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## 1–3 JOHN. Concordia Commentary Series. By Bruce G. Schuchard

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**1–3 JOHN. Concordia Commentary Series.** By Bruce G. Schuchard. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012. 752 pages. Hardcover. \$49.99.

This is among the world's thickest commentaries on these short epistles, containing some 800 pages when bibliography and other front matter are factored in. Some of the bulk is the result of the frequent inclusion of long citations from secondary sources in the footnotes. While this is unusual, I do not find it overdone and in fact feel it is helpful, for it gives the larger context of other scholars' best insights as Schuchard has dug them out through his research.

In some ways, then, this is not only the author's attempt to present 1–3 John's insights in the most thorough way possible: he also compiles a mini-library of the richest, most pithy observations he could find in other commentators' works. This feature will be especially valuable for preachers, who may not have access to all these other significant studies, but who will be able to cite them with confidence because Schuchard has provided sufficient context to do so.

While Schuchard is alert to patristic commentary and Luther, he most frequently cites contemporary exegetes like Brown, Dodd, Kruse, Lieu, Marshall, Smalley, Stott, Witherington, and many others. He also gives due attention to the standard grammars, lexica, and other technical resources. On the whole, this is a scholarly and not a popular-level or sermonic commentary (like, say, David Allen's recent *1–3 John: Fellowship in God's Family*).

The commentary's introductory sections lay out an informed and persuasive case that John the son of Zebedee is

the author of 1–3 John. Included here are thorough reviews of the patristic data along with careful interaction with important current scholarship by the late Martin Hengel, Charles Hill, Richard Bauckham, Paul Trebilco, and others.

Readers can go to [www.cph.org/topic-bgscharts](http://www.cph.org/topic-bgscharts) and access supplementary color-coded charts highlighting various literary and linguistic features of each section of 1–3 John. They are additional testimony to the care with which Schuchard has pored over the Greek text.

A very simple structural analysis of all three epistles is found at the outset on a single page (viii). Individual sections (twelve for 1 John, one each for 2 and 3 John) are broken down as follows: Translation, Limits and Structure, Textual Notes (mainly close grammatical and syntactical analysis), Commentary, and Concluding Observations. Reading knowledge of Greek is needed to consult "Textual Notes" with profit, but the "Commentary" section is free of Greek citations. "Commentary" also includes the "Icons" (xviii–xix) that highlight important theological themes.

A notable feature of this commentary is the absence of *odium theologicum*—rancor or snarkiness toward scholars with whom Schuchard disagrees. In that respect, it not only explains but models the graciousness and love that are such central features of 1–3 John. This is a commendable achievement in commenting on a corpus containing so many hotly disputed passages. Schuchard declines to fixate on points of disagreement with other scholars, instead choosing simply to cite them when he agrees with them or finds their formulations beneficial.

A challenge in reading 1 John is the Apostle John's tendency to revisit the same subject in various places and from varying angles. Schuchard helps the reader here with a thorough subject index (696–718). If a reader wants to know

what 1 John says about “anointing,” for example, one does not have to guess at where Schuchard might have enlarged on that topic, or read the whole commentary to find out, but will be directed (697) to the nearly two dozen passages where this theme is broached in the commentary. Considering that the word occurs only three times in 1 John (2:20, 2:27 [twice]), this opens up a wealth of discussion that would otherwise remain hidden from all but the most avid readers with lots of time on their hands—which does not describe many pastors, at least, who might consult this book.

While this is among the longest commentaries on 1–3 John, opinion will vary on whether it is also among the best. The decisive question is: for what purpose?

If the ideal is breaking new ground with innovative “critical” theories, this work is not at the top of the list. If however one seeks resources for a grasp of these epistles that is faithful to the original writer's likely meaning, Schuchard has produced a valuable work indeed. There is plenty of data provided to help readers make up their own minds about disputed questions. Schuchard's own proposed solutions are generally reasonable and clearly formulated.

I especially appreciate the commentary's openness to theological and pastoral dimensions of the text's message, matters that can be overlooked in an exegetical commentary. This feature (along with others already

suggests that the commentary will prove particularly valuable to seminary students seeking to get a feel for these epistles' message in light of ongoing scholarly discussion. Working pastors with aspirations to highlight God, Christ, and the gospel in their preaching will likewise find this to be a go-to homiletical resource for preaching from these epistles.

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