

# Concordia Theological Quarterly



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## Book Reviews

### Review Essay

***A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethics.* By Joel Biermann. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014. 204 Pages. Softcover. \$23.50.**

Does redemption in Christ free a person from a limiting structure of being, or does it establish a person within such a structured existence? Biermann offers his volume on virtue ethics not merely as a case for a particular ethical methodology but as a diagnosis of the “theological barrier” to moral instruction that he finds within Lutheranism (5). This barrier is gospel reductionism, or a practical antinomianism, and, in this criticism, Biermann follows in the footsteps of others before him, notably Scott Murray’s *Law, Life, and the Living God*. The unique contribution of *A Case for Character* is that Biermann is not satisfied merely to “address” and “expose” gospel reductionism, but to overcome it with a paradigm for ethical training that would shape character and not merely rely on the teaching of principles (5, 9).

A notable strength of Biermann’s work is his compilation of various sources treating key elements of this topic. He summarizes leading ethicists who have before him diagnosed the challenge of gospel reductionism. He makes readily available key passages in the Lutheran Confessions and in the writings of Luther and Melancthon that emphasize the importance of promoting good works and forming Christians through catechesis and habituation. He provides for a Lutheran audience a timely primer on virtue ethics, even as the field is being rejuvenated among those concerned with ethics.

I am less convinced that Biermann will overcome gospel reductionism with his new paradigm, a creedal paradigm that incorporates the three kinds of righteousness. Time will tell. However, by not treating centrally the question of how Christ’s work of redemption and the application of the gospel forms the Christian life, methodologically he is unable to overcome the dominance of gospel reductionism. Instead of showing the proper role of the gospel in formation, he excludes a treatment of it. Thus he leaves the reader wondering what the role of the gospel is in ethical formation, potentially inviting abuse of the role of the gospel in the Christian life.

### I. Key Insights

Biermann's study summarizes important material in the area of virtue ethics and presents a number of clarifying insights into the interconnection between law and gospel, ethics, and virtue. To begin with, he presents in chapter one an accessible overview of the current state of virtue ethics, highlighting contributions of key figures such as Josef Pieper, Alisdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, and Gilbert Meilaender. Virtues are dispositions toward the goods of human flourishing. Biermann explains the significance of community practices for the formation of virtue. A *practice* is not just any repeated activity, but one that 1) is social and cooperative, 2) aims at a purpose, 3) is characterized by internal goods (not merely external goods such as payment or prestige), 4) has standards of excellence, without which the goods and purpose cannot be achieved, and 5) develops over time, contributing to a tradition (18–19). Participation in these community practices habituates community members in certain virtues.

Biermann also presents a select overview of ethicists who have criticized the contemporary structures in Lutheran theology that mitigate against comprehensive development of theological ethics (39–63). Fundamental to these erring structures is the misconstrual of the law-gospel relationship as an opposition. Law and gospel should not be conceived of as two ends of a pole. When speaking of the law with respect to good works, the law refers to the unchanging and good will of God (FC SD VI 4, 15). The gospel frees people from the punishment for failing to keep the law. It does not free people from doing the law. On the contrary, the gospel regenerates and grants the Holy Spirit, who empowers life according to God's will (FC SD VI 6, 11, 17). The law and the gospel are not alternatives. Rather, when it comes to good works, the gospel empowers a person to do them.

Were law and gospel set in opposition to each other, the gospel would free one from the law, not from the punishment of failing to keep the law. It would follow that the free person has no concern for striving after the law or disciplining himself according to it. Furthermore, any order or structure for the new life would be only a condemning law in opposition to what the gospel frees the Christian from (40–41, 46, 115–16). On the contrary, according to Biermann, the gospel grants us new life, a life that takes its form in accordance with the will of God. This life is not amorphous—gnostic—but structured according to the will of God (42). Another way to think of it is that the form and structure of life that God takes on in the incarnation models the new life to which each Christian, baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ, is born (41).

Consequently, while the commandments condemn sin, they also express the form of life God desires and for which he prepares the Christian (while always accusing the sin that remains). The free Christian does not oppose the good life, but desires and embraces it as true freedom. The commandments form the Christian so that he embodies the new life given in justification. Thus justification and the new life are connected through the commandments (59–60).

For Biermann, then, the law-gospel structure of the condemning law brought to an end by the forgiveness of the gospel serves to explain the Christian's standing before God (*coram deo*), whereas the better paradigm for explaining ethics and one's life in the world (*coram mundo*) is that of the two or three *kinds of righteousness* (119). Biermann's distinction between these two paradigms corresponds to the methodology of the Formula of Concord: when treating one's standing before God, the Formula upholds the distinction between law and gospel, labeling any word that convicts or condemns as law, and the forgiving, reconciling word as gospel (FC V). However, when speaking of good works or fruits of the Spirit in the world, the Formula describes the law not only as condemning, but as indicative of God's will (FC VI; the Formula explicitly makes the distinction between the two kinds of righteousness in SD III 32, 41).

So what are the *three* kinds of righteousness? This comes from Biermann's helpful distinction between *civil righteousness*, outward good works that can be done by anyone, and the *righteousness of the law*, good works done by Christians. This is no innovation; Luther makes this same distinction in his "Sermon on the Threefold Righteousness" (1518; WA 2, 41–47). In this framework, civil righteousness refers to outward conformity to the moral law, regardless of the condition of one's heart. A person who obeys those in authority, refrains from violence, is faithful to his spouse, does not act or speak dishonestly, and so on, has acted, in these cases, according to civil righteousness, even if he denies Christ in his heart or thinks all kinds of evil thoughts in his heart. The righteousness of the law refers to the truly good works that Christians do because they are regenerate and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This includes outward actions, as well as righteous inclinations and thoughts from the heart (121–122).

In summary, in Biermann's framework civil righteousness is the first kind of righteousness, which all can do; justifying righteousness is the second kind of righteousness, given freely on account of Christ to those who believe; and the righteousness of the law is the third kind of righteousness, good works done out of faith. For clarity, Biermann refers to

these as *governing* righteousness, *justifying* righteousness, and *conforming* righteousness, respectively (129). Biermann's careful explanation sheds valuable light on discussions about the kinds of righteousness, and the precise delineation of the three kinds of righteousness is one of the highlights of the work.

## II. A Creedal Paradigm

Chapters five and six are the culminating section of the book, where Biermann presents his constructive proposal for virtue ethics within a creedal paradigm. Biermann says that he will consider "the benefits of thinking of the creed in terms of a paradigm," and that he will go on to "describe a single guiding frame that adopts the three-kinds-of-righteousness framework and then roots that framework within the basic creedal paradigm." His subsequent explanation indicates that he means that the three kinds of righteousness are best understood as an expression of the creedal confession. The three kinds of righteousness express righteousness corresponding to the three articles of the creeds, and in this sense accord with the "creedal framework" (136). "The redemption accomplished in the second article of the creed leads the believer back into the first-article world of creation, there to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, who carries out the third-article work of restoration and fulfillment" (142). God's creative work finds one element of expression in the ethical life of created human beings, that is, in the civil or governing righteousness after which human beings strive. God saves people through his justifying righteousness on account of Christ. One element of sanctification is the active or conforming righteousness of the faithful. According to Biermann, the benefits of the creedal paradigm are that justification and a Christian's life in the world are not set up as a polarity that diminishes one when the other is emphasized. More fundamentally, the creed sets forth all righteousness, whether governing, justifying, or conforming, as the work of the Holy Trinity (136). As one who is redeemed and sanctified, the Christian endeavors in creation to serve others. This is his life *coram mundo* (140).

It is worth noting in this discussion that Biermann presents a brief but helpful critique of contemporary so-called trinitarian ethics, promoted by Jürgen Moltmann, Stanley Grenz, and others. The creedal paradigm, although clearly trinitarian, is not to be confused with this so-called trinitarian ethics. This so-called trinitarian ethics argues for using the intertrinitarian relationships as a model for human relationships and society. The problem with this way of thinking is that we have a limited knowledge of intertrinitarian relationships: the Father is unbegotten, the

Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Little else may be said without speculation, leaving little to serve as a model for ethics. Even that which we do know has little correspondence to human society, as the relation of begetting does not extend outside the family, and the relation of proceeding is not a human relation. When ethics is based on speculations about the intertrinitarian relationship, then the vocation given us in this life and revealed by Scripture is overlooked. As creatures, redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Spirit, people are given vocations by which to serve one another in their places in life according to the commandments (139–40). Therefore, the purpose or telos of a human person is not to imitate strictly or speculatively the intertrinitarian life, but to live out God's will for him in creation, as directed by the word, most specifically, the Ten Commandments (144).

The credal paradigm iterates, "Thus the creed, with articles on creation, redemption, and restoration/fulfillment, pulls together the Christian's life *coram Deo* and *coram mundo*" (178). The creed assures of the unity of Christian identity before God, that he will resolve the gap between God's view of our righteousness in Christ and our performance in the world. In the meantime, the Christian strives to be more Christ-like, to be more fully human (178). Each of the three ecumenical creeds "directs and explains" the Christian, living, by grace, "to accomplish the purpose of the Creator by serving the rest of creation, in anticipation of the Creator's promised consummation of all creation" (180).

### III. Creation and Eschatology

It is in these constructive chapters that the reader most desires to hear Biermann's unique voice. Instead, the source material often ends up dominating the text. Much of the final two chapters summarizes other scholars' research without significant analysis or structuring of the material in a way that gives unique dynamism to Biermann's argument. The reader is not engaged with a compelling, centering argument that carries him through a variety of contributing scholarly material. Rather, a collection of authorities is strung together to give impetus to the idea that the creed provides structure to the Christian life, unified *coram Deo* and *coram mundo*.

For example, Biermann begins to demonstrate the close relationship between the doctrine of creation and the virtuous life by arguing that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit directs the Christian back into creation where he serves others according to his vocation. To be fully human is to live according to the righteousness that God intended for us. Yet as he is beginning to develop this argument, he switches to another topic, noting

that “the question of humanity’s destiny or telos will be taken up again in a subsequent section” (144). When the reader arrives at this subsequent section, Biermann tantalizes the reader by indicating that this restoration to “God’s original creative intent” also “accommodates essential aspects of eschatological truths . . . . With the incarnation, God’s plan for creation was elevated and expanded in ways that could not have been anticipated by Adam” (151–152).

Yet, what are the elevations and expansions to which Biermann refers? He never develops this line of thought. This leaves the reader with at least one fundamental line of questioning: what, particularly, distinguishes the eschatologically-oriented life from a mere restoration to the created state? How do the incarnation and sanctification transform created life beyond its Edenic beginnings? Specifically, for Biermann’s purposes, how does this trajectory affect ethical formation? How do the commandments as the articulation of God’s will express this move from Eden to the New Jerusalem?

The Scriptures indicate that this trajectory includes a participation of the redeemed in the body of Christ, a grafting into the one who has taken on human nature, that they “grow up in every way into him who is the head . . . [who] makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph 4:15–16). In this way the redeemed do not exist in the same way as Adam was created in the beginning, but dwell in Christ in anticipation of the consummation of the new creation in which “the dwelling place of God is with man” (Rev 21:3). In this dwelling place, the river of the water of life with the tree of life do not merely stand in a garden to be cultivated, but they adorn and nourish Christ’s people in the completed city of God (Rev 22:1–5). Biermann rightly notes the eschatological trajectory of the sanctified. Developing his presentation of it more extensively would have provided further groundwork for the conforming righteousness of the sanctified life in contrast to the governing righteousness of all people.

#### **IV. Formation and the Gospel**

Perhaps most enigmatic is that Biermann does not delve more deeply into the relationship between justifying righteousness and conforming righteousness. It is central to his argument that conforming righteousness lives out of justifying righteousness—in fact, to overcome the polarized view of law and gospel, this relationship is necessary and vital: “Righteousness 3, conforming righteousness, grows out of God’s monergistic action of righteousness 2 [justification] and must be joined to it. The conforming righteousness is uniquely Christian and driven by the truths of



the second article . . ." (149). Uniquely Christian works of loving God and the neighbor are fruits of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Yet throughout the work Biermann declines to explore the details and contours of this relationship. For example, he says:

It is important that strong and lively connections between the believer's life *coram Deo* and *coram mundo* be maintained. Yet, a clear delineation of these connections is not only difficult, but dangerous—at least theologically dangerous. Meilaender himself warns elsewhere against yielding to "the temptation to step across the gap which divides inculcation of the virtues from shaping the soul." The interrelationship between growth in virtue *coram mundo* and individual identity *coram Deo* remains at once tremendously dense and delicate, and wisdom would dictate a marked reticence about offering descriptions of it. While an explication of the relationship remains elusive, it is evident that a relationship does, nevertheless, exist. (175–176)

On the one hand, the relationship must be maintained; on the other hand, attempting to describe this relationship is dangerous. Yet the potential danger suggests that theologians and pastors ought to examine the question according to the Scriptures and Confessions and to have a ready explanation that says as much as the Scriptures say, while also guarding against saying more than the Scriptures say. However, Biermann is reticent to engage in this task:

In the realm of theology, it is too often the case that attempts at explanation end badly—merely spawning misleading or false doctrine . . . . [A]ny effort to elaborate on the interaction between justifying righteousness and conforming righteousness is an ill-advised adventure since it always forces the would-be teacher into the role of innovator. Scripture says very little about the inner workings of the relationship between justification and a life of good works, and the Confessions are similarly all but silent about *how* justification and new obedience are related. The two are related—period. (131)

How "very little" the Scriptures and Confessions say about this relationship is open to discussion, as this is a relative claim. The task of theology is to say what the Scriptures say, and no more, as Biermann warns, but also no less. Saying as much as the Scriptures say and distinguishing this from errors that say either too much or too little is the central task of a theologian.

Surely there are great limits to our understanding. Furthermore, this review does not allow the space to develop a biblical theology of the rela-

tion between justifying and conforming righteousness. Nevertheless, I note a few passages that suggest that the Scriptures and the Confessions do have significant things to say on this question, things that could serve as starting points for this investigation. Romans 6–7, for example, famously expressed Paul’s account of the flesh and the new man. The new man lives out of justification, having risen with Christ in Baptism (6:4). This new man delights in the good law of God and desires and strives to fulfill it, although he is often thwarted by the flesh (7:15–23). Overcoming these failures—overcoming sin—even after justification requires continued reliance on the merits and mercy of Christ, who saves the new man from the flesh, the body of death (7:24–25). The Formula of Concord expresses in several places that the regenerate are changed and have “new impulses and movements in mind, will, and heart” (SD II 70; cf. SD II 63–70; III 27–33, 41–43; IV 7–11; VI 12, 17). Thus, the good works of conforming righteousness are fruits of the new man who is created anew and sustained by the meritorious justifying righteousness of Christ.

The Bible says more about the nature and strength of this new man. Galatians 2:20 proclaims that the flesh has been crucified with Christ while the new life is Christ living in the new man. The life and power of Christ is communicated to the faithful. The earthly continues to be put to death, while the new self continues to be renewed after the image of Christ (Col 3:5, 10). The putting to death of the old, earthly flesh continues daily through repentance under the law and the enlivening of faith through the gospel in the means of grace. Preaching, pastoral exhortation to repentance, the daily use and practice of Baptism, and the faithful reception of the Lord’s Supper are the abundant variety of ways that the Holy Spirit continuously strengthens the new life. Luther’s words on the use of Baptism are especially poignant here: the “purging” and “daily decrease” of the old Adam is to practice and to “plunge into Baptism and daily to come forth again,” and “when we enter Christ’s kingdom, this corruption must daily decrease so that the longer we live the more gentle, patient, and meek we become, and the more we break away from greed, hatred, envy, and pride” (LC IV 65–73). Here is some of the Confessions’ strongest language on formation, expressed not as instruction in the law, the cultivation of community, or habituating practices, but in the faithful reception and exercise of Baptism.

Thus the lack of a comprehensive treatment of the place of the gospel and the means of grace in formation is a significant ellipsis in this work. In illustrating his argument with the example of a converted truck driver, Biermann notes that the driver “avails himself of the blessings of word and

sacrament that constitute the community that is the church" (160). This is, however, the most explicit acknowledgment of the role of the means of grace in formation, and it is not developed further.

### V. Ethical Formation in the Congregation

In explaining Christian formation, Biermann offers three sections of application: "Training in Virtue" (189-191), "Cultivation of Community" (191-194), and "Ethics for Ordinary Life" (194-196). In the first of these, he begins by speaking of the importance of catechesis and instruction, while balancing this with a criticism of moralism. Teaching should give attention to the Commandments and the four cardinal virtues, especially as they ought to be practiced (rather than merely thought about). Cultivating community centers on modeling the Christian life for newer or younger Christians by more mature Christians and establishing a community that challenges the individualistic, selfish vices a person develops when he follows his sinful nature. Such modelling engages individuals emotionally through vivid example, stirring up the imagination and challenging Christians to discern how these models give concrete expression to virtue. Ethics for ordinary life gives attention to the kind of person one ought to be in everyday relationships and responsibilities, rather than dwelling on ethical quandaries that are rarely, if ever, faced. This development of an ordinary Christian ethic is supported through the rituals of everyday life, such as daily prayer, liturgical ceremonies, or making the sign of the cross.

Thus Biermann's case for character is that it be shaped through discipline, modelling, and habituation, under the central narrative of the creed, so that Christians take the form of the incarnate life God desires for them in Jesus Christ. Largely left out of the conversation is the place of the means of grace, specifically the regular, faithful use of Confession and Absolution (returning to Baptism), attention to the preached call to repentance and faith, and the forgiving, nourishing work of the Lord's Supper. Because Biermann states as one of his purposes that he desires to counter the influence of gospel reductionism, he may see the inclusion of the means of grace in the shaping of character as another way that gospel reductionism may erode true character formation. That is, if formation occurs through the means of grace, then this might invite the reduction of formation only to attending services, hearing preaching, taking the Supper, and letting the Holy Spirit do the rest of the formative work. He also is concerned about mixing law and gospel, that is, in this case, to develop an ethical system that blurs or confuses the pardoning declaration of the gospel (50-53).

By declining to treat the place of the gospel in ethical formation, Biermann has missed the opportunity to develop the regenerative power of the gospel. The gospel not only declares a person to be righteous; it begins to make a person righteous (Ap IV 72, 78, 117, 132). To restore the proper understanding of the regenerative power of the gospel, without mixing law and gospel or reverting to gospel reductionism, is vital to a renaissance in Lutheran ethics. With a deep, careful explanation of the role of the gospel in formation, the case for character will be made.

### **VI. Concluding Thoughts**

Lest my criticism seem too strong or extended, I will close with a reiteration of the great value this work holds for the Lutheran Church at this time. Biermann's efforts ought to raise greatly the awareness in Lutheran circles of the importance of virtue ethics. Indeed, his efforts raise the importance again of ethics in general in the life of the church. He effectively counters the view that law-gospel is a polarity, and he demonstrates the importance of understanding the law as informing the structure of good human life. His account of the kinds of righteousness is the most detailed and accessible contemporary account available in published form. His guidance to the church for ways to think again about the external practice of formation will be of value to pastors and congregational leaders. This work is highly recommended for all audiences as the beginning of a conversation that will hopefully bear much fruit for years to come.

Gifford A. Grobien

## Review of Four Books in the “Bible Discovery Series”

***Bible Basics: Finding Tools to Read and Interpret Scripture.* By Donald W. Patterson. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010. 96 pages. Softcover. \$13.50.**

*Bible Basics*, the first of four resources reviewed here from the “Bible Discovery Series” of Northwestern Publishing House, the publishing arm of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), is presented as a book for all levels of Bible readers, but its primary audience is the reader who knows little to nothing about the Bible. In the first chapter, Donald Patterson gives a basic description of the Bible, addressing the most basic terms and concepts. In the second chapter he describes what the Bible has to say about itself, giving attention to the divine origin of the Scriptures, the human authors, Christ as the “main message,” and the power of the Bible to change people’s lives. Chapters three and four are summaries of the Old and New Testaments, respectively, focusing primarily on the narrative content and placing the authorship of the various books in the historical setting of the narrative. The fifth chapter provides practical instruction on interpreting and applying the Bible. Patterson addresses the actual reading of the text, noting the importance of its meaning to the original author and audience, the historical and literary context, the practice of the letting the Bible interpret itself, and applying what is read to the reader. He also lists and briefly discusses useful resources for the study of the Bible: teachers, study Bibles, commentaries, Bible encyclopedias, handbooks, dictionaries, concordances, and electronic devices. In the sixth chapter he returns to the books of the Bible, categorizing the books or portions of their content by style as historical or sermonic narrative, poetry, prophecy, letters, and parables. The final, brief chapter suggests ways or useful guides for reading the Bible.

Patterson’s writing style is simple and readable. The book could be used to prepare someone who is unfamiliar with the Bible for catechesis. It attempts to address the challenge of creating Biblical literacy in someone who has very little previous church or Sunday School experience.

Because the purpose of the book requires simplification and summary, the pastor who wishes to use it to prepare catechumens might argue for things that have been left out. The simplification often has the effect of obscuring the Christological, sacramental, and ecclesial content of the Scriptures. Christ’s presence and saving work in the Old Testament is limited to sixty prophecies, leaving the rest of the text primarily as morality lessons or Christ-free portrayals of God. A further concern is that

Patterson's description of the content of Scriptures does not lead the reader to Baptism, toward the catechesis of the church, into the Lord's Supper, or into the liturgy and life of the local congregation. For instance, he records the events of Maundy Thursday but makes no mention of the Institution of the Lord's Supper, the central event of that narrative. While he clearly indicates that the Old Testament is God's word, he does not discuss how these writings have now become the Scriptures of the New Testament church. Likewise, he does not emphasize that the New Testament writings arose out of the church's life and were written for use in the church's preaching and catechesis.

A pastor who considers placing this book into the hands of a potential catechumen might also regret the lack of other items. There is no apologetic bringing forth external witnesses in the reception of the Old or New Testament canon, questions that this reviewer has often fielded from potential catechumens. The book gives no reference to the Bible as the source of the church's public creeds and confessions. The Office of the Holy Ministry is referred to in passing, in one instance as a subset of "teachers" in the church, but this sole, divinely instituted office does not appear at home in the Bible. A pastor will also note that no instruction is given regarding the distinction between the law and the gospel in Holy Scriptures, or how important this distinction is for a proper understanding of the content of Scriptures.

***One God—Two Covenants?: Discovering the Heart of the Old Testament.***  
By Lyle W. Lange. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010.  
127 pages. Softcover. \$16.00.

In *One God—Two Covenants?* Lyle Lange attempts to highlight and preserve the theological distinction between the law and the gospel in the Old Testament. The two covenants of the title are the Abrahamic covenant concerning the Savior and the Sinai Covenant. He summarizes the story of the Old Testament, giving particular attention to the promises of the Savior and the teaching of justification by faith alone (which he identifies with the covenant to Abraham), and contrasts these promises with the covenant instituted at Sinai. In the Sinai covenant he examines the ceremonial parts of the Ten Commandments, ceremonial law, civil law and its application. His argument in the book rightly asserts that salvation is in Jesus Christ alone, that the Christians of the Old Testament were saved by faith alone in the promises of God, that the mandates of the Sinai covenant were provisional until fulfilled by Christ, and that the Sinai covenant was only for the people of Israel.

Despite this overall sound dogmatic framework, however, his treatment of certain aspects of the Old Testament passes over the text itself. He does not, for example, show that the word "law" in both Old and New Testaments frequently refers to the Torah, the teaching or books of Moses, and as such might be the law, the gospel, or both, rightly divided. From the outset this omission lends confusion to a difficult subject.

Lange defines the entire Sinai covenant and cultus as law (in contrast to gospel). But he completely fails to teach that the tabernacle, sacrifices, priesthood, etc., were actually forms of the gospel, provisionally and for the Jews only, in that through these means the holy God actually dwelt among his sinful people, atoned for their sin, forgave them, sanctified them, and blessed them. By rendering these ritual mandates of God as mere pictures, he empties them of their gospel content, obscuring their prophetic anticipation of and participation in Christ. For example, the flesh of Christ as our tabernacle (John 1:14) and temple (John 2:21) becomes a meaningful fulfillment of the Sinai covenant only if God actually dwelt in the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament and rendered true and saving atonement, forgiveness, and blessings to his people in them. Such an understanding of God's ritual mandate for the Divine Service under Moses compromises neither the distinction between the law and the gospel nor the glory of Christ's fulfillment, but rather enables the New Testament Christian to take seriously both the weak and provisional rituals of the Old Testament and their universal, all-encompassing, and permanent fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ and in the rituals he instituted in the New Testament. Indeed, the law itself, as presented in the ritual legislation of the Torah, thus stands in sharper contrast to the gospel in the Torah. Christ's fulfillment of the Mosaic ritual mandates and legislation is the gospel.

In the final chapter Lange rightly warns the reader against paganism, legalism, formalism, and work righteousness. He might also warn against spiritualizing the ritual legislation of the New Testament and robbing it of its gospel content. Insofar as God's Old Testament mandates or ritual legislation are gospel, they serve as a prophetic anticipation of the ritual legislation of the New Testament, i.e., Baptism, Absolution, preaching, and the Lord's Supper (e.g. 1 Cor 10:1-5). Just as God is the principle actor in the Old Testament rituals of atonement in which sins were forgiven (e.g. Lev 4:35), so also he is the principle actor in the ritual sacraments of the New Testament such as the Lord's Supper, in which sins are forgiven (Matt 26:28).

The Torah should be read on its own terms as both the law and the gospel, as God's dealings with man and his gracious ritual mandates for his people, and simultaneously as the icons and foreshadowing of the Christ, from whom alone they derive their substantial power and worth. Then the entire "Torah of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" may reveal and be fulfilled in the crucified and risen Christ (Luke 24:44-49). Then also rich New Testament terms and concepts such as purification, clean, holy, atonement, forgiveness, peace, salvation, redemption, blessings, etc. may be taught from the original Old Testament Scriptures of the apostolic church and be found to be the Scriptures of Jesus Christ, which "reveal the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

***Grand Themes and Key Words: Exploring Important Bible Terms.* By Karl A. Walther. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011. 157 pages. Softcover. \$17.00.**

Karl Walther provides forty-one essays on biblical terms and concepts from A to Z in *Grand Themes and Key Words*. Many of the terms will be the topic of questions and interest by the average church member. He illuminates terms whose meaning might elude many readers of the Bible. For example, he identifies the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament with the pre-incarnate person of Jesus Christ and Baptism as the anointing of the New Testament Christian. A critique of the book will naturally examine the terms included and those excluded. One might wish to see entries on dogmatic items such as Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Office of the Holy Ministry, the Church, etc. On the other hand, articles on faith, grace, redemption, righteousness, etc. address topics of confessional concern. His essays do not quote or reference Lutheran confessional writings, but their content is nevertheless clearly Lutheran.

Some of the entries lack the precision or depth this reader would like to see, but such editorial choices are inevitable given the scope and length of the book. Restriction to the New International Version (NIV) translation creates occasional unfortunate limitations or consequences. For example, the NIV translation of 1 Corinthians 12:12 speaks of the body of Christ in the industrial terms of "unit" and "parts" rather than the natural and organic (original) terms of "one" and "members"; unfortunately, Walther ignores this mistranslation in his essay.

Walther accomplishes his overall objective. This book is a good addition to a church library and a useful teaching tool for the pastor or for the teacher in the classroom.



*Four Portraits of the One Savior: Discovering Why the Bible Has Four Gospels.* By Mark J. Lenz. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2012. 98 pages. Softcover. \$13.50.

Mark Lenz's title indicates the contents of the book. The book takes each of the four Gospels and discusses the author, intended audience, date, contents, and unique characteristics of each. Matthew is the tax collector-made-disciple writing to a Jewish audience, with a deliberate scheme for answering questions that pertain to his audience. Matthew's portrait of Jesus includes the use of groupings, an emphasis on discipleship, the kingship of Jesus as the Messiah, and the frequent evidence of Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy. Mark's history and association with Paul and Peter are reviewed. Mark wrote for a Roman audience that appreciated Jesus as a man of action. He did not write in an orderly fashion as Matthew. His portrayal of Jesus, however, offers a more intimate glimpse of Jesus, and especially of his humanity. Luke's history in Acts and the Epistles is also reviewed, demonstrating when he probably wrote his Gospel and to whom. In his Gospel Luke gives greater attention to the historical and biographical details of Jesus' life. Lenz highlights Luke's inclusion of the four canticles, his emphasis on prayer, and Christ's love for all people. He concludes the chapter on Luke with a brief comparison of the Synoptics. Finally, he introduces John's historical place, his audience and date, and the characteristics of his Gospel. He notes the unique aspects of John's Gospel, the many "I Am" statements of Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit, and numerous repeated words that carry his theological emphases.

Lenz writes for the lay Christian who has the average parishioner's knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus and wants to understand the distinctive characteristics of the four Gospels. His descriptions are accurate and replete with quotations and references to the text itself (NIV translation). He focuses on narrative themes of each Gospel, particularly relative to the person and work of Christ. The reader should not look for a discussion of each Gospel's reception in the liturgical life of the original audience, nor for each Gospel's theological contours of Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Office of the Holy Ministry, the church, and the like. This book could be used as a Bible study text or resource for a congregational study of the four Gospels.

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**Mark 1:1—8:26. Concordia Commentary.** By James W. Voelz. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013. 624 pages. Hardcover. \$54.99.

James Voelz's much anticipated first volume on the Gospel of Mark has hit the presses and is sure to find a welcome place on the bookshelves of many pastors and scholars.

Those familiar with Voelz's work and expecting an emphasis on linguistics and grammar will not be disappointed. His former students may even feel like they are back in his classroom. Voelz's first excursus, titled "Grammatical Review," accents verbal features, including "Aspect," "Tense," "Voice," and "Participial Usage." In his second excursus, Voelz fixes our attention on his understanding of linguistics, a topic central to his scholarly career. His fourth excursus is likewise highly conceptual, dealing with "The Hermeneutics of Narrative Interpretation." Here he outlines his understanding of the dynamics of communication, including the place of the author, the text, and the reader. Some readers may be tempted to skip these sections and get right to the meat of the commentary, but this would be a mistake, as these ideas form the conceptual framework for much of his exegesis.

As you may have already guessed, this is not a typical commentary. I can think of no one who so closely follows the mechanics of writing and communication. The first thing one notices is that Voelz does not simply rely on the text of Nestle-Aland but offers his own reconstruction based largely upon Vaticanus (B), which he feels best represents the contours and characteristics of Mark. The reader will be impressed to see that Voelz has translated the Gospel in such a way as to highlight his distinct interpretation. He places in bold type those words that he feels bear special emphasis, or are in some way striking or emphatic. He uses italics to reflect "subtleties of verbal aspect," and he underlines "non-literalistic" renderings of the underlying Greek (p. 27). His translations are not for the faint of heart, and may need, in fact, further translation and decoding. While this may take a while to get used to, readers will surely be rewarded by repeated usage. Even more, pastors will be inspired to ask how to translate Mark's message for their own sermons.

With every exegetical treatment, Voelz offers an analysis of the "Linguistic Essentials." Voelz parses the verbs, and includes notes on "Verbal Aspect," which has to do with an emphasis on the action or activity of a verb, or upon the connection between the actor and the action. This is a bit complicated, and may lead many to reread Voelz's "Grammatical Review." Perhaps more accessible is Voelz's attention to

"Marcan Usage," in which he notes the peculiar and distinctive ways in which Mark communicates his message. Particularly arresting is Mark's use of the "historical present," which gives Mark's gospel such vividness and power. Likewise, Mark's use of asyndeton, which is the absence of connecting words, keeps the hearer/reader on his toes and propels the narrative forward. These linguistic features fit in well with Mark's theological presentation, in which the mission of Jesus is marked by a jarring urgency. For this type of thing, Voelz is an experienced and invaluable guide. Here is a scholar who has lived long with the gospel of Mark, and it shows. His sections on "Literary Features" and "Literary Assumptions" are likewise excellent and may serve well as a map for those who seek to navigate their way through Markan waters.

We also should note that the author's attention to detail often pays big dividends. Mark is a notoriously quirky gospel, and the evangelist's word choices are often strange or jarring. Voelz sees this not as an example of Mark's supposed primitive nature but as a sign of Mark's theological and literary sophistication. For instance, Voelz notes that in Jesus' Baptism, the Holy Spirit does not simply descend upon Jesus, but "into" him (Mark 1:10). Intriguingly, Voelz sees this as an indication that Jesus is himself "possessed" by the Holy Spirit (p. 131). This valuable insight helps us to see Jesus as both strange and mysterious, moody and magnificent. Voelz recognizes a Markan theme dear to Lutherans: Jesus remains in many ways unknown, and is revealed fully only on the cross.

Voelz typically structures his exegesis on a verse-by-verse basis. One wishes, at times, that the author, so apt to plumb the depths, would come up more often, as it were, for air, to give the reader the bigger picture. So, for instance, Voelz notes the linguistic parallels of the Feeding of the 5000 to the Lord's Supper, but does not go much further. Did Mark want his readers to think of the Lord's Supper? Was Jesus himself preparing for the climactic meal? Voelz concludes, "We may see a connection, but *only in a complex way*" (429, emphasis original). One wishes, perhaps, that Voelz would unpack for us this complexity.

Indeed, this commentary's complexity may be its greatest strength and weakness. Some connections the reader must simply make for himself. While Voelz excels on the micro level, he is reticent to make larger connections. The picture of the boat, for example, recurs in the gospel, and it seems to be the way that the second evangelist depicts the church as a place of both danger and safety, but Voelz treats this only as a metaphoric possibility. He sees connections between Mark's story and Homer's *Odyssey* but hesitates to make the connection forward to the church. This is

especially vexing, given Voelz's attention to detail. For instance, in the pericope of Jesus walking on water (6:45–52), the disciples are said to be "tormented" in their rowing. Joel Marcus, like other commentators, has noted that the word in Greek is used in the book of Revelation to describe eschatological tribulation. Mark is offering here a preview of life in the church, which will be marked by tribulation and suffering. Voelz, as a rule, appears reticent to see within the stories a picture of Mark's church.

On perhaps a side note, it is welcome to see that Voelz has included various references to the works of classical antiquity. For instance, he notes how Jesus' stilling of the storm (Mark 4:31–35) bears resemblance to Homer's *Odyssey*, specifically Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops. Such references remind us that Mark's Gospel has a place within the work of Roman antiquity, and that its writing was shaped and influenced by the evangelist's desire to bring his message to the Greco-Roman world.

Voelz's work is admittedly out of the ordinary. This commentary takes time to digest and is not for those looking for an easy nighttime read. On the other hand, exegetes will love its attention to detail. For Lutheran exegetes, it will be required reading for many years to come. It is truly a masterwork, a must buy, and a most welcome contribution to the Concordia Commentary Series.

Peter J. Scaer

***Isaiah 56–66.* By Reed R. Lessing. Concordia Commentary Series. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014. 577 pages. Hardcover. \$54.99.**

As his fourth contribution to the Concordia Commentary Series, Lessing's handling of Isaiah 56–66 follows the pattern of his previous commentaries. He balances between summarizing and responding to existing scholarship, a thorough treatment of the Hebrew text, and commentary that flows from both scholarly and textual insight while also serving the Church faithfully.

Lessing's treatment of the existing scholarly approach to Isaiah 56–66 focuses upon Bernhard Duhm as progenitor and representative of standard scholarship. The treatment is fair, but limited in scope. The reader who wishes to investigate further the arguments of Duhm and others will need to turn to the firsthand sources or to critical commentaries that build upon Duhm and others. What is particularly helpful in Lessing's treatment is his response to the standard critical arguments that would define these chapters as "trito-Isaiah." Lessing sets forth lexical links between Isaiah

40–55 and 56–66 along with other connections. Lessing’s defense of a unified Isaiah is quite beneficial.

Even more beneficial, however, is the treatment of the text. The pastor who has been deprived of the blessing of learning Hebrew will find the textual notes challenging at times, but the notes also present an opportunity to reinvigorate his handling of the word of the Lord. From a clear handling of the text, Lessing leads the reader into an exploration of its meaning. The Christocentric approach to Isaiah yields homiletical and pedagogical wealth.

Lessing’s commentary will not be highly valued by those who have subordinated the word of God to critical theories. But for those who hold Scripture to be not only the inspired word of God but also a revelation of Christ, Lessing’s *Isaiah 56–66* will be cherished as the standard commentary for these rich chapters of the word of the Lord through his prophet.

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***The Second Letter to the Corinthians.* By Mark A. Seifrid. Pillar New Testament Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014. 535 pages. Hardcover. \$50.00.**

From its cover, this volume of the Pillar New Testament Commentary rightly appears an attractive choice for those desiring rigorous exegesis with “pastoral sensitivity.” Yet, from its cover, which speaks of the series’ commitment to “questioning obedience,” and its authorship by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Mark Seifrid, it may still appear as a typical commentary by a Protestant Evangelical, colored with such lenses.

However, a quick glance at the dust jacket reveals high praise for this volume from various A-list conservative Evangelical and Lutheran scholars, including James Voelz and Oswald Bayer. Read almost anywhere into the book and one finds it dripping in the theology of the cross, highlighting the eccentricity of faith, and expounding the God-driven nature of the Christian life, with plenty of Luther and Bayer insights for further elucidation, all while remaining true to the text. It leaves the unknowing reader seriously wondering if Seifrid is a closet Lutheran.

As it turns out, shortly after this reviewer began writing this review, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, announced that Seifrid will join its faculty. Welcome Dr. Seifrid! This volume will teach his students well, and be a great help and comfort to pastors and others who are afflicted for remaining faithful.

Seifrid points out an abundance of helpful significant details on the text in its context, while not bogging down the reader in finer technical matters and unnecessary dialogue with other commentaries. This allows for a true theological commentary, keeping the matters before Paul here in the wider scope of his theology, and smoothly and convincingly revealing a unity to the epistle through its various topics. Woven throughout is its theme of the cruciform nature of the Christian life, as exemplified in the apostle. This epistle is Paul's response of faithful and loving service to the Corinthians, despite previous conflicts and false expectations impregnated in them by "successful" apostles.

The middle chapters of the epistle, urging completion of the collection for the Jerusalem church, are thematically connected to the beginning and end, in that Paul's theology of giving is an invitation for the Corinthians to become like him and Christ Himself—"weak" through charitable giving of their resources. In this, their work would reveal a "divine quality," in that it would be generous while relying on the God's power to sustain. The final chapters remarkably demonstrate Christ's presence and power in weakness as seen in Paul's apostolic service. In a section of this epistle many readers find confusing, Seifrid aptly sorts out Paul's abundant use of irony and connects it to his intent.

Several things are left to be desired from this commentary. As much as faith's eccentric nature is emphasized, and as the epistle has an ecclesial scope, there is hardly any recognition of what this reviewer would discern as baptismal language, or discussion of how Baptism applies. This no doubt would have shed additional light on the text. Second, for all the volume's practical insights and applications, as well as the discussion of Titus' and other apostles' roles, it would have been helpful to hear more on the Office of the Holy Ministry itself.

However, these apparent lackings should not deter one from this commentary in the least. It is full of useful knowledge, beneficial insight, wisdom, encouragement, and divine truth for those bearing the cross today. And even more, it is a pleasure to read!

Peter J. Scaer

*Luther's Works, Volume 68: Sermons on Matthew, Chapters 19–24*, Edited by Benjamin T.G. Mayes and Christopher Boyd Brown. Translated by Kevin G. Walker. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014. 456 pages. Hardcover. \$54.99.

For the sake of our own lively confession, for the edification given by the certainties of our Lord's incarnation, atonement, and sacraments among us and for us, and for the thoughtful pastoral and practical helps it offers the busy, needy pastor, we should all be reading more Luther. Concordia Publishing House's recent expansion of the American Edition of *Luther's Works* that is underway (an additional twenty-eight volumes) gives a host of new material in various genres in careful, easy-to-read English. This new series is an invitation to re-immense ourselves in the theology and ecclesial practice of that Reformer whose great confession has shaped our identity.

In this volume of *Sermons on Matthew, Chapters 19–24*, we hear Luther from the pulpit (via his recording secretaries and editorial commonplaces of the day) preaching serially through the first Gospel with fifty-six sermons delivered between 1537 and 1540, though with a few breaks in between. Compliments to Kevin Walker who, with the editorial team, have produced an excellent translation with just the right amount of introductory insight and notes for needed context.

Beyond the taking up of the texts themselves, the sermons can almost be read as a diary of sorts: the autobiographical and personal comments by the preacher; the press of current events surrounding the oft re-scheduled (and finally jettisoned until Trent in 1545) Mantua church council that figured in Luther's writing of the Schmalkald Articles (1537) just prior to these sermons, critiques of Müntzer's "Wordless Spirit" and "Spiritless Word" enthusiasms, and the threat of radical Islam (the "Turks")—all from a Wittenberg church experiencing the occasional plague and deadly illness.

For the preacher overly familiar with the Matthean texts that he has preached many times, this volume is a fresh resource and a new (or old) "set of eyes" on the standard pericopes—an animated, still contemporary (five hundred years later), and earthy addition to twenty-first century sermon contemplation. Those who use the historic, one-year lectionary will find food for Advent 1; Septuagesima; Palm Sunday; and Trinity 18, 20, 23, and 25, along with plenty of other fodder. Those who use *Series A* will likewise gain from Luther's treatment for Advent 1 (both alternatives) and Propers 20 through 26, with a few saints' days and other observances as well. Luther approaches topics or texts that we would likely shy away from in a sermon in the manner that he takes them on (e.g., marriage,

divorce, God's design for man and woman, "woes," role of government and rulers, and the end times). Yet Luther, in his own context, still must have ruffled the feathers of "the comfortable" of his day as he charges ahead with clear direction.

One aside regarding this reviewer's peculiar predilections: The aim of reading Luther writings of every sort was first fired in me by the late Dr. Heino Kadai at the Fort Wayne seminary in the late 1980s. My family purchased the individual volumes as gifts for me over a number of years until I had the whole American Edition. Out of my own curiosity and budding theological interests, I took to pencil-marking page numbers and margins (in my deeply unscientific way) each mention of the sacraments made in whatever context and genre (to include even what some might refer to with the derogatory "dragging-it-in" category). It is a habit I have not shaken. The "count" for this volume of the Wittenberg sermons is that references to our Lord's sacramental gifts appear on 77 of the 341 pages (in various contexts). That is remarkable, although I have nothing else with which to compare it. If nothing else, it gives a strong indication of Luther's own theological assumptions in preaching the visible Word. By reading more Luther, perhaps we will recognize our own.

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*Chance and the Sovereignty of God: A God-Centered Approach to Probability and Random Events.* By Vern S. Poythress. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. 368 pages. Softcover. \$25.00.

Many people, even Christians, wish each other "good luck." But luck implies chance, and chance is an issue for people who believe in a creating God who providentially supports all things. If God is sovereign over all things, is anything truly left to chance? Poythress, who holds doctorates in both mathematics and New Testament theology, takes up this issue in *Chance and the Sovereignty of God*.

Poythress' work is grounded in a solid respect for Scripture as the source and norm of Christian faith. Early chapters include significant passages that speak to the question of God's foreknowledge of events as well as his control over them. The passages are used well and in context. They reveal the depth of the Lord's foreknowledge and his intimate involvement in all facets of creation and human activity. The chapter that attempts to reconcile human choice with God's will, however, seems weak. The



impression given is that God has written out a script that all humans are fated to follow yet for which they are nonetheless held responsible.

In the latter half of the book he delves directly into the mathematics of probability. He points out that the so-called laws of nature are simply observed regularities in God's orderly governance. Drawing on his early work in symmetry, he also argues that the laws governing probability reflect both God's attributes as well as his triune nature.

Over all, the book provides some good mathematical and theological insights into the question of how seemingly random events are reconciled with a God who is omnipotent. It serves as a good response to the growing idolatry of "chance" in our culture and a reminder that there is no such thing as luck—good or bad—in our world.

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***The Holy Spirit—In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today.***  
**By Anthony C. Thiselton. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013. 579 pages. Softcover. \$46.00.**

Thiselton, who is one of the world's foremost scholar of hermeneutics, brings his considerable theological acumen to the study of the Holy Spirit and has produced a magisterial volume that should prove valuable to scholars and pastors alike. The book is divided into three main parts in which Thiselton brings together exegetical, systematic, and historical theology as he ranges across the breadth and depth of Christian tradition. He begins with an examination of the Holy Spirit in the texts of the Old and New Testaments, which is then followed by a survey of the doctrine of the Spirit from the early church through the eighteenth century. The third part of the book deals with the Spirit in modern theology from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century and includes interaction with scholars from the Pentecostal tradition and Charismatic Renewal movements. The final chapter acts as summary for the entire study, in which Thiselton offers his own reflections and conclusions, and points out areas where mutual dialogue among Christians (particularly between Pentecostals/Charismatics and more orthodox Christians) needs to take place.

Like most of Thiselton's books, this one features his usual, well-footnoted interaction with both primary and secondary sources. Nearly every major figure in church history who has written about the Holy Spirit

can be found here, which allows the book to function at times almost like a reference book. Of particular interest to Lutherans will be his chapter on the major reformers, which deals in part with Luther's interaction with the enthusiasts.

Things get a little different when he gets to the latter parts of the book and starts to include voices from more recent times. Here Thiselton has to make a more conscious choice of which writers to feature, and he is open about whom he chooses and why. He makes sure that he has representatives from Protestantism, Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. He is also intentional about including writers from the Pentecostal and Renewal traditions. He is especially careful in choosing writers he believes to be scholars who happen to be Pentecostal, rather than "Pentecostal scholars." He is especially appreciative of Pentecostal writers who critique their movement from within. Here the book is especially valuable as Thiselton critiques the hermeneutical and exegetical abuses that lie behind many Pentecostal teachings and shows just how far some in that tradition have wandered from orthodox Christianity. He points out the irony that Pentecostal hermeneutics pit Paul against Luke, which gives it more common ground with critical scholarship than most Pentecostals would find acceptable. Thiselton does more than offer a polemic here; he also praises those movements where they have offered legitimate critiques of traditionalism, and he does believe that with some correction Pentecostalism may have something valuable to offer the church at large.

All in all, Thiselton has produced a much-needed contribution to the study of the Holy Spirit that goes beyond the polemical and seeks to offer a way forward.

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*The Handy Guide to New Testament Greek: Grammar, Syntax, and Diagramming.* By Douglas S. Huffman. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012. 112 pages. Softcover. \$16.99.

The author states, "This volume has been created because one year of Greek is dangerous; the language needs review and further study to become truly usable in the study of the Greek NT" (5). Accordingly, the book is filled with an assortment of "handy" paradigm charts and other useful tools to help second-year Greek students, as well as parish pastors, continue their study of, and work in, the Greek New Testament. The book

is small, only 112 pages, and has approximately the same physical dimensions as the standard Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament. Designed to supplement Greek grammar and syntax textbooks, it also contains an extensive bibliography that lists many resources to which readers can turn for additional study.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is an overview of Greek grammar. In about forty-five pages, Huffman briefly describes everything from the Greek alphabet, breathing marks, and accents to nouns, prepositions, and verbs. Much of this section is filled with the same kinds of paradigm charts that one would find in a standard Greek grammar. The charts are very similar, for example, to those in *Fundamental Greek Grammar* by James Voelz, the standard textbook for many LCMS pastors.

The second section of the book provides a summary of Greek syntax. The section begins with a brief but extensive summary of the different ways that the Greek cases (i.e., vocative, nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative) can be used. For example, a reader can quickly look up the difference between a subjective and objective genitive, along with eighteen other possible uses of the genitive case. This is followed by a summary of verbal aspect and the variety of ways in which Greek verb tenses can be translated, building on what Voelz, for example, teaches in his grammar.

The author devotes the final section of his book to phrase diagramming. He sees phrase diagramming as “a tool to discover sermon and lesson outlines quickly in the Greek text” (5). As such, he provides step-by-step instructions for diagramming 1 Peter 1:3–9, as well as a sample sermon outline, as an example of how this technique can be used.

This little volume is indeed “handy” and deserves a place on the bookshelves of seminary students and pastors alike. As the author states, having only one year of Greek instruction is dangerous; what is even worse, in my opinion, is to stop using Greek altogether after having invested so much time and energy in trying to learn it. The author has provided a great service with this little book to help students of Greek enhance their skills to read the New Testament in its original language.

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