

Gribben, Crawford. *J. N. Darby and the Roots of Dispensationalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2024. 154pp. + 16pp. (front matter) + 94pp. (back matter).

Crawford Gribben, a professor at Queen's University Belfast, pairs an intriguing interest in John Owen and John Nelson Darby, in the Puritans and the Plymouth Brethren. This volume is a major study in Darby's thought. The latter part of the title is explained in the last sentence of the book: "He saw the roots, but not the birth, of dispensationalism." Dispensationalism, in Gribben's telling, is a simplification and distortion of Darby's thought. The focus of the book is about Darby's soteriology, ecclesiology, pneumatology, and eschatology. Gribben summarizes Darby's positions as Calvinist, catholic, charismatic, and catastrophic, respectively. These designations need some unpacking, however, since Darby's views include some surprises.

Gribben describes Darby's soteriology as developing out of "Anglican high Calvinism" (35). However, this brand of Calvinism is different from what many today would think of as flying under the Calvinist banner. For instance, Gribben observes, "Like other high Calvinists, he rejected the confessional view that believers were under the moral law as a rule of life in their sanctification" (36). One might think that this was a kind of antinomian hyper-Calvinism, but the Brethren recognized the Scriptures as morally binding and held that the imitation of Christ is a higher standard than the Decalogue (144, 146). This emphasis led Darby to argue against justification on the grounds of Christ's imputed righteousness. He wanted to excise any thought that righteousness could come through obedience to the law—even Christ's obedience to the law. In this Darby claimed that he was closer to the Augsburg Confession, the Formula of Concord, Calvin's *Institutes*, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the Westminster Confession than his opponents. Darby thought that this "was his most important contribution" to the recovery of true theology (52). Darby's soteriology, not his eschatology, provoked the most opposition in Darby's own day. Gribben highlights especially the opposition of Free Church of Scotland minister George Smeaton, whom, Gribben asserts, misunderstood some of Darby's claims. Gribben also notes that Darby's soteriology did not persist even among the Brethren.

Gribben describes Darby's ecclesiology as "catholic" (32). This may seem an odd appellation to apply to the leader of a group that called for separation from denominations that contained a mixture of believers and unbelievers. In Darby's thought, however, the church had fallen away from its purity in the first centuries and would never be restored (the Reformation did not restore it, according to Darby). Thus, the Brethren called all true Christians to gather apart from the denominations. Much of the chapter on ecclesiology outlines the practical challenges the Brethren faced in trying to live out this theology, including a split among the Brethren themselves.

Darby's pneumatology was, as Gribben puts it, "laundered charismaticism" (91). Darby rejected cessationism, but he also believed that Irving and his followers were not truly receiving special gifting from the Spirit. Later he would deny that the miraculous gifts continued even while rejecting the cessationist position: "The gifts had been withdrawn not because the canon of Scripture had been completed, as nineteenth-century cessationists routinely argued, but because of the church's failure" (97). Darby also developed a two-stage view of the Christian life in which the sealing of the Spirit was a subsequent experience, but he rejected Wesleyan perfectionism and thought the Higher Life

movement was a distortion of his doctrine. He also innovated by distinguishing between definitive and progressive sanctification. According to Gribben, this distinction was later picked up by Westminster Seminary professor John Murray. Gribben also claims that D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones adopted Darby's view that the sealing of the Spirit was a subsequent experience in the Christian life. Interestingly, later dispensationalists did little with Darby's pneumatology: "Hardly anything of Darby's pneumatology made it into the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909)" (91).

Darby's eschatology was, in his lifetime, the least controversial aspect of his theology due to the wide variety of eschatological positions among evangelicals in the nineteenth century. In addition, Darby was not entirely innovative. Gribben notes that "Darby combined existing eschatological ideas in a distinctive structure" (116). These factors explain why Darby's eschatology was widely adopted in a variety of denominations where his other theological views would not have been welcome. In his examination of Darby's eschatology, Gribben draws three contrasts between Darby's eschatology and that of dispensationalists who followed him. First, Darby did not base his eschatology upon a literal reading of the prophets. Instead, Darby examined whether a prophetic passage referred to Israel or to the church and then developed his interpretative approach from that starting point. Second, even though Darby believed that Jews would return to the land of Israel and be converted, Gribben thinks it inaccurate to label Darby a Zionist. Gribben notes that Darby had "high Tory sensibilities" that led him to be "opposed to popular democracy" (117). This combined with his belief that the church should avoid political campaigns. Thus, Darby's belief regarding the restoration of Israel had no political component to it. Third, Darby's understanding of dispensations differed from the definitions of later dispensations. He moved away from using *dispensation* to describe "a period in redemptive history," opting to use the terminology of "age" or "administration" (133). He used the term *dispensation* "to refer to a particular expression of divine grace within these redemptive-historical periods" (133). In addition, dispensations only existed in the time when God was specially working among the Jews. Thus, for Darby there were no dispensations before the Flood or after the Cross. The sharp distinction between Israel and the church led to another innovation that did not endure. Darby argued that the material promises of the OT would be fulfilled for Israel on the new earth while the spiritual promises given to the church would be fulfilled for the church in heaven.

Gribben opens his book by citing Donald Akenson's claim that Darby is the fourth most influential Protestant theologian, following only Luther, Calvin, and Wesley. He emphasizes the scope of Darby's writing ("one of the nineteenth century's most prolific and varied writers," 3) and his vast learning (noting his extensive library, positive reviews of his *Synopsis* in the *Princeton Review*, his work with Bible translations in German, French, and English, and his engagement with textual criticism). Despite impressions, sometimes fostered by the Brethren themselves, that Darby was an innovator, Gribben holds that Darby was historically informed. He concludes, "'But if the substance of his ideas was not especially distinctive, his combination of ideas was often unique" (x). And yet for all his learning and writing, Gribben finds Darby's thought neglected, overshadowed by the dispensationalism that followed him.

Gribben closes the book by drawing on evaluations of early critics and defenders of Darby and the Brethren. While acknowledging Darby's distinctive thought, Gribben seems to side with those who

find greater continuity between Darby and the broader Reformed tradition. For instance, Gribben writes of a critic of Darby (146–47):

He might have discovered in the works of Johannes Piscator Darby's argument that believers were not justified through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ; he might have learned from John Owen Darby's argument that believers should meet for Bible study without clerical oversight and for the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper; he might have found in the works of Johannes Cocceius the idea that redemptive history progressed through a sequences of ages, as a consequence of which believers were not bound to keep the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath; and he might have located the idea that Jewish people would be converted to Christianity and restored to the Promised Land in the Geneva Bible and in the works of many English puritans. In other words, just as Reformed tradition could be used to critique the distinctive claims of the brethren, so it could be used to support them.

Early dispensationalism, on the other hand, Gribben takes to be something that Darby intensely disliked: a “simplified and reductive” rendering of his thought. These modifications have taken some odd turns (Gribben mentions Clarence Larkin, Hal Lindsey, and the *Left Behind* series). Gribben sees progressive dispensationalism as a move back toward Reformed theology (though not necessarily a move back to Darby).

Gribben has written a fascinating account of the thought of a clearly influential figure. The major shortcoming of the book is its brevity. For instance, the soteriology chapter clearly explains why Darby rejected the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but his alternative scheme is not clearly explained. Gribben writes as an historian. He is not evaluating Darby's views. One might feel some regret in reading Gribben's account that Darby's complex thought was simplified or abandoned. But when evaluated theologically, Darby's view of imputation, his view of the church, his views on the sealing of the Spirit, and his distinctive definition of *dispensation* all should have been abandoned. In the almost century and a half since Darby's death, his best ideas (such as the distinction between definitive and progressive sanctification and some of his eschatological thought) have endured, while the less valuable ideas have fallen away.

Finally, Gribben's work stands as a caution to contemporary critics of dispensationalism. It will not do to simply critique Darby and Scofield and think that dispensationalism has been discredited. Dispensationalism is a developing theological tradition. Many critiques of Darby and Scofield do not apply to present-day dispensationalists, especially progressive dispensationalists. Gribben's observation that Darby was often drawing on earlier theological ideas should move some Reformed theologians to examine whether some of the opposition to dispensationalist positions is too reactive. The restoration of Israel to the land and a national conversion has a long Reformed pedigree. Must it be abandoned simply because it was also adopted by Darby and the dispensationalists who followed him?

Brian C. Collins

Biblical Worldview Lead Specialist | BJU Press

Lundeen, Erik. *The Reformation of the Literal: Prophecy and the Senses of Scripture in Early Modern Europe*. T&T Clark Studies in Historical Theology. New York: T&T Clark, 2025. 219pp. + 12pp. (front matter) + 30pp. (back matter).

The Reformers famously emphasized literal interpretation and rejected the allegorical approaches common in earlier eras of the church, or so the popular history goes. In the past half century scholars have pushed back against this narrative by arguing that the Reformers stood in greater continuity with their medieval predecessors than many think. Eric Lundeen, a pastor at Village Church of Gurnee (IL) and a fellow with the Center for Pastor Theologians, steps into this discussion with a detailed analysis of what the Reformers practiced when they claimed to interpret according to the literal sense.

Lundeen approaches the issue of Reformation interpretation by examining Johannes Oecolampadius's commentary on Isaiah (1525) in conversation with commentaries by Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Thomas Aquinas, Nicholas of Lyra, Martin Luther (lectures given from 1527–1530), Conrad Pellican (1534), Johannes Brenz (1550), John Calvin (1551; 2nd ed., 1559), Wolfgang Musculus (1557), and Lucas Osiander (1578). As the earliest Reformation commentator on Isaiah, Oecolampadius is a key transitional figure.

The first chapter introduces readers to Oecolampadius. He worked with Erasmus on his famed Greek NT. Nonetheless, Oecolampadius broke with Erasmus over his controversy with Luther. Oecolampadius sided with the Swiss reformers against the Lutherans in the Eucharistic controversy. He was highly regarded for his facility with the Hebrew language.

Chapters 2 through 4 compare Oecolampadius's exegesis of Isaiah with select interpreters who preceded him. At the end of each of these chapters, Lundeen briefly looks at how the six Reformation-era commentators handled the same passages. Chapter 2 compares Oecolampadius's exegesis of Isaiah 5:1–7, 13:1–14:23, and 21:1–10 with that of Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, and Chrysostom, with an eye to how they handle figures of speech and extended metaphors or literary allegories (that is, allegories written by the author). Chapter 3 turns to the medieval period and compares Oecolampadius with Thomas Aquinas and Nicholas of Lyra on Isaiah 7:14, 8:1–4, 9:7, 11:1, and 49:1. The chapter examines how Christological passages in Isaiah are read in their OT context. Chapter 4 demonstrates that Oecolampadius was shaped by medieval Jewish exegesis. Whereas patristic and medieval exegesis tended to take passages piecemeal and to read them Christologically, medieval Jewish interpretation tended to read the prophets as literary works to be interpreted in light of the whole and as relating to the prophet's own time. Lundeen summarizes these two tendencies with the words "coherence and contemporaneity." Oecolampadius adopted both emphases in his commentary on Isaiah while also advocating for Christological readings of the prophets. Lundeen proposes that Oecolampadius may have been attracted to Jewish exegesis due to a Renaissance emphasis on the interpretation of texts as literary wholes.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to Isaiah 40–66 and place Oecolampadius in more detailed conversation with the six Reformation commentators on Isaiah. Chapter 5 focuses on three issues: the interpretation of metaphors, the interpretation of texts quoted or alluded to in the NT, and the "coherence and

contemporaneity” of Isaiah’s prophecies in these chapters. Chapter 6 looks at the issue of referentiality, particularly with regard to the Cyrus oracle in Isaiah 44 and 45.

A few examples of the comparative work that forms the heart of this book will give the reader a sense of the similarities and differences among the various interpretive traditions. Isaiah 5:1–7 is, in Lundeen’s terminology, a “literary allegory.” Notably, Chrysostom recognized the difference between literary allegory and allegorical interpretation while Jerome and Cyril did not. Jerome and Cyril also identified symbolic significance in each detail of Isaiah 5:1–7, while Chrysostom simply took the main point of the metaphor as found in v. 7. Oecolampadius warned against finding a symbolic meaning in each detail of the passage, but in the end he did just that. In this he was followed by five of the six Reformers Lundeen surveyed, with Calvin alone adopting the approach of Chrysostom.

The interpretation of Isaiah 13–14 is likewise intriguing. Jerome and Cyril understood Isaiah 13–14 to be about the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians according to the historical sense, but about the devil’s fall, the church’s present triumph over Satan, and yet future eschatological judgments according to the spiritual sense. In broad strokes Oecolampadius agreed, but he sought to link tightly the historical and spiritual senses and to justify the spiritual sense from the letter. He noted that the language of Isaiah 13 in the historical sense had to be understood as hyperbolic. In addition, the details of Isaiah 13 did not match historical events precisely. Thus, Oecolampadius proposed that Babylon served as a type, with the text partially fulfilled historically (the literal sense) and partially fulfilled eschatologically (the anagogical sense). The six Reformation interpreters were not inclined to recognize a spiritual sense, and they universally rejected the fall of Satan interpretation of Isaiah 14. Interestingly, those interpreters who distinguished between a literal sense and a spiritual sense read the text metaphorically when reading according to the literal or historical sense and non-metaphorically (one would say *literally* except that term has already been applied to the historical reading) to arrive at the spiritual or eschatological sense.

Isaiah 16:1–5 serves as an example of a shift from patristic and medieval readings of Scripture toward readings that valued coherence. In his comments on Isaiah 16:1, Jerome proposed that Isaiah shifted sharply away from a historical prophecy about Moab to speak of Christ (the Lamb) descended from the rock (Ruth the Moabitess), shifted back to an oracle regarding Moab in verses 2–4, and then shifted back to Christ in verse 5. This became the dominant Christian reading, and this is the view found in the commentaries by Thomas and Lyra. Medieval Jewish interpreters understood Isaiah 16 to be a continuation of Isaiah 15. The sheep in 16:1 referred to tribute that Moab paid to Israel. Verse 5 referred to the rule of Hezekiah. Oecolampadius followed the Jewish reading, but he then claimed that Hezekiah was a type of Christ. He applied the passage to Christians by paralleling the tribute paid to Hezekiah with the requirement that Christians offer themselves up to Christ. The other Reformers also followed the Jewish interpretation of verse 1, but they divided regarding verse 5. Luther read verse 5 as about Hezekiah alone. Brenz and Osiander followed Jerome and the tradition in holding it was about Christ alone. The Reformed interpreters, Pellican, Musculus, and Calvin, followed Oecolampadius in seeing Hezekiah as a type of Christ.

Isaiah 65:25 provides a case study in the handling of metaphor. Luther, Osiander, and Musculus followed the traditional interpretation that understood the wild beasts as metaphors for the wicked;

their gentling referred to conversion. Oecolampadius adopted this symbolic reading, but he also argued that it was fulfilled literally in Christ's first coming (cf. Mark 1:13; Acts 28:3–6; Mark 16:18; Luke 10:19). He posited, "Any harm from animals that happened in this life, he wrote, could surely only be due to their unbelief" (169). Calvin opted for a nonmetaphorical reading and a fulfillment at the Second Advent, but he also taught that the main point of the text was a metaphor about sinners brought to obedience in Christ. Brenz rejected these metaphorical readings and read the text to teach that the beasts who became ferocious due to Adam's sin could not ultimately harm Christians who have eternal life in Christ.

The Cyrus oracle in Isaiah 44 and 45 provided an opportunity to examine different approaches to referentiality. The patristic and medieval commentators held that the literal sense had only a single referent but that additional referents could be found in the spiritual senses. Oecolampadius is aligned with the preceding tradition on this point. The Lutherans, however, rejected the spiritual sense while maintaining that the literal sense could only have one referent. They saw Cyrus as the only referent of this prophecy. The Reformed interpreters who followed Oecolampadius likewise rejected spiritual senses, but they were willing to see multiple referents and fulfillments in the literal sense, often due to their view of typology.

Lundeen concludes from this survey that the Reformers had a complicated and diverse understanding of what it meant to read a text literally. However, it seems instead that a variety of generally valid interpretive strategies were deployed by the Reformers. Each of these could be valid depending on the passage. Recognizing this deflates, in my opinion, Lundeen's emphasis on the diversity of literal interpretation.

Lundeen is not opposed to the scholarly trend of finding Reformation hermeneutics in line with the preceding tradition. For instance, he observes that Calvin is to a certain extent the outlier in refusing to make any use of multiple senses. I confess that I don't see this entirely borne out in the preceding text. Oecolampadius seemed unique among the Reformers in admitting a spiritual sense, and his spiritual sense in Isaiah 13–14 is arguably getting at the literal sense of the passage. In addition, Lundeen also notes that his chapter on the influence of medieval Jewish exegesis "bucks current scholarly trends by pointing to significant discontinuities between the exegesis of the reformers and that of their patristic and medieval Christian predecessors" (126). He also observes that those who claim that Calvin engaged in non-literal exegesis operate with a narrower conception of the literal sense than Calvin did. He does not reject their definition of the literal sense, but he does hold that they ought to make this fact clear in their discussions.

At the end of this volume Lundeen suggests other avenues for extending his research. The avenue that would most interest me would be a similar study on biblical books of genres other than prophecy. It would also be worthwhile to advance this study into the post-Reformation era. If those projects go forward, this learned, informative, and clearly written work will provide an excellent model.

Brian C. Collins

Biblical Worldview Lead Specialist | BJU Press

Beale, G. K., and Benjamin L. Gladd, eds. *CSB Connecting Scripture New Testament: A Study Bible of Biblical Allusions & Quotations*. Nashville: Holman, 2025. 531pp. + 21pp. (front matter) + 27pp. (back matter).

The editors of *CSB Connection Scripture New Testament* have produced an impressive version of the NT that focuses on biblical quotations, allusions, and parallels between the two Testaments. Although this volume contains 592 pages, it is relatively thin due to Holman's use of durable opaque paper and a readable 9.25-point type. Both hardcover and leather versions are available.

Each of the books of the NT in this volume contains helpful introductions, tables, and articles concerning key biblical themes that extend through both Testaments. Likewise, footnotes and cross references abound. Most notable, however, is the color-coding that exists throughout the biblical text. Blue text indicates an OT quotation, while green text points to a potential OT allusion. Beale and Gladd identify a third category flagged as a "parallel" reference, a conceptual "swath" of texts that align the NT text with the Old (vii). However, the authors rightly caution the reader to examine each potential allusion or parallel to affirm or deny the likelihood of an intentional link between the Testaments.

Although I believe that these three categories could have been better delineated, the value of having a version of the NT that marks so many potential OT references in the NT is great. I am unaware of another NT text that provides such an abundance of potential textual and conceptual references to the OT. In addition, two indices provide the reader with the added value of locating potential uses of the OT in the New in each of the books of the OT and then in each of the books of the NT. Both indices are color-coded as described above.

My generally positive review is somewhat diminished by the editors' uncritical approach to many of the texts. For instance, the editors argue that the stone of Matthew 24:2 ("not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down," CSB) is an ironic allusion to the stone of Daniel 2:34–35 ("As you were watching, a stone broke off without a hand touching it, struck the statue on its feet of iron and fired clay, and crushed them. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth," xiii). Perhaps one might say that the context of judgment validates the linking of these two texts. The "stone" of Daniel, however, clearly points to the Messianic Kingdom, while the "stone" of Matthew is a common Temple stone, of which there were thousands that made up the structure.

The writers of the NT reference Psalm 118 frequently; so, it provides a good test case for Beale's and Gladd's thesis. They list twelve quotations and twenty-two allusions to Psalm 118 in the NT (539). Assuming the validity of these connections, one could conclude that the NT writers were well-acquainted with the Messianic elements of this psalm, especially as pertaining to the "rejected Cornerstone" theme.

Although each of the listed quotations of Psalm 118 appears to be a valid instance of the authors' reproducing this prior text, I detected some inadvertent errors. For one, the text indicates that Luke 13:35 cites Psalm 118:25, which should read 118:26. Additionally, the editors color-code John 12:13 as an allusion instead of a quotation. It seems clear to me that John intends to reproduce part of Psalm

118:26. Thus, the number of quotations of Psalm 118 in the NT should be thirteen. It is understandable that minor mistakes would be made in a volume like this since the editors have covered a massive amount of material.

The category of “allusions” to Psalm 118 in the NT is more problematic. Clerical errors include John 10:14, which should be 10:24, and Luke 9:21, which should read 9:22. Regarding the appropriate identification of an allusion, I would suggest that eight of the twenty-two listed are possible allusions to Psalm 118: Matthew 11:3, Mark 8:31, Luke 7:19 and 17:25, John 11:27, 1 Peter 2:4, and Revelation 19:1. The remaining supposed allusions provide unlikely connections to Psalm 118. For example, the text suggests that the “rulers of the people” in Acts 4:8 is a possible allusion to the nobles of Psalm 118:9 (“It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in nobles”). Although the word for “rulers” or “nobles” is the same in the NT and the LXX, the context of the passages is dissimilar, and the term “rulers” is quite common in Scripture (583x in the OT; 37x in the NT), thereby making it unlikely that Peter referenced Psalm 118:9 while addressing Jewish leaders.

Likewise, it is difficult to imagine that Paul had Psalm 118:25–27 in mind when he told Titus that the “grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (Titus 2:11). Both texts extol the arrival of salvation, but Psalm 118:25–27 does not include the scope of this salvation as for “all people.” If Paul alludes to a text in Titus 2:11, it is more likely Psalm 67:1–3, where God’s “saving power” is offered to all the nations.

Perhaps the clerical errors and unconvincing allusions to Psalm 118 in this text are exceptional; more likely, similar features will be found by the readers of this volume who are interested in how the NT writers referenced the OT. Nonetheless, in spite of these failings, I am quite happy with this publication. It is a long-awaited reference tool for the study of biblical intertextuality. The reader is only left to examine and evaluate the data.

Neal Cushman

Dean | BJU Seminary

Williams, Peter J. *The Surprising Genius of Jesus: What the Gospels Reveal About the Greatest Teacher*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2023. 113pp. + 22pp. (front matter) + 17pp. (back matter).

The Surprising Genius of Jesus makes a compelling case for the genius (or “cleverness”) of Jesus as demonstrated through his biblical-theological technique, intertextual allusions, rhetorical brilliance, and storytelling savvy. It does so primarily through an extended case study centered on Jesus’ parable of the two sons (more commonly known as the parable of the prodigal son) presented in Luke 15.

In this book, Peter Williams (principal of Tyndale House, Cambridge, chair of the international Greek Testament Project, and member of the ESV translation oversight committee) leverages the combined strengths of an articulate apologetic and a strong grasp of NT Greek and Gospels studies. Williams’s central thesis is that “Jesus should be considered a genius . . . because of the cleverness and wisdom of his teaching” (2). Williams supports and develops this theme in five major moves, each move taking one chapter.

Chapter 1, “A Brilliant Story,” explores the genius of Jesus that is discernable even from a surface reading of the story of the two sons. Williams points out Jesus’ ability to address two different audiences simultaneously with different issues and needs. “It is a powerful story in any setting for what it conveys . . . even before we consider its wider scope in handling human relationships with God” (29). But Williams points out that “it is even more powerful when considered in the context in which it is reported, with tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and scribes all present” (29). Sinners and tax collectors are invited to repent and taste of the Father’s lavish forgiveness upon the son who was “lost away from home,” while Pharisees and scribes are challenged by the negative example of the older brother who was “lost at home.” By the end of this chapter, the reader is prepared to agree with the author that “to convey all this in under four hundred words is a work of great artistry of the kind that . . . displays genius” (30). But here the book points out that “beneath the surface there are layers of deeper meaning in the story which show it to be cleverer still” (30).

Chapter 2, “Connecting with Genesis,” arguably represents the heart of the book. This substantive chapter argues that “Jesus’ story echoes details from most of the major stories in Genesis” (34). Moving from more readily apparent allusions to more nuanced or even potentially debatable points of connection, Williams argues multiple points of intentional connection between Jesus’ parable and the accounts of Jacob and Esau, Jacob and Laban, Joseph, Judah, Abraham, and the account of Cain and Abel. In thirty-three pages, Williams presents an array of lexical and thematic connections Jesus’ 400-word story makes to these major episodes across the Book of Genesis. As Williams points out, one could easily imagine a careful scribe, practiced in copying the first book of the Torah, perking his ears up at some of the allusions this chapter presents as woven throughout Jesus’ parable.

A full recapitulation of chapter 2 is neither desirable nor possible. But sampling the treatment of the first of the five Genesis narratives covered will help the reader anticipate what to expect from this key chapter. In the Genesis accounts dealing with Jacob and Esau, Williams identifies eleven areas of striking correspondence to Jesus’ parable of the two sons: (1) “a man with two sons,” (2) “a younger brother going into a far country,” (3) “the younger brother herding animals in that far country,” (4) “someone saying he is dying of hunger,” (5) “a younger brother wearing the best robes given by a

parent,” (6) “an older brother coming in from a field,” (7) “the use of the word ‘draw near’ (Luke 15:25),” (8) “an older brother being angry,” (9) “concern about an older brother losing some inheritance to a younger one,” (10) “young goats as a meal,” and (11) the wording, occurring only in these two places in the entire Bible, “ran . . . and fell on his neck and kissed him” (Luke 15:20; Gen. 33:4).

Esau’s response alluded to in connection (11) above is, to the first-time reader of Genesis, quite surprising, just as the father’s reaction in Luke 15 is a surprising response for Jesus’ audience. While this seems to connect ungodly Esau awkwardly with a God-like figure in Luke 15, this is apparently exactly the way Jacob felt about the encounter himself, for as “a careful reader of Genesis” would know, “just six verses after Esau runs and falls on Jacob’s neck and kisses him, Jacob declares that encountering Esau is like seeing the face of God (33:10)” (40).

But why would Jesus care to draw the attention of scribes and Pharisees to the story of Jacob and Esau? “If even a person like Esau . . . could accept his returning brother, how much more should the older son accept his brother?” What conclusion should the “older-brother” portion of Jesus’ audience reach? “The Pharisees and scribes should not resent that Jesus, and therefore God, welcomes tax collectors and sinners. They should not resent God’s grace shown to the undeserving or react as if they stand to lose through God’s generosity” (42).

In addition to this kind of textual and thematic work across the five major connected episodes in Genesis, chapter 2 also explores wider OT connections, as well as arguably meaningful echoes of Rabbinic parables. According to Williams, “the deeper references are . . . both an invitation and a challenge to experts in Scripture to recognize the knowledge of the storyteller and heed what he says” (66).

Chapter 3, “More Stories Inspired by the Old Testament,” explores whether other of Jesus’ parables also show “a pattern of Old Testament allusions in other stories and parables of Jesus” (67). Williams overviews fifteen other stories from various Gospels to show how they also feature strong connection to the OT, backing up the claim that “such allusions are a common feature of Gospel parables, not merely of those found in Luke’s Gospel” (87). Foreshadowing chapter 4, Williams argues: “The most natural thing is to suppose that Old Testament references go back before the written Gospels to Jesus, the teacher whose words they claim to report” (87).

In chapter 4, “Was Jesus the Genius?” Williams tackles the potential objection that the extremely clever connections between Jesus’ stories and the OT (especially in Luke) could have come from the mind of the Gospel writer. Williams successfully demonstrates that the parables recorded in Luke show strong evidence of an author who was “deeply familiar with (1) Palestine, (2) the Old Testament and (3) rabbinic ways of talking” and argues that Jesus “fits just this profile” while Luke does not (94). Williams also identifies “Six Hallmarks of Jesus” that “show a common mind behind Luke 15 and what is attributed to Jesus elsewhere especially in Matthew’s gospel” (95).

Finally, Williams briefly addresses a remaining potential challenge—how were these stories passed on until recorded in the Gospels? Williams concludes: “The stories attributed to [Jesus] in the Gospels show numerous common features and . . . are not readily explained as creations by the Gospel writers

but are easily explained as the records of a brilliant teacher with a profile that closely matches what we know about Jesus” (107).

In chapter 5, “Much More Than a Storyteller,” Williams reviews the key points of the argument and lands with a focus on the identity of Jesus himself in unity with the entire record of Scripture. The book reaches a fitting conclusion in an apologetic, evangelistic challenge. “If the storyteller Jesus Christ is God himself [as the Gospels claim], who made the world, invented language, oversaw history, and then became human to tell us about God and to rescue us from our alienation to him, then his wisdom and genius make sense. And if he is that smart and if he also loved us enough to die to save us, the only sensible thing to do is to accept him unreservedly as our teacher, guide, and Savior” (113).

The Surprising Genius of Jesus is an enjoyable book to read. The accessible prose, clear and persuasive tone, fascinating argument, and engagement with the details of Luke and Genesis make it easy to keep turning the page. The style gives the impression of an author who knows more than he has space to say but who understands the need to carefully guide his readership to grasp and internalize an argument, even if it means strategic repetition and restatement.

This is the type of book a specialist might consider to be *popular* and that a non-specialist might consider *academic*. Some readers might wish for fewer original language references (although these are contained and no biblical language knowledge is necessary to appreciate even the details of this book). Another set of readers may wish for deeper engagement with scholarly sources. But one strength of the book lies in the way it integrates a substantive argument with accessible presentation. Busy pastors, professors, and serious lay readers will appreciate the combination.

A key strength of this book is that it makes the reader hungry to pick up the Gospels and take a closer look at the teachings of the genius, Jesus. It will also encourage the reader to read both the Gospels and the Pentateuch through a more canonically conscious lens. Seeing Jesus as “the genius” also invites the reader to see Jesus as the master interpreter teaching and modeling the interpretive approach behind the *other* OT/NT connections in apostolic teaching.

In case the “making of many books” about the use of the OT in the NT, filled with debates and differing models, has already made the reader weary in the flesh, it is worth pointing out that this is not one of those books. The nature of the case studies in this book entirely bypasses this well-trodden territory. The focus is on Jesus leveraging scriptural language, echoes, and allusions to strengthen his argument as he weaves OT narratives into his parable. The reader will look in vain for arguments that depend on a debated hermeneutical approach or systematic-theological viewpoint. Issues such as typology, levels of authorial intent, pattern-fulfillment, various versions of *sensus plenior*, etc., are not relied upon or even mentioned in the book. The material being treated and the nature of the connections being claimed simply do not call for or rely upon such concepts. While such issues have their place, it is refreshing and frankly relaxing to read a book so concerned with intertextuality yet so devoid of the knotty hermeneutical concerns that of necessity often permeate a fair bit of OT-in-the-NT literature.

This is not to say that there is nothing debatable in the book. At times the reader could be forgiven for suspecting Williams of some confirmation bias, and, in places, this reviewer scribbled “Stretch?” in the margin. For example, not all will be completely convinced by the suggestion that the collocation

of the words *goat*, *friend*, and *prostitute* in Luke 15 are designed to evoke the Judah narrative of Genesis 38 (although it is the only other place in Scripture the three words occur together). It is also possible to argue that the surface connections pointed out between Jesus' parable and Cain and Abel, though striking, could be coincidental. Other places may raise the eyebrows of skeptical readers as well. Williams seems to realize the vulnerability of some of the specific points and himself shows sensitivity to the fact that readers could legitimately quibble with some of the details without invalidating his larger argument: "Even if some of the connections explored above are explained away as common elements that occur in any story about family dynamics, many connections are striking and cluster together" (59). Elsewhere he admits the *possibility* that he may have "occasionally seen parallels that are merely coincidental" but points out that "this does not invalidate my central argument that Jesus' story contains allusions to stories right across Genesis" and argues that "it is still hard to credit all these parallels merely to hard searching" (60). This honesty makes it easier to follow and accept the general argument while marking certain "connections" for more thorough review.

In terms of evangelical commitment, the argument of the book is made possible by Williams's healthy conviction that the Gospel writers accurately transmit the teaching of Jesus. Williams argues and insists that we give Jesus credit for his faithfully transmitted teaching. And in the end, the reader's eyes are turned to Jesus Christ, the genius, the storyteller, and much more, the Savior and King who deserves our praise, trust, and devotion.

Timothy Hughes

Assistant Professor | School of Theology and Global Leadership, Bob Jones University

Strickland, Darby A. *When It's Trauma: A Biblical Guide to Understanding Trauma and Walking Faithfully with Sufferers*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2025. 262pp. + 46pp. (back matter).

Having counseled trauma cases—everything from abuse to combat PTSD—for over twenty-five years, I have experienced the absence of biblical writing on trauma. The recent interest in study and writing has been both refreshing and alarming—refreshing because of helpful contributions; alarming because, like most studies in soul care, the temptation to import secular worldviews into the discussion seems irresistible.¹ Strickland's book, another in the line of several on abuse and trauma she has authored, seeks to provide a biblical approach to counseling trauma sufferers.

Although Strickland doesn't state her thesis succinctly, her emphases in the introduction establish what she endeavors to prove: (1) Trauma is a soul-level issue that mirrors exile; (2) Christ meets sufferers in the ruins of their life; and (3) caregivers must be present with sufferers to gain their trust. Strickland structures her book in three sections: "Foundations of Care," "Wounds of Trauma," and "Hope of Restoration."

After her introduction, Strickland provides a primer on the "Terrain of Trauma" in which she sets the parameters of what trauma is and isn't. Here, she provides a description of what it means to be traumatized (16) and identifies characteristics of trauma by the wounds it inflicts and the disorientation it causes (19–20). The biblical theology she establishes in this section is helpful and sets the tone for the rest of the book in her use of the Scriptures. Here she provides examples from Psalms 22 and 88, Tamar, Elijah, Job, and the exile of Israel.

Foundations of Care

In the first chapter, Strickland uses two case studies, Abby and Charlotte, to demonstrate the need for both seeing the hurt and for drawing near to sufferers. She draws her theology for this chapter from God's abiding presence with Israel (31) and several examples of Jesus' presence with the disciples and others (32–35). She ends this chapter with several encouragements to churches to evaluate their approach to those in the pews who are suffering. At the end of each chapter, she provides a reflection section using the same format for each: (1) "Seeing the Sufferer," (2) "Entering Their World," and (3) "Engaging My Own Story."

For chapter 2, Strickland focuses on providing time for the sufferer by listening and lamenting. Especially strong is a section entitled "The Gospel for Those Who Suffer" in which she offers biblical principles concerning suffering such as (1) suffering is never wasted, and (2) our presence prepares

¹ One such example is the broad acceptance among believers of *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, by Bessel A. van der Kolk (New York: Penguin, 2014). Even secular authors have questioned his emphasis. For more, see Michael S. Scheeringa, *The Body Does Not Keep the Score: How Popular Beliefs About Trauma Are Wrong* (N.p.: Michael Scheeringa, 2024); Julia Shaw, *The Memory Illusion: Remembering, Forgetting and the Science of False Memory* (Toronto: Penguin Random House Canada, 2017); and Susan A. Clancy, *The Trauma Myth: The Truth About the Sexual Abuse of Children—and Its Aftermath* (New York: Basic, 2009). For biblical treatments, see, Francine Tan, "A Critical Evaluation of Bessel van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score*," *The Journal of Biblical Soul Care* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2023): 23–57, available at <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/essays/a-critical-evaluation-of-bessel-van-der-kolks-the-body-keeps-the-score>.

sufferers to hear gospel truths by “embodying” these truths as we speak them (45–47). She follows this section with good descriptions of how to offer our loving presence. Here she emphasizes listening, avoiding premature solutions, serving sufferers, enduring with them, and honoring God’s pace (49–53). One additional section stresses the need to “Remember our Mission” (52).

“Laying the Foundation for Effective Care” is the focus in chapter 3. This chapter provides helpful essentials for understanding the sufferer’s situation, including providing for safety issues (60–63). Additionally, this chapter alerts the counselor to potential physiological and spiritual issues (63–66), including self-injury and suicidal ideation (65). Strickland’s emphasis in this chapter is on laying the proper foundation through building trust, knowing the person well, being aware of interventions such as EMDR (69), and remaining humble and hopeful (67–72) before arriving at right answers (73). These foundational principles are working off the theology she previously addressed from the failures of Job’s friends in chapter 1.

Wounds of Trauma

Part 2 of Strickland’s book describes the wounds of trauma, beginning in chapter 4, the longest chapter, with a focus on the suffering of the body. Her stated purpose here is as follows: “Yet a large part of trauma is expressed physically. As we tend to its victims, we need to understand how God made us and how our bodies and souls interplay with each other” (78). This interaction is evident in this chapter when she addresses spiritual issues such as shame or anxiety as a person manifests them through his body. She covers a range of physical issues such as fatigue, tension, sleep problems, dissociation, digestive problems, and others (78–81). In the middle section she interacts with Scripture and cautions against over emphasizing either the spiritual or physical (83). For her final section, she provides a lengthy discussion on how trauma affects the body and brain (85–88), with the rest of the chapter devoted to how to care using Psalms 42–43 as the foundation (90–105).

In the remaining chapters of part 2, Strickland provides helpful expositions on the most common problems from trauma: shame (ch. 5), faith questions (ch. 6, one of the strongest chapters in my opinion), relational hypervigilance (ch. 7), reexperienced trauma (ch. 8), and avoidance (ch. 9). In each of these chapters, Strickland defines and explains the nature of the problems and then provides a “how to” section on helping sufferers. In many of these chapters she includes both helpful questions and principles that guide the counselor in helping the sufferer (115, 120–22, 144–45, 169, 189–92, 217–18, and 220). It is here that the biblical counselor will see the most prolific opportunities for repentance and growth in the suffering saint (223).

Hope of Restoration

The final two chapters comprise counsel for sufferers. In chapter 10, Strickland focuses on the broad theme of restoration by using the Book of Ezra for her theological foundations, returning to the concept of trauma as exile. Here her emphasis on worship is important (229–32), since the imperatives of Scripture flow from the nature and redemptive work of God in our lives through Christ. We are most receptive to changes God makes in us when we admire him most. Strickland offers practical

insights here, including gentle reminders that restoration takes time and patience and that God is the one who restores (237–38).

After establishing this foundation, in chapter 11 Strickland focuses on the role of the church community via two avenues—pastors and truth blended with compassion (246–48). Here she draws on the theology of Nehemiah 3 and several NT passages such as Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 2. She also challenges the church to be a community that both welcomes and aids in healing trauma sufferers. She explicates principles and questions here that contribute well to a church seeking to grow in this area of care (244–50).

Strickland concludes with an invitation to the wounded Christ in Isaiah 53. Here she reminds the reader that “our wounded Savior shows us that healing is not about forgetting, pretending, or moving on [all false assumptions this reviewer has encountered in counseling trauma]. It is not about becoming people who have never suffered. Healing is about being transformed—about being brought back into fellowship with our triune God” (255). This transformation she joins tightly to our union with Christ (256).

In the back matter, Strickland includes seven appendices on identifying trauma (267), a case study (269), a plan for distress (275), secondary trauma (281), exploitation and weaponization in trauma (285), empathy vs. enmeshment (291), and referring to medical professionals (297).

Strengths

Strickland has provided both a helpful breakdown of trauma and biblical responses to the struggles overall. Her use of Job in capturing the spiritual and physical dynamics is quite helpful. Her organization moves logically and systematically through the various issues one encounters. I found the faith questions (ch. 6) to be most helpful since, in my experience, these are some of the largest challenges a trauma sufferer faces, i.e., questions about faith, God, and one’s relationship to him. These strengths far outweigh the weaknesses, but the weaknesses require a call for both discernment and caution.

Weaknesses

While the gospel emphasis in Strickland’s conclusion was engaging and strong, I puzzled over why it would be her conclusion rather than her introduction. These strong emphases provide the necessary foundational hope for the sufferer that I believe should move forward in the counseling process. There is no greater hope for the individual than the redemptive presence of Christ in the life of the believer through the Spirit. I certainly understand the need for patience and pacing. It seems, however, Strickland would postpone the offering of hope until the counselor gains the trust of the individual. This claim is apparent when she stresses Jesus’ presence (a point I wholeheartedly promote) but seems to overlook the prophetic function of Jesus (34), since he was not only present in the storm but also challenged the disciples to greater trust (Mark 4:35–41).

In this section Strickland provides several examples of Jesus’ presence: Lazarus’ death, the Samaritan woman, the disciples in the storm, the healing of Bartimaeus, and the Upper Room

Discourse. But in each of these examples, Jesus also provided gentle correction and teaching, not just his presence. To be clear, I agree with Strickland's emphasis on Jesus' presence, including his intercessory work, as the source of great comfort in loss. The weakness I see is one of emphasis, since she acknowledges the need for instruction in later chapters. Strickland states, however, "Our role as helpers is not to *force premature hope* or spiritual growth on people but to talk patiently with them as they learn to trust again" (45, emphasis added). If I'm understanding her correctly, we are most comforting when we are present without teaching truth too soon. I agree that wisdom and tact are essential in this process, but I'm not sure how offering hope from the Scriptures can be premature. Isn't it the authority of the Word that provides the basis for the hope of his presence (Ps 130:5; Heb 13:5; 2 Pet 1:17–19)?

The second weakness is an overemphasis on the body. At the time of writing, this is the controversial issue of trauma counseling. Both secular clinicians and integrationists have placed a lot of eggs in the body basket. This emphasis has lured some biblical counselors the same direction. I appreciate Strickland's use of Psalm 42 as a theology of suffering, especially in connecting spiritual/emotional responses to what we see in the body. I agree with her assessment that there is a close connection between the body and spirit. But we should always remember that the body isn't in charge; it is the inner man that controls what our bodies are doing (Prov 4:23; Mark 7:14–23). Strickland writes, "When [sufferers'] minds and bodies are hijacked by past trauma, we want them to find refuge in the Lord so that they can come closer to experiencing the climactic, and most familiar words of Psalm 46: 'Be still, and know that I am God'" (v. 10). I understand what she means by this explanation, that is, sights, sounds, smells, etc., can trigger physical responses in sufferers. The problem, however, isn't the body but the beliefs the individual maintains that associate such elements with trauma even when trauma is no longer occurring. My goal in counseling the trauma sufferer is to disconnect their responses from the trauma through truth by targeting the person's beliefs. I suspect Strickland also shares that goal, but I believe her emphasis here places too much agency with trauma, resulting in some degree of physical determinism.

Related to this emphasis, Strickland spends several pages describing how trauma affects the various parts of the brain (86–88). Commendably, she admits that research is still young and that the data are suggestive rather than conclusive (86). Discussions of the effects of trauma on the brain, however, seem more intellectually stimulating rather than practical for counseling. Furthermore, this emphasis opens the door to a medical model for counseling trauma. In the end I say, even if these facts were true, how do we address these constituent parts of the brain? Are we certain that these parts of the brain control these responses? It seems a bit (no pun intended) like asking a computer what fragments of data are stored on which segments of the hard drive. The problem isn't where the data are stored but the nature of the data. In fairness, Strickland concludes this section with some implications for counseling (88). I assert, however, that we could better draw those conclusions from lament Psalms than from brain theory. The psalmists often struggle with their understanding of trauma, of the people who afflicted them, of the circumstances they face, overwhelming emotions, lack of trust in God and others, an incoherent timeline, etc. (see Ps 88, for example). God didn't include brain science for them to understand such struggles. He provided them, and us, with both his presence and life-sustaining

theology for their trauma and terrors. It is God's truth that renews the inner man, even while the outer man is wasting away (2 Cor 4:16).

Third, Strickland opens the door to secular and unproven therapies such as EMDR (69) and psychiatry (195, 298). There are two issues at stake in this discussion: We agree that true medical intervention is required when there are genuine organic problems, an issue that she addresses in more detail in Appendix G (297–300). Where we disagree is with unproven “medical” interventions such as EMDR or other treatments rooted in psychiatry and psychotherapy. We urge continuing to provide compassionate biblical counsel for ongoing spiritual roots, including mental and emotional needs. Biblical counseling strives for a more carefully nuanced position here.

There is much to commend in Strickland's work, but I have issued some notable cautions for biblical counselors regarding critical areas of concern. I believe her work would be much stronger if she began with a concentrated biblical and exegetical theology of suffering and trauma to lay the foundation for the praxis.

Bruce Meyer

Professor of Biblical Studies and Counseling | BJU Seminary

DeYoung, Kevin. *Daily Doctrine: A One-Year Guide to Systematic Theology*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2024. 373pp. + 14pp. (front matter) + 34pp. (back matter).

In his introduction, DeYoung relates his dream of writing a book such as *Daily Doctrine* ever since he was in college. This work reflects both his interest in Christian doctrine and the need to present a wide variety of theological topics in a format that can help “busy pastors, students, leaders, and laypeople.” The unique result is a blend of a systematic- and historical-theology textbook and *Our Daily Bread*—intended to be read as a devotional companion. With a daily schedule in mind, DeYoung anticipates the reality that many readers will face; rather than 365 entries, he has written 260 entries, leaving space for his busy readers to miss two days each week. In addition, he aims to make each entry manageable in length—just one to one-and-a-half pages.

DeYoung acknowledges that his unique blend may evoke criticism from some who think the work should address topics more thoroughly or from others who believe that he addresses topics in a way that is too deep for many readers. Nevertheless, DeYoung’s work provides a unique format that invites readers to a broad series of theological conversations, suited for everyone from the novice to an “old-hand.”

DeYoung works through the 260 entries in traditional systematic-theology categories, starting with preliminary issues and the doctrine of Scripture, then moving through the doctrines of God, man and sin, covenant theology, the person and work of Jesus Christ, salvation, the church, and eschatology. Within this framework, DeYoung addresses a wide array of topics, from long-standing issues of hermeneutics and theology to contemporary issues that might not have been addressed if the book had been written ten to twenty years ago.

As a Presbyterian minister, DeYoung naturally and openly writes from a covenantal and Reformed perspective. Most Christians will find common ground on many topics, however (e.g., inerrancy, the canon, justification, and the mission of the church). Further, since his goal is to help his reader think biblically, he provides a great deal of relevant Scripture within each topic, both in how terms are defined and in how the ideas are developed. Beyond this goal, DeYoung models a traditionally Calvinistic approach to organizing the topics and analyzing various doctrines through a Reformed lens. This approach allows him to introduce (or remind) his readers of the relevance of the development of doctrine throughout history; thus, he draws attention to the value of various creeds and catechisms on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, this approach will naturally divide his readers between those who read with anticipated agreement and those who expect to find areas of disagreement. Reformed believers will find succinct entries that introduce, define, and defend the Reformed view on topics such as the relationship between Israel and the church, the scope of the atonement, reprobation, and the recipients of baptism. Given the length of each entry, non-Reformed readers should not expect much treatment of non-Reformed perspectives on these topics, although DeYoung does at times anticipate and provide brief answers to arguments against Reformed positions.

The titles of the various entries vary from common theological terms (e.g., “Effectual Calling,” “Hypostatic Union,” “Millennial Views”), to longer descriptions (e.g., “The Newness of the New

Covenant,” “The Law and the Christian,” “Church Officers in the New Testament Church”), to questions (e.g., “Is Predestination Fair?” “Is Every Sin the Same in God’s Eyes?” “Does James Contradict Paul?”). Some entry titles demonstrate DeYoung’s desire to increase the theological vocabulary of some of his readers (e.g., “Aseity,” “*Perichoresis*,” “Middle Knowledge,” “*Berith* and *Diatheke*”). In these cases, DeYoung provides clear definitions, from either Scripture or from their historical use as appropriate. In such entries, readers will perhaps learn new terms for somewhat familiar concepts; in others, they will likely be introduced to entirely new concepts (with entirely new terms), depending on their theological background and knowledge.

Many entries deal with common theological topics that should unite orthodox believers across denominational lines. In some cases, however, he is silent on topics and terms while addressing key terms and passages that could easily have been addressed. His entries on Scripture—dealing with the topics of inspiration, inerrancy, and the canon—provide an excellent summary and defense of Scripture on these topics. Nevertheless, DeYoung provides no entries dealing with the preservation of Scripture or the reliability of its transmission. Given both the biblical data and the Bible’s history on these points, one or two entries on these topics would certainly remind the reader of the scriptural and historical defense of the reliability and authority of Scripture in these critical areas.

Similarly, DeYoung includes several entries on human origins. For day 63, he explains and defends the idea that the days of Genesis 3 are best understood as twenty-four-hour periods, and for day 64, he emphasizes the critical importance of Adam being an historical (rather than a mythological or merely literary) figure. These entries, along with some others surrounding it, provide a scriptural and rational basis for rejecting the basic tenets of theistic evolution, particularly attempts to make the theory fit within Scripture. However, DeYoung does not name evolution or theistic evolution in this section (and there are no entries for these terms in the index).

Despite omitting mention of some controversies, DeYoung provides some clear arguments in entries on contentious contemporary issues. On days 75 and 76, he deals directly and clearly with the biblical basis for recognizing two distinct genders (both in their distinctive bodies and roles) and marriage (as a permanent union whereby God intends the role of a wife to complement her husband). On day 77, he tackles the issue of transgenderism, drawing from Scripture and the previous two entries to conclude that “we do not have an inalienable right to do whatever we want with our physical selves,” applying this from how we attire ourselves to what we do with our God-given, biological differences.

In entry 179, DeYoung tackles the question of the “New Perspective on Paul,” acknowledging that while recent writers (James Dunn and N. T. Wright) have drawn proper attention to the “Jewishness of the New Testament,” they have nonetheless blurred key doctrines, particularly the basis for how God imputes Christ’s righteousness to sinners, both in the present and the future. On the topic of universalism (day 243), although he does not name any figure more recent than Origen, he is clearly addressing a present, forceful undermining of a clear biblical doctrine. Once he gets to annihilationism (day 244), he does identify contemporary advocates, including P. E. Hughes and John Stott. It is particularly in topics such as these that DeYoung’s appeal to historical doctrine comes through, albeit in ways that most Christians will agree with. In such cases, DeYoung argues, Christians

must stand with the “author of Christianity . . . in spite of selfish prejudices and appeals to human sentiment” (352).

In this vein, on days 191 through 195 DeYoung provides both an excellent summary of the doctrine of the church, dealing with the nature, unity, holiness, and catholicity of the church. He argues that the oneness of the church does not require fellowship with anyone who claims to be Christian, stating that “if we do not share ‘one faith’ with Mormons or liberals or Unitarians (and we do not), then we have no unity to maintain” (280). However, he omits any mention of how Christians, even within the Reformed tradition, have attempted to apply these principles of unity and holiness. In light of his appeals to historical doctrine in other areas, the omission is glaring. Even Martin Luther—despite being cited on a number of doctrinal issues—is not specifically credited with his critical protest against the heresies of the Roman Catholic Church. J. Gresham Machen likewise receives no mention despite being a clear historical example (within DeYoung’s own theological tradition) of delineating clear lines of fellowship between truth and error.

Further, DeYoung acknowledges the basis for such application in both moral and doctrinal arenas: “According to the apostle Paul, some factions—when the result of moral laxity or theological heterodoxy—can be an occasion for true Christians and true churches to stand apart from counterfeits (1 Cor 11:19)” (280). But other passages that could provide the basis for such actions (Gal 1:8–9; 2 Cor 6:1–7:1; 2 John 7–11) receive either little or no attention with regards to what a believer should do when he finds himself among professing believers who have chosen to violate the moral or doctrinal boundaries found in God’s Word.

The simplest approach to a work such as *Daily Doctrine* is to recognize what it attempts to accomplish rather than what it does not. If someone wants more in-depth treatment on topics, there are already many fine (and lengthy) works available. If someone wants a basic devotional, that space is similarly well-populated. Christians who want an introduction—or a review—on a wide variety of theological topics will benefit from many of the entries, although non-Reformed believers will quickly notice that the selection and treatment of topics reflect Reformed doctrine in soteriology and a covenantal approach to ecclesiology. (In this light, if someone from another theological perspective decided to produce a work uniquely for their own tradition within Protestant Christianity, DeYoung’s work provides a helpful template of topics for doing so).

DeYoung’s greatest strength in *Daily Doctrine* is his succinct biblical and historical treatment of a range of interesting theological and contemporary issues. The most notable weakness—perhaps inherent in its purpose—is that the work aims primarily for the head. Although some entries touch on matters of the heart, the work as a whole tends to omit or bypass practical implications and applications. A second edition that adds such material—while providing a succinct treatment of these topics, if that is possible—would increase this work’s value to any reader who wants to know God with his head and follow the Lord with his heart.

Ted Miller

Professor | School of Theology and Global Leadership, Bob Jones University

Eveson, Philip H. *Baptised with Heavenly Power: The Holy Spirit in the Teaching and Experience of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*. Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2025. 393pp. + 26pp. (back matter).

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was one of the leading evangelical voices of the twentieth century in the United Kingdom particularly but also around the world. The study of his views of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a fascinating but controversial part of his heritage.¹ Philip Eveson offers a careful and sympathetic overview of Lloyd-Jones's views, a study which one would probably not call "critical" but which is still honest in its approach. The structure of the book shows the author's concerns. The subtitle, *The Holy Spirit in the Teaching and Experience of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, reveals his concern for the role of experience both theologically and personally in understanding Lloyd-Jones's pneumatology. The work divides into four parts—"Theological Background," "Theology of the Holy Spirit," "Revival and the Holy Spirit," "Preaching and the Holy Spirit"—with major analysis coming in the last three sections.

There is much both enriching and informative about the book. The author helpfully explores Lloyd-Jones's Welsh background. Not only does he deal with Lloyd-Jones's personal biography, but he also provides a full discussion of the overall Welsh context going back to the Evangelical Awakening. Eveson demonstrates how this Welsh history is important in understanding the development of Lloyd-Jones's ideas. In addition, he provides two valuable appendices. The first is a previously unpublished address by Lloyd-Jones on Evan Roberts and the Welsh revival; this essay not only reveals aspects of Lloyd-Jones's approach to revival but also stands by itself as a useful introduction to Roberts and that awakening. The other appendix is a selection from a personal journal that Lloyd-Jones kept for a time that shows how his concerns about the Holy Spirit were far from merely academic but were the burden of his heart and soul.

Eveson addresses several concerns in this study. A key part of his argument, as odd as it sounds to those familiar with the Welsh preacher, is that Lloyd-Jones was genuinely Reformed. He answers charges that Lloyd-Jones's pneumatology put him outside the bounds of Reformed orthodoxy. The author shows how Lloyd-Jones's ideas are rooted in the approaches of some Puritans to the doctrines of the Spirit. He may not be typical of Reformed expositors on this point, but neither does he stand as unique. The greater question is whether Lloyd-Jones is biblical in his views, and that issue takes up a much larger portion of the book's discussion.

Eveson also stresses a concern with revival as a major component of Lloyd-Jones's theology. This topic is a natural extension of pneumatology, as the nature of the Holy Spirit's work is a major concern in discussing the nature—even validity—of revival. Lloyd-Jones in fact bemoaned the lack of the discussion of revival among theologians, with the exception of J. C. Ryle, James Buchanan, George

¹ One can start delving into this topic by reading Lloyd-Jones himself in *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996). For secondary studies other than Eveson's, see Michael Eaton, *Baptism with the Spirit: The Teaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1989), or my own briefer study, "Pentecostal Puritan? D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit," *Journal of Biblical Theology & Worldview* 5, no. 2 (2025): 41–60.

Smeaton, and of course Jonathan Edwards, who is likely the most prominent theologian in church history to address the theological nature and meaning of revival.

Of course, it is the details of Lloyd-Jones's view of the work of the Holy Spirit that take the central place in Eveson's discussion. The meaning of "baptism" of the Spirit is central to the analysis (cf. 145–46). Lloyd-Jones, for example, denied that Spirit baptism always referred to conversion, rejecting the idea that Christians already have all of the Holy Spirit they will ever possess and that their need is to surrender fully so that they can enjoy what they already have (193). Instead, he argued vigorously for particular experiences of baptism or fillings (the two terms seem interchangeable in Lloyd-Jones's thought), experiences that were not permanent and could be repeated.

Considering Lloyd-Jones's work as an exegete, it is no surprise that discussions of scriptural evidence take a central place in the discussion. Eveson surveys Lloyd-Jones's examination of relevant passages throughout the Bible, although unfortunately there is no Scripture index. One point of contention is the role of the Book of Acts. Are passages in Acts descriptive or prescriptive? Those opposed to Lloyd-Jones's approach to spiritual gifts tend to see references to Spirit baptism in Acts as simply Scripture's descriptions of events that happened in the first century. Lloyd-Jones argues that they are prescriptive, recording matters that are still normative for the church.

The place of experience in Lloyd-Jones's thought shows his view of assurance. He recognized the importance of views other than his own. Assurance may be a deduction from the promises of God or may be validated by the "tests of life" as in 1 John, the fruit of one's life providing evidence for assurance. But Lloyd-Jones believed the highest form of assurance was the direct testimony of the Spirit to the believer.

Some of Lloyd-Jones's arguments are less than convincing. He said that the reason the NT never urged people to be baptized in the Spirit was that believers were already evidently baptized with the Spirit. As to why John in his epistles used, in the words of Jason Meyer, "lower forms of assurance" based on matters such as the tests of life instead of experiences of the Spirit, John wrote for "a later generation of believers" whose fervor had cooled.

Eveson traces the outworking of these views first in Lloyd-Jones's approach to revival but even more in his preaching. Lloyd-Jones appears to model the classic evangelical understanding of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the church. One may not presume the Spirit's work in preaching but must seek the blessing of the Holy Spirit every time one enters a pulpit.

Eveson observes, "Lloyd-Jones's calling was not to write systematic or even biblical theology works on the Holy Spirit, preaching, and revival" (325). Eveson's treatment bears out this point. Lloyd-Jones often touched on the subject of the Holy Spirit but not in a progressively structured manner. Rather as the occasion arose, such as when pneumatology related to a passage he was expositing or when he was discussing historical manifestations of revival, he delved into the topic. I wonder whether this tendency could be a source of confusion. To some extent readers must construct a "systematic theology" of Lloyd-Jones's pneumatology on their own.

Of course, every study will leave some matters for further consideration. Does Lloyd-Jones's stress on revival raise questions about the value of the regular means of grace? Eveson's discussion on 217 at least seems to refute or modify that criticism. What about Lloyd-Jones's apparent diminishing of the

importance of objective evidences of assurance? Was he simply correcting those who avoid subjective approaches because they seem too “Pentecostal,” or did he reduce the value of such evidences?

Certainly, on the whole Eveson’s book provokes thought on the subject of Lloyd-Jones’s views on pneumatology and their ramifications. Furthermore, the work’s tone makes it not only historical informative but also edifying.

Mark Sidwell

Professor, Division of History, Government, and Social Science (retired) | Bob Jones University

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Mere Christian Hermeneutics: Transfiguring What It Means to Read the Bible Theologically*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2024. 424pp. + 52pp. (back matter).

Few books in evangelical biblical studies can be called a magnum opus, as this book can; few raise readerly expectations to a fever pitch, as this book did; even fewer satisfy those expectations—as, indeed, this book did not.

Those expectations came in part through the promise in the title: Kevin Vanhoozer, the great hermeneutician, was going to deliver to serious believing readers of Scripture a *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, a hallway where the various denominations and reading cultures (more on that term in a moment) who read Scripture might find some hermeneutical unity amidst our never-ending theological cacophony. “I argue,” he says, “that interpreters need to leave their interpretive silos and mingle in the hall to converse with those who read the Bible differently” (xxi). He was going to accomplish this feat via the method in his subtitle: *Transfiguring What It Means to Read the Bible Theologically*. And as any reader of Vanhoozer knows, he was going to use verbal panache unlike that of any other writer. This humble reviewer was very, very eager to read this book.

What came when the volume was delivered was a wide-ranging read of nearly 400 pages. A 2,000-word review must content itself with the high points. And the low points. There were, for this reader, two key promises Vanhoozer made that he failed to fulfill, two expectations which were left unsatisfied. I will discuss these before offering sincere praise for this incredibly stimulating book.

First, Vanhoozer promises to rescue the reputation of the fathers as careful readers of Scripture. This is, admittedly, not an explicit promise but rather a clear implication of the rhetorical structure of the work. Vanhoozer, a leader in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement, brilliantly lays bare the two “reading cultures” that are often found fighting in the mere Christian hallway rather than working together: biblical studies and theology. Each of these reading cultures (one thinks of Stanley Fish’s “interpretive communities”) has its own rules and expectations for the hermeneutical task; “each culture devalues or perhaps dismisses the contribution of the other” (50).

Can the two be unified? Vanhoozer says that his own “transfiguring interpretation,” his “grammatical-eschatological exegesis,” is “shorthand for the attempt to combine scholarly exegesis, with its philological attention to the letter, and spiritual interpretation, with its concern for reading in such a way that readers understand in ways that conform them to the image of Christ” (25). Vanhoozer continues (25):

What earlier generations called the spiritual sense is, according to the view set forth here, the “transfigural” sense, namely, the glory of the literal sense. To see Christ in the letter is not to see something “other” in the text, as in “allegorical” interpretation; Rather, it is to see “how much more” there is to the literal referent. Transfigural interpretation stands for the whole hermeneutical process of glorifying the biblical letter for the sake of the reader’s glorification.

Perhaps Vanhoozer did not intend this, but his subsequent forays into precritical interpretations and his regular reminders that these earlier readers brought a better frame of reference than so many of us moderns, a reference beyond Charles Taylor’s “immanent frame”—all of this led me to expect a

defense of at least some of the fathers' allegorizations. Vanhoozer does helpfully point out that "even Origen distinguished between proper and improper figural exegesis" (166). Augustine, too, had hermeneutical controls. "Mere Christian readers have always worked with some such distinction," Vanhoozer says (166).

But this promise remained unfulfilled for me. I still react to far too many comments in InterVarsity's valuable Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture with the very syllables Vanhoozer uses to describe me: "Nothing bothers seriously literal interpreters more than the arbitrary lists of correspondences that allegorical interpretation apparently licenses ('This means *whaaat?*')" (165). I waited the length of the book to be told what I was missing; I highlighted countless lines full of wisdom, but I did not finally come to a decidedly positive view of the fourfold sense or of ancient Christian allegoristic practices.

Second, Vanhoozer promises to reveal the transfiguration as a kind of hermeneutical key to the "grammatical-eschatological exegesis" he argues for in the text. He makes numerous provocative and insightful connections between the light of Christ's face and the task of reading the Bible; there is a highly pleasing amount of clever wordplay regarding the common "light" metaphor in Scripture. I agree that Jesus' transfiguration showed off the truth of what he was all the time (268), much as moments of illumination while reading God's word only reveal light that was already being shed on our paths whether we saw it or not.

But Vanhoozer raises an expectation that Jesus' transfiguration would unlock all of Scripture. "In looking back to the Law and the Prophets, and forward to Jesus' exaltation, the transfiguration is an interpretive crux of the gospel narratives" (267). I wrote in the margin: "Really?" I admit that Vanhoozer brings forth stimulating quotations in which other writers have seen unexplored depths in the important events at Mount Tabor that all three Synoptics relate (Matt 17 | Mark 9 | Luke 9). But I prefer to see the passage as a profound illustration (note the "lustre" in the middle of that word) of what grammatical-eschatological exegesis can and should do, not a guide for how to do it.

Now, I am eager to agree with Vanhoozer when he says that we ought to engage in interpretation that "starts with the letter of the text and with the way the authors, human and divine, make the words run"—but does not stop there. Such exegesis "gives a thick description of the Bible's literal sense" (179) by reminding us that the "figures" in Scripture have ultimate eschatological referents. The words run to an end point: that God—in Christ, through the Spirit—may be all in all. I agree that the OT prophets could know the sense of what they were saying without necessarily knowing the referents. Vanhoozer sees in Isaiah's Servant Songs, for example, not a *sensus plenior* (a fuller sense) but a *referens plenior* (137) and a *sensus splendidior* (269)—a fuller referent and a "shining sense," namely Jesus Christ. But I found concrete specifics to be somewhat lacking in Vanhoozer's book. Granted, we should read the OT in the light of Christ. And the *sensus literalis* of a divine-human text can include eschatological referents, a spiritual sense, because God can mean more than his inspired writers do. But what makes for bad figural readings? This was left less than fully clear.

The major example of good figural reading that Vanhoozer adduces—at the very end of the book—felt like low-hanging fruit. It was the Song of Songs. But what about the Minor Prophets?

What about Genesis 3:15? Vanhoozer offers helpful categories for understanding these passages but little guidance for how to choose which categories apply.

I struggled to wrap my mind around this book as a whole. Academic reviewers are not supposed to admit such weakness, but I choose to say it this way rather than to criticize Vanhoozer for somehow failing—because I have immense respect for him. *Mere Christian Hermeneutics* is bursting with insight and quotable lines. Because I cannot with honesty point to a clear through-line, I will instead finish this review by simply noting individual instances of insight I appreciated. I will mention five out of literally hundreds. This is an experience I have had with several of Vanhoozer's books: the sum of the parts adds up to more than the whole.

First, Vanhoozer's concept of "answerability" accords well with the morality of knowledge I have already come to see in Jesus' rhetorical question to the Pharisees, "Have you not read . . . ?" Christians are the New Covenant people; when God addresses us in Scripture, we are accountable to respond as young Samuel did: "Speak Lord, for your servant hears."

Right reading is a [here Vanhoozer quotes Chretien] "process that requires a particular attention, vigilance, and availability." These are not steps in a method but interpretive virtues: dispositions of the mind and heart that arise from a deep desire for understanding and for doing justice to the voice of the author, an author. No single method can guarantee right reading. Right reading requires right-hearted readers. (18–19)

Like his apparent ally, Iain Provan, Vanhoozer calls for "right readers reading rightly." Good interpretation arises from desire, from love.

Second, Vanhoozer makes more brilliant uses of C. S. Lewis than simply echoing his famous book title (itself an echo of a line from Puritan Richard Baxter). Vanhoozer writes, with clear allusion to Lewis's *An Experiment in Criticism*, "Instead of judging 'right readers' or 'right readings' on the basis of the critical methods they use, I propose *judging the rightness of critical methods by the kind of theological readings, readers, and reading cultures they beget*" (5). This point is profound, and it is (I judge) empirically observable in the various Christian communions that Vanhoozer hopes to help bring together through his work. I cannot say that Catholicism and Orthodoxy hold no appeal—clearly, many intelligent people with apparently sincere religious faith find each compelling. And Reformation Protestantism has plenty of flaws, of whom I am chief. But truly evangelical reading methods have produced better Bible-reading cultures than those of Catholicism and Orthodoxy. This feels indisputable to me.

Third, and following immediately on from the previous point, I definitely feel the tension between the two reading communities of biblical studies and theology, and it was helpful to have this tension named—and to have a solution described for me: "I define a *bad* exegetical method as one that forbids, forestalls, or frustrates any theological reading of the Bible, and a *good* exegetical method as one that is open to, facilitates, or necessitates some kind of theological reading" (5). Reading Vanhoozer reminded me to believe that if Scripture cannot be broken, neither can good theology. He pushed me to connect my examination of the biblical trees to the synthesis of the theological forest, and vice versa.

Fourth, Vanhoozer has picked up—perhaps due to his attention to postmodern theorists—some of the cast of mind of Stanley Fish, mentioned above; and one very Fishian point I found highly provocative and insightful came in a quotation Vanhoozer gives about typology and allegory. Vanhoozer quotes Peter Martens in a journal article on that topic: “The emerging consensus is that ‘typology and allegory are *competing* forms of non-literal exegesis, the former the successful variety, the latter its unsuccessful, non-literal twin” (163). This helpfully clarified my still-in-process feelings about the typological interpretations of influential (and clearly very knowledgeable and godly) contemporary exegetes such as Jim Hamilton and Mitchell Chase, both of Southern Seminary. Fish would observe that “typology” is not a neutral category that “sits above the fray, monitoring its progress and keeping the combatants honest.” No, typology is “right there in the middle of the fray, an object of contest that will enable those who capture it to parade their virtue at the easy expense of their opponents: we’re for [Christological interpretation] and you are for [unfettered hermeneutical flights of fancy].”¹ I believe in the existence of OT types and NT antitypes; it is simply helpful to be reminded that the line between typology and allegory is both blurry and contested.

Fifth and finally, I believe I will from now on style myself a “grammatical-eschatological” interpreter. As with Vanhoozer’s provocative self-designation—one I share—of “reformed catholic” (note the lower-case *c*!), Vanhoozer’s “grammatical-eschatological exegesis” is a playful and memorable and counter-intuitive pointer to important truths. I am not stuck in Taylor’s immanent frame or Schaeffer’s lower story. Though it is true that the Bible records the historical intentions of real writers in history who used linguistic forms accessible through historical study, and though it is true that a major aim of my interpretation is to read the Bible as it was read by its intended (historical) readers, the Bible is divine address that can and must be read in light of the future Trinitarian glories to which it has always pointed. Some people read the Bible and come away with their faces dulled by over-attention to historical tabulation: *So and so begat so and so, who begat so and so; yawn*. But I wish to come away from the Bible with my face shining like Moses’, shining like someone who has beheld the glory of God in the face of Christ, and who is changed into that same image from glory to glory.

Kevin Vanhoozer is an expert at prolegomena, a genre of theological writing I love. I do think readers need his words to run further: we need some *legomena*. I would like to see Vanhoozer cash out his reading strategies with more exegesis. But till that day, I remain grateful for his work.

A small postscript about Vanhoozer’s witticisms: the clever references that only certain people will get, the fascination with metaphor and wordplay—these feel genuine to me, and not ostentatious. They let the reader into the workings of a mind that delights in God’s good gifts of allusion and paronomasia. I commend Vanhoozer for writing in this way and his editors for letting him.

Mark Ward

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¹ Stanley Fish, *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 16 (interpolations my own).