'Millennialism and Missions', has essays by Nicholas T. Batzig on Edwards, McLaurin and the concert of prayer and Kelly van Andel on Edwards, the Stockbridge Indians and sin. The fourth section, 'Philosophy', contains three essays from Richard A. S. Hall on theories of causation in Edwards and Hume, H. G. Callaway on Witherspoon, Edwards and the shift in American moral sensibilities and Natalia Marandiuc on Edwards, Kant, the human will and divine grace. The final section, under the heading, 'Aesthetics', has essays by Susan Miller on beauty in Edwards and Keats and by Kyle Strobel on Edwards and the beatific vision. At the back of the book there are two additional and helpful features worth noting: first, a sizeable bibliography and second, a subject index, both of which draw from sources and are keyed to topics from each essay.

There is certainly much to commend this work. It is, however, not without some liabilities. While its contributors include some seasoned Edwards scholars, the majority are junior scholars in the field. Thus, the quality from essay to essay is somewhat uneven. In some cases it appears that Edwards has been made to fit the interests of other research. For this reason the degree of historical speculation as well as arguments from influence are amplified in certain cases. However, perhaps the greatest liability of the work is the absence of two additional essays which were presented at the conference but did not make it into the book, one by David Bebbington on 'A Historical Review of Revivals' and the other, a second essay by Richard Hall titled, 'A Lost Smibert Portrait of Edwards?' Had they been included, they would have contributed appreciably to the quality of the overall project.

Despite these criticisms, both students and professionals alike will find this a useful work of reference within an ever-growing body of Edwards secondary literature. Much praise belongs to the editors and Dunedin Academic Press for the quality, accessibility and formal presentation of the work. Such assets beckon one to purchase this volume. *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland* will undoubtedly stimulate further research into this largely overlooked and altogether important aspect of Edwards studies.

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Derek R. Nelson, *Sin: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York and London: T&T Clark, 2011), pp. 168. £14.99.

In his introductory treatment on sin, Derek Nelson creatively establishes the notion that sin has a kind of in-built hope which humbles human beings

and points them in the direction of their need for the Creator (p. 1). Nelson's objective is not to give us a thorough and detailed understanding of sin as a concept, but to explore the concept of sin as a 'kind of collage' which demonstrates the inextricability of both Christian thought and sin (p. 17). Nelson's view is that sin cannot be pinned down, just as the nature of God cannot be pinned down (p. 118). Nelson, relying on Barth, argues that multi-faceted definitions of sin should be held in tension (see especially chapter 4), yet these definitions reduce to a description of man's being against God (p. 118).

By way of summary, let me offer a brief outline of how Nelson proceeds. Interestingly, he begins in chapter 1 introducing the theme of the book whereby sin is a kind of good news for humanity, then he considers objections raised against sin language and some historical views on sin. In chapters 2–4, Nelson lays the ground work by offering ways in which sin can be portrayed (chapter 2), considering Augustine's view (chapter 3) and examining recent conceptions of sin (chapter 4). Before concluding, he appropriates his notion of sin as essentially tied to a social structure by illustrating it in terms of phenomenological malfunctioning (chapter 5), liberation thought (chapter 6) and feminist thought (chapter 6). There are two aspects of the book which make it an invaluable resource, so to these we now turn.

First, Nelson has a unique way of uniting the material in a way that grounds the concept of sin in the Christian tradition which is also applicable to contemporary concerns. In a clear and methodical manner, Nelson thematically works through biblical, historical and contemporary literature on sin. While he is not explicit about his method of doing theology, it seems that his method for constructing theology has much that is commendable. By drawing from historical thinkers and very general categories for thinking about sin, he then works through scriptural terms and categories later to develop these terms in the context of contemporary thought. Thus, by the end of his treatment, Nelson offers us a way to view sin which is rooted in Christian tradition, yet has contemporary significance both in theory and in practice.

Second, Nelson exemplifies a manner of writing and communicating that is both dynamic and engaging. Throughout, he draws many illustrations and analogies from history, scripture and contemporary thought. One gem of an example is represented in Nelson's engagement with modern thinkers concerning sin as estrangement, isolation, rebellion and self-justification (chapter 4). I found this chapter to be rich with varying levels of depth in meaning. For example, Nelson's discussion of sin as estrangement offers thoughtful insight into our created natures in contrast to our experience of the self. Nelson says that persons who do not live up to their full potential can be explained by thinking of persons as having an 'essential self' and an

'existential self' (p. 55). What this means is that a person has an essence with an imbedded 'ideal' or 'true' self that is not always experienced in concrete reality. Interestingly, Nelson draws from these notions when reading Romans 7 whereby Paul is struggling to live up to his 'essential self'. Nelson concludes by considering the theologian Paul Tillich, who says that human beings live in 'polar tensions' reflecting the dynamic between the 'essential self' and the 'existential self' (p. 57). I find this way of thinking through a concept to be fertile with imagery, insight and practical application. With all that is positive, and there is much more to be said that is congratulatory in nature, there is one disappointment. This disappointment relates to Nelson's lack of synthesising the material.

Throughout Nelson is insistent that we cannot define sin, yet it seems to me that Nelson has undersold his own ability to coherently articulate sin. Connected to this, I think establishing a synthesis of the definitions and an overarching ethical view would only have improved an already satisfying primer on sin.

As a theological primer on sin this book has much that is commendable because it is full of original approaches and thoughts on sin. *Sin: A Guide for the Perplexed* would be a useful supplemental text in courses on systematic theology or courses on the nature of sin. The academician, pastor and layman will benefit from Nelson's work, indeed, I think most could benefit from reading *Sin: A Guide for the Perplexed*.

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A. Graeme Auld, *I and II Samuel*. The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), pp. 712. $75.00 (hbk).

The present commentary represents a very elegant application to 1 and 2 Samuel of Auld's distinctive approach to the books of the former prophets, developed by him in a series of works over several decades. Scholarship on this biblical corpus has been dominated by Martin Noth's thesis of an exilic Deuteronomistic Historian who assembled the whole block of material from Joshua through Kings and composed key texts framing the whole – a thesis refined in different directions especially by Rudolf Smend and Frank Moore Cross. Auld has for some time championed an alternative hypothesis rooted in a comparison of Samuel–Kings to parallel accounts in Chronicles and to variant editions represented in the versions and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Rather than viewing the Deuteronomistic History as the primary source of the book