

reflect more thoroughly the character of divine love exhibited in the renovated creation.

Part 4 (chaps. 11–16) investigates the moral values latent in the Decalogue and social-justice laws, wrestling with issues of theodicy arising from these regulations along with questions about their continuing authority. This section is quite helpful in answering common objections to the OT Law in its allegedly draconian treatment of women, slaves, and immigrants.

The book's conclusion offers an extended reflection on the value of obedience to God's will, tying together Gane's inferences concerning the continued applicability and authority of the Mosaic Law.

The book has several strengths. Gane's treatment of ANE backgrounds decisively clarifies the context of OT Law and illuminates many prescriptions that would otherwise remain unclear. His approach to the application of OT Law is highly sophisticated, evidencing concern to handle Scripture carefully. Also, he persuasively demonstrates that the Law champions the rights of the least powerful in society, including women and slaves, rather than the inverse.

There are, however, a few weaknesses. The book suffers somewhat from a lack of consistent focus, as much of the material is repetitive or does not follow a clear sequence. At more than 400 pages this shortcoming makes for difficult reading at times (e.g., the first 50 pages might have been abridged). More importantly, Gane's *Progressive Moral Wisdom* fails to deal adequately with the NT believer's relationship to OT Law. This reviewer concurs with interpreters who understand the Mosaic Law as abrogated in Christ and no longer binding on the NT believer. Gane's approach, however, tends to blur this important distinction and to foist the rather scant biblical material concerning the nature of creational/new-creational life upon a much larger body of clear directives. In the end, his method tends to over- or underemphasize important aspects of the OT and subtly undermines the sufficiency of Scripture.

The book provides a helpful introduction for advanced students with limited exposure to the complexities of OT Law. Although this reviewer finds deficiencies in Gane's approach, the book may be read with profit by those who seek a more robust understanding of the nature and context of OT Law.

Kyle C. Dunham

*Ancient Apocryphal Gospels*, by Markus Bockmuehl. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017. vii + 330 pp. \$40.00.

The average sympathetic reader of the New Testament takes a posture of fear or defensive skepticism towards apocryphal Christian gospels. Dan Brown's popular stories and rumors from The Jesus Seminar

threaten to undermine everything that the poor New Testament reader thinks he knows about his text. Furthermore, popular opinion far and wide, influenced by Brown and others, holds that an early, authoritarian church suppressed multiple authentic traditions about Jesus of Nazareth. One can easily imagine fearing the results of a careful examination of the texts that purportedly hold these horrors. On the other hand, many take the more skeptical view that the non-canonical gospels do not preserve a reliable tradition of Jesus. They need only the fourfold gospel of the New Testament to learn of his life and deeds. Hence, the apocryphal gospels deserve only scorn and neglect. For the correction of both these postures Markus Bockmuehl of Oxford University has written *Ancient Apocryphal Gospels*. In this work Bockmuehl offers an introduction and survey of the ancient non-canonical gospels, with particular reference to how they relate to the New Testament.

The introductory chapter of this work includes a much-needed clarification of terms and concepts, a brief background and overview of the texts, as well as a direction for the book. Among the terms he covers are “gospel,” which he says at the earliest discernible points in Christianity meant both the teaching *of* Jesus and also the teaching *about* Jesus, as well as “apocryphal,” meaning, in some sense, hidden. Applied to literatures this narrows the present corpus of study to those ancient, non-canonical Christian texts that are explicitly the teaching of or about Jesus and which are in some sense hidden. Furthermore, among the introductory material, Bockmuehl tips his hand to the posture he will take in the rest of the book. In a series of stated emphases, he shows that he holds the canonical gospels in high regard and yet that the non-canonical gospels are valuable due to their epiphenomenal relationship. By epiphenomenal Bockmuehl means that they assume the existence, substance or wording of the NT gospels, thus validating them even as they supplement, subvert, or otherwise relate to them.

The following chapters, two through five, function similarly to a New Testament introduction textbook. Each chapter consists of a major subsection of apocryphal gospels and of the important details needed to introduce them to the uninitiated, such as date of composition, manuscript attestation and relationship to the canonical gospels. Chapter two deals specifically with the Infancy Gospels. These include the “gospel-like texts associated with the birth and childhood of Jesus and with the family origins especially of his mother, Mary” (55). Chapter three discusses the Ministry Gospels, which are concerned with Jesus’s teaching ministry. Chapter four includes a distinction that Bockmuehl admits is only for convenience, since the Passion Gospels may have originally included longer narratives, but in their existing fragmentary forms only describe the Last Supper, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Jesus. Finally, chapter five discusses the Post-Resurrection Discourse Gospels, which largely consist of lists of Jesus’s alleged sayings.

These chapters form the true body of the work. While Bockmuehl includes a great deal of detail, he remains tethered to his purposes throughout the discussion. The state of critical scholarship is explained

for each major work, constantly connecting the content and background of the text at hand with the documents of the New Testament. This he accomplishes while remaining conscious of the non-expert who may be unaware of terms or ideas related specifically to the study of apocryphal gospels. Indeed, for the non-specialist these chapters might act as a helpful reference resource, similar to a New Testament introduction.

Chapter six synthesizes the findings of the detailed discussions into what Bockmuehl considers to be points of reference for further reflection and discussion. First, in his opinion it has been demonstrated that the Canonical Gospels appear to be unique and distinctive. Second, contra a myriad of popular theories, the non-canonical gospels did not “become canonical” and were not “suppressed” from the canon. Third (and he has made a special effort to show this in the body of the work), the apocryphal gospels are epiphenomenal to the gospel tradition that became canonical. Fourth, only a minority of the apocryphal gospels seem to intend explicit subversion or displacement of the fourfold gospel. Finally, the apocryphal gospels illustrate the diversity of early Christianity’s cultural and religious engagement with the memory of Jesus. Each of these points is accompanied by an engaging discussion and reflection.

This work has a great deal to offer anyone interested in the apocryphal Christian gospels, especially the student or scholar of another field. Its strengths lie particularly in its constant accessibility, which is achieved by means of clarification of terms, consistent relation of material to the New Testament, and bibliographies at the end of each chapter for further study. Furthermore, given that so much scholarship has taken place in this field in the last ten years, this book has a clear edge over other good introductions that were published in the last decade. The introduction and conclusion are particularly valuable for the non-specialist coming from a New Testament background because they provide the introductory material and analysis necessary to be able to competently, critically, and yet sympathetically relate to these non-canonical texts. While the reader who holds the New Testament in high esteem will be pleased with Bockmuehl’s conclusions he will also be left with a healthy respect for these ancient texts that resists a polarized reaction against them.

Luke Beavers

*Dispensationalism and Free Grace: Intimately Linked*, by Grant Hawley. Taos, NM: Dispensational Publishing House, 2017. 74 pp. \$12.95.

In this brief book, Grant Hawley attempts to demonstrate that the literal interpretation of dispensationalism gives rise to free grace theology (chapter 1). Conversely, he argues that non-literal interpretation is to blame for Lordship salvation, legalism, covenant theology, and non-dispensational views of the millennium (chapter 2). Finally, he sets forth