

BOOK REVIEWS

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The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve: Thematic Coherence and the Diachronic-Synchronic Relationship in the Minor Prophets. Daniel C. Timmer. Biblical Interpretation Series 135. Boston: Brill, 2015. ISBN 9789004235816. Pp 301. \$163.00 (USD).

The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve is divided into fourteen chapters, including an introductory chapter, twelve chapters analyzing the twelve books in the Minor Prophets, and a concluding chapter, which provides a summary and synthesis of the study and an examination of the coherence of the theme of the nations in the Twelve as a whole.

In the introductory chapter, Timmer outlines the goal, method, and significance of his study and provides brief critical remarks on the divisiveness of the diachronic and synchronic approaches—a divisiveness his study seeks to overcome through integration. This chapter provides a good foundation for the remainder of the volume, but it is difficult to follow and fully grasp on a first read-through, so additional close readings are necessary. However, the remainder of the volume is easier to understand, and after reading the book in its entirety, the introductory chapter becomes clearer.

The analysis of the nations in each of the twelve chapters is structured uniform-

ly and contains three main sections: 1) the terminology which includes proper nouns such as Edom and Egypt, language and related terms such as אֱל (‘‘people’’) and יָג (‘‘nation,’’ or ‘‘people’’), and generic terms such as ‘‘northerner’’ or ‘‘all flesh’’; 2) the characteristics of the nations such as their portrayal and role in the book along with divine judgment and possible restoration in the future; and 3) an analysis which seeks to determine if the lexical data from the first section indicates any overlap or distinction between God’s people and the nations. In this analytical stage, Timmer also examines the data from the second section to determine if any overlap or distinction exists between God’s people and the nations on a semantic level.

The following observations pertain to the core of the volume, which analyzes each of the books of the Twelve. First, in some of the introductions to the chapters, Timmer places the given book’s treatment of the theme of the nations within the context of adjacent books and others within the Twelve, such as in his analysis of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah. However, in the chapters which address Micah and Nahum-Malachi, connections between either adjacent books or others in the Twelve are not provided. Second, though the chapters are uniformly structured, the terminology sections reveal a minor inconsistency, in that the chapters on Hosea-Jonah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi begin by identifying the proper nouns in each of the books, followed by specific and generic terms related to the nations. However, the terminology sections in the chapters relating to Micah, Habakkuk, and Zechariah begin with specific and generic language related to the nations, followed by the proper nouns. Third, while the conclusions to the twelve core chapters consistently address the thematic coherence of the nations, and place their respective books in the context of the Twelve as a whole, these observations may have been better suited for the summary of the study’s findings in the concluding chapter: in some cases, observations are offered about books in the Twelve which have yet to be analyzed in the volume. Fourth, the various observations concerning the interrelationships of the books in the Twelve which have been highlighted in the conclusions of the core chapters have not been summarized in the concluding chapter, which leaves the reader struggling to piece together this information. Since the concluding chapter provides a summary of each of the twelve books’ treatment of the nations, it is logical and helpful to likewise provide the same for the interrelationships between and among the books. Lastly, Timmer does not address the use of the term גֵּר (‘‘sojourner,’’ ‘‘foreigner,’’ ‘‘alien’’), which occurs in Zech 7:10 and Mal 3:5 in relation to the oppression and denial of justice to the alien living among God’s people. Though it is not strictly relevant to the study on the non-Israelite nations, it would have been helpful for the reader if Timmer had addressed this point in the introductory chapter.

In the last chapter of the book, entitled ‘‘The Nations and the Twelve,’’ Timmer

begins with a helpful summary of the theme of the nations and the extent to which it is coherent in each of the books of the Twelve. For example, in Hosea, the nations are consistently portrayed negatively, regardless of whether the timeframe is past, present, or future, as the nations draw the Israelites away from God; while in Joel, the nations are portrayed negatively in the present time period, but those that repent and turn to God in the future are portrayed positively.

In the second section of this concluding chapter, Timmer establishes the following five classes to categorize the various perspectives on the nations which occur throughout the Twelve: 1) the first class only includes Obadiah, which presents the nations in all timeframes as receiving divine judgment, with no hope for restoration; 2) the second class only includes Habakkuk, which portrays Babylon negatively and other nations neutrally in the foreseeable future, but in the distant future, Babylon is absent and the other nations are portrayed negatively and will experience divine judgment; 3) the third class only includes Hosea, which demonstrates that the nations are harmful to Israel's relationship with God but does not address issues of divine judgment or deliverance for them; 4) the fourth class only includes Nahum, which pronounces judgment upon Assyria and liberation for its victims, the nations, but does not deem the other nations guilty or innocent; and 5) the fifth class, including Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, all of which indicate that some people from the nations will enter into a relationship with God and his people in the future and thus not experience judgment but deliverance. Though these five classes and their descriptions are beneficial in understanding the nations across the Twelve, this part of the analysis only spans a few pages in the concluding chapter. Given that each of the books of the Twelve was analyzed in detail and separately in chapters 2–13, the synthesis provided here seems disappointingly short for an in-depth thematic study of this magnitude.

The remainder of this concluding chapter focuses much more on the coherence of the theme, given that its analysis across the twelve books reveals one both diversity and discontinuity. Timmer argues that the theme of the nations, though diverse, is coherent as represented in each of the books when different time periods are taken into consideration. He then examines thematic coherence across the Twelve as a whole to demonstrate that the characterization and fate of the nations is dependent upon their relationship with God. The author is careful to advise that though thematic coherence exists in each of the books and in the collection as a whole, it does not necessarily provide evidence for the literary unity of the Twelve. Timmer also notes that the relationship between thematic coherence and literal unity requires a separate examination, outside the scope of his study.

The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve is an informative and

comprehensive study of the nations, thoroughly researched with extensive footnotes and a 33-page bibliography. Each of the chapters in this volume is a manageable read, though varying in length from approximately 10–25 pages. While some parts of the introductory chapter are challenging to understand, the remainder of the volume is a straightforward read. This volume is geared toward those involved in biblical scholarship and may not engage readers such as pastors or lay leaders due to its academic focus, the absence of translations for German texts (e.g., 77, 82), and perhaps the restrictive price. Despite some of the criticisms noted here, overall, Timmer’s thematic study of the nations offers an important contribution and is a worthwhile read for those seeking to further understand the book(s) of the Twelve.

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Of Seeds and the People of God: Preaching as Parable, Crucifixion, and Testimony. Michael P. Knowles. Eugene: Cascade, 2015. ISBN: 9781625648204. Pp. xxiv + 263. \$32.00 (USD).

Michael Knowles’ latest book is an important corrective to the results-based, technique-driven culture which pervades much of today’s church. When research indicates that little is retained by passively listening to long monologues,¹ it is easy to question whether preaching is worth the effort. One might expect a professor of preaching to suggest ways that preachers could improve their sermons in order to better effect change in people. Instead, Knowles demonstrates that preaching, in itself, is powerless to bring about the kinds of change in people that the Gospel promises. And it is that very powerlessness which is the strength of true Christian preaching, because it bears witness to the only power that *can* effect change. So preaching is effective (and, therefore, worth the effort) insofar as it points to the true power at work and does not claim that power for itself.

Knowles’ main argument, then, “concerns theology and spirituality rather than structure or form: it is that Christian preaching at its most potent simply bears witness to the life-giving power of God” (xx). This argument is developed along three intersecting lines: preaching as parable, preaching shaped by the cross, and preaching as witness to a power other than itself. These themes are each dealt with in turn in the three parts into which the book is divided.

Part One, “God’s Field,” explores Jesus’ use of parables, particularly agricultural parables, to point to God as the “sole source of life” (xxii). Knowles shows how

¹ For example: Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994).

Jesus' parables could (and can) only be understood by paying attention, on the one hand, to their many resonances with Hebrew Scripture and, on the other, to the present but still not fully revealed reality of God's Kingdom. Introducing a play on words which he maintains throughout the book, Knowles describes Jesus' teaching as "parabolic" not only "in the sense that he tells parables, but also because . . . his teaching functions like a parabola, capturing light and sound and energy from a more distant yet powerful source, then focusing it to a point of intense concentration, accessibility, even revelation. That more distant source is, of course, God" (xxi). God, not the parables themselves, is the power source.

By applying this double hermeneutic (Hebrew Scripture and the presence of God) to each of Jesus' agricultural parables, Knowles demonstrates how Jesus' teaching takes the material of everyday life in first-century Palestine, like seed and soil, and uses it to point to something extraordinary, like a thirty-, sixty-, or hundredfold harvest, which can only be explained by God's active presence. It is beyond what can happen with seed and soil, regardless of how skillful the farmer is or how hard he works. The process whereby a seed germinates and sprouts into a new, exponentially abundant existence then becomes a powerful metaphor for the experience of God's transforming work. This work is not accomplished by the skill and sweat of either the farmer or the preacher. Their role is to experience it, and bear witness to it.

Part Two, "God's Body, God's Building," explores how preaching can, and must, be shaped by a theology of the cross. This does not mean that Knowles suggests that the cross be the explicit theme of every sermon. Rather, for preaching to be transformative, the ministry of preaching and, indeed, the preacher as well, must go through the process of being crucified with Christ and then raised into the reality of God's new creation. "The call to die with Christ belongs as much to ministry as to conversion" (102, summarizing earlier work by Andrew Purves). What this means for Knowles in practice is that just as Jesus could do nothing apart from the Father, so the ministry of preaching must rely on the power of God and not on the preacher: "Ministry will rely for its success less on aptitude, proper training, or personal ability than on willing inability and loving reliance" (97).

This is not to say, however, that there is no place for honing rhetorical skill and technique. It's more a question of putting those efforts in their proper place, which is in bearing witness to the transforming power of God. This is the theme of part three, "God's Word." These final two chapters compare and contrast the perspectives of Augustine, Karl Barth, Walter Brueggemann, and Paul Ricoeur on the nature of Christian witness, and then conclude with a more thorough development of Knowles' concept of parabolic preaching. Ministry which descends into the death of the cross and then re-ascends through the power of the resurrection, follows a parabolic curve and "depend[s] for its effectiveness on a power well beyond anything words alone can achieve" (89). Knowles concludes: "Proclaiming this defeat and victory, Chris-

tian preachers are captured by the one and liberated by the other. . . . As categories of human speech, parable and testimony together indicate the limits of our own role in proclaiming this gospel, thereby leaving room for Christ to accomplish what we cannot. This is to claim neither too little nor too much for preaching” (210).

The book also has two extremely helpful appendixes which root its concepts in the soil of practical application. Appendix A offers a list of seven questions that “can help to orient the various components of sermon preparation so that they reflect this same movement from death to life in the presence of God” (213). In Appendix B, Knowles shares the text of three of his own sermons to illustrate how such preparation can result in parabolically shaped preaching.

By submitting preaching to a theology of the cross, Knowles has offered a valuable corrective to our understanding of both its purpose and posture. There are some themes, however, which would be worth pursuing further. First, while being “crucified with Christ” certainly corresponds to a shift from dependence on human effort and skill to a reliance on the power of God (cf. Knowles’ discussion of how Paul’s afflictions, lack of eloquence, and reversal of social prominence all “correspond to crucifixion,” 111), it also entails a transformation which is profoundly ontological. More theological work on how that applies to the ministry of preaching would be extremely valuable. Second, Knowles describes the Spirit as bearing witness to the validity of the church’s preaching (162–67). But is this the full picture? Is the outpouring and indwelling of the Spirit not only a corroboration of the Gospel, but also the means whereby the ontological transformation of death and resurrection is accomplished? Is it not at least a component of the new reality to which preaching must bear witness? Third, Knowles focuses his study primarily on the formal ministry of preaching in today’s church. But how much of the proclamation described in Scripture corresponds closely to today’s model of sermon preparation and delivery? It would be fascinating to apply this study to the full range of how God’s people attempt to bear witness to the active, transforming power of God.

Of Seeds and the People of God is a vital and timely book. We live in an age when much church culture idolizes self-reliance and success through technique and power, as if the Sovereign of the Cosmos were merely a “god of the gaps,” working only around the edges of our performance. Faced with the temptations of that mindset, it is not only the ministry of preaching which needs to take the parabolic journey through crucifixion and resurrection. *Every* mode of ministry, both formal and informal, needs to die and be raised with Christ so we can speak and act as effective witnesses to the only Power that can bring true transformation.

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The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary. Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. Pp. xv + 312. ISBN 9780802868091. \$28.00 (USD).

The Psalms as Christian Lament is primarily an annotated commentary that also contains brief accounts of historical interpretation for select psalms of lament from the Hebrew Psalter; it is a complementary or companion volume to *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, by the same authors (Eerdmans, 2010). Bruce Waltke, James Houston, and Erika Moore provide verse-by-verse commentary and discuss the historical development of biblical interpretation, moving from the apostolic era to the present state of Psalmic research. They consider Pss 5, 6, 7, 32, 38, 39, 44, 102, 130, and 143—six of these being part of the seven traditionally identified penitential psalms. With some other added features, the authors also supply, first, a new translation for each of the ten psalms, and, second, a glossary of terms at the end of the volume—both creative and useful.

As a historical commentary, Waltke, Houston, and Moore preface each psalm's commentary with a brief overview of several historical interpreters or relevant Christian faith traditions. For example, Ps 5 summarizes the life and thought of Jerome, while in Ps 102, a comparison between Roman Catholic and Reformed or Evangelical thought is presented, with attention given to John Fisher (ca. 1469–1535), Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1450–1536), and Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562), among others. While the historical commentary summarizes the lives and thoughts of particularly significant figures to the development of Christian biblical interpretation, the brief discussion targets the chapter's respective psalm of lament.

Waltke, Houston, and Moore do an excellent job emphasizing the use of a specific psalm by a certain historical scholar. In my observations, I noticed particular attention was given to the theological lineage of the Reformed tradition—from Augustine to Luther to Calvin and forward. While their historical commentary accomplishes its primary task, to provide the reader with an introductory understanding of the academic lineage of the interpretation of lament poetry, there was a lack of emphasis given to twentieth-century theological interpretation. When I received *The Psalms as Christian Lament*, I was expecting extensive engagement with the works of Sigmund Mowinckel, Claus Westermann, Walter Brueggemann, and H. J. Kraus, for example, and not the Reformed tradition. There was what I deem minimal interaction with these scholars, which was unfortunate, considering the significance of lament theology only really began to receive emphasis and recognition as vital to the Christian faith tradition during this era of scholarship. However, it seems that Waltke, Houston, and Moore hold a different opinion and would argue that la-

ment theology was already recognized as such earlier in history and should be dated back to the apostolic era.

In their analysis of these select psalms of lament, Waltke, Houston, and Moore apply two distinct methodologies, rhetorical criticism and form criticism, for the purpose of exegesis and commentary. A foundational knowledge of these two methods is important for the reader to understand before exploring this volume if he or she desires a fuller appreciation of how the volume's commentary is structured. The authors present their verse-by-verse exegesis according to the form structure they determine appropriate. Their argument for the form structure of any given psalm is typically placed in the third part of each chapter and is relatively easy to follow.

Concerning the verse-by-verse commentary and new translation, it is quite noticeable that the authors make the interpretive decision to translate the divine name YHWH, which is typically translated "the LORD," as "I Am" in all instances. While I find no reason to criticize their creativity, I was unable to find a convincing rationale behind this translation within the volume's introductory section. Furthermore, it seemed that the commentaries supplied were particularly meant to aid those involved in pastoral ministry, or for the personal interest and spiritual growth of the layperson, as can be seen through their references to current events and persons as illustrations (e.g., Saddam Hussein, 194) and their use of colloquial abbreviations (e.g., "AWOL," 199); again, not that I disagreed with the authors' decision to write in such a way, only that some form of rationale would have brought some clarity concerning their intended audience. Furthermore, the authors also reference a considerable amount of popular writers of pastoral and practical theology—Charles Haddon Spurgeon, C. S. Lewis, and Eugene Peterson, for example. Waltke, Houston, and Moore are clear in their attempt to bridge the gap between historical Christian exegetes and modern readers. They were successful in their argument that lament poetry was important for those in pastoral ministry historically and should remain as significant, if not more so, in the present.

Regarding their commentary on the lament psalms, there was little emphasis given to the placement and function of these psalms within the greater structure of the Psalter. With Gerald H. Wilson's significant publication in 1985, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, a significant portion of Psalmic scholarship moved toward the conclusion of an intentional structuring of the five books of the psalms. I believe it would have been helpful for the reader if the authors provided a fuller engagement with this concept of intentional editing and placement of lament psalms within the megastructure of the Psalter.

In conclusion, I recommend this volume to any person who is interested in gaining an introductory knowledge of the biblical interpretation of lament Psalms in the Christian faith tradition. More specifically, I highly suggest that anyone who is in pastoral ministry and is considering the topic of lament poetry as a teaching series

purchase a copy of *The Psalms as Christian Lament*. This volume provides ample information that can be applied to the preparation of biblical teaching in a congregational setting. It is not necessary that one read *The Psalms as Christian Worship* to understand the arguments presented in this volume; however, I recommend that both be purchased together for the purpose of more fully understanding the significance of the Psalms to the Christian faith tradition.

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A World Transformed: Exploring the Spirituality of Medieval Maps. Lisa Deam. Eugene: Cascade, 2015. ISBN: 9781625642837. Pp. xv + 142. \$19.00 (USD).

I'm sure the observation has been made before, but I've grown accustomed to seeing the word "accessible" employed in comments of advance praise on the back covers of academic volumes, only to find inside that "accessible" means only "moderately more readable" than other offerings in the same field. Thankfully, Lisa Deam's book is really and truly accessible: it's a genuine pleasure to read, a skillfully laid path that engages our minds and our spirits with each inviting step. From the outset, Deam is winsomely honest about her own surprising journey, initially inspired by undergraduate encounters with medieval art. "I loved the way that medieval artists saw their world: with creativity and in intimate connection with the creator. It became the way I see my own world, or the way I try to see it"; in particular, the seven-hundred-year-old Hereford Map "transformed not only the course of my scholarly career but also my journey with God" (1). As the book unfolds, the challenge Deam faces is that of persuading us that this and other medieval maps can offer us similar guidance on our own journeys.

Following an introduction that addresses the admittedly "foreign world" of these maps by arguing that we "need the vision of history shown on medieval maps to deepen our sense of belonging in God's world," such that we can interact with the Hereford Map "as an app for our time . . . a spiritual GPS for our journey with God" (2, 5), Deam devotes her next three chapters to "finding Christ." Chapter two, "Finding Christ at the Center," uses the medieval tendency of placing Christ in Jerusalem at the centre of world maps to prompt questions about where Christ fits in our lives today. "Begin with the cross," Deam says of the Hereford design. "Let Jerusalem shape the contours of the earth. The map's making contains an echo of what God did in the beginning, creating the world and ordering it around his son" (12). By contrast, the noisy clutter of today's world means "that Jesus sometimes gets crowded out. We forget the place that he once occupied in our lives, the passion that we

once had for him. Our world may no longer be recognizable to us” (13). Engaging with Col 1:15–17, Deam finds in the map’s cruciform centre (complemented by the Ebstorf Map, emphasizing Christ’s resurrection) a reminder to return to a truly Christ-centered worldview. The following chapter finds Christ in history: the maps’ relation of biblical history includes monstrous races, liminally placed, while the crucifixion, the “cure for monsters—the very remedy for sin,” reshapes that history from the centre outward, allowing us to “embrace our place,” small but important, in response (37, 43). Chapter four (“Finding Christ at the Edge”) returns to the monsters, observing how medieval Europeans illustrated the fears, dangers, and unknowns of their existence by placing them along the boundaries of maps—and how we often do the same.

As themes of “finding Christ” linked chapters two through four, so a “journeying” motif connects the next triad. Chapter five journeys to Jerusalem, introducing pilgrimage: the Hereford Map’s illustrations of major pilgrimage routes invite reflection on the cost of discipleship, whether undertaken on a physical path or an interior, metaphorical one. In chapter six, “Journeying through Life,” pilgrimage encompasses life itself—especially life in Christ. From the Exodus route as represented on the Hereford Map, to the “foreigners and strangers” motif in Heb 11 (included here in English and Latin, to emphasize pilgrims as *peregrini*, though the Greek wording is curiously absent), to lessons on perseverance drawn from the map’s inclusion of Odysseus, Deam guides us toward greater attentiveness in prayer, commending in this regard the practice of the daily examen. The book’s seventh and perhaps most demanding chapter, “Journeying through the Day,” considers the Psalter Map (ca. 1265), where “geography can teach us to tell spiritual time” (85). Having earlier helped readers to reorient themselves toward maps where east (and thus Asia) is at the top, Europe at the lower left, and Africa to the lower right, Deam now adds the Divine Office of fixed-hour prayer that psalters were meant to facilitate. She has us consider the daily life of an imagined, young, medieval housewife, moving through the “spiritual territories” pictured in each continent, before transposing the same exercise into our own lives: Europe as “the land of the familiar—our everyday work and responsibilities”; Africa, “with its monsters, is the fearsome land”; and Asia and the Holy Land, “our landscape of faith” (93). I would have appreciated seeing some admission of the postcolonial (or, given the Psalter Map’s antiquity, *precolonial!*) problems such an exercise might reinscribe, but I admired the chapter nonetheless—in part for its continued development of the book’s Christology, emphasizing Christ’s roles as creator, sustainer, and monster-defeater.

The final two chapters and the conclusion focus on “Being,” as Deam suggests spiritual practices to inculcate the preceding material into our lives. Delving once more into Scripture and the words of medieval writers, chapter eight (“Being Reborn”) gathers together images of Christ as mother: “In birthing the world, Jesus

gave a great gift to all who live therein. . . . Perhaps, in being surprised by the idea of Jesus giving birth, we are shocked out of our complacency and are able to reach new heights of compassion for what our savior went through on the cross” (104). Chapter nine, “Being Centered,” studies the Hereford Map’s depiction of Alexander the Great—whose conquests are notably confined to the map’s edges—as an example to be learned from when we find ourselves imitating it. Even in acts of service, Deam admits, “I want no less than to change the world. I scurry around the edges of the earth, building my empire of achievements” (120). In such moments, only the deliberate practice of resting in, and submitting to, God’s presence will help: “Restored by the center, I am ready to face the edge again” (121). The conclusion, “Toward a Practice of Centering on Christ,” cleverly offers a review—a “Map Full of Practices” (124)—that also serves as a call to begin practicing any of the exercises suggested earlier, any combination of which will help readers to reorder their lives around Christ.

Throughout the book, readers will benefit from illustrations taken from the maps in question, as well as from sets of “Reflections and Practices” at the conclusion of each chapter. These exercises are well-chosen, pushing us just enough into new territory, as it were, to challenge us to grow. The reflections for “Being Reborn,” for example, ask which names we are comfortable with using when addressing Jesus in prayer, and which ones we “shy away from,” nudging us toward bringing “whatever growing pains you are experiencing” to Jesus as mother, for instance (107–108). The book’s accessibility leaves some questions in want of nuance: Deam’s directions to meditate on Jer 29:11 and to “[r]ejoice that God has made you part of his plans for the world” neglects that passage’s imperial background, which may inadvertently reinforce its frequently decontextualized use in popular Christian media. That said, the book as a whole remains a marvellously reorienting read, supplying insights for mind and soul on nearly every page. As Deam says, in dialogue with Augustine, “No person lies beyond [God’s] reach. God redeems the edge, making it a place of miracles as well as monsters” (55).

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Recovering the Evangelical Sacrament: Baptisma Semper Reformandum.
Anthony R. Cross. Eugene: Pickwick, 2013. ISBN: 9781620328095. Pp. xvi
+ 403. \$46.00 (USD).

In *Recovering the Evangelical Sacrament*, Anthony Cross issues a call for the church “to restore baptism to its New Testament place in conversion and in the gospel we proclaim” (91). Drawing upon contemporary discussions of conversion

as a process that includes faith, baptism, and the work of the Spirit, Cross puts forward a biblically grounded argument that baptism neither precedes conversion (as in *paedobaptism*) nor follows it (as in *credobaptism*), but that baptism in water and Spirit is an essential part of conversion itself.

Cross begins with an overview of the state of contemporary baptismal debate, identifying a lack of progress in discussion between paedobaptists and credobaptists, and a worrying tendency among evangelicals to neglect the importance of baptism altogether. In chapter two he articulates his understanding of baptism as “conversion-baptism,” and responds to concerns that such an understanding poses a threat to the Reformation principle of *sola fide*. Drawing on the work of George Beasley-Murray, Cross identifies biblical texts which show that the gifts of salvation given to faith are also given to baptism, and argues that in the New Testament baptism and faith are inseparably connected, being the “outside and inside of the same thing” (56). He suggests that the tendency among evangelicals to separate faith and baptism, and to minimize the importance of baptism, reflects a gnostic dualism that is rooted in Zwinglian thought and Enlightenment empiricism rather than in the biblical witness.

The next two chapters are devoted to detailed exegetical discussions, focused on Eph 4:5 and 1 Cor 12:13 respectively. The concept of synecdoche is crucial in both discussions, with Cross arguing that, because of the inseparability of the elements of conversion/initiation, any of these elements may be a synecdoche for the whole. Thus, faith and the gift of the Spirit are implicitly included in the “one baptism” of Ephesians, and being “baptized in one Spirit” in 1 Cor 12 takes place in conjunction with the event of water-baptism.

Subsequent chapters build on these exegetical discussions. Noting that many evangelicals tend to resist a close connection between baptism and the gift of the Spirit, Cross argues for a biblically based sacramentalism which places priority on divine activity while also making room for human responsiveness. Cross criticizes Barth’s departure from Calvin’s sacramental understanding of baptism, and draws on the work of Pinnock to broaden the definition of sacrament to include all the ways that God might use created reality to reach out to his creatures. The following chapter appeals to Scripture, the early church, as well as Calvin and the Reformed tradition in order to “rehabilitate baptismal regeneration within Evangelical theology” (208). A chapter on the corporate dimension of baptism argues that baptism amounts to entry into both the gathered community as well as the universal body of Christ, exhorts evangelicals to ecumenical involvement, and responds to covenantal arguments for infant baptism. The penultimate chapter considers the ethical and liturgical aspects of baptism, arguing, against Barth, that it is unnecessary to reject sacramentalism in order to maintain the ethical aspects of baptism, and encouraging evangelicals to give greater attention to the liturgical

celebration of the relationship between baptism and the Christian life. A final chapter offers concrete suggestions for the reform of baptism in the life of the Church.

One of the strengths of the book is that a number of key exegetical issues are explored at length, such as the meaning of “one baptism” in Eph 4, as well as Cross’ argument, *pace* Dunn, that “baptized in one Spirit” in 1 Cor 12:13 should be understood as a synecdoche rather than as a metaphor. However, while some texts such as 1 Cor 12 receive close exegetical engagement, other significant texts, such as 1 Cor 6:11 and Titus 3:5, receive much more cursory treatment (see 106–107). Cross’ argument would have been more convincing if more attention were given to engaging substantively with non-baptismal and non-sacramental readings of the baptismal texts most crucial to his argument (e.g., Philip Towner on Titus 3, or Robert Jewett on Rom 6). While there is some engagement with broader ecumenical voices, Cross seems to be primarily aiming at the Reformed end of the evangelical spectrum. He does not engage substantively with Pentecostal biblical scholarship, simply noting that arguments for a post-conversion baptism of the Spirit have been answered by Dunn, Fee, Turner, and Thistleton.

I also noted that when he draws on the work of John Colwell, Cross’ criticism of Barth reflects a common mis-reading of Barth that has been corrected in recent work by Travis McMaken and others. I suggest that the difference between Cross and Barth is arguably not so much whether baptism is an event of conversion involving both divine and human activity, as whether conversion is a one-time process in which the Christian life begins (Cross) or an essential characteristic of the whole of the Christian life (Barth).

The majority of the material in *Recovering the Evangelical Sacrament* has been previously published in other contexts, and this book would have benefited from more careful editing to streamline the argument and to reduce excessive supporting quotations, overly long footnotes, and verbatim repetition (e.g., 53 and 183; 109 and 171; 165 and 179). There are times when the voices of others threaten to crowd out that of Cross himself (e.g., 81, where Stein’s view of the temporal nature of conversion is included in the text, while Cross places his own perspective in the footnotes). That said, in this book, the culmination of over twenty years of engagement with the question of baptism, Cross has amassed a wealth of evidence. He clearly demonstrates that his significant interpretive moves are supported by many scholars with solid evangelical credentials, thereby opening up a space for reluctant evangelicals to consider issues such as sacrament and baptismal regeneration, and contributing to the growing body of literature advocating a baptist sacramentalism.

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