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Book Reviews

***Darwin's Black Box—the Biochemical Challenge to Evolution.* By Michael J. Behe. New York: Touchstone (Simon & Schuster), 1998. 307 Pages.**

In recent years, several authors have reexamined the theory of evolution. For example, Philip Johnson's books (*Darwin on Trial*, *Reason in the Balance*, and *Defeating Darwinism*) offer many insights into the irrationality of evolutionary theory. However, while Johnson and other authors conclusively demonstrate the philosophical incoherence of evolution, what has been lacking are more works which attack evolution on the basis of science, demonstrating that the theory disagrees with both the evidence and sound reasoning.

Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* is a crucial contribution to the scientific refutation of the theory of evolution. Although a Roman Catholic, Behe does not bring his religious views into his argumentation. (In fact, one is surprised to find that a reference to "Calvinism" in the first chapter is not connected to the sixteenth century theologian, but to the pseudo-science of characters in the "Calvin and Hobbes" comic strip.) Behe's position is not that of a "young Earth" creationist; the author does not dispute the common scientific view of the age of the Earth. Instead, Behe forms his argument entirely from Darwinism's inability to cope with the complexity of life on the molecular level: "The scientific disciplines that were part of the evolutionary synthesis are all nonmolecular. Yet for the Darwinian theory of evolution to be true, it has to account for the molecular structure of life. It is the purpose of this book to show that it does not" (25).

The central point of Behe's argument is evolution's inability to explain the development of complex systems on the cellular level. "An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly (that is, by continuously improving the initial function, which continues to work by the same mechanism) by slight, successive modifications of a precursor system, because any precursors to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional. An irreducibly complex biological system, if there is such a thing, would be a powerful challenge to Darwinian evolution. Since natural selection can only choose systems that are already working, then if a biological system cannot be produced gradually it would have to arise as an integrated unit, in one fell swoop, for natural selection to have anything to act on" (39). Much of Behe's book is devoted to examining several irreducibly complex biological systems (the bacterial flagellum, blood coagulation, the synthesis and distribution of proteins within the cell, and the immune system) and repeatedly pointing out that evolutionary theory has proven itself utterly incapable of explaining the development of such systems. Although much of the scientific detail is beyond the comprehension of most readers, Behe's ability to construct analogies between the processes he describes and the everyday experiences of the average reader keep his book accessible to a non-technical audience.

The concluding chapters of *Darwin's Black Box* examine the institutional and intellectual pressures that uphold evolutionary theory in the face of

overwhelming evidence of intelligent design. In Behe's words, "The dilemma is that while one side of the elephant is labeled intelligent design, the other side might be labeled God" (233). Although the reader may not agree with all of the author's conclusions, and much of the science is quite challenging, this book is too valuable to ignore.

James D. Heiser
Salem Lutheran Church
Malone, Texas

Those Terrible Middle Ages! Debunking the Myths. By Régine Pernoud. Translated by Anne Englund Nash. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000, 179 Pages. Paper. \$12.95. Originally published as *Pour en finir avec le Moyen Age* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1977)

In her tenure as an archivist at the French National Archive, Régine Pernoud heard many misconceptions concerning the Middle Ages. It was an age of slaughter, massacres, violence, ignorance, mindlessness, and general underdevelopment. One schoolchild told her that people began to think only after the Middle Ages. A fiction writer of note stated that the medieval church did not even acknowledge that women had souls. It is myths like these that Pernoud attempts to debunk in a book first published in French in 1977.

What are the Middle Ages? Pernoud says it is the period when classical antiquity was considered a treasure to be exploited, not a model to be imitated, as was done in the sixteenth century Renaissance. It was a time when art always expressed the sacred, when the book (codex) replaced the scroll (*volumen*), when slavery disappeared, and when some women in the church enjoyed extraordinary opportunity and power. The Middle Ages produced magnificent cathedrals, courtly lyrics, literary novels, mystery plays, and intense musical activity that included the naming of the notes on the scale based on an eighth century hymn honoring John the Baptist.

Medieval feudalism is often characterized by moderns as an oppressive system that favored the lords at the expense of the peasants. Pernoud carefully explains how feudalism was instead a system based on personal agreements that enabled rural society to survive and even flourish in the wake of the collapse of the Roman Empire. The castle was the mother of this society and gave birth to a code of honor and chivalry. The monastery also played an important role serving as a place of learning in the rural setting. Gradually the rural areas lost their importance as the more important monastic orders, schools, and centers of government gravitated to the cities.

The Inquisition is another medieval institution that provokes modern revulsion. While not defending the Inquisition, Pernoud does point out that the link between the profane and the sacred was so close in the Middle Ages that doctrinal deviations took on extreme importance in everyday life. For example, the

heretical Cathars' denial of the validity of oaths threatened the integrity of the feudal system, which was based on oaths. The Inquisition, therefore, was the defensive reaction of a society for which, rightly or wrongly, the preservation of the faith seemed as important as physical health in our age.

Pernoud answers some of the criticisms that have been directed at the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. She calls foolish the idea of a monolithic medieval church wielding power in the person of the pope. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the popes lived for 122 years outside of Rome as outlaws and exiles. What kind of power did the pontiff have if he was chased out of the city by Roman factions and revolts? Pernoud writes that those who do nothing but condemn the medieval church forget certain facts: the twelfth century desire of the church to understand non-Christian beliefs as evidenced by sponsoring translations of the Talmud and Koran; an active thirteenth century Christian community thriving in China under the Archbishop of Peking; and the church actively caring for the poor and sick free of charge.

This interesting book on the Middle Ages may not be enough to arouse the interest of Lutherans who tend to jump from the Early Church to the Reformation era. However, Pernoud makes three important points which Lutherans should note. First, she condemns historical illiteracy. Her many examples of historical inaccuracies leading to faulty and foolish arguments should spur one to continual historical study and research. Second, she cautions against using history as a vehicle to promote pet ideas. She quotes one rather careless historian who said, "You must understand, when I do history, it is not to know if some particular fact is accurate or not; I am looking for what can promote my ideas" (139). Pernoud argues that the study of history ceases to exist if it is not a search for the truth founded on authentic documents. Third, she reminds us that history does not furnish any solutions, but it permits—and it alone permits—us to pose the problems correctly. "And everyone knows that a problem correctly posed is already half solved" (172). This sage advice from a respected historian like Pernoud is reason enough for the busy pastor to continue his study of history, even medieval history.

James G. Kroemer
Christ Memorial Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Discovering the Plain Truth: How the Worldwide Church of God Encountered the Gospel of Grace. By Larry Nichols and George Mather. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998. 141 Pages.

In a century marked by growing indifference to doctrinal integrity and fidelity to Holy Scripture, recent developments within the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) stand out in striking contrast. Since the death of Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986, the WCG leadership's efforts to turn away from the heterodox teachings of its founder have attracted considerable attention (and even some suspicion)

within the Christian community. The WCG was widely recognized as a cult because of its wide array of false (even bizarre) teachings. Anti-Trinitarian theology, a denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and a denial of the unending punishment of the damned are among the many false teachings that separated the WCG from the church.

In *Discovering the Plain Truth*, authors Nichols and Mather provide the reader with a concise summary of the history of the WCG, as well as an evaluation of the changes that have occurred within the church's doctrine. (An appendix details doctrinal changes on roughly two dozen topics ranging from the WCG's views on the Trinity to Anglo-Israelism.) The writers' experience as authors (they have co-authored two other books, *The Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult and Masonic Lodge*) and as pastors in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod lends a great deal of credibility to their work. The authors' gifts also include a very accessible style of writing; the book commends itself to both pastors and laymen.

The title makes the conclusions of the authors readily apparent; Nichols compares the current state of the WCG to that of the church re-emerging in the former Soviet Union: "I realized that the WCG was under its own Babylonian captivity for an almost equal number of decades. It is truly remarkable to see the grace of God emerging in the lives of many people who endured many years in the shackles of legalism" (84). Nevertheless, despite the authors' positive assessment of much within the reformed WCG, they still note areas that still need to be brought in line with the norm of sacred Scripture (for example, "soul sleep," the teaching that the souls of the deceased remain in a state of unconsciousness until the resurrection). Nichols and Mather are to be commended for providing the church with such a concise and well-informed assessment of the Worldwide Church of God.

James D. Heiser
Salem Lutheran Church
Malone, Texas

***Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism.* Edited by Edith L. Blumhofer, Russel P. Spittler, and Grant A. Wacker. Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.**

This book is a collection of essays that serve as "case studies that suggest how religious movements come to be defined in the popular imagination and how these definitions come to be deconstructed." The book opens with an introductory essay on Pentecostalism's biblical antecedents and closes with an historiographical essay on the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

The real meat of the book takes place in the intervening essays that document two major phases of Pentecostal and Charismatic encounters with Protestantism. The first set of essays deals with the beginnings of the Pentecostal movement and its clashes with mainline Protestantism. These initial conflicts were generally

separatist, as the Pentecostal movement was met with skepticism and resistance. At this time, many who followed the Pentecostal movement either left or were driven out of their church bodies. This section concludes with a treatment of the systematization of Pentecostal theology by second generation Pentecostals.

The second set of essays chronicles a shift in the conflicts. The tension in these essays moves from conflict between different church bodies to conflict within church bodies. In the early twentieth century, mainline Protestants who were within the Pentecostal camp had generally separated themselves from those who did not agree with them. Later in the century, Protestants with Pentecostal sympathies, referred to now as Charismatics, chose to stay within their church bodies and fight for official recognition of their views. Particularly interesting here is Albert Schenkel's essay about how polity effected this conflict within both the American and Southern Baptist denominations. The American Baptist conflict took place mostly at the national level, while the Southern Baptist conflict took place within local associations of pastors. In the end, neither denomination was able to fight off the movements from within and "the structures of the ABC and SBC were flexible enough to retain large numbers of charismatic believers. Baptist wineskins did not altogether fail the charismatic vintage." In fact, as the all the essays in this section show, none of the denominations involved were able to fight off the influence of the Charismatics from within.

The significance of this book for Lutherans lies not so much in what the book has to say about Pentecostals and Charismatics, but in the change in the nature of the conflict that the book outlines. Many of the challenges facing the LCMS in our time come from within. Our theology, our polity, our very identity as Lutherans are being challenged by voices on the inside. The conflicts in our own synod are taking place at both the national and local levels. We find ourselves in a situation very similar to many of the church bodies discussed in the book. What remains to be seen is how much more new vintage our Lutheran wineskins handle before they cease to be Lutheran.

Grant A. Knepper
Mount Olive Lutheran Church
Seattle, Washington

***Heritage in Motion: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 1962-1995.* Edited by August R. Suelflow. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998.**

This book is a sequel to *Moving Frontiers* (Carl S. Meyer, editor [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964]) and, like its predecessor, is essentially a collection of documents. As with most sequels, however, *Heritage in Motion* does not live up to the standard set by the original. While *Moving Frontiers* at least recognized its limitations as a collection of documents and saw itself as a supplementary resource in the study of American Lutheran history, *Heritage in Motion* makes larger claims for itself.

The book not only claims to be history in the sense that it provides historical background or context to the documents, "this volume presents . . . all the excitement and the trauma present at the time when these documents and statements were written," it also claims to be a primary source "from which a more detailed history can be produced." *Heritage in Motion* fails to support either claim.

The introductions to the documents themselves are weak and in no way accomplish what they claim. This fact alone is illustrative of a larger problem the LCMS has in its approach to history. History is more than just document collections and actually doing history involves more than just reading official documents. This book ignores the personalities and agendas that lie behind the documents and, in doing so, fails to tell the story of the past few decades of LCMS history adequately. The history of the LCMS simply cannot be told from a collection of documents. Documents provide an important source but they are not the only source from which history is constructed.

Heritage in Motion also fails as a primary source from which a history can be written because it puts a layer of meaning between the would-be historian and the documents. Instead of presenting the documents in a chronological format and letting them speak for themselves, the book is arranged in a topical format. The arrangement of documents under topic headings makes it difficult to use as a primary source. The documents are also presented in an edited format, further limiting their ability to speak for themselves. Edited documents arranged in a topical format might better be considered a secondary source. In the end, the book may tell us more about the editors than it does about LCMS history.

Not only does the book fail to live up to its claims, it is also not an easy book to use. Finding an individual document in the book is difficult unless one knows the name of the document itself. There is no general index, nor any other tools available that would at least help the book function as a supplementary text. CPH would have been better served in staying with the format of *Moving Frontiers*.

Despite the publishing of this book, the history of the LCMS in large part remains unknown, and because we do not know who we were, we will continue to have problems deciding who we are.

Grant A. Knepper
Mount Olive Lutheran Church
Seattle, Washington

***The "I" in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7.* By Michael Paul Middendorf. Saint Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1997. 303 pages.**

Since Krister Stendahl's "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," Lutheran voices have grown increasingly quiet in the contemporary discussion of Romans 7. Michael Middendorf's book, a revision of his Th. D. dissertation at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, breaks the silence

and challenges the scholarly abandonment of the traditional reading of a key Pauline text: Romans 7.

The trajectory of Roman 7's interpretation took a new turn after the 1929 publication of Werner Kümmel's dissertation. Kümmel criticized the older view that Romans 7:14-25 is describing the plight of Paul as a Christian who struggles with meeting the demands of the law. On the contrary, nothing indicated to Kümmel a specifically Christian individual in the chapter, nor could the "I" refer to Paul. The chapter is couched in a very general discussion of the law itself, and ancient readers would have recognized the rhetorical "I." Apart from evangelical circles, few today adhere to the traditional reading of Romans 7. Modern scholars such as Stendahl assume the results of Kümmel's exegesis. Middendorf, for his part, is not content to parrot the classic arguments for the traditional reading. Middendorf has carefully reviewed the scholarly literature on Romans 7 and created a roadmap for his readers through the maze of new interpretations, although an author index would have been helpful. While his own approach is deeply indebted to the work of James D. G. Dunn, Middendorf advances the position and provides a critique of opposing schools of interpretation.

Chapter One surveys the various interpretations of Romans 7 in vogue. Verses 7-11 may be referring to Paul himself, Adam, Israel, and/or a transpersonal "I." Conclusions regarding the identity of the "I" in verses 7-11, because of the connection between the paragraphs, will determine the identity of the "I" in verses 14-25. Nevertheless, verses 14-25 could be describing pre-conversion or non-Christian experience, verses 14-25 could be describing post-conversion Christian experience, and/or the verses could be transpersonal. Chapter Two offers a semantic reading of Romans 7 and its context as a foundation for the ensuing chapters. Middendorf concludes in Chapter Three that the most likely referent of the "I" in Romans 7 is Paul himself and not Adam, Israel, or a rhetorical entity. Middendorf justifiably criticizes Kümmel's generic "I" (with Michael Winger and others). Chapter Four explores whether Romans 7 describes Christian or non-Christian existence. Middendorf concludes in favor of the former. Chapter Five explores how the "I" statements function pragmatically in Paul.

The "I" in the Storm not only guides readers through the modern debates on Romans 7, but offers credible reasons for the older understanding. The author points the way forward toward a satisfactory solution.

A. Andrew Das
Elmhurst, Illinois

Sin, Death, and the Devil. Edited by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. Paper. 132 Pages.

This volume brings together papers originally presented at a conference under the sponsorship of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, presided over by the editors, Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson. The unholy trinity of sin, death, and the devil—God's enemies and tyrants who enslave and taunt humanity—is the organizing theme as their authors attempt to speak to topics that have been ignored, de-mythologized, or reduced to therapeutic categories in recent theological discourse. Robert Jenson's introductory essay masterfully sets the stage for what is to follow as he describes the pretense of culture that is finally nihilistic, in spite of efforts both banal and bizarre to mask the emptiness.

In an essay entitled "Sin Sick," Duke ethicist Stanley Hauerwas explores the exchange of the language of sin for that of sickness in our culture in general, but most particularly in the church. In our culture, the new cathedrals are the hospitals. In theological education, Clinical Pastoral Education has become more important than Christology. This exchange not only corrupts the practices of the church, it also gives medicine a meaning and an identity that it cannot finally bear.

Gary Anderson, who teaches Old Testament at Harvard, revisits Genesis 3 in light of the recent critiques of this doctrine by the likes of Matthew Fox. Drawing on Barth, Anderson argues that the doctrine of original sin is necessary if the fullness of the narrative of divine redemption is to be maintained.

In his introduction, Jenson asserts that "the sacraments overcome the tyrants" (6). While Hauerwas sees baptism as the proper context for the practice of medicine (20-21), two of the essays are explicit in their focus on the sacraments. "The Eucharist as the Sacrament of Union" by A. N. Williams sees the Lord's Supper not primarily as the means of forgiveness, but as participation in the life of the Trinity and so as the sacrament of sanctification. Williams finds support for his thesis in both Aquinas and Calvin. Gilbert Meilaender's essay, "I Renounce the Devil and All His Ways" answers the Catechism's question, "What does baptism give or profit?" with a reading of I John 2:15-16 informed by Augustine's categories of temptation.

Carl Braaten reflects on the demise of the devil in liberal Protestantism in his contribution, "Powers in Conflict: Christ and the Devil." Braaten notes that when the existence of the devil is dismissed, it is not long until God is displaced as well. "The first thing we learn is that the decision for or against the existence of the Devil is a decision for or against the integrity of Christianity as such. We simply cannot subtract the Devil, along with demons, angels, principalities, powers, and elemental spirits, without doing violence to the shape of the Christian faith, as transmitted by Scripture and tradition, our

primary sources. No room is allowed for these spiritual realities in a strictly materialistic or naturalistic worldview, nor for any other secrets of the Christian mystery, for that matter" (97).

Richard John Neuhaus reflects on *Evangelium Vitae*, not so much as a statement of moral truth, but as the gospel itself. A concluding essay by Orthodox ethicist Vigen Guroian uses the liturgical theology of his church to articulate the victory of Christ's resurrection in a dying world.

John T. Pless

***The Bible in English: John Wycliffe and William Tyndale.* By John D. Long. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1998. xvi + 179 pages. Paper.**

This is an instructive book, but not one that I recommend, for it illustrates the difficulties in writing at a popular level about a subject with which one is not very familiar. The author, professor emeritus of the business school at Indiana University and a Bible-believing Christian, has set out to write a partial history of the English Bible "that could be easily digested by readers who were not professional Bible historians and who might not have the inclination to tackle the huge mass of literature awaiting the serious reader" (x). This is a worthwhile objective—Wycliffe and Tyndale are certainly important figures in that history—and Prof. Long's writing is clear and well organized. So what's the problem?

Just this. Not being familiar with current research and the latest findings, the author has presented an account of his subject that is marked by inaccuracies and dubious interpretations. The section on John Wycliffe is worse than that regarding Tyndale, but even the latter has serious problems.

First of all, the author's unfamiliarity with his subject manifests itself in his sources. For example, regarding Wycliffe, the Lollards, and their Bible, the most prominent historian today is Anne Hudson, whose extensive publications include the indispensable and magisterial *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History*. Unfortunately, Long's annotated bibliography fails to list any of Hudson's publications.

This is probably the most egregious omission but there are a host of others besides, and they have consequences for the content of the book, both errors of fact, for example, identifying Thomas Netter as a sixteenth-century opponent of reform (46; he wrote in the fourteenth century) and of interpretation, for example, describing Wycliffe as "repudiating" scholasticism (57) when he was one of the preeminent scholastic theologians of his day.

On the other hand, Long's section on Tyndale indicates dependence on Tyndale's best biographers in the twentieth century, J. F. Mozley and David Daniell, and consequently, this section is better than the one on Wycliffe.

Nevertheless, there are some curious omissions and interpretations here too. The most notable is the author's failure to recognize Luther's extensive influence on Tyndale's New Testament, including prefaces, notes, and even the arrangement of the books. Long simply does not know enough about his topic.

Although certainly well intentioned, Prof. Long is not the right man to write church history for non-professionals. Much better in this regard is the quarterly magazine, *Christian History*, with easy-to-read articles, either by scholars in the field or journalists familiar with the scholarship. So instead of *The Bible in English*, I suggest interested readers acquire back issues of *Christian History* 3 (Summer 1984) on John Wycliffe and 16 (Fall 1987) on William Tyndale. The articles are brief, the presentation is colorful, and the content is accurate—exactly what one wants in popular church history.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching. By Peter E. McCullough. Cambridge: University Press, 1998.

It is hard to imagine what our world would be like without modern means of communication; but it is not hard to imagine that in such a world, sermons and other forms of spoken communication would be much more important than they are now. So it is no surprise to discover that historians like Peter McCullough, Fellow of Lincoln College (Oxford), are studying the practice of preaching in the early modern period for what it can tell us about the impact of religion and religious leaders upon culture and society at that time. McCullough, in particular, has produced a very interesting study of preaching at royal chapels during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I of England and assesses the influence of "court pulpits and chapels . . . on court culture and national politics"—clearly important topics for the period between the Reformation and the English Civil War.

Beginning with a chapter on the architectural settings for court preaching, McCullough proceeds to examine the men and their message—at least its political content—before Elizabeth, James I, and members of James's family (Queen Anne and two sons, Henry and Charles). McCullough's research has uncovered some significant details, for example, the elevated seating of the monarch that placed the ruler at eye level with (or above) the preacher in his elevated pulpit, the relative paucity of sermons during Elizabeth's reign (Lent was the only season of the year during which there were weekly events) as compared to James (who insisted on sermons at least twice every week), and the concern of Lancelot Andrewes (perhaps the most celebrated preacher in England during the first decades of the seventeenth century) regarding a piety that so emphasized sermons that it neglected liturgical prayer. In expressing this concern in sermons before James I, Andrewes was taking direct aim at the monarch, who could arrive at any time during morning prayer. At this point,

the preacher was expected to preach, and when the sermon was over the king would leave, no matter how much of the service remained!

This is an excellent book but it is not for everybody. For one thing, it presumes a high level of acquaintance with the political and religious history of the period. Secondly, its focus is exclusively on the significance of court preaching for culture and politics—not religion per se. For example, McCullough gives a lot of information regarding the concerns of preachers in the 1620's about James's foreign policy, but nothing about the doctrinal content of their sermons. Since the sermons were sermons, it would be valuable to know what vision of the Christian religion was being presented to these monarchs and their households, but that is not McCullough's purpose.

Nevertheless, for those who have a special interest in the period and the topic, *Sermons at Court* is an excellent work that provides new information and insight regarding preaching before the kings and queens of England.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible. By Paul D. Wegner. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999. 462 pages. \$29.99.

During my time in the parish, two questions came up repeatedly. First, "Why do Lutherans baptize babies?" This provided a wonderful opportunity to speak of grace, faith, Christ's love for children, and so many other things dear to our hearts. The second question, or set of questions, was nearly as persistent, but much more tedious to answer. "From where does the Bible come? And, how do we know what the original text is? Isn't it simply the product of revisions and editing over the years?" Sometimes, these questions were asked by curious Christians. Just as frequently, such questions were cynical attempts to disregard God's word by relegating its origins to an unknown and unknowable past.

To answer such questions for Christians and cynics alike, comes Paul Wegner, Professor at Moody Bible Institute. Happily, Wegner's *Journey from Texts to Translations* removes much of the unnecessary mystery surrounding the Bible's origins and transmission. Wegner helpfully describes how and why the Bible came to be written, how it was preserved and passed down through history, and finally, how it came to be translated into English. His general description of the Bible's contents, complete with graphs and charts, is helpful, especially for the beginning student or inquirer. Likewise, his discussion on the process of canonization and his brief history and description of textual criticism offers a good summary of the discipline without overwhelming the reader.

Naturally, this book bears not only the scholarship, but also the confession of its author. Positively, we commend Wegner's unequivocal confession that the

Bible is the inerrant word of God. However, he too often fails to see that the Bible is the book of the church, written from the heart of the church, and for the sake of the church. An inside-cover blurb features a quote from Abraham Lincoln, a great man, but hardly a great man of the church. More substantively, in a chapter titled "Why So Many Translations?," Wegner is nearly uncritical concerning the proliferation of Bible versions. He does not ask what translation would be good for the church, nor does he express appreciation for the catechetical, liturgical, and ecumenical advantages of sharing a common translation. Instead, he sees the choice of Bible translation as an individual enterprise, writing, "Choosing a Bible is an important decision, as its message is intended to affect the life of the reader" (399). He then proceeds to offer suggestions as to what Bible might be preferable, based on whether a person is younger or older, whether he has "fine literary tastes," or is an unchurched person (402). Some Bibles, Wegner suggests, are better as study Bibles, others for memorizing, while still others are preferable for Roman Catholics, and still another for Jews (The Tanakh—is he suggesting that the Jews do not need the New Testament?) The general thrust of the argument is that you should choose the Bible just right for you as an individual. Sadly, such an approach only takes us closer to the confusion of Babel, leading ultimately to disunity within the body of the church.

Other Reformed tendencies make this a book to be used with care and discernment. For instance, Wegner over-emphasizes Covenantal Theology as the key to understanding scripture. Again, his remarks on typology are at home in the Reformed tradition, but less so in ours. Wegner especially warns against those who see "the blood of Christ in every mention of blood, or baptism in every reference to water" (71). Tellingly, he does not offer a counter-warning against those who confine baptism to a few proof texts and thereby dismiss the sacrament's fundamental place in scripture and the life of the church. Again I wonder, if the Old Testament sacrificial blood does not point us to the blood of the new covenant, shed on the cross and offered in communion, what does it signify? Again in typical Reformed tradition, Wegner states that a proper understanding of types "should be limited only to those types that are stated to be such in the New Testament" (71). Why this should be so, he does not say. What would be the danger in seeing the sacrifice of Isaac as a type of God's own offering of His Son? The New Testament typological exegesis might better serve as a model for our own, rather than as a rule against seeing Christ woven everywhere into the very fabric of Old Testament redemption history.

Having issued such cautions, Wegner's book may still well serve as a handy reference tool, at least until a more churchly book on the subject is written.

Peter J. Scaer