

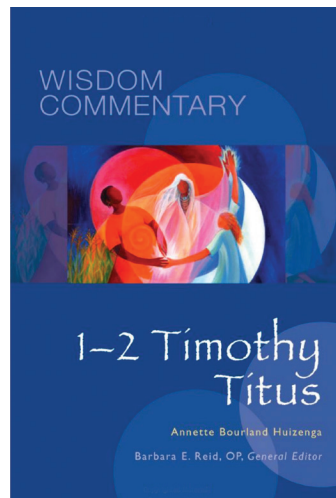


# Book Reviews

April 2018

Section Editors: Craig Nesson, Ralph Klein, Troy Troftgruben

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## **1-2 Timothy, Titus.**

By Annette Bourland Huizenga. *Wisdom Commentary*, Vol. 53. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8146-8203-6. lii & 207 pages. Cloth. \$39.95.

Annette Bourland Huizenga's new commentary on the Pastoral Letters is a part of the Wisdom Commentary series

(General Editor, Barbara Reid). Huizenga is Assistant Dean and Associate Professor of New Testament at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

Huizenga organizes the commentary in a straightforward way: introductory chapter subtitled "Gendered Letters" (xli–lii), comments on each chapter of the three letters (1–180), and a brief conclusion (181–184) followed by a bibliography and both scriptural and subject indices. In her introduction, the author shares conclusions about the Pastoral Letters, derived from careful study of the Greek text, comparison with the letters reliably attributed to Paul, and reading of secondary literature. Employing a hermeneutic of suspicion, Huizenga argues that 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are most likely written pseudonymously about 100 C.E. by the same author, who as a well-educated male viewed himself "as a teacher in the Pauline tradition, an authoritative one, who could 'correctly' convey Paul's instructions in the proper form and style" (xlix).

Huizenga notes that pseudonymous writings were a well-known phenomenon in the ancient world and that moreover these three letters attributed to Paul are part of the New Testament canon. This presents a dilemma for interpreting these texts faithfully and honestly, given the pseudonymous writer's first-century patriarchal attitudes toward gender and topics such as slavery. Huizenga asserts, "The author of the Pastorals views God as 'Father,' the patriarchal head-of-a-very-large-household, so that the idea of 'God's household' functions as the ground of

a practical theology that decrees every 'family member' ought to take up their subordinated position in relation to this father and master God and after that to God's designated male leaders." (xlii). Repeatedly the Pastorals attack false teaching that is corrupting believers and, as an antidote, refer to the "sound" or "healthy" teaching (Gr. *hygiainē didaskalia*) in which Timothy and Titus are to instruct their faith-communities. An integral element to this "sound teaching" concerns proper order and leadership within the church-communities, made explicit in the patriarchal "household codes" known and used in the ancient world.

The most valuable portions of the commentary are its full-throated consideration of the texts dealing with gender and slavery, which in recent decades have become increasingly problematic for many readers. For example, pages 15–30 provide a thorough treatment of 1 Tim 2:8–15, where the author of the Pastorals instructs women about their behavior and attire and includes the phrase "saved through child-bearing" (2:15). Huizenga incorporates short segments labeled "Translation Matters" to discuss translational issues, and she helpfully features major excerpts from other interpreters (in this instance, those from Elsa Tamez and Eh Tar Gay). In this case, she also lists considerable bibliographical references to scholars' interpretive efforts on this contentious text (see footnote 10, p. 24). Most crucially, Huizenga explores fairly the patriarchal "logic," including its gender-specific claim about salvation in that Roman context around 100 C.E., which makes the text understandable, if not valid today. This detailed contextual and interpretive work is most useful for addressing the hermeneutical issues that encourage some churches to employ this text to justify the prohibition of women holding office in congregations.

Huizenga treats passages on "slaves" with equal thoroughness. Included in her comments are extensive essays, one on 1 Tim 6:1–2 titled "An Interpretive Essay: Reflections on Engaging This Teaching Today" (73–87), and one on Titus 2:9–10 titled "Interpretive Essay: Slaves and Masters Living Together" (153–168). She is keenly aware of the effects that uncritical readings of these texts have exercised on black people (just like those regarding women). Such interpretations have left their painful trail of abusive and unhappy outcomes in the history of the church and larger society.

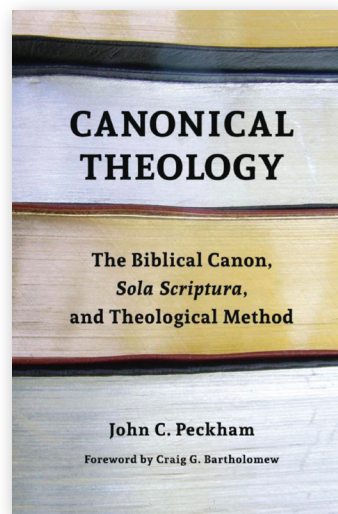
I highly recommend this commentary with its accessible format to those teaching and learning in a seminary or university context, as well as pastors who are studying and preaching texts in the Pastorals. Huizenga notes the passages selected for use in the Revised Common Lectionary. Sections of this commentary are certainly usable for a study of troubling texts with lay people.

A shortcoming of the commentary for some users might be its rather terse treatment of certain passages (e.g., in 2 Tim 2:17b–18 the reference to two men "who have swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place," and in 2 Tim 3:16 the oft-quoted assertion that "All scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correc-



tion, and for training in righteousness”). But as Barbara Reid’s introduction emphasizes, the *Wisdom Commentary* series allows us to hear and understand oft-misapplied texts through the sensitivities of a feminist lens.

James L. Bailey  
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***Canonical Theology:  
The Biblical Canon,  
Sola Scriptura, and  
Theological Method.***

By John C. Peckham.  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7330-9. 309 pages. Paper. \$35.00.

In *Canonical Theology*, John C. Peckham successfully argues for a nuanced canonical methodology that fits between

a reductionist *sola scriptura* model (in which Scripture requires no interpretation) and a communitarian model (in which the community drives interpretation and extra-biblical traditions are awarded a prominent seat at the epistemological table). To this end, Peckham defines the Canon as those writings that are “intrinsically canonical” by virtue of divine action. He then offers Christ as a witness to the Canon’s intrinsic value and argues that sources, consistency, and self-authentication are subsidiary proofs of the Scripture’s special nature. This particular discussion limits the scope of Peckham’s intended audience to those who already concede a relatively high view of Scripture and are seeking to employ it in building good theology.

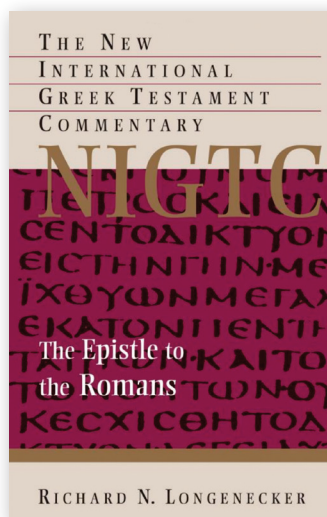
After making his case for intrinsic canonicity, Peckham demonstrates how this understanding of Scripture is inconsistent with communitarian approaches. Not only do such approaches run the risk of rejecting/undermining divinely appointed authorities (prophetic apostolic, etc.), Peckham argues that communitarian methodology in general fails to explain how any specific community can function as a reputable arbiter of interpretation. In spite of his criticism, Peckham is fair to these views and adequately distills their shared proclivities: a turn toward a community-determined extracanonical normative interpretive arbiter or consensus, a recognition of the failure of modernity and the corresponding postmodern milieu, and a tendency to ground doctrine in community and/or tradition. Peckham even commends these approaches for exposing the problem of interpretive isolation and advancing healthy correctives in lieu of the demise of classical foundationalism. However, he also asks these methods a question they are not prepared to answer—“Which/whose rule of faith is worthy to define what/what isn’t

an appropriate interpretation of the Scriptures?”

Thankfully, Peckham’s method is able to answer this inquiry. He exalts the Canon itself and the Triune God thereof as the rule of faith *par excellence*. Not only is this position consistent with what the Bible says about itself, it is suitable given how the Canon has historically served as the least common denominator for the church. Therefore, while Peckham claims that communitarians cannot articulate a compelling guiding rule of faith, he argues that the Canon itself, properly understood, is not only able to satisfy this need, it already has in various socio-historical localizations.

In the remainder of the work, Peckham endorses his approach to redeem a more robust understanding of *Sola Scriptura* and provides an illustration of how this applies to both a particular theological consideration (the Trinity) and systematic theology in general. Peckham’s methodology is as careful as it is effective and his discussion is a welcome elucidation of a growing canonical trend in conservative theology today.

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***The Epistle to the Romans.*** The New International Greek Testament Commentary. By Richard N. Longenecker. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8028-2448-6. lxxvii & 1140 pages. Cloth. \$ 80.00.

Richard Longenecker has reproduced a massive commentary on Romans. At 1140 pages, it is exactly the length of Robert Jewett’s *Hermeneia* series commentary (2006)! Professor Longenecker organizes each section the same: translation, textual notes, form/structure/setting, exegetical comments, biblical theology, and contextualization for today. In honor of Longenecker’s preference for numbered lists, I will list four contributions and four limitations of his commentary.

1. Longenecker’s discussions of form, structure, and setting present his most unique observations. At the macro level, he identifies 5:1–8:39 as the “spiritual gift” Paul mentions in 1:11; in 2:16 and 16:25 he also calls those chapters “my gospel.” Chapters 1–4 and 9–11, with their frequent use of Old Testament quotations, express the Jewish-Christian theology of the Roman believers (whether Jew or Gentile), with which Paul agrees. Chapters 5–8, on the other hand, are the center of the letter and



a summary of the gospel he has been preaching to Gentiles. This explains the paucity in those chapters of Old Testament references and themes such as justification. An important question is whether Longenecker adequately engages 5:1 (“therefore, having been justified by faith”), which pulls in previous themes as the foundation for chapters 5–8. Further, in chapters 5–8 Paul utilizes sin, Adam, Moses, and the law—all Jewish themes. At the micro level, Longenecker’s observations on the form and structure of smaller sections constitute a gold mine of information.

2. Another substantial contribution is attention to text-critical problems. His use of patristic authors is remarkably consistent and helpful.

3. Longenecker is in constant dialogue with previous students of Romans, frequently reviewing the history of an interpretive argument. He regularly engages the church fathers, Luther, Calvin, and nineteenth and twentieth century commentators.

4. As one would anticipate, given the series, the commentary delves into Greek matters, with detailed attention especially to adverbs, particles, and conjunctions.

However, the commentary also has major limitations.

1. It is frustratingly uneven. While 724 pages are dedicated to chapters 1–8, only 322 pages deal with chapters 9–16. Some passages are assigned many pages, and there are several excellent excursions (e.g., on the righteousness of God). Other passages are discussed quite briefly, and many key terms pass without comment. Especially striking is the lack of attention to the word *flesh*, which results in an unfortunate anthropological dualism. The exegeses of 6:1–14 and 10:14–17 are prime examples of what is missing in depth.

2. The commentary’s scholarship is dated. It uses the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Nestle text, not the 28<sup>th</sup>, and it utilizes the 1957 Bauer lexicon rather than the 2000 revision. Although the surveys of interpretation contribute much, they result in reliance on older scholarship, with heavy dependence on Sanday and Headlam (1895) and Cranfield (1979). Commentaries from the 1930s and 1950s are treated as though they are new. The list of current scholars who are ignored or mentioned rarely includes Das, Hultgren, Lampe, Oakes, N. Elliott, Esler, and Wright. The material on same-sex relationships—mis-labeled as a discussion of homosexuality—is woefully anachronistic and shows little engagement with the debate or linguistic precision of recent decades.

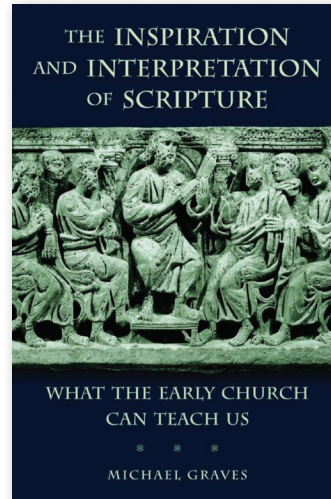
3. The commentary is repetitious. Often the biblical theology and contextualization discussions say virtually the same thing.

4. The author states value judgments that may not be appropriate in a commentary. I am uneasy with terms such as “the better rabbis of Judaism (or of Paul’s day).” What are the criteria for that evaluation? But I am most bothered by the constant language of “truly Christian thought,” “truly Christian living,” “truly Christian biblical theology,” and the like. It points to an unstated agenda with judgmental implications.

The bottom line is I am unable to give an unqualified rec-

ommendation. The book is a good resource for structure and form criticism, but the unevenness of the exegesis means that, for me, the book would best be used as a supplement to the commentaries produced by Jewett and Hultgren.

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*The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture: What the Early Church Can Teach Us.* By Michael Graves. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6963-0. viii & 201 pages. Paper. \$24.00.

Michael Graves has been on the faculty at Wheaton College (Illinois)

since 2004 and serves as Armerding Professor of Biblical Studies. In his introduction to *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture*, Graves states his aim succinctly: “to describe what Christians in the first five centuries of the church believed about the inspiration of Scripture” (2). Further, he seeks to describe the “entailments” (i.e., consequences of belief) of this doctrine of interpretation for these early church fathers.

The introduction describes briefly the main figures whose works Graves consults, subdivided by centuries (12–15). The book’s organization is thematic, clustering by concept entailments of biblical inspiration into five clusters, each a chapter with several subsections: Usefulness, Spiritual and Supernatural Dimension, Mode of Expression, Historicity and Factuality, and Agreement with Truth. One of the major strengths of Graves’s treatment is his use of plentiful and intriguing examples of patristic interpretation. He does not make claims *about* early church interpretations of Scripture, but *shows* how particular interpretive impulses played out in light of specific biblical passages. This provides color and assists the reader’s sense of time, place, and argumentation of our ancient interpretive guides throughout the book.

In chapter two, on the “Usefulness” of Scripture, Graves addresses the foundational concept of early church interpretation: namely, that God intends Scriptures to be used for the benefit of humanity. As the chapter shows, the “benefits” ancient interpreters expected in Scripture are often visible by the questions they asked of it. Graves demonstrates that those questions were primarily theological, moral, and ritual. He includes a subsection on the perceptions that early Christians held, namely



that no details in the Bible, no matter how minor, were wasted: all may be read beneficially. This is one piece that illustrates how differently the same impulse for noticing details, by both ancient and modern Christians, may be undertaken in widely varied ways and with impressively different results (22–26).

Chapters three through six continue in like fashion, each on thematically connected beliefs about Scripture. In each section, the author includes a wide range of examples from early church fathers and an assessment regarding what should be reclaimed from our patristic forebears and what the passage of time has rightly discarded.

In chapter three, Graves discusses the widespread ancient use of allegorical interpretation, which sought to uncover the spiritual or supernatural dimension of Scripture's message. Modern biblical scholarship has been concerned with allegorical methods—and the interpreters' likelihood of “reading into” the texts—while Graves highlights the ancient conviction that divinely inspired texts (problematic ones and not) require divine intervention to make sense of them. As Graves points out, the humility repeatedly evident in patristic interpreters' professed dependence on God in interpreting confounds modern readers' easy dismissals and assumptions of different motives. Graves finds a relevant lesson in this for all who study biblical texts in their original contexts: “[V]irtues such as humility, patience, and charity in scholarship are important for understanding even the literal sense of Scripture” (48). He also notes commonalities between modern Christian reception of Scripture—often with prayer and an eye to application—and ancient methods that might otherwise seem foreign. A further help in that chapter is a series of definitions regarding ancient interpretive methods (e.g., “tropology” or “anagogy”) (52–53).

Chapter four (on Scripture's “Mode of Expression”) names more ideas that confront the modern interpreter with the “foreignness” of early church interpretation. Ancient thoughts on etymological significance, for instance, go beyond mere interest in word meanings (65–70). Most striking is the ancient conviction that divine communication should be obscure and mysterious, while modern readers typically expect the message of Scripture to be comprehensible and plain. Graves explains well just what a difference this makes in our approaches to Scripture (64–65).

The fifth chapter (on “Historicity and Factuality”) couples ancient interpretive inclinations toward allegory with their commitment to the factual truth of Scripture—whether historical, philosophical, or scientific. The wide variety of approaches, particularly to apparent contradictions within Scripture, is instructive for modern intra-Christian debates. One particularly helpful section introduces how early church fathers dealt with the Bible's encounter with “pagan truth.” Modern Christians may be satisfied with the pithy saying, “All truth is God's truth.” But Justin Martyr's explanation takes an insightfully christological turn, crediting the divine *Logos* as the source of truth beyond the boundaries of Christianity (94–95, 99).

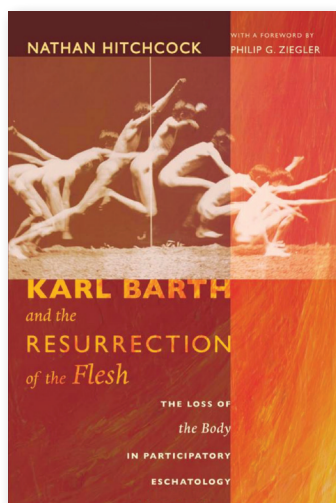
In chapter six (“Agreement with Truth”), Graves addresses

how early Christian thinkers maintained the absolute truthfulness of Scripture in light of apparent contradictions between texts or in things that seem to cast God in a bad light (e.g., commanding genocide). The topic allows for in-depth comparison between early Christian interpreters who took different approaches on these issues. For example, Graves presents Jerome (following Origen) and Augustine in a face-off over whether Scripture can ever deceive human beings, particularly in light of Paul's reported conflict with Peter in Galatians 2 (112–116). For another example, Irenaeus and Augustine differed on the nature and function of the Rule of Faith (an external summary of central tenets of Christianity) (117–122). In examples such as these, Graves deftly leads the reader through the diverging logics of each author and, in doing so, trains us well how to read alongside these ancient interpreters. This chapter makes for a fitting culmination to what the book has been doing subtly all along.

In his concluding chapter, Graves makes two important observations about Scripture in early Christian interpretation. First, although each interpreter surveyed had a “high” view of inspiration, there was wide variation regarding which beliefs were understood to capture best a Christian view of Scripture. Second, “some notions associated with inspiration in antiquity are no longer fully plausible from a modern standpoint” (131). Thus, attempts to recapture or claim absolute coherence with patristic interpretations of Scripture are impossible. Graves then launches a challenge to modern interpretation's near-exclusive focus on interpreting Scripture on a literal or historical level: to complement such reading by learning from early Christians to read more on the “spiritual” level. Graves identifies four ancient ideas of inspiration that would serve modern readers well: (1) a focus on Jesus; (2) reading within church community and tradition; (3) seeking a coherent (or “worthy”) theological portrait of God; and (4) humbly relying on divine illumination in the task of interpretation (136–137). He concludes by sketching out some contemporary applications to interpretation and to the authority of Scripture that grow from these principles.

Throughout his book, Graves demonstrates the historical embeddedness of these patristic interpreters and thereby recognizes our own—quite different—historical contexts. At the same time, he suggests compellingly that we modern readers of Scripture have something to learn from our ancient counterparts, whose faithful thoughtfulness and closer proximity to Scripture lend their insights credence. Certainly, we can learn more about ourselves and our allegiances in interpretation through this engagement. The readability, theological sensitivity, suggestions for application, and provocative examples of Graves's *Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture* make it highly recommended for pastors and for use in the Biblical Studies classroom.

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***Karl Barth and the Resurrection of the Flesh: the Loss of the Body in Participatory Eschatology.*** By Nathan Hitchcock. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-6109-7802-6. xvi & 209 pages. Paper. \$27.00.

The author investigates the resurrection of the flesh as eternalization of the

delimited human life in the theology of Karl Barth. Human flesh is not abolished by eternity but transformed into the incorruptible. Jesus Christ's own resurrection is the Father's eternalizing verdict through which Barth's actualized ontology articulates human finitude and eternal life only through the gift of eternity from God (xiii). The author's notion of actualism is grounded in the election of Jesus Christ, which denotes that one's being can be identified with the extent of one's actions. In identification between God's eternal being and the act of Jesus' own finite history, epistemology affirms the anthropological actualism in which the human being is lifted into God's being by grace (97, 103). Nonetheless, theological actualism in the Barthian sense is not merely comprehended in the historical act of Jesus (the economic Trinity) but grounded in God's free act of grace (the immanent Trinity).

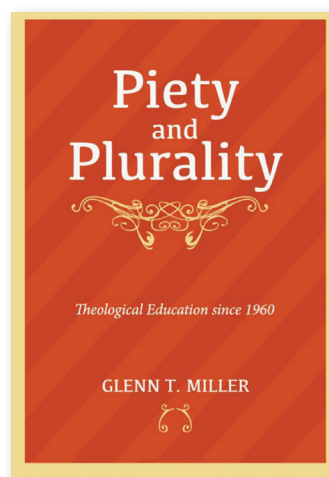
Barth defines God as the One who loves in freedom. Accordingly, eternity is defined in terms of pre-temporality, supra (co)-temporality, and post-temporality, as in perichoretic unity. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the physical (or natural) death (that is, the first death) is interpreted as a harmless sign of judgment rather than a curse that is negated by the Savior. The resurrection after death is "the direct vision of God," which is still in expectation of Jesus' second coming and the consummation of the world. For Barth the presentative reality of eschatology or eternal life stands in relation to a chiliastically oriented ethics (*Fiat Justitia*) toward the coming reality of eschatology at the final parousia. The de-eschatologizing of Christianity is met with a vengeance (III/2: 511).

The author's argument for pantheism is intriguing and controversial, since Barth's doctrine of election has a pantheistic thrust or better understood, panchristism in terms of an *assumptio carnis* in collective sense (167). Nevertheless, Barth's reflection of "God all in all" refers to the free mystery of the divine preservation rather than closer to the family of pantheists. In the final revelation of Jesus Christ, God will be seen by the creature who will not cease to be distinct from God (III/3: 86). The author criticizes Barth's conflation of the immediate

and final states through the resurrection of flesh at death in the sense of eternalization. But those in the bliss of resurrection or eternal life are, for Barth, still in the immediate state and in hope for Christ's final return, which involves the doctrine of the last judgment, in the sense of a purifying judgment (IV/3.2: 922). Barth's reflection of death is *terminus a quo* for the second coming of Jesus Christ (*terminus a quem*), in which the resurrection of the flesh occurs in the sense of the general resurrection and eternal life in eternal light. Those who have already been raised from the dead before Christ's final return will still go through the righteousness of his grace (IV/3.2: 922). The author addresses the Gordian knot in Barth's reflection of resurrection of the flesh with reference to his eschatology and theology of the final consummation. This book is well-written and structured with conceptual clarity, making a contribution to the interpretation of Barth's theology of death, resurrection, and eschatology.

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***Piety and Plurality: Theological Education since 1960.*** By Glenn T. Miller. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-6256-4184-7. xix & 386 pages. Paper. \$47.00.

This volume in Glenn Miller's trilogy on North American theological education completes his project with erudition and insight. Whereas the two previous books focused on (1) the colonial and nineteenth-century pursuit to organize confessional traditions around an intellectually credible pattern of theological education and (2) the demands placed on theological education by new forms of biblical interpretation and increasing professionalism, this contribution explores the varied landscape of theological education at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. The term "plurality" indicates the author's assessment of the range of issues characterizing our own times. The only constant from beginning to end of Miller's three-volume study has been the stress of financial viability, a theme which greatly informs the book's conclusion as theological schools seek to navigate their way between two authorities, church and higher education.

The author characterizes the model at the onset of the 1960s as promoting professionalism in ministry. The social unrest that emerged in that decade led to unprecedented efforts to incorporate student voices and wide-ranging curriculum experiments.



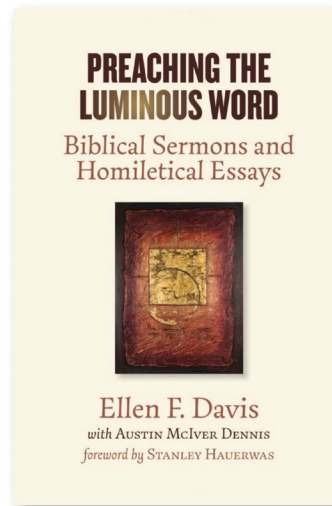
Financial challenges led to new efforts in the redeployment of theological education assets, including library collaborations. The emergence of evangelical schools into greater prominence has been one of the most significant developments in the changing landscape.

At the same time, new challenges related to diversity and equality confronted the status quo of theological schools with questions about the full inclusion of women, African American, Asian, Latina/o, and GLBTQ students, faculty, and staff. Women's ordination became a major issue of debate in many denominations during this era. Likewise, the demographic changes in the U.S. population, in particular the increase of Hispanic people, remains an unresolved challenge to which Miller devotes major attention: "Hispanic Americans are the most complicated of the unrepresented groups in theological education. Considered as a whole, they are just beginning to enter Bible College and graduate theological education in significant numbers" (134). How will the churches and theological schools address this tidal shift?

Miller devotes an entire chapter to Roman Catholic theological education and a following chapter to matters of seminary governance in relation to theological controversy, exploring at length the emergence of American Evangelicalism as a force on the U.S. religious scene. Case studies examine theological controversies affecting theological education in two particular denominations, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Southern Baptist Convention. At the end of this chapter, the author reflects: "The question of academic freedom in theological education is the question of whether, given the fragmentation of religion in modern societies, a community of accountability analogous to that in other academic disciplines exists or not" (248).

The concluding chapters address the fruitful scholarly discussion about theological education generated by the work of Edward Farley, after which many major contributions followed, for example, by Charles Wood, David Tracy, John Cobb, Joseph Hough, and David Kelsey. Miller's discussion is fair and thoughtful, although it does not adequately incorporate other significant voices. The development of the field of practical theology and the transforming effects of globalization on theological education are explored. Likewise, the author examines the infrastructural developments within theological schools especially as driven by the requirements of accreditation, leading to a new form of professionalization. Miller's final assessment of theological schools, given "the substantial plurality in the goals and purposes of theological schools" (361), is encouraging: "In fact, I would say that the administrations of these schools are much stronger, and that they have increasingly sophisticated tools to use in accomplishing their tasks" (362). Because of the key role of theological schools in supporting the mission of the churches, we can only hope he is right.

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*Preaching the Luminous Word.* Ellen F. Davis with Austin McIver Dennis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7423-8. xxiv & 332 pages. Paper. \$33.00.

Already renowned as an Old Testament scholar and environmental theologian, this volume introduces to a wider audience a well-known fact among Ellen Davis's ecclesial and academic communities: Dr. Davis is an excellent preacher.

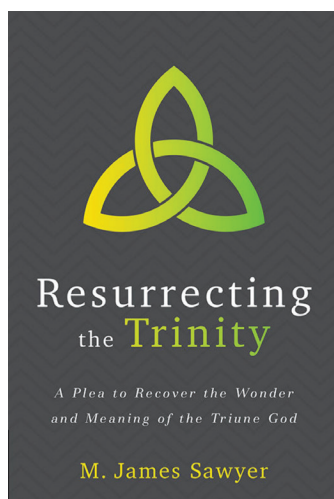
The sermons in *Preaching the Luminous Word* arise from Davis's engagement with Scripture, which itself reveals an essential aspect of her preaching. Davis considers the text, and God's appearance through the text, of primary purpose in preaching. Even the book's organization highlights this priority, with homilies on Genesis first, a sermon from Revelation last, and a biblical order for every text in between. Five topical essays punctuate the sermons, addressing the Old Testament, preaching ethical or practical elements, sermons on Proverbs, the Book of Isaiah as a vocational text, and the Triune God as the content and goal of biblical preaching.

One might call Davis's style *exegetical preaching*. Her sermons not only stay close to the biblical text, but open Scripture for deeper congregational engagement. Davis largely avoids illustrations, insisting instead that Scripture itself contains appropriate stories and images to enable people to more clearly encounter God. Yet, these sermons are not dry lectures, but instead dynamic illuminations of God through the biblical prism. We all might learn from Dr. Davis how to better tell the stories of Scripture.

This style will certainly leave many homileticians wanting, Lutherans especially, for there is no Law/Gospel presentation within Davis's sermons. Indeed, in her work on the Hebrew Bible, Davis sees the Law not as a burden of death, but a witness to life. In Davis's view, exegeting Scripture from both testaments helps people more accurately encounter the God of the Gospel. Not every preacher will appreciate that style, but all can learn from the content of both the sermons and essays.

More than a sermonic education, *Preaching the Luminous Word* is a devotional book that reintroduces to readers both Scripture and the God to whom those words witness. Read it not just for your preaching, but for yourself.

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Lenoir-Rhyne University



***Resurrecting the Trinity: A Plea to Recover the Wonder and Meaning of the Triune God.*** By M. James Sawyer. Wooster, Ohio: Weaver, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-9413-3768-4. 224 pages. Paper. \$11.25.

Sawyer argues in his *Resurrecting the Trinity* that the Western theological heritage

has truncated the doctrine of the Trinity, thus impairing vision of God's love. He seeks to help Western Christians recover their sight.

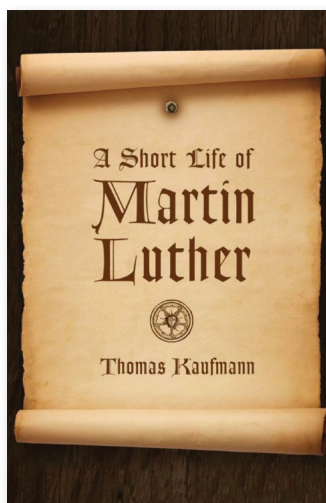
He observes that Western Christians tend to confess Trinitarianism in a mere intellectual sense but live as unitarians in a functional sense. This explains why Western systematic theologies often seem dry and impersonal. They often commence in an Aristotelian way, with divine attributes. Against this, Sawyer argues that Trinitarianism is foundational for Christian theology, and thus the appropriate base camp for wider explorations.

Sawyer discusses distorted views of God in ministry, biblical and theological correctives to them, and ancient language for describing the Trinity that drips with emotional and communal insight. He also discusses the interpenetration of the divine Persons in perfect fellowship and cooperation (*perichoresis*), and the unique ministries of the Son and the Spirit.

Weaknesses of this volume are minuscule. The treatment of divine unity could be strengthened through further discussion of Gregory of Nyssa's concept of the energies of God. Gregory's tract addressed to Ablabius explains God's unity in reference to common energies which begin in the Father, proceed through the Son, and then flow out from the Holy Spirit to pour grace on the created realm. While Sawyer discusses the divine energies briefly, he does not uncover the riches of Gregory's classic conception. Also, a subject index would have enhanced the usefulness of the book for students.

Sawyer draws abundantly from Christian theological heritage to enrich readers' perception of the Trinity. His treatment of *perichoresis* alone is worth the price of the book. This deeply informed volume befits theology classrooms and church, college, and seminary libraries.

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***A Short Life of Martin Luther.*** By Thomas Kaufmann. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. Translated by Peter D. S. Krey and James D. Bratt. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7153-4. xii & 146 pages. Paperback. \$18.00.

Though it never quite says so, this short biography of Martin Luther mostly examines

the reformer's character: the personal traits and professional convictions that launched a Reformation. This qualitative focus sets this book apart from other works that follow a more traditional chronological approach. Therefore, while it is perhaps not as straightforward a retelling of Luther's life as one might expect, it offers an accessible introduction to many key ideas, themes, and traits that shaped Luther's witness. Examples of these central themes include the righteousness of God, Christian freedom, and theology for daily life.

The book's structure both helps and hinders this character study. A brief introduction describing Luther's personality comes before another short chapter on Luther's self-understanding. The bulk of the book consists of chapters two and three, titled "Living in the Reformation of God" and "A Theological Life," respectively. Chapter two is over thirty pages long; chapter three is over sixty pages long. The book then concludes with a short epilogue, a translation of Luther's 95 Theses, and an annotated bibliography.

Because this book might be used for discussion groups, it is worth noting that the long chapters contain sub-headings, which break up the text into more manageable segments and themes. Even so, group leaders might want to plan ahead on how to use the book most effectively. Also, since the book does not always proceed chronologically, readers might be intentional about taking notes to help remember where different insights arose in the text.

Some of the sub-chapters are especially worthy of individual study. The "Luther's Bible" and "Lecture Hall and Pulpit" sections are very compelling, as they focus on Luther's dedication to the Bible and his calls to preach and teach. Kaufmann also has an ear for good Luther quotations that sound fresh to modern ears. Additionally, though Luther lived in a different era, contemporary readers are frequently invited to consider the reformer's relevance for today.

Originally published in German in 2014, this translation reads quite well. For some reason, though, words like "dudgeon" and "adumbrate" enter the text, complicating rather than clarifying the meaning. The translators also twice used the metaphor



of an “iron ration”—which stems from World War I emergency food provisions—to describe basic catechetical instruction. This is perhaps not the clearest phrase for twenty-first century North American readers. Mostly, however, this book is written with a lively prose and good storytelling, so that interested readers of a variety of backgrounds should find it engaging and readable.

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