals itself throughout the book. This spirit explains the record of his tireless labors in Christian academia and for the Church. He is no armchair theologian. Reading the lines and between the lines of his book, the reader meets a skillful, warmhearted pastor-theologian, whose desire to live out what he has discovered presents itself in this carefully researched work. A serious work of theology in which the author's heart shines with the warmth of Christ is rare, and this is a rare work. Its central topic, personal spiritual transformation, certainly lends itself to this result. The reader discerns a gracious brotherliness and worshipful tone that pulsates from the preface through the rest of the pages. Millar says, "Writing this book has made me gasp all over again at the extent of his love for us, the extravagance of his work in us and the relentlessness of his commitment to us" (x).

The chapters of *Changed into His Likeness* are organized with helpful headings throughout. The author also provides valuable conclusions at the end of each chapter (27, 53–55, 122, 172, 215–22, 242–243). These conclusions help the reader transition easily to each next chapter. The logically arranged chapters give a solid sense of progression, unity, and completeness to the work.

Proportionality provides clarity in a book because it gives greater attention to the most vital information and less attention to ideas of lesser significance. Chapter 3, "Can a Leopard Change Its Spots?," is disproportionately long (sixty-six pages) compared to all the other chapters. In fact, it is three times the length of chapters 1 and 6, but for good reason. The author treats the whole OT

[6] "Gary Millar," Queensland Theological College; last modified Dec. 06, 2016, https.www.qtc.edu.au/about-qtc/faculty-staff/.

corpus on his subject in this one chapter but with a remarkable conciseness and refreshing thoroughness. Chapter 4 covers the entire NT corpus on personal transformation in forty-nine pages. This is an even more remarkable feat considering that the process of personal transformation is taught primarily in the NT, a fact Millar demonstrates convincingly. This is a prime example of progressive revelation, a feature of the Scriptures that biblical theology calls to our attention, as the author observes (223).

So, from the perspective of proportionality, that the author devotes 115 of his 243 pages, or sixty-four percent of the book, to the unfolding of the biblical information section by section, author by author in both canons on the subject makes sense. The remaining thirty-six percent shows the importance of the subject through current cultural contextualization. It further provides a discussion of the image of God in man as essential theological context for discussing personal transformation. Then it adds valuable and relevant lexical and linguistic background for the discussion. After examining the biblical material, Millar cites the significant contributions of other theologians through the centuries on personal transformation. In all, it is a well-balanced presentation of the truth on this subject of personal spiritual change.

While *Changed into His Likeness* is not a long book, it is thorough. It boasts an eighteen-page bibliography with 357 entries, an index of authors containing 283 writers cited in the book, and 514 footnotes, many of which are content notes. The work is preeminently a work of Scripture exposition, as evidenced by the 654 passages cited from fifty-six of the sixty-six books of the canon. The book is also an interaction, a conversation with current scholars whose works touch on the theme of Christian personal transformation. As a Reformed, Evangelical, Presbyterian minister, the author does not surprise the reader by showing a certain preference for and deference toward Reformed authorities, both past and present (evidenced by citations in the index of authors). But none of these authors are cited inappropriately or gratuitously. Their contributions are valuable and worthy of inclusion.

To assist the potential reader, the ensuing discussion summarizes the method of development in Millar's monograph. It provides a synopsis of each chapter and also cites benefits and weaknesses. Chapter 1, "Clearing the Ground" (twenty-two pages), begins by citing non-Christian psychological authorities on personal change—showing that most believe it is difficult to achieve, extraordinarily complex, and lacks a clear path how to achieve it (1–8). Millar then shows that movements within evangelical Christianity either promise too much personal change too easily, which he calls "the toxicity of over-realized eschatology" (9), or they offer too little change through "the aridity of under-realized eschatology" (12). Millar then shows that believers have been changed already in Christ through the gospel—sanctified positionally (13–20)—and will be changed ultimately at glorification (21–26). True to the biblical-theological method, he quotes Scripture passages profusely to establish these truths. He concludes the chapter by explaining that it is "life in the middle," between these two states, which his theology of personal transformation develops (27–28).

In chapter 2, "On Being 'Us': Biblical Anthropology and Personal Transformation" (twenty-six pages), Millar discusses contemporary secular perspectives of human nature, both corporeal and non-corporeal. He cites the thoughts of non-Christian psychologists, neuroscientists, and quantum

physicists, demonstrating the relevance of this discussion for believers today. He shows that what Scripture has to say about man's nature, both physical and spiritual, is highly relevant (29–32).

Articulation of the image of God in man and biblical descriptions of man's spiritual and physical nature follow. Millar offers clear, non-technical, subtly sophisticated discussions that attest thorough acquaintance with the biblical languages, relevant linguistic sources, and biblical passages (32–47). He shows that in Scripture there is both a dualistic description of man as physical and spiritual and a holistic description of man as a unity, both of which should shape our view of human nature. He then warns that extreme views result in misguided practice and thought. For example, an overly holistic view of man results in a distorted missiology that gives priority to man's temporal, physical condition as a primary concern in the mission of God in the world, or it may result in the false doctrine of annihilationism since the body and the soul are so inextricably bound up together that one cannot survive beyond the other. On the other hand, an overly dualistic view of man results in a "gospel minimalism," which "reduces human beings to 'souls on legs'" (50–53). This attitude renders the Christian compassionless concerning the temporal needs of others. The author rejects each of these extremes and argues that man is both simple and unified in his being—distinctly physical and spiritual, based on the biblical-theological evidence (53–55).

Chapter 3, "Can a Leopard Change Its Spots?" (sixty-six pages), tackles the question whether the OT teaches continuing moral change. Millar's strategy is to first consider six case studies of major figures in the OT: (1) Noah, (2) Abram/Abraham, (3) Jacob, (4) Moses, (5) David, and (6) Solomon. He concludes that the narratives of these lives are not focused on describing positive, personal spiritual growth. In fact, all exhibit profound instances of regression and failure—calling for God's gracious forgiveness and restorative action (56–94).

While he concedes that Rahab, Naaman, Manasseh, and Nebuchadnezzar provide powerful examples of personal transformation in the OT (85–94), Millar considers these to be exceptions rather than the rule. Though mentioning their faith and repentance, he seems disinclined to emphasize these traits. He also does not emphasize the penitential psalms and psalms about the believer's relationship to the Word—psalms which result in personal transformation and are filled with repentance and faith for change. The national revivals in Israel and Judah also receive relatively light emphasis, even though the people followed godly leaders in large-scale repentance and faith. These are all profound case studies about personal transformation in the OT. Millar's casual treatment of these examples diminishes vital information to strengthen his assertion that the OT teaches little about the process of progressive personal transformation. The facts speak otherwise. God intends the OT narrative to provide examples of personal transformation for us to follow (e.g., 1 Cor 11, Heb 3–4, 11).

Next, Millar develops the thesis: "In fact, the hope and longing for change is a vital part of the overall fabric of the theology of the Old Testament, and a key building block of a robust biblical theology" on the subject (102). Working through the Pentateuch, the Psalms and Wisdom Literature, and then the Latter Prophets (especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel), Millar demonstrates that this hope and longing for change is expected and desired in the future (102–12). It is only the detailed description of the process of personal transformation in the *present* that he contends is largely absent from the OT. When compared to the NT, this conclusion is true, as the author shows later.

After answering some probable objections to his view about the paucity of clear teaching on the process of personal transformation in the OT, Millar returns to his primary contention in his closing statement of the chapter: "A careful reading of the Old Testament, then, suggests that change or transformation is both necessary and deeply desirable, but remains elusive until the new covenant (i.e., the dramatic intervention of God promised in multiple places and construed in various ways) is set up by the coming of Messiah" (122). It is his next chapter which shows how the NT addresses this need for a full process of personal transformation through the New Covenant.

In chapter 4, "On Wine and Wineskins" (forty-four pages), the author alludes to the parable of Jesus about the necessity and dangers of change. He uses this analogy to unfold the biblical theology of the NT about the process of personal spiritual transformation. He systematically works through the teachings of Jesus (123–44), Paul (144–63), Peter (163–65), James (165–66), Hebrews (166–69), and John (169–71)—following the biblical-theological method of grouping the material by author, citing Scripture profusely, and displaying distinctive elements from each author to develop the overall teaching of the NT.

By treating the corpus of each NT author on personal transformation, Millar demonstrates each author's different emphases while developing the same theme. Christ's teaching in the Gospels, the foundation of all else, is that his life through the gospel daily gives the believer the grace to live the beautiful life of conformity to the law of God and bear fruit for God's glory (127–28). The author shows that Paul is the most detailed of the NT writers in the specifics that bring about and characterize personal transformation. The author concludes insightfully, "It is important that we realize that when it comes to real-time change God makes through the gospel as, by the Sprit, we are united to Christ, the New Testament articulates a doctrine of transformation that is multi-faceted, extravagant and immeasurably rich" (172).

In chapter 5, "Pursuing Change" (forty-four pages), the author "steps sideways to engage with how a range of ancient and modern theologians have dealt with this subject, in confidence that this will further enrich both our understanding and expression of the biblical material" (172). Under the heading "The Inner Life and Biblical Change," Dr. Millar expounds the thought of Augustine of Hippo (174–77), Thomas Aquinas (177–79), Jonathan Edwards (179–81), Thomas Chalmers (183–86), C. S. Lewis (187–90), and James K. A. Smith (191–92). Millar sees value in Augustine's trinitarian emphasis regarding personal transformation (175). He argues that the Reformers were indebted to Aquinas for teaching that the happiness of God is the ideal disposition we should conform ourselves to by grace (178–79). He lauds Edwards for his teaching about the inner experience of joy in God (180–81). He commends Chalmers for his insight into self-examination (184). He concedes that Lewis is not a theologian but sees him as a man of deep insight into humanity, spiritual nature, and personal spiritual warfare (187–88). On the other hand, Millar warns that Smith "has to a large degree, lost the centrality of the gospel, which itself has the power to change people" (192). Smith may write incisively about cultural problems, but he wrongly believes that introducing new liturgies for worship is the answer for the internal poverty of Christians spiritually.

Under the heading of "Christology and Biblical Change," Millar draws heavily on Calvin to develop the idea of our union with Christ as central to any change in the believer (193–97). Calvin and

the author are in complete harmony with Scripture in this emphasis. Without Christ we can do nothing. He alone in us is the source of all grace for change.

Next, the author develops "Piety and Biblical Change," showing how preeminent theologians and pastors of the past have emphasized the public and private means of grace for change (i.e., the Word, prayer, and worship). John Owen, John Newton, John Wesley, and B. B. Warfield are cited extensively and convincingly, demonstrating the strong emphasis they gave to personal piety for personal transformation (197–211). Surprisingly, Millar then briefly discusses the growth and value of the modern biblical counseling movement, particularly when it manifests the theological emphases of the Reformed tradition (212–14).

Before articulating a concise theology of personal transformation in his final chapter, the author observes that while no theologian he has cited has articulated such a theology, they have contributed to what he has come to understand about this truth from Scripture. First, "Biblical change is complex" (215–16). Second, "Biblical change is God's work" (216–17). Third, "Biblical change is trinitarian" (217–18). Fourth, "Biblical change flows from our union with Christ" (218–19). Fifth, "Biblical change is word driven" (219–20). Sixth, "Biblical change requires biblical piety" (220). Seventh, "Biblical change is comprehensive" (220–21).

In chapter 6, "Changed into His Likeness" (twenty-one pages), the author unfolds the biblical theology of personal transformation at which he has arrived by examining Scripture. He develops it by briefly underscoring that personal, progressive transformation is a NT reality (223). He places God at the center and as the prime actor in the process, not diminishing the responsibility of the believer who must cooperate and obey. These are the actions of God to change us: (1) "God transforms our relationship with him" (225–27). (2) "God transforms our knowledge of him" (227). (3) "God transforms our desire for him" (227–28). (4) "God transforms our character (our resemblance to the Lord Jesus Christ)" (229–30). (5) "God transforms our experience of life (with him)" (230–31).

Next, Millar emphasizes that God changes us through the gospel. By this he means through the Word by the Spirit beginning at salvation and continuing throughout the Christian life. The author questions the Reformed teaching of the Lord's Supper and baptism as additional means of grace—acknowledging that this teaching, though propounded by Calvin, has virtually vanished from Reformed teaching. He does not suggest that these ordinances carry grace in themselves, but that personal transformation is effected through obedience and fellowship in their practice (232–34).

Finally, Millar says that God changes us by enabling us to respond in repentance and faith as we are convicted by His Spirit through the Word (235–37). He explains that the process of change is not accomplished alone, but through the fellowship of the church—as believers build up one another, hold each other accountable spiritually, and encourage one another to love and good works (238–41). We must persevere for there to be transformation wrought by God (241–42). Millar concludes that the change in us will be life-long, arduous, and sometimes painful. The pilgrim's path of transformation is progressive and often mysterious. It leads to the throne of God, where we will experience complete transformation as faith becomes sight and we see his face.

The depth, breadth, and solidly biblical-theological character of this work commend it. The gracious pastoral tone and clear, concise expression also commend it. Most of all, the interesting and

thorough development of a theology of personal transformation commends it. *Changed into His Likeness: A Biblical Theology of Personal Transformation* is a book worth reading, worth thinking through, and worth internalizing for growth in Christlikeness. It is biblical theology at its best. We owe a debt of gratitude to our brother Gary Millar for his great care and sacrifice in writing it.

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Lawson, Steven J. *Called to Preach: Fulfilling the High Calling of Expository Preaching.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022. 208 pp.

The following review is intended to encourage future pastors and ministry leaders to evaluate and grow in their call to expositional preaching. Steven Lawson's *Called to Preach: Fulfilling the High Calling of Expository Preaching* includes nine chapters in which the author sequentially introduces and explores elements of a call to preach God's Word. Lawson pastored for thirty-four years, has authored thirty-three books, serves as the professor of preaching at The Master's Seminary, and trains pastors around the world in the skill of expositional preaching. In this work, Lawson's focus is the faithful and effective expositional preaching of God's Word. In it he provides a broad overview of biblical and practical suggestions, progressing from discerning a call to preach to delivering an expositional message.

In his first three chapters, Lawson provides a biblical and philosophical view of the call to preach. He shares nine indicators of a legitimate call to preach: growing desire, ability to teach, godliness, exemplary living, will of God, confirmation from others, spiritual influence, sense of urgency, and a providential open door (29). Next, Lawson explores the preacher's biblical mandate from 2 Timothy 4:1–5. He details God's specific instructions to Timothy as a "strict charge" that is "extended to every preacher called by God and is the timeless standard for all who preach" (49). Lawson elevates the preacher's responsibility to exalt God, stating that "a towering understanding of God leads to transcendent worship and holy living" (50). This third chapter is saturated with the high and lofty values of preaching the glory of God, through the gospel of the Son, in the power of the Spirit. These three ideas give the reader an elevated view of the privilege and responsibility of the preacher.

In chapters 4–8, Lawson moves from philosophy to practice, providing the reader with a thorough explanation of expository preaching. He leads the student through several stages of studying for an expositional message: the orientation stage (the tools of Bible study), the preparation stage (the steps of effective study), the evaluation stage (understanding the spiritual needs of the audience), the selection stage (choosing passages for various kinds of exposition), the observation stage (initial investigation of the text), the interpretation stage (detailed investigation of the text), and the consultation stage (referencing resources for the text) (90). Then he details the practical assembly of an expository sermon through several stages: the explanation stage (detailing the major points of the sermon), the implication stage (seeking to write out the text's implications for the modern audience), the application stage (stating what the text requires of the audience), the illustration stage (adding windows of light), the introduction stage (crafting an attention-drawing opening), the conclusion stage (the final word), the inspection stage (reviewing the message for length, accuracy, and balance), and the intercession stage (praying over the message).

Turning to sermon delivery, Lawson describes eighteen practical ideas for developing an effective communication style—supporting his insight with both Scripture and other quotations. His wisdom in connecting with a spiritually diverse audience is one of the most helpful aspects of the book. He discusses twelve different states of spiritual development that may be represented in the audience, and

he challenges the preacher to be mindful of each as Scripture addresses them all effectively. Lawson wraps up this portion of the text by sharing seventeen suggestions for improving as an expositor.

The author closes with a fitting and compelling final chapter on the personal life of the preacher, in which he challenges every preacher that "God must prepare the preacher before the preacher can prepare the message" (165). His closing words call the preacher to faithfulness and fidelity in the expositional preaching of Scripture. This is especially significant in a day when theologically light and biblically thin self-help sermons abound in many Christian churches.

This book is remarkably practicable and actionable. Every pastor or future pastor should read it. For the experienced pastor, it is a clarifying journey that will rekindle a passion for faithful exposition. For the younger pastor or student, it will establish a strong foundation and biblical perspective for effective future ministry.

Weaknesses are difficult to identify in this book, but it would have been well-served by a chapter or section on biblical theology. Giving the reader a high-altitude view of the grand narrative of Scripture (as one cohesive, redemptive, historical narrative) would help the expositor-in-training to frame the context of any biblical text within the broader redemptive story and God's Christo-centric narrative arc. The closest that Lawson comes to this is in a one-paragraph section entitled "Bible Survey" in chapter 4 (71).

Called to Preach is both informational and inspirational. It is an excellent survey of the broad topic of expository preaching presented by a well-qualified author. This resource will motivate and equip a preacher to engage his call, grow his skills, and faithfully execute his task. The author provides a broad treatment of the vital components of effective expository preaching. Each of Lawson's nine chapters contains wise admonitions, motivating insights, and a biblical perspective that will develop any pastor, but especially next-generation pastors. Dr. Lawson has served the church well with this new resource that God may use to help many biblical communicators to lovingly and faithfully present the life-giving truth of his Word.

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Weremchuk, Max S. *John Nelson Darby: A Biography*. Updated and expanded ed. El Cajon, CA: Southern California Seminary Press, 2021. 214 pp. + 16 pp. (back matter).

John Nelson Darby is a fairly well-known figure in church history, but not always one who is known accurately. Writers sometimes label him as the founder of the Plymouth Brethren (which he was not) or as the man who invented dispensationalism (which he did not). Rather he deeply influenced these movements in their early history. Throwing further light on Darby and his contribution would be a welcomed contribution to historical understanding.

Max Weremchuk attempts to provide a fuller picture of Darby's life, but his attempt is not a complete success. This biography, a revision of an edition published in 1992, seeks to be more edifying than scholarly. The author does not discount scholarly research on Darby—and hints at other studies to come—but his purpose is more to present the personal life of Darby. Such an emphasis is welcomed toward contributing to a better understanding of Darby's character, but it leaves the reader wishing for a bit more.

Part of the problem is the author's determination to communicate the details of Darby's life—too much detail at times. The book relies heavily on block quotations. Although this method demonstrates that the author's points rest on primary sources, it is stylistically deadening. The author also devotes too much space in the text (rather than footnotes) to dealing with matters of detail such as the chronology of the events of Darby's life. More summarizing or editing of the selections from the quoted material along with moving technical points to the footnotes would help the work to flow better and better highlight the main points the author is making.

Weremchuk succeeds in providing insight into Darby's life and heart, but often the reader could profit from knowing more of the historical setting. At one point the author quotes Darby: "I felt God, out of England, gave me the French speaking countries as a field of labour, perhaps America also, and in fact this did not fail. In His constant goodness He added part of Germany." The problem is that Weremchuk provides little detail in the narrative of the wide ministry represented in this statement, although in an appendix he does provide a helpful timeline that gives some context. Integrating Darby's views and personal reflections more into Darby's historical context would in fact help the reader grasp those views and reflections better.

Fortunately, there are positive aspects to the book. It is refreshing to hear a sympathetic author review Darby's life, particularly because he is a controversial figure who has often drawn a negative press. Although one might regret that the book does not give greater place to Darby's theology or the controversies in which he participated, the author gives good emphasis to Darby's devotional and church life. The reader likely understands his character a little more. Also, although the large quotations from primary sources work to the detriment of the flow, some of the selections do provide insight into Darby's thought. For example, the final appendix—a writing by Darby titled "What Do I Learn from Scripture?"—not only sums up Darby's views but also illustrates something of his method, such as his resistance to formal statements of faith.

So, in brief, the work is a sympathetic biography that casts light on Darby's views and personal character. The author mentions in his "Foreword" (which technically should be a preface) that in this

revision he took to heart some of the criticism of his first edition. Perhaps this present book is another step toward bringing the story of Darby to the public, to be followed by a more scholarly work that the author intimates is yet to come.

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Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger. *The Holy Spirit*. Theology for the People of God. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020. 485 pp. + 31 pp. (front matter) + 66 pp. (back matter).

This is the premier title of a newly proposed multi-volume series (Theology for the People of God) that primarily targets "students, seminarians, pastors, and other church and ministry leaders" (xxii). Each volume in the series will be co-authored by a pair of convinced evangelical Baptists (xxi). What is most intriguing, however, is that the volumes "emphasize integration of biblical and systematic theology in dialog with historical theology and with application to church and life" (xxii). In keeping with this primarily bi-perspectival approach, part 1 (219 pages) lays the groundwork with a biblical-theological survey of the Holy Spirit through the Old and New Testaments. Part 2 (262 pages) then explores specific systematic-theological issues related to the Holy Spirit, incorporating relevant historical theological insights along the way.

The biblical-theological methodology progresses straightforwardly through each successive corpus of both Testaments, pausing along the way for summaries of the data and charts that helpfully track every reference to the Spirit in each corpus. The following systematic-theological analysis covers a wide array of issues, including the Spirit's deity and personhood, intratrinitarian relations, relation to Scripture, and the Spirit's role in creation, providence, salvation, the Church, and the future. A chapter on contemporary issues briefly evaluates Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement, and third-wave evangelicalism (including its more recent Reformed expressions). Given the authors' affirmation of continuationism (see below), their concluding application is unsurprisingly generic: "Our pneumatology urges believers and churches to avoid easy reductionism by which Pentecostal and charismatic phenomena are dismissed as either the highest expression of divine blessing [sic; "dismissed" as such?] or the derelict result of demonic activity" (470).

The fundamental theological posture of the authors is solidly orthodox. A smorgasbord of positions espoused in the book will give readers a feel for its contents and orientation. (1) The trinitarian formula in Matthew 28:19 is attributed not to "Matthean parlance" but directly to "Jesus's ipsissima verba" (59). (2) The authors' "pneumatological interpretation of the creation account stands against all non-creationist views," "rejects theistic evolution" (299–300), and holds the *ruach* in Genesis 1:2 to be the Holy Spirit (11–12). (3) They helpfully trace the source of the Bible as a "trinitarian revelation, initiated by the Father, expressed through the Son, and terminating in the Holy Spirit, who inspired it" (307–09). (4) Summarizing four views on the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, both authors hold that this sin involves "malicious, irrational rejection and slander" of the Spirit's testimony to Christ that attributes it to Satan, but they disagree on whether that sin may be committed today (343–44). (5) The authors embrace the priority of regeneration to conversion (369). (6) Several pages argue for the eternal, double procession of the Spirit. The promise of biblical passages that confirm *eternal* procession (259) never actually materializes, however; while several passages are adduced for the *double* procession, arguments for the *eternal* procession are limited to assertions from church fathers. The authors acknowledge that the church's historic formulation of the doctrine "*added* to the biblical affirmation of John 15:26 but *did not contradict* it" (258, emphasis original). (7) The Holy Spirit gives individual believers "specific guidance as to the where, when, how, and whom of career, ministry,

marriage or singleness, family and more. While controversial in some circles, such guidance is well supported by Scripture" (400). (8) In a discussion of soteriological inclusivism, which argues that the Spirit himself may be an avenue of salvation within other religions even apart from any knowledge or confession of the death of Christ, the authors soundly conclude, "Our doctrine of the Holy Spirit . . . holds to exclusivism and rejects inclusivism" (474).

Some omissions are a little surprising for a volume dedicated to a thorough unfolding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Though the authors seem to imply indirectly that OT believers were not permanently indwelt by the Spirit (22, 54), they include no detailed, systematic discussion of that issue (nor any footnote reference to one). Likewise, in tracing the biblical theology of the Spirit through Acts, the authors propose no potential resolution to the apparent contradiction between 20:22 and 21:4 and 11 beyond stating the obvious: "It is difficult to understand how the same Spirit who constrained Paul to go to Jerusalem leads believers and Agabus to warn him against doing so" (96); granted, an extensive German study is footnoted for further reference, but that is an odd option for a volume expressly intended "not first and foremost [for] other 'professional' theologians" (xxii).

For many readers, the most debatable position espoused by Allison and Köstenberger will be their defense of continuationism. The biblical-theological survey on passages relating to tongues concludes that the phenomenon in Acts 2 involved xenoglossia—the ability to "miraculously speak in foreign languages" (84). The authors never address, however, whether the tongues-speaking practiced in Corinth and regulated by Paul was also xenoglossia. What are readers to make of this? Should we assume that they believe the tongues-speaking in Jerusalem and Corinth were identical, since they never say otherwise? Or does their silence on this point intentionally leave the door open for their later affirmation of continuationism (429–34)? The failure to clarify this point vexes their defense of continuationism, since at the core of that position is the argument (and therefore the need for biblical-theological data) that the Corinthian tongues-speaking was not xenoglossia. Avoiding any discussion of the nature of tongues outside of Acts (Corinthian or modern) is conspicuously unhelpful for any fair and biblically informed presentation of the debate.

The authors' summary of the cessationist position is equally disappointing. "Cessationism points to the following support in its favor," it begins. "(1) First Corinthians 13:8–13 associates the cessation of sign gifts . . . with the completion of the New Testament canon" (431). Granted, point (2) acknowledges "a modification" of this view that rejects this interpretation. But why begin by attributing to cessationism a view that, in point of fact, most cessationists reject? One expects a bit more informed accuracy in an academic work of this caliber. The authors cite Anthony Thistelton (a continuationist) over a dozen times elsewhere in the book; this might have been an apropos time to cite him once more, for even Thistleton concedes that "*few or none* of the serious cessationist arguments depends on a specific exegesis of 1 Cor. 13:8–11."[7] Listing the completion-of-the-canon view as central to cessationism also undermines the relevance of their further arguments against this view. For example, they pose the following question: "As the early church read these passages . . . what would

[7] Anthony C. Thistleton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1063 (emphasis added).

have signaled to them that these apostolic instructions no longer apply" since "no such signal appears in the texts themselves" (432)? But if the sovereign Spirit simply ceased giving a particular gift, no such signal in the text would be necessary. Indeed, the counter-question might be posed: what text signaled to the early church the cessation of normative, inspired Scripture? A formidable argument has been made that the cessation of tongues need not be argued for on any textual grounds but on purely historical grounds—just as all orthodox believers (the authors included) would argue for the cessation of inspired Scripture not on any textual grounds but on historical grounds.[8] Similarly, the authors argue against the cessationist view: "At what point and in what manner did the early churches and their leaders *know to suspend the operation of the gifts* of prophecy, speaking in tongues, and the other sign gifts?" (432, emphasis added). This is an astonishing question to pose in a book on the theology of the Holy Spirit, given the unequivocal biblical-theological data that churches and their leaders have nothing to do with either instigating or suspending spiritual gifts in the first place (1 Cor 12:7–11, 18, 24, 28); such gifts are purely at the sovereign disposition of the Spirit—a point the authors rehearsed just four pages earlier (428) but overlook in their critique of cessationism.

All that being said, the book's strengths far outweigh its weaknesses, and the authors have made a significant contribution to pneumatology specifically and to theological method in general. Hopefully this model of directly interfacing biblical and systematic theology within the same volume will find its way into other theological studies in the future.

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8 See Alan N. Grover, "Canon Theology As a Model for Cessationist Theology: A Biblical Case for Cessationism (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 2015). Part of Allison's and Köstenberger's argument, of course, is the debated assertion that "the historical record of the continuation of the sign gifts is solid. It is simply not the fact that these gifts died out after the apostolic age was over or that their continuation was confined to marginal, even heretical, groups" (432). See Grover, chapter 9, "Historical Evidence for Cessationism."