

The Angel of the Lord: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study, by Matt Foreman and Doug Van Dorn. Denver: Waters of Creation, 2020. xvi + 412 pp. \$33.97.

Matt Foreman has been the pastor of Faith Reformed Baptist Church in Media, PA, since 2003 and is a lecturer in Practical Theology at Reformed Baptist Seminary. Doug Van Dorn has been the pastor of Reformed Baptist Church of Northern Colorado since 2001. These pastors have collaborated to argue that “the Angel of the Lord” in the OT is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. That claim may not be too controversial, but they argue further that the “Angel of the Lord” is “the most important and central figure in the [OT], the most frequent way God is revealed, and appears way more often than most people realize” (2). With the statement “way more often than most people realize,” Foreman and Van Dorn are referring to their contention that the Son or “Angel of the Lord” also appears in the OT as the “word” of YHWH (e.g., Gen 15:1), the “Name” of YHWH (e.g., Isa 30:27), God’s “presence” (e.g., Deut 4:37) or “face” (e.g., Gen 32:20), the “form” or “likeness” of YHWH (e.g., Num 12:8), the “man of war” (Exod 15:3) or “commander of the army” of YHWH (Josh 5:13), etc. In other words, this book is about more than just those places where the specific phrase “the Angel of the Lord” appears. Why should you read this book? The authors make a convincing argument that Christians can preach and teach, and indeed grow in their love of, Christ from the Hebrew Scriptures without resorting to a form of “christotelic” hermeneutics which “actually excuses its own high-level form of eisegesis, justifying reading Jesus back into texts in which he wasn’t originally present and skirting any need for the [OT] to be accountably revealing of Christ on its own terms” (352).

The main body of this work is divided into four parts: (1) “The Angel and Biblical Theology,” (2) “The Angel and Church History,” (3) “The Angel in Application,” and (4) several lengthy appendices. The first section surveys the OT texts, which ostensibly describe the Son interacting with his creation. Rather than moving through the text in canonical or chronological order, this biblical theology section is divided into chapters that address a particular term (or cluster of related terms) used to describe the Son. So, besides some of the descriptions listed above, the authors include a discussion of passages that describe the “glory” of God, the “shepherd,” and the “hand” of God. Rather than immediately assuming that terms like “face” or “arm” when used of God are anthropomorphic, Foreman and Van Dorn argue that many, perhaps most, of these are actually references to the Son’s *body* appearing and acting on behalf of his people. However, they are also clear that this is the *pre-incarnate* Son. To support this distinction between a non-human bodily existence and a human bodily existence, they appeal, in part, to a distinction between *’ish* (אִישׁ) and *’adam* (אָדָם), with only the former being used for the Son’s pre-incarnate, non-human bodily appearances. The Son in this bodily form existed in the heavenly realm

from which he could periodically enter our earthly dimension and then subsequently return.

There is much that could be said here, but one of the more intriguing portions of this opening section is chapter 11, where Foreman and Van Dorn argue that the OT describes the Son presiding over a divine council made up of beings, variously called *watchers*, *elohim*, *angels*, *sons of God*, etc., which, unlike the Son, are created (e.g., Deut 32:7–9; 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Pss 82; 89:5–7). Prior to the completion of the written word of God, genuine prophets were granted access to this council in which they received revelation from the Son (e.g., Isa 6). Some of these beings rebelled when God created mankind and designated man as the ruler of this earth. As a result of Adam's sin and mankind's subsequent treachery at Babel, the world's nations, excluding Israel, have been given to rebellious members of this council to rule. Christ's work reclaims the rightful rule of this world for mankind. Some of this builds on the earlier work of writers like Michael Heiser (who writes the foreword to this book). A reader might quibble over how a particular verse is interpreted here and there, but overall, Foreman and Van Dorn make a compelling argument for the importance of this divine council in the biblical storyline, suggesting plausible explanations for difficult NT passages such as John 10:34–36.

In the book's second section, Foreman and Van Dorn provide some historical evidence for identifying the "Angel of the Lord" as Christ. In chapter 16, they review evidence demonstrating that some Jews prior to the coming of Christ already held "some form of a Godhead...simultaneously holding to beliefs such as there being (at least) two Persons in the OT called Yahweh or two Persons such as the Ancient of Days and 'one like a son of man' who were both separate and, yet, not separate" (237–38). This concept of Two Powers was "squashed" by rabbis following the spread of the Christianity so that "very few realize the actual history on how many Jews were interpreting their Scriptures with a Godhead" (248). The remaining two chapters in this section trace demonstrate that it was common in the church fathers (chap. 17) and the Reformation period (chap. 18) to identify the "Angel of the Lord" with the Son.

Foreman and Van Dorn open the book's final section with a chapter on the "Angel" and systematic theology (chap. 19). Here they overstate their case that the systematic theologies of Grudem, Berkhof, and Hodge lack interaction with the OT "Angel" passages (290–91). For example, Hodge spends six pages in his work on the "Angel" (Foreman and Van Dorn also seem to overlook the second place in Grudem's work where he discusses the "Angel"). However, Foreman and Van Dorn do seek to advance the discussion in systematic theology by demonstrating how the biblical revelation regarding the "Angel" might address contemporary questions such as God's impassibility, God's relationship to time, and a functional or economic subordination of the Son to the Father. In this last area especially, passages such as Genesis 24:7 and Exodus 23:20, which describe the Father sending the Son in the OT, seem

to provide reasonable evidence supporting the economic subordination of the Son even prior to his incarnation.

At times, it seemed that Foreman and Van Dorn inserted enough unlikely interpretations, or at least minority positions, that it threatened to weaken their overall thesis, which I find very compelling. That thesis might be summarized in the following way: On the road to Emmaus, Jesus did not need to resort to typology or eisegesis but could point to many OT passages where he spoke and acted, where he was seen and heard. Foreman and Van Dorn have done an admirable job of shining new light on many of these OT texts.

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A Short History of Christian Zionism: From the Reformation to the Twenty-First Century, by Donald M. Lewis. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021. x + 373 pp. \$36.00.

Writing a few years after the end of World War I, the British War and Air secretary Winston Churchill avouched his support for Zionism, a movement that afforded in his view a welcome counterpoise to the rising menace of communism in Russia and Europe: "Some people like the Jews and some do not; but no thoughtful man can doubt the fact that they are beyond all question the most formidable and the most remarkable race which has ever appeared in the world." Churchill then championed Britain's role in the formation of a Jewish state: "It has fallen to the British Government, as the result of the conquest of Palestine, to have the opportunity and the responsibility of securing for the Jewish race all over the world a home and a centre of national life.... [I]f, as may well happen, there should be created in our lifetime by the banks of the Jordan a Jewish State under the protection of the British Crown, which might comprise three or four millions of Jews, an event would have occurred in the history of the world which would, from every point of view, be beneficial, and would especially be in harmony with the truest interests of the British Empire" ("Zionism versus Bolshevism: A Struggle for the Soul of the Jewish People," *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, 8 February 1920, 5). Churchill's aspirations for the creation of a Jewish state would not come to fruition for nearly another thirty years, but his consistent backing of the Jewish people and of Zionism would earn him over his long career a reputation as one of the most philo-Semitic British statesmen (see W. D. Rubinstein, "Winston Churchill and the Jews," *Jewish Historical Studies* 39 [2004]: 167–76). Still, the roots of British state support for the creation of a Jewish homeland antedate Churchill by centuries, going back to the Victorian-era Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881) and further still to Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) and a number of the Westminster divines (see B. Horner, *Future Israel*,