

all” (149). Using many of the same texts that Osborne marshals, he walks the readers through a defense of a general aspect to the atonement. But then midway through his argument, he switches to his defense of the particular intent, for he holds “God did not intend to save everyone by Christ’s death on the cross, but to make provision for the salvation of all” (162). The atonement includes both an “objective provision” and a “subjective application” (163). Here Hammett picks up some classic arguments for a definite atonement—e.g., “sending anyone to hell whose sins have been paid for would be patently unjust” (164). This leaves Hammett believing that his view has “all the virtues of both traditional positions with few of the problems of either” (183). He concludes with a discussion of the cosmic intent that he identifies with Christus Victor: “An intention in the atonement that addresses all the enemies believers face in the world” (184).

After the presentation of each view, the three main contributors are allowed space to respond to aspects of the other views presented. The exchange is cordial and gracious, whether or not one considers the responses persuasive or definitive. The editors provide essays that bracket the entire discussion with introductory and concluding comments on the importance of the debate and the manner in which a discussion of this nature ought to be engaged by thoughtful Christians. The final result is a book that provides a most helpful introduction to a controversial theological subject.

Jeffrey P. Straub

Interpreting the General Letters: An Exegetical Handbook, by Herbert W. Bateman IV. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013. 311 pp. \$29.99.

Herbert Bateman holds a Ph.D. from Dallas Theological Seminary and has taught at several seminaries in the United States and abroad. Bateman is currently an adjunct professor of New Testament at Liberty University. He has also written or edited a number of books, including *Jesus the Messiah* (2012) and *God’s Big Picture* (2015).

According to Bateman, the purpose of *Interpreting the General Letters* is to “shape the way people think and go about studying and communicating eight books of the New Testament” (13). Broadly speaking, Bateman desires to pass on his exegetical skills and knowledge of Scripture to the next generation of students (13).

For Bateman, there are important steps that students must take when studying and communicating those eight NT books. Before getting to those steps, Bateman discusses the genre of the General Letters (19–56), their background (57–88), and the theology of the letters (89–126). Then, Bateman gives a nine-step approach to go from preparing for the interpretation of the letters (127–170), to interpreting the passages of those letters (171–208), to then communicating those General

Letters (209–48). After that, Bateman offers a couple of sample sermons to illustrate his exegetical method taught in the previous chapters (249–83). Lastly, Bateman lists selected sources he suggests would best serve the study of the General Letters (285–311).

Bateman spends much of the first chapter dealing with basics such as letter components and opening salutations (19–34). He helpfully and thoroughly uses Greco-Roman research to demonstrate the different types of ancient letters and how the General Letters correspond to those types (35–48), and makes good use of contemporary scholarship as he discusses pseudonymity and authorship (49–56).

Bateman clearly shows how relevant background study is to interpreting Scripture. For instance, in chapter two, he rightly demonstrates the impact of understanding the wisdom addressed in James from a Jewish perspective as opposed to a Greco-Roman one (72–80), and he explains the 1 Peter household codes in light of their Greco-Roman background (81–84).

Overall, Bateman's chapter on theology is excellent. His explanation how he fleshes out biblical theology is packed with Scripture and backed up with solid research (90–118). His development of the main theological themes of the General Letters, though brief, is still clear and helpful (118–125).

The heart of Bateman's book is found in chapters four to seven. In those chapters, Bateman lays out his nine-step approach to getting from interpretation to the communication of the General Epistles. This nine-step process has value to the seminary student, the pastor, and the scholar. His guide for interpreting the General Letters is helpful for a student to use as it is very practical and thoroughly exegetical. The pastor and scholar could use it to inform their study of the text from exegesis to the communication of the text. They can also compare it with the standard *New Testament Exegesis* text by Gordon Fee, and perhaps adjust or improve how they do exegesis.

Bateman offers an insightful and practical way to develop structural outlines (172–86) and to interpret the style, syntax, and semantics of the General Letters in chapter five (187–98). Then, in chapter six, the practical way in which Bateman walks one through getting from the exegetical outline to the central truth of the text, and then to the homiletical outline, is very easy to follow (210–45). Since the strength of Bateman's book is exegesis, one might couple it with Donald Sunukjian's *Invitation to Biblical Preaching* to complete the process of communicating Scripture, a topic treated more thoroughly in Sunukjian's book.

Lastly, in chapter eight, along with his selected bibliography, Bateman provides a useful description and classification of New Testament commentary series (295–302).

Though this book is not exhaustive, it is still is a succinct and comprehensive guide to studying the interpretation to communication of Scripture. It is definitely worth the read.