

Book Reviews

Biblical Theology: The God of Christian Scripture. By John Goldingay. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.

Review by Dallas Pitts

Dr. Dallas Pitts serves at The Baptist College of Health Science in Memphis, Tennessee.

John Goldingay, David Allan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, contributes this volume to the growing number of recent biblical theologies. His previous works include *Old Testament Theology* and *Do We Need the New Testament? In Biblical Theology*, Goldingay gives a solid addition to his previous works and advances the idea that reading the Old Testament theologically in isolation from the New Testament yields a problem for Christians.

While Goldingay does not wish to establish a center to this biblical theology, he tries to communicate what the Bible teaches concerning the person and triumph of God, which lends itself toward the idea of a center. Furthermore, in forming his theology, he utilizes the common approach to delineate Scripture into four thematic categories: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Goldingay's strives to locate God's person and action in each of these categories. The author provides a context for grasping the Scriptures, which he seeks through attention to major themes. *Biblical Theology* divides into eight chapters, each dealing with an aspect of God's nature or creation.

The book contains two sections. The first section includes four chapters that constitute one of Goldingay's main emphases – God's person. The first chapter communicates his investigation into the person of God. It highlights God's character and includes many of the concepts one finds in a systematic theology.

Chapter two explores "God's Insight," a refreshing contribution to the volume and the literature in this area of scholarship. This chapter examines the revelation of God within the Scriptures. It demonstrates how God communicates through His written Word, as well as through human experience.

The third chapter examines God's creation and begins Goldingay's understanding through a consummation thematic scheme. Goldingay's themes in this chapter loosely follow the beginning of creation through the waywardness of humanity. His most creative contribution in this section is the discussion of angelic beings and the devil, especially the invalid power of the devil. This is a welcome

discussion as many biblical theologies do not discuss this topic. Overall, the chapter aims to show God's person in relation to the created order.

Chapter four finishes this section on God's person with a study of God's reign in relation to Israel as its rightful King. This reign is already happening through Jesus, but is not yet complete.

The second section discusses God's triumph in various facets. The most salient features of this section connect the person and work of Jesus with the overall triumph of God revealed in the biblical narrative. Chapter five deals with Jesus' life as the Son of God and the multifaceted nature of Jesus' death. It includes His carrying away sin, making restitution, and setting God's people on a path for service to God. This approach demonstrates Goldingay's firm commitment to the work of Christ as a sacrifice and to God's faithfulness to the world. After this chapter, Goldingay naturally moves to the nature of God's people as an outworking of God's triumph over sin and death through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In chapter six, Goldingay aims at the congregational nature of God's children. This concept communicates biblical ecclesiology, focusing on some analogies and metaphors that convey the nature of God's people in relation to Him and each other. One key ecclesiological theme is Goldingay's emphasis on God's people as a household. The emphasis on household in this section stands as a basis for further discussion of community and relationship between God and fellow believers.

Chapter seven is the shortest chapter, but focuses on something central to the Christian experience – worship. However, the discussion is more holistic in outlook than merely institutional commitments. It concerns a Christian's walking in line with the Holy Spirit in all of life. In the final chapter, Goldingay ends with the title "God's Triumph," which fits nicely into the interpretive grid. This final chapter highlights the motifs of God's judgment as well as Christ's appearing.

Goldingay's desire to aid readers in grasping the whole of Scripture is clear and attainable through his use of central motifs. However, the text reads more like a systematic theology than a biblical theology. This approach does not condemn the book, but clarifies what the reviewer sees as a complication in locating it within the scholarly works on biblical theology. However, the God-centeredness of the work rings throughout and gives thematic strength to the entire volume. A weakness of the work is a lack of interaction with contemporary biblical theologies in favor of older works. However, this omission is minor and does not detract from the book's overall aims. The final assessment of the work is positive as several features within a few chapters or sections, such as "God's Insight," "Devil," and "God's Triumph," provide some fresh ideas to this area of theology.

The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets. By Richard Alan Fuhr Jr., and Gary E. Yates. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.

Review by Robert J. Eason III

Robert J. Eason serves as a Youth Pastor at Angels Way Baptist Church in Marion, Arkansas and is a PhD student at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Minor Prophets not only comprise one of the most neglected sections of the Old Testament, but of the entire Bible. Gary Yates and Richard Fuhr seek to bridge the disconnect between the modern reader and the Minor Prophets in their book *The Message of the Twelve*. Yates, professor of Old Testament at Liberty University, received a BA from Washington College and the ThM and PhD degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary. Serving as the assistant professor of Biblical Studies at Liberty University, Fuhr received his MDiv from Liberty University and PhD in Old Testament from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

A quick glance at the publications available on the Minor Prophets reveals no lack of accessible material on the subject. The existing material on the Minor Prophets range from highly technical works to simple surveys. Yates and Fuhr present a work that attempts a mediating position between the two spectrums. While the book reveals a high dependence upon the Hebrew language, the authors present a book accessible to persons without a knowledge of Hebrew through transliterations and detailed explanations of Hebrew terms. This approach presents a work that remains useful for scholars with a working knowledge of Hebrew without speaking beyond those unfamiliar with the language.

Instead of examining each book as a contained literary unit, Yates and Fuhr follow the academic approach of the last two decades that focuses on the Minor Prophets as a single unified collection under the heading of the Book of the Twelve. This approach seeks to show that the twelve prophets speak in unison. The authors' approach appears prominently in the two major divisions of the book. In the first four chapters, Yates and Fuhr examine the historical background, the literary structure, the role of the prophets, and the canonical context of the book. The second section of the book contains a detailed commentary on each of the twelve prophets. Yates and Fuhr present a work that attempts to find a balance between an introduction to the twelve prophets, academic excellence, and personal application. This division produces a slightly repetitious feel to each chapter as the authors examine the prophets through the lens of these three major sections.

The Message of the Twelve strives to introduce the important background information on each prophet while introducing key theological issues. Each chapter

concludes with a brief application that shows how the message of the prophets speaks to the contemporary church.

Much of the material presented in *The Message of the Twelve* follows a very conservative view. However, Yates and Fuhr unnecessarily cast doubt on the authorship of some of the prophets. The book presents the possibility that someone other than the prophets may have penned the books of Hosea, Jonah, and Zechariah. This approach seems to stem from an attempt to satisfy both conservatives and persons who hold more moderate viewpoints. The problem with this approach is that such a stance fails to please either perspective.

Yates and Fuhr do not hide any theological bias. Rather, *The Message of the Twelve* seeks to move away from the interpretive approach that views the Minor Prophets through a futurist lens. While the authors hold that the twelve prophets proclaim an eschatological hope, Yates and Fuhr do not attempt to decipher a timetable for this event. According to the authors, individuals who constantly look for a current eschatological fulfillment in the message of The Twelve fail to grasp the purpose of the twelve prophets. Yates and Fuhr note that instead of trying to find a “detailed roadmap of how the kingdom will come,” preachers should focus on proclaiming the hope of restoration and the coming kingdom.

The Message of the Twelve serves as an excellent resource for surveying the Minor Prophets. Yates and Fuhr excel in clearly communicating a section of the Old Testament that many consider extremely difficult and obscure. *The Message of the Twelve* is a welcome volume that will help many to engage this important segment of the Old Testament. While this work exceeds in presenting both an exegetical analysis and overview of the theological issues in the Minor Prophets, the book will not meet the needs of scholars seeking a serious academic study of the prophets. Yates and Fuhr try to overcome this challenge by providing a well guided path to other excellent resources. *The Message of the Twelve* should be approached as a strong introductory work that points the reader in the right direction for deeper study.

Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture. By William Edgar. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017.

Review by Garry D. Graves

Garry D. Graves has a MDiv from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a PhD from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. He serves as Assistant Professor of Theology at the Liberty University School of Divinity.

William Edgar, Professor of Apologetics and Coordinator of the Apologetics Department at Westminster Theological Seminary, holds the John Boyer Chair of Evangelism and Culture. He has authored *A Transforming Vision*, *Francis Schaeffer on the Christian Life*, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*, and *Truth in All Its Glory*.

Edgar demonstrates that secular thinkers generally support cultural studies as a replacement for a theocentric view of the world while traditional Christians have warned about the dangers of emphasizing cultural preferences at the expense of accepting sinful practices. Edgar's main goal includes defining culture as an aspect of creation in which God continues to operate.

Edgar provides an overview of secularists Edward Burnett Tylor, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida, and others. Edgar compares the influences of Marx and Nietzsche. While Marx promoted redemption for the poor, Nietzsche supported the view that the powerful would reign over the powerless. Edgar acknowledges that these and other secular views stand in direct opposition to biblical faith.

Edgar outlines the traditional views expressed by Christians such as H. Richard Niebuhr, T. S. Eliot, C. S. Lewis, Abraham Kuyper, Cornelius Van Til, Francis Schaeffer, Wayne Grudem, Charles Colson, David Wells, John Piper, et al. Edgar concludes that the views of H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) in his classic book entitled *Christ and Culture* includes flaws by suggesting that Christians should be in opposition to culture. Edgar dismisses the classic views of Niebuhr and Kuyper and prefers the stances of modern thinkers.

Edgar refers to the biblical references that demonstrate opposition for embracing human culture as *contra mundane* texts. Some of the significant texts cited by Edgar include Matthew 6:25, Matthew 22:15, Mark 10:17-21, Acts 2:40, John 8:23, 1 John 2:15, and James 4:4. Edgar contends that the biblical conflict presented by culture opponents lies in the direction of opposition to evil rather than opposition to culture.

Edgar presents the main goal of the book as a cultural mandate: "Simply put, the basic argument of this book is that the Bible teaches that cultural engagement before the living God is, along with worship, the fundamental calling for the human race" (p. 87). He develops the essence of the mandate in three aspects. First, the heart

of cultural relevance revolves around the covenant blessing of God on the human race. Edgar summarizes, “He [God] has given us all the gifts we need to flourish and return [H]is love. Nothing in culture makes any sense apart from God’s covenant presence” (p. 176). Edgar finds that God has called humans to know his covenant presence.

Second, God’s original goal for humanity was *to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with our productive presence*. Edgar writes, “The human race was to populate the world beyond the garden, always with the purpose of using all its diversity and talents in the discovery of God’s life-giving purposes; in a word, culture-making throughout the world” (p. 176). According to Edgar, the goal as originally established continues for populating the earth.

Third, God created human beings *to rule over the creation with benevolent lordship*. Edgar’s final description for the essence of the mandate includes this premise: “Always under the greater rule of God, we are vice-regents in this marvelous place, uncovering its riches and taming what is untamed so that all redounds to God’s greater glory” (p. 176). For Edgar, a significant aspect of living includes discovering and experiencing the vast expanses of God’s creation.

According to Edgar, God created human beings in His image to develop and interact with culture. Edgar proposes that the Fall did not prevent humanity from experiencing culture. Edgar concludes, “Because of the Fall, culture can and has become sinister. Christ’s redeeming grace moves culture in the right direction, ennobles it, and allows it to extend the realm of God’s *shalom*, [H]is goodness, [H]is justice, [H]is love” (p. 177). Edgar contends that cultural activity improves the human condition.

One of the book’s strengths includes the outlining of misguided efforts by atheists and secular thinkers who have attempted to utilize culture in gaining an advantage for refuting a theocentric worldview. He also includes classic views of Christians concerned with maintaining a healthy distance from an exaggerated acceptance of cultural relevance. Another strength of the book involves Edgar’s reminder that human beings should intentionally experience and enjoy God’s creation. A correct understanding of eternal life includes the expectation of peace, comfort, and joy in heaven with infinite duration, but also of fellowship with God in the current life.

An area of weakness includes the need to address a greater concern for the devastating effects of the Fall. All of creation still groans under the weight of sin (Rom. 8:22). This dilemma embraces tradition and culture devised by humans. Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension completed the redemption plan, but some events in Revelation remain unfulfilled.

Another weakness involves the need for a clear distinction between an interest in human culture and things of God. Christians should avoid becoming too closely affiliated with worldly pursuits in a fallen world (Eph. 6:12). Paul reminded

the Corinthians to come out from among unbelievers and maintain separation (2 Cor. 6:17). Paul also reminded the Colossians to set their hearts and minds on that which is above (Col. 3:1-2). Jesus told His disciples to live in the world but not be of it (John 17:16). Accordingly, Christians eagerly await the Second Coming of Christ when all of creation will be returned to order.

Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles that can Radically Change Your Parenting. By Paul David Tripp. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

Review by Michael Collins

Dr. Michael Collins is professor at a Christian academy in southeastern Asia.

What about your child(ren) frustrates you as a parent? Is it when he embarrasses you in the supermarket? Is it when she talks back to her mother? Is it when they fail to see (and fail to appreciate!) just how good they have it? In *Parenting*, Paul David Tripp says the core of the issue happens when we get frustrated when our children act like young people who actually need parenting. He encourages parents to re-orient their view of parenting and change their description of what it means to be successful parents. Tripp writes, "Successful parenting is not about achieving goals (that you have no power to produce) but about being a usable and faithful tool in the hands of the One Who alone is able to produce good things in your children" (19).

Pastor, author, and conference speaker, Tripp also serves as president of Paul Tripp Ministries, and executive director of the Center for Pastoral Life and Care in Ft. Worth, TX. He has authored seventeen books and created fourteen teaching series related to Christian living. His book titles include *New Morning Mercies*, *Relationships*, and *What did You Expect? Redeeming The Realities Of Marriage*.

In *Parenting*, Tripp explains what many parents do not understand: God never calls parents to produce obedient children, nor does He ask parents to make miniatures of themselves. God invites parents to be the tools that He will use to lead their children to holy redemption. With this statement as his thesis, Tripp encourages parents to change their view of what they are called to do.

As mentioned above, this volume means to be a re-orienting book. Tripp penned this work to give "vision, motivation, renewed strength, and the rest of heart that every parent needs." What I believe makes this book unique, and absolutely essential, is Tripp's call to parents to "expend the major effort, time, and energy of your life for your children's welfare." In no way does he intimate that parents bend to

every whim of their children or hold them up as mini-gods. Instead, he calls parents to ask: "What is the will and plan of the One who sent *me*?" For Tripp, the answer is simple – lead your children to redemption. Every decision in a parent's life should revolve around this understanding.

Parenting guides the reader through what Tripp considers fourteen essential principles of parenting – Calling, Grace, Law, Inability, Identity, Process, Lost, Authority, Foolishness, Character, False Gods, Control, Rest, and Mercy. At the beginning of each chapter, he defines a different principle in the context of parenting. This approach creates an easy format, making the book quite readable. Here is a sampling of three chapter headings.

Ch. 1 Calling. Principle: Nothing is more important in your life than being one of God's tools to form a human soul.

Ch. 3 Law. Principle: Your children need God's law, but you cannot ask the Law to do what only grace can accomplish.

Ch. 6 Process. Principle: You must be committed as a parent to long-view parenting because change is a process and not an event.

These chapters highlight and provide a synopsis of Tripp's re-orienting vision. His motive for writing is to provide parents with a "big picture parenting worldview that can explain, guide, and motivate all the things that God calls [individuals] to do as parents."

Throughout each chapter, Tripp displays honesty about his personal struggles and failures as a parent. At no time does the reader sense that Tripp presents himself as an expert. On the contrary, he confesses several mistakes, many of which are admittedly embarrassing. Readers should find this refreshing and appealing. No scolding appears here, only grace-filled encouragement. Constantly, Tripp reminds readers that as they parent their children, God is simultaneously parenting *them*.

As captivating and promising as this work is, *Parenting* is not without controversy, and Tripp admits as much. He shows he is not afraid of such controversy when he confesses that he is troubled and saddened that "success in work and career has become too important" for many parents. He is concerned that even Christian parents are comfortable with latchkey kids, and adds that for many workers in vocational ministry, the commitment to ministry gets in the way of doing what God has called them to do and be as parents. According to Tripp, these issues require courage for Christians to discuss.

Among other books in the category, I believe *Parenting* clearly separates itself. Many books deal with behavioral or societal issues but do not approach the biblical principles Tripp presents. I know of no other work that presents the role and privilege of parenting in the same terms.

With *Parenting*, Tripp has given the body of Christ a wonderful gift, which is bound to be an instant classic. One of his rich and sweet admonitions should resonate with all parents: "God has called you to be an agent of His rescuing, forgiving, transforming, and delivering grace. You cannot allow yourself to settle for anything less."

Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study. By Jonathan Griffiths. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017.

Review by John R. Williams III

Dr. John R. Williams III, serves as Professor of Bible at Trinity Baptist College in Jacksonville, Florida.

Jonathan Griffiths is the lead pastor of Metropolitan Bible Church in Ottawa, Canada. He has pastored several churches and is the author of several works. His work fills the gap that exists between many books that deal with the mechanics of preaching, but fail to examine the definition of preaching as defined in a post-apostolic context. The follow up question is: How does preaching in the New Testament relate to the preaching of the Old Testament prophets or Jesus and His disciples?

Many books deal with the mechanics of preaching. Significant authors have penned works that deal with delivery, structure, and the mechanics of preaching a good sermon. Most of these works assume that the person reading the work has a desire to proclaim God's Word. Consequently, many books fail to lay out a biblical theology of preaching from the New Testament. *Preaching in the New Testament* makes a solid contribution in this area. Griffiths discusses what preaching the Word of God actually means. He begins from an exegetical and theological argument for preaching and concludes with how Christians can better engage people with the Word of God.

The book has three main sections. The first section discusses the method of preaching. Griffiths seeks to answer the question of whether or not a biblical mandate for preaching exists. He also wants to see if the preaching of Jesus, the apostles, and the early church are a sufficient replacement for the Old Testament prophets.

Part one deals with the groundwork of preaching. His treatment of key theological and exegetical terms relating to preaching is excellent. He explains that the Greek word for "preach the good news" occurs fifty-four times in the New Testament. The New Testament authors use the word for *proclaim* eighteen times.

They use the term for *preach* or *proclaim aloud* fifty-nine times. He argues that the words refer to the act of making a public proclamation of the Scripture. He then focuses on examining the word for *preach* in selected passages of Scripture.

Part two includes several exegetical examinations of key passages concerning preaching. He examines the third and fourth chapters of 2nd Timothy, Romans chapter ten, and several passages from 1st and 2nd Corinthians, as well as First Thessalonians, and Hebrews. Each excursus deals with a detailed analysis of the Scripture, key words, as well as the writer's intended audience. Of all of the exegetical studies, Griffiths focuses the most attention on Hebrews. His interaction with the message of the book helps to show that the preaching of Jesus was foundational in the life of practice of the early church.

The final section provides a summary and conclusion of the findings in the previous two sections. The author adds some poignant truths that can benefit any preacher or teacher. His section on showing the continuity between the "then" and "now" is extremely helpful. He also concludes by demonstrating that preaching the Word of God should be of primary importance to a pastor.

This book provides a short, but necessary look into some of the most important aspects of preaching, namely research and development of the theology that is based in Scripture. One of the positives about this book is the conversational prose. The book is very readable and does not flow like an academic textbook. Griffith has included several helpful charts and word studies that augment his arguments.

One of the weaknesses is the author's use of transliterations in the footnotes. The author also has a habit of referencing his other works throughout the book. The work is well researched, and provides a practical guide that admonishes preachers with a solid foundation from which to exercise their most important mission, to preach the Word of God.

This work would be helpful for a layperson as well as a supplemental text to augment the many fine preaching textbooks that are in print today. Written for a Bible college or seminary audience, this book encourages future pastors and Christian leaders to make the preaching of the Word of God their primary goal.

***Reformation 500: How the Greatest Revival Since Pentecost Continues to Shape the World Today.* By Ray Van Neste and J. Michael Garrett, eds. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016.**

Review by Mark E. Thompson

Dr. Mark Thompson is adjunct professor at MABTS and serves as pastor at First Baptist Church, Hughes, Arkansas.

J. Michael Garrett is assistant editor of the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University. Ray Van Neste is director of the Ryan Center of Biblical Studies and professor of Biblical Studies at Union University. He is also an author in the areas of biblical studies, history, and pastoral ministry. This compilation celebrates the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

The Reformation reclaimed the primacy of the Bible and the importance of the Gospel and the spread of its message. In this book, eleven authors from Union University discuss how the remnants of the Reformation impact Christianity in our age. Baptists find their history rooted in the fruits of the Reformation and owe much to various men, including Luther, who promoted “justification by faith alone,” along with leaders who stood for faithfulness to the Scriptures over the unity of the church. These reformers elevated the mission and message of the Scriptures. They deserve not only celebration, but continued recognition for their determination.

The authors explore the impact of movements and individuals from the Reformation and before. A medieval group, the Lollards, laid the groundwork for the Reformation banner of *sola scriptura*. James Patterson explores the like-minded commitment shared by Anabaptists and modern Baptists.

The chapter on John Calvin is especially strong. In Baptist life today, Calvinism is a buzz word for church division, but the author strongly points to Calvin’s work of unifying the church as opposed to dividing it. Calvin sought to provide unity in truth, rather than unity at the expense of truth.

The authors dedicate approximately one third of the book to Martin Luther and his impact on the Reformation and beyond. Luther’s ecclesiology played a defining role in determining the true church from the false. He promoted the idea of the Christian life as one of continual death and resurrection. The Christian dies first at the cross and immediately is risen because of the cross. The church’s primary purpose is as witness to the cross in the way it functions and in its message to the world. Luther played a primary role in developing the mindset of the church toward vocational calling, higher education, and the church’s relationship to politics.

Particularly enjoyable are the chapters on Reformation worship, Rembrandt, and the art of the Reformation. The worship of the Reformation reclaimed the role of music in the church. While not as important as the preaching of the Word of God,

Christians must pay attention to the message of music and not the repetitive nature or the beat of the music. The author reminds us that worship is not emotional, but theological.

The chapter on Rembrandt focuses on Reformation art as it represented a “fundamental shift in the way many Western European Christians viewed the Bible and salvation.” He painted within the scope of the person and work of the Lord Jesus and the salvation He provides. Rembrandt illuminated the primacy of the Scripture through his art.

The book is worthwhile for any Christian, but especially for persons who study history. The book is primarily an academic work, but the casual reader will find it helpful. Overall, this work contributes to the field of church history and helps readers connect the important events of the Reformation with the development and relationship of the church to modern culture.