

comprehensive. This is really a drawback of the encyclopedia, leaving one to wonder whether the editors met their goal in making this work “one of lasting significance” (1:xvi). Given the price and the current status of this encyclopedia, I am hesitant to recommend the *OEBL* without any reservations. It is, however, definitely a “must have” for any serious research library, due to its unique nature.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

DOMINIC BORNAND

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016. xii + 288 pp. Hardcover. USD 21.99.

Evangelical theologian Kevin Vanhoozer is Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Theological Seminary in Deerfield, Illinois. *Biblical Authority After Babel* is the most recent of his works in the area of systematic theology. His previous publications, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), and *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture: A Mere Evangelical Account* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), a book co-authored with Daniel J. Treier, provide useful background for the present work.

Vanhoozer begins the book by asking, “Should the Church repent or retrieve the Reformation?” (1) His answer is: retrieve. This proposal is a reaction to the tough criticism that non-sympathizers of the Protestant Reformation have repeatedly expressed, maintaining that secularism, skepticism, and schism have been its unintended consequences. Although Vanhoozer believes these criticisms to be ultimately misguided, he recognizes that interpretive disagreements among Protestant Christians have obscured the Reformation’s latent potential and particularly focuses on addressing this issue. In fact, he essentially argues that revisiting historical Protestantism through a creative retrieving (ressourcement) of the five Reformation *solas* can provide for a present-day normative Protestantism, “mere Protestant Christianity” (3), which can help solve the problem of interpretive authority, thus providing an alternative to the problem of pervasive interpretive pluralism. The argument mostly focuses on the central roles that *Sola Scriptura* and the concept of a “priesthood of all believers” have played in inciting interpretive pluralism and aims to show how these concepts lose their potential for divisiveness if understood along with the rest of the *solas*.

The introduction and conclusion contain insights crucial to understanding the rationale for the project of Protestant retrieval. The rest of the chapters develop the retrieval of the *solas*, particularly addressing issues of interpretive authority and leading to the goal of “plural interpretive unity” (223–227). *Grace Alone* communicates how everything—including interpretive authority—exists within the Triune God’s economy of grace. *Faith Alone* involves trusting the testimony of the Triune God as enclosed in Scripture,

as well as the testimony of divinely authorized interpreters comprising the testimony of the church at large. *Scripture Alone* describes Scripture as holding supreme, magisterial authority. The church holds ministerial interpretive authority, ultimately preserved within church tradition. *Christ Alone* is the head of the church and has invested interpretive authority upon His earthen body, the church. *The Church Alone*, marginally added as an unofficial *sola*, clarifies how interpretive unity in the context of the royal priesthood of all believers discourages both the vesting of interpretive authority upon a Roman magisterium, as well as upon autonomous individuals apart from their church community. The royal priesthood of all believers is thus explained as a pattern of authority within interpretive communities. Finally, *For the Glory of God Alone* entreats church communities to avoid interpretive isolation and publicly display a united front by joining the conversation towards interpretive unity within larger conferences of churches committed to rightly communicating and preserving the Gospel for God's glory.

Woven throughout the book is Vanhoozer's main illustration for plural interpretive unity: "Evangel Way" (33). Each surrounding home represents a church, denomination, or confessional tradition, stressing how these are not necessarily expected to inhabit the same "house," but rather to be good neighbors on the same street. Homeowners often invite each other over for supper (Lord's Supper) in a spirit of fellowship and mutual understanding, enjoy camaraderie during block parties, and even manage to keep a neighborhood watch, all despite their non-essential disagreements. According to Vanhoozer, this kind of Protestant unity avoids the extremes of individual interpretive anarchy (families live together in homes) and magisterial authority of the Church (homes remain separate as such). Another way that he illustrates his proposal is with Babel representing the "towering Roman uniformity" (229) and Pentecost, the reversal of Babel, representing Protestantism. This is why he also describes plural interpretive unity as "Pentecostal unity" (223). Ultimately, Vanhoozer concludes that the trans-denominational structure of evangelicalism is most compatible with mere Protestant Christianity's plural interpretive unity.

*Biblical Authority After Babel* is richly supported with relevant primary and secondary sources, as well as biblical references. The author, well informed and articulate, efficiently brings countless concepts into a coherent whole. With considerable expertise, Vanhoozer continues a longstanding discussion while also opening a new phase in the conversation through the concept of mere Protestant Christianity.

There is more to commend. First, Vanhoozer successfully argues that the Reformation did not release interpretive anarchy into Christianity, as its critics believe, but instead opened up an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the Gospel and for the practice of charity among Christians, despite the disagreements. This element of his "creative retrieval" provides Protestant Christians a sense of renewed confidence, reminding us that we can still hold our heads up high. It also provides a well founded appeal for a much needed charitable attitude over against the divisiveness, defensiveness, and suspicion too often manifested among Protestant Christians. Others have voiced this

appeal before, but the significance of this particular proposal is the robust and articulated theological system that Vanhoozer provides to support it. Additionally, the wisdom of formulating it through the *solas* is that it already builds upon basic elements widely agreed upon among Protestants. Further on, his constructive approach to the *solas* is refreshing in comparison to the apologetic spirit in which they are usually reviewed (as wholesome theology should not be built only on the basis of negations).

That being said, the process of “creative retrieval” of the *solas*, in which determinations are made as to what presently constitutes the non-negotiables of mere Protestant Christianity, seems more challenging. Let me explain why. The creative retrieval process consists in interpreting, from the present viewpoint, what the reformers meant. Even if one is not an expert in the field, one can imagine that interpretation of the reformers’ vast and varied works is not necessarily a debate-free zone. Thus, it is up to the reader to be conversant with the primary sources, as well as the discussions around them, in order to better understand how the author positions himself in his retrieval. Moreover, while the works of Luther and Calvin, for example, are referred to often, other reformers’ works are not significantly featured. The reader is left wondering whether this omission might make a difference in the conclusions arrived at in the retrieval of the *solas*, as well as whether this retrieval exercise comes out of a certain tradition within Protestantism, with certain attached presuppositions.

Yet another question comes to mind. If, hypothetically speaking, in the process of a charitable dialogue during supper, some homes on Evangel Way were to challenge some of the elements portrayed here as constituting the *solas* of mere Protestant Christianity, could these homes remain on Evangel Way? (Since the *solas* are hereby described in fairly elaborate detail, some of the more detailed components could maybe spark some discussion as to whether or not they are core elements.) If so, would they simply hold longer, harder conversations until interpretive agreement was achieved? In the meantime, would they have an indeterminate place around the table and in the neighborhood? Would there be a point where a definitive impasse could be identified, resulting in eviction? More concretely, is mere Protestant Christianity, as defined and described by the creative retrieval portrayed in this book, essentially a final word on what constitutes the core of Protestantism, or is it more of an initial, adaptable suggestion?

Answers to these questions, although important, do not seem to be entirely clear from the reading. Although, perhaps the answers have been partly provided by Vanhoozer’s recognition that his retrieval of the *solas* can “help evangelicals *inch closer* to the unitive interpretive plurality,” which he sees as an “*unrealized hope*” (234; emphasis added). In this sense, Vanhoozer’s proposal for mere Protestant Christianity could be considered a valuable new direction that offers deeper insights and higher standards for the conversation to continue honestly, prudently, and charitably, as he rightly suggests.

*Biblical Authority After Babel* is a heavyweight academic work written with proficiency, but in an approachable, and even witty, style. Experts in areas, such as the Protestant Reformation, contemporary evangelical hermeneutics,

or ecclesiology, will be best served by the book. Those who understand the relevance of the topic, but find the reading intimidating, can still reinforce their understanding by paying special attention to, and often revisiting, the twenty theses or main arguments that are distributed throughout the book, always in the last section of each chapter. This is a recommended work for all evangelical Christians interested in the present state of Protestantism, particularly in the sub-topic of interpretive authority.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

IRIANN MARIE HAUSTED

Widder, Wendy L. *Daniel*. The Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 288 pp. Hardcover. USD 29.99.

Wendy Widder is the author of a new commentary on the book of Daniel, which is part of a new commentary series by Zondervan, entitled *The Story of God Bible Commentary*. The general editors of the series are Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight, who have considerable experience as editors and authors. The purpose and aim of the series is to explain the Bible within its ancient context and show what it means for readers today, with special emphasis on its connection to Christ. Its audience is primarily clergy, but it intends to be accessible to laity also.

Widder has not published extensively on the book of Daniel, but she has taught several college level courses on the subject. Despite this disadvantage, she is to be commended for her measured and genial tone throughout the book. She competently addresses the major issues within the text and admirably connects the text to modern Christian living. However, her non-traditional interpretation of certain key chapters is not sufficiently supported with evidence from the text and raises important theological questions and concerns. She also does not consistently connect the text to Christ, which is one of the main aims of the commentary series.

The layout of the book is common to the commentary series. There is an introductory section that treats the introductory data for the biblical book. Next, each chapter of the biblical book is analyzed according to a set structure. First, there is a section titled, "Listen to the Story," which includes the biblical text from the NIV 2011 and relevant intertextual data. Then, the author analyzes the meaning of the text within its ancient context in the section titled, "Explain the Story." Finally, in the section titled "Live the Story," the author attempts to connect the text to the modern reader and apply it to the life of the believer and the church today.

In the introduction, Widder gingerly addresses the many thorny introductory issues of the book, such as authorship, date, and canon. Widder approaches these controversial issues tactfully and carefully. She accepts the traditional sixth century date of the book, but refrains from a negative appraisal of a second century date for the book. She accepts the veracity of Daniel as a historical figure, but states that it is impossible to definitively know who compiled the book. Widder eschews easy answers to these complex questions, but it is unclear whether her hesitation to commit to a certain