

Top Picks

of Commentaries on the New Testament

by

The New Testament Department of
Talbot School of Theology

- Clinton E. Arnold, Chair
- Doug Geringer
- Joe Hellerman
- Moyer Hubbard
- Alan Hultberg
- Michelle Lee
- Victor Rhee
- Michael J. Wilkins

October, 2005

Preface to the 2005 Revision

Have there really been enough commentaries published in the last six years to warrant a revision of *Top Picks*? The answer is a resounding “yes”! Literally hundreds of commentaries and New Testament resources have appeared in this short period of time.

The second edition of *Top Picks* incorporates 23 new commentaries (with reviews) selected to replace others from the previous edition. Many other recently published works are noted in the section entitled, “Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention.” On some of the NT books (like Romans), the reviewers concluded that none of the newer commentaries were that much better than the ones they had previously selected, so the selections remain unchanged. For other books (like 1 & 2 Thessalonians), the entire lineup has changed because of the publication of so many quality commentaries.

A new feature to this revision is a section listing “top picks” of foundational research tools for New Testament studies including volumes on backgrounds, Greek grammars, dictionaries and encyclopedias, and standard editions of primary source material.

It is not only scholars at other institutions writing the commentaries. Our own faculty has been very busy publishing commentaries and a variety of useful resources for the study of the New Testament.

Many of us have eagerly awaited the publication of Mike Wilkins’s commentary on **Matthew in the NIV Application Commentary series**. This 1,000-page commentary is a monument to the many years of research Dr. Wilkins has invested in Matthew’s gospel. But it is not a commentary just for scholars. It is an application commentary that will be a tremendously useful tool for all who lead Bible studies and preach through Matthew’s gospel. This commentary was awarded the Silver Medallion Award for excellence in Christian publishing by the Evangelical Christian Publisher’s Association.

Mike Wilkins, Moyer Hubbard, and Clinton Arnold all wrote commentaries for the **Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary** released in 2002. This four-volume set is a passage-by-passage commentary focused on illuminating the NT text on the basis of cultural, religious, social, and political background information as well as the latest archaeological evidence. The set includes numerous full-color pictures, maps, and diagrams. For this set, Wilkins wrote on Matthew, Hubbard contributed 2 Corinthians, and Arnold wrote the commentaries on Acts, Ephesians, and Colossians (in addition to serving as general editor). This commentary was also recognized by the Evangelical Christian Publisher’s Association with the Gold Medallion Award.

By the time the next edition of this guide is published, I hope that we can report on the publication of some of the first volumes in a brand new series that is being launched by Zondervan Publishing House. It will be called the **Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series**. This 20-volume series will include some of the following distinctive features: a

graphical display of the text of each passage, a 2-3 sentence identification of the main idea of each passage, a rigorous application of the grammatical insights students learn in second year Greek, and a “theology in application” section for each passage. The editorial board for the series consists of myself, Bill Mounce, Tom Schreiner, George Guthrie, and Mark Strauss. The first volumes will probably appear in 2007.

The next edition will hopefully also include notification of the publication of Dr. Victor Rhee’s **commentary on Hebrews** for the Asian Bible Commentary series. This series will make a unique contribution by focusing on a solid interpretation of the text but drawing out implications for Asian church contexts.

Our faculty has also made some extraordinary contributions to the field of New Testament studies that have been published by **Cambridge University Press** in their prestigious Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series in the past few years:

Moyer V. Hubbard. *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought.* Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 119 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Joe Hellerman. *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum.* Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 132 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Michelle V. Lee. *Paul, the Stoics and the Body of Christ.* Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 137 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

I don’t know of any New Testament faculty *in any seminary or university in the world* that has as many Cambridge SNIS authors as Biola/Talbot. This will increase by one more when Biola undergraduate Biblical studies professor **Mickey Klink’s** St. Andrews dissertation is published in this series.

Over the past few years, Dr. Victor Rhee has kept as busy as ever publishing numerous articles on the book of Hebrews. A revision of his dissertation was also published by Peter Lang:

Victor Rhee. *Faith in Hebrews: Analysis within the Context of Christology, Eschatology, and Ethics.* New York: Peter Lang, 2001.

To keep up on the variety of articles published by the NT faculty of Talbot, check out the section on “Talbot Authors” to find the contributions we have made.

We hope you find this new edition of *Top Picks* useful!

Clinton E. Arnold
Professor and Chairman, Department of New Testament
Editor of the *Top Picks of Commentaries on the New Testament*
October, 2005

Preface to the Original Edition

Almost once a week, I am approached by a student and asked, “Dr. Arnold, I’m starting a series at my church on Romans (or any other NT book) and would like to know what you think are the three or four best commentaries available on that book.” Every professor in our department is asked a similar question on a regular basis.

I understand why. We are blessed with dozens of commentaries on every book of the NT. A quick look at a CBD catalog illustrates this. There are numerous series of commentaries and many stand-alone volumes. Given the bewildering variety of commentaries available, the high cost of books (ICC volumes can sell for as much as \$50-\$70 each), and for most of us, a tight budget, which commentaries are the best investment?

The New Testament Department of Talbot School of Theology got together and decided to formalize what we tell students in the classroom. We have chosen our favorite three or four commentaries on each book of the NT. We have written a concise review of our top picks so that you will know why we have chosen these particular commentaries. Our principal criterion was to choose the three to four commentaries that would work well together in preparing a Bible study or a sermon. Consequently, we have a mix of exegetical, expository (or, mid-level), and application-oriented commentaries.

Often, it was not easy to narrow it down to three or four, so we have included a section on “Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention.” We merely mention these and do not include a review.

We are also aware of commentaries currently being written or in production. We have noted these in a section called “Watch For.” On each book of the NT, there are numerous specialized studies on aspects of background, theology, and other features that have been published as academic monographs or journal articles. We have included a section called, “Outstanding Special Studies,” to highlight these studies that we have found particularly significant and helpful.

Talbot profs, of course, do their share of writing and we want to make you aware of what we have written on the various NT books. Check out the section on “Talbot Authors” to find the contributions we have made.

We hope you find this helpful.

Clinton E. Arnold
Professor of New Testament
Editor of the *Top Picks of Commentaries on the New Testament*
May, 1999

Abbreviations of Series and Publishers

AB	Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday)
BEC	Baker Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House)
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary Series (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson)
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan)
Hermeneia	Hermeneia Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press)
ICC	International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark)
IVPNTC	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary Series (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press)
NAC	New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman)
NCB	New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans)
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson)
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans)
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans)
NIVApp	The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan)
Pillar	Pillar Commentary Series (Eerdmans)
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans)
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson)
ZEC	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, <i>to appear in 2007 and beyond</i>)

Places to Purchase Commentaries

Biola University Bookstore

13800 Biola Ave., La Mirada, CA 90639 (562) 903-4883

(on the Biola University campus between the Chase Gymnasium and the Student Union building)

- The public is welcome. You do not need to be a student to use the campus bookstore.

The management of the Biola University Bookstore has made a commitment to have each of these volumes in stock and offer them at a discount. They will be offered at enough of a discount to make your purchase price competitive.

Other Local Bookstores

- ◆ In Christ Books: 14515 Valley View Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90607 (just past McDonalds on Valley View near Rosecrans); (562) 623-0505.
- ◆ House of Bibles (Fullerton): 123 E. Commonwealth; (714) 992-5081

Mail Order

- ◆ Christian Book Distributors (CBD), P.O. Box 7000; Peabody, MA 01961; Orders: 1-978-977-5000; www.christianbook.com
- ◆ www.amazon.com
- ◆ www.barnesandnoble.com
- ◆ www.eisenbrauns.com
- ◆ www.dovebooks.com

Top Picks of Foundational Resources for Doing NT Research

Compiled by Dr. Clinton E. Arnold

Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

- *ISBE: International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols.) – A great first place to check. Be sure to use the edition the revised edition published in the 1980's. You should own this set and have it readily available for use.
- *IVP's Dictionaries* (available in electronic format in the IVP Essential Library software).
 - *DJG: Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*
 - *DPL: Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*
 - *DLNTD: Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments* – This covers Acts, Hebrews to Revelation, and the apostolic period to A.D. 150 (including the Apostolic Fathers).
 - *DNTB: Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds.* – This work was just published and is of extraordinary help with background materials.
- *ABD: Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.) – An excellent reference tool, but of uneven value. Some articles are veritable gold mines; others are disappointing. (available in electronic format as an add-on to the Logos Bible Software).
- *OCD³: Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edition).
- *ODCC³: Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd edition).

Greek Word Studies

- *BAUER, Walter, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* Revised and Edited by F. W. Danker based on W. Bauer's 6th edition. 3rd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. ISBN: 0226039331. –This is the first work that you should consult in doing any word study! This is the standard Greek lexicon for the New Testament. (available in electronic format as an add-on in either BibleWorks or the Logos Bible Software).
- *NIDNTT. New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.* Edited by Colin Brown. 4 Volumes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976-78. (available in electronic format in Zondervan's Pradis software).
- *TDNT (or, "Kittel"):* *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Gerhard Kittel. 10 Volumes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1974. (available in electronic format in the Logos Bible Software).

Greek Grammar

- WALLACE, Daniel, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. –This is the most commonly used intermediate grammar in seminaries today. It is exceptionally helpful on grammatical questions with ample examples with helpful explanations. (available in electronic format as an add-on to Bible Works or Logos).
- BDF: F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Translated and revised by R. W. Funk. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961. –This has long been the standard Greek reference grammar. Some of the grammatical descriptions, especially regarding tense, have now been revised by modern linguistics (viz. verbal aspect theory).
- PORTER, S.E. *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992. – Don't let the title mislead you; this is actually an intermediate grammar. This book is heavily informed by modern linguistic theory.

NT Backgrounds

- *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002. 4 Volumes of 500 pages per volume. 17 contributors. – Contains contributions by Michael Wilkins (“Matthew”), Moyer Hubbard (“2 Corinthians”), and Clinton E. Arnold (“Acts,” “Ephesians,” and “Colossians”).
- BARNETT, Paul. *Jesus & the Rise of Early Christianity. A History of New Testament Times* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999). –An excellent volume on NT history. We are using this as the principal text for the “World of the NT” class at Talbot. It provides the story of Christian origins developing it chronologically.
- FERGUSON, Everett, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993. – An excellent survey of the world of the NT topically arranged.

Recommended Standard Editions of Important Primary Sources

- **Pseudepigrapha: Charlesworth**
James H. Charlesworth, Ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. 2 Vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983-85.
- **Josephus: Loeb**
H. St. J. Thackeray, R. Marcus, A. Wikgren, and L. H. Feldman. *Josephus*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926-65.
(Electronic version of Josephus available in BibleWorks of both the Greek text and the English. Greek text is based on the 1890 B. Niese edition morphologically tagged by Drs. J. -N. Aletti and A. Gieniusz of the Pontifical Biblical Institute. The English translation is that of the 1828 Whiston translation.)

- **Philo: Loeb**
F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, J. W. Earp, and R. Marcus. *Philo*. Loeb Classical Library. 12 Vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929-53.
- **Mishnah: Danby**
H. Danby. *The Mishnah*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933.
(J. Neusner edition available in electronic format as an add-on to the Logos Bible Software).
- **Babylonian Talmud: Soncino**
I. Epstein, Ed. *The Babylonian Talmud*. 35 Vols (rpt. in 18). London: Soncino Press, 1935-52 (rpt. 1961).
- **Jerusalem Talmud: Neusner**
Jacob Neusner, Ed. *The Talmud of the Land of Israel. A Preliminary Translation and Explanation*. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism. 1- Volumes
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983-
- **Apocrypha: NRSV**
The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. (available in electronic format in BibleWorks).
- **Dead Sea Scrolls: Martinez**
F. Garcia Martinez, Ed. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. 2d Ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
Geza Vermes, Ed. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. New York: Penguin, 1997.
(a morphologically tagged electronic edition of the Hebrew texts is available in electronic format as an add-on to BibleWorks)
- **Nag Hammadi: Robinson**
James M. Robinson, Ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library In English*. 4th Ed. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- **LXX: Rahlfs**
Alfred Rahlfs, Ed. *Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935, 1979. (available in electronic format in BibleWorks).
- **Apostolic Fathers: Holmes**
Bart D. Ehrman. *The Apostolic Fathers*. 2 Vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.
Michael W. Holmes, Ed. *The Apostolic Fathers*. 2d Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.

NT Theologies

- THIELMAN, Frank. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- MARSHALL, I. H. *New Testament Theology*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- LADD, George. *A Theology of the New Testament*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). –Long recognized as the classic introduction to NT Theology.
- GUTHRIE, Donald. *Theology of the New Testament*. InterVarsity, 1981.
- DUNN, James D. G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Eerdmans, 1997. – Now the standard biblical theology of Paul and his letters.
- Cambridge University Press “New Testament Theology” Series. –This series will consist of volumes on every NT book. Some that are available include: U. Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (1995); W. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (1999).

Important NT Journals

New Testament Journals	Key Evangelical Journals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>New Testament Studies</i> (Cambridge) • <i>Novum Testamentum</i> (Brill) • <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> (Sheffield) • <i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> • <i>Biblica</i> • <i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i> • <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> • <i>Neotestamentica</i> (South Africa) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i> ▪ <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i> ▪ <i>Trinity Journal</i> ▪ <i>Themelios</i> ▪ <i>Evangelical Quarterly</i> ▪ <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> ▪ <i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

The Commentaries

Matthew

Reviewer: Michael J. Wilkins

Studies of Matthew's gospel – critical to conservative – have exploded in the last 25 years. New commentaries have come out in an almost mind-boggling stream. But this concentrated study of Matthew has provided a wealth of important, mature insights. The next few years should see the conclusion of this phase of Matthean study, so the commentaries listed below will be reliable tools for several years.

Leon Morris. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Pillar Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

This volume, in the Pillar Commentary series, bridges the gap between some of the older classic expositors of the century and the more recent. Leon Morris, retired principle of Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia, has been a bulwark, evangelical exegete for many years, and this volume shows his wisdom. Although the copyright date is 1992, you will find in the footnotes few references to recent work in Matthew. This is a drawback for those wanting to stay up to date on recent discussion. However, this does not mean that the commentary is uninformed. Instead, Morris uses an older lexical approach to the Greek text, especially discussing morphological and etymological issues that underlie the text, as is revealed in his frequent use of *TDNT* and works such as Moule's *Idiom Book*. Most of the works cited are prior to 1980. However, Morris has a classic, genuine grasp of the meaning of the text and communicates that meaning in a warm, pastoral fashion.

Morris is sympathetic to the early dating of Matthew and to the authorship of the apostle Matthew, but is reluctant to express affinity with any of the competing theories for resolving the Synoptic Problem. Overall, Morris wants to contend for the authenticity of the material that Matthew was intent to pass on to his community. His brief treatment of these issues does not breathe unfamiliarity with the general arguments, but rather a sense of urgency to treat the text itself carefully without expending too much time on introductory issues.

The commentary proper is English based, but treats the Greek text in the footnotes. Warm pastoral comments are a regular feature of Morris' style, but they do not generally interfere with a serious treatment of the text.

Donald Hagner. *Matthew*. 2 volumes. Word Biblical Commentary 33 A-B. Dallas: Word, 1993, 1995.

Donald Hagner, who holds the George Eldon Ladd Chair of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, has provided in these two volumes a comprehensive exegetical commentary on Matthew from a professedly evangelical perspective. The commentary requires the basic use of Greek, but is not burdensome.

Hagner demonstrates acquaintance with the full range of interpretative perspectives, and offers careful analysis of the competing options. His conclusions, while tending to come through a historical-critical methodology, are broadly evangelical. For example, he is sympathetic to the early (i.e., pre-A.D. 70) dating of Matthew, and sees the apostle Matthew standing behind the majority of the gospel material (although he understands the final editor of the gospel to be a Hellenistic Jewish Christian disciple from Matthean circle. Hagner contends for the authenticity of the oral sayings of Jesus which Matthew

faithfully passed on (see pp. xlvi-1), but also contends that the narratives have been shaped by Matthew – without losing their historical character – to meet the needs of the readers (cf. xxxix-xliii). Hagner tends to walk a careful line between these two emphases.

Michael J. Wilkins. *Matthew. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.*

For most of church history Matthew has been the most influential of the four Gospels especially because of its profound declaration of Jesus as the Messiah of not only Israel but also of all humanity, and especially because of its use as a catechetical document for growing disciples. This volume, in the NIV Application Commentary series that is characterized by three sections that discuss each passage, accentuates Matthew's unique place in Biblical revelation. The commentary focuses on the "original meaning" of Jesus' historical ministry. The commentary next focuses on the "bridging contexts" of Matthew's theological message for his community, and concludes by emphasizing the "contemporary significance" of each section of the gospel for modern readers.

Professor of New Testament Language and Literature and Dean of the Faculty at Talbot, Michael Wilkins holds conservative positions regarding significant interpretative issues of background, authorship, dating, and the inerrant inspiration of the text. Yet his research into and defense of the historical Jesus in the light of such critical groups as the Jesus Seminar keep the commentary up-to-date by interacting with the most recent interpretative debates and issues.

The commentary is designed especially for pastors and advanced students of Scripture, yet teachers and scholars will profit from its contemporary wrestle with Matthew's profound record of Jesus' life and ministry. The commentary proper is English based, but treats the Greek text in the footnotes. Wilkins has extensive pastoral, teaching, and scholarly experience, which he brings to bear upon his exegesis and exposition of Matthew's message for modern readers.

Because this review is written by the author of the commentary, some bias may affect the evaluation. ☺

Donald A. Carson. "Matthew." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Volume 8. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.*

For the past 20 years this commentary has been one of the best exegetical commentaries on Matthew. It arose out of the controversies over inerrancy and redaction criticism in the late 1970's – early 1980's. It represented the finest evangelical conservative scholarship on those issues, and today is a significant foundational work for commentaries now being written on Matthew. While it is therefore somewhat dated, it deserves a prominent place of reference for study, teaching and preaching on Matthew. Carson is now revising the commentary, which promises to reassert it as a leading evangelical commentary on Matthew's gospel.

Carson is nearly exhaustive when discussing the competing views for the major interpretative issues in the text. Although some other issues have surfaced in recent years (e.g., literary-critical analysis; the work of the Jesus Seminar) and much more has been written on Matthew, Carson will still give present readers more than an adequate understanding of major approaches taken to interpreting this gospel. At times this can be somewhat distracting, because so many different views are presented in the discussion of the text. But if one learns to glance through these discussions quickly and weigh Carson's conclusions, the reader will be amply rewarded and given a thorough treatment of the text. While some Greek terms are included in the discussion of the text, this is basically an English commentary based on a meticulous understanding of Greek lexical and syntactical features in Matthew's gospel.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

The most extensive current commentary on Matthew is by **W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr.**, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 volumes: 1-7; 8-18; 19-28, *The International Critical Commentary* (new edition; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1988, 1991, 1997). This 3 volume set surfaces all possible interpretations of the text, especially from a historical-critical perspective. A serious treatment of cultural and historical backgrounds is found in **Craig S. Keener**, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). A helpful commentary that blends sound exegesis and pastoral application is by **Frederick Dale Bruner**, *Matthew*, 2 volumes, *The Christbook and the Churchbook* (Dallas: Word, 1987, 1990, 2004). An excellent, brief commentary that is geared toward pastors and laypersons is provided by **Craig Blomberg**, *Matthew*, *New American Commentary* 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992).

Watch For: Several commentaries by evangelical scholars are nearing completion; when they appear they may become “top picks.” Among them are commentaries by **R.T. France** in the NICNT series, **John Nolland** in the NIGTC, **David Turner** in the Baker Exegetical Commentary series, and **Grant Osborne** in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series.

Outstanding Special Studies on Matthew

Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). One of the most influential and prolific authors on the gospel of Matthew in the last twenty-five years, Kingsbury interacts with leading themes in Matthean study. It is an invaluable starting point for advanced studies of critical approaches to Matthew’s gospel.

R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*. This is another equally valuable study from a more conservative stance. It is an important survey of introductory and theological issues in Matthew. It has been updated and republished in a revised form (2nd ed.; 1989; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998).

Two studies give a sampling of current issues (mostly critical, but important to understand the landscape) in the study of Matthew’s gospel. **Graham N. Stanton**, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992, and **David E. Aune**, Ed. *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of William G. Thompson, S.J.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Talbot Authors

Michael J. Wilkins

- ◆ *Matthew*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), mentioned above.
- ◆ “Commentary on Matthew,” *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Clinton E. Arnold, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).
- ◆ *Discipleship in the Ancient World and in Matthew’s Gospel*. 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995. This is the second edition of a work originally published under the title *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew’s Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term Μαθητής*, *Novum Testamentum Supplements* 59 (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988).

Mark

Reviewer: Michael J. Wilkins

Mark's gospel has not received the same intensive examination in recent years as has Matthew's gospel. But because it is a cornerstone gospel for those who accept Markan priority of chronological authorship, it has been the subject of steady scholarly examination. Likewise, those who adopt Matthean priority or primarily an oral tradition source have interacted with Mark's gospel as an invaluable depository of the apostle Peter's reflections through Mark. In the last few years we have seen two outstanding volumes produced, which bodes well for the future of scholarly commentary on Mark's gospel.

R. T. France. *The Gospel of Mark. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.*

R.T. France has been a leading evangelical British gospel scholar for nearly thirty years, recently retiring as principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, and has been through those years rector of seven Anglican parishes. With the publication of this commentary, he will remain a steady guide to students, pastors, and scholars for many years to come. This commentary is a model of serious exegesis, paying primary attention to the Greek text in order to lead his readers into the world of Jesus' historical ministry as reflected in Mark's historical reflection. France holds to the traditional understanding of the apostle Peter standing behind Mark as his primary historical source in recollecting Jesus' life and ministry.

France's commentary is based on an understanding of Greek, but it is not burdensome in the technicalities. Rather, the Greek text is highlighted for getting at significant nuances that may be missed in English translations. Therefore, it is a very helpful commentary for those with a second-year knowledge of Greek, and it facilitates the reacquisition of a working knowledge of Greek for those whose skills have lapsed.

One significant feature of France's commentary is that he keeps his interaction with other commentaries and scholars at a manageable level. This is not a commentary on other commentaries, but a single-minded focus on the text of Mark's gospel. He does not skirt major issues, but instead addresses them, briefly demonstrates the value of the preferred view, and then validates that view by referencing other scholars. In that sense this is not primarily a commentary for scholars and doctoral students wanting to plumb the depths of every conceivable problem or issue, but is instead a tool for pastors and students who want to hear the most reasonable understanding of Mark's gospel.

Although France has some idiosyncratic views, especially in seeing the eschatological discourse of 13:1-31 referring solely to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, his overall commentary reflects a mature, traditional understanding of Mark's gospel and Jesus' life and ministry. With few expositional or devotional reflections, his commentary should be supplemented by one that adds those dimensions, such as Edwards below. But this is the top pick as the exceptional commentary for those with a working knowledge of the Greek text, as all pastors should be!

Robert A. Guelich. *Mark 1—8:26. Word Biblical Commentary 34A. Dallas: Word, 1989;*

Craig A. Evans. *Mark 8:27—16:20. Word Biblical Commentary 34B. Nashville: Nelson, 2001.*

Before his untimely death at the height of his re-established academic career, Robert Guelich managed to complete the first of a projected two volume commentary on Mark's gospel. A former pastor and New Testament professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Guelich blended a genuine scholar's mind with a compassionate pastor's heart to produce an important commentary.

He associates the authorship of this gospel with the traditional identification with John Mark, and he contends for a relative early date of writing (A.D. 67-70). He suggests that the death of Peter precipitated the writing of this "good news concerning Jesus Messiah, Son of God," since with the passing of the first generation eyewitnesses the "gospel" needed to be put in writing lest it be lost or distorted with the passing of time (p. xli).

While Guelich bases his commentary on the Greek text, this often is limited to word studies, with minimal syntactical analysis. Therefore, readers with little or no Greek are not distracted with grammatical discussions, but readers with a working knowledge of Greek are not helped significantly to explore the syntax of the Greek text. On the other hand, Guelich's grasp of the historical/religious milieu of first century Palestine illuminates the text for all readers.

With the death of Guelich, the rest of the commentary on Mark's gospel was placed in the able hands of Craig A. Evans, the Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia, Canada. Evans is a prolific and astute scholar, so the completion of the commentary was much anticipated. It did not disappoint. As one of the world's leading Jesus scholars, Evans especially draws upon his historical studies of Second Temple Judaism to inform his understanding of Mark's gospel. He has insightful understanding of how Jesus would have interacted within the Jewish milieu of the first century, and how Jesus' profound message of the arrival of the kingdom of God would have impacted the Jewish social and religious world.

Evans is fully conversant with the leading scholarship on Mark's gospel, although his strength is in backgrounds, and not always as strong on narrative or theological perspectives. The volume is a bit wordier than Guelich's volume, and at times goes into considerable detail, but not in a significantly detrimental way. Evans is an evangelical who understands the wider world of New Testament scholarship, so he is not caustic when interacting with critical views, but he lays a solid historical foundation for understanding Mark's gospel. He is now underway revising the first volume, so his approach will pay rich dividends for students and pastors for many years.

James R. Edwards. *The Gospel According to Mark*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

James Edward's offers a lifetime of scholarship on the Gospel of Mark in this commentary, including more than twenty-five years of teaching experience, most recently as Professor of Religious Studies at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington. As is the format of the Pillar series, Edwards bases his commentary on the English text of the NIV, but throughout he deals with the underlying Greek text (transliterated). Written with a warm spirit and love of Mark's gospel, this commentary provides a nice balance to the other Top Picks on Mark's gospel. It draws contemporary readers into the study of Jesus' life and ministry through Mark's eyes, and throughout invites readers to enter into the experience and apply the lessons.

Whereas France and Guelich focus on the text of the Gospel, and Evans focuses on historical backgrounds, Edwards draws out literary and theological implications. Edwards points to Mark's use of irony, which emphasizes the incongruity between the expectations of those around Jesus, and between who he was and what he actually did in his ministry. In turn this leads to an understanding of discipleship that contrasts insiders and outsiders around Jesus. The theological pinnacle for Edwards is Mark's emphasis

upon Jesus as Son of God whose atoning death as the suffering Servant provides the basis for a new community of disciples.

Edwards emphasizes the historical veracity of Mark's gospel, which will mean that pastors and students can find a trustworthy commentary to lead them into understanding the historical Jesus and the theological implications. This is not a devotional commentary, but it does emphasize the contemporary significance of discipleship to Jesus. Edwards does not want to remain strictly with technical and historical issues, but intends to draw theological implications that will impact contemporary issues of faith. This is a fine balance of scholarly and theological depth, which points to Edwards' own skills as a scholar, exegete, and pastoral guide.

David E. Garland. *Mark. The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

David Garland, professor of New Testament at George W. Truett Seminary at Baylor University, is especially strong when unfolding Mark's literary conventions in the gospel, and how Mark's message about Jesus was truly God's "good news" to his readers then and now. He offers no glib moralizing in his application section, but instead offers usually sound applications for readers that surface directly from the text. He gives especially strong warnings about turning the Christ of the cross into whatever kind of leader present-day readers fancy.

However, Garland is perhaps weakest in getting at the historical details of Jesus' life and ministry, because he emphasizes Mark's theological intentions so strongly. Somewhat surprisingly Garland questions whether the Mark associated with Peter (1 Peter 5:13) is to be identified with the John Mark found in Acts (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:4, 13) and the fellow worker of Paul (Col 4:10; Philem. 24; 2 Tim 4:11), which early church history clearly identifies. He dates the writing of the Gospel either toward the end of or shortly after the end of the Jewish war in the late A.D. 60's. France's reasoning on these issues is more consistent with the bulk of the testimony of the early church fathers (see above).

Garland has an easy style of writing, blending classic quotations with modern illustrations, which current readers will find most readable. He understands the difficulties and challenges of the modern Christian life, and offers a realistic and hopeful view of Jesus' early followers as they experienced the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Messiah, and how that gospel story can be carried out in our modern contexts. Pastors and teachers will profit on several levels from the guidance offered by Garland in this succinct, yet comprehensive, approach to the Gospel of Mark.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

William L. Lane's commentary (*The Gospel According to Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974]), while nearly 25 years old, continues to rank among top picks of current commentaries on Mark's gospel, especially from a theological perspective. It has a very clear English exposition of the text, offering sound, trustworthy conclusions. **Robert H. Gundry** (*Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993]) filled a void in exegetical studies of Mark with its serious treatment of the Greek text and its extensive interaction with contemporary scholarship, but is now surpassed for pastors and students by more recent commentaries. Even older, but offering solid treatments of the Greek text are those by **C.E.B. Cranfield** (*The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary [1959; rev. rpt.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972]) and **Vincent Taylor** (*The Gospel*

According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes [2nd ed; rpt.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966]). A more recent commentary by **C.S. Mann** (*Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 27 [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1986]) does not rank as a top pick, but it is most interesting as a commentary that follows the Griesbach hypothesis, suggesting that Mark is a digest, or conflation, of Matthew and Luke, with a strong bias in favor of Matthew's order and material. The revision of the Anchor volume is now underway by **Joel Marcus**, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 27 [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000]), although from a moderately critical perspective.

Watch For: The last few years have seen some of the best good commentaries on the gospel published. The major series have added commentaries on Mark's gospel, but a couple still remain. Among the most eagerly anticipated is **Robert Stein's** volume for the Baker Exegetical Commentary. Watch also for the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary installment by **Mark Strauss**.

Outstanding Special Studies on Mark

Ralph P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972). The unique theological emphases of the evangelists have been noted since the beginning of the Christian era, but were especially recaptured in the latter part of the 20th century. In the same series in which R.T. France unfolded Matthew's perspective (see above on Matthew), Martin captured Mark's perspective in this highly influential study. This volume (currently updated by Martin with Lynn E. Losie, and republished by InterVarsity Press in 1999) should be consulted as a beginning point for serious study of Mark.

Ernest Best has contributed much to the study of Mark's gospel in the past several decades, and among his many publications students would be benefited by consulting *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (SNTSMS 2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), and *Mark: The Gospel as Story*, in *Studies of the New Testament and its world*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983).

Christopher Bryan, *A Preface to Mark: Notes on the Gospel in its Literary and Cultural Settings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) attempts to bring together literary and sociological approaches to the gospels in a unique emphasis upon orality and oral transmission, which helps to draw together these sometimes disparate scholarly approaches.

Luke

Reviewer: Michael J. Wilkins

Commentaries on Luke's gospel experienced a transition during the last decade of the 20th century. Standard commentaries such as those by I. Howard Marshall (NIGNT), Leon Morris (Tyndale), Earle Ellis (NCBC) and Joseph Fitzmyer (AB) were replaced by new series and replacement commentaries, ranging from conservative to liberal. The newer commentaries have built on the foundation of the earlier ones, and represent a sort of "changing of the guard" in studies of Luke's gospel.

Darrell L. Bock. *Luke (Volume 1: Luke 1:1—9:50; Volume 2: Luke 9:51—21:53). Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994, 1996.*

Darrell L. Bock made a striking appearance in Lukan studies in the last decade of the 20th century. His massive (2,148 pages) 2-volume commentary cited here was the most impressive. But nearly concurrently with those volumes appeared his commentary on Luke in the IVP New Testament Commentary series (InterVarsity, 1994) and his commentary on Luke for the NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan, 1996). He has also nearly completed his commentary on Acts for the Baker Exegetical Commentary series.

Bock is Professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary. His doctoral studies were under I. Howard Marshall at the University of Aberdeen, and in many ways represents an heir to some of Marshall's status as a leader in studies in Luke's gospel. Bock's stand on basic introductory issues is conservative (Luke is the author, writing in the early 60's) but conversant with the wider world of Lukan scholarship. His scholarship is thorough, yet not presented pedantically. One gets a feel from reading his commentaries that his life has been shaped by the message of the gospel that he studies.

The top-pick of Bock's commentaries is the 2-volume work in the Baker Exegetical Commentary. His other two works are essentially summaries of the large work (however, you might consult his NIV Application commentary for more of his pastoral side). Although the 2-volume commentary is extensive and filled with a detailed study of the text, he provides sidebar overviews and concluding summaries to each pericope that help give the reader the bigger picture. He treats the Greek text primarily in footnotes, in additional notes, and in parentheses in the body of the commentary, so that even a reader with little knowledge of Greek can use the commentary profitably. A helpful feature of this commentary is an introductory paragraph to each section that deals with "sources and historicity." Bock has given serious attention to the modern study of the historical Jesus, and in these paragraphs provides helpful rebuttal to the work of groups such as the Jesus Seminar who attack the historicity of Luke's gospel.

This is a most helpful and reliable guide to Luke's gospel, and promises to be the standard exegetical commentary by a conservative New Testament scholar for many years to come.

Joel B. Green. *The Gospel of Luke. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.*

Joel Green is another former doctoral student of I. Howard Marshall who carries on the mantle of Lukan studies. This is a replacement commentary for Norval Geldenhuys' 1951 NIC volume on Luke's Gospel, the first in the NIC series. Joel Green strikes out in a unique approach to Luke's gospel, pursuing a line of study he describes as "discourse analysis" - correlating culture-critical and narratological concerns. Essentially this means that the commentary examines the literary art and narrative theology (i.e., theology,

ethics, and spirituality) that drive the Luke's purpose for writing this gospel (p. 1). This provides readers with a wholistic approach to the gospel, and is a helpful supplement to Bock's more traditional commentary. While Green suggests that the most likely candidate for the authorship of Luke-Acts is Luke the physician and sometime companion of Paul, his narrative approach allows him to take the text as it stands as a whole without forcing him to lean too heavily on the identity of the author of this anonymous gospel. This seems somewhat of an unnecessary compromise, but it does allow the reader to engage fully the developing story of Jesus' mission and message without being distracted by form-critical and redaction-critical discussions found in other commentaries.

Robert H. Stein. *Luke. An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, NIV Text. New American Commentary 24. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.*

This commentary is written by one of the long-time figures of 20th century evangelical New Testament scholarship. Professor Stein was Professor of New Testament at Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota for many years, but now teaches at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His commentary on Luke's gospel is a good balance to those of Bock and Green. It is relatively brief (625 pages of commentary), setting each passage within its historical and textual context, offering a phrase-by-phrase commentary, and then unfolding the Lukan message of each gospel passage. This makes a user-friendly commentary for pastors and teachers, but it does not go into depth on individual passages as does Bock's commentary.

Stein holds to the traditional identification of the author as Luke the beloved physician and companion of Paul, but places the date of writing somewhere in A.D. 70-90. Such a late date seems unwarranted in my opinion, but it does not overall affect Stein's conservative conclusion about the historicity of Luke's account of Jesus' life and ministry.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

I. Howard Marshall's commentary (*Commentary on Luke*, The New International Greek New Testament Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978]) – while nearly 25 years old – continues to rank among top picks of current commentaries on Luke's gospel. Marshall is the dean of evangelical Lukan scholarship, and his students are among the most influential Lukan scholars in the world today. **John Nolland** has provided an excellent contribution to the Word Biblical Commentary series with his three volume *Luke*, 3 volumes, WBC 35ABC (Dallas: Word, 1989, 1993). A profoundly influential international commentary was written by Roman Catholic scholar **Joseph A. Fitzmyer**, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 volumes, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981, 1985). This commentary should be consulted to see the wider perspective of Lukan scholarship.

Outstanding Special Studies on Luke

One of the most influential volumes discussing Luke's gospel and the Acts has been **I. Howard Marshall's** *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, first published in 1970, but recently reprinted with a postscript assessing the course of recent Lukan studies (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998). Another useful volume in the same vein by a Catholic scholar is **Joseph A. Fitzmyer**, *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1983).

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Mark L. Strauss** (Talbot alumnus and former adjunct faculty member; now Associate Professor of New Testament at Bethel Theological Seminary, West), "Luke," in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

John

Reviewers: Michael J. Wilkins and Alan D. Hultberg

The Gospel according to John received extensive coverage in the middle of the 20th century, but received relatively little attention in the latter part of the century. However, at the turn of the 21st century, extensive attention is once again being given to this invaluable gospel.

Donald A. Carson. *The Gospel According to John. Pillar Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.*

Professor Donald A. Carson, Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, is arguably one of the finest evangelical New Testament scholars of the latter part of the twentieth century. He has been a model of impeccable scholarship, an outspoken advocate for the inerrancy of Scripture, and an example of scholarship that serves the church and the worldwide missionary endeavor.

Carson's commentary on the gospel according to John is – in my opinion – the leading conservative treatment of this gospel. He holds to traditional identifications of the author with the apostle John, with the probable date of writing in the years A.D. 80-85, with the gospel directed to Christians in Ephesus. Carson understands John's primary purpose in writing his gospel to be evangelistic; i.e., it is a gospel intended to evangelize Jews and proselytes.

Carson's treatment of the text follows the precedent he set in his commentary on Matthew (see above). Although he is fully conversant with the text-critical, lexical, and syntactical issues of the text, he does not encumber the reader with details. The primary emphasis is upon illuminating the text through an understanding of the development of the evangelist's argument and the background issues of Jesus' historical setting within Israel, though the exposition is also punctuated by frequent interaction with critical scholarship. His solid exposition establishes a credible historicity of Jesus' earthly ministry. He examines prevailing interpretive options and gives helpful summaries of problem passages with suggestive conclusions.

This is a must commentary for pastors and teachers, providing a trustworthy guide to the text and all of the primary issues in the study of this gospel.

Craig Keener. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary. 2 vols. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003.*

The literary production of Craig Keener, professor of Biblical Studies at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, is nothing short of astounding. In the years 1999 to 2003 he produced substantive commentaries on three New Testament books as well as numerous other studies and portions of books, all worthy of reading. His commentary on John is a major piece of evangelical scholarship and will probably remain a standard for decades.

Less straightforwardly apologetic, and less conservative, than Carson, Keener nevertheless offers helpful, in-depth consideration of both the social-cultural background

of the Gospel and of other interpretive views. Sometimes this information will leave the reader overwhelmed, but in general Keener provides a readable and reliable exposition of the text. Most sections of the commentary begin with a useful summary of John's developing message or of John's purpose in the section of text under consideration. The introduction to the commentary is an excellent, detailed study of the current state of scholarship on most questions regarding the Gospel of John.

Pastors may find Keener tedious to use for quick reference, but for extended study, he should not be overlooked.

Hermann Ridderbos. *The Gospel according to John: A Theological Commentary*. Tr. John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

This commentary was originally published in Dutch in two volumes in 1987 and 1991. The English translation is a welcome event. Hermann Ridderbos, an elder statesman of conservative European scholarship, taught New Testament for many years at the Theological School of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands and has produced a number of useful works in New Testament studies. His commentary on John is no exception.

Ridderbos, though quite conversant with broader Johannine scholarship, makes very little attempt to interact beyond a summary fashion with other interpreters. Instead, as the subtitle implies, he focuses almost solely on expounding the developing message and theological concerns of John. The exposition is thus refreshingly clear and unencumbered, though it is semi-detailed and clearly grounded in solid and mature scholarship. This commentary makes a helpful addition to Carson and Keener, in whom one can sometimes miss the forest for the trees.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

Two newer commentaries that almost made the cut as Top Picks are those by **Gary Burge** (*John*, NIV App, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) and **Andreas Köstenberger** (*John*, BEC, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004). Both are by younger scholars informed by years of study in John. Burge provides a straightforward, informative exposition and deeply reflective application of John. (Sometimes, however, the application is not tied closely to John's original intention.) The text is aimed at a popular audience and purposely limits interaction with other scholarship, though it is grounded in serious study. Köstenberger's commentary is similar to Carson's (under whom Köstenberger did doctoral studies) and serves well to update Carson's bibliography. Nevertheless, the commentary provides numerous original and helpful insights into John's theology and message.

C.K. Barrett's commentary – *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. 2d. ed. 1955; rev. rpt.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978 – is essential reading for detailed exegesis of the Greek text. Since his orientation is quite critical, historical and theological issues must be adjudicated by Carson's and Keener's commentaries, but Barrett provides a wealth of exegetical detail. While now over thirty years old, **Raymond E. Brown's** commentary, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 volumes, The Anchor Bible 29, 29A (New York: Doubleday, 1966) has a wealth of historical and theological detail from a prominent Roman Catholic New Testament scholar. Dr. Brown was working on a revision of this landmark commentary when he died in 1998. His revised introduction was published in 2003 under the title *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Maloney (Doubleday). **Leon Morris's** *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT, rev., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), was the standard evangelical exegetical commentary for most of the time since its release and gives somewhat more attention to lexical, syntactical and text-critical as well as pastoral issues

than does Carson. **George R. Beasley-Murray**, *John* (WBC 36. Dallas: Word, 1987), is a more technical commentary than Carson, Keener, or Ridderbos, from a broadly evangelical perspective.

Watch For: The Gospel according to John will receive intense scholarly attention in the next 10-20 years. Excellent evangelical commentaries such as Carson's are leading the way, but in the next several years others will make an appearance, including **Richard Bauckham** in the New International Greek Testament Commentary, **J. Ramsey Michaels**, who is preparing a replacement volume for the NICNT series, and **I. Howard Marshall** who is writing for the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series.

Acts

Reviewer: Clinton E. Arnold

No significant new commentaries on Acts have appeared in the period since the previous edition of *Top Picks* – except for the installment on “Acts” in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, which everyone should have!

Ben Witherington III. *The Acts of the Apostles. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

This 874-page volume is perhaps now the best all-around commentary on the book of Acts. It is very well written and gives extensive insight into the social and cultural background of each of the passages. Witherington is quite conversant with the recent scholarship on the book of Acts and makes good use of it for illuminating the meaning of the text.

This commentary begins with 100 pages of introductory material on Acts. A unique component of this commentary is a feature called “A Closer Look” – a variety of essays interspersed throughout the commentary covering topics such as “Luke’s Christology,” “Miracles in Acts,” and “Altars to Unknown Gods.” There are also two appendixes. In one of these, Witherington builds on an already strong case for seeing Paul’s letter to the Galatians written before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

This commentary is very well written and is a delight to read (something that certainly cannot be said about all commentaries). Witherington is professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary.

F. F. Bruce. *The Book of the Acts (revised).* The New International Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.

This has been a long-standing classic on the book of Acts. F. F. Bruce had an eye for bringing out helpful historical background information to illuminate the text. This volume continues to be exceptionally valuable for the contribution Bruce makes to understanding Acts. The serious student, however, will now want to supplement Bruce’s commentary with information made available in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting* series.

Bruce has been one of the strong advocates of the South Galatian theory, which sees Galatians written to the churches Paul evangelized in Acts 13-14 (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe = the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia). He therefore sees Galatians as having been written prior to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

This is the revised version of his original 1954 commentary on Acts for the NICNT series. The book of Acts was the major focus of Bruce's scholarly career and two generations of students of the Bible are indebted to him.

I. Howard Marshall. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

This is an outstanding paperback commentary written by Professor I. Howard Marshall, the retired Professor of New Testament at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland). For many years, this Tyndale volume has stood as the perfect complement to F. F. Bruce's NICNT commentary. Whereas Bruce tended to focus more on the historical matters, Marshall gives a greater amount of attention to the theological issues and themes. Long known for his lucid writing style, Marshall has given the church an excellent commentary that has served well for many years and has still not been supplanted.

William J. Larkin. *Acts*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995.

William Larkin is professor of New Testament and Greek at Columbia Biblical Seminary and Graduate School of Missions in Columbia, South Carolina. Columbia has a rich tradition of preparing men and women to serve the Lord in cross-cultural mission settings. It is no surprise then to see Larkin properly highlighting the strong emphasis on mission throughout the book of Acts.

This is an exceptional commentary. Larkin is an excellent scholar (with a Ph.D. in NT from Durham, England) with the heartbeat of a missionary. The reader of this commentary will find valuable insights and helpful explanations of the text combined with discussion of practical and contemporary significance. A unique feature of this commentary is Larkin's sensitivity to cultural issues. For instance, in describing the address of James to the Jerusalem Council, Larkin concludes his discussion with, "James's proposal, then, teaches us three things about life together in a culturally diverse church ..." You will need to buy this commentary to find out what they are (and many other practical points)!

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

The most recent in-depth exegetical treatment of Acts is the two-volume commentary by **C.K. Barrett** (*Acts*, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Vol. 1=1994; Vol. 2=1998]). This is an outstanding commentary, but will be rather difficult for many people to read. He often cites German, Latin, and French sources without translating them. Another evangelical work that could easily have been in the top three is the 500-page work by the Australian evangelical scholar **David J. Williams** (*Acts*, New International Bible Commentary [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1985]). This is well-written and contains many excellent historical and theological insights. **Ajith Fernando**, a Bible teacher from Sri Lanka, has contributed a commentary on Acts for the NIV Application Commentary. He has many valuable applicational insights.

Watch For: A good number of commentaries on Acts are in preparation. All of them promise to be excellent contributions: Watch for the Pillar NT Commentary by **David G. Peterson**, the Word Biblical Commentary on Acts by **Steve Walton**, the NIGTC commentary on Acts by **Stanley Porter**, the NICNT commentary by **Joel B. Green**, and the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on Acts by **Eckhard Schnabel**.

Outstanding Special Studies On Acts

- ***The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting***. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. –The Tyndale Fellowship in Cambridge, England, has sponsored the publication of a massive historical study of the book of Acts that has appeared in five volumes. These are indispensable for anyone wanting to gain a firm and up-to-date treatment of the historical background of Acts. The series consists of the following titles:
 1. **Bruce D. Winter** and **Andrew D. Clark**, Editors. *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting*.
 2. **David W. J. Gill** and **Conrad Gempf**, Editors. *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*.
 3. **Brian Rapske**. *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*.
 4. **Richard Bauckham**, Editor. *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*.
 5. **Irina Levinskaya**. *The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting*.
- **Martin Hengel** and **Anna Maria Schwemer**. *Paul: Between Damascus and Antioch*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997. –This is a landmark historical study of the early chapters of Acts, chapters 6-15, covering the years AD 33-49. Hengel’s work represents the decisive blow to the critical understanding of Paul offered by the History-of-Religions school of thought.
- **Rainer Riesner**. *Paul’s Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. –This is an invaluable historical study of the historical events and chronology of the events surrounding Paul’s life from his conversion to the writing of 1 Thessalonians.
- **I. Howard Marshall** and **David Peterson**. *Witness to the Gospel. The Theology of Acts*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. –This 700-page volume is a compendium of 25 essays on the theology of Acts by scholars such as Marshall, Peterson, Darrell Bock, Joel Green, Ben Witherington, John Nolland, Craig Blomberg, and Phil Towner.
- **Eckhard Schnabel**. *Early Christian Mission*. 2 Vols. Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004. –The second volume of this monumental 2000-page work comments on the mission of the church as it is narrated in Acts. Schnabel has engaged in an impressive amount of detailed historical study.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Clinton E. Arnold**. “Acts,” in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 218-503. –This commentary focuses on all forms of historical, cultural, and religious background material that helps to illuminate the meaning of the text. The volume includes numerous photographs, charts and maps.
- ◆ --. Entries on "Centers of Early Christianity," "Syncretism," "Satan, Devil," "Power," and "Magic and Astrology," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997).
- ◆ **Harold Dollar**. *A Biblical-Missiological Exploration of the Cross-Cultural Dimensions in Luke-Acts*. San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. –Harold is the former chairman of the Missions Department at Talbot School of Theology.
- ◆ **Moyer V. Hubbard**. “Urban Uprisings in the Roman World: The Social Setting of the Mobbing of Sosthenes.” *New Testament Studies* 51.3 (2005) 416-428.

Romans

Reviewer: Walter B. Russell (updated by Victor Rhee)

James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*. Word Biblical Commentary 38A & 38B. Dallas: Word, 1988.

These two volumes combine for 976 pages of meaty Greek exegetical exposition. This is perhaps the best Romans commentary in this category in any language right now. It will stretch your view of Paul and his theology in numerous ways as Dunn carries you through the epistle. In particular, this is the first exegetical commentary on Romans from the New Perspective on Paul. While it is valuable for its insights into each passage, it is especially valuable as an example of how to systematically read Paul from this new perspective. At times, Dunn's views will open up a whole passage in a fresh way. At other times, you will have to put the book down and scratch your head because his interpretation seems to be a reach. These are the joys and agonies of the New Perspective on Paul and first century Judaism! For Dunn's orientation to this perspective, see pages lxiii-lxxii at the end of the Introductory section.

Apart from some of the areas of overstatement of the New Perspective that Dunn evidences, this is a very fine exposition of the argument of Romans. Dunn sees three purposes for the letter: a missionary purpose, an apologetic purpose (Paul and his mission), and a pastoral purpose (healing divisions in the Roman church). Paul weaves these purposes together around the Jew/Gentile issue as he recounts the revelation of God's righteousness at present in the gospel. Perhaps more consistently and sensitively than any before him, Dunn traces these threads in Paul's argument. Such tracing gives much needed new understanding to many well-known passages. In many ways, we end up seeing Romans more from Paul's perspective than ever before.

However, with the new insights comes some over-playing of the hand. It may be wise to consult Moo's or Cranfield's commentaries to provide a bit of balance on those passages where you sense such overstatement. When a new paradigm is being developed, we get these instances of periodic distortion. Nevertheless, the insights of Dunn are worth the few bones that one finds in the fish! However, the key word is "balance" and this is where Moo and Cranfield are helpful. Read Dunn *with them* and you will get the whole package. New insight will be balanced with traditional stability. The result should be a solid and trustworthy understanding of this world-changing epistle.

Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

This is the best, all-around English expositional commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans. If you are only buying one commentary on this letter, this 1012-page tome should be the one. It will serve you well over the next generation. Do not be discouraged because it is not Greek-oriented. While it does not discuss the Greek exegetical issues in the body of the text because of the NIC format, there is ample discussion of the key Greek issues in the footnotes. Additionally, Moo gives rich and full bibliographical data on every issue he discusses. In other words, the English expositional format will not hinder the depth nor breadth of discussion of the text.

Moo rightly sees "the gospel" as the main theme of Romans and helpfully traces this theme throughout the argument of the whole letter (summary on pages 33-35). He interacts consistently with the New Perspective on Paul, yet does not embrace it to any extent. Rather, Moo cautiously and wisely works through the exegetical issues of a passage, gleaning any helpful insights into the text from the New Perspective and

charting a moderate course on these issues (e.g., the “Works of the Law” discussion on pages 211-217). On the whole his conclusions are solid and very well-balanced, although he would certainly be categorized as “traditional” in his perspective. Moreover, while Moo’s exposition fits within the Reformed tradition which the NIC series represents, he strikes a more independent line of interpretation in certain passages (e.g., Romans 7:7-25). Therefore, this commentary is a good balance to Dunn and gives a fresh expression of the traditional understanding of Romans.

John Stott. *Romans: God’s Good News for the World. The Bible Speaks Today Series. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994.*

Few expositors in the twentieth century have had the worldwide scholarly and pastoral impact that John Stott has had. His commentary is of great value to you, not because of its innovative or cutting-edge interpretive theses. It has none. Nor is it valuable because it plows a lot of new ground in its understanding of Romans. It does not. Rather, it is valuable because one can sit before this great expositor and learn from him the craft and art of exposition as he explains and applies this remarkable epistle in delightful ways.

To this end, Stott is particularly helpful in explaining Romans because he shows great sensitivity to Paul’s missionary concerns and the Jew/Gentile tensions in Rome. One can see this from the beginning in his helpful, yet concise introduction (25 pages) where he lays out the epistle’s main concerns. Also, it is obvious that he is aware of the New Perspective on Paul, yet most cautious in adopting it in a wholesale manner. Instead, he picks his way through both sides of this interpretive conflict in a thoughtful and wise manner in passage after passage. This is particularly true in passages like Romans 7 where he attempts to reach some meaningful compromise with the conflicting viewpoints. While you may not agree with all of his conclusions, you will be edified by the well-informed manner in which he lays out all of the options and in the gracious manner in which he defends his conclusions. This is marvelous exposition by a master! Come, sit at his feet, and learn.

Gerald Bray, Editor. *Romans. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament VI. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998.*

The focus of this remarkable 27-volume commentary series, of which this volume is one of the first New Testament volumes, is to make available the comments of the early church fathers on the exegesis of each biblical book. This work makes a unique contribution among the commentaries on Romans in that it gathers thousands of relevant and insightful comments on each verse of Romans from the commentaries and sermons of the church fathers of the first several centuries of the Church rather than championing a certain thesis or interpretation of the letter. The result is a remarkable feast of ancient insights into the meaning of Romans that will challenge our modern perspectives and warm our world-weary hearts.

Therefore, this commentary is worth getting because of its unique contribution to understanding both the text of Romans and its early history of interpretation. Time and again you will find that what you think is an innovative and “modern” view of a passage is both non-innovative and ancient! What this may help us do is to focus on understanding and preserving the truth and proclaiming it more passionately, rather than being novel and innovative. This commentary will help provide this exhortation in your life.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

C. E. B. Cranfield (*The Epistle to the Romans*. International Critical Commentary. 2 volumes. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 1979).

This two-volume commentary is the most comprehensive exegetical commentary in English. The commentary is based on the Greek text. Cranfield gives a detailed analysis of words and phrases in each verse. Although it is outdated, it is nevertheless an important commentary to consult in having a detailed exegesis of Romans. One thing I [Victor Rhee] like about the author's approach is that he presents different views and the arguments on a given issue. He then refutes these views and suggests his own solution to the issues in consideration. He is a Conservative Barthian. At times, one may notice that his interpretation is influenced by his theology (e.g., see his exegesis of Rom 3:23-24; the result of his interpretation is that all have sinned, and all have been justified, thus suggesting the universal salvation).

Thomas R. Schreiner (*Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998) which thoroughly defends a more traditional understanding of the epistle. A fine new English expositional commentary (919-page work).

Leon Morris (*The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

This is a good commentary on Romans for those who do not have the knowledge of Greek. It is non-technical, but solid in exegesis.

Douglas J. Moo. Romans. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

In this commentary Moo gives the exposition using the theme of the "gospel" as the overarching rubric (pp. 26-27). Each section of the commentary is divided into three parts: Original Meaning, Bridging Contexts, and Contemporary Significance. In the Original Meaning, he gives a brief exegesis of the passage in consideration; in Bridging the Context he expands his exposition to other passages of the Bible; in Contemporary Significance, he applies what he feels is the important topics and issues to our contemporary Christian life. This commentary will be helpful to pastors and other Christian workers in preparing for messages and the Bible studies.

F. F. Bruce (*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, revised 1985). A solidly traditional understanding along with the inexpensive work.

Adolf Schlatter (*Romans: The Righteousness of God*. Trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995 [of the 1935 German original]. A theologically stimulating interpretation.

Brendan Byrne (*Romans*. Sacra Pagina Series, Volume 6. Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book/The Liturgical Press, 1996).

Joseph A. Fitzmyer (*Romans*. The Anchor Bible, Volume 33. New York/London: Doubleday, 1993).

Peter Stuhlmacher (*Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*. Trans. Scott J. Hafemann. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994)

John Ziesler (*Paul's Letter to the Romans*. SCM Press: London & Trinity Press International: Philadelphia, 1989).

Watch For: **Richard Longenecker** is currently completing the NIGTC commentary on Romans and **Frank Thielman** who is writing the installment for the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series.

Outstanding Special Studies on Romans

Karl P. Donfried, editor (*The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991; 1977 original) is a must-buy collection of 23 of the best journal articles in recent years on the purpose, structure, and theology of Romans.

James C. Walters (*Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1993) is an excellent discussion of the crucial Jew/Gentile issue in Romans.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Walter Bo Russell, III**, "An Alternative Suggestion for the Purpose of Romans," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (1986) 174-184.
- ◆ --. "Insights from Postmodernism's Emphasis on Interpretive Communities in the Interpretation of Romans 7," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (1994) 511-527.
- ◆ **Michael Cranford** (Talbot alumnus and former adjunct faculty member), "Election and Ethnicity: Paul's View of Israel in Romans 9:1-13," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 50 (1993) 27-41.
- ◆ --. "Abraham in Romans 4: The Father of All Who Believe," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995)

1 Corinthians

Reviewer: Michelle V. Lee

Blomberg, Craig. 1 Corinthians. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Blomberg, who teaches New Testament at Denver Seminary, has produced a fine, all-around commentary on 1 Corinthians. He combines sound exegesis with many helpful points for contemporary application. Although Blomberg is more well-known for his work in the gospels, he has produced a solid and well-balanced commentary on the epistle. His judicious evaluation of various positions is especially refreshing, given the numerous controversial issues raised in the letter.

Following the unique format of the series, Blomberg's commentary on each section is divided into three parts: 1) Original Meaning; 2) Bridging Contexts; and 3) Contemporary Significance. One of the outstanding features of the commentary is Blomberg's ability to relate the text to a wide variety of concrete situations, from "seeker-sensitive" churches, to caring for the poor, to AIDS, to the New Age movement. He also does a fine job of

relating the more obscure passages, such as eating meat sacrificed to idols (8:1-13), to the modern world.

But the strength of the commentary is also its weakness. Blomberg tends to treat the letter like a handbook of practical issues, without going in depth into the theological core of the letter (For this issue, see the works on Pauline theology, below). As a result, the epistle comes across as being significant only for the specific types of issues mentioned in the letter. A larger discussion of the way in which Paul relates the gospel to ethics would give the letter a far broader usefulness and correctly emphasize the centrality of the gospel in 1 Corinthians.

Overall, this is a fine commentary which blends solid exegesis with meaningful contemporary application. It does the best job of relating the original meaning of the text to the contemporary world.

Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

Fee's work continues to be one of the standard evangelical commentaries on 1 Corinthians. His volume is based upon the Greek text, but is accessible to the reader with little or no knowledge of the language. References to the Greek are either transliterated or put in the footnotes.

His syntactical and grammatical analyses of the text are among the main strengths of the commentary. Fee is a very detailed and meticulous exegete, and he follows carefully the theological flow of the text. He is also known for his work on exegesis and spirituality, and his short but insightful applications at the end of each section reveal his pastoral sensitivity and are well worth reading.

Fee does an excellent job with the secondary literature, providing a comprehensive and usually quite balanced discussion of different views. However, for the most up-to-date and even more comprehensive treatment of the current scholarly discussion, one can now consult Garland's and Thiselton's volumes (see below).

One flaw in the commentary is the way in which Fee considers the primary problem in the letter as a conflict between Paul and the Corinthians, as opposed to disputes among the Corinthians themselves. This issue is more critical in 2 Corinthians. He overemphasizes the way in which Paul is concerned to defend his own authority as opposed to resolving the conflicts within the community, and this unfortunately influences many of his conclusions.

All in all Fee's volume is a prime example of careful scholarship and remains a valuable resource for 1 Corinthians students.

Garland, David. *1 Corinthians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

Garland's impressive work was a runner-up for the 2004 Christianity Today Book Awards (Biblical Studies), and with good reason. The volume is marked by rigorous scholarship, attention to nuance, and fair and reasoned evaluations.

Garland covers various interpretations, but does not tend to get bogged down in the secondary literature. In keeping with the intent of the series, the volume focuses on the material which is most relevant to the meaning of the passage without dwelling on exegetical problems for their own sake. The result is a focused, readable, and very beneficial commentary. His brief summaries at the beginning of the sections are particularly helpful for highlighting the main points for a quick overview. It should be noted, though, that those wanting more extensive discussions of detailed exegetical

points or the secondary literature will want to supplement their studies with Fee and/or Thiselton.

There are several unique strengths to the commentary. First is the special attention given to social and cultural issues. Garland has produced a sensitive reading of the text which takes into account the latest research in this area and in many places shows how the basic problem has its roots in a basic social tension rather than a theological conflict.

Another strength, related to the first, is the author's desire to read the letter as a letter, that is, as real communication between Paul and a congregation. As a result, Garland clarifies many exegetical problems according to a more common sensical approach as to what might be expected in a normal conversation between Paul and the Corinthians without resorting to complicated exegetical gymnastics which too often characterize biblical studies. Along the same lines, Garland has a good feel for the literary flow of the text, thus giving the reader more insight into the purpose of the passage and how the parts fit into an overall argument.

In summary, this is a well-researched, well-written and focused commentary, an invaluable asset to any serious student of 1 Corinthians.

Thiselton, Anthony. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. (*Greek)*

Thiselton is best known for his contributions on hermeneutics, *The Two Horizons* and *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, and as to be expected, his expertise in this area is evident in this commentary. He combines insights from linguistic theory, socio-historical background, philology and theology to produce a detailed and integrated analysis of the text. From a hermeneutical standpoint the result is particularly impressive. Thiselton consistently produces insights from the text which avoid the pitfalls of a reductionistic analysis which focuses too strongly on one area. Perhaps the most intriguing contribution is Thiselton's application of "speech act" theory, which understands the meaning of the text not only in terms of explicit content, but "the performance of an act *in* saying something" (quoting J.L. Austin).

The commentary is marked by extensive interaction with the secondary literature, which is both a strength and weakness. Thiselton carefully takes into account each position and in general comes to judicious conclusions, often incorporating various aspects of each position into his final conclusion. He also includes discussions of the history of interpretation from the church fathers to the Reformation. However, the incorporation of secondary literature can sometimes overshadow and limit the actual exegesis of the text, and one sometimes wishes he would just state what the text says as opposed to engaging in long discussions of what other interpreters say. Furthermore, his tendency to dwell upon various interpretative details and contemporary hermeneutical issues sometimes makes it difficult to follow the overall flow of the letter and relationship of the various sections to each other.

Despite these criticisms, this is a first-rate commentary and essential for those wanting to dig deeper into 1 Corinthians. It is not, however, for someone who wants a quick overview of the letter.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

An excellent recent commentary is **Raymond F. Collins**, *First Corinthians*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999) in the Catholic Sacra Pagina series. This commentary is especially good at incorporating insights from the Hellenistic philosophical context. **Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer**, *I Corinthians*, The International Critical

Commentary, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963) is a classic Greek exegetical commentary. **Hans Conzelmann**, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) provides a wealth of ancient religious and philosophical background material. **C.K. Barrett**, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968) remains a standard work. **Ben Witherington's** *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) provides valuable insights from the standpoint of rhetoric and other aspects of the socio-historical background, making it a good supplement to Garland's work.

Watch For: Forthcoming commentaries to watch for include **Linda Belleville's** in the Word Biblical Commentary series, **Brian Rosner's** volume in the Pillar Commentary Series, and **Paul Gardner's** volume in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series.

Outstanding Special Studies on 1 Corinthians

The most significant recent works on 1 Corinthians have come from the field of rhetorical criticism. (See Witherington's commentary above). **Margaret Mitchell** (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991]) examines 1 Corinthians from the standpoint of deliberative rhetoric and concludes that the entire letter is Paul's attempt to combat factionalism in Corinth. **Duane Litfin** (*St Paul's Theology of Proclamation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994]) compares Paul's preaching in 1 Corinthians with Greco-Roman oratory and provides a fine introduction to the world of ancient rhetoric.

One very intriguing study is by **Dale Martin** (*The Corinthian Body* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995]). His hypothesis, that the entire letter can be understood according to Paul's disagreements with his Corinthian opponents over the ideological construction of the body, is ultimately a bit strained. But the book is an excellent resource for ancient medical and philosophical views on the body, a very important topic in 1 Corinthians.

Some very significant and thought-provoking studies on Paul's theology in 1 Corinthians by **Victor Furnish**, **Gordon Fee**, and **Charles Cousar** appear in *Pauline Theology: 1 & 2 Corinthians*, vol. II, ed. David M. Hay (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). These essays seek to find a coherent theology of the letter and combat the notion that the letter is simply Paul's practical responses to various issues raised by the Corinthians.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Michelle V. Lee**. *Paul, the Stoics and the Body of Christ*. Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 137 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). An in-depth study of the "body of Christ" theme in 1 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians

Reviewer: Moyer Hubbard

Garland, David E. 2 Corinthians. The New American Commentary 29. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999.

David Garland's exposition of 2 Corinthians in The New American Commentary series would be a welcome addition to any pastor's shelf. The NAC series is evangelical in orientation, utilizes the NIV, and is aimed at the minister or student looking for a rigorous examination of the text, yet one that is not devoid of theological reflection. Garland succeeds on both counts. His exegetical work is careful, and he interacts with a wide range of contemporary scholarship. While perhaps not as detailed in primary-source research as, for example, Furnish's commentary on 2 Corinthians (see below), Garland helpfully elucidates Paul's argument through a generous use of Jewish and Greco-Roman authors. Garland does not merely note extra-biblical texts with verbal parallels; he cites genuinely illuminating background material (e.g. his discussion of the triumphal imagery in 2:14-17). The emphasis of the NAC series is on "theological exegesis" and "practical, applicable exposition" (from the Editor's Preface), and this restricted focus allows Garland space for pastoral reflection on Paul's letter. Mindful of the spiritual dimension of 2 Corinthians and the practical concerns of the preacher, Garland frequently offers applicational summaries that synthesize and enumerate the key points of a passage (e.g. on 2:1-5; on 7.8-10; 8:1-10; 9:1-8; on 12:1-5). The result is a scholarly, readable, and spiritually challenging exposition of 2 Corinthians.

Barnett, Paul. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Paul Barnett's volume fills a noticeable gap in the literature on 2 Corinthians: a full scale, scholarly-but-accessible commentary on this important New Testament book. In keeping with goals of the series to which it belongs (NICNT), Greek references are confined to the footnotes, or are transliterated, which adds to its readability. Written from a conservative perspective, Barnett deals sensitively with the text, offering insights beyond the descriptive critical task. One of the more distinctive traits of this commentary is the frequent sentence diagrams employed to elucidate the line of thought. Equally helpful is Barnett's expertise in Greco-Roman history and literature, which frequently sheds valuable light on Corinth and the Corinthian correspondence.

Barnett deals admirably with the two most important critical questions in 2 Corinthians: the unity of the letter, and the identity of Paul's opponents. Although most critical scholars divide 2 Corinthians into two or three separate letters, Barnett argues for the unity of the letter, a decision that has important implications for understanding the argument of the epistle. By all accounts, the dramatic change of tone in chs. 10 – 13 requires explanation, though Barnett successfully demonstrates that the alternative view raises more questions than it answers.

Regarding Paul's opponents, Barnett sketches a portrait of judaizing Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who regard Paul as an inferior and pride themselves on externals, such as dazzling oratory and ecstatic experiences. At this point, Barnett probably relies too heavily on "mirror reading" the argument and terminology of 2 Corinthians, but the connections he makes are all plausible, and his suggestion that Romans, which was written from Corinth, helps us grasp the issues Paul was facing on the ground in Corinth deserves serious consideration.

Furnish, Victor Paul. *II Corinthians*. Anchor Bible 32A. New York: Doubleday, 1984.

This is the most advanced and technical commentary considered here, but it certainly belongs on even a short reading list of literature on 2 Corinthians. While not conservative in outlook, Victor Furnish is a prudent, circumspect exegete whose opinions are not easily dismissed.

Furnish approaches 2 Corinthians as a historian and critic. The preacher will find little in the way of homiletical hints. Yet Furnish provides a thoughtful and readable

discussion of the text, which is rich in its exploration of the social context of Paul's ministry. His surefooted treatment of difficult passages represents the best of critical scholarship. Particularly useful is the author's use of Jewish sources to illuminate Paul's thought, and his fresh, even lively, translation of the letter.

In line with most contemporary critical scholarship, Furnish separates chs. 1 – 9 from chs. 10 – 13, believing the latter to be part of a subsequent correspondence. The question of Paul's opponents is treated with rigorous attention to the text of 2 Corinthians, and as a result Furnish treats (rightly, in my opinion) detailed portraits of these opponents (like that of Barnett) with skepticism. While not written with the interests of the minister in mind, Furnish's readable prose, combined with the transliterated Greek, renders this commentary imminently accessible. There is much in it to broaden the intellectual horizon.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention

Although now somewhat dated, **C. K. Barrett** brings to his commentary on 2 Corinthians (London: A & C Black, 1973; reprinted by Hendrickson) what few else can: a tremendous breadth of knowledge (both historical and theological) and nearly five decades of study. Sound judgements and critical acumen are its hallmarks. **Margaret Thrall's** commentary is certainly the most comprehensive and technical study available (ICC. Edinburgh: T & T Clark), though it is written primarily for scholars and suffers from too much detail. **Charles Talbert**, on the other hand, has produced a highly readable one volume commentary on the Corinthian correspondence without neglecting the important cultural and literary dimensions of the text (*Reading Corinthians*. New York: Crossroads, 1987). However, he treats chapters 10–13 as a separate and earlier letter, and rearranges 2 Corinthians accordingly, which is unnecessary and somewhat confusing. For contemporary application, no commentary is better than **Scott Hafemann's** in the NIV Application Commentary series.

Watch For: Watch for the forthcoming volumes by **Murray Harris** in the NIGTC series, **Mark Seifrid** in the Pillar NT Commentary series, and **Bruce Winter's** volume in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series.

Studies on 2 Corinthians

The most important studies on 2 Corinthians in recent years have come from the pen of **Scott Hafemann**. In addition to numerous articles, Hafemann has produced two full-scale, densely packed volumes which focus on the theology and argument of 2 Corinthians. Hafemann is especially good at untangling Paul's sometimes knotted line of thought, and at relating Paul to his Jewish context. Originally published by J.C.B. Mohr (Tübingen), Hafemann's works have been edited for a more popular audience and reissued by Eerdmans (*Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit*, 1990) and Hendrickson (*Paul, Moses, and Israel*, 1996). **Timothy Savage** has produced powerful study of Paul's paradoxical "strength in weakness" stance in 2 Corinthians (*Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians*; Cambridge, 1996). This monograph also contains an illuminating portrait of first-century Corinth. Although primarily concerned with 1 Corinthians, **Duane Liptin's** monograph, *Paul's Theology of Proclamation* (Cambridge, 1994), is crucial for understanding the Greco-Roman context of the Corinthian correspondence generally, and warrants inclusion here.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Moyer V. Hubbard.** *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought.* Society of New Testament Studies monograph series, 119 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). An exploration of the motif of "new creation" in 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Jewish literature of the period.
- ◆ --. *2 Corinthians* in Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Clinton E. Arnold, editor (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002). An examination of 2 Corinthians focusing on its historical and cultural context.

Galatians

Reviewer: Walter B. Russell

Richard N. Longenecker. *Galatians.* Word Biblical Commentary 41. Dallas: Word, 1990.

We have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to commentaries on Galatians. This 323-page work by a well-respected evangelical statesman is one of the very best all-around Galatians commentaries with excellent introductory background on Galatia (79 pages), insightful rhetorical analysis of the argument of Galatians, and cautious, helpful Greek exegetical insights into every verse of the epistle. One will search long and hard for a more scholarly, well-informed, and warm-hearted exegesis than Longenecker's work on Galatians.

The distinctives of this commentary, in addition to its Word Biblical Commentary format, are four-fold, according to Longenecker: "(1) its stress on Hellenistic epistolary conventions, (2) its eclectic treatment of Greco-Roman rhetorical features, (3) its highlighting of Jewish themes and exegetical procedures, and (4) its Antiochian style of interpretation" (p. x). Additionally, the introductory background material is worth the price of the book. After thorough and even-handed discussions of each debated issue, the author concludes (rightly!) in favor of the South Galatian view of the recipients and the earlier dating of the epistle (A.D. 48-49). Perhaps even more importantly, after interacting with many of the older and more recent theories regarding the identity of Paul's opponents, Longenecker again rightly concludes that Paul's opponents were, in fact, Jewish Christians from the Jerusalem Church. These Jewish Christians followed Paul in Galatia "with a message stressing the need for Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the rudiments of the cultic calendar, both for full acceptance by God and as a proper Christian lifestyle" (p. xcvi). This places Longenecker squarely within the traditional understanding of the epistle, as does his view that there was a dual threat in Galatia: the Judaizers' legalism and an indigenous threat of libertinism which combined to divide the churches of Galatia.

One of the helpful, but debated aspects of this fine commentary is Longenecker's conclusion that Galatians is a real, private letter of the rebuke-request type with the following structure: 1:1-5, Salutation; 1:6-4:11, Rebuke Section; 4:12-6:10, Request Section; and 6:11-18, Subscription. This analysis differs significantly from the majority of the rhetorical analyses of the epistle. Additionally, Longenecker's treatment of Galatians 5:13-6:10 does not advance the recent discussion of the exhortative portion of the epistle. This is because the author sees Paul countering a second threat of libertine tendencies, rather than reaching the climax of his argument against the singular threat of the

Judaizers (the recent understanding). In spite of these quibbles, this commentary will serve the reader quite well as a faithful and trustworthy guide to this polemical epistle.

Hans D. Betz. *A Commentary of Paul's Letter to the Churches of Galatia*. Hermeneia Series. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1979.

Since Betz's commentary appeared, it has become the standard Greek exegetical work that everyone must interact with if they are going to talk about Galatians. There are several reasons for its definitive status. First, Betz is the first modern commentator to trace Paul's argument in the letter in a convincing manner via the categories of ancient rhetoric. He does this with remarkable consistency and brilliant analysis. While many recent commentators have challenged his rhetorical conclusions (rightly so), one must still consult Betz because of his standard-setting work. Secondly, he makes available an amazing amount of scholarly research and primary and secondary resources in his commentary. He helps place the reader in Paul's setting in the first century. Lastly, Betz, though not evangelical, does reach many helpful and solid exegetical conclusions that will help the interpreter to come to well-informed conclusions about what Paul is saying throughout the epistle. While Betz may push some views that are a bit idiosyncratic, on the whole, his exposition is very balanced and well-reasoned. He will provide some different perspectives to Longenecker, especially rhetorically, and these will force the interpreter to grapple with Paul's argumentation even more closely.

G. Walter Hansen. *Galatians*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, Volume 9. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

This is one of several English expositional treatments of Galatians, and perhaps, the best and most readable commentary of its type. Hansen did his doctoral work with Richard Longenecker, so many of his conclusions, especially rhetorically, will be similar to his mentor's. However, the shorter (212 pages) and more popularly written style helps the reader to trace the epistle's argument more readily. Additionally, Hansen includes some helpful applicational comments that guide the interpreter more closely to applying the biblical text to his or her listeners.

The strengths of this commentary are three-fold. First, there is a concise, clear, and very helpful introduction to the commentary that is only sixteen pages long. Hansen focuses on the most important and essential issues of an introductory manner in an exemplary fashion. Secondly, the author gives a solid, evangelical exposition from a nuanced "New Perspective on Paul." This means that Hansen does not primarily follow the Reformation understanding of Galatians being Paul's attack on the Judaizers' alleged attempts to teach a work-righteousness salvation. Rather, Hansen rightly sees that the main issue is how the Gentiles are to be incorporated into the people of God and what their primary identity marks will be as God's people. While some legalism was present in his opponents' false gospel, this was not Paul's primary target in Galatians, and Hansen proves this in a balanced, accurate manner. Lastly, the author does a good job of tracing the purpose of the epistle throughout the entire letter. He never loses sight of Paul's focus and brings this out in each section of the epistle. This is helpful from a synthetic perspective and adds to the value of this fine commentary.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

The newest, major Greek exegetical work is by **J. Louis Martyn** (*Galatians*. Anchor Bible 33A. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997) and it may surpass Betz' work as the

standard in this category. Martyn has many excellent and innovative exegetical and theological insights, but with these also brings some idiosyncratic views that cloud certain issues. However, if one is buying a fourth commentary (after the three mentioned above), this would certainly be the best one to purchase. Among the helpful features of Martyn's exposition are the 52 *Comment Sections* sprinkled throughout the commentary that give extensive explanation of key issues within the letter and the 36-page bibliography that is up-to-date and very comprehensive.

Among the fine Greek exegetical works, also see the trustworthy **F. F. Bruce** (*The Epistle to the Galatians – A Commentary on the Greek Text*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); and the former standard by **E. D. Burton** (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*. The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921); and the older and still useful classic by **J. B. Lightfoot** (*The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*, 10th. ed. London: Macmillan, 1890; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957).

For additional English expositions that are helpful, see especially **James D. G. Dunn** (*The Epistle to the Galatians*. Black's New Testament Commentaries. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993) for a consistent exposition from the New Perspective on Paul; **Ronald Y. K. Fung** (*The Epistle to the Galatians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) for a more traditional perspective; and **Frank J. Matera** (*Galatians*. Sacra Pagina Series 9. Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book/The Liturgical Press, 1992) for a useful, contemporary Roman Catholic perspective.

Ben Witherington's commentary (*Grace in Galatia. A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) will serve as a nice supplement to the more traditional commentaries. Witherington offers important insights into the social and historical setting of the book of Galatians while demonstrating how the literary structure of the book sheds light on its argument.

For a helpful English exposition with an applicational emphasis, see **Scot McKnight** (*Galatians*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

Watch For: **Mark J. Edwards**, editor (*Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VIII. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998) for a very helpful commentary that brings together numerous comments by the Church Fathers on each passage of the epistle that will help to establish the history of interpretation of Galatians. **Moisés Silva's** volume in the Baker Exegetical Commentary series will be a solid, helpful exposition from a more traditional perspective. Watch also for **Donald A. Carson's** volume in the Pillar NT Commentary series and **Tom Schreiner's** volume in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series.

Outstanding Special Studies on Galatians

John Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*. Studies of the New Testament and Its World. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988 is an outstanding exposition of the epistle with an eye to its ethical ramifications.

G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians--Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts*. JSNTSup 29. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989 is very helpful for insights into the epistolary structure of Galatians.

James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: University Press, 1993 gives the theology of Galatians from the New Perspective on Paul.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Clinton E. Arnold.** "Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Galatians 4:3, 9." *Novum Testamentum* 38.1 (1996) 55-76.
- ◆ --. " 'I Am Astonished That You Are So Quickly Turning Away!' (Gal 1:6): Paul and Anatolian Folk Belief." *New Testament Studies* 51.3 (2005) 420-449.
- ◆ **Michael Cranford** (Talbot alumnus and former adjunct faculty member). "The Possibility of Perfect Obedience: Paul and an Implied Premise in Galatians 3:10 and 5:3," *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994) 242-58.
- ◆ **Walter Bo Russell, III.** *The Flesh/Spirit Conflict in Galatians* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1997).
- ◆ --. "Does the Christian Have 'Flesh' in Gal 5:13-26?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (1993) 179-188.
- ◆ --. "The Apostle Paul's Redemptive-Historical Argumentation in Galatians 5:13-26," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995) 333-357.

Ephesians

Reviewer: Clinton E. Arnold

Harold W. Hoehner. *Ephesians. An Exegetical Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.

During a visit to Tyndale House (Cambridge) in 1984, I met with Harold Hoehner to talk about a commentary he was busily engaged in researching and writing—a commentary on Ephesians. Almost 20 years later, Harold has brought the volume to completion—an accomplishment that many of us have looked forward to because of the vast amount of work over time that has gone into it.

For the dust jacket of the commentary, I wrote: "Hoehner has now produced the most detailed and comprehensive treatment of Ephesians ever written. The volume is well organized, clearly written, and very useful for in-depth study of the letter. It is now the indispensable standard for courses on Ephesians.

One of the greatest values of this 930-page volume is that Harold has documented virtually every view ever expressed on each exegetical issue in the letter and has critically engaged the arguments. It thus functions as an excellent compendium of research on the letter.

Harold argues strongly for the Pauline authorship of Ephesians. He also sees *en Ephesō* in Ephesians 1:1 as authentic and thus contends that the letter was written for Christians in Ephesus. The exegesis throughout the commentary is thorough and helpful.

Peter T. O'Brien. *The Letter to the Ephesians. Pillar New Testament Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

I would characterize O'Brien's volume as the best all-around commentary on Ephesians currently available. He provides substantial help interpreting the text without overwhelming his readers with detail. He makes ample use of footnotes for making comments on the Greek text of the letter.

O'Brien contends that the main purpose of Ephesians could best be characterized by the expression, "identity formation." For O'Brien this is more than simply helping people

understand their new nature in Christ. It is broader and “cosmic” in orientation — encompassing earth and heaven and orienting believers into their place in God’s plan from creation until the end. O’Brien sees the end-time “summing up of everything in Christ” (Eph 1:10) as determinative of the essence of Paul’s thought in Ephesians. This involves the two interrelated themes of (1) unity in Christ (especially the uniting of Jew and Gentile into one body in Christ), and (2) cosmic reconciliation. He makes a compelling case for this as the heart of Ephesians drawing on the important studies of C. C. Caragounis and T. Moritz. The central message of Ephesians, then, not only involves the church, but also the theme of how God deals with the rebellion of the demonic powers — and how the church and the powers relate in terms of conflict and struggle. O’Brien does an exceptional job of developing these themes throughout the course of his exposition.

O’Brien argues that the Apostle Paul is the author of the letter. Although he does not see *en Ephesō* as the original reading of 1:1, he still sees the letter written for churches in and around Ephesus and perhaps also for those on the road to Colossae. Because of the importance of Ephesians for Christian “identity formation,” the letter to the Ephesians and this commentary should be consulted regularly by Christian leaders involved in “spiritual formation.”

Andrew T. Lincoln. *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary 42. Dallas: Word, 1990.

This 500-page volume is currently the best exegetical commentary on the market (although now rivalled by Ernest Best’s). Lincoln is Professor of NT at the University of Gloucestershire (formerly at Toronto and Sheffield). Lincoln’s verse-by-verse exegetical analysis of the letter is extremely rich with insights. He shows an incredible mastery of all the relevant secondary literature interacting with it throughout the commentary.

The troubling part of this commentary is Lincoln’s description of the life setting coupled with his conviction that Paul did not write the letter and the implications of this for his interpretation of various features of the theology of the letter. For Lincoln, it is the temporal setting of the letter that is decisive for its interpretation. He sees the letter as written by a Jewish-Christian follower of Paul who is using “the accepted device of pseudonymity” to pass on Pauline tradition to the churches of Hierapolis and Laodicea after the death of the great apostle. For the most part, Lincoln sees the Pauline tradition reflected in Ephesians as faithfully preserved in its application to a new setting. For instance, in contrast to many other scholars holding to pseudonymity who detect an eschatology in Ephesians at odds with Paul, Lincoln rightly stresses the futurist eschatology present in Ephesians and explains that the realized eschatology of Eph 2 (e.g. “you have been raised with Christ”) is essentially consistent with Paul. At other points, however, Lincoln finds theological formulations that he feels could not have been made by Paul during his lifetime. Perhaps most significant here is his explanation of Eph 4.1-16. He contends that the pseudonymous author is addressing the issue of how the Pauline churches can remain unified and apostolic without the apostle. The answer is to be found in the stress on the significance of the bearers of the Pauline gospel—originally the foundational apostles and prophets, but now the evangelists, pastors, and teachers. To my mind, his appeal to pseudonymity as an ancient literary device that would have been recognized and accepted by the early Christians is still unproven (although a few evangelical scholars think otherwise). Lincoln’s explanation of the “Pauline” autobiographical statements in Ephesians 3 is particularly strained and a glaring weakness of this approach.

In spite of these foundational criticisms, the reader will find much help in this commentary, especially in the significant amount of primary and secondary literature used to illuminate the terms and concepts.

John R. W. Stott. *The Message of Ephesians. The Bible Speaks Today.* Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

In finding a commentary that combines exegetical sensitivity with good application, it is hard to beat the work of John Stott, Rector Emeritus of the All Souls Church in London and now Director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. This is the unusual kind of commentary that one could pick up and read cover to cover as a book because it is so well written.

Stott unabashedly affirms Pauline authorship seeing the modern skepticism as one of the curiosities of a hypercritical age. Because of the absence of "in Ephesus" (Eph 1:1) in some manuscripts and the course of scholarship about this problem, he regards the precise identity of the readers as an unsolved mystery. Nevertheless, at various points in his commentary, he points to specific cultural and social traits in Ephesus and its environs as useful background to interpreting the letter.

This is not a verse-by-verse commentary, but a passage-by-passage commentary. Stott provides interpretive comments about the meaning of the text and then attempts to relate it to issues and concerns in the church today. For example, after commenting on Eph 2:11-22, which speaks of Christ breaking down the "dividing wall of partition" separating Jews and Gentiles, Stott draws out the importance of this message of reconciliation for churches today. He notes, "we are contradicting our message by tolerating racial or social or other barriers within our church fellowship."

I require this paperback volume whenever I teach Ephesians. It is helpful and it is challenging.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

The most recent in-depth exegetical treatment of Ephesians is by **Ernest Best** (formerly Professor of NT at the University of Glasgow and now retired in St. Andrews) in the International Critical Commentary series. He describes Ephesians as a pseudonymous letter written in the post-70 era possibly to believers in Asia Minor. There is much helpful exegetical insight and rich interaction with the recent literature in this commentary.

Before Hoehner, the most comprehensive commentary on Ephesians was written by **Markus Barth** (*Ephesians*. Anchor Bible 34a & 34b. New York: Doubleday, 1974). In this two-volume set totalling 850 pages, Barth (son of Karl Barth) affirms Pauline authorship and provides helpful insight into the text, although at times is somewhat idiosyncratic. A particularly useful feature are the theological essays following his commentary on each passage.

Mention should also be made of the fine concise commentary on Ephesians by **F.F. Bruce** (*The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984). As always, Bruce provides helpful commentary on each passage. A good combination of interpretation and application can be found in **Klyne Snodgrass's** commentary in the NIV Application commentary series.

Watch For: the New International Greek Testament Commentary series volume by **M.M.B. Turner** (London Bible College).

Outstanding Special Studies On Ephesians

Thorsten Moritz, *A Profound Mystery. The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians.*

Supplements to Novum Testamentum 85. Leiden: Brill, 1996. — An outstanding study of the use of the OT throughout Ephesians.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Clinton E. Arnold**, "Ephesians," in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
- ◆ --. Commentary on *Ephesians* for the new Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, approximately 2008).
- ◆ --. *Power and Magic. The Concept of Power in Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997 (It is now available through Wipf and Stock. It was formerly titled *Ephesians: Power and Magic*. Originally published in the series: Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 63. Cambridge: University Press, 1989).
 - This is a detailed background study of Ephesians focusing on the theme of power and spirit powers. The book highlights and explains the relevance of the local occultism, magical practices, astrology, and the cult of the Ephesian Artemis (Diana) for explaining the emphasis on the power of God and spiritual warfare in Ephesians.
- ◆ --. "Ephesians" and "Ephesus" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993. "Ephesians" is now reprinted in *Dictionary of the New Testament*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- ◆ --. "Introducing Ephesians: Establishing New Believers in Christ," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 39 (1996) 4-13.
- ◆ "Woman and Man in Apostolic Teaching" (co-written with Robert L. Saucy). *Women and Men in Ministry. A Complementary Perspective*. Eds. Robert L. Saucy & Judith K. TenElshof. Chicago: Moody, 2001, 113-38.
 - This chapter seeks to interpret and apply the passage on husband-wife relationships (Ephesians 5:22-33).
- ◆ --. "Jesus Christ: 'Head' of the Church." In *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*. Eds. M.M.B. Turner and J. B. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 346-66.
 - This study examines the head-body imagery in Ephesians and Colossians and argues that as "head," Jesus provides leadership for the church and supplies the church with the nourishment it needs to grow.
- ◆ --. "The 'Exorcism' of Ephesians 6.12 in Recent Research." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (1987) 71-87.

Philippians

Reviewer: Clinton E. Arnold, Joe Hellerman, and Moyer V. Hubbard

Gordon D. Fee. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.*

Gordon Fee knows how to write a great commentary. This one does not fall short. It is insightful, very well written, and exceptionally helpful for understanding the text and its meaning. I usually find myself drawn very quickly to the paragraph or two he writes following every section of detailed analysis of the text. In these concise pieces, Fee draws

out a few contemporary implications for life and ministry. These are always so thought provoking and challenging, reflecting the spirit of the biblical passage he is writing on. As editor of the entire NICNT series, Fee sets an outstanding example of commentary writing.

Particular emphases include a successful attempt to avoid atomization and, instead, trace Paul's argument through the length of the epistle. I (Joe) especially appreciate the way in which Fee opens every section (and sub-section) of his commentary with a discussion of the function of the passage in its broader epistolary context. Also, the commentary is unique in its focus on the work of the Holy Spirit. Fee's Pentecostal roots encourage him to see the Spirit in places where others have traditionally not (e.g., "standing firm in one pneuma", 1:27), a fresh emphasis which, in many cases, I (Joe) find persuasive.

Fee sees Philippians as a letter Paul wrote from imprisonment in Rome around AD 62 to suffering Christians in Philippi. These believers are being persecuted in their Roman environment because of their confession of Jesus (not Nero) as Savior and Lord. Fee strongly emphasizes the importance of recognizing that Philippians corresponds to a genre of ancient letter writing known as "letters of friendship," although he sees many elements of moral exhortation as part of Paul's strategy. Fee uses this background to assail the arguments of critical scholars who have suggested that Philippians is a patching together of three or four letters with little inner continuity.

Fee also goes against the grain of contemporary critical consensus by contending that Phil 2:5-11 is not an early Christian hymn that Paul has edited and incorporated into his letter. He sees it rather as exalted prose or even poetry that Paul himself has written as he contemplates the marvels of Christ.

Peter T. O'Brien. *Commentary on Philippians*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. (*Greek)

This 600-page commentary currently represents the most substantive treatment of the Greek text of Philippians that is available. It is the place to go to find secondary bibliography (to 1991) on various passages of the epistle. As with all commentaries in the NIGTC series, a knowledge of Greek is a prerequisite.

Peter O'Brien contends that Paul wrote Philippians from Rome in AD 60-62. Paul wrote for a variety of reasons, according to O'Brien, but one of the chief reasons was to counteract the influence of opponents at Philippi, whom he suggests are Judaizers (Jewish Christian missionaries from outside the congregation).

O'Brien devotes nearly 100 pages of his commentary to treating Phil 2:5-11. An exhaustive and exhausting treatment! He reaches a similar conclusion to Fee (and Tom Wright and Joe Hellerman) that the passage may have originally been written by Paul himself as a means of providing a theological foundation for the rest of the letter.

For the person who is looking for an in-depth discussion of the text of Philippians with constant interaction with the full range of biblical scholarship, this commentary is unsurpassed. It is also, however, a bit pedantic. I recommend consulting O'Brien early in the sermon prep process and then turning to Fee and Thielman for more spiritually nourishing treatments of the text as Sunday approaches on the calendar.

Frank Thielman. *Philippians*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

Frank is a NT professor at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, in Birmingham, Alabama. He has distinguished himself as an expert on the complex and controversial issue of Paul and the Law through his monographs, *From Plight to Solution*

(Brill) and *Paul and the Law* (IVP). Frank is quickly becoming one of the more respected NT scholars of our day – combining his excellent scholarship with a life of personal integrity and commitment to the Lord all in the service of the church.

This is one of the finest volumes in the NIV Application commentary series. Frank provides excellent insight and description of the meaning of the biblical text as well as a challenging application to the contemporary church and society. Take the opportunity to read Thielman after perusing O'Brien and Fee and you will greatly appreciate the way in which Thielman has immersed himself in the literature on Philippians and made it accessible the church in this exemplary Application Commentary. We (Joe and his co-pastors) gave copies to our small group leaders when we preached through Philippians in the Fall of 2005.

Frank sees Philippians as a unified letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Philippi warning them not to succumb to errors like the churches in Galatia and Corinth had fallen into. Breaking with the traditional consensus, Frank sees Philippians written during a postulated Ephesian imprisonment at a time earlier than his later Roman imprisonment. This enables him to suggest that Philippians was written at roughly the same time that Paul wrote Galatians and 1 Corinthians, which has an impact on how he interprets Phil 3.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

Students will continue to find excellent insights in **J. B. Lightfoot's** classic commentary on insights, both in the commentary itself as well as in the appendices (*Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* [London: Macmillan, 1896]).

Gerald Hawthorne's commentary in the Word Biblical Commentary series (1983) was the evangelical standard for many years. This is an outstanding commentary and well worth consulting.

Marcus Bockmuehl has produced a top notch exposition of Philippians for Black's New Testament Commentary (Hendrickson, 1998) – thorough, readable, and judicious.

Moises Silva's contribution to the Baker Exegetical Commentary series (1992) is also a very useful commentary for his discussion of the text and its theological implications.

Ben Witherington III, the master of the "socio-rhetorical commentary" genre, has produced one on Philippians (1994) which is well-worth consulting for a rhetorical analysis of the letter but a bit 'underwhelming' after reading Fee, O'Brien, and Thielman.

Watch For: **G. Walter Hansen** is writing the volume for the Pillar NT Commentary series and **George Guthrie** is writing the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series volume.

Outstanding Special Studies On Philippians

Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd. *Where Christology Began. Essays on Philippians 2.* Nashville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998. –This is a recent and important set of essays on Philippians 2. Martin is the author of the acclaimed study, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, which is now out of print. In it he made the case that 2:5-11 was a hymn from the worship of the early church that Paul has cited in his letter.

Gerald F. Hawthorne. *Word Biblical Themes: Philippians.* Waco: Word, 1987.

Peter Oakes. *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000). A profile of first-century Philippi, the suffering church, and the role of the imperial cult in the community and the letter.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Joe Hellerman.** *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). An examination of key parts of the letter against the social background of Roman Philippi. Offers a creative, new interpretation of Paul's great Christological masterpiece in 2:6-11. I (Clint) find his thesis illuminating and very persuasive. A (very) abbreviated version of the argument can be found in the following two-part study:
 - "The Humiliation of Christ in the Social World of Roman Philippi, Part 1." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (July-September 2003) 321-36.
 - "The Humiliation of Christ in the Social World of Roman Philippi, Part 2." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (October-December 2003) 421-33.
- ◆ **A. Boyd Luter & Michelle V. Lee.** "Philippians as Chiasmus: Key to the Structure, Unity and Theme Questions." *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995) 89-101.

Colossians and Philemon

Reviewer: Clinton E. Arnold

Peter T. O'Brien. *Colossians, Philemon*. Word Biblical Commentary 44. Dallas: Word, 1982.

This has served as the best exegetical commentary on Colossians for the past decade. O'Brien is an evangelical who serves as head of the NT department of Moore Theological College in Australia. He provides good exegetical insight throughout the letter.

O'Brien argues for Pauline authorship of the letter and that Paul wrote it from Rome around AD 60-61. He sees the dangerous teaching facing the church as a form of Jewish mysticism. Accordingly, he interprets the "worship of angels" (Col 2:18) as believers who claim to have engaged in a mystical ascent to heaven experience and worship *with* the angels. He suggests that the "elemental principles or spirits" (*stoicheia*; Col 2:8, 20) are spirit beings and are understood by the Colossians as blocking the believer's access to God's presence.

The work continues to be a helpful and reliable guide to Colossians and has not been displaced by the newer commentaries on the letter.

Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke. *Colossians*. Anchor Bible 34B. New York: Doubleday, 1995.

This volume has the distinction of being the longest and most comprehensive commentary on Colossians currently available. At 557 pages (with 134 pages of introduction), it is about twice as long as Dunn's (290 pp.) or O'Brien's (260 pp.). It is only dwarfed in size by his two-volume commentary on Ephesians. I wonder, however, if it would not have benefitted from being carefully edited and reduced in size. Many of the discussions seem unnecessarily verbose and detailed covering every conceivable

interpretational option. This is truly an excellent commentary, however, and packed with useful information.

Markus Barth is the son of the famous Swiss theologian, Karl Barth. He was helped in researching and writing the commentary by one of his capable doctoral students at Basel, Helmut Blanke. After Barth's death in 1994, Blanke brought the volume to completion. It was subsequently translated from the German by Astrid Beck.

The volume takes a conservative stance on most issues. Barth argues for the Pauline authorship of the letter and contends that he wrote it from Rome in AD 61 or 62. He stays rather non-committal on identifying the nature of the problem at Colossae. In commenting on Colossians 2:18, however, he does accept the Jewish mystical view of heavenly ascent and worshipping with the angels. But he does find many other Hellenistic and local aspects to the false teaching at Colossae. He interprets the *stoicheia* (Col 2:8, 20) to be "components of the world" in the sense of "created things" rather than spirit powers of some sort. When he does comment on the "principalities and powers" he interprets them in terms of "an outdated expression for what modern man calls the structures, laws, institutions ..."

James D. G. Dunn. *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. (*Greek)

James Dunn, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity at the University of Durham, England, has produced an outstanding exegetical treatment of the Colossian letter. One of the strengths of his work is his ability to draw out the relevant Jewish background to the terms and theological concepts. He regularly makes helpful comments on the theology of the letter and correlates it to the other Pauline letters.

Although Dunn does not find Paul as the author of the letter, he does see the letter as written during the lifetime of Paul by someone quite close to him. In Dunn's opinion, this is none other than Paul's right hand man, Timothy. In fact, Dunn contends that the letter was written by Timothy with Paul's input probably during his Roman imprisonment.

Dunn is quite concerned that commentators cease referring to the teaching that Paul objected to at Colossae as "heresy." In Dunn's view, there was not an orthodox system of theology at this stage of the development of Christianity; there were many and varied streams of Christianity emerging. Thus, it is inappropriate to refer to the problem at Colossae as heresy. He interprets the challenge facing the church at Colossae as stemming from outside the church, namely, the synagogue(s) in the city. The Jews in the community were opposing Christianity by mounting their own self-confident apologetic attacks. This, in turn, was influencing a fair amount of Colossian Christians who had come from a background in the synagogue. It seems to me that he does not take seriously enough the indications that there was more to it than this, such as the phrase "worship of angels" and the term *embatueo*, that many have seen as a technical term of the local mystery cults.

This is an excellent commentary and provides numerous helpful insights for interpreting this great book of the Bible.

David E. Garland. *Colossians and Philemon*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

As with all of the NIVAC commentaries, this one is filled with suggestive application of the text for preaching and teaching. Garland has done an excellent job in this volume

of interpreting the letter and drawing out significant implications for the life of the church.

As for the situation behind the letter, Garland tends to follow Dunn (and now Bevere) in arguing that the opponents are actually Jews from a local synagogue who are affronted by the claims of these Gentile believers to share in the inheritance of Israel. Thus, there is no syncretism involved at all.

The “worship of angels” (2:18) is interpreted as a subjective genitive, that is, the Colossians were seeking to ascend to heaven and worship God as the angels do. The *stoicheia* of 2:8 and 20 are seen as “quasi-demonic spirits” to which humans have foolishly given their allegiance. The Colossian “philosophy” is thus animated by the elemental spirits. Garland interprets the poetic praise of Christ in Col 1:15-20 as Paul’s own composition and not a citation from the worship tradition of the early church.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

The classic commentary on Colossians for over a century was written by **J. B. Lightfoot** (*St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977; originally printed in 1879]) and is still of great value for its many insights. Few have matched Lightfoot’s knowledge of the ancient sources and his ability to bring them to bear on the text of the NT.

Considerable help with the Greek text of Colossians is available in **Murray J. Harris’s**, *Colossians & Philemon*, Exegetical Guided to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

Of the more popular commentaries on Colossians, three are worthy of mention: **N. T. Wright** (*Colossians and Philemon* [Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986]), **Robert W. Wall** (*Colossians and Philemon* [IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993]), and **Margaret Y. MacDonald** (*Colossians, Ephesians* [Sacra Pagina 17; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000]).

Watch For: The International Critical Commentary by **R. McL. Wilson** that he is currently finishing, the Pillar NT Commentary series volume by **Gerald Hawthorne**, the Baker Exegetical Commentary by **Greg Beale**, and the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary volume by **David Pao**.

Outstanding Special Studies On Colossians and Philemon

Alan R. Bevere. *Sharing in the Inheritance. Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians.* JSNTSS 226. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003. – Bevere contends that Colossians is best read against the background of the “new perspective” on Paul

Thomas J. Sappington. *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae.* JSNTSS 53. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991. – Contends that the problem at Colossae is the impact of Jewish mysticism.

N. T. Wright. “Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20.” *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990) 444-68 (= reprinted with minor revisions in *The Climax of the Covenant. Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992, 99-119. – One of the best articles on the so-called Colossian hymn.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Clinton E. Arnold.** (Talbot professor), is writing the replacement commentary on *Colossians/Philemon* for the Word Biblical Commentary Series (Dallas: Word Publishing, approximately 2012).
- ◆ --. *The Colossian Syncretism. The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996 (originally published in the series *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2/77 [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995]). – This is a detailed background study on Colossians. In it I contend that the “Colossian Heresy” can be best understood as a local syncretistic folk belief that has at its root a fear of hostile powers resolved in part by calling on angels for protection, help, and assistance.
- ◆ --. “Colossae.” *Anchor Bible Dictionary.* 5 Vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- ◆ --. “Jesus Christ: ‘Head’ of the Church.” In *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology.* Eds. M.M.B. Turner and J. B. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 346-66. – This study examines the head-body imagery in Ephesians and Colossians and argues that as “head,” Jesus provides leadership for the church and supplies the church with the nourishment it needs to grow.

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Reviewer: Clinton E. Arnold

Many excellent volumes have appeared on 1 & 2 Thessalonians since the first edition of *Top Picks* that has resulted in a replacement of the entire previous line-up. This means that there are a lot of very helpful commentaries out there on these two letters.

Gene Green. *The Letters to the Thessalonians.* Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

I regard this as the best all-around commentary on the Thessalonian correspondence. It is substantive and helpful in the interpretation of the text although one might wish for more help with Greek expressions and syntax in the footnotes. The strength of this commentary is in Green’s constant help in setting the letter in its social, political, religious, and cultural context. There are numerous helpful and illuminating insights throughout the commentary.

The reader of the commentary must not neglect to read his 77-page introduction where he places the letter in its historical life setting. This introduction is well-written and helps the reader to understand how Green will interpret the letter on certain key issues. For instance, Green contends that the Roman system of patronage was quite prominent at Thessalonica and, thus, the majority of the church consisted of a few clients and their patrons. For Green, this helps to explain the problem of “work” in the two letters: people wanted to maintain their client status instead of work. This analysis corresponds significant to the conclusions reached by Doug Geringer, who wrote his Th.M. thesis on this issue (but did so before the publication of Green’s commentary).

The commentary is very well written and a delight to read. All of these traits have made it very popular with students in my Exegesis of the Epistles class over the past couple of years.

Gene Green is a professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and served for many years in an evangelical seminary in Costa Rica.

Abraham Malherbe. *The Letters to the Thessalonians*. Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

This is an outstanding commentary on the letters that some people regard as the finest available on the two letters. Combined with the use of Gene Green's commentary, these two volumes will provide enormous insight into the text.

Commentaries in the Anchor Bible series typically do not provide much help with the Greek. This commentary is a notable exception. In many ways, it provides more help with the Greek text by providing significant interpretive insight on syntactical constructions and grammar than most contemporary exegetical commentaries do. If you want substantive help with understanding the flow of thought and the syntax, this is the volume to turn to.

In general, I find significant exegetical help and insight throughout this commentary. The reader needs to be aware, however, that Malherbe posits a somewhat unique interpretive background to the text and explains many of the statements of the text in light of it. He contends that Paul frequently uses the language and ideas of popular philosophy to give expression to his thoughts. This is particularly apparent in 1 Thess 2:1-12, where Paul is not engaged in a defense of his visit with the Thessalonians, but simply adapts language of the popular philosophers of his day to portray himself in a positive way. His use of this background is not limited to 1 Thess 2, but is found throughout the commentary. This is true, for instance, in 1 Thess 4:3-8 where Malherbe finds that on the subject of sex and marriage, Paul was deeply indebted to his philosophical contemporaries.

Michael Holmes. *1 & 2 Thessalonians*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

This commentary provides a solid and responsible interpretation of the passage followed by many helpful applicational insights. Holmes, who teaches at Bethel College in Minneapolis, is well-known as an outstanding Greek scholar. He has published the Baker edition of the *Apostolic Fathers* that features the Greek text with an English translation on the facing page.

One can sense that a great deal of research went into this commentary, but the information is presented in a concise way. This is commendable in an age when commentaries seem to be getting longer and longer. I find most of his interpretations of key issues in the letter convincing. Holmes also brings in significant and helpful historical information in the right places.

On some issues, such as the identity of the restrainer in 2 Thess 2, Holmes is reluctant to commit himself to one particular view. In fact, he uses the limited and inadequate amount of evidence to caution the reader about the pitfall of speculating and making positive identifications. In light of the fact that a former Bible professor of mine revealed to his surprised students that under certain schemes his own name could be calculated as 666, the warning Holmes provides us on going beyond the evidence is important!

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

Greg Beale from Wheaton has made a solid concise contribution arguing an amillennial perspective in the IVP New Testament Commentary series (*1 & 2 Thessalonians*. [Downer's Grove: IVP, 2003]). Another excellent commentary on 1 & 2

Thessalonians is the volume by **F. F. Bruce**, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, WBC 45 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1981). This was the first Word Biblical Commentary published and still remains an excellent commentary on these two epistles. Three other great commentaries that were formerly in the top tier include: **I. Howard Marshall**, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); **Leon Morris**, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Revised Edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); and, **Charles A. Wanamaker**, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) (*Greek).

Watch For: **Jeffrey A. D. Weima** is writing the commentary for the Baker Exegetical Commentary Series. Also look for the publication of the ICC volume on the letters by **Karl Donfried**. The replacement volume in the Word Biblical Commentary is currently being completed by **Seyoon Kim**. Further down the road will be the volume in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series by **Gary Shogren**.

Outstanding Special Studies On 1 & 2 Thessalonians

- **Rainer Riesner**. *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. –This volume contains nearly 100 pages of background information on the Thessalonian correspondence that is incredibly rich. Riesner actually lived on site for a period of time and has gathered all the available archaeological information.
- **Karl P. Donfried**. "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence." *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985) 336-56. –This article provides illuminating background information on the prominent cults of Thessalonica, including the cults of the Cabirus, Dionysus, Isis, Sarapis, and the Ruler Cult. Donfried relates this information to the text of the two letters in a compelling way.
- **Jeffrey A. D. Weima**. "'But We Became Infants Among You': The Case for ΝΗΠΙΟΙ in 1 Thess 2.7," *NTS* 46.4 (2000) 547-64. –An excellent syntactical analysis of 1 Thessalonians 2 that changed my mind on the text critical issue convincing me that *nēpios* is the best reading.
- **Todd D. Still**. *Conflict at Thessalonica. A Pauline Church and its Neighbor*. JSNTSS 183. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999. – An excellent treatment of the social-historical situation behind the letters.

1 & 2 Timothy and Titus

Reviewer: Clinton E. Arnold

John R. W. Stott. *Guard the Truth. The Message of Timothy & Titus*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

I can't think of a better person to write a commentary on the Pastoral Epistles than John Stott. He has exemplified in his life what Paul points Timothy and Titus toward – a life of service to the church, irreproachable personal integrity, and a commitment to upholding and passing on the truth of God.

Stott begins his volume with a discussion of the disputed authorship of the three letters. He concludes that, "the case for the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals still stands." This is the only issue he chooses to discuss in the introduction. I would like to

have seen him give some discussion of the life setting of the letter and summarize the principal theological themes.

As always, Stott's commentary is quite readable (even for the non-specialist). It abounds with excellent insights into the text, but also helpful applicational discussions and engagement with the tough issues. Stott finds the many and varied recent attempts to reinterpret 1 Tim 2:11-15 along egalitarian lines as unsatisfying. He affirms that God has given to men a role of leadership that Paul has here argued on the basis of the order of creation. Women will be saved "through childbearing" (2:15) by the birth of *the child*, that is, by the birth of the Messiah.

A special, and very helpful, feature of this commentary is a 16-page study guide at the end of the volume. The questions would serve as excellent points of discussion in group Bible study. One should also be aware that Stott covers 2 Timothy in a separate volume in the same IVP series (1973).

I. Howard Marshall (with Phillip H. Towner). *The Pastoral Epistles*. ICC. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999.

This commentary represents the fruit of many years of Howard Marshall's labor on the Pastorals that began in the early 1980's. Professor Marshall is the retired professor of New Testament at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland) who is well known for his solid exegetical studies and his excellent work on the theology of the New Testament. Marshall did some of the work on the commentary in collaboration with Dr. Phil Towner who served as a missionary/teacher at the Chinese Evangelical Seminary in Taipei, Taiwan and currently with the United Bible Societies. Towner also began his work on the pastorals in the early 80's working on his Ph.D. thesis in Aberdeen under I. Howard Marshall and later wrote the IVP NT commentary on the Pastorals.

Regarding the context and purpose for the letters, Marshall contends that "the main motivation of the author is the positive one of wishing to maintain the purity and truth of the gospel over against what he saw as distortions of it, because of his conviction that the gospel contains the saving truth by which the church stands" (p. 41). The vigor of the polemic of the letter reflects that there was active and open opposition to Paul and his teaching. Marshall sees the opposition as sizable and gaining support. The errorists were not Gnostics, but rather were some form of Jewish Christianity – perhaps travelling teachers with an ascetic streak.

Marshall takes a unique position on the issue of the authorship of the letter. He does not see Paul as the author of the letter, but he is quite adamant that he does not hold to a pseudepigraphical view. Rather, he coins a new term, "allonymity" (from the Greek word *allos*, "other") to say that it was someone other than Paul, but quite close to him in time and proximity. In distinction from those who take a pseudepigraphical approach, Marshall sees the letter written quite early, that is, around the time of the death of Paul. He argues that they were produced in a circle which included the historical Timothy and Titus. They were endeavoring to express Paul's theology and convictions in their own words and for the benefit of the churches in their own time.

Functionally, then, for Marshall, Paul is not the author of the letters, but the letters faithfully express his theology. This method helps Marshall to take into account the differences of style and theological expression between the accepted Paulines and the Pastorals. My own impression is that Marshall still faces an enormous problem in finding an adequate explanation for the historical and autobiographical material in the letters. Nevertheless, his commentary is quite different than one would find in any other volume taking a pseudepigraphical approach because Marshall sees the theology in essential continuity with Paul. In fact, his disciples actually honor his memory and authority by working so hard to extend his influence.

The actual commentary is exceptionally helpful for its exegetical insights and discussion of interpretational issues. It is clear and well written with an economy of wording.

William D. Mounce. *Pastoral Epistles*. WBC 46. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000.

This is a commentary on the Pastoral Epistles by a Pastor. He also happens to be a solid New Testament and Greek scholar. Bill currently serves as the preaching pastor at Shiloh Hills Fellowship in Spokane, Washington. He is perhaps best known to seminary students as the author of their beginning Greek textbook, *The Basics of Biblical Greek*. Bill has also served as a New Testament professor at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary and at Azusa Pacific University. The end result is a commentary that pastors and teachers in the church will find very helpful for insight into the interpretation of the text.

Mounce contends strongly for the Pauline authorship of the three letters. Differences in style and theological emphasis are accounted for by the unique historical situation of each of the respective letters.

He offers a very thorough commentary on 1 Tim 2:12 and its context interacting with all of the recent literature in Evangelicalism on all sides of the issue of the role of women in the church. He concludes that Paul is teaching that “women are not to take the reins of the church, exercising authority over the men and teaching them.” Regarding the specific qualification of the elder as “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2), Mounce takes the same view as Dr. Bob Saucy, contending that it conveys the notion of marital faithfulness. Throughout the commentary, Mounce provides thorough discussion of the views and arguments on each of the key issues.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

Another outstanding popular commentary on the Pastorals has been written by **Gordon Fee** (*1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988]). See also the volumes by **Phillip H. Towner** (*1-2 Timothy & Titus* [IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994]), **Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr.** (*1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* [NAC 34; Nashville: Broadman, 1992]), and **George Knight** (*The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992]).

Watch For: **Robert Yarbrough** is just beginning his work on the Pastorals for the Pillar NT Commentary series. Watch also for **Philip Towner’s** NICNT volume and **Greg Beale’s** in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series.

Outstanding Special Studies On the Pastorals

- For those who want an in-depth treatment of 1 Tim 2:11-15, an entire book has been devoted to explaining this passage: Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin, *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).
- Phillip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSS 34; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).
- Reggie M. Kidd, *Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles. A “Bourgeois” Form of Early Christianity?* (SBL Dissertation Series 122; Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1990).

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Clinton E. Arnold.** "The Ephesian Background of Paul's Teaching on Women's Ministry." (co-written with Robert L. Saucy). *Women and Men in Ministry. A Complementary Perspective*. Eds. Robert L. Saucy & Judith K. TenElshof. Chicago: Moody, 2001, 279-90. — This study examines 1 Timothy 2:12 in light of the social, cultural, historical context of Ephesus.

Philemon

(see Colossians)

Commentaries on Philemon are normally coupled with Colossians (where they are reviewed in this guide), but there is one notable exception that is reviewed here.

Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke. *The Letter to Philemon*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Some may find it hard to believe that a 561-page commentary could be written on one small letter that is 25 verses in length. Without a doubt, Barth & Blanke have written the most thorough and exhaustive study of Philemon ever put into print.

One of the secondary values of this commentary is that it represents a very thorough analysis of the institution of slavery in Greek, Roman, and Jewish contexts. As one might expect, the commentary itself provides an in-depth historical and exegetical treatment of each verse of the text.

The authors maintain the traditional view regarding the setting of the letter: Onesimus is a runaway, fugitive slave who has somehow met up with Paul and now the Apostle is attempting to reconcile him with his master, Philemon. Barth & Blanke specifically reject as lacking support the view that has become increasingly popular in recent years suggesting that Onesimus was not a fugitive slave but has intentionally sought out a friend of his master, in a legitimate and legal way, to intervene in a dispute he was having with Philemon (popularized in an important article by Peter Lampe).

Hebrews

Reviewer: Victor Rhee

William L. Lane. *Hebrews*. Word Biblical Commentary 47A-B. Dallas: Word, 1991.

In this two-volume commentary Lane assumes that the readers have knowledge of Greek. In the first volume he has a long discussion of introductory materials (109 pages).

Although his treatment of authorship is very short, he has a very good discussion of the intended audience, circumstances surrounding the composition, the date of the book, and other introductory materials. He has done especially well in summarizing different literary approaches suggested by recent scholars. Among these different literary views, he relies upon the work of Vanhoye for the outline of his commentary.

The greatest strength of this commentary is the use of literary analysis in the discussion of the meaning, issues, and theology in each of the passages. His analysis of chiasm in many parts of the passages is very convincing. This literary approach allows the readers see how the author of Hebrews had designed his sermon, thus enabling us to have a better understanding of the text. His discussion of the literary structure personally helped me gain a greater understanding of the text. This commentary enabled me to make a better outline of the book.

Lane also has done well in providing bibliography for those who are serious in doing research in different topics in Hebrews. In addition to giving the main bibliographic information, he also lists books, essays, and journal articles for each section of the book. I found myself making use of this commentary very extensively while I was writing my dissertation on the book of Hebrews. This commentary is highly recommended for those who are serious about having an in-depth study of the book of Hebrews.

Paul Ellingworth. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text.* New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

This commentary is very detailed and technical in that it requires the knowledge of Greek. However, for those who are serious about studying Hebrews using the Greek text, it is an indispensable volume. This is another commentary which helped me much in writing my dissertation and preparing for lessons in my Hebrews class.

The author has a very good discussion of background materials (e.g., authorship, destination, date, canonization of Hebrews, the use of the Old Testament, literary genre, etc.). His discussion of the theology of Hebrews is brief, but nevertheless very helpful. It makes the readers aware of some of the important theological issues in Hebrews. Even the non-Greek student can benefit greatly from this background information.

The discussion of the authorship of Hebrews is very helpful. Ellingworth lists thirteen individuals for possible candidates for the author of Hebrews. Although he does not commit himself to any one person, he presents a strong case against Pauline authorship based on the internal evidence. He suggests that the differences of vocabulary between Paul and Hebrews make it impossible to attribute to Paul as the author of Hebrews.

Ellingworth also does well in detailed exegesis of the passages in Hebrews. Whenever there is a grammatical difficulty, he clearly points out the problem and gives the solution by way of diagramming the structure of sentence (e.g., p. 279, 516). Moreover, his discussion of some difficult exegetical and theological issues is very helpful. He presents different views on different issues in Hebrews and provides his own solution of the problems. The author's documentation of different views allows the reader to do a more in-depth study of the issues presented in the passages. This is another top-pick that any serious student of Hebrews must have.

Harold W. Attridge. *The Epistle to the Hebrews.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.

One of the advantages of this commentary is that it is less technical than that of Lane and Ellingworth. Attridge wrote the book in such a way to be reader friendly without losing the high quality of scholarship. Even those who do not have the knowledge of Greek will benefit greatly from it. The author gives his translation of the passage in each section. He also includes a helpful section on textual criticism. Although the main body of

the book is for the general audience, the footnotes are designed for those who desire to have more in-depth study on particular issues being discussed.

In addressing the issues of the authorship of Hebrews, Attridge give a good survey of the history of the problem of the authorship throughout the church history. Although he refutes Pauline authorship, he tends to believe that the author may have been associated with the Pauline School from the evidence that he was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus, but stands within an ecclesiastical tradition (p. 5). This commentary also has a good discussion on the literary structure of Hebrews. Attridge basically follows the literary analysis of Albert Vanhoye. A brief summary of different sections helps the reader to have a panoramic view of the entire book of Hebrews.

Attridge does not think that the audience is necessarily Jewish Christians. He allows the possibility that it may have been those who have been attracted to Jewish Christianity (p. 10-12). Attridge also believes there is a close affinity of ideas and concepts between Hebrews and Philo. However, he also emphasizes that these similarities are not due to direct literary dependence between Hebrews and Philo, but the common tradition available to both, and both relied upon it.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention

George H. Guthrie. *Hebrews*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998. Each section of the commentary is divided into three parts: Original Meaning, Bridging Contexts, and Contemporary Significance. The author's treatment of interpretive issues is concise and brief. The commentary will be helpful to pastors and other Christian workers in preparing for messages and the Bible studies. Guthrie also gives a good summary of different views on warning passages in Hebrews (223-32).

Craig R. Koester. *Hebrews*. The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 2001. This commentary is an updated version of the previous work done by George Wesley Buchanan and does not require Greek knowledge. Koester has a comprehensive survey of the authorship of Hebrews all the way from the early church to the present time. He devotes 113 pages (pp. 19-131) for the introductory materials. It is written in a non-technical style, but comprehensive in the discussion of major interpretive and theological questions.

Phillip E. Hughes. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977. Hughes approaches his commentary with the theme of the supremacy of Christ throughout the book of Hebrews. He has a good discussion on the warning passages in Hebrews. He takes the view that those individuals mentioned in the warning passages are merely professing believers.

F. F. Bruce. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964. A good commentary, but lacks a detailed exegetical approach. Unlike Hughes, Bruce subdivides Hebrews into eight sections without any suggestion for one central theme. We might call it patch-work approach.

R. Kent Hughes. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul. Preaching the Word*. 2 Vol. Wheaton: Crossway Book, 1993. This preaching commentary is helpful in bridging the gap between exposition and sermon. It has many illustrations that can be used for preaching and Bible study.

Watch For:

- The Pillar NT Commentary by **Peter T. O'Brien**.
- The Zondervan Exegetical Commentary by **Doug Moo**.
- *The Warning Passages of Hebrews: Four Perspectives* (Kregel)

General Editor: Hebert W. Bateman IV

- 1) Grant Osborne (An Arminian View)
- 2) Buist Fanning (A Reformed View)
- 3) Gary Cockerill (A Wesleyan View)
- 4) Randall Gleason (A Modified Reformed View)

Outstanding Special Studies on Hebrews

Buist M. Fanning. "A Theology of Hebrews." In *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck and D. Bock, 369-415. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994. Fanning has an excellent discussion on the overall theology of the book of Hebrews. He believes that Christ's high priesthood is the major theme that runs throughout Hebrews.

George H. Guthrie. *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 78. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994 (Also in Biblical Studies Library series from Baker Book) - In this book Guthrie made a very careful analysis of the structure of Hebrews. This book helps readers see that the author of Hebrews employed many different literary devices in communicating his messages to the recipients.

Barnabas Lindars. *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. This is a good work for introductory study of the theology of Hebrews. Especially in chapter two he deals with topics such as the preexistence of Jesus, Jesus the Messiah, humanity of Jesus, the way of perfection, priesthood of Jesus, response of faith, etc.

Lincoln D. Hurst. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, vol. 65. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. In this book Hurst presents a good background study of Hebrews. He examines the relationship between Hebrews and Philo (chapter 1), Qumran (chapter 2), and other non-Christian backgrounds (chapter 3). He also has a good discussion on faith in Hebrews (pp. 119-124).

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Victor Rhee.** *Faith in Hebrews: Analysis within the Context of Christology, Eschatology, and Ethics*. New York: Peter Lang, 2001. In this book I have argued that faith in Hebrews is both Christologically and eschatological. In response to the view that faith in Hebrews is removed from Christ, I have argued that the author of Hebrews portrays Jesus as both the model and object of faith.

Articles written

- "Chiasm and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 11." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998): 327-45.
 - "Christology and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 1:1-2:4," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 174-89.
 - "Christology and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 5:11-6:20." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000): 83-96.
 - "The Christological Faith in Hebrews 3:1-4:16." *Filologia Neotestamentaria* XIII (2000): 75-88.
 - "Chiasm and the concept of faith in Hebrews 12:1-29" *Westminster Theological Journal* 62 (2001): 269-84).
- ◆ **Michael Wilkins** contributed five articles in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*: (1) Solid Food, (2) New Birth, (3) Pastoral Theology, (4) Prayer, and (5) Teaching, Paraenesis. His work on "Teaching, Paraenesis" (1156-59) is especially helpful for the study of the book of Hebrews.

James

Reviewer: Victor Rhee

Peter Davids. *The Epistles of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Davids considers that the authorship and date of the epistle of James cannot be separated. He is inclined to believe that the source of the book appeared in the late 40s and early 50s, but the final redaction took place during the period of A.D. 55-65 (or possibly, A.D. 75-85). For this reason he attributes the author as James the Just (i.e., half-brother of the Lord). He also feels that the early dating of the book fits the possible life setting of James's teaching on poverty and wealth.

As for the structure and the composition of the epistle, Davids contends that there is a literary unit unlike Martin Dibelius's contention that the book is a series of unrelated sections. His argument for the unity of James is quite helpful (p. 25-28). He considers that the theme of testing forms the thread which ties other themes together in the epistle. His brief analysis of the theology of James is very helpful (suffering/testing, eschatology, Christology, poverty-piety, law, grace, and faith). His comparison of faith, work, and justification between James and Paul is especially helpful (p. 51-52).

Davids' verse by verse exposition of the book of James is very detailed and helpful. However, this commentary assumes the basic knowledge of Greek on the part of the readers. His solutions to different issues are also helpful. He takes the view of non-Christian for the interpretation of the rich in 1:9-11. Davids also has a good discussion of the problem of faith and work in 2:18-20 (one of the most difficult problem passages in the New Testament). He points out the gist of the objection in this passage is that faith and work are separate spiritual gifts, and that it is this separation of faith and work that James is attacking.

Ralph P. Martin. *James*. Word Biblical Commentary 48. Waco: Word, 1988.

Martin's approach to the question of authorship is quite interesting. He gives possible candidates for the author of the book of James in the Bible (p. xxxii). Then he uses the elimination process to conclude that James the Lord's brother to have been a more probable candidate for the contents of the book. However, he also believes that what we have now as the epistle of James is the edited publication of James' testamentary document (p. lxxviii). Martin suggests two life situations for the epistle: one in Jerusalem in early 60's and another in some decades later in Antioch in the Syrian province. He points out that manifold problems of social robbery, wealth, the care of the poor, the place of good work in light of misunderstanding of Paul's teaching by faith alone caused the hellenistic disciples of James to codify the teachings of James.

The biography of James the Lord's brother based on the record of the New Testament and the traditions of the first century Jewish Christians is very helpful. This is a good resource for teaching and preaching on the authorship of James (p. xxxiii-xli). Martin seems to indicate that there is one major theme running throughout the epistle. He basically follows Vouga's suggestion of threefold categorization of faith (testing, obedience, and fidelity) with some modification (p. cii-civ).

Martin has a good discussion of the identity of the rich man in 1:10. He prefers the nonbeliever view in light of the setting of 2:7. His discussion of faith and works in 2:14-26 is helpful (p. 82-84). He presents four different views on this important issue. His representation of scholars for each view allows a more serious-minded student to do more in-depth study on this issue. Martin also has a good discussion of the difficult

problem in 2:18 (i.e., identity of “someone”). Out of the three different views he argues for the view that it refers to an opponent of James (pp. 86-92).

Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.*

In the past Moo has written a short commentary on James in the Tyndale New Testament Commentary series. The Pillar Commentary Series is more detailed in its approach. He states, “The Pillar series has enabled me almost to double the space I could devote to commentary on the letter” (p. x). As for the authorship of James, he argues for James the half brother of the Lord as the only James in the Bible who would fit the profile (p. 10). He examines the four objections often cited against the authorship of James the brother of Jesus and refutes them categorically (pp. 13-20).

Moo considers that the recipients of the letter are the Jewish Christians who were forced to live away from their home country (i.e., Palestine). This, he says, helps explain their poverty and oppressed condition. Moo believes that “one of the key purposes of the author is to encourage these suffering Christians in the midst of these difficulties, reminding them of the righteous judgment of God that is coming (5:7-11) and exhorting them to maintain their piety in the midst of their trials (1:2-4, 12)” (p. 24).

Moo argues for the early date of the epistle (i.e., in the middle of 40s) from the two vantage point: (1) the probable relationship between James 2 and Paul’s teaching on justification by faith, (2) absence of any awareness of the conflict over torah that existed in the early church as a result of the Gentile mission (p. 26).

The commentary also has a good discussion of theology of James. The discussion of faith, works, and justification by comparing with Paul’s is especially helpful. Moo also thinks that James also contributes significantly to our understanding of God, temptation, prayer, the law, wisdom, poverty and wealth, Christian life, and eschatology (pp. 27-43). I highly recommend this commentary to anybody for the purpose of teaching and preaching.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention

David P. Nystrom. *James.* The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997. As with other commentaries in this series, each section is divided into three parts: Original Meaning, Bridging Contexts, and Contemporary Significance. The author devotes 325 pages for the discussion of five chapters in the letter of James. The commentary will be helpful to pastors and other Christian workers in preparing for messages and the Bible studies.

James Adamson. *The Epistle of James.* The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976. Adamson considers that James the brother of the Lord is the sole author of the epistle. However, his discussion of the authorship is very brief. The book has some good discussion on the theology of James (e.g., law, rich and poor, faith and works). This commentary can be used even by those who do not have Greek background. Adamson also includes more technical discussions in the Excursus sections.

D. Edmond Hiebert. *The Tests of a Living Faith.* Chicago: Moody Press, 1979. This is a good commentary from the standpoint of the Bible exposition. Those who do not have Greek background can benefit from it.

Watch For: The installment in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series by **Craig Blomberg** and **Mariam Karnell.**

Outstanding Special Studies on James

- D. Edmond Hiebert.** "The Unifying Theme of James." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (1978): 21-31. Hiebert proposes that the test of living faith is the unifying theme of the epistle. His outline: (1) Introduction (1:2-18), (2) faith tested by its response to the word of God (1:19-27), (3) faith tested by its production of works (2:14-26), (4) faith tested by its reactions to the worldliness (4:1-5:12), (5) faith tested by its resort to prayer (5:13-18).
- R. E. Glaze.** "The Relationship of Faith to Works in James 1:22-25 and 2:14-26." *Theological Educator* 34 (1986): 35-42.
- John F. MacArthur.** "Faith according to the Apostle James." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (1990): 13-34.
- David Hutchison Edgar.** *Has God not Chosen the Poor?: The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 206. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001. By examining the setting of James, the author concludes that "the epistle's unique contribution to our understanding of the emergence and development of early Christian thought and identity within its sociohistorical context is particularly important and worthy of far more attention than has usually been the case" (p. 231).
- Luke Timothy Johnson.** *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. The author indicates in his preface that this book contains a collection of essays on the Epistle of James that were written over a period of two decades (p. vii). It includes topics such as James's Significance for Early Christian History, Social World of James, The Use of Leviticus 19 in the Letter of James, the Sayings of Jesus in the letter of James, Friendship with the World and Friendship with God.

1 Peter

Reviewer: Michael J. Wilkins

Thomas R. Schreiner. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*. The New American Commentary 37. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003.

One of the most recent commentaries on the Petrine epistles and Jude, this volume is written by a conservative evangelical scholar who is also a leading Pauline scholar. In that sense readers have a commentary that they can trust on the basic introductory and theological issues, and a commentary written by a scholar who is abreast of the broader issues of N.T. theology. It is accessible to pastors, teachers, students, and advanced laypeople. Schreiner is Professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. Although the commentary does not require the use of Greek, it is based on a thorough understanding of the Greek text, transliterated in the commentary. Therefore, seminary students and pastors will make good use of their Greek in an easy fashion to explore the original text. Schreiner's stated purpose in the "Author's Preface" is to provide a commentary that is short enough (252 pages) so that busy pastors can have a quick grasp of the epistle. Therefore, he has not written primarily to scholars, which keeps interaction with technical issues to a manageable level, yet the reader will not be short-changed at getting to the heart of this gem of a little epistle.

Schreiner has an excellent discussion of Petrine authorship, contending in an informed and persuasive way for the apostle Peter writing the epistle from Rome around A.D. 62-63 before the Neronian persecution. While writing from a fairly strong Reformed perspective, Schreiner lets the text speak clearly through an even stronger biblical theological thrust. That is to say, he roots the epistle firmly in its first century historical

and cultural setting, giving rich insights to Peter's message to the churches of Asia Minor. There is very little by way of present-day application, but the careful student will understand clearly Peter's intended principles for his readers, which make the contemporary significance plain.

This commentary is an important place to gain a solid overview of this wonderful little epistle.

J. Ramsey Michaels. *1 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary 49. Waco: Word, 1988.

Based upon a discussion of the Greek text of 1 Peter, Michaels follows the typical format of the Word series, providing a translation, textual critical notes, interaction with the form/structure/setting of each passage, the commentary proper, with some brief explanatory notes that are primarily theological. The volume is being revised, which is needed to bring up to date the commentary and bibliography. Michaels taught for many years at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is Professor Emeritus at Southwest Missouri State University. Michaels is an evangelical who embraces a more critical approach to 1 Peter than does Schreiner. He has an informed discussion of the authorship of 1 Peter, but ends by seeing the epistle as essentially Petrine, and probably the living apostle Peter was responsible for its writing.

Michaels also wrote the Word Biblical Themes volume on 1 Peter, which is a clue to his theological interests. He emphasizes Peter's theological contributions to the themes of "God," "Christ" (including 'Revelation,' 'Salvation,' and 'Ethics and Salvation') and "The Spirit." Throughout the commentary Michaels brings exegetical skills to bear upon the text, which then lead to an understanding of the apostle's theological perspective.

From a broad evangelical perspective, Michaels' commentary is valuable for gaining a wide perspective of exegetical options. Handled together with Schreiner's, this commentary will give a solid understanding of 1 Peter for pastors and students.

Scot McKnight. *1 Peter*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996.

Following the format of the NIVAC series, Scot McKnight, the Karl A. Olsson Professor in Religious Studies at North Park University, gives a solid exegetical treatment to the text of 1 Peter before attempting the bridging contexts and contemporary significance. McKnight is an evangelical who does not mind addressing critical issues, but also has a warm heart for the spiritual significance of the text. This commentary provides a nice balance to the more technical exegetical commentaries on 1 Peter mentioned above. McKnight emphasizes in the bridging contexts the way in which the communities that Peter addresses provide a living demonstration of principles that contemporary believers and communities of faith can draw upon as we attempt to apply the revelation of Peter's epistle. McKnight focuses on 1 Peter as a message helping Christians to live in a hostile environment and to live in such a way that they not only endure but also have a lasting impact for good on that environment. As such, McKnight provides us a timeless message from God that is immediately relevant in our contemporary world.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention

The value of 1 Peter is demonstrated in the amount of fine commentaries on this epistle.

Among the more technical are **Paul J. Achtemeier**, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*. Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996). This is an exhaustive, scholarly exegesis of 1 Peter. For scholarly study, this is the starting point for students. The reader should be

aware of Achtemeier's critical orientation, but it is of a conservative sort. A classic commentary is **E. G. Selwyn**, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Essays* (1946; 1947; 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1964). For many years this was the premier exegetical commentary on the Greek text of 1 Peter. It is now dated, but it is still important to consult. An evangelical commentary is found in **Peter H. Davids**, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), who has given us a solid commentary on the English text of 1 Peter.

Expositional commentaries abound. One of the best is **I. Howard Marshall**, *1 Peter* (IVPNTC; Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1991). In his usual style, Marshall offers us a first-rate, although brief commentary on the epistle, with his customary warm, pastoral insights. **Wayne A. Grudem**, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), is a professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, which points to the value of his commentary for unearthing the theological issues in the epistle. **Edmund P. Clowney**, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross* (BST; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), offers a first rate expositional/sermonic commentary.

Watch For: Several noteworthy commentaries are nearing publication, all of which could become top picks. Among them are **Troy Martin** in the NIGTC series (Eerdmans), **Scott Hafemann** in the Pillar series (Eerdmans), **Karen Jobes** in the BECNT series (Baker), and **Michael J. Wilkins** in the new Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan).

Outstanding Special Studies on 1 Peter

Several monographs, primarily critical, have explored recent exegetical approaches to 1 Peter. Among them are: **Steven R. Bechtler**, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community and Christology in 1 Peter*. Scholars Press, 1998; **John H. Elliott**, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981; **Ralph P. Martin**, "The Theology of 1 Peter." *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude*. Andrew Chester and Ralph P. Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; **Troy Martin**, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter*. SBLDS 131; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992; **J. Ramsey Michaels**, *1 Peter*. *Word Biblical Themes*. Dallas: Word, 1989; **Lauri Thurén**, *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origins of Christian Paraenesis*. JSNTSupSer 114. Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995.

Talbot Authors

- ◆ **Michael J. Wilkins** (Talbot professor), is writing the commentary on *First Peter* for the new Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, approximately 2010).

2 Peter and Jude

Reviewer: Victor Rhee

Michael Green. *2 Peter and Jude*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

This commentary does not require knowledge of Greek. Those who have not had Greek may greatly benefit from it. The authorship of 2 Peter has had a very rough road throughout church history. In this commentary Green examines the authorship from two areas: the language and the thought. He believes that the stylistic difference between 1 and 2 Peter is due to a change in secretary in writing the letters. He also examines the thoughts between the two epistles and concludes that both letters derived from Simon Peter. His comparison of thoughts between the two letters is very convincing. Green also holds that the letter of Jude is written by Jude the brother of Jesus.

Green also gives a very helpful summary of differences of false teachings between 2 Peter and Jude. For example he asserts that while Peter's opponents twist the OT prophets and Pauline writings to their own ends, Jude's antagonists, on the other hand, twist the (Pauline) doctrine of free grace into an excuse for license (p. 43). He also does not consider that the false teaching both in 2 Peter and Jude is an early form of Gnosticism based on the fact that there is no cosmological dualism, which is the heart of the teaching of Gnosticism. He believes that the heresy in 2 Peter and Jude is entirely credible within the mid-first century (p. 44-45).

Is there any literary dependence between 2 Peter and Jude? Did Peter depend on Jude or vice versa? Green gives arguments for both sides. His discussion of similarities and differences between the two letters is very helpful. He concludes that it is highly probable that both Peter and Jude used a common tradition available at the time of writing.

Green also has some good discussion on different issues in 2 Peter and Jude. He translates 2 Peter 1:20 as "no prophecy of Scripture came about by the *prophet's own interpretation* as opposed to *one's own interpretation*." He believes that the context points to the divine origin of Scripture. As for the interpretation of "they" in 1 Peter 2:20, he holds that Peter is referring not to young, unstable believers, but the false prophets.

Richard J. Bauckham. *Jude, 2 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco: Word, 1983.

In this commentary Bauckham has done an outstanding job in helping us realize the importance of 2 Peter and Jude in New Testament. This book assumes that a reader has some knowledge of Greek. It is to be noted that Bauckham gives the title of this book as "*Jude, 2 Peter*" instead of *2 Peter, Jude*." It reflects his conviction that Jude was written first and 2 Peter shows signs of literary dependence on the earlier work. Although one may not agree with his conclusion, his discussion of the different views is helpful (see pp. 141-43).

Bauckham argues against the pseudepigraphal hypothesis of Jude and concludes that Jude the brother of Jesus is the author of the letter. As for the authorship of 2 Peter he tends to believe that the name "Peter" is a pseudonym (pp. 159-60). However, he also believes that the pseudepigraphal device is not a fraudulent means of claiming apostolic authority nor is it a reason to be excluded from an honorable place in the canon of Scripture (pp. 161-62). As for the opponents in Jude, Bauckham suggests that they are antinomians, not Gnostics. He also holds that the opponents in 2 Peter are not Gnostics but libertines who accommodated to the permissiveness of pagan society (p. 156).

Bauckham has good discussions of different issues in 2 Peter and Jude. He also deals with grammar and textual criticism in this commentary. He believes that the major thrust of 2 Peter 1:20-21 has to do with the divine origin of Scripture (i.e., the word *idios* is to be translated as "prophet's own interpretation"). I really like his attempt to interpret the passages in light of the OT and other background materials. He argues that 2 Peter 2:20 is the continuation of the discussion of the false prophets which the author began 2:1. His overall exegesis of both 2 Peter and Jude is excellent.

Douglas J. Moo. *2 Peter and Jude. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.*

In this commentary Moo points out that 2 Peter and Jude focus on the negative things. He emphasizes the importance of listening to the negative messages, so that we might be warned about dangers and steer clear of them (p. 15). He feels that "Denunciation of False Teachers" might be the message we need to hear in the midst of the pluralistic mindset of our age. In his short introduction to 2 Peter and Jude Moo presents a summary of parallel teaching on false teachers between the two books (p. 16). He repudiates the idea that 2 Peter is pseudepigraphy and argues for Petrine authorship. He also holds that Jude was written by Jude, a brother of the Lord Jesus (. 27). This commentary is recommended for to pastors and other Christian workers in preparing for messages and the Bible studies.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention

Charles Bigg. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude.*

The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901. This commentary includes 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude. It is outdated, but nevertheless valuable. It has useful background information.

D. Edmond Hiebert. *Second Peter and Jude.* Greenville: Unusual Publication. This is a good commentary for the purpose of Bible exposition. It does not require knowledge of Greek.

E. M. Sidebottom. *James, Jude, 2 Peter.* The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Jerome H. Neyrey. *2 Peter, Jude.* The Anchor Bible. Vol. 37c. New York: Doubleday, 1993.

Thomas R. Schreiner. *1, 2 Peter, Jude.* The New American Commentary. Vol. 37. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003.

Watch For: The NIGTC commentary by **Scott Hafeman**, the NICNT commentary by **Robert Webb**, and the Pillar NT commentary by **Peter Davids**.

Outstanding Special Studies on 2 Peter/Jude

Duane Durham. "An Exegetical Study of 2 Peter 2:18-22." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (1983): 40-54. This article argues that "they" in v. 20 refers to new converts (i.e., true believers).

F. Gardiner. "The Similarity between the Epistle of Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 11 (1854): 114-39. This article shows similarities and differences between Jude and 2 Peter. The author argues that it is impossible to suppose that such a resemblance could have been accidental.

I. Howard Marshall. *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel.* Downer's Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 2004. See pages 660-704.

The Johannine Epistles

Reviewers: Michael J. Wilkins and Alan D. Hultberg

The Epistles of John have had a profound affect upon the church throughout history. As with the Gospel of John, little attention has been given to these epistles in recent years. However, several new commentaries have just recently been published, or will

soon be announced. Commentaries on these epistles must be considered in the light of commentaries on the gospel according to John, and the Revelation.

Gary M. Burge. *The Letters of John. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.*

Burge's NIV Application Commentary on the Johannine epistles takes pride of place among the Top Picks for commentaries on these books. Gary M. Burge is Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College. He has focused much of his academic career on the Johannine literature. In this commentary he brings to play both his scholarly expertise and his pastoral interests. Burge gives a thorough understanding of the text of these epistles from a conservative perspective. He holds to the traditional view that the author of these epistles is none other than the apostle John, yet he is thoroughly conversant with competing views. His analysis of problem passages is even handed, and he has a gracious attitude toward those with whom he disagrees.

Following the general pattern of the NIV Application Commentary, the commentary is divided into three sections: original meaning, bridging contexts, and contemporary significance. He does an excellent job at all three points, providing a realistic model of biblical exposition and practical application for pastors, teachers, and students. This is a well-balanced commentary that will be of considerable help to a wide audience of readers.

Stephen S. Smalley. *1, 2, 3 John. Word Biblical Commentary 51. Waco: Word, 1984.*

Two technical commentaries stand out as required reading for serious study of the letters of John. Raymond E. Brown's contribution to the Anchor Bible series (vol. 30, Doubleday, 1982) is a thorough and in-depth exposition of the Biblical text and surrounding academic discussion. (For this latter reason, the introduction alone is well worth owning.) But, while the exposition is full of exegetical gems, Brown's very thoroughness makes his commentary somewhat tedious reading. Brown's approach is moderate but critical and firmly grounded in the Johannine school hypothesis, and thus readers may take exception with some of his conclusions.

Much easier to consult, and slightly more conservative, is the extensive exegetical commentary by Stephen Smalley in the Word Biblical Commentary series. He has excellent discussions of textual critical issues, a very good discussion of the Greek text, and very full discussions of the theological implications. Like Brown's, readers may find exception with some of his conclusions, but this is a commentary that will force the reader to interact with the text with integrity.

Colin G. Kruse. *The Letters of John. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.*

Professor I. Howard Marshall, long-time professor of New Testament at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, wrote a landmark commentary for the NIC series in the latter part of the 1970's (I. Howard Marshall. *The Epistles of John. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.*). It served to bring the state of research up to date, helpfully summarizing much of the previous scholarship on the Johannine epistles. Now, however, the commentary is over 20 years old, and its successor appears to be that of Colin G. Kruse, lecturer in New Testament at the Bible College of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. Kruse writes in a similar vein as Marshall, providing serious yet clear and straightforward exposition of the text. Many useful excursions on various important Johannine terms and concepts help clarify, without encumbering, the main exposition.

Worthy of mention here is a similar commentary by Daniel L. Akin in the New American Commentary series (vol. 38, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001). Akin's tone is a bit more pastoral than Kruse's, and he focuses a little more on the broader theological implications of the text, but he provides an equally serious and close exposition of these epistles.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

The commentary by **John R. W. Stott**, *The Epistles of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), is outstanding for getting to the pastoral thought of John, and Stott does so quickly and with great exegetical efficiency. **John Painter's** *1, 2, and 3 John* (Sacra Pagina 18, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002) is a critical commentary that serves to update discussions in Smalley and Brown. **Marianne Meye Thompson's** commentary (*1-3 John*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992) draws upon her extensive work in the Johannine corpus. She too alludes to the Johannine school standing behind the authorship of this material. This is a fine commentary that attempts to combine solid exegesis with heartfelt devotion.

Watch For: As with treatment that will be given to the Gospel according to John, the Epistles of John will receive intense scholarly attention in the next 10-20 years. In the next several years, commentaries that could very well become top picks will make an appearance, including the one to appear soon by **Robert W. Yarbrough** in the Baker Exegetical Commentary series. Watch also for the NIGTC volume by **D. A. Carson** and the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series installment by **Karen Jobes**.

Jude

(see 2 Peter)

Revelation

Reviewer: Alan Hultberg

Recommending commentaries on Revelation is a difficult undertaking, not just because the number of commentaries seems endless, but also because the main ways of approaching the book (preterist, historicist, futurist, and idealist) make the conclusions of the various commentaries quite divergent. In what follows I have recommended the works that have the most helpful exposition or analysis of various views and those that best represent their various interpretive traditions.

G. K. Beale. *The Book of Revelation. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.*

Two recent commentaries on Revelation deserve pride of place as Top Picks. Both offer lucid exposition, helpful, detailed surveys of background information and scholarly debates, and useful summaries of the developing message of the book. G. K. Beale,

formerly professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and now Kenneth T. Wessner professor of Biblical Studies at Wheaton Graduate School, offers a formidable exposition of Revelation from an idealist amillennial perspective. The commentary is not just for amillennialists, however. Beale often has profound insights into the Old Testament and Jewish background of the Apocalypse that all students of the book will find quite helpful. He also regularly offers scrupulous consideration of competing viewpoints on most issues crucial to the interpretation of Revelation. These discussions do not generally, however, get in the way of Beale's exposition, which is readable, reasonable, and thought-provoking. Though, in my opinion, Beale's conclusions are not always compelling, especially due to his broader approach to Revelation, his commentary will nevertheless admirably serve as a guide and stimulus to any who study the book.

Grant R. Osborne. *Revelation. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.*

The other commentary referred to above is that of Grant R. Osborne, professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. This commentary, like Beale's, offers a commendable balance between thorough consideration of current scholarship and straightforward exposition of the Apocalypse. Osborne's discussions are not as in-depth as Beale's, although still quite extensive, but his explication of John's thought is equally clear and stimulating. Each section of the commentary has useful introductions and summaries, and these help the reader focus on the developing message of the book as Osborne sees it.

Osborne understands Revelation to focus on the eschatological tribulation and vindication of the saints as a lens through which to view and address the situation of John's churches in their struggle against Roman imperial, and particularly Domitianic, ideology and persecution. Much of his interpretation is thus futurist, though he keeps a firm eye on the first-century context of the book. Osborne thus helps balance and challenge some of Beale's conclusions.

David Aune. *Revelation. 3 Vols. Word Biblical Commentary 52A-C. Dallas: Word, 1997-98.*

David Aune's three-volume work is an indispensable, though sometimes frustrating resource for study of the Apocalypse. Aune, Professor of Theology with specialties in New Testament and Christian Origins at Loyola University, is a well-known figure in both apocalyptic and NT background studies, and he brings this expertise fully to bear in his investigation of the book of Revelation. The reader is literally deluged with carefully researched and meticulously presented extra-biblical details and with résumés of scholarly debates impinging on the text of the Apocalypse. The Introduction is invaluable for this reason. Unfortunately, Aune does not always indicate the relevance of the vast array of information he adduces, and the reader is frequently left with the task of sorting out the significance of it all. One is reminded of a preacher who throws everything he has learned into a sermon but who never actually helps the congregation understand the biblical text. Aune *does* help one understand Revelation to a degree, but he requires a patient and thoughtful reading.

Aune seems to understand John as actually having seen the visions he reports, though his approach to the Apocalypse is generally preterist. It is unclear whether Aune believes John actually to have prophesied of the end. Committed futurists will thus find Aune's conclusions occasionally distasteful--but Aune should not for that reason be avoided. Dig into him for the incredible smörgåsbord of information he lays out and use that to help form your own conclusions on the text.

Robert L. Thomas. *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary. 2 Vols. Chicago: Moody Press, 1992, 1995.*

For a thoroughly futurist and dispensational approach to the Apocalypse, one will want to consult Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*. Thomas, professor of NT language and literature at The Master's Seminary, argues that Revelation is to be interpreted "literally," and this implies to him exclusively futuristically, with all details being "objectively meaningful and historical," especially as he understands the book to be sui generis a NT visionary prophecy and not related generically to extra-biblical apocalypses. His exposition thus differs considerably at points from that of Mounce and Aune.

Thomas's commentary is clear and detailed, and his conclusions generally sober. He leaves virtually no stone unturned with regard to vocabulary and grammar, a feature many will appreciate, though the work is not always compelling. Thomas is similarly thorough in surveying contending views at most points in the commentary (hence its length), and this may prove to many readers to be its most valuable feature. In general he deals even-handedly with other viewpoints, though at times the tone is overly polemical.

Other Commentaries Worthy of Mention:

Robert H. Mounce (*The Book of Revelation*, Rev., NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) remains one of the best English commentaries on the Apocalypse, though now overshadowed by those above. The exposition is clear and considered, and scholarly debates are relegated footnotes. Somewhat like Osborne, Mounce combines futurist and preterist elements in his understanding of Revelation. So, for example, the Beast from the Sea is both the Roman empire and the Antichrist; the Beast from the Earth is both the imperial priesthood and a final enforcing agent of secular-religious power. In the main his conclusions are compelling and useful.

Craig S. Keener (*Revelation*, NIV App, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) is another recent, solid commentary on Revelation. He understands Revelation 1-18 to be addressed especially to the situation of John's churches and 19-22 to be prophetic of the eschatological future. His exposition is lucid, and he deals thoughtfully with competing interpretations. His application is generally relevant and deeply reflective.

Standards from earlier in the century include **R.H. Charles**, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920), helpful introduction and comments but an idiosyncratic source theory; **Isbon T. Beckwith**, *The Apocalypse of John* (NY: Macmillan, 1919), an excellent introduction and commentary; and **Henry Barclay Swete**, *Commentary on Revelation* (NY: Macmillan, 1911), a standard rival and balance to Charles. Also useful are **G.R. Beasley-Murray**; NCB (Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1974); **G.B. Caird**, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, BNTC, rep. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993); **David Chilton**, *Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Fort Worth: Dominion, 1987), a well-argued postmillennial-preterist interpretation; **William Hendricksen**, *More Than Conquerors*, rep. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), a lucid amillennialist exposition; **George Eldon Ladd**, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); **John F. Walvoord**, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), the standard dispensational work, now surpassed by Thomas. **Steve Gregg**, ed., *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997) lays out in parallel columns according to the text of Revelation excerpts from commentaries representative the four main interpretive

traditions. **Mark W. Wilson**, "Revelation," in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. 4, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) provides some interesting background material and images that help the interpreter get a feel for the original setting of the book.

Watch For: The Pillar NT Commentary volume by **D. A. Carson** and the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary by **Buist Fanning**.

Outstanding Special Studies on Revelation

- Richard Bauckham**, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), very scholarly, fresh, and thought-provoking studies on Revelation in a quite accessible style.
- . *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge U., 1993), a much shorter condensation of *Climax*, with other helpful articles.
- Colin J. Hemer**, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, JSNTSS 11 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), an exegesis of Rev 2-3 focusing especially on the historical background of the seven churches of Asia. Very careful assessment of literary, epigraphic, numismatic, and archaeological evidence.
- J. Ramsay Michaels**, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), a broadly evangelical and profitable introduction to interpretive issues in Revelation.
- Robert L. Muse**, *The Book of Revelation: An Annotated Bibliography* (NY: Garland, 1996), as the name implies, a thorough, 350-page annotated bibliography on the Apocalypse.
- C. Marvin Pate**, ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), essays from representatives of four interpretive traditions, preterist, idealist, progressive dispensationalist, and classical dispensationalist, expounding their approaches to the Apocalypse.
- Merrill C. Tenney**, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), a brief, readable, but extremely insightful set of special studies and commentary on the Apocalypse from an Evangelical icon.

Talbot Authors

Michelle V. Lee. "A Call to Martyrdom: Function as Method and Message in Revelation." *Novum Testamentum* 40.2 (1998) 164-194.