



REGENT'S REVIEWS

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Editorial

It seems to me that also every UK theological establishment is now engaged in work that seeks to bring theology into conversation with public and political life. While this is not a new area for theology, there does seem to be a new demand and a new confidence amongst theologians to contribute to, and also shape, public conversation and political policy (one prominent example might be Philip Blond's *Red Tory* which is partly behind the Cameron 'Big Society' idea). Now this might in part be out of desire to show that theology has some 'use' in public life, especially as universities are deciding which departments will face the biggest cuts, but I think it is more generally a renewed confidence in theology to have something to say, that theology not only speaks to the church, but also to the world. I draw attention to this because in this edition of *Regent's Reviews* there is a major review of Luke Bretherton's *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*. Bretherton, a Senior Lecturer and Convenor of the Faith and Public Policy Forum at King's College London, is a new and already influential voice in this area.

Other books reviewed in this issue range from Stanley Hauerwas' theological memoir, *Hannah's Child*, to Lucy Moore's sequel to *Messy Church*, Ernst Käsemann, *On Being a Disciple* and Dominic Erdozain on sport and Victorian religion. So something for everyone.

Andy Goodliff
Editor

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Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (London: SCM, 2010), xii and 288pp.

When this book dropped through my letter box I was part-way through re-reading a novel (ironically, by Anthony Trollope) – the novel remains unfinished. It is rare for me to be asked to review a book which proves virtually impossible to put down: this book is such, indeed, I don't think I have ever read anything quite like it.

Hauerwas insists that this is a theological memoir rather than an autobiography, avoiding the 'then I did that... and after that I wrote this' format (p.285) – but it would be hard to think of a book that was more personally revealing. And it would be similarly hard to imagine a book that was simultaneously so delightful and so difficult to read. It is difficult, not in the sense of being badly written – it is beautifully written and never fails to engage, even when it is giving accounts of North American scholars of whom I have no knowledge – it is difficult rather in the sense of being so painfully moving. Hauerwas is disarmingly and shockingly honest in all that is here recalled: honest concerning his friendships, his agreements and disagreements with those who have touched his life; honest concerning the sometimes regrettable politics of university life; honest, most movingly, concerning the mental illness of Anne, his first wife; honest, quite ruthlessly, concerning himself and his struggles to name himself a Christian.

For those who are critical of Hauerwas' work this account may well reinforce their prejudices regarding the unsystematic nature of his work (unsystematic, that is, in one rather limited and predictable sense of the term): this memoir recalls how his thinking has developed and been shaped through friendships, contexts, and conflicts. For those, like me, who have been deeply

affected and challenged by Hauerwas' work (even in disagreement) this account identifies its connectedness and continuity – a continuity that can only be narrated since it is the story of a tenacious life which would be 'unintelligible if the God we Christians worship does not exist' (p.x).

It is the responsibility of a good review to describe the work in question – but to do so in this case would be both to detract from the joy of reading this memoir and also to belittle it by inadequate (because impersonal) summary. But read this book and you will learn much about the life of a Texan bricklayer. Read this book and (from a British perspective) you will learn something of the rather different structures of North American academic life. Read this book and you will be introduced to a host of theological thinkers, some recognisable and some unknown, but you will encounter them in the context of friendship and surprising (and sometimes disturbing) revelations. Read this book and you will gain some insight into what it means to live with someone deeply disturbed through bi-polarity. Read this book and you will discover why friendship, which can only come to us as gift, is truly a virtue. Read this book and you will be awakened again to the truth that the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ *is* the grain of the universe.

This book, then, endorses the very essence of Hauerwas' theological contribution, that we are storied people whose stories only make sense in the light of the story of God which is the story of Israel and of Jesus Christ. Stanley Hauerwas, as 'remembered' within these pages, is a generous gift of the generous God, challenging the aridity of pompous liberalism. Whatever else you do this year, buy this book and read it – and if you don't 'get it', ask yourself some serious and

searching questions as to why you don't 'get it'.

*John E. Colwell
Budleigh Salterton, Devon.*

John Weaver, *Christianity and Science* (London: SCM, 2010)

This volume in the 'SCM Core Text' series provides a very helpful overview of a number of key areas in the debate about the relationship between Christianity and science. It begins with a discussion of the relationship between science and theology, which leads to a discussion of how the Bible should be read and interpreted, especially in relation to the questions raised by science. It then covers five areas in which both science and theology are engaged in a search for understanding: cosmology and the origin of the universe; the natural world and the evolution of life; the mind-brain debate and the nature of personhood; the genetic modification and manipulation of plant, animal and human life; and the environmental crisis. The final chapter explores the implications of what has been discussed for our understanding of God and God's activity in the world. It includes a good discussion of suffering and 'natural evil'.

The author, who is Principal of South Wales Baptist College, sets out the purpose of the book in these terms, 'It is to present a dialogue between science and theology in which the role of the creator becomes increasingly clear in God's transcendence, immanence and self-limiting love. Modern science has revived the old design argument of natural theology (Thomas Aquinas), and has given it new teeth. It presents us with an understanding of the universe that includes a beginning and an end. It also demonstrates a universe that has a 'fine-tuning' which is suggestive of purpose. From these two features is developed the anthropic principle, which proposes that

the conditions of human life are written into the very fabric of the universe' (p.24). It achieves this purpose in good measure.

Inevitably the author of a survey like this which deals with several major areas of debate has to be selective in the scholars whose work is discussed and is limited in the depth of treatment that can be given of major issues. On the whole John Weaver gives a fair reflection of the debates in the areas covered and provides the reader with enough depth to have a basis for following up the debate further with the help of the bibliographies and footnotes.

There are three things which I would have included in a book like this in addition to what is there. The first is the work of Simon Conway Morris on convergence in evolution and the implications of this for our understanding of evolution (See his book *Life's Solutions: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*, CUP, 2003). It suggests the evolution is a far less random and more directional process than is generally believed. His arguments are gaining adherents (see S. Conway Morris (ed.), *The Deep Structure of Biology*, Templeton, 2008).

Secondly there is the concept of 'emergent properties' which are radically new properties which come into existence as a system increases in complexity (see P. Clayton & P. Davies (eds.) *The Re-emergence of Emergence*, OUP, 2006). They cannot be predicted from, or reduced to, the properties that exist at a lower level of complexity. Some scholars argue that this provides a helpful approach to understanding the appearance of self-consciousness and the brain-mind debate.

Finally, the discussion of natural theology, which is quite brief, would be strengthened by interaction with Alister McGrath's proposal for a new form of natural theology in *The Open Secret: A*

New Vision for Natural Theology,
(Blackwell, 2008).

One of the strengths of John Weaver's book compared with other similar texts is that there is firmer rooting in the Bible with more discussion of relevant biblical material. It is certainly a book which should be on the 'required reading' lists of courses on Christianity and science and it will provide anyone interested in that area with a good introduction to it.

Ernest Lucas
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Angus Paddison, *Scripture: A Very Theological Proposal*, (London: T & T Clark, 2009)

This book, which consists of five related but relatively self-contained essays, makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of literature exploring theological approaches to biblical interpretation. Although Paddison provides examples of the kind of interpretative work that he believes necessary in the light of Christian belief (and is the author of a major study of 1 Thessalonians), the focus here is on how scripture and its interpretation are themselves to be understood in theological perspective.

The opening essay lays out the fundamental dogmatic convictions that undergird Paddison's proposal. To affirm that the biblical texts are Scripture is to attest to their location within the gracious and reconciling self-revelation of God and, furthermore, within the worship and ongoing practices of the church. Those familiar with the work of John Webster and his important book, *Holy Scripture*, will be familiar with the first claim, but Paddison, drawing on the work of P. T. Forsyth as a dialogue partner is keen to extend claims about Scripture's overall place in the divine economy to claims

about its specific place and time in the life of Christian community and its worship.

The implications of this account of a theology of Scripture are then spelt out in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 tackles the thorny issue of how the Bible is used in relation to ethics. Paddison strikes at the heart of standard treatments which operate on the assumption that the meaning of the biblical texts can be understood in isolation from questions about the identity and obedience of the reading community. Here the conversation partner is, perhaps inevitably, John Howard Yoder, whose own account of the relation between the Bible and ethics makes it clear why the common language of 'using' Scripture to make ethical decisions is, from a theological point of view, so problematic. Chapter 3 turns our attention to the relationship between Scripture and doctrine and considers how a reading of John's gospel from a theological standpoint might serve to challenge recent trends in Christological thinking. Chapter 4 moves on to Scripture and preaching, where John Calvin offers us an example of the ways that preaching, when rightly understood, must take its cue from core convictions about the resurrection of Jesus and his ongoing, indestructible presence in the life of the church. Finally, we are offered reflections on the place of Scripture and scriptural interpretation within the University. Here Paddison calls for a 'de-centred' university, even a secular one, whose central responsibility is the preservation of space for the articulation and discussion of our most deep-seated differences.

This is not an easy book to read. Anyone looking for an introduction to the theological interpretation of Scripture would do well to look elsewhere. But there are lots of hidden gems here and different essays will

appeal to readers with different interests. At the heart of Paddison's proposal is a quite proper refusal to divorce notions of Scripture that relate it to divine agency from notions that dwell on what Telford Work calls the 'humanity of churchly biblical interpretation'. With this refusal, and the consequent recognition that interpretation demands of the church the virtues of patience, listening and rightly handling conflict, I wholeheartedly agree. I have remaining questions about the very tight ecclesial location that Paddison suggests is the only true context for interpretative work, and I look forward to ongoing conversations with the author (earlier stages of which are mentioned on p.21, n.98). For now, I commend Paddison's very theological proposal to all who wish to see how good theological thinking about the church's thinking about the Bible might help us to renew a core practice of Christian identity, faith and obedience.

Sean Winter
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Melbourne.

Samuel Wells and Ben Quash (ed.),
***Introducing Christian Ethics* (Oxford:**
Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)

Samuel Wells (ed.), *Christian Ethics:*
***An Introductory Reader* (Oxford:**
Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)

Samuel Wells and Ben Quash have served the student of Christian ethics well by providing two rich ground-breaking volumes that seek to explore Christian ethics from three perspectives: universal, subversive and ecclesial. The companion *Reader* offers a range of texts that support the analysis of *Introducing Christian Ethics* making cross referencing between the two volumes particularly easy. The Universal category reflects an enlightenment world view, the subversive category draws on the liberation and

feminist hermeneutic of suspicion exposing the weaknesses in predominantly western male theologies. Finally ecclesial ethics draws on a range of authors from MacIntyre and Milbank to Yoder and Hauerwas whose common characteristic is their attraction to virtue ethics and their recognition that a key player in moral formation is the Church.

The success of this publication and of the ecclesial ethics movement from which it comes is significant. First, it is opening up the space for many more conservative schools of theology to engage with the world of Christian Ethics. This re-awakening is desperately needed if evangelical Christianity is to be liberated from right wing fundamentalism. Second the notion of ecclesial ethics building on the virtue ethics of post liberal theologians is forging unusual alliances across historic confessional lines with Roman Catholic and Anabaptist perspectives finding some common ground. Third, it is challenging mainstream philosophers and theologians to contemplate a significant paradigm shift in the way contemporary Christian ethics is approached.

My criticism however would be that the writings selected in the reader lack a sufficiently critical range of perspectives. The ecclesial section especially does not invite serious engagement with academics who regard ecclesial ethics to be insular and intellectually unsatisfactory. The result is a reader where the contributors are selected and their writings used to defend the position of the editors without giving space to serious critical reflection on that position.

It is surely something of an own goal for the editors since on the one hand they argue that what is needed is an approach to Christian ethics which does not assume the old polarisations of the Enlightenment world view, in which the intellectual and spiritual, the public

and private are constantly placed in opposition to one another, yet on the other hand they do not engage in a serious way with the critics of ecclesial ethics so that the gulf that divides these perspectives, such as church versus world, or experience versus abstract ideas is further polarised.

So whilst welcoming the contribution of Wells and Quash, I would, for the reasons just stated, have appreciated an approach in which the editors invited a more robust critical dialogue on the topic of Christian ethics. By drawing on a wider range of philosophers and theologians the much repeated and serious objections to ecclesial ethics as being naive and sectarian could have been either clearly substantiated or refuted. I think it would be to the advantage of Wells, Quash and others in the ecclesial ethics camp to facilitate this debate since they have nothing to lose and everything to gain from such an open and critical dialogue.

Myra Blyth

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Steven Harmon, *Ecumenism Means You, Too: Ordinary Christians and the Quest for Christian Unity* (Eugene: Cascade, 2010)

This book tries from the outset to buck the trend and present ecumenism as earthy, populist and accessible. That is no mean feat and what is even more remarkable is that it sets about this task in a way that does not dumb down the subject matter. On the contrary it is deeply reflective and well supported by an appendix that points the reader to important primary and secondary sources for further study.

I warm to this unique energetic presentation of the ecumenical vision and would recommend it to students of theology and to those in ministerial training as a great accessible primer.

This book –in the words of the Harmon (a Baptist and member of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission) – “invokes the theological dimensions of U2's songs when they cast artistic light on various aspects of the quest for Christian Unity”. This is an inspired and inspiring quest. It brings the politics of Ireland –the homeland of the band members- and the fragmented state of the church into the spotlight of their song lyrics and offers a critique of both against the narrative of Jesus. This is an exciting dialogue between theology and popular culture which relocates ecumenism in the real world rather than in some ecclesiastical backwater.

The U2 vision of unity is not a vision of ecclesial *koinonia*, but it is for the author analogous to that and he chooses to explore and exploit that analogy. The entire book is framed around the lyrics of the song “One”. It begins, as the song title anticipates, by exploring the vision and history of the ecumenical movement and the divisions which it seeks to heal; it then considers a theology of ecumenism that recognises the interdependency of the different parts of the universal church and the ecumenical imperative arising from that which calls on churches to seek each other out rather than hide away. It presents an action plan for ecumenism rooted in grass roots activism and then complements this with a postlude that cautions against impatience and calls forth perseverance. The eschatological goal which ecumenism anticipates is clearly presented and experienced in the development of the author's argument. Unity is now but not yet. It will be fully realised in times and conditions not yet imagined.

The missing chapter in my opinion is a robust working out of ecumenism in the world. Such a perspective would ironically have brought the reader closer to the actual

ecumenism of the band but this is largely sidelined in preference for the Unity of the Church. In doing so the book not only sells short the vision of the band, but it loses the opportunity to expand and develop the vision of a wider ecumenism. The unity of the world and the unity of the church are two sides of the same coin, had they been more equally represented in this book then its significant value would have been even further enhanced.

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Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 1906-1945 Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance*, Trans: Isabel Best (London: T&T Clark, 2010)

Ancient biblical wisdom tells us that 'of making of many books there is no end.' These perceptive words found in the book of Ecclesiastes may have been written by someone granted a prophetic glimpse of the publishing industry that now surrounds Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Every year there is fresh commentary written on the compelling life and work of this German pastor / theologian. But while numerous books revisit his theology, there have been very few biographies written on this 20th century martyr. This year however two new life-histories have been published, this work by Ferdinand Schlingensiepen and another by Eric Metaxas, *Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Thomas Nelson: 2010).

In hardback both biographies cost between £12-15, but while Dr Schlingensiepen has produced the shorter work at 439 pages, of the two new arrivals on the shelves it is certainly the more perceptive and detailed study. Like singers covering a Beatle's song, any biographer of Bonhoeffer faces the inevitable comparison to the epic 'original' story told by Bonhoeffer's friend Eberhard Bethge, first published in English in 1970 and revised by Fortress

Press 2000. This 1048 page work will remain the standard text for those serious to engage with Bonhoeffer's life, but from the beginning Bethge himself acknowledged that a more concise book was needed. Indeed over 40 years ago Bethge specifically asked Dr Schlingensiepen to undertake such a work and finally we have the excellent fruit of that labour: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906-1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance*.

In many ways the twelve chapters of this book follow the well-known chronology of Bonhoeffer's life. So while Schlingensiepen's subtitle eschews the existential epochs detected previously by Bethge, 'Theologian, Christian, Man for our Times' in favour of some recurring motifs that run throughout Bonhoeffer's life, still we are treated to a clear exposition of the man himself. With a fluid and persuasive style (that must owe as much to an excellent translation as to the original German text) the book charts events from Bonhoeffer's birth into a strong and privileged upper middle class family, progresses through his decisions to study theology, his travels abroad, his work as a pastor and educator for the Confessing Church and finally traces his time as someone engaged in the German resistance hoping to overthrow Hitler and the Nazi regime. The final chapters recount his months in prison and the final week being moved from Buchenwald to the place of his execution in Flossenbürg on 9th April 1945.

Throughout the book the facts of Bonhoeffer's life and their interpretation are handled with theological dexterity, personal empathy and a political perception that reveals the author's lifetime spent engaged with his subject. Without labouring the point, Schlingensiepen repeatedly returns to the nature of Bonhoeffer's decision

making, particularly concerning his theological convictions and shows how this process is a core motif in understanding the choices made by this 'martyr, thinker and man of resistance.' In doing this the reader is taken beyond the simple factual chronology and immersed in a biography which manages to be simultaneously wider in scope than might have been expected and yet at the same time is distinctly more intimate.

With a broader brush he makes insightful use of new materials, including recently opened archives from the Confessing Church, the Resistance Movement and documents from the Nazi regime to broaden the reader's understanding of the complexities of German history from this time and its place in world events. Through his treatment of Bonhoeffer's travels and friendships with Karl Barth, Willem Visser't Hooft and Bishop George Bell, among others, we get both a vivid picture of the blossoming ecumenical movement and glimpses of the potential it might yet fulfil.

Yet with this comes the fine detail of a more humane Bonhoeffer than readers may have encountered before. Without becoming mawkish Schlingensiepen draws from the private correspondence that passed between Bonhoeffer and his fiancée Maria von Wedemeyer. We discover how this spirited woman half his age had much to teach the older lecturer about life: we see a master theologian struggling to discern the meaning of her letters with more dedication than he might have given a gospel pericope or doctoral dissertation. It is a refreshingly emotional portrait of Bonhoeffer that emerges here, balancing the restrained and measured characteristics that he had learned from his early family life.

Like all biographies of Bonhoeffer the reader cannot but turn the final page and ponder the 'what ifs' of human history. How might his life, theology in

the 20th century and the Church of Jesus Christ today be different had Bonhoeffer survived until the Allies liberated Flossenbürg a few weeks later? But Bonhoeffer himself would have shunned such wishful and fanciful thinking: his search was for the concrete word for the moment, 'who is the Christ for us today?' Schlingensiepen's biography deftly reveals the theological, political and personal urgency of a man on such a quest and it does so while paying great attention to the context in which he lived. His book will be both an invaluable resource to the libraries of scholars and a popular addition to the shelves readers with a more general interest. It deserves to be both widely and deeply read.

Craig Gardiner
Calvary Baptist Church, Cardiff

Jürgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness, Arise! God's Future for Humanity and the Earth* (London: SCM Press, 2010)

When presented with a book of 250 pages which seems to cover such a vast array of topics (Christ, Spirit, Trinity, church, kingdom, suffering, hope, death, resurrection, monotheism, justice, judgement, creation, community, perichoresis, knowledge, God's immanence, science and theology, evolution, biology, ethics, etc.) it might be natural to assume that its author has aimed for breadth and not depth. This would be partly correct in the case of Moltmann's latest work; it does not have the systematic detail of some of his other works. However, this is not to say that the ideas contained within receive only superficial treatment. The discussion is rich and, as ever with Moltmann's work, the topics interact, re-appearing at different stages and developing the overall picture.

The book covers much ground, but this collection of essays and lectures should not be taken as an overview of Moltmann's theology. Most concepts which Moltmann has written about are mentioned, but the focus falls largely on their relation to the four parts of the book: the future of Christianity, the resurrection, the nature of God and 'God in Nature'.

This first part is relatively short, with a discussion of the predicament of the Church post-Christendom. Moltmann analyses its structures and considers the place of hope for God's kingdom in the Church's current context. The second part focuses on the resurrection of Christ and the hoped-for resurrection of humanity and all creation. Moltmann wishes to draw out the effect of this belief on the present: hope for the resurrection speaks of life, gives courage and starts the struggle against death.

The third part is entitled 'God is Righteousness and Justice' and can be seen to contain two significant threads. One deals with themes around the Trinity (monotheism, perichoresis and openness to creation), continuing Moltmann's interest in God as eternal community and vulnerable companion to the world. The other thread concerns God's righteousness, particularly in judgement, and claims that this judgement brings victory for all, raising up victims and putting right perpetrators. The fourth and final part centres on God's involvement with the natural world. Here Moltmann attempts to build bridges between science and Christianity, and to help this partnership inform a healthy relationship between humanity and the world around it.

There seem to be no major departures from recent works, or ventures into completely different theological themes. Consequently there is the repetition of old ideas, but the feeling of having 'seen this before' may well be confronted by a broader view or a finer

detail that adds fresh perspective and subtle refinement to previous arguments, stimulating the reader's ongoing thought on these topics. It would have been good to see Moltmann engaging more with the new ideas that have emerged from the theological community in the last 10 years, although this is not entirely absent. That said, however much his previous work obviously forms the core of this book, Moltmann is not content to simply wheel out and reformat old work for new audiences. This book demonstrates persistent grappling with the subject matter, with the result that he continues to be an active and courageous thinker with a clear desire to communicate, provoke and explore.

In conclusion, those who have hungrily read everything available of Moltmann's work will almost certainly enjoy the repetition of familiar concepts mixed with new expressions and perspectives. Those whose experience of Moltmann is positive but limited to a book such as *The Crucified God* will find this contribution helpful to facilitate a re-engagement with his thinking. For those who have avoided or simply missed Moltmann's work, this volume offers the scope and brevity to draw the reader into conversation with his wealth of ideas and experience.

Ben Dare
South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff

George Newlands and Allen Smith, *The Hospitable God, The Transformative Dream* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 251pp.

I was really looking forward to reading this book as hospitality is a theme I am very much attracted to. Understanding God as hospitable and reframing our faith in the context of hospitality is compelling in a world that seems increasingly hostile to the stranger.

Moreover the cover which depicts two young children in an IDP camp in Sudan was intriguing and disturbing.

There are many superb insights in this book. The authors declare that hospitality is costly – on the second page there is a health warning in capital letters, ‘HOSPITALITY MAY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH’ (p.4). They warn us that just talking (and presumably writing!) about hospitality will not necessarily make us more hospitable. It is a hard test and involves developing certain ‘mindsets, habits and character’ (p.5).

They argue that it is particularly hospitality according to the Christian faith that will lead to human flourishing. They link hospitality to a theology of risk – I like that and I think that insight could have had a lot more reflection and elaboration. What risks might our theology undergo if we practised hospitality more intentionally? How would our theology look and sound; and would it smell and taste different? Later in the book the authors discuss a transcultural theology as a theology of hospitality – this involves inviting others into our own environment and receiving from them. Imagine how our theology might be transformed if we could truly do this and practise reciprocal hospitality. The link between hospitality and human rights is an interesting one although whose human rights and whose hospitality could invite further investigation. The affirmation that hospitality in a Christian perspective can never be abstract is vital and the example of a congregation who struggled to practise hospitality was welcome to strengthen and elaborate the discussion.

The book surveys hospitality in different ages, cultures and traditions. The authors draw on a wide range of literature and writers to create a broad canvas and wide framework for hospitality as it is to be practised within the Christian tradition. It looks at different approaches to hospitality,

considers the latest literature and discusses what it means to be hospitable church – both as a local church and more widely. The link of hospitality to discipleship is an important one. They do not deny the ‘ambiguous record of the churches in living out concrete hospitality’ (p.203). They consider the idea that God is FOR hospitality and not that God IS hospitality; God is hospitable in himself and that ultimate hospitality remains a mystery. Again these ideas could have had further elaboration.

There is much to commend this book especially its emphasis on the reframing of theology through the lens of unconditional hospitality, its readiness to confront and deal with contemporary issues and the authors’ desire to place hospitality within the widest possible context of our present social, economic and political reality. I did not find it an easy read but this is not to diminish its worth. There are several typos (I found at least 10) and in one instance a paragraph repeated verbatim 60pp apart (p.136 and p.193). I am still reflecting on the significance of the cover – is it a tug at the heartstrings or a genuine effort to place hospitality in a larger context embracing justice and future hope? There is a comprehensive bibliography and the emphasis on hospitality as a call to Christ-like discipleship is one I wholeheartedly affirm.

Cathy Ross
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Joel Lawrence, *Bonhoeffer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2010)

When I first received this book, I imagined it would be in the vein of the Oxford *Very Short Introduction* series – a concise introduction to Bonhoeffer for those who have never really

encountered him, but think they may like to. I have encountered Bonhoeffer, and I am pleased to say that this book was very helpful.

Rather than being an introduction for the beginner, this book is indeed more of a 'guide for the perplexed', a guide for those who have encountered Bonhoeffer, perhaps read some of his work, and want a broader picture of the man and the theology. Due to the nature of Bonhoeffer's life in an extraordinary time and place, and the fact that much of his theological work was published posthumously and derived from notes, lectures and letters rather than book manuscripts, it can be difficult to piece together the flow and evolution of ideas in his work.

What this book does brilliantly is provide a chronological guide to the progression of Bonhoeffer's ideas, arranged by theme. Thus, each chapter provides a kind of walk-through of Bonhoeffer's thoughts on a particular theological theme or area, following it through his various works over time, including some of his lectures and other less commonly explored works. The result of this approach for the reader is a much fuller understanding of the work of Bonhoeffer as a whole, and some of the interplay between his various ideas.

Rather than being an introduction for the beginner, then, *Bonhoeffer: A Guide for the Perplexed* is perhaps better suited to the theology student, or to the lay-person who has already read a bit about Bonhoeffer – or even a little of his own work – and seeks a deeper understanding of how to fit everything together. This is by no means a book for experts, but for anyone still perplexed by Bonhoeffer after their first few encounters, this is a truly indispensable little book.

Ashley Beck
King's College London

Christopher J. Voke, *Creation at Worship: Ecology, Creation and Christian Worship* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2009)

With a rapidly changing landscape, quite literally, unfolding before us both in terms of the physical world and human concern for the environment, Chris Voke has produced a timely and thoughtful book. His reflections on the crying need to recover the doctrine of creation in worship, along with greater attentiveness to the God who creates and redeems, sustains and progresses the natural world, are well argued. He offers a pertinent (and impertinent) challenge to the church to put its house in order – and to become more liturgically astute as it encompasses the whole created order in its worshipping life. He offers an overview of how different Christian traditions have dealt with nature, ranging from the cosmic view of salvation celebrated by the Orthodox liturgy through to the rather more ambivalent perspective of churches in the reformed traditions who have usually emphasised humanity's domination over sin-ridden nature rather than the glad stewardship of creation that God made and saw that it was good.

He rightly argues that our understanding of God and our following of Christ is shaped by the worship event. He argues for a rediscovery of theological structure to our worship services, a structure that should reflect the whole story of salvation from creation to redemption to eschaton. The words we use, the patterning of our services, the things we do together have meaning for us, and shape us. His plea, then, is that 'in public worship the vision of the triune God as the creator, recognition of the createdness and dependence of human beings upon God, and a stress on responsibility towards the world in which the Creator has

placed us, along with its value and destiny, are essential parts of the story told in Christian public worship' (p.128). He explores at some depth the essential work of Christ 'in whom all things in heaven and earth were created' arguing that in the two natures of Christ we have 'the ultimate means of bringing creation and redemption together and is therefore the model of how that same relationship is to be expressed within corporate worship' (p.131).

The centrality of Christ, through whom we offer our worship of God, is the plumbline by which some contemporary ecological liturgies are assessed and found wanting. He rings the alarm bells when songs and prayers do not distinguish between the Creator and the created order, becoming essentially pantheistic. He explores the importance and use of metaphor in helping us to encounter and engage with creation; and importantly in our disciplined response to the needs of the world.

Voke's study of the power of blessing is one of the strongest parts of the book which I found very helpful. 'In liturgical blessing a healthy transition is made from the context of worship to the created world in which everyone lives in the providential presence and under the good hand of God' (p.155). A rediscovery of that gift and grace in our communities and in the world becomes a means of connection not only with disciples, but with those on the road to faith. Voke argues persuasively for its missional power. He also offers practical guidance as to how creation can be remembered and held, celebrated over and lamented with in our services.

I enjoyed this book very much. It felt a little as if its roots were in a doctoral thesis. So its theological journey is detailed and thought-provoking and a degree of theological nous would be helpful in engaging with it. Its practical outworking is helpful for all Ministers and those who shape the worship of our

churches. It is a wake up call to us, and I highly commend it.

Sian Murray-Williams
Bristol Baptist College

David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor (eds.), *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010)

With a brand new commentary series seeming to appear almost every day, it is perhaps appropriate that a new lectionary series is also launched. This series, when it is completed later in 2011, will contain twelve volumes of reflections on lectionary passages. The added dimension of this series is each biblical text is approached from four different perspectives – theological, pastoral, exegetical and homiletical – providing those tasked with preaching with more than enough stimulus in their preparation. The series lives up to its name *Feasting on the Word*. This reader has found the pastoral and homiletical the most helpful in sermon preparation. With the editors and the publishers being American, some of the reflections do not always translate to a British and European context, but with the likes of William Willimon, Beverly Gaventa, Bryan Spinks, Donald McKim, Eberhard Busch, Scott Bader-Saye and Terence Fretheim among the contributors, there is much to inspire good preaching.

For those who follow the lectionary, this is a series well-worth collecting, although with twelve volumes at some cost. For those who are not convinced by the lectionary this is a series still worth considering as so much of the bible is here considered.

As this reader enters pastoral ministry I am well aware of the need to preach well, enabling the congregation to feast on God's word to nourish faith

and faithful living. This series I am sure will assist in that task.

*Andy Goodliff
Belle Vue Baptist Church
Southend-on-Sea*

Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2: Ideas for Discipling a Christ-Centred Community* (Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008)

Lucy Moore, *All-Age Worship* (Bible Reading Fellowship, 2010)

Margaret Withers, *Local Church, Local School: Practical and creative ways for churches to serve local primary schools* (Bible Reading Fellowship, 2010)

In recent years the Bible Reading Fellowship have been publishing some fantastic resources for churches to engage with children and families in worship. At the forefront of this has been Lucy Moore, who has spearheaded the phenomena that is 'Messy Church'. A previous book introduced Messy Church to a wider audience. *Messy Church 2* continues with a new set of ideas for an all-age and creative way of being church for the unchurched, but also with a desire to explore what 'Messy Discipleship' might look like. (If you are wanting an introduction to Messy Church, it is best to get a copy of the first book, as *Messy Church 2* is written to readers who know what Messy Church is and are already running events.) What I found especially interesting about this sequel is a commitment to seeing how Messy Church might also encourage discipleship at home, recognising that a couple of hours a month is not enough to sustain discipleship (and neither is a couple of hours a week!). Messy Church is not the only future of the church, (and Moore in no way claims this), but it does seem to offer an excellent way of engaging with families, as a means of exploring the bible and the Christian life and left me wanting to give it a try.

All-Age Worship is a fantastic introduction to how to plan and prepare all-age services. All-age or family services often get a bad reputation and here Lucy Moore seeks to overcome this view and demonstrate, both the importance of all-age worship and how it can be done well in practice. This is the strength of the book: it's practical. The two most helpful chapters are on some basic rules of thumb (keep it simple, uses senses and emotions, use story, include participation, use invitation) and how to plan. Every chapter includes stories and examples. Creating space for the whole church to gather to worship for this reviewer is not an optional extra, but is integral to being church, and as Moore shows, this does not mean services which only cater for children. Reading this book will hopefully open up the possibility of how all-age worship might enrich a whole congregation and provide encouragement to those who either struggle with all-age or are looking for help.

Local Church, Local School is almost like a textbook for everything a church might need to know in order to engage with their local primary school. The book has a definite Church of England slant, but there is much that is useful here, for example, in terms of how churches might welcome schools on visits. If you are a church that has never built a relationship with a local primary school apart from perhaps the odd assembly, this book is a fantastic place to start. For churches that already have good relationships this book will feel fairly basic.

*Andy Goodliff
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Helen Cameron, *Resourcing Mission: Practical Theology for Changing Churches* (London: SCM, 2010), xii and 154pp.

It is a pleasure to be able to commend this engaging volume from a good friend and colleague Dr Helen Cameron, until recently the Director of the Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology at Ripon College Cuddesdon, and a Visiting Fellow of the Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent's. Helen has now taken up the post of Director of Public Affairs for her own denomination the Salvation Army. Helen Cameron is trained both as a theologian and as a social scientist and brings insights from both disciplines to bear in her analysis of and reflections on contemporary church life in Britain.

It is worth buying the book for the opening chapter alone in which she asks the question 'How can Theology be Practical?' As a key member of the British and Irish Association for Practical Theology, she is well placed to offer an answer. In this chapter Cameron helpfully introduces the pastoral cycle and the discipline of theological reflection as a tool for thinking about church life, not just for the professional Christian leader but for congregational use as well.

Another original contribution of this book is her development of a new typology for discussing current patterns of church life in Britain in which, alongside the traditional 'parish' and 'gathered' church models, she offers three further types which she labels, 'small group', 'third place' and 'magnet' churches respectively. Cameron follows sociologist of religion Grace Davie in suggesting that in our society the parish model is culturally most like that of the public utility, but in an age of deregulation and privatization, certainly for the younger adults in society, she suggests that the model of a private utility is perhaps more appropriate. We are all consumers now.

Gathered churches operate as voluntary associations and as Cameron notes such patterns have struggled to survive after their heyday in the nineteenth century, requiring a degree of personal involvement which twenty first century people seem reluctant to offer. As another colleague, Paul Fiddes, has shown, historically this was rooted in a theology of covenant, but today there is a question mark over the strong mutual commitment such models require, together with significant questions about the cost effective deployment of resources.

Small groups have a long history and have taken various forms in church life, from base ecclesial communities in Latin America to house groups and cell church in the UK. Cameron argues these may be compared to book groups and party plans which may represent secular parallels. I would add that they also reflect the increasing significance of the private home in current society (what some might term the B & Q tendency!) compared with the energy given to creating and running institutions in Victorian society.

What Helen Cameron designates as the 'third-place' model is the church which meets in secular spaces such as coffee shops, garden centres and pubs, reflecting the diverse networks of many people today. She argues that this form is deeply committed to enculturation by using a contemporary cultural form to give 'Fresh Expression' to what it means to be church.

The final model is that suggested by the influence of parental choice of schooling, what Cameron designates as the 'magnet church', whose common feature is a middle class ethos reflecting professional or managerial parents with school age children. As the label suggests such churches are able to attract people from quite a wide area and this is by no means confined to the city or the

suburbs. They are to be found in market towns, and more rarely in smaller settlements within reach of larger populations. Such large churches are frequently characterized by their active children and youth programmes and by a professional staff team; although volunteers are important they are often coordinated and organized by paid staff.

Of course she recognizes that these forms are not all mutually exclusive and various hybrids develop, and I suggest that any such models are likely to need at least some light touch organization which may prove to be variations of the associational model for a post institutional culture. But the point to underline in relation to these latter three models is that they do not depend on previous patterns of church life and can be adopted by both parish and gathered churches. They are attempts to develop culturally relevant patterns of church for the 21st century.

In the main body of the book Helen Cameron suggests themes which congregations might like to explore using the methodology outlined in the first chapter and in the light of the models developed in the second. These include the use of time, money and buildings and patterns of leadership. All of this illustrates her key contention that congregations can learn to think theologically about their context, and that through such a process they can be alert to the cultural forms which shape their patterns of life, and therefore ask crucial questions about the deployment of their resources in participating in the mission of God.

An engaging and accessible book – to be read and used.

*Nicholas Wood
Regent's Park College, Oxford*

Paul W. Goodliff, *Ministry, Sacrament and Representation: Ministry and Ordination in Contemporary Baptist Theology, and the Rise of Sacramentalism* (Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Volume 2; Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2010), pp. x and 239pp.

The demands of local church ministry often mean that with all the time taken up with 'doing' ministry, there is little time to stop and reflect on what we are doing and why. When we do carve out that time, this is a book worth reading and the time invested will help think through again some of the central issues of ministry.

Written initially as a DMin thesis for King's College, London, the book centres on some empirical research that Paul Goodliff undertook, involving the invitation of every Baptist minister to participate in a survey, followed by a series of interviews with College Principals and other Baptist Ministers, followed by a further questionnaire. The book contains in appendices the results of this research. In the main body of the text Goodliff analysis and reflects on the empirical data and offers historical and theological perspectives through which to understand the development in attitudes he discovered.

The main development that Goodliff observes is what he describes as 'a sacramental turn'. The evidence for this is the responses to the initial survey and later questionnaire when held against the various Baptist documents of recent decades. Whereas the formal documents, Goodliff suggests, do not hold any place for a sacramental view of ordination, a significant number of those who responded understood their ordination in this way. A significant number of others did not, and Goodliff also recognises that there is a spectrum within a sacramental understanding, but

the evidence certainly supports the view that there has been a development of thinking among some ministers in the last two decades. Goodliff traces this influence to the Colleges and those who have had significant input into the theological development of recent generations of ministers, and in particular he names Nigel Wright, John Colwell and Paul Fiddes.

As a piece of research it is both convincing and important. Those who completed the surveys and those who looked at them but never sent one off will be interested to know the results, and the way that the denomination is changing. But the book offers many other insights as well as the empirical data.

Goodliff locates the change in a historical context, and in so doing traces the development of thinking about 'ministry' in the latter half of the twentieth century. Although Ian Randall's *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, covers some of this material the work here is focussed specifically on the question of ministry, engages in much more of the twists and turns of the debate and the influences on the debate and also brings the narrative more up to date. So chapters 3 and 4, some fifty pages, offer an excellent introduction to Baptist thinking on ministry, through an exploration of recent history. For some of us, who have sat more on the edge of that history in recent decades, it is an insightful account into what was happening around us.

Later Goodliff offers some more theological reflection on the change in attitude within the context of wider influences within theology and culture. In particular he discusses the development of Evangelicalism, particularly broad or open evangelicalism, the influence of charismatic renewal and the increasing participation in the ecumenical movement. All this is set within the post-liberal, or post-conservative aspects of more general post-modern developments.

Again, not only does this chapter offer added thinking into why there might have been this 'sacramental turn', it also offers insight more generally into developments in theology, church and ministry. Sometimes there are occasions when we might look back aware we have changed somewhat, but not quite sure how it happened or what the implications might be. Goodliff here helps us have a better grasp of where we are today and so how we might build for the future.

Finally, in what is mainly an addition to the DMin, Goodliff offers some wider reflections on both the nature of ministry and the process of ministerial formation, appealing, in the light of the sacramental turn, which Goodliff himself welcomes, to an idea of ministry which moves beyond ideas of the 'manger' and the 'therapist'. In many ways this is a desire to reclaim something of the tradition of minister as having 'cure of souls', which requires more than a function but a 'way of being'.

Some of the sections are mainly narrative and so more easily accessible. Other sections contain significant theological issues presented in a concentrated way, making it much more demanding reading – but it is based on a doctoral thesis. There are the very occasional mistakes in the book - Goodliff narrates the infamous Christological crisis arising from the 1971 Assembly with Michael Taylor as President of the Union (rather than Gwynne Henton-Davis) – but this is an excellent and helpful piece of work which will be used and quoted and built on for a number of years to come.

Anthony Clarke
Regent's Park College, Oxford

Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 251 pp.

How can Christians engage the political processes in Western liberal democracies? What are the relationships between civil society, the market, the state and the church? These are crucial questions if the church is not to be a willing collaborator with those who want it excluded entirely from the public sphere, and Luke Bretherton has answered those questions in a profound way in this multi-faceted book.

I must declare an interest.

Bretherton was my doctoral supervisor, and I am in his debt for the wise way in which he provided that supervision, while at the same time writing this book, amongst many other responsibilities. Both processes had successful outcomes, and I am grateful.

Bretherton writes as an academic, of course, but one born into a politically active Christian home, and this early experience in a home in West London where Rackmanism was challenged, has, I suspect, profoundly influenced his interests, and shaped his thinking as one of the most astute observers of the relationship between church and politics. He acknowledges as much in the preface. It also shapes the ways in which he works out those relationships in the local context, as broad-based community engagement, and in the national context as he explores the case study of refugee policies.

The opening introduction and the first chapter on faith-based organizations are subtle and erudite sections of his argument that set the scene. In particular, the introduction serves as a portrayal of the landscape of Christian political engagement asking three questions: what are the limits of the state? What are the limits of money? And what are the limits of community? The answers given variously to those questions will see the

church as an agent of social cohesion, or an interest group seeking a share of public money. Here the church becomes a client of the state or a new form of establishment. Or the church is one voice amongst many in a society characterised by multiculturalism, clamouring for that voice to be heard in identity politics. Others construe Christianity as a product to be consumed in the religious marketplace, emphasising it as just another privatized life-style choice. In other words, co-option, competition or commodification. Bretherton wants another response, one that is more congruent with Christianity itself.

Augustine and the City of God loom large throughout the exploration of politics and faith in this book, and following Augustine, Jeremiah 29 is the seminal text, praying for the welfare of the city. The introduction concludes with a survey of other accounts of the basis on which the politics of civil society can be set: the pessimistic account of MacIntyre, critical of modernism per se. Second is the account that sees liberal democracy in decline, such as that espoused by Robert Putnam of the decline in social capital (“bowling alone,”) while the third agrees that the traditional collective sources of meaning are declining, but is optimistic that new large-scale movements are replacing them, fluid, issue-based political alliances. Fourthly, are those who welcome the decline in traditional politics, arguing that the replacement represents a deepening of commitment to democracy itself.

Running alongside these new democratic processes is secularization, and the variants of “secularization theory” are analysed before the argument progresses through the extended case studies that provide the material for local, national and global contexts. However, the intervening section, chapter 1, discusses the shape

of relations between faith-based organisations and the state in a multi-faith society. The voices of Hauerwas, John Paul II and Oliver O'Donovan and his wife, Joan Lockwood are heard, who in various ways argue that the political dimensions of the church qua church are central. The question for them, as for those who belong to Radical Orthodoxy, is what does it mean to be church. Easy pragmatism or a search for 'relevance' should not be allowed to rob the church of its autonomy, or allow the state to set the terms and conditions of entry into the public square. Liberal democracy can be as tyrannical as any other human system, and late modernism in the political guise of a Rawlsian settlement cannot be the defining basis of political engagement for the church. The key stance here should be discrimination about when and where to enter into partnership with the state in order to avoid the co-optation of the church by the state and its instrumentalization for goals inimical to the church's values.

The local context is exemplified by the work of the American Saul Alinsky, and the broad-based community politics that he developed from the 1940s onwards. In this work, Augustine's concept of the *saeculum*, the period between Christ's first and second coming that is ambivalent and open, is the theological partner. Augustine was reacting to Constantinian triumphalism and Donatist separatism, and in his middle way, creating the space for the church to be church in the midst of human society. 'For Augustine, politics in the *saeculum* is about enabling a limited peace that is on the one hand shorn of messianic pretensions but on the other not given over to demonic despair' (p.83). The contemporary exponent of this is Maritain, and this way of avoiding the temptations confronting the church today is outlined by the careful promotion of local politics. Alinsky's approach suggests ways of embodying faithful

witness under present conditions, allowing the '*convivium* of Christians and non-Christians in the same body politic' (Maritain).

The national context takes as its case study, the plight of refugees, and response of the sanctuary movement in the United States. Here Christian cosmopolitanism is an alternative to the protectionism of the nation-state and overly idealised notions of borderless states. The politics of refugees is contested ground, balancing the needs of the citizens of the state with those of refugees. Bretherton argues that the witness of the church in this arena is to be directed to the upholding of the rule of law, and extending that rule to those whose need is greatest.

The third context is the global, and here the case study explores global economic relations, and especially the possibility of faithful witness under conditions of global capitalism, notably the campaign for Fair Trade. This is a small way in which social relations are privileged over commodification of the means of production, and the totalizing influence of modern forms of economic power. This political consumerism that prioritises the wellbeing of those who produce over the financial hunger of the market is one means of forging and sustaining friendship within the hegemony of global capitalism.

The locating of the arguments about the relations of state, church, civil society and economics in the three spheres of locality, nation and globalised world, each with a specific example of how faithful witness might be maintained, is the genius of this account of how to live in the *saeculum*. Bretherton has brought wide learning and a passionate commitment to the principle that the church in its witness must be faithful to God to those matters of great importance as the church faces the temptations of power or its denial. This is a book of great significance as

the study of political theology assumes greater and greater importance in a secular world. I cannot commend it highly enough.

Paul Goodliff
Baptist Union of Great Britain

Anthony R. Cross and Nicholas J. Wood (eds.), *Exploring Baptist Origins* (Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies. Volume 1; Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2010)

The opening volume in this new series promises well. A collection of essays which interact with early texts and controversies as a way of understanding more fully our earliest patterns, and their impact and questions for us today, as we explore Baptist identity.

The seven essays cover baptismal theology, boundary issues, interfaith and ecumenical questions, political presence, Christology and our broader European identity. This may look like a mixture with no common theme, but it holds together as a collection by drawing on the root texts and practices of our communities, and exploring them on the assumption that they still matter.

In a day and a context in which we are accustomed not only to recognise the past as a foreign country, but also to see it as one we don't really need to visit, it is cheering, and challenging to be encouraged to make the trip, and to take the sights and sounds seriously.

Cross challenges us to reconnect with serious consideration of baptism and the theological issues that go much deeper than a simple "it's biblical" – while, Holmes allows us to visit a land where real reading and clear thinking lead us deeper into relationship with the Lord Jesus. A careful reading of little known petitions to Parliament from Anabaptists, by Kreitzer, remind us that, in our land's history, being Baptist has not always been an easy option, nor a safe home, and that

that required good thinking and careful reflection, while Gribben's exploration of millennialism helps us see how we have retained a surprising amount of the same approaches – and that this is a case of approaches, not an approach. Fiddes explores familiar territory of covenant, but in new and creative ways, using the framework of Troeltsch and demonstrating its weaknesses in understanding – and incidentally, the dangers of assuming that Baptists as a movement can be easily slotted into an institutional model. Haymes revisits Helwys, exploring in particular the complexities of the argument in *The Mystery of Iniquity*, and demonstrating its strengths and weaknesses as a form of political theology, all the while, demonstrating the need for us to work at political theology in our time and place. The book ends with a moving and powerful reflection by Jones on a biography, exploring Baptist identity in times of stress and oppression.

This is not an "easy" book. It is not an introductory volume to Baptist history. For those who don't know the accounts of our earliest beginnings, there are other books available. Rather, this is a series of important essays that help us understand why the story of who we are and where we have come from – why we have the shape we have – is not just for those who are interested in history, but are for all of us who are concerned about living faithfully within our tradition, and in community with other traditions. Travel broadens the mind – but only when we are open to learning from the journey. And that is best accomplished by travelling with those who know, who can point out the features and introduce us to the inner landscape. This book is a good guide to a far away past which still shapes our present. We are grateful to those who have produced it for us.

Ruth Gouldbourne,
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

Dominic Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 300pp.

This book may prove essential reading for those with a variety of interests: anyone considering the history of evangelicalism should be engaged, readers with an interest in issues of secularisation will be intrigued, denominational historians of the nineteenth century will find much to ponder, and those whose prime focus is in tracing the history of sport inside and outside the church will find Erdozain's narrative and arguments compelling.

While the author's main focus is on the Victorian era he rightly sees a need for the 'back story' and traces the rise of the evangelical movement to its roots. Of particular interest here to Erdozain, and perhaps to some of his readers, is how evangelicalism could metamorphose from an experience of personal intensity and joy into a system of constraints and virtual joylessness. When did 'the tradition of the elders,' as it sometimes described, get superadded? Certainly, by the beginning of the Victorian era he argues, 'seemingly hardwired into the evangelical psyche was the assumption that secular pleasure was the enemy of vital religion; that you could not have one and keep the other.' (p. 42) Some voices cautioned against the negative and world-denying tone of much evangelical preaching. But in general they were not heeded. In contrast to forms of Christianity which had seemed cerebral or formalised, evangelicalism had preached a gospel that laid claim on the whole person. This gospel provided all that was needed for personal fulfilment – it was its own enjoyment and no other sources were needed. In fact, other, competing, claims on human affection were imposters to be driven out. Here sport, like alcohol, and most other leisure pursuits, competed with bible reading and prayer – and these

ought to have provided recreation enough. While evangelicalism did introduce a new sense of pleasure into faith: the source of that pleasure was always to be found inside the faith, not outside of it. Pleasure, in other words, had become a problem in evangelical churches and for evangelical preachers.

Any keen sports spectators or participants will now find such ideas largely alien. Evangelical churches offer big sporting occasions on their giant screen TVs, and far from seeing sport as competition it is often seen as an aid in mission. True, the predominance of Sunday morning football and mini-rugby may still introduce ambivalence from churches on the matter, but in general we would no longer argue that people should be enjoying their church membership and Christian discipleship so much that they do not need any other leisure pursuit. When did attitudes begin to change, when did a rapprochement between sport and evangelical Christianity begin?

The beginnings might be found in what could be called the 'Victorian settlement' on sport. Victorian church leaders came to see that religion could not be the sole source of enjoyment for its adherents. What Baptist minister R.H. Martin called (in 1879) an 'oppressive seriousness' was particularly damaging in the church's relation with young people. In fact, Erdozain quotes Martin as arguing, when purged of 'undesirable accoutrements' leisure could be a positive force. Martin is one of a number of Baptist writers who figures significantly in this account, and while Erdozain is not primarily concerned to separate out the various strands of denominational attitudes it is possible to do just that as the reader follows his detailed and impressive research.

R.H. Martin thought it wrong to believe sports such as cricket were 'worldly' as had often been held

hitherto, and he questioned whether the many prohibitions on sport and leisure were really just the ‘traditions of the elders’ which had not solid biblical or theological justification. Many came to share this view, and by the last quarter of the nineteenth century in England sport had generally ceased to be regarded as sinful in church circles and became permissible - even *essential* in the missionary cause. The Victorian churches may not have had big TV screens, but they embraced with some enthusiasm the use of sport as a missionary tool.

Such a sweeping summary blurs real distinctions and Erdozain identifies five types of religious attitudes to sport, ranging from the separatist attitudes of exclusive sects to the thoroughly appropriated attitude of ‘muscular Christians.’ (pp.157ff) But many churches in all the major denominations did catch the sporting mood, and made recreation a key tool of mission strategy. The rise of the YMCA is an important part of this movement. Originally the YMCA arranged readings and bible studies. But as they adopted sports as a means to attract young men to their centres their membership took off. Soon, however, members came for sports but not bible studies.

Erdozain suggests that something more sinister was going on in this process, unintended but ultimately damaging. As sport became more widely accepted, and as a discourse of the ‘rounded individual’ or ‘personal wholeness’ expressed as ‘Christian manliness’ was constructed around it, Erdozain suggests that sport – or the discourse surrounding it – begins to supply its own soteriology and becomes implicated in the processes of secularization. From being a tool in mission the personal development possible through it becomes the goal – the end rather than the means. The story of the YMCA seems to illustrate the theory well. As such, Erdozain has interesting

observations to make in the debate about the secularization process.

Key to this discourse is the way that, as Erdozain points out, by the 1870s in English elite schools ‘manliness’ and ‘virtue’ are becoming synonymous (p. 109). Much the same is true of their American equivalents, and furthermore, this manliness is the product in no small part of participation in sport. Among the reasons given for the retention of the more brutal rules in rugby, for instance, were that they helped inculcate manliness. And given these associations it is hardly surprising that women’s participation was going to be thought problematic at first. In the industrial Victorian era the roles of men and women were being re-defined on both sides of the Atlantic. There is an assumption (seen in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*) ‘that serious piety is a woman’s work, confined to the bedroom and the nursery’ (p. 103). Issues of gender hover around the development of sport, and the churches are once more implicated in certain attitudes to women which now seem at best quaint and at worst discriminatory. This book is a detailed and, at times, demanding read. It is also a thoroughly worthwhile one, with Erdozain’s thorough detail being matched by a coherent and challenging overarching argument. What a shame that the list price of £60 will take it out of many potential readers’ reach.

Rob Ellis
Regent’s Park College, Oxford

Douglas Harink (ed.), *Paul, Philosophy and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical Engagements with Agamben, Badiou, Zizek, and Others*, (Theopolitical Visions 7; Eugene OR: Cascade, 2010)

This fascinating collection of essays offers to the reader something of a ‘state

of play' discussion of the recent rediscovery of Paul and his gospel by a number of significant philosophers and cultural theorists of the late twentieth and early twenty first century. If the names of Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben and Slavoj Zizek mean nothing to you, then this may not be the book for you. But if you are interested in exploring the ways in which the message of Paul might be interpreted in such a way as to speak to the central philosophical and theological questions of our own day, then there are riches galore in twelve essays gathered here.

The book is divided into five parts. Lou Martyn gets the ball rolling with an essay considering Paul's attitude to the philosophies of his own day. Those familiar with Martyn's radically apocalyptic reading of Paul will find little new here, but his claim, that for Paul the gospel comes from nowhere other than the divine invasion of human history for the purposes of putting one world to death and establishing a new creation, is powerfully made. Section two (essays by Travis Kroeker, Justin Klassen and Grant Poettcker) remind us that it is not only recent philosophical figures who have understood the Pauline gospel to be, in some senses, disruptive of conventional reason. Essays on Nietzsche, Heidegger and Walter Benjamin follow. Sections three and four contain essays on the figures named in the book's subtitle with the focus largely on the work of Badiou (essays by Stephen Fowl and Neil Elliott) and Agamben (essays by Paul Griffiths and Ryan Hansen). The final part contains three essays (by, in turn, Jens Zimmerman, Gordon Zerbe and Douglas Harink) which are more general in scope, but which are intent still to draw out the ways in which recent philosophical attention to Paul serves to clarify important theological issues about the nature of interpretation, the identity of the church and the relationship between politics and notions of time.

The essays are not simply expositional – theologians telling us how philosophers read Paul. They are at their best when they are critical and constructive. Several contributors (particularly those who, like Fowl and Elliott, are biblical scholars) are quite rightly critical of much of the contemporary appropriation of Paul's thought, and show how a deeper sensitivity to the textual and exegetical complexities makes a more nuanced view possible and at times pits the Pauline vision *against* that of a Badiou or Agamben. Others are concerned to show how attention to the philosophical conversation with Paul directs us to a better understanding of the Christian political vision. For me the standout essay here was that by Paul Griffiths who argues that a Christian political agency will be marked by the virtues of quietism, skepticism, hope and lament – not the usual words associated with Christian calls for political engagement.

Those with interests in contemporary philosophy, Paul's apocalyptic gospel, or the nature of Christian witness in the cultural and political spheres will find in these essays much to stimulate their own thinking and, if you are like me, much that will stretch your mind.

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Joseph L. Mangina, *Revelation, SCM Theological Commentary on the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 2010)

In keeping with the other volumes in this series, Joseph Mangina's commentary on Revelation offers an overtly *theological* reading of the text; but this is not to imply that it is unengaged with biblical scholarship. Rather, what Mangina achieves is to bring to Revelation a theologian's eye

and a pastor's ear. The details he observes and the interpretations he hears are those which will be of particular interest and benefit to those who want to engage the depth of Revelation's theology within a church context.

From his opening discussion of Revelation's context and setting, Mangina is alert to the interpretative complexities which have so frequently obscured Revelation's message within contemporary Christianity. For example, Charles Wesley's apocalyptic advent hymn 'Lo, he comes with clouds descending' is contrasted with D.H. Lawrence's vitriolic denouncement of Revelation as little more than a vindictive expression of the will to power. Throughout his discussion, Mangina helpfully guides his readers to a contextualized engagement with Revelation, which is alert both to its first century context and also to its contemporary usage.

The commentary on the text of Revelation offers a not-quite-verse-by-verse analysis, which is unconstrained by discussion of the minutiae of each sentence. Rather, Mangina highlights the key theological themes of each section, and illustrates his engagement through helpful reference to wider contemporary reading and relevant ancient texts. The vision of church which Mangina discerns in Revelation is of radical, subversive communities, resisting the tyranny of empire and faithfully witnessing to the good news of a slain-yet-alive Lamb who calls his followers to join him in the redemption of the world.

This is a very readable commentary, and one which will be welcomed by pastors wanting a steady guide in sermon preparation. It is not a detailed scholar's commentary, and there are places where it glosses over debates which others engage in detail. However, it ably succeeds where others have failed, in offering a consistent, relevant,

contextualized and theologically engaged interpretation of the book of Revelation.

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Ernst Käsemann, *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene: Unpublished Lectures and Sermons*, Rudolf Landau and Wolfgang Kraus (eds), Roy A. Harrisville (trans.), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010)

Ernst Käsemann was not, by all accounts, the easiest person to get along with. Shaped by the experience of the Church struggle in Germany (as early as 1933 Käsemann stated from the pulpit that the Reichsbishop was a traitor to the Evangelical Church) and mired in theological controversy for much of his life (often with his teacher Rudolf Bultmann as the main sparring partner), he was known for his severity, rigour and polemical style. Käsemann was not someone to suffer fools gladly, especially theological fools, of whom, for him, there were many.

All of this makes Käsemann a challenging read and although these essays, previously unpublished and now admirably translated by Roy Harrisville, largely consist of talks, lectures and sermons given in churches, one sometimes wonders what the audiences would have made of what they were hearing. The key emphases of Käsemann's thought remain: the apocalyptic nature of salvation; the importance of the church as community; the need for radical discipleship; the political requirements of Christian obedience; the critique of idolatry in all (and especially its ecclesiastical) forms; the call to Christian freedom. Yet one has the sense that for Käsemann, in his old age, these issues became not, as is often the case, muddier and more complex, but, on the contrary, clearer

and more urgent. In particular, we can see how the polemic that during the war was directed against the idolatry of the German Christian movement was, in later years, turned against the conventionality and morality of the middle classes, as well as the oppressive practices of what Käsemann (never one for political correctness) calls 'the white race'. To give you a flavour, consider these quotations:

'But where Protestant theology conceives apocalyptic as the message of God's kingdom revealed in Christ and as the worldwide liberation of the children of God, world anxiety may not be derived from it. A beginning should rather be made with the demons in politics, economics, and the worldview of the white race in the modern age, with the aim of promoting their expulsion and restraining.' (14)

'But for the gospel and Christianity, morality is more dangerous than all blasphemies' (54)

Or, wonderfully, this:

'It is high time to give up the conceit that we were required to bring to others the blessings of our culture and civilization. Christianity, at least, ought to realize that the white race must learn from the illustration of the world of color what it actually is, what misery it has brought over the whole earth, an enterprise that involved both theology and mission. It may be that we can properly hear and understand all of Jesus' Beatitudes again only when we bravely go from the bunkers of meritocracy and affluence into the no-man's land

in which our Lord died, when we sense something of an earthly hell in which our brothers and sister in the Third World are dying. No theological statement is correct and worth preserving that has not been tested in this hell. No Christianity has the least merit that is not on the way to Golgotha with the Master.' (150)

On Being a Disciple is full of material like this. The first fourteen essays deal with biblical themes, usually drawing on Paul and the Sermon on the Mount. The second section contains fifteen essays that deal with the vocation of the church, one that Käsemann continues to treat in terms of struggle and conflict. The volume is prefaced by a brief, autobiographical account of Käsemann's own theological journey up until the war; one that explains in part (there are tragic details from his later life that also shape the content and tone of these chapters) how and why he came to see that '[d]iscipleship of the Crucified leads necessarily to resistance to idolatry on every front.' (xxi). It is sometimes thought that committed, contextual theological scholarship began in Latin America in the 1960's. It didn't. It began with Paul whose theology of a 'God who justifies the ungodly' lies behind almost every sentence in this book. Käsemann's life and work is also testimony to the fact that even those great, severe Germans of the last century must be understood as theologians whose work was decisively shaped by and directed towards their own context.

If they made you read Käsemann in theological college, then this book would be an ideal way of renewing your acquaintance with his thought. If you have never really

grappled with this prophet-scholar (and in scholarly terms a number of contemporary trends in New Testament studies, ranging from concerns for the importance of the historical Jesus to an insistence that Paul's theology must be understood in apocalyptic terms, depend on Käsemann's exegetical and hermeneutical work) then now is the time to begin. This is a book that might be read slowly, chapter by chapter, allowing the clarity of Käsemann's vision and the force of his expression to do their work. Sometimes the people who are hardest to get along with are the people whose voice needs to be heard most clearly.

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Maggi Dawn, *The Writings on the Wall: High Art, Popular Culture and the Bible* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010)

Maggi Dawn, the author of *The Writing on the Wall*, is one of those multi-talented people. She is a gifted singer/song-writer, a theologian, a university chaplain, a radio presenter, a Greenbelt personality, and more latterly a writer. She is a highly respected presence on the Christian blogosphere, frequently posting incisive comments on the Church and particularly the Anglican Communion, and providing something of a bridge between the established church and alternative worship and emerging expressions.

The Writing on the Wall brings together Maggi's particular interests in the Bible and the Arts, not confining herself narrowly to one section of the Arts but covering a broad spectrum. Its inspiration came from numerous conversations with students who, in pursuing arts subjects, sought out the author to ask the significance of a biblical or theological allusion. It goes about doing this by sketching out the main themes and characters of the Bible, more

or less in order, and by providing examples of how they have been interpreted in different centuries through different art forms, highbrow and popular.

If you're looking for a weighty engagement with the Bible and the Arts then you will be disappointed. But *The Writing on the Wall* should not be dismissed as lightweight because this is not its intention, although well within the gift of the author. It is more introductory, bringing together the two as they are experienced in our culture. For someone coming to this book with some understanding of the arts but little understanding of the Bible, you will be enlightened. And the same experience is to be had for someone with some understanding of the Bible but little of the Arts. For anyone with an interest in both, it is eye-opening to see the extent to which the Bible has influenced high art and popular culture.

The chapter 'Gospel Truth', relating to the four Gospels, and the longest in the book, touches on many of the big themes, beginning with Annunciation and concluding with Mary Magdalene. Examining the different emphases of the Gospel writers, and engaging with literature, drama, poetry, music – including a TV theme and a superb story about John Coltrane and 'A Love Supreme' - art and film, it provides a feast for the mind and the senses. In this section in particular, I found myself scurrying around on-line art galleries, looking up poems, and listening to music on Spotify.

I came to parts of the book thinking that I had nothing to learn, only to discover that there was far more. Handel's Messiah, appropriately in a chapter on the Messiah, was one such instance. And, although I thought I knew something about the Jesse Tree, I discovered I knew very little and found myself rooting around the different

examples described in the book through Google images.

As Maggi Dawn acknowledges in the Preface, *The Writing on the Wall* is 'merely a brief glimpse into subject matter that would need a whole library of books to begin to cover it well.' For 'a brief glimpse' it is accessible, informative, illuminating and a delightful read.

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Books Received

Terry J. Wright, *Providence Made Flesh: Divine Presence as a Framework for a Theology of Providence* (Paternoster, 2009)

Neil Pembroke, *Pastoral Care in Worship* (T & T Clark, 2010)

David Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries* (Baylor, 2010)

Nicholas Wood, *Faiths and Faithfulness: Pluralism, Dialogue and Mission in the Work of Kenneth Cragg and Lesslie Newbigin* (Paternoster, 2009)

Walter Brueggemann, *Journey to a Common Good* (WJK, 2010)

Craig Detweiler (ed.), *Halos and Avatars: Playing Video Games with God* (WJK, 2010)

Michael P. Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial* (T & T Clark, 2010)

John E. Colwell, *Why have you forsaken me? A Personal Reflection on the Experience of Desolation* (Paternoster, 2010)

Robin A. Parry, *Lamentations* (Two Horizons Commentary; Eerdmans, 2010)

Murray Rae, *Kierkegaard and Theology* (T & T Clark, 2010)

Michael F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Hendrickson, 2010)

Martyn Atkins, *Resourcing Renewal: Shaping Churches for the Emerging Future* (SCM, 2010)