

Kaiser's work does provide helpful exposition. For example, chapter 1 presents an overview of three cycles of sin (the Fall, the Flood and the Tower of Babel) and promise (Gen. 3:15, 9:27 and 11:4/12:1–3). Kaiser provides a two-page explanation for translating the verb "to bless" in Genesis 12:3 as passive, not reflexive (11–12). And Kaiser expands on his earlier edition with a more thorough exposition of Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. While the ESV, NASB, and NIV all translate v. 19 differently, Kaiser argues convincingly that *torah* has the sense of a "charter" for humanity. While these expositions are important, and the book provides a compelling argument for God's universal intentions in both Testaments, the overall depth of the book is still lacking.

Kevin Paul Oberlin

God Is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion, by Rob Lister. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 333 pp. \$22.99.

The modern era has witnessed a sweeping shift in theology away from the traditional conception that God is invulnerable to changing emotional states brought upon him by his creatures, an idea commonly known as divine impassibility. In its place has arisen a widespread consensus that a modern conception of God, one that is relevant to our increasing awareness of global human suffering, cannot afford to deny that God also suffers with his creatures and is, therefore, passible.

Many modern passibilists have argued against a caricatured view of impassibility as teaching a God who is unfeeling, aloof, and devoid of emotional warmth toward the sufferings of his creatures. On the other hand, a few prominent impassibilists have defended the idea of divine emotions while noting that they are qualitatively different from human emotions. In his book *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, Rob Lister argues historically and exegetically for what he calls a qualified model of impassibility. His thesis, as captured in his title, emphasizes the classic dual affirmation of impassibility, that God is impassible and thus transcends the finite experience of suffering, and God is impassioned, possessing real and vibrant affections (36). The Incarnation, therefore, is the means by which God's natural impassibility was overcome in order for Christ to undertake the suffering and judicial effects of sin. Though Lister gives brief attention to the Christological implications of his thesis, the main focus of his work lies in the realm of theology proper.

A key feature of Lister's argument, one that distinguishes his qualified model from other impassibilists such as Thomas Weinandy and Paul Helm, is his emphasis on divine responsiveness. While God's eternal commitment to his own glory and holiness is unchanging, Lister argues that his passions are not eternally static but are, rather, dynamic expressions of his character in the context of human events by virtue of his voluntary engagement within the created order (immanence). God is

neither passive toward creation, nor is he *actus purus* (pure actuality) such that his fatherly responsiveness to his creatures is but an illusion (157, n. 38). Rather, his voluntary engagement in creation results in a “relational mutability,” an idea to which Lister is dependent upon the work of Bruce Ware.

Lister organizes his argument into two major sections. The first section is primarily historical, tracing the development of impassibility by the patristic writers, through the medieval period, and to the modern theological scene largely dominated by passibilists. Lister’s purpose in this section is to show that the Fathers who initially developed the idea of impassibility did so, not under the sway of the Greek philosophical ideal of *apatheia* (as modern passibilists frequently allege), but rather in an honest effort to represent the teachings of Scripture. Further, Lister seeks to demonstrate that his two-pronged emphasis (divine impassibility and impassionedness) has been the common understanding of the majority of theologians in Christian history prior to the rise of passibilism in the modern era. Lister concludes his historical investigation with a critical analysis of modern passibilist thought.

The second division of Lister’s work is devoted to a biblical and theological defense of impassibility. The argument for impassibility in this section, the author is careful to point out, does not rest on a particular passage or collection of proof texts; rather, impassibility follows from the Scripture’s revelation about the character of God, the totality of which ought to inform the difficult passages that appear to attribute regret, repentance, jealousy, and affliction to God. Lister concludes his development of a qualified model of impassibility with a brief summary of its implications for Christology.

Overall, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned* makes a valuable contribution to the study of theology proper. Lister’s historical section examines the work of an impressive number of Christian theologians, patristic, medieval, and Reformed. Unfortunately, the breadth of his enquiry frequently results in less than inductive and rather brief treatments of certain key figures (e.g., Stephen Charnock’s work on impassibility, among the most extensive of post-Reformation theologians, receives only two and a half pages). Nevertheless, the wealth of primary and secondary literature supporting his discussions almost makes up for their brevity and offers the reader ample guidance for further study.

Lister interacts with a wide variety of relevant biblical texts, given the length of his study. And though he acknowledges that he has left more relevant texts untreated, the reader is left with a good idea of how they would fit into his argument. Perhaps the main strength of Lister’s study is the attention he devotes to grounding his argument within the relevant principles of theology proper (e.g., transcendence and immanence, the Creator/creature distinction, etc.). As a result, his work makes for a lucid treatment of man’s analogical likeness to God and provides a devastating critique of the theodicy that has given rise to modern passibilist thought. Finally, though written as a serious scholarly work, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned* does not fail to draw the reader’s affections to

the majesty of God reflected in his impassibility.

Kevin J. Sherman

A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life, by Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. xv + 1054 pp. \$60.00.

The renaissance of Puritan studies that has been underway for several decades has reached a significant milestone with the publication of *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* by Joel Beeke and Mark Jones. This monumental work is a veritable compendium of almost every theme addressed by the seemingly innumerable theological and practical treatises penned by the Puritans during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It represents as much of an exhaustive treatment of Puritan theology and practice as can be accommodated within a single volume. A particularly unique and helpful feature of this work is its organization of the major themes of Puritan theology around the loci of systematic theology, thus making it possible for students to examine Puritan conceptions of Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, etc. Moreover, the authors interact extensively with the most current scholarship, oftentimes challenging conclusions of such notable authorities as Carl Trueman and Michael Horton.

The theme occurring throughout this work is the Puritans' emphasis on the practical, and thus on the primary purpose of theology, which was, according to William Ames (1576–1633), "living to God." In other words, the main objective of doctrine was to enable the believer to live his or her life as an expression of worship to God in accordance with his Word. Due to the vastness of this volume, we will highlight select topics covered that might be of particular interest.

One of the earliest chapters (chapter 2) deals with Puritan hermeneutics and exegesis. There the authors show, among other things, how the Puritans' insistence on a Christological reading of the Old Testament served as one of the primary bases for their covenant theology. This Christological reading of the Old Testament, involving heavy reliance on typology, resulted in a conception of the literal sense that was very nuanced. Forthrightly rejecting the medieval method of discerning four different senses in Scripture (i.e., the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical meanings of a given passage), the Puritans contended that a biblical text conveyed only one sense, the literal sense. Yet, they maintained that the one literal sense contained two aspects: one literal, grammatical, and historical, and the other mystical or spiritual. The inclusion of a spiritual dimension within the literal sense enabled the Puritans to discern numerous Old Testament personages such as David, Solomon, Joseph, Noah, et al., as types of Christ.