

A REVIEW ARTICLE

PNTC, BECNT, and NIGTC: Three New Testament Commentary Series Available Electronically in Libronix¹

Reviewed by
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Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC). 8 vols. Edited by D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988–. 4,254 pp. 1 CD-ROM. \$311.00. <http://www.logos.com/products/details/2118>.

Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT). 8 vols. Edited by Moisés Silva (1992–2002), Robert W. Yarbrough, and Robert H. Stein (2002–). Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992–. 6,274 pp. 1 CD-ROM. \$374.92. <http://www.logos.com/products/details/2603>.

New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC). 12 vols. Edited by I. Howard Marshall, W. Ward Gasque (1978–1992), Donald A. Hagner, and I. Howard Marshall (1992–). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978–. 8,975 pp. 1 CD-ROM. \$660.00. <http://www.logos.com/products/details/2109>.

PNTC, BECNT, and NIGTC are three outstanding evangelical NT commentary series, and each is available electronically in the Libronix Digital Library System by Logos Bible Software. This brief review builds on last year's review, which makes a case for using Libronix's theological digital library.³ What follows (1) suggests some advantages of using electronic commentaries in Libronix, (2) compares

¹Special thanks to (1) Brian Collins, Phil Gons, Jon Pratt, and Stephen Smith for examining a preliminary draft of this review and sharing insightful feedback and (2) D. A. Carson (editor of the PNTC) and Robert W. Yarbrough (co-editor of the BECNT) for sharing their perspectives on the PNTC, BECNT, and NIGTC.

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³Andrew D. Naselli, review of *Scholar's Library: Gold*, Version 3, by Logos Bible Software, *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 11 (2006): 151–60; see esp. pp. 151–54.

the three series in general, and (3) comments briefly on the individual volumes in the three series.

ADVANTAGES OF USING ELECTRONIC COMMENTARIES IN LIBRONIX⁴

Using electronic commentaries in Libronix is more efficient than using print commentaries because electronic commentaries are searchable, versatile, and less expensive.⁵

Searchability

Electronic commentaries have multiple search capabilities that are superior to print commentaries in both speed and thoroughness.

1. Users may search for specific references (e.g., locating every occurrence where a particular Scripture verse is referenced), topics (e.g., election or justification), and words or phrases (e.g., an author's name or a book title). The "Reference Browser" and "Topic Browser" are especially helpful tools for the first two, and the "Basic Search" is ideal for the third. Libronix's easy-to-understand "help" section explains how to perform these simple searches (which are very similar to Google searches) as well as more advanced ones.

2. Users may easily locate certain passages in commentaries by using the passage guide.

3. Users may limit searches by specifying strategic boundaries, such as searching within a customized collection.⁶ For example, when I preached through Philippians last year, I created a collection that grouped about thirty of my electronic commentaries on that letter. One of many conveniences of such a collection is that it allows searches that are faster and more focused.

4. Users may quickly find a word or phrase in an open resource as they type by using Libronix's "find" feature. It is similar to the one in Firefox: simply select Edit | Find or press Ctrl+F to open it.⁷

⁴Cf. *ibid.*, 153–54.

⁵This section applies to electronic commentaries in general and is not limited to PNTC, BECNT, and NIGTC. Many of the available commentary series are listed at <http://www.logos.com/products/groups/allitems/commentaries-set-series>.

⁶The Libronix *Help Manual* defines collections as "groups of resources," which "can be used to create custom search ranges, so one can search for information only in a defined subset of resources. Collections can also be used to filter My Library so that you can browse only a defined subset of your library." (The Libronix *Help Manual* is accessible within Libronix by pressing F1 or clicking "Help" on the main menu and then "Libronix DLS Help.")

⁷The Libronix *Help Manual* explains, "A special toolbar (the Find Bar) will appear at the bottom of the active window. As you type the text that you want to find into the text box, the next instance of that text in the window will be selected. To find another instance of the same text, press Enter (or F3) or click Find Next. To find the

Versatility

Electronic commentaries are significantly more versatile than print commentaries.

1. **Accessibility:** An entire digital library fits comfortably on a small fraction of a hard drive, so one's electronic commentaries can go anywhere one's hard drive goes.⁸ I enjoy accessing my electronic commentaries on my laptop in a variety of locations: homes, classrooms, libraries, planes, conferences, hotels, and even the pulpit. When I am in the middle of an exegetical study of a particular passage, I appreciate not having to drag around a suitcase full of twenty or thirty print commentaries. (And my wife appreciates having a bit more living space that print commentaries would otherwise fill!)

2. **Readability:** Electronic commentaries are more readable than print commentaries, especially those printed with tiny fonts (e.g., some footnotes). I frequently adjust the text's font size depending on how far away I am from the screen and how tired my eyes are. I nearly always display the table of contents on the left side of the screen, which allows me to (1) see the logical flow of a commentary, (2) expand or collapse certain sections of the table of contents by clicking on the plus and minus symbols, and (3) jump directly to other sections. I also strongly prefer reading an electronic commentary on a large, good-quality LCD screen rather than a print commentary. At my home office, I currently connect a 22-inch LCD screen to my 17-inch laptop, which allows me to have multiple programs open on different screens. For example, when I am working through electronic commentaries, I prefer to have Libronix open on my 22-inch screen and other programs (Word, Outlook, Firefox, etc.) open on my 17-inch screen.

3. **Marking:** Marking electronic commentaries is more efficient than marking print ones. I regularly mark up electronic commentaries with an assortment of different colors and styles of highlighters. I also frequently insert notes, which I occasionally edit—something not entirely possible with printed works.

4. **Copying and pasting:** Users may copy and paste the text of electronic commentaries (including the footnotes and usually the pagination) into a word processor.⁹ There is no need to take the time to write or type out quotations and then double-check for accuracy.¹⁰ When

previous instance of the same text, press Shift+Enter (or Shift+F3) or click Find Previous."

⁸This sentence uses the term "hard drive" rather than "laptop" in order not to exclude external hard drives, many of which are pocket-size.

⁹The Libronix versions of PNTC, BECNT, and NIGTC include the original pagination.

¹⁰One qualification of this statement is that Libronix resources occasionally

one pastes a portion of text from Libronix into a word processor, Libronix automatically includes a footnote with bibliographic information in the citation style desired (e.g., Turabian, SBL, MLA, APA).¹¹

5. Saving: Users may add bookmarks to a particular place in an electronic commentary so that it automatically opens there in the future. They may also save their entire workspace so that it opens exactly as it was when they saved it that way.¹² Saving a workspace is an especially helpful feature when working with multiple open commentaries.

6. Linking: Users may jump directly from an electronic commentary to other electronic resources. (1) Users may link commentaries to each other (as well as to any Bible) so that when one is opened to a particular verse, others automatically open directly to that same verse. Also, if multiple commentaries are open and linked, scrolling up or down in one automatically does the same in the others so that they are open to the identical passage. (2) Users may designate parallel resource associations so that if they are studying John 1:18 in D. A. Carson's commentary, they may jump directly to the same passage in other commentaries on John. (3) Scripture references are tagged as hotspots so that a mouse-hover or single-click opens one's preferred Bible version to the verse(s) cited. (4) One can right-click or double-click on Greek and Hebrew words and then look them up in lexicons. (5) Page numbers cited in indexes are tagged as hotspots so that a single-click jumps directly to the referenced page. (6) References to other digital works (e.g., commentaries, Josephus, Apostolic Fathers, lexicons, journal articles, theological works) are also hotspots and will open directly to those works if the user owns them. (7) One of the finest reading habits to cultivate is looking up unfamiliar words that one encounters. In some circumstances, however, following this ideal practice is unrealistic if a dictionary is not conveniently accessible. Logos users who own an electronic dictionary such as *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* have a considerable advantage. When they encounter an unfamiliar word, they may simply right-click or double-click on it and instantly locate its definition.

include typographical errors that print volumes do not. When users discover these, they may highlight the error and easily report the typo to Libronix, which will then fix the error and make available a free update of the resource.

¹¹Unfortunately, this feature needs improvement. My default citation style is Turabian, and the automatically generated entries have never been exactly correct without any need for modification.

¹²The Libronix *Help Manual* explains, "Workspaces allow you to store the layout of the Libronix DLS main window and restore it at a later time. Workspaces save which application windows and dialogs are open and where and how they are positioned on the screen. This can be particularly useful if you have a task that you routinely perform, and you want to get 'set up' for it quickly, or if you have long-term research and you want to 'save your place' and come back to it. You can store as many different workspaces as you have tasks to prepare for."

Cost

Electronic books are less expensive than print books. That statement is more like a proverb than case law: it is not an invariable rule with absolutely no exceptions, but it is generally true. The following table lays out data for the three electronic commentaries under review.

Series	Logos			Print		
	Retail	Sale	Academic	Retail	CBD	Amazon
PNTC	\$311.00	\$249.95	\$199.95	\$326.00	\$242.92	\$221.78
BECNT	\$374.92	\$224.95	\$179.95	\$399.92	\$270.92	\$258.67
NIGTC	\$660.00	\$533.27	\$399.95	\$696.00	\$514.88	\$446.10
Total	\$1,345.92	\$1,008.17	\$779.85	\$1,421.92	\$1,028.72	\$926.55

The following explanations qualify and clarify the above table.

1. These numbers are based on Internet searches performed on August 1, 2007.¹³ Since book prices (both print and electronic) are subject to change, these figures may be different later.

2. Print books are available individually, but Logos currently sells these three commentary series collectively. If consumers want to purchase Thomas Schreiner's commentary on Romans, for example, they would currently have to purchase the BECNT series.¹⁴

3. The "sale" price for Logos Bible Software is their normal selling price that is available to any consumer.

4. The "academic" price for Logos Bible Software applies only to degree-seeking students, full-time faculty and staff, and school libraries and computer labs.¹⁵

5. NIGTC is included in *Scholar's Library: Gold*.

GENERAL COMPARISON OF PNTC, BECNT, AND NIGTC

When this review mentions the three series, it does so in order of increasing technicality: PNTC is the least technical, and NIGTC is the most technical. All three are based on the Greek text: PNTC uses the

¹³See <http://www.Logos.com>, <http://www.Christianbook.com>, and <http://www.Amazon.com>.

¹⁴The commentaries in these three series may be available individually in the future, and forthcoming volumes will almost certainly be available individually. Logos currently includes the option to purchase individual commentaries in other series such as the Word Biblical Commentary.

¹⁵For more information on the Logos Academic Discount Program, see <http://www.logos.com/academic/program> or email academic@logos.com.

NIV as its base English translation (though authors occasionally use their own original translations), and the other two use the authors' own original translations. PNTC transliterates Greek, BECNT uses original Greek words followed immediately by transliteration and translation, and NIGTC uses original Greek without transliteration. All three series are fresh, scholarly, and at least broadly evangelical in their approach. Some of the volumes in the NIGTC, however, are a bit less conservative and more critical.

1. PNTC is the best pastoral series for sermon preparation. It shrewdly and economically works through the text within a big-picture framework, and it is preoccupied not with critical studies but with interpreting the books as they stand. Carson explains in the series preface for each PNTC volume that the commentaries

seek above all to make clear the text of Scripture as we have it. The scholars writing these volumes interact with the most important, informed contemporary debate, but avoid getting mired in undue technical detail. Their ideal is a blend of rigorous exegesis and exposition, with an eye alert both to biblical theology and the contemporary relevance of the Bible, without confusing the commentary and the sermon.

2. BECNT is more technical than PNTC and slightly less technical than NIGTC. Yarbrough and Stein explain in the series preface that BECNT's goal is to "blend scholarly depth with readability, exegetical detail with sensitivity to the whole, attention to critical problems with theological awareness." It interacts thoroughly with secondary literature, and its outstanding feature is a shaded box that begins each section and traces the argument of the text in that section. In addition to explaining word meanings, grammar, and historical events and customs, BECNT robustly demonstrates the logical interconnectedness of the book as well as its connection to the canon, and it integrates broader theological considerations. Its format is the most user-friendly of the three series.

3. Although the series foreword describes NIGTC as "less technical than a full-scale critical commentary," NIGTC is the most technical of the three series and likely the most technical commentary series produced by evangelicals. It is a superb resource for scholars and those trained in NT Greek, but unlike the other two series, it is often excessively technical for pastors.¹⁶ Marshall and Hagner explain in the series

¹⁶Stewart Custer's conclusion to his review of Anthony C. Thiselton's NIGTC volume on 1 Corinthians is typical of how many view the NIGTC as a whole: "Although this commentary may delight the Ph.D. candidate who is writing a dissertation, the pastor who uses it in preparation for a sermon will probably bore his congregation to tears. It reminds one of the rifleman who asked for ammunition, and the quartermaster sent him a crate of 155mm shells. The shells certainly fit the definition of ammunition, but they were useless, for the rifleman was thinking of the next foxhole, not the next country" (*Biblical Viewpoint* 37 [April 2003]: 113).

preface that NIGTC volumes “are intended to interact with modern scholarship” and “attempt to treat all important problems of history, exegesis, and interpretation that arise from the New Testament text.... It is not their primary aim to apply and expound the text for modern readers.” The methodical verse-by-verse (and often word-by-word) exegetical plowing in the NIGTC is rich and invaluable, but it is nearly always in need of supplementation from other commentaries that interact more with biblical theological themes and connect passages within Scripture’s salvation-historical storyline.

BRIEF COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL COMMENTARIES IN PNTC, BECNT, AND NIGTC

The following brief comments do not thoroughly analyze the twenty-eight major commentaries in the three series, nor do they highlight all disagreements. Instead, they focus on the overall quality while occasionally noting factors such as distinct contributions, interpretations of controversial passages, and theological positions. These comments are based on personal interaction with each commentary, and they take into account dozens of reviews in theological journals, books that evaluate commentaries,¹⁷ and commentary lists prepared by NT scholars.¹⁸ Asterisks (*) indicate commentaries that are my single, overall favorite for the corresponding NT book. This ranking factors in commentaries not in the PNTC, BECNT, and NIGTC, so some books (e.g., Romans) do not have an asterisk. Each of the three sections closes by noting the scheduled forthcoming volumes, which should become available electronically in due course.

PNTC (8 vols.)

The first two volumes of this series, Romans (Leon Morris) and Revelation (P. E. Hughes), were originally not part of a series. After D. A. Carson wrote the commentary on John, Eerdmans asked him to serve as the editor of a NT series to which they added the Romans and

¹⁷Cf. Stewart Custer, *Tools for Preaching and Teaching the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1998); James Rosscup, *Commentaries for Biblical Expositors: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Works*, rev. ed. (Sun Valley, CA.: Grace Books International, 2004); D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 6th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); John Glynn, *Commentary and Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources*, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007).

¹⁸Cf. “Basic Library Booklist” prepared by the Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary faculty (2005; available at <http://dbts.edu/pdf/Booklist.pdf>, accessed July 30, 2007) and “Exegesis Bibliography,” prepared by William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Susan M. Hecht of Denver Seminary’s NT department (Jan. 2007; available at <http://www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles2007/0200/0201>, accessed July 30, 2007).

Revelation volumes, even though their format is not quite the same as the rest of the series.

1. *Matthew* (Leon Morris, 1992; xvii + 781 pp.) is warm, clear, faithful, and pastorally sensitive. Morris's prose is readable and his theological reflection mature. Morris, who dates the book prior to A.D. 70, methodically deals with each pericope, often presenting various views on a given passage and then arguing for his own. His verse-by-verse reflections are often frustratingly brief (e.g., no discussion on the use of Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23), and other than noting, "Matthew has five considerable sections of teaching (chs. 5–7, 10, 13, 18, 23–25)" (p. 7), Morris does not explain the Gospel's structure or comment on the many textual clues that suggest a certain structure. His treatment of Matthew 24–25 is amillennial.

2. **Mark* (James R. Edwards, 2002; xxvi + 552 pp.) is the mature fruit of over two decades of studying and teaching Mark's Gospel. Edwards's clear exegesis is Christ-exalting, theologically conservative, and sensitive to history, backgrounds, literary genres, and contemporary relevance. It views 16:9–20 as "a later addition and not the original ending" (p. 497), and it includes helpful excursuses on eight themes: the messianic secret motif, Son of Man, divine man, Christ, the transfiguration, women in Mark's Gospel, Pontius Pilate, and the Son of God.

3. **John* (D. A. Carson, 1991; 715 pp.) is a model commentary, combining exegetical rigor with theological breadth of vision and pastoral warmth. Carson lucidly explains the text and insightfully draws connections to biblical and systematic theology. He elucidates OT allusions such as parallels between 1:14–18 and Exodus 33–34 (pp. 126–34), and he avoids linguistic fallacies such as the assumption that ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in 21:15–17 must refer to two different kinds of love (pp. 676–78).

4. *Romans* (Leon Morris, 1988; xii + 578 pp.) is a reliable, skillful, unintimidating guide to Paul's grand letter. Morris's theological positions include Reformed soteriology and amillennial eschatology. He does not interact with the new perspective on Paul (E. P. Sanders, et al.).

5. **Ephesians* (Peter T. O'Brien, 1999; xxxiii + 536 pp.) is insightful, clear, concise, meticulously researched, conservative, applicable, and reverent. In the series preface, Carson rightly describes O'Brien's exegesis as "fresh and penetrating, edifying as well as informing, profoundly centered on the gospel even while it wrestles engagingly with details" (p. ix). O'Brien, who has now written a commentary on each of Paul's prison epistles, is an evangelical Anglican in Australia who argues in agreement with Reformed soteriology and complementarianism. He champions Pauline authorship, and he argues that the book's "central message" is "cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ" (p. 58). His comments on 5:18–21 are superb (pp. 385–405).

6. 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Gene L. Green, 2002; xl + 400 pp.), which builds on Green's esteemed Spanish commentary *1 y 2 Tesalonicenses* (Grand Rapids: Editorial Portavoz, 2000; 383 pp.), is conservative, equitable, understandable, and thorough. He ably defends Pauline authorship and argues that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians after 1 Thessalonians. He demonstrates the relevance of the Greco-Roman background of Thessalonica in Macedonia, presented primarily in the 77-page introduction and then scattered throughout the volume. See, for example, his explanation that the Thessalonians's refusal to work was based on patron-client relationships in Roman society rather than their eschatological perspective (pp. 26–31, 208–13, 337, 341–42, 347–54). For controversial passages (e.g., 1 Thess 4 and 2 Thess 2), Green evenhandedly lays out the various views and critiques them. He focuses on eschatology's ethical purpose (e.g., p. 229) and explains the text in a way largely consistent with the major millennial positions. Though he does not emphasize his view, he advocates a posttribulation rapture in the framework of historic premillennialism (cf. pp. 228, 301 n. 4).

7. *James (Douglas J. Moo, 2000; xvi + 271 pp.) updates and expands Moo's *The Letter of James* in the Tyndale NT Commentary series (Grand Rapids: IVP/Eerdmans, 1985; 191 pp.). He skillfully blends first-class exegesis, theological issues, a lucid and compact style, and textually rooted application. He views its genre as neither *paraenesis* nor wisdom, but rather "a sermon or homily" (p. 8). "[T]he heart of the letter is a call to wholehearted commitment to Christ" (p. x) or "spiritual 'wholeness'" (p. 46), a theme that climaxes in 4:4–10 (pp. 45–46, 186). Moo does not impose an artificial structure on James, but recognizes "several key motifs that are central to James's concern" (p. 45). He categorizes seven theological topics addressed in James (pp. 28–43), including James's "most important, and controversial, contribution" to NT theology: "his teaching about the importance of works for justification (2:14–26)" (p. 38). Moo's explanation of 2:14–26 is exceptional (pp. 37–43, 118–44).

8. The Letters of John (Colin G. Kruse, 2000; xxii + 255 pp.), according to Carson in the series preface, is "sure-footed and reasoned, clear and remarkably concise without being simplistic or condescending. His use of both primary and secondary sources is always pertinent and restrained, and he never lets the reader lose sight of the text he is studying" (p. xii). Kruse, an evangelical Anglican in Australia, provides twenty-one brief notes scattered throughout the commentary covering issues such as sinless perfectionism and hospitality. Comments on some controversial passages (e.g., 1 John 2:2) as well as theological reflection, however, are disappointingly thin.

The following volumes are forthcoming: Luke (Peter Head), Acts (David Peterson), Romans replacement (Colin G. Kruse), 1 Corinthians (Brian S. Rosner and Roy E. Ciampa), 2 Corinthians (Mark A.

Seifrid), Galatians (D. A. Carson), Philippians (G. Walter Hansen), Colossians and Philemon (Douglas J. Moo), Pastoral Epistles (Robert W. Yarbrough), Hebrews (Peter T. O'Brien), 1 Peter (Scott J. Hafemann), and Revelation replacement (probably D. A. Carson). Colossians and Philemon, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, and Philippians should be published within the next year or so. The current 8-volume series in Libronix does not include 2 Peter and Jude (Peter H. Davids, 2006).

BECNT (8 vols.)

1–2. *Luke, 2 vols. (Darrell L. Bock, 1994, 1996; xxxv + 2148 pp.), is historical and exegetical, massive and magisterial.¹⁹ It is disproportionately long for BECNT, but Silva explains in the series preface that he gave Bock “some flexibility in discussing source-critical and historical questions” partly so that the later BECNT volumes on the Gospels would “be able to deal with such questions more selectively and briefly” (p. x). Bock asserts, “My major goal is to discuss the text and compare it to what Mark and Matthew wrote” (p. xii). Bock consistently structures his handling of each pericope into six sections (p. xiii): (1) brief overview (shaded text); (2) sources and historicity, including comparisons with parallel passages; (3) literary forms, outline, and thematic synopsis (shaded text); (4) translation followed by verse-by-verse exegesis and exposition; (5) pastoral passage summary (shaded text); and (6) additional notes, primarily regarding textual issues. Sections 1, 4, and 5 are most helpful for pastors, and section 2 often engages in composition criticism (a conservative form of redaction criticism) and refutes the Jesus Seminar. Bock, a progressive dispensationalist, integrates theological reflections (cf. pp. 27–43) and background material throughout the volumes, and he skillfully presents a comprehensive compendium of scholarly views on controversial passages.

3. John (Andreas J. Köstenberger, 2004; xx + 700 pp.), explains Köstenberger, “represents the culmination of an intensive ten-year study of John’s Gospel” (p. xi).²⁰ Its conservative exegesis rightly roots

¹⁹Cf. Bock’s published Ph.D. dissertation completed at the University of Aberdeen in 1982 under I. Howard Marshall and Bock’s two lighter commentaries on Luke: *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 413 pp.; *Luke*, IVP NT Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 412 pp.; *Luke*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 640 pp.

²⁰Köstenberger is the author of about two dozen other books and articles on John’s Gospel, including the following: *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel’s Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), xvi + 271 pp., which is his published Ph.D. dissertation completed at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1993 under D. A. Carson; *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, *Encountering Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999),

the text's meaning in the authorial intent and deals impressively with historical, literary, and theological themes. It demonstrates a thorough interaction with the primary and secondary literature. Köstenberger's exegesis and exposition covers the text in small units (e.g., two or three verses) rather than one verse at a time, and it includes several useful charts. Concluding summary statements (similar to Bock's *Luke*) would be a welcome addition.

4. Romans (Thomas R. Schreiner, 1998; xxi + 919 pp.) is outstanding, second only to Douglas J. Moo's volume in the New International Commentary (1996). Schreiner, professor of NT at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is a Calvinist, complementarian, and Pauline expert.²¹ He dedicates the commentary to his pastor, "John Piper, who has proclaimed" to him "the supremacy of God" (p. v) and has taught him "more than anyone about the glory of God, and how stunning it is" (p. xiv). "[T]he glory of God is the central theme that permeates the letter" (p. xiii; cf. pp. 739–40), and Schreiner's outline emphasizes God's righteousness. He skillfully traces Paul's argument, and in his discussions of controversial passages, he thoroughly presents various interpretive options and then conservatively and (usually) convincingly argues for his view. A few of his interpretations are unconventional. For example, the righteousness of God "is both forensic and transformative" (p. 66; cf. pp. 64–67),²² and

277 pp.; "John," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), pp. 280–85; *Studies on John and Gender: A Decade of Scholarship* (New York: Lang, 2001), viii + 378 pp.; "John," in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 2:2–216; "John," pp. 415–512 in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old*, ed. D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); the study notes for "John" in *Holman Christian Standard Study Bible*, ed. Edwin Blum (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, forthcoming) and *ESV Study Bible*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, forthcoming).

²¹Cf. Schreiner, "Circumcision: An Entree into 'Newness' in Pauline Thought" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983), vi + 489 pp.; idem, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, ed. Scot McKnight, Guides to New Testament Exegesis 5 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 167 pp.; idem, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 294 pp.; Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds., *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, vol. 1: *Biblical and Practical Perspectives on Calvinism*, vol. 2: *Historical and Theological Perspectives on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 248 pp., 270 pp.; Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 344 pp.; Schreiner and Andreas J. Köstenberger, eds., *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 287 pp.; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, forthcoming [April 2008]), 976 pp.

²²Schreiner later adjusted his view in *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ*: "I am grateful to Bruce Ware and especially Don Carson for personal correspondence in which they responded to my section on righteousness. They persuaded me that righteousness is forensic rather than transformative, and hence what I have written here is

the ἐγώ (“I”) in 7:14–25 refers to anyone trying to please God by self-effort (keeping the law) since the law is unable to transform human existence (pp. 371–93). The volume’s layout makes it difficult to locate quickly discussions on a particular verse because it does not indicate treatment of individual verses (e.g., it does not include bold verse numbers at the beginning of paragraphs).

5. 1 Corinthians (David E. Garland, 2003; xxii + 870 pp.) is probably second to Gordon D. Fee’s volume in the New International Commentary (1987) in overall quality but over fifteen years more recent. Garland, author of *2 Corinthians* in the New American Commentary (1999), distills detailed research into a crisp, useful presentation that carefully follows the logical flow in Paul’s letter. It is academic and workmanlike, though not especially warm or applicational.

6. Philippians (Moisés Silva, 2nd ed., 2005; xx + 248 pp.) was originally published in 1988 as the inaugural volume of Moody’s Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary series, for which Silva served as the NT coordinator and which Baker acquired and renamed as BECNT. Silva’s volume was published with minor updates in 1992 as the inaugural volume of BECNT, for which Silva initially served as editor. Silva’s further refined second edition is exegetically sound, rigorously brief, and refreshingly clear. Its primary strengths are dealing concisely with complex issues, tracing the argument, and using textual criticism and lexical semantics.²³ See, for example, his discussions of over-exegeted synonyms in 2:6–8 and 4:6 (pp. 106, 195). The theme of Philippians is not joy. Rather, it uniquely “stresses our complete dependence on God for sanctification” (p. 22).

7. 1 Peter (Karen H. Jobes, 2005; xviii + 364 pp.) demonstrates historical, linguistic, and theological competence. The work’s 57-page introduction is nearly three times the length of most of the previous BECNT volumes. One of its contributions is making “the role of the Septuagint (LXX) for interpreting 1 Peter more accessible,” particularly by interpreting it “against the context of the passages quoted from the LXX” (p. xi). Carson evaluates Jobes’s work as “in some ways the best general-use commentary on 1 Peter” and “strong on every front while remaining accessible. It deserves wide circulation.”²⁴ John H. Elliot, author of several works on 1 Peter since 1966,²⁵ notes that in Jobes’s work “grammatical and syntactical problems—so abundant in

an adjustment of the view I expressed in my book, *Romans*, BECNT” (p. 192 n. 2; see pp. 192–209, esp. p. 206).

²³Cf. Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

²⁴*Survey*, p. 136.

²⁵See esp. *1 Peter*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

1 Peter—are ably unpacked and solutions competently weighed.”²⁶ Jobs studied at Westminster Theological Seminary under Moisés Silva, who invited her to contribute to the series and with whom she co-authored *Invitation to the Septuagint*.²⁷ She completed the commentary while teaching at Westmont College, and she is currently a professor of NT Greek and exegesis at Wheaton College.

8. Revelation (Grant R. Osborne, 2002; xx + 869 pp.) uses an eclectic methodology and premillennial approach. Osborne eclectically interprets the Apocalypse as futurist, preterist, and idealist, allowing the approaches “to interact in such a way that the strengths are maximized and the weaknesses minimized,” and unlike G. K. Beale’s amillennial approach in his NIGTC volume, “the futurist rather than the idealist position is primary.... Therefore, this commentary is quite similar to Beale’s except for the centrality of the futurist approach (also similar to Ladd, Beasley-Murray, Michaels, and Mounce)” (p. 22). Osborne’s “thesis” with reference to the use of the OT in Revelation “is that John is fully cognizant of the context behind his allusions but nevertheless transforms them by applying them to the new apocalyptic situation in his visions” (p. 26). Although Osborne divides the book into six parts, he qualifies, “no single structural scheme for the book will suffice because the sections relate at more than one level” (p. 29). Osborne’s hermeneutic frequently results in what he calls “double meaning” (pp. 26, 41, 70, 86, 133, 150, 282, 284, 289, 398, 430, 458, 482, 528, 539, 542, 567, 582, 589, 614, 739, 773). Although his eclectic approach is potentially confusing, he clearly presents pros and cons of interpretational options. Osborne rightly asserts, “In the NT eschatology always leads to ethics. Every passage dealing with the return of Christ ends with a call to conduct one’s life with both vigilance and diligence” (p. 42). Consequently, Osborne wisely ends each major section with a shaded box titled “Summary and Contextualization.”

The following volumes are forthcoming: Matthew (David Turner), Mark (Robert H. Stein), 2 Corinthians (George H. Guthrie), Galatians (Douglas J. Moo), Ephesians (Frank Thielman), Colossians and Philemon (G. K. Beale), Pastoral Epistles (Stanley E. Porter), Hebrews (D. A. Carson), James (Dan G. McCartney), 2 Peter and Jude (Gene L. Green), and John’s letters (Robert W. Yarbrough). Acts (Darrell L. Bock) was published in August 2007, and Matthew, Mark, Acts, 2 Peter and Jude, and John’s letters should be published within the next year or so.

²⁶Review of Karen H. Jobs, *1 Peter*, *Review of Biblical Literature* (Oct. 2006), available at http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/5128_5396.pdf, accessed August 6, 2007.

²⁷Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

NIGTC (12 vols.)

1. Mark (R. T. France, 2002; xxxvii + 719 pp.) is a fresh, warm, informative guide to the Gospel of Mark's narrative, history, and theology. France, a former Anglican rector who authored *The Gospel of Mark* in the Doubleday Bible Commentary (1998; 217 pp.), refreshingly explains, "I have tried to write the sort of commentary I like to use.... This is, in my intention, a commentary on Mark, not a commentary on commentaries on Mark.... My concern is with the exegesis of the text of Mark, not with theories about its prehistory or the process of its composition" (p. 1). Although France holds to Markan priority, he is not preoccupied with the synoptic problem throughout the commentary (see pp. 41–45). France views the Gospel's structure as a "drama" about Jesus' ministry in three "acts" (pp. 11–15), taking place in and around Galilee (1:14–8:21), on the journey to Jerusalem (8:22–10:52), and in Jerusalem (11:1–16:8). The commentary includes substantial introductory essays for major sections and subsections, supplemented by textual notes and verse-by-verse comments. Rosscup qualifies his praise for France's volume: "with all due respect his ideas have misguided him to have Christ's enthronement to have kingly, universal and eternal dominion here and now be the meaning of texts that are about Christ's coming at the Second Advent (8:38; 13:26; 14:62; cf. pp. 32, 342–43, 534–35, 610–13)."²⁸

2. Luke (I. Howard Marshall, 1978; 928 pp.) was the inaugural volume for NIGTC. Nearly thirty years later, Marshall's now dated commentary seems to have been surpassed by his pupil Darrell Bock, but Marshall is scheduled to update his work with a forthcoming second edition. The formatting and dense comments make it much less user-friendly than Bock's. Marshall, an Arminian, combines exegesis and theology, building on his *Luke: Historian and Theologian*.²⁹ He defends Luke's historical reliability and refutes detrimental theories by critics like Bultmann, whose name he mentions in the commentary 318 times.

3. 1 Corinthians (Anthony C. Thiselton, 2000; xxxiii + 1446 pp.) is a mammoth, comprehensive work by a theologian renowned for his expertise in biblical hermeneutics and linguistics. Carson praises the volume with the descriptions "very impressive," "well written," "accessible," "penetrating," "detailed," and "invaluable."³⁰ Thiselton is skilled at clearly summarizing the sociohistorical background as well as the history of interpretation and interpretative options for various passages. The body of the commentary routinely breaks into four parts: an

²⁸ *Commentaries*, p. 221.

²⁹ Exeter: Paternoster, 1970; 238 pp.

³⁰ *Survey*, pp. 93–94.

introduction to the section, Thiselton's translation, bibliography, and verse-by-verse exegesis with a blend of textual issues and excurses. The bibliographies alone take up nearly 120 pages, and Thiselton incorporates speech-act theory in his exegesis.³¹

4. *2 Corinthians (Murray J. Harris, 2005; cxxviii + 989 pp.) thoroughly, patiently, and competently deals with Greek grammar, syntax, and textual criticism. On a couple of occasions this year, I heard Harris's former colleague D. A. Carson remark that Harris is the type of person who, if one were to drop in on him at home during some of his leisure time, would likely be reading classical Greek for relaxation! Harris is a superb Greek grammarian, and he argues, "[A]t root Christian theology is grammar applied to the biblical text; Scripture cannot be understood theologically unless it has first been understood grammatically" (p. xiv). Consequently, Harris does not prematurely jump to theological issues without analyzing grammar and syntax in detail. Harris's volume is a more advanced and technical update of his "2 Corinthians" in volume 10 of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (1976). Although he argues for the letter's integrity with more confidence than he did in his *EBC*, he no longer holds that Paul penned 2 Corinthians in one sitting (pp. xiii, 50). He methodically comments on every textual variant in the NA²⁷, and he includes as an appendix an "Expanded Paraphrase of 2 Corinthians" (pp. 943–62), which is exceedingly useful for quickly confirming Harris's understanding of a particular word, phrase, verse, or passage (cf. p. xiv). Harris devotes "disproportionate space" to his exegesis of two theologically significant passages: 1:8–11 and 5:1–10 (see pp. 150–82; 365–411). He explains, "5:1–10 is probably the most contested section of the letter. As it happens, it was the focus of my 1970 doctoral thesis at the University of Manchester, in which I explored the close relation of 1:8–11 and 5:1–10 in some detail" (p. xv).

5. Galatians (F. F. Bruce, 1982; xx + 305 pp.) painstakingly works through the Greek text. Bruce (1910–1990), a member of the Open Plymouth Brethren (though not sympathetic with their dispensationalism), earned an impeccable reputation as a world-class NT scholar, and this commentary demonstrates his familiarity with relevant sources, grasp of interpretational options, and proficiency with Greek grammar. The volume is a bit dated now and understandably does not address E. P. Sanders's new perspective on Paul. Though the text is readable, at times it lacks a crisp, logical clarity, which is due in part to the formatting. For example, it incorporates bibliographic information in the body rather than placing it in footnotes. Bruce believes that the readers of Paul's letter were from South Galatia (pp. 3–18), and his interpretation of 3:28 is favorable to egalitarianism (p. 190).

³¹"Speech-act" occurs 58 times, locution terminology (e.g., "illocutionary" or "perlocutionary") 62, Nicholas Wolterstorff 25, J. L. Austin 21, and John R. Searle 13.

6. *Philippians (Peter T. O'Brien, 1991; xli + 597 pp.) is crisp and comprehensive (e.g., eighty-six pages on 2:5–11). It is an outstanding blend of penetrating, reliable exegesis and theological reflection. Carson fittingly describes this “magisterial work” as “the best commentary on the Greek text of Philippians.”³² Rosscup adds, “O'Brien has the best exegetical work on the letter” and “is thorough and clear on key problem verses (2:6–7; 2:13; etc.)” with the result that “one comes away confident of seeing a masterful sifting.”³³

7. Colossians and Philemon (James D. G. Dunn, 1996; xvii + 388 pp.; 290 pp. for Colossians and 60 pp. for Philemon) is detailed, scholarly, and theological. Dunn is particularly competent with historical background and intertestamental literary parallels. Dunn wrote this after his commentaries on Romans (Word Biblical Commentary, 2 vols., 1988) and Galatians (Black's NT Commentaries, 1993) and before his *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (1998). Along with E. P. Sanders and N. T. Wright, Dunn is one of the three primary proponents of “the new perspective on Paul,” a label that Dunn himself coined. Dunn creatively and unconvincingly argues that Paul did not write Colossians; rather, he surmises, the author is Timothy, who wrote under Paul's direction or influence (pp. 35–39).³⁴ Dunn awkwardly and inconsistently refers to the author throughout the commentary as Paul, Timothy, and Paul and Timothy (cf. Dunn's awareness of this on p. 39). His treatment of 1:15–20 does not affirm Christ's pre-existence but instead defends a view consistent with adoptionism.³⁵ He hypothesizes that many wrongly assume “that Onesimus was legally at fault in going to Paul,” but “Onesimus left his master's household with the express purpose of contacting Paul” to serve as a friendly mediator between him and his master (p. 304).

8. 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Charles A. Wanamaker, 1990; xxviii + 316 pp.), according to Richard A. Young, is “scholarly, innovative, provocative, clearly written, marked with careful exegesis, sound argumentation, and conservative conclusions. Wanamaker explores various interpretative views with precision without becoming pedantically boring.”³⁶ Wanamaker, professor of Christian Studies at the University of

³²Survey, p. 112.

³³Commentaries, p. 290.

³⁴Contrast D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), pp. 517–21.

³⁵Cf. Dunn's *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), in which he argues, “If we are to submit our speculations to the text and build our theology only with the bricks provided by careful exegesis[,] we cannot say with confidence that Jesus knew himself to be divine, the pre-existent Son of God” (p. 32, emphasis in original).

³⁶Review of Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (Spring 1991): 139.

Cape Town in South Africa, highlights his “social science approach” as his most distinctive contribution (p. xii). He surprised himself by coming to the conclusion that 2 Thessalonians was written before 1 Thessalonians (p. xiii). Carson labels this “the best all-around commentary on the Greek text of these epistles.... Wanamaker is thorough and usually sensitive to both literary and theological flow. For students and pastors who can handle Greek, this commentary falls into the ‘must’ column. His handling of the rhetorical elements of the epistle, though, is sometimes overdone.”³⁷

9. *Pastoral Epistles (George W. Knight III, 1992; xxxiv + 514 pp.) is meticulous, careful, and conservative with a word-by-word exegetical approach. Knight, who has served in both the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, incorporates some of his previous works.³⁸ He valiantly defends Pauline authorship (pp. 4–6, 21–52) and complementarianism in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 (pp. 138–49).

10. Hebrews (Paul Ellingworth, 1993; xcvi + 764 pp.) is a technical, erudite tome. Ellingworth has served as a translation consultant for the United Bible Societies and a NT lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, and his expertise is Hebrews.³⁹ His volume focuses on Greek grammar, textual criticism, and extra-biblical documents, but not on larger theological issues. It is strong in microscopic and encyclopedic detail, but weak in clarity and synthesis. Ellingworth argues that 2:17 refers to expiation rather than propitiation (p. 188–89), and he takes an Arminian position on the warning passages, arguing that they were addressed to genuine Christians who could actually lose their faith and apostatize (pp. 75, 318–28, 325, 533–36).

11. James (Peter H. Davids, 1982; xxxviii + 226 pp.) is well researched and useful. Davids has been ordained as a deacon and presbyter in the Episcopal Church since 1979. In addition to methodical

³⁷Survey, p. 120.

³⁸Cf. Knight’s “The Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles” (Th.M. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1957); *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* (Kampen, NJ: Kok, 1968); *The Role Relationship of Men and Women: New Testament Teaching*, rev. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985); “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21–33 and Colossians 3:18–19” and “How Should Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Work Out in Practice?” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 165–78, 345–57, 492–95, 529–31.

³⁹Cf. Ellingworth, “The Old Testament in Hebrews: Exegesis, Method and Hermeneutics” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1977), viii + 731 pp., advised by I. Howard Marshall; Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1983), viii + 364 pp.; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth, 1991), xiv + 144 pp.

exegesis, Davids discusses seven theological themes in James: suffering/testing; eschatology; Christology; poverty-piety; law, grace, and faith; wisdom; and prayer (pp. 34–57).⁴⁰ He argues that James the brother of Jesus wrote the letter, but he qualifies that a Hellenistic redactor or editor is ultimately responsible for the letter's final form (pp. 12–13, 22, et al.). He refers to the author as the “redactor” twelve times (pp. 22 [3x], 64, 124, 135, 137, 149, 157, 181, 184, 195).

12. Revelation (G. K. Beale, 1999; lxiv + 1245 pp.) is an impressive, magisterial commentary from an amillennial perspective that Beale calls “inaugurated millennialism” (p. 973) and an approach that he describes as “eclecticism, or a redemptive-historical form of modified idealism” (p. 48). Beale earned a Th.M. in 1976 at Dallas Theological Seminary, where he studied under S. Lewis Johnson, so he is no stranger to dispensationalism. Beale has taught at Grove City College (1980–1984), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (1984–2000), and Wheaton College (2000–), and studying Revelation has been a lifelong preoccupation for him. His 37-page bibliography includes over twenty of his own previous works that are directly related to Revelation (pp. xxx–xxxi).⁴¹ Perhaps the single best word to describe Beale's volume is *comprehensive*. Though few will agree with all of his interpretations, he appears to have left hardly a stone unturned. His 177-page introduction is followed by rigorous verse-by-verse exposition (which is clearly labeled with section headings rivaling Puritan book titles in length!). He perceptively explains OT allusions and frequently shows parallels with extra-biblical literature. Unfortunately, his writing style is often tedious, wordy, and extremely complex. Stewart Custer concludes, “Such a commentary is very little help to one who believes in a literal, future fulfillment of prophecy.”⁴² On the other hand, Grant Osborne, a premillennialist, remarks, “There has never been a deeper probing of the Old Testament allusions in the Apocalypse, nor a better presentation of the idealist interpretation.”⁴³

The following volumes are forthcoming: Luke, 2nd ed. (I. Howard Marshall), John (Richard Bauckham), Acts (Stanley E. Porter), Romans (Richard N. Longenecker), Ephesians (Max Turner), 1 Peter (Troy W. Martin), 2 Peter and Jude (Scott J. Hafemann), John's

⁴⁰Cf. Davids, “Themes in the Epistle of James That Are Judaistic in Character” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manchester, 1974), xvi + 589 pp., advised by Stephen S. Smalley.

⁴¹Cf. *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), xiv + 349 pp., which is Beale's published Ph.D. dissertation completed at the University of Cambridge in 1980; *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1998), 443 pp.

⁴²*Biblical Viewpoint* 35(November 2001): 140.

⁴³Quoted from Osborne's endorsement on the print volume's front flap.

letters (D. A. Carson), and a commentary on the Apostolic Fathers (David E. Aune and Donald A. Hagner). Carson's long-anticipated volume on John's letters should be published within a couple years. The current 12-volume series in Libronix does not include Matthew (John Nolland, 2005), but Logos currently has the electronic files and should be releasing it shortly.

CONCLUSION

PNTC, BECNT, and NIGTC are three NT commentary series that are especially useful for diligent pastors, teachers, and students. Their electronic availability in Libronix by Logos Bible Software makes them incalculably more useful because electronic commentaries are searchable, versatile, and less expensive. God's servants who preach and teach His words are responsible to glorify Him as faithful stewards, and these electronic commentaries are an invaluable means to that worthy end.