Green and Turner have done biblical scholars a significant service by providing a stimulating set of reflections on the relation between New Testament studies and theology. The eleven essays in this volume challenge the notion that these disciplines can and ought to be separated. They argue for a responsible integration, carefully respecting the methodological integrity of critical biblical studies (though some essayists are less sanguine about the results of the historical-critical method for theology and church) and Christian theological inquiry. Between Two Horizons also introduces the new Two Horizons Commentary (THC) series that will seek to weave together theology and biblical studies. In this review I will provide a brief overview of the themes of the major essays and draw some conclusions about the volume’s overall contribution to the interface between these fields.

The first essay, “New Testament Commentary and Systematic Theology” Strangers or Friends?” by the book’s editors, Green and Turner, is introductory to the entire volume. They ask, “Why another commentary series?” about the forthcoming THC project, and answer that good commentaries have become inaccessible to all but the experts and that most commentaries stay within the thought-world of the biblical authors, failing to address the theological needs of the church today. The forthcoming THC series will focus less on “behind the text” issues and more on “in the text” and “in front of the text” (the reader’s world) concerns.
The second essay, “Scripture and Theology: Uniting the Two So Long Divided” by Joel B. Green, gives a history of the divide between the two disciplines and critiques the “iron curtain” between them. Green surveys the 20th century’s most well known effort to bridge the gap, the “Biblical Theology” movement, and the problems that led to its demise. After making an inventory of the issues facing those who want to bridge the disciplines of biblical and theological study, Green offers three models of “interdisciplinarity.”

The third essay is by Max Turner, “Historical Criticism and Theological Hermeneutics of the New Testament.” His goal is to “reassess the question of the relevance of ‘behind the text’ approaches in theological readings of NT texts” and to weigh them in relation to ‘in the text’ and ‘in front of the text’ questions (p. 44). Informed by the categories of contemporary literary criticism, Turner takes up the specific kinds of texts in the NT (narratives, letters, and apocalypse) and discerns that the issue of meaning differs in relation to each genre. He focuses on NT letters and defends (against the New Criticism) the importance of discerning authorial intention, yet he recognizes the interpretative role of the modern reader.

Next is Stephen E. Fowl’s essay, “The Role of Authorial Intention in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture.” His aim is to help readers of Scripture sort out how and why the issue of authorial intention is relevant to the task of theological interpretation. He defends “a chastened notion of authorial intention” but rejects “the claim that an author’s meaning is ‘the meaning’ of a text”(p. 73). Fowl argues for the legitimacy of addressing the larger issues of the Christian life, such as, worship, faithful living, and communion with God, and recognizes that an exclusive focus on “behind the text” issues is likely to frustrate these concerns.

Robert W. Wall writes the fifth and ninth essays, “Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions: The ‘Rule of Faith’ in Theological Hermeneutics” and “Canonical Context and Canonical Conversation.” They are provocative defenses of the role of Christian tradition (pluriform) in guiding the interpretation of Scripture. The first essay proposes that “Scripture’s performance as a persuasive word and enriching sacrament depends upon interpretation that constrains the theological teaching of a biblical text by the church’s ‘Rule of Faith’”(p. 88). His approach contrasts sharply with the perspective of modern biblical scholarship: the “evident dislocation of the Scripture from the church to the academic guilds of biblical and theological scholarship to serve more secular (rather than confessional) interests, funded by a theological hermeneutics of suspicion, actually strips Scripture of its fiduciary claim upon the church”(p. 90). In the second essay Wall discusses “the Scripture’s privileged role in Christian formation . . . first, as a rule whose teaching norms the believer’s theological understanding; and second, as a sacrament whose use mediates God’s salvation-creating grace” (p. 165). This approach, not the “methodological interests of historical criticism,” which are subversive of these ends, will
“bring believers to maturity in theological understanding and in their love for God and neighbor” (p. 166).

After chapter six’s application theological hermeneutics from a Pentecostal perspective, the seventh essay, “Biblical Narrative and Systemic Theology” by John Goldingay, creatively compares the way we reflect on a film, novel, or song with the way we interpret a biblical narratives: (1) there are individual moments that convey insights; (2) in biblical narratives, plots are a key to theological significance; (3) biblical narratives portray or render characters in such a way that readers are left to infer what kind of persons (in the case of God and Jesus) they are; and (4) narratives contain theological themes that must be teased out through exegesis. Goldingay concludes that theology must deal with the fundamentally narrative character of biblical faith and that its rational and philosophical categories are often inadequate to the biblical portrayal of God. He concludes with constructive proposals for moving from narrative to theology.

In “Two Testaments, One Biblical Theology” Steve Motyer affirms that “there is a unified ‘theology’ to be discerned and affirmed in the Bible” (p. 143). After reviewing the challenges to this assumption, Motyer surveys five 20th-century attempts at a unified biblical theology: (1) “biblical theology apart from historical criticism” (Vos and Vischer); (2) “biblical theology arising out of historical criticism” (von Rad); (3) “biblical theology abstracted from history” (Eichrodt, Stuhlmacher, and Childs); (4) “biblical theology founded upon a new ‘history’” (Watson); and (5) “biblical theology in engagement and dialogue” (Goldingay and Brueggemann). Motyer defines biblical theology as “that creative theological discipline whereby the church seeks to hear the integrated voice of the whole Bible addressing us today” (p. 158), and he has a five-point plan as to how one may do it.

The penultimate essay in this volume (“Tradition, Authority, and a Christian Approach to the Bible as Scripture”) by Trevor Hart of St. Andrews is critical of both the academy (and the “avowed objectivism of some historical-critical approaches”) and of naïve, uncritical Christian appeals to “the Bible alone” or to “what the Bible says.” Both fail to appreciate the positive influence of “extratextual voices,” both ecclesial and secular. Such extratextual voices in the form of theological concerns (or tradition) are always present when we read Scripture. Hart maintains that it is one of the roles of theology to forge, clarify, and regulate the rules for a Christian reading of Scripture (p. 189). Readers must attend to the elusive “presence” of meaning in texts and suggests wagering on transcendence (p. 195) in a way that calls us to submit to the text and listen to it carefully for the presence of meaning, while “recognizing the partial and provisional nature of all its readings” (p. 196).

Finally, Between Two Horizons closes with a spirited essay by N.T. Wright on “The Letter to the Galatians: Exegesis and Theology.” Wright takes the questions and
approaches evident in this volume and applies them to his own work of writing a commentary that lets “questions of exegesis and theology stare each other in the face” (p. 205). His approach gives an account of the exegetical issues in Galatians, suggests what theological questions might best be put to the letter (and its possible answers), and proposes how the tasks of theology and exegesis might be integrated in a commentary. A final section shows how the theology in Galatians might relate to the kind of contemporary issues raised by Miroslav Volf in _Exclusion and Embrace_ (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

This set of essays will be helpful to theological students and teachers as they seek to bring together biblical interpretation and the demands of Christian faith and life. The multiple perspectives of this volume give freedom in thinking about the integrative task before us and in offering more than one way to proceed. It is evident, however, from the essays by Wall and Thomas, that tensions remain over the use of critical methods in the tasks of exegesis and theology for the life of the church. One mild criticism: instead of engaging systematic theology (one thinks of Barth, Pannenberg, and Moltmann, for example), as the subtitle suggests, the volume’s authors address “theology” in general or theological hermeneutics in particular. Little is heard from the side of systematic theology per se. Most of the bridge building is attempted from the side of biblical studies. Though not all of the essays are as rich and constructive as those of Goldingay, Hart and Wright, we owe a debt of gratitude to Green and Turner for creating a volume that identifies the problems and proposes instructive solutions.