

BOOK REVIEW GUIDE

Each student will write at least one book review either on the Luther, Kuyper, or Müller text. You may choose to write a second review worth up to 5% of extra credit towards your final grade. Please consult the Supplemental Bibliography to select an optional extra credit review. Also, consult your syllabus to see when that book review is due. Your class schedule lists the review options that are due for each class session. If you choose to do an extra credit review, please email me and let me know which book you would like to review. Each book will only be reviewed by one student, so reserve your book as soon as possible. If you choose to do an extra credit review, please be prepared to read your review to the class the day that it is due. We want to be able to discuss your work.

Reviews should be single spaced with a 1/2" paragraph indentation, beginning with the second paragraph. Please limit your review to 1200 words. See the Sample Review following the directions for formatting questions. Be sure to add the bibliographic information for the book at the top.

Here are the makings of a great review.

INTRODUCTION

In your introduction provide the title and the author of the book, ever so briefly telling us a little bit about the pedigree or qualifications of the author to write on this subject. Summarize briefly the state of research in the field of study with which this book is a contribution. Most importantly summarize the authors argument of the book and attempt to encapsulate his/her thesis in one sentence.

THE BOOK SUMMARY

The major portion of your review should contain a carefully crafted explanation of the author's major arguments. Limit direct quotations as much as you are able. Consider the methods and sources that the author employs to prove these arguments. Ask yourself: "What is the author concerned about? Why? What is new or unique in the author's treatment of this subject? How is this book different than other treatments of the same subject?" You may also wish to mention details in your summary that will become 'evidence' in the critical evaluation section of your review. This summary should only be descriptive and not contain a critical evaluation of the book (whether positive or negative). Instead, a good summary provides an objective, dispassionate report of the book's major themes and arguments.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

In the final section of your review you should provide a thoughtful critique of the book. How well does the author use her/his sources? Does he/she successfully defend the theses or arguments? Does the evidence bear out the author's conclusions? Are there flaws in the author's reasoning or the book's organization? Does she/he propose new approaches, use any major new documents, propose new interpretations, challenge existing interpretations, or present old information in new ways? What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the work? If you judge the book to be 'interesting,' 'provocative,' 'boring,' or 'significant' explain why or how. If you did not like the book, say so, but support your opinion with solid arguments. In other words, the critical evaluation

requires you to state and defend your opinion of the book. A critical evaluation must always be gracious and polite. Avoid cheap shots or ad hominem attacks.

CONCLUSION

In a final paragraph, briefly summarize the argument of your review and provide a concluding statement (whether positive or negative) about the book that you reviewed. Suggest who might find the book useful and how it might best be used.

SAMPLE BOOK REVIEW

David P. Barshinger and Douglas A. Sweeney, eds. *Jonathan Edwards & Scripture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. xiv + 276 pp. £22.99/\$35.00.

As the Edwards Renaissance continues, a happy trend is interest in studying the Edwards of the Bible. This interest is pursued by Edwards scholars from various backgrounds and disciplines, as participation in the recent *Jonathan Edwards & Scripture* compendium demonstrates. The editors, Douglas A. Sweeney, author of the authoritative work, *Edwards the Exegete*, along with David P. Barshinger, author of the pioneering *Edwards and the Psalms*, have assembled an anthology of essays attending to Edwards' engagement with the Holy Writ—the aim of which is to observe Edwards' devotion to scripture, assess him as a biblical interpreter in comparison to his Reformed heritage and enlightened context, and to appreciate the *sui generis* of Edwards' constructive biblical theology and theological interpretation of scripture. Since a comprehensive *précis* is impractical, this review illuminates how the contributions, though valuable independently, ought to be read in tandem. Their arguments corroborate one another and display a consensus on Edwards' scriptural interpretation. Apologies to readers who anticipate a linear account; this review is thematically produced.

Kenneth Minkema (chapter 1) depicts Edwards' scriptural practices. Edwards kept canonical reviews of scripture and had favorite texts and textual “clusters”, which are found in Edwards' “Miscellanies”, “Blank Bible”, “Notes on Scripture”, other thematic notebooks, and the scripture texts he habitually re-preached. Minkema's introduction to these less known parts of Edwards' corpus is helpful because all later contributors amply use these texts. Adriaan Neele's study (chapter 3), explores Edwards' secondary interlocutor, Matthew Poole, who introduced to Edwards much more secondary literature. As Neele summarizes, Poole's *Synopsis* “is a composition of a vast number and variety of authors of various faith traditions” (p. 56). Robert Brown's case-study of Edwards and the Pentateuch furthers these arguments (chapter 7). Edwards gave generous time to studying the historical narratives of Genesis and Exodus in order to defend Mosaic authorship (cf. entry No. 416 in “Notes on Scripture”). Edwards also resourced English translations of French-Catholic scholars, Richard Simon and Louis Ellies Du Pin, for his research. Brown's article is preceded by a Pentateuchal case-study from luminary of American historical studies, Mark Noll, who provides an account of Edwards' interpretation of Genesis 32:22-32, Jacob's wrestling with “a Man” (chapter 6).

In chapter 2, Stephen Nichols asserts that Edwards' reformed interpretive heritage caused him to place great value on harmonizing the Old and New Testament. This harmony respected the “Christological scope” of Scripture. Edwards also appropriated interpretive practices from late antiquity and medievalists by reading texts typologically; this allowed for infinite spiritual senses of the text. Later, David Kling reveals that Edwards believed the unconverted may correctly interpret scripture's historical and exegetical sense, but only the converted may comprehend scripture's spiritual sense (chapter 12). Ava Chamberlain's essay on Edwards and Jonah's whale is a case-study of Edwards' typological and spiritual interpretation (chapter 8). She compares Edwards' theological work with Cotton Mather's use of natural science to resolve the unbelievable elements of this story. Edwards repaired the historical and natural science problems by employing his spiritual sense of the text.

Chamberlain's essay demonstrates how fruitful research comes from matters even Edwards gave scant attention. Three other essays reveal this. Remarkably, each one surfaces theological and cultural tensions Edwards managed in respect to Catholicism. Stephen Stein's essay on Edwards and the Virgin Mary exhibits that Edwards staunchly opposed the Catholic doctrine of Mariology, but he did not marginalize Mary (chapter 10). Her role in redemptive history as the pre-natal vessel for the

two-natured Son of God becomes, for Edwards, a typological picture of those who “foster the life of Christ in the world” (p. 190). James Bryd’s blend of intellectual, social, and military history discusses Edwards’ function as a civil figure, who supported a just war interpretation of scripture to enlist support for England’s conflicts with Catholic Spain and France (chapter 11). Gerald McDermott’s inquiry on how evangelical Edwards’ theological commitments were suggests that Edwards is quite Thomistic on a handful of positions (chapter 13). Furthermore, Edwards appears to subscribe to a *Prima Scriptura* rather than *Sola Scriptura* position. Before readers rise up against McDermott’s assessment, it is vital to observe that Protestantism’s catholicity has always featured marks of Thomism; Edwards’ is no outlier.

Charles Hambrick-Stowe’s contribution on the Bible in Edwards’ personal life and spiritual practice illumines Edwards’ fundamental preaching aim to elicit revival and stir affections (chapter 4). Edwards’ writing practices were exercises of biblical spiritual reflection to foster personal revival and ongoing conversion, which Kling alludes to in chapter 12 (p. 229-231). Jan Stievermann’s and Ryan Hoselton’s contribution compares Cotton Mather’s experimental piety to Edwards’ (chapter five). For Edwards, experimental piety is denoted by “spiritual notions in Scripture lively to the mind by stirring the saint’s internal senses and perceptions to feel and see their beauty, concinnity, and goodness” (p. 102). Michael McClymond neatly pulls together these conclusions about Edwards’ spiritual understanding of Scripture as he unfolds Edwards’ “logic of fullness” in John’s writings (chapter nine). Edwards believed that the spiritual life involved an ever-increasing experience of God’s grace as one perpetually comes into deeper intimacy and union with the triune God. McClymond asserts that Edwards’ “logic of fullness” anticipates the inaugurated eschatology of Richard Bauckham and the “dynamic relation” of C. H. Dodd.

These essays will engender further critical engagement by scholars preoccupied by Jonathan Edwards. Furthermore, by acquainting readers with ongoing projects, like Cotton Mather’s *Biblia America*, this study alerts readers to the value of exploring Edwards’ and Mather’s Atlantic World frontier. Pastors and interested lay-readership will find comfort and encouragement from Edwards’ traditional yet innovative interpretive work; Edwards preserved his Reformed heritage, while creatively protecting sound doctrine from sceptic’s and liberal’s assault upon the church.

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