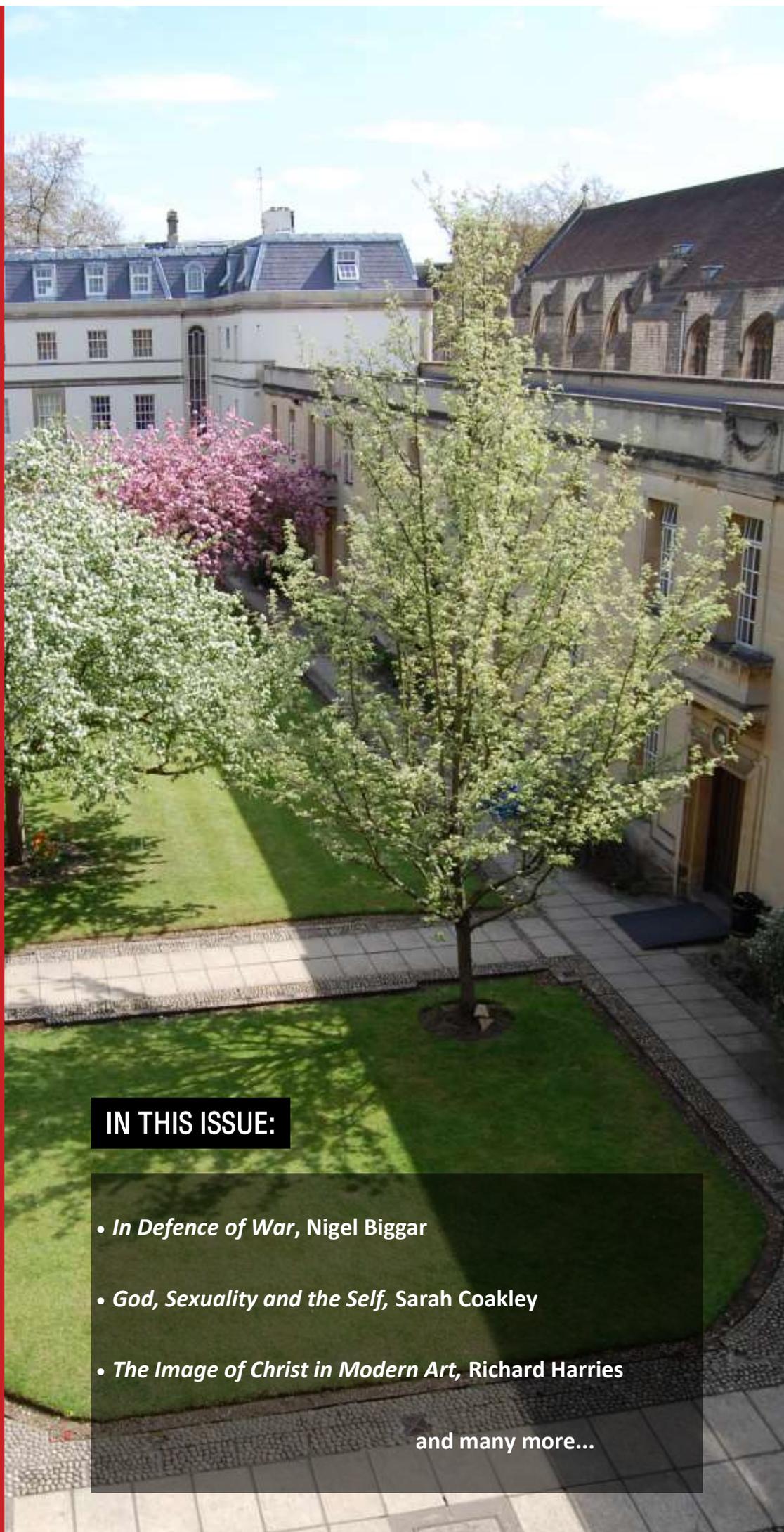


Reviews

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Editorial

Coakley. O'Donovan. Hauerwas. Biggar. Thiselton. Wright. Dunn. This edition of *Regent's Reviews* presents reviews of some of the most influential names in theology and biblical studies today. We have reviews of the first volume of Sarah Coakley's systematic theology, the first volume of Oliver O'Donovan's theological ethics, a collection of Stanley Hauerwas' sermons and Nigel Biggar's important book defending war. In addition is Anthony Thiselton's extensive and detailed treatment of the Holy Spirit, the latest Tom Wright book on creation and truth (a review of his big book on Paul will appear in October's edition) and the latest Jimmy Dunn on oral tradition.

If that is not enough we have three recent books exploring theology and the arts and a range of other reviews engaging with disability, shame, children, messy church, homelessness, and faith amongst university students.

I am grateful again to all the publishers who have sent such a diverse range of books and to the growing number of those who commit to reading and reviewing.

Andy Goodliff
April 2014.

Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay on the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xxii+365pp.

Sarah Coakley's has been one of the more intriguing, distinctive, and informed theological voices of recent years and, consequently, this first volume of a projected four volume systematic theology warrants enthusiastic reception and generates hope-filled anticipation for the volumes to follow.

This first volume, an exploration of the Trinity identifies a theological method to be followed and introduces the notion of a *théologie totale*, the attempt to integrate theological insights from different disciplines and sub-disciplines and, in particular, from the disciplines of spiritual contemplation which, this volume argues, should be especially privileged. At risk of over-simplification for the sake of summary, Prof. Coakley identifies rival expressions of Trinitarian spirituality within the early church, the one deriving from what is intimated in Romans 8 concerning the experience of prayer through the Spirit to the Father, this participatory and experiential approach being contrasted with the *logos* Christology approach, deriving from the prologue of John's Gospel and issuing in a more dogmatic and establishment manner of conceiving the Trinity. The latter came to dominate and obscure the former, in Prof. Coakley's view, for largely political reasons (the former view being seen as potentially schismatic and subversive) and it is this more personal, participative, Spirit-focused tradition with its characteristic emphasis on desire for God that this volume attempts to re-hear and to trace both in the early church and in subsequent expressions of the tradition (noting throughout the political and social contexts in which these rival expressions of Trinitarian thought emerge and re-emerge).

Following a detailed introduction (here termed a 'Prelude') heralding the arguments of the volume, chapter one, 'Re-casting "systematic theology"', identifies the significance of gender, of desire, and of the integrated disciplinary approach of a *théologie totale*. 'Doing theology "on Wigan Pier": why feminism and the social sciences matter to theology' identifies distinctive dangers in some contemporary approaches to systematic theology, and, at risk of admitted over-simplification, isolates three contemporary forms of theology with their distinctive weaknesses, contrasting these with the integrated approach here commended that seeks to give proper attention to desire, to the social sciences, and to the concerns of feminism. Chapter Three explores the patristic tradition of 'praying the Trinity' discussing in some detail and characteristic insight the initial thesis of the book. Chapters Four and Five respectively examine expressions of these differing approaches to the Trinity in an empirical analysis of two charismatic churches in the North East of England and then in the iconography of both the Eastern and Western traditions, noting in both traditions the political and social assumptions revealed in these depictions. The Chapter 'Batter My Heart', as the title suggests, offers a fresh reading of Donne's poem but only after a careful reading of Eastern and Western traditions of Trinitarian thought, specifically a reading of Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, that avoids simplistic contrasts (as has become the fashion) while identifying real distinctions and drawing particular attention to common themes of desire for God, which must be the proper context in which to comprehend sexual desire. Chapter Seven reiterates the primacy of divine desire and includes engagement with Dionysius and a concluding discussion of the *filioque*. A concluding coda lists six theses privileging the ascetical discipline of contemplation within the effort towards a *théologie totale*.

The volume includes a glossary of technical terms and names, keeps footnotes to the barest minimum, ends each chapter with a concluding summary, and (most helpfully) appends a ‘Bibliographic Note’ to each chapter. However, while all this is commendable effort towards directness of writing and accessibility, I fear that here, as with most of us, the gap between Church and Academy is massively underestimated. But this is not my chief hesitation with this impressive and fascinating volume.

Some years ago a theological friend commented that while systematics should integrate the sub-disciplines of biblical studies, historical theology, and philosophical studies (political and social studies) in practice most of us prioritise one over the other two or two over the remaining one. One is sincerely grateful for Sarah Coakley’s perceptive engagement both with the Church’s early tradition and with its contemporary philosophical, political, and social setting but, notwithstanding the impression conveyed by the Scripture Index at the back of this book, engagement with Scripture itself, other than as it has been heard in certain contexts, is largely absent. And if it would be arrogant to attempt a systematic theology without the recognition that the Church has heard Scripture and responded to Scripture previously, and if it would be naïve to attempt a systematic theology without engagement with Enlightenment and post Enlightenment thought, can theology ever claim to be truly a *théologie totale* without a sustained engagement with the narratives of Scripture? Other readers might protest that the central thesis of this volume springs from the Trinitarian tension between Romans 8.26-27 and the opening verses of John’s Gospel but this surely is a perceived tension, a tension between the use made of these passages in the Early Church rather than an attempt now to pay attention to them, albeit acknowledging how they may have been heard in the past. Without succumbing to any misguided desire for forced harmonisation, it is not difficult to read references to the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel in a manner that accords with Paul’s point in Romans 8 – a point that probably shouldn’t be so readily wrested from its place within perhaps the most tightly argued treatise in Scripture. This is no mere quibble – though it is not intended to detract from my genuine appreciation of this perceptive and helpful book – and I hope it is not the echo of past fundamentalism (or foundationalism). Our continuing hearing of the narratives of Scripture, our responding to the one narrated therein, and our being shaped by these primary testimonies, is crucial to the continuity and connectedness (catholicity) to the Church. For theology truly to be total, integrated, and systematic, these formative narratives need to be heard more overtly than is attempted here.

John E. Colwell
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Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit in biblical teaching, through the centuries and today* (London: SPCK, 2013), 565pp.

‘Magisterial! Erudite! Brilliant!’ Thus reads the back cover commendation by Amos Yong. While that may raise suspicions of hyperbole, for once I can only agree with Yong’s assessment. This is a truly remarkable book which should be on the shelves of every student of theology and every working minister of the Gospel. Thiselton has produced a comprehensive exegetical, theological and contemporary examination of the doctrine of the Spirit which traces key historical developments while constantly showing an alertness to issues of pastoral concern. This is a book that fills a long-existing void in pneumatology.

The book is divided into three parts. The first offers an exegetical study of biblical teaching. Here the author's hermeneutical expertise engages with key texts and offers critical conversation with important biblical scholars. While the main task is exegesis, there are extended sections where Thiselton engages in debate with contemporary writers on issues such as the gift of prophecy and baptism in the Spirit. The author's personal views are constructive and his criticisms of others made with respect and gratitude. Section two surveys the theological tradition from the Apostolic Fathers through to the eighteenth century. The author has the ability to summarise key theological views with accuracy yet succinctly without sacrificing important detail. Equally notable is his choice of key figures. In the chapter covering the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries he includes Owen, Wesley and Edwards, as would be expected. Yet we are also introduced to Jeremy Taylor as an example of one who understood the holy life to be lived in the presence and power of the Spirit. Thiselton comments 'it would be a serious mistake to equate the sheer volume of *talk* about the Holy Spirit with the extent to which we authentically *experience* the Spirit.' (p.275) The third section traces developments in pneumatology from Schleiermacher and Hegel to the present day. The author regularly challenges commonly held interpretations of key figures. For example, Karl Barth is often thought to underplay the person and work of the Holy Spirit, but Thiselton judges that 'there is relatively little by writers of the 1950s and 1960s that has not been anticipated by Barth.'

One of the great strengths of this magnum opus is the breadth of scholarship. Thiselton is equally at home engaging critically with New Testament scholars such as Fee and Stronstad, as well as theologians as diverse as Moltmann, Congar and Zizioulas. To each writer Thiselton brings a depth of understanding and critical eye, piecing together important insights from wide ranging traditions.

The final chapter is a *tour de force* in itself. Here Thiselton summarises his constructive proposals by offering seven key themes, which include a helpful discussion of personhood and gender language in relation to the Spirit. All seven themes have a close eye on practical consequences in church life. The focus then shifts to suggest six areas of dialogue in urgent need of attention between Pentecostals/charismatics and those who have been more critical of renewal. There is much wisdom in evidence here as the author bemoans the 'them and us' culture that he still sees in many writings today. The chapter concludes with five issues in hermeneutics, which are pertinent to the previous discussion, and a final excursus on the meaning of inspiration. In my view this book would be worth owning for the final chapter alone.

Yong is fully justified in his praise for this book; this is a truly magisterial work. Whether you are a theology undergraduate or ministering in a local church, this is a must have book from the pen of one of the few scholars equally at home in biblical exegesis, theological analysis and contemporary church life. A rare treat.

*Graham J. Watts,
Spurgeon's College*

Tony Lane, *Exploring Christian Doctrine* (London: SPCK, 2013), 308pp.

In his introduction to the book, Tony Lane explains that the material began life as a series of lectures to first year undergraduates. As a resource for students setting out on

a study of theology, or for the interested Christian, this book admirably fulfils its purpose as a survey of Christian Doctrine. Lane's experience as a gifted teacher is clear as he negotiates some of the complexities of the subject in an approachable and interesting manner. It is a significant accomplishment to write an introductory book on doctrine which neither dodges difficult issues nor renders them obscure. In many ways this is a book born from many years of engaging with questions that students ask in class. As such it is a refreshingly accessible yet comprehensive way in to the study of Christian Doctrine.

Lane's approach is made clear in the introduction. He writes from an evangelical perspective, but avoids an overly confessional approach, mining theological insight from a wide range of traditions and offering criticism of his own tradition when appropriate. Although the book utilises the sort of structure one would expect from an overview and follows a logical order, it is not an attempt to be systematic; neither does the author subscribe to one particular controlling theme or overarching narrative. The preferred approach is described as 'eclectic,' viewing differing traditions as offering windows into the study of Theology. If there is a controlling motif it is faithfulness to the Scriptures; each chapter has copious biblical references.

After a short opening section on methodology, the book moves through the doctrines of creation (3 chapters), sin and evil (4 chapters), redemption in relation to God and his work (7 chapters), redemption as personal (5 chapters), redemption as corporate (4 chapters) and eschatology (3 chapters). Inevitably any ordering could be questioned. The Trinity is not tackled until chapter 16, after the doctrine of Christ and pneumatology, but before a chapter on the attributes of God. If this reflects anything it is perhaps closer to aspects of the history of the development of doctrine; this is certainly one way of helping students to appreciate the way in which theology has developed by engaging with viewpoints considered by the church to be unorthodox. An argument can be made for a different structure, but there is logic to Lane's approach.

Perhaps the most original aspect of this book is the way in which each chapter is structured. An opening set of questions leads into a section which encourages the student to think through their own response. Lane then offers his own response to the question, being careful not to present this as *the* answer. He then engages with a common objection, which he calls 'sceptic's corner.' Each chapter then explores the way in which the church has stated its belief about the doctrine in question through the creeds. A summary of historical errors to avoid leads to a concluding section which focusses the doctrinal focus as expressed liturgically. As each area of doctrine is considered its relationship to worship and discipleship is made clear, thus showing the practical 'so what' of fundamental beliefs.

There are several alternative introductions to Christian Doctrine available which can be used as core texts or are useful for the interested reader. The distinctiveness of approach here together with the gifted teaching style of the author make this a valuable tool for teachers of undergraduate theology. I will certainly be adding this to the required reading list for my own first year course.

Graham J Watts
Spurgeon's College

Nigel Biggar, *In Defence of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 384pp.

This book is very well timed. We are in the midst of pouring over WWI after a century since it began. We are also witnessing Eastern Europe in trauma as Russia deploys its massive military muscle. The juggernaut of war – true to the words of Jesus in Mark 13 – rumbles on.

So Professor Biggar has chosen some excellent targets for his appraisal of the moral justifiability of WWI in 1914, NATO's bombing of Milosevich's Serbian Republic in 1999, and NATO's invasion of Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 2003. The big picture painted by the book is, as the title announces, a justification of some war making, and an exploration of why this is with recent and relevant 'worked examples'. Here is a Christian ethicist of a realist rather than idealist temper, arguing that some war is vital for the welfare of humanity. His introduction is titled 'Against the Virus of Wishful Thinking', in which the author owns a keen sense of human sin and wickedness which requires punishment, resistance and contradiction. Sinful action needs to be pushed back: 'Just war is an extreme form of retributive punishment' (p 11). But Biggar immediately states that even when coercive and violent, retribution should also be qualified by forgiveness. Biggar tells us that his book defends the doctrine of the just war from a position of anthropological and moral realism, against a virtual pacificism that depends on an optimistic anthropology. He thinks that pacificism dominates the academic discipline of Christian ethics, and that is why his first chapter outlines his rejection of Christian pacificism with its mapping of the normative example of Jesus onto the ways of the world, with faith that divine power will purge away war before the end time.

The first chapter criticises Christian pacificism, starting with Hauerwas and his suspicion that the nation state is an idolatrous entity, self protecting, and God rejecting. The great Mennonite pacifist theologian Yoder is also discussed, with his question to the just war proponent that we cannot know if the evil in waging such war does more harm than good. Biggar does not find Yoder decisive in his rejection of just warfare in the Augustinian mode. New Testament scholar Richard Hays is also found less than persuasive. Such pacifists lump all violence together, rather than distinguishing motivation and proportion and they bring that reading to the figure of Jesus as a rejecter of all violence, which may be questionable.

Love in war is the second chapter's theme, taking up Augustine's claim that the deployment of violence can be a form of kind harshness, and Biggar accordingly argues that war can be 'qualified' love as forgiveness. Biggar is here discussing ground now commonly found in 'restorative justice', issues of compassionate forgiveness towards non-repenting abusers and of forgiveness only if the abuser repents as a pre-condition. These are two 'moments' needing to be united for a Christian view of reconciliation. Vengeance is to be rejected by the just war tradition – as the British Army showed with its hospital care for injured Taliban insurgents who had been blowing up colleagues with hidden land mines. Biggar's realism is in fact taken for granted in the Geneva Conventions on warfare in the Christian tradition, rejecting the genocidal elimination of defeated opponents, or indeed insurgents however murderous. This may be argued on the Christian basis of love, including space for resentment and retribution, seeking to evoke repentance not annihilation, in a just war. This chapter ends with moving testimony of servicemen and morally noble attitudes shown in combat contexts to illustrate the possible union of war combat with compassion to individual opponents.

The principle of double effect is the topic of next chapter flowing from the first two: what kind of killing are we speaking of in just war theory? Pacifists object to killing as such, but law and morals recognise distinctions between different kinds. As the lawyers say, is there a '*mens rea*', a guilty mind intending to kill? Or, as per the theory of 'double effect', is the intention, say to protect the vulnerable, but in doing this malefactors are killed? We are used to his principle in the euthanasia debates: a doctor might give a suffering, terminally ill patient, an overdose of pain killing morphine, to kill the pain but secondly it will end the patient's life. To aim to kill as the primary intent is hardly compatible with love - of that target person anyway. Biggar argues that the military serviceman does not 'intend' to kill his 'unjust enemy', but merely has to accept this consequence as the necessary and proportionate side effect of serving the common good. The Nazi version of this doctrine might be said to be articulated by Adolph Eichmann, as reported by Hannah Arendt at his trial in Jerusalem, when he said that killing Jews was a service to humanity as they were like vermin rather than human beings. Happily Biggar is operating within a Christian framework – although again, the Inquisitors who burned to death Jews in the *auto de fe*, were not intending to kill so much as test the Catholic faith of the new, forcibly converted victims. This is very tricky territory indeed. To test the plausibility of his thesis of double effect, Biggar moves us on to the chapter on Proportionality, subtitled 'lessons from the Somme and the First World War'.

WWI entailed the deaths of millions of men. Was it worth it, was it proportionate to the goal of fighting a just war? What might proportion mean? This chapter contains much historical evidence about German intentions, and Biggar accepts the thesis of Fischer, 1969, that the German government, more a military machine which was also a state than vice-versa, caused the war. It willed a local war between Austro-Hungary and Serbia, deliberately reckless of a continent wide war with France and Russia, and it started such a war. Warnings were ignored by the German government, and her generals wanted war with Russia, a social Darwinism being part of this toxic cauldron. This chapter will be of interest to students of politics as well as ethics. Britain went very reluctantly to war, but in defence of Belgium which was brutally assaulted by the Kaiser's war machine. A massive assault, with the aim of domination of Europe by a militaristic cruel regime, had to be met by all the forces of Britain and her allies. That arguably justifies the war effort, and justifies not suing for peace before the end of the war, argues Biggar. As a scholar of Barth, he might have cited the shocking document signed by many leading academics, including theologians, basically asserting the cultural superiority of Germany and their right to expand – a document that sickened Karl Barth. Biggar thinks that the 'Oh What A Lovely War' message on which the post 1950's generation in the UK was reared, reinforced by 'Blackadder' and the idiot military hierarchy utterly careless of the loss of life, is false. Recent research has shown that the British war effort was not criminally negligent nor futile. And reflecting on proportionality is an easy task for those being wise after the event: no one dreamt of a four year carnage at the outset and wars are not calculable in bureaucratic fashion. Perhaps the dropping of the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with the Roman Catholic pilots 'shriven' by their confessor priests beforehand as Elizabeth Anscombe pointed out, might be an example of such a calculable act – mass killing to end a mass war, and with what possibilities being opened up in the future? That was a different case, with greater technological grip on what would happen, perhaps making the ethics of proportion different for that catastrophic act of 'double effect' and proportion, which instantly ended war with Japan? This also raises the questions of means to ends, and the use of annihilating

force as such a means to the good end of finishing a terrible war. The actual dropping of the bombs is distinguishable from the *threat* of mutually assured destruction – but Biggar does not discuss this particular event.

Your reviewer found chapter five hard going and it felt as if it were a free standing essay dragooned into service for the middle of the book, long and a trifle turgid. Its title is ‘Against legal positivism and liberal individualism’, whereas I think a better title might have been ‘the ethical place of the nation state’ in terms of just war theory. The chapter discusses David Rodin’s secular attack on just war theory as an outdated hangover from Christendom, making national self defence its axiom, whereas national defence is not analogous to an individual’s self defence and right to life. Military action, for Rodin, could be justified as law enforcement, rather than national self defence, but without a global state, that is not credible. Further just war theory has not provided a set of practical criteria for assessing a just war. Biggar argues that Rodin’s rejection of just war theory based on current international law as legal positivism, basically an administrative system with no deeper foundations, has merit and in fact constitutes an unwitting argument in favour of the older Christian basis for just war theory, that of the policeman role of the state.

‘Legality, morality and Kosovo’ is the subtitle of chapter six, which is particularly intriguing to the reader in this moment of Russian annexing Crimea from Ukraine. To a Serb, and not a particularly nationalistic one, NATO did much the same to Kosovo, waging war and giving an historic province, which had never been Albanian, to Albanian Muslims, without any UN legal sanction. Putin’s annexation of Crimea, *prima facie*, has the superior claim in that until 1954 it was part of Russia, till the Ukrainian Khrushchev gave it to Ukraine. So why the fuss now over Crimea?

Well, Milosevic was attacking the Albanians in Kosovo, and this followed the Bosnian massacre of Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica. But an alternative account is that Albanians in Kosovo had been carefully provoking the Serbian regime by killings in Serbian villages, leading to retaliation by Serbs, thus attracting NATO action, and then the seizure of Kosovo and giving it to the Albanians. Now historic Serbian monasteries and churches are being destroyed by the Albanians in Kosovo, keen to cleanse the Orthodox marks of the province. NATO is accused of not acting to protect those, and looking away Serb farmers are being killed.

The chapter argues that despite the lack of ‘positive’ legal approval, NATO’s intervention was morally justified and right. It does not consider whether the current situation should be questioned and opened up, given what seems to be an unjust outcome let alone an illegally caused one. Another point worth considering is the legacy of such controversial actions: Crimea may be just one such.

The final chapter focuses on the Bush-Blair invasion of Iraq with the WMD rationale and its tissue paper credibility even at the time. On reflection, sanctions were in fact working against Saddam’s regime, it was not an international danger, and the Shia-Sunni fratricidal war was under the dictator’s control whereas now, we read that Sunni fighters in Syria are migrating to Iraq to join in what is developing into a civil war, murder and chaos. Liberal Democracy did not take root. Was it worth it? Pope John Paul II did not agree with the invasion, nor many Christian ethicists. This was a war for regime change, in a culture and civilization that the West clearly failed to understand, as we soon discovered. Your reviewer tends to agree with the then Pope rather than Professor Biggar on this particular example of an alleged just war. The

fate of the large Christian minority, now decimated post Saddam, is a catastrophe and collateral damage that should have been considered. Such ancient minorities alas fare better under secular dictators in Islamic societies than under elected Muslim governments. And the consequences of the 'war on terror' associated with this invasion, from 9/11 to the London bombings to the murder of drummer Rigby, hardly need to be pointed out. Consequentialism may be a moral factor of more respectability in the ethics of war than in personal moral reasoning?

I liked the epilogue of the book, in which the author allowed the question of his own place in the world to be considered, as in effect a 'middle aged person' and not a young soldier called to fight for a cause, as in Afghanistan, now seen to be idealistic and even false. Any writer commending just war does well to undertake this Lenten self examination.

All in all a worthwhile book whose basic thesis is strong, although the difficulty of working it out is seen to be far from an exact science. In particular the global multiculturalism and religious civilizational contrasts, do make a universal justification of good wars very much more difficult than in the era of a quiescent Islam, and likewise in the era of a less dominant USA and a swaggering Russia. A great strength of the book is its hold on the realities of the human condition of living together in societies, with goods and threats to those goods, with the grey areas of actual life in our fallen world. The Christian tradition has the merit of acknowledging our fallibility, and yet calls us to make responsible decisions to keep back the tide of evil, and to support what is good and right, in the grace of the God of Jesus Christ.

Tim Bradshaw
Regent's Park College, Oxford

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 12: Berlin 1932-33*
Larry L. Rasmussen (ed.), (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), 704pp.**

For New Year's Day 1943 Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a circular letter entitled "After Ten Years" and sent it to those friends who were resisting the Nazi regime within Germany. He asked them all the rather blunt question "Are we still of any use?" Through this very deliberately titled piece he called his family and colleagues to assess all that had happened to them and their country since the crisis of 1933. Back then, Bonhoeffer had recognised quicker than many that the rise of National Socialism and Hitler's ascent to power would soon challenge the integrity and faith of the German Protestant church as never before. Here in Volume 12 of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, covering the years 1932 to 1933 we see in depth and detail the foundations of the creative and costly theological and political responses Bonhoeffer would subsequently make to that crisis.

Weighing in at almost 700 pages and costing around £30 this is not a book for the casual enquirer into Bonhoeffer's life and work, but then, there are already many notable contenders for that niche. Instead this volume, edited by longstanding Bonhoeffer expert Larry Rasmussen, offers an essential resource for those seeking to go deeper into the social context and theological reflections of a man who dedicated his life to being a disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of a German Church all too willing to bask in the Teutonic and heretical pride of the Third Reich.

In common with the other biographical volumes of this series, this book is divided into three main parts, beginning with Bonhoeffer's correspondence and documents, continuing with essays and lectures and concluding with his sermons and liturgies from this period. An added bonus here is an illuminating 'Editor's Afterword' by Ernst-Albert Scharffenorth that examines Bonhoeffer's involvement in the university, the Church and his early confrontation with the political questions of the time. But there is an almost irresistible temptation for those readers already familiar with Bonhoeffer to turn to the middle section and refresh themselves in the new renditions of critical pieces such as his essays on "Christ and Peace", "The Prayer of the Church Community for God's Kingdom on Earth", the early drafts of the Bethel Confession and most famously his thoughts on "The Church and the Jewish Question". It was here of course, that Bonhoeffer challenged the Church to protest against the Anti-Jewish policies of the State reminding them that while they had an "unconditional obligation towards the victims of any societal order" so too did they have a responsibility not just "to bind up the wounds of the victims beneath the wheel but to seize the wheel itself." Perhaps most enticing of all in this section is the substantially redeveloped lectures on Christology. It must be remembered that at this time Bonhoeffer was only in his mid 20s but already had a reputation for theological acumen and had acquired both pastoral and academic experience overseas. His students in the University in Berlin quickly warmed to his passionate convictions and his ready accessibility. And it is to them that we owe an immense debt, for it is only from notes made by them at the time that we have the essence of Bonhoeffer's lectures and especially those on Christology. The import of these lectures cannot be underestimated. As Rasmussen reminds us in his insightful Introduction it is precisely how Bonhoeffer understood Jesus Christ that then forms the foundations for his developing critique of the Church, the work undertaken in the illegal seminary in Finkenwalde and his subsequent political resistance. The Christology lectures have of course been reconstructed and translated previously as 'Christ the Center' by Edwin H. Robertson, but this is no simple updated reissue - Rasmussen's annotating comments along with his insightful Introduction seem to understand not only the mind, but the heart of the young Bonhoeffer at this critical time.

And yet it is there, in the tensions of the mind and heart, between the academic and the pastoral vocations of Bonhoeffer that this volume shines perhaps its most important light. Amidst the letters and documents that open the book and in the sermons with which it ends, we are reminded over and over that he feels divided in himself. While he is lecturing to students he admits to friends that he no longer believes in the university. This promising academic is already anticipating the community at Finkenwalde, training pastors in church-monastic schools. These anticipate the dichotomies Bonhoeffer would subsequently strive to overcome in his 'Ethics', the sacred and the secular that are united under the one Lordship of Christ, no partaking in the reality of God without the reality of the world. It paves the way for his reconciliation between the twin passions of theology and music in the 'little invention from the 'Letters from Prison' - the 'polyphony of life', that calls humanity to love God in such a way that it does not weaken our earthly love. All these tensions are clearly evidenced in this excellent volume, but so too is the genesis of their eventual resolution - that is once again located in Bonhoeffer's Christology, rooted firmly in the definition of Chalcedon of Jesus, fully divine and fully human, Lord of Church and World.

In a world now come of age, where so many things social and ecclesial seem to 'fall apart' and we wonder if 'the centre can hold', where many Christian pastors and

academics may be wondering 'are we still of any use?' - it is the indirect biography of this volume as much as the vibrant theology contained within it that offers hope and challenge for scholars of Christianity and disciples of Jesus Christ alike.

Craig Gardiner
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Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World and Time: Ethics as Theology, Volume 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 138pp.*

For about twenty-five years, Stella Artois promoted its lager using the advertising slogan, "reassuringly expensive." This unusual juxtaposition of terms was, I assume, intended to convey the idea that paying extra for Stella Artois is a fitting corollary of the quality it offers. With a similar intent in mind, Oliver O'Donovan's *Self, World and Time* can be described as "reassuringly demanding!" The book's erudite, but frequently complex, proposals about "the form and matter of Christian Ethics as a discipline, its setting amongst the humanistic faculties of study, and its proper shape" (p. xi) offer penetrating insights to the reader prepared to invest significant time and care engaging with them. Readers of this review who are seeking some idea of its core thesis before making such a commitment will, I hope, find the following quote instructive: "Awareness of self, awareness of the world, and awareness of time frame moral experience, not separately but interdependently, each affording a point of view upon the others. They structure moral reasoning, which moves among them intuitively and discursively on its path towards action. Theological moral reflection, too, which watches over the conversion of moral reason, is concerned with the recovery of a sense of self, world, and time. Recovered and converted, they form the structure of the discipline of Theological Ethics: "faith," "love," and "hope" (p.97).

Self, World and Time is the initial volume of a project conceived as a trilogy, whose overarching aim is to investigate and substantiate the implications of these claims. The author declares this first book to be an "*induction* into Ethics as Theology," a term chosen to distinguish its character from the 'introduction' to a topic which typically begins an enquiry such as this. This distinction is necessary, O'Donovan proposes, because whereas an 'introduction' sets the stage *prior* to embarking on a journey into unfamiliar territory, an 'induction' befits practical reasoning (specifically, in this case, moral reasoning) because it enriches learning and questioning about a phenomenon which *has always been* integral to our consciousness. "No introduction can be imagined for what we can never meet for the first time" (p.1), namely our agency amidst the dynamic matrix of obligations in which our lives are situated from the start. Since this matrix is the pre-existing context of our moral deliberation, O'Donovan suggests that 'waking' be embraced as a foundational metaphor for moral experience: we are "seized" by wakefulness which simultaneously draws our attention to an *ordered reality* (a "world"), to *ourselves* as agents with a limited grasp of its truth but particular responsibilities in relation to "world," and to the cradling of our experience in *time*, awareness of which directs our moral deliberation to the immediate future continually opening up before us for our action. Historical and current examples of practical reasoning which shortchange the task of Ethics neglect due attention to at least one of "world", "self" and "time."

One such "two-legged tripod" (to use one of the book's many memorable metaphors) singled out for more elaborate rebuttal is the voluntarism epitomized by David Hume.

O'Donovan insists that this tendency misrepresents ethics because it insists on separating the judgments of practical reason (deliberation leading to right action) from objective truths about reality to which they necessarily correspond. An account of 'responsibility' as self-awareness in the process of moral deliberation which is critical of landmark treatments of the concept by e.g. Max Weber and H. Richard Niebhuhr culminates, towards the end of the second chapter, in an unabashed theological premise: "The relation of the self to God may or may not be consciously recognized, but whether it is or not, it underlies the sense of responsibility which gives the moral its character of urgency. ... Developed and self-conscious moral thinking begins and ends by calling on God" (p.38).

Given the confines of this review, and bearing in mind the purpose of *Regents Reviews*, I will draw attention to a few discussions from the remaining chapters which I think are of particular interest to those engaged in pastoral ministry. I hope thereby to give at least some flavour of the various profound insights to be found in them. One of the endorsements on the book's cover describes the author's style, quite rightly, as "splendidly dense yet lucid." A key aspect of that lucidity is the astute, at times witty, use of explanatory illustrations. O'Donovan is known for his commitment to the craft of preaching as well as his scholarly prowess. Others regularly engaged in sermon preparation will, I think, admire and draw inspiration both from his adept handling of biblical hermeneutics for ethics (see especially the section entitled "Moral theology and the Narrative of Salvation") and the illumination enabled at several points by perceptive analogies to everyday life. Those called to nourish congregations, not just by preaching but also through leading acts of worship, would be well advised to take seriously O'Donovan's admonitory comments about the communal importance of structured and familiar liturgy which treats the Lord's Prayer as indispensable (pp.64-5). Although finding the essential message at this point to be persuasive, I felt the explanation suffered from being a little too concise, permitting space only for a brief sketch of the two poles of a spectrum of approaches to liturgy without considering whether there may be credible approaches positioned between them. Are we to assume that there is no legitimate scope at all for the innovative or surprising in liturgy, somewhere between the "formal and predictable character of liturgy" which O'Donovan applauds for enabling the incorporation of the individual into a genuinely communal act of worship, and the "conception of worship as magnified self-expression" he condemns for preventing this? Baptists who, amongst others, are committed to a congregational polity (and occasionally frustrated by meetings that seem to parody it) may be encouraged and equipped by O'Donovan's insistence on the critical role of "discussion" in moral reflection, as distinct from "negotiation" (p.45: "A negotiation succeeds when it achieves a compromise; a discussion succeeds only when it reaches a measure of substantial agreement"). Similarly, the section on "advice" offers wisdom for ongoing reflection about what is entailed in faithful pastoral care.

The final two chapters include valuable Christological and pneumatological insights, along with observations concerning the interaction of faith, love and hope in human agency and their bearing on the three categories which give this book its title. They deserve more attention than space permits here but, since they anticipate a more elaborate investigation in the two volumes intended to follow this book, reviews of these volumes in later editions of *Regents Reviews* will doubtless compensate for the deficit. In sum, this is a book whose brevity belies its breadth and depth. As you read it, expect to find much you will want to revisit for clarification and ponder at length.

After you have read it, don't be surprised if you feel you have earned the refreshment of a reassuringly expensive beverage!

Michael Peat
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Doug Gay, *Honey from the Lion: Christianity and the Ethics of Nationalism* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 207pp.

The title of Gay's book comes from the biblical story of Samson and the riddle "out of the eater, came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet" (Judges 14:14). The metaphor of lions (power) and honey (virtues) is one he uses freely to get at a pivotal question for political theology and political (theological) ethics. However, the subtitle is also noteworthy for it discloses something important that may be obscured by assumptions about what Gay's book is about. It is easy to assume given the timing of the publication and Gay's known political views (he is a member of the SNP), that this is a book about Scottish independence and the referendum that will take place on 18 September 2014. This is only half true given the first four chapters are concerned with general ethical and theo-political concerns around nationalism and its justification. Gay's book, therefore, I am happy to report, has a life beyond September 2014 as a contribution to on-going theological reflection on the issue of nationalism and also as an introduction to key thinkers in British political theology.

If the first half of the book is concerned with nationalism as a concept then the second half of the book, chapter 5 to 9 and the conclusion, is more focused on the current debate around nationalism and Scottish independence. It is in this second half of the book that Gay's love, passion and concern for the church in which he is a minister comes to the fore. Those unfamiliar with the political and constitutional history of the Scottish Presbyterianism, and I include myself in that number, may find themselves in an unfamiliar landscape for much of this part of the book.

Many readers will have heard of John Knox, but Andrew Melville and his contribution to the First and Second Books of Discipline and their importance will be new to many, thus one has to ask if Gay has done enough groundwork by the time he suggests the need for a Third Book of Discipline in chapter 8. Likewise, many may associate the name of Thomas Chalmers with atonement theory, but the Disruption of 1843, its significance and his role in it will be unfamiliar to those not well versed in the finer details of church history in Scotland. Yet, these chapters that have a specifically Scottish flavour to them should also be of interest and benefit to those who both have or do not have a vote in the 2014 referendum. In this material Gay not only provides a template that may be used to help us think through our own nationalism, but his approach with its headings for appraising the sweet, bitter-sweet and sour of political life may also prove fruitful should there also be a referendum over continued participation and membership of the European Union.

Having made the case that this should be a book of interest to those both living in Scotland and those outwith, it is also important to note that Gay aims at a wider readership than the academy. A danger is writing for the layperson and academic professionals are that neither is satisfied. However, while some academics will have wished for greater depth and critical analysis in certain areas of his argument, he has on the whole avoided the danger of pleasing no one.

A central argument of the book is that nationalism need not be founded on the concepts of opposition and enmity, that those who are not us are in opposition to us and should be viewed as one's enemy. Rather, in forming the *we* that includes one group of people as *us* and everyone else as *them* the grounds for this inclusion and exclusion need not be hostile. In Gay's nationalism *the other* is not my enemy but my neighbour "to whom and for whom I am accountable" (p.8). The importance of this point cannot be overstated, for it establishes not just a positive ethical dimension to nationalism, but it also reminds us of what is being argued for by those, like myself, who are in favour of Scottish independence. What is being sought is political independence while retaining cultural and social bonds of friendship along with common histories and shared interests. Independence may mean the loosening of some of these bonds. However, a nationalism based on neighbourliness and love of neighbour could also result in a strengthening of certain bonds between the nations of these isles and a fruitfulness that has not been realised under the Union.

The tone in which Gay writes is one of ecumenical generosity and hospitality. Bretherton, Milbank and in particular O'Donovan are used respectfully and sympathetically along side Scottish voices like Forrester and Ferguson. The book will also introduce readers not brought up in the Scottish education system to the joys of the poetry of Iain Crichton Smith and other significant Scottish cultural and literary figures.

Chapters 3 and 4 are the heart of the book. In chapter 3 Gay presents his thoughts on 'The Christian idea of a society', and seeks to answer the question 'How does political theology define a good society?' The contextual struggle he has in advocating a society in which we are beloved and joyful is the widely held perception, especially of his own domination, that Christianity is joyless, austere and unloving. His other headings for a good society are; free, just and equal; landed and lawful; and complex and peaceful. These headings highlight the political concerns of many in Scotland regarding three big issues; the increasing gaps between the *those who have* and those who *have not*; the issue of land ownership and distribution championed by Andy Wightman among others; and the issue of Trident based less than forty miles from Gay's home in Glasgow.

Chapter 4 'Honey from the Lion' builds upon these thoughts on a good society and presents an Augustinian informed theological justification of nationalism. The ethical and theological tensions over nationalism remain, but are navigated and traversed primarily by interrogating the claims of *this* particular nationalism by the "kind of loves that are embodied"(p. 81) in such claims.

In several places in the book Gay advocated subsidiarity, especially for what is called the democratic deficit. I would have liked to see Gay say more on what he means by this and comment upon the notion of political authority behind the concept of subsidiarity as he understands it. In particular it would have been good to see him engage with some of Joan Lockwood O'Donovan's reservations regarding subsidiarity, (see Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Subsidiarity and Political authority in theological perspective', in *Bonds of Imperfection*, 2004).

The other issue on which I'd like to have seen Gay comment more is around the issue of what independence and nationalism mean and how they function in a globalized interconnected world in which nations are integrated within a complex social, political, economic and ecological system. The ability of any nation to act independently is restricted not only by formal political and trade agreements, but also

by what Gay himself advocates – love of neighbour – as this imposes upon us certain duties, responsibilities and restrictions to act freely, or to use a term fraught with difficulties, sovereignty.

I hope Gay's book receives the wider readership to which it is aimed and that it will continue to be engaged with beyond 18 September 2014. If we can embody the generosity that it advocated and with which it is written then we'll all be much the richer.

Brodie McGregor
University of Edinburgh

Jason A. Goroncy (ed.), *'Tikkun Olam' - To Mend the World: A Confluence of Theology and the Arts* (Pickwick Publications, 2013), 234pp.

'Tikkun Olam' is the Jewish notion of mending or perfecting the world. This collection of essays, which emerged out of a symposium and art exhibition, explores the theme in depth. The premise is that artists and theologians can help us to see and hear better: artists, as they respond to revelation and make us more attentive to the world's beauty and its tragedy; Christian theologians, as they bear witness to and help us to be attentive to God's self-disclosure. This is a book that takes both art and theology seriously - they matter - and in the confluence it's a classic case of the whole exceeding the sum of its parts. This is a very creative and stimulating compilation, making me wish I'd had the experience of being there!

All of the contributions engage with 'an exploration that is both confession that things are not right with the world, and an act of hope that things might be bettered, or even made new.' And this is approached through different art-forms and theological disciplines.

William Dyrness, in a chapter, 'Prophecy to these Dry Bones? - The Artist's Role in Healing the Earth' speaks of 'the poetics of life', the story, that 'is essential not only to bring the historical and literal to life, but also to arouse people to live that life.' Why? 'Because art carries us in a way that history, by itself, cannot ... This means that we cannot only look to the scientists to help us heal the earth, but also, and perhaps primarily, to artists.'

I was taken with his reflection that the artist never leaves things as she finds them but she wants to do something special with everything she touches. 'The musician does not just want to make a nice melody but, as Jeremy Begbie puts it, frame a melody that we didn't know to listen for! Or show us colors and shapes that we didn't know to look for, or language that shocks and delights. In other words, artists push us to see and hear what doesn't yet exist, but should.'

Trevor Hart considers the place of human 'creativity', relating it to God's unique role as the Creator of the cosmos, and drawing on the literature of Dorothy Sayers and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Carolyn Kelly, in her chapter on 'Re-forming Beauty', looks at the tension between Romantic and aesthetic 'sensitivity' and Reformed theological 'sense', and the contribution that artists and theologians can make as they explore the truth of beauty and the beauty of truth. As an aside, I'm continuing to reflect on her provocative

quote by Balthasar on the absence of a Marian spirituality in the Protestant church, ‘that when the image of woman has vanished from the theological realm, “an exclusively masculine, imageless conceptuality ... takes over,” and faith finds itself banished from the world.’

Carolyn Kelly touches on Mark 14.3-9 and the anointing of Jesus, a passage that forms the basis of Jonathan Ryan’s chapter, ‘Questioning the Extravagance of Beauty in a World of Poverty’. This is a profound, insightful, exploration of a passage which is of central importance for the artist living in a world which questions the usefulness of art. He concludes, ‘in expressing our love for Jesus and the poor, we are invited to bring to Jesus beautiful things, creative things, artistic things, as generous and extravagant offerings. To do so may involve great risk or great cost, but we do so, not for our own sake, but trusting that through us - to borrow Paul’s words - the “fragrance of the knowledge” of Christ may fill the world.’

Other chapters engage more concretely with particular forms of art. Libby Byrne’s essay explores the artist’s vocation to ‘live close to the wound’, and provides examples from the work of Anselm Kiefer and her own practice. Artists Allie Eagle and Joanna Osborne discuss Eagle’s art project, ‘Sudden Imperative’, which is a reframing of her ideology of the 1970’s as a feminist separatist. Murray Rae, in ‘Building from the Rubble’ considers the architectural work of Daniel Libeskind at Ground Zero, conjecturing that although art has no power to redeem us, it can ‘give expression to our memories, our sorrow, and our penitence’.

John Dennison, in his essay on the Irish poet Seamus Heaney, argues that a most notable and least understood aspect of Heaney’s work is his trust in the good of poetry and the arts and how this approximates religious faith. Julianne Clarke-Morris in her contribution on ‘New Media Art Practice’, proposes that although art cannot mend the world, through art and through us, God can. ‘With the power of the Spirit, new media art can lead hearts and minds into the knowledge and love of God.’

The book concludes with Steven Guthrie, on ‘Silence, Song and the Sounding-Together of Creation’. He highlights the paradox of our contemporary aural environment, living in a world that is both silent and deafeningly loud. ‘In contrast to this earsplitting silence, both scripture and the pre-modern theological tradition testify to a natural world that has a voice; one that not only speaks, but sings.’

‘Tikkun Olam’ is an imaginative, thoughtful, and invigorating read. Its leitmotif ‘is the matter of hope, recalling that creation in its entirety leans forward and that human persons are made responsible to nurture an eschatological imagination.’ Inevitably, in a book made up of contributions by different authors from different artistic practices and theological disciplines, chapters stand out according to personal preference (writing this within a sabbatical I look forward to exploring Steven Guthrie’s insights in more depth). This is a specialised book and certainly won’t interest everyone, but it makes the important point that art is not an add-on - and neither is theology - for those who like this sort of thing. In a world that is broken and in need of mending, it matters profoundly, and it has a vital part to play.

*Geoffrey Colmer,
Central Baptist Association*

Richard Harries, *The Image of Christ in Modern Art* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), xi + 177pp.

I am glad that I now own a copy of this book for my own library. It is a mine of detailed information, and it includes an impressive gallery of full-colour illustrations, all gathered here in one volume, easily accessible using a comprehensive index.

As 'art' books go, this one is a little unusual. For my taste, its own aesthetic qualities are sadly lacking. The font is small, the layout is not easy on the eye, and the text has a *staccato* delivery that lacks the flow of a fully-honed argument. This is not a book I would visit for sheer visual indulgence – something I rather enjoy – rather its value is as a source book of a very different kind. As will become clear in the course of this review, this book's real strength is largely located in its latter half, where readers are introduced to a wide range of recent Christian art. Initially, however, we do need to explore the first half in order to set a context for all that follows.

Harries begins with a clear explanation of the boundaries and limitations of his latest book. 'Modern' is taken to begin with that revolution in European art associated with the turn of twentieth century. Harries refers to what the artist David Jones called 'The Break', and to the landmark movement 'Die Brücke' ('The Bridge'), originating in 1905, and offering an effective starting point for his exploration. This takes him, then, immediately into European expressionism, the movement that inspired one of the twentieth century's foremost theological commentators on art, Paul Tillich.

'The Image of Christ' is the other parameter shaping the content of this book. Harries limits himself to what he describes as "... art that is related in some way to the traditional Christian iconography, which might be the work of a Christian, a Jew or someone of another faith or of no faith at all." (p2) With this as his working definition, however, Harries allows himself to range far and wide, and pictures that come under his under scrutiny include many in which the explicit image of Jesus is barely present at all. One of the delights of this book is its large number of quality illustrations (84 in total); and Harries has engaged a simple mechanism (underling) to identify a further wide range of pictures, referenced in the text, and largely accessible on-line.

Starting, then, with German expressionism Harries provides a number of cameos of individual artists, beginning with Emil Nolde, Max Beckmann, Jacob Epstein and Georges Rouault. He then moves to a more diverse sequence, Marc Chagall, Cecil Collins and Stanley Spencer. Each of these cameos stands in its own right, very much like an article in a dictionary of artists, each just a few pages in length, offering a brief portrait of the artist and focusing on the distinctives of their engagement with religious themes. In these early chapters, there is probably not a great deal that will be new for readers who have already given some attention to these now very famous artists, and it is a little disappointing that Harries does not give more attention to the potential linkages and overarching bridges that might be explored between their various works.

A similar criticism could be brought to a further couple of chapters although, for a non-Catholic like myself, Chapter 4 usefully introduces less familiar works by Leon Underwood, Eric Gill and David Jones. For today's writers, of course, it is always difficult to represent Eric Gill without sinking in the mire of disclosures about his private life, and Harries struggles to do this in such a limited encounter. After the

section on David Jones, there is a return to other big names from the early twentieth century story: Graham Sutherland, Henry Moore, John Piper and Ceri Richards.

The real energy of this book, however, lies in its final two chapters, occupying by far the largest number of pages, entitled in turn, 'Searching for New Ways' and 'A Vibrant Contemporary Scene'. It is hard not to feel that this was the main reason for writing this book, and that the earlier cameos do little more than set the scene for the more recent era. I am still left wondering if those earlier chapters could have been better handled by giving more attention to movements rather than individuals. It is these final chapters that will take a majority of readers onto new territory and provide them with at least some unfamiliar names that they will now be keen to explore further. These chapters, like the earlier ones, are richly illustrated and it is not at all difficult to gain a 'good feel' for the style of the artists who are presented. For the purposes of this review, just listing here the key players is probably helpful for potential readers: In 'Searching for New Ways', these are Barnett Newmann, Craigie Aitchison, Elizabeth Frink, John Reilly, Hilsdegart Nicholas, Albert Herbert and Norman Adams, and in 'A Vibrant Contemporary Scene', they are Fenwick Lawson, Peter Ball, Anthony Caro, David Wynne, Shirazeh Houshiary, Alison Watt, Sophie Hacker, Maggie Hambling, Helen Meyer, Peter Howson, Nicholas Mynheer, Mark Cazalet, Charles Lutyens, Greg Tricker and Roger Wagner. All these receive the same cameo treatment used in the earlier chapters, but in the case of these recent artists, this is precisely what most of us need to bring them to our attention.

Roger Wagner has clearly gripped the imagination of a former Bishop of Oxford, as it has already gripped many Baptists who have become aware of Wagner's use of images of rural Oxfordshire in general, and Didcot in particular. Samples of Wagner's wide-ranging *oeuvre* provide an excellent finale for Harries's book.

Near the beginning Harries had expressed how pleasantly surprised he was to discover so much 'good art' that fits within his chosen parameters of 'Christ' and 'Modern'. As he says, this might not have been what commentators would have expected as they looked forward around the time of 'The Break', and the re-invention of European art at the start of the twentieth century. It is indeed quite thrilling to see that a significant number of highly talented artists have managed to re-visit the great themes of Christian faith and at the same time work with integrity within the foremost artistic movements of the modern period. It is also very pleasing to see that, as the story unfolds, more and more women artist join the names that are celebrated in the gallery.

I can repeat, then, that I am glad to have this book in my own collection, although mainly for the resources in its second half. Even from the earlier part, however, I am encouraged to go back and explore further the work of Cecil Collins, David Jones and Ceri Richards, all of whom have remained little known to me to this point, and now are clamouring for further attention. It is, though, in the latter chapters that the new adventures most obviously await. I now want to know more about the deceptively naïve images of Albert Herbert, what Harries calls 'the tenderness and pity' of the paintings of Helen Meyer, and the richly symbolic pictures of Nicholas Mynheer. It is indeed good to have such firm evidence that the image of Christ is so very much live and well in the galleries of modern art.

Richard Kidd
Northern Baptist Learning Community

Trevor Hart, *Between The Image And The Word; Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature* (Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts; Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), vii + 254pp.

“A cold coming we had of it ...” reported the travellers in T S Eliot’s now famous poem, ‘Journey of the Magi’ – and that is not a bad description of my own journey through the first four chapters of this book. The metaphor that repeatedly came to mind was that of ‘labour’ – labour, that is, in the sense of a lengthy agonising process associated with birth. As with all metaphors, there was a collision of ‘the like’ and ‘the unlike’. Undoubtedly, real labour is hugely more agonising than the reading of any theological text; but, thankfully – ‘the like’ - the reader is eventually greeted by the joyful occurrence of a birth. The birth takes place on p.119, “... not a moment too soon ...”, nearly half way through the 254 pages of this book. It is heralded, at the start of Chapter 5, by the words, “On 7 October 1936 Dorothy L Sayers, a writer ...” and finally we are dealing with a real artist, with real artefacts and with an imaginative process of theological engagement – something we were always expecting in the light of this book’s title. Thankfully, Chapters 6-10 never lose the long-awaited vitality that surfaces on p.119 and, indeed, engaging creativity gathers pace with each succeeding chapter. By the end of the book the language, style and content are virtually unrecognisable as deriving from the same source as its laborious beginning.

So, you ask, how can this be? Trevor Hart never attempts to disguise the fact that this book is a lightly-edited stitching together of many pieces that first achieved publication in earlier years. Detective work on page vii, entitled ‘Provenance of Chapters’ soon begins to uncover a possible explanation. Chapters 1-4, it seems, owe more to a period of writing around the turn of the millennium and the early 21st century; Chapters 6-10 all belong to more recent times. Hart also does not disguise – in fact, he mentions it more than once – that the final edit of this composite text took place on a train journey between Kolkata and Darjeeling. I venture to suggest that it is a shame that the journey did not begin further into South India. My own experience of Indian trains and their ability to sap the final reserves of a ‘will to live’ might, on a longer journey, have given time either for a more radical edit, or (better, perhaps) a more courageous pruning of redundant material. I suppose I remain surprised that Ashgate’s pre-publication readers did not advise along these lines too.

So, what is it about the first four chapters that is so deadening and unimaginative. They open with a straight declaration of an overarching thesis. “The central contention of Christian faith is that in the incarnation the eternal Word or Logos of God himself has taken flesh, so becoming for us the image of the invisible God” (p1), on the basis of which, Hart goes on to say, “Christian theology itself, I am suggesting, by virtue of the nature of its proper and primary object (the God made known in Jesus Christ) and its own nature as an activity shaped and determined by that same object, is closely and necessarily wedded to acts of imaginative human *poiesis*.” (p.13). This is no doubt a laudable declaration, but its out-working needs, from the beginning, a sharper enactment of its own metaphor of a ‘wedding’, a genuine celebration of real ‘acts of imaginative human *poiesis*’. Instead, we encounter four chapters of densely argued theory, unsupported by imaginative forms of Christological engagement, and radically lacking in evidence of human *poiesis*.

The idea that a Christian’s understanding of the relationship between image and word should be tested against sustained Christological reflection is surely a good one. In

Chapters 1-4, however, this means such careful and guarded appeals to the ‘orthodoxy’ of the early Christian Creeds and Councils, that it rarely begins to come to life in anything like the way it will finally achieve in Chapter 10, where it is largely the Christology of Jürgen Moltmann that provides an imaginative lens through which to evaluate the significance of art, artists and their artefacts for the creative development of Christian theology.

The remainder of this review, therefore, largely concentrates on the later chapters of Hart’s editing work where, as Eliot’s Magi also have it, there is “evidence” of a birth. Each of these later chapters opens a creative window onto the work of at least two imaginative artists: Dorothy Sayers and J R R Tolkien (Chapter 5), Byron and Milton (Chapter 6), Shakespeare and Epictetus (Chapter 8), Tolkien [again] and Iris Murdoch (Chapter 9) and Shusako Endo (Chapter 10). Chapter 7 is much more eclectic, but no less imaginative than its near neighbours. Indeed, it provides a very helpful and concise account of the turbulent history of conflict between ‘iconophiles’ and ‘iconoclasts’ over many centuries; I especially like the way that this and neighbouring chapters focus the issues around a very simple question – are artists drawing on God’s intended delegation of creativity, not dissimilar from God’s own, or are artists usurping powers that rightly belong to God alone, popularly expressed in a phrase like ‘playing God’? I am glad to report that I concur fully with Hart in his affirmation of God’s delegating intent.

Chapter 9 provides a feast of imaginative engagement. I am inspired with a strong desire to follow further its central theme - the nature of ‘the tragic’ and ‘tragedy’ and how this relates to Christianity’s founding narrative – and to check in more detail the works of witnesses that are drawn into Hart’s argument. I now want to know more about Tolkien’s use of the term ‘eucatastrophe’ and will be looking at Tolkien’s *Tree and Leaf* - of which I know little; and I shall be searching out Iris Murdoch’s *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* which clearly deserves detailed attention. Those, like myself, who have already appreciated Alan Lewis’s *Between Cross and Resurrection* will warm to the way this chapter is drawn to an inspiring conclusion in its closing pages.

The final chapter, Chapter 10, ‘The Substance of Things Hoped For’, brings the whole book to an unexpectedly engaging conclusion – unexpected, that is, when measured against the labours of Chapter 1. Beginning with the harrowing account of the suffering of Jesuit missionaries to Japan in the 17th century in Shusko Endo’s novel *Silence*, it ventures onto the notoriously volatile ground of theodicy. In debate, first with George Steiner and then with Ernst Bloch, the chapter rounds onto the work of Jürgen Moltmann and especially his *The Coming of God*. The ground is trod with great care and spiritual sensitivity and provides an excellent climax with which to finish. The reader is left in no doubt that without the imaginative engagement of minds like that of Jürgen Moltmann, Christian theology would be hugely the poorer, and it becomes clear too that Christology itself, so unimaginatively engaged in this book’s early chapters, only really comes to life when all the God-intended gifts of imagination are free to flourish. [As an aside, I commend to those attracted by Endo’s *Silence* two further imaginative engagements: a film of the book directed by Masahiro Shinoda, and Macmillan’s ‘Symphony No 3’, also inspired by Endo’s book and carrying the same title.]

So – “... were we led all this way for Birth or Death?” Thankfully, for birth, but in the same spirit as Eliot’s Magi, not a birth disengaged from death. I would gladly have

bypassed some of the deadliness of the early chapters, but that is not the death to which I now affirmatively refer. I gladly express my gratitude for the later chapters of Hart's book where, fully in the mode of new birth, he engages with issues of both birth and death, with imagination, creativity and often prophetic zeal.

Will I refer to this book again in the future? Yes, especially with a view to references and resources for on-going exploration. Will I ever re-visit Chapters 1-4? No, not if I can avoid them. Do other readers need to bother with Chapters 1-4. Probably, but they need to approach them as a labour of love. Do I recommend this book to others for further reflection? Yes, with all the provisos listed above.

Richard Kidd
Northern Baptist Learning Community

John Hughes (ed.), *The Unknown God: Responses to the New Atheists* (London: SCM, 2013), 128pp.

Once you've read a few Christian responses to the New Atheism, it's not long before the yawning sets in. It is difficult to find a writer on either side of this tired debate who does more than repackage old arguments, trying to convince us they are somehow new. From the atheist side, little 'new' has been offered since the Baron d'Holbach's 1770 classic, *The System of Nature*; little exciting has been served up since Friedrich Nietzsche's 1888 page-turner, *The Anti Christ*, and little philosophical erudition has appeared since Bertrand Russell's 1957 essay, *Why I am not a Christian*.

However, in the wake of what we now call 9-11, the modern myth that religion and politics can be separated has been blown out of the water. Whilst we might have expected some serious reflection on the nature of the relationship between religion and politics, the societal reaction we witnessed instead was a simplistic attack upon religion as a whole. This was the cultural context from which the New Atheism was born, its entire credibility resting – as ever – upon the ludicrous, comforting, traditional belief that religion and politics can be separated.

The tide of Christian indignation the New Atheists evoked was largely directed at the contents of their arguments, without addressing the wider political and cultural context. There have been glorious exceptions, most notably by such figures as Terry Eagleton (focusing on politics and culture), Alister McGrath (majoring on science and philosophy) and David Bentley Hart (emphasizing history and theology). John Hughes has succeeded in editing a small volume into which each of these insightful figures has poured the best of their insights. Combined with a host of other deeply reflective writers and thinkers, the book carries the reader through questions concerning politics and ethics, Darwin and Dawkins, History, Suffering and Hope.

The Unknown God is comprised of sermons given to Cambridge undergraduates in a chapel setting (many of whom will – surprisingly – be deeply atheist), a context in itself which makes them readable, concise, and thought-provoking. The end result is a book genuinely distinct from anything else in the huge range of literature on this topic, managing to hit the intellectual zenith of this debate whilst maintaining an exciting, compelling tone.

Simon Perry
Robinson College, Cambridge

Bryan P. Stone, *A Reader in Ecclesiology* (Ashgate Contemporary Ecclesiology Series; Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 296pp.

This book is, as its title suggests, a collection of brief readings in ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. Four sections cover the early church (including the New Testament); the Middle Ages and Reformation; the 'Modern Period' (c. 1700 - c. 1900); and the twentieth century. It is intended as a textbook for an introductory class in ecclesiology; introductory material is kept to a bare minimum; the third part is by some distance the shortest; the section on the twentieth century the longest.

The selections cover most of the obvious bases, and includes some interesting surprises. 'Ecclesiology' is narrowly interpreted in terms of church, ministry, and sacraments; there is nothing here on church architecture, decoration, music (although the words of several hymns are included), etc. - and virtually nothing on the liturgical calendar.

The 'Dead White European Males' predominate, of course, in some cases perhaps surprisingly so. The only female author featured who is not still alive is Hildegard of Bingen; it would not have been hard to justify others: Marie Dentière in the Reformation period, for instance, or Katherine Chidley's spirited and powerful seventeenth-century defences of congregationalism. The long tradition of women arguing for their right to engage in the preaching ministry is also absent; not including at least one of Phoebe Palmer or Catherine Booth in the nineteenth century looks like a serious gap to me, and not just on gender-justice grounds.

In the twentieth century, non-Western voices start to appear. The majority world is represented almost entirely by liberation theologians; given that the new Pentecostal churches are the largest non-Catholic tradition of Christianity in the world today, exclusion of their voice seems odd, even accepting that they have not perhaps generated the quality of theological writing that liberation theology has.

Ecclesiology that looks at the arts, considers gender justice, and is awake to the massive transformations of global Christianity that are currently taking place seems to me to be just much more interesting than the narrow story that was common a generation ago and that is here told; there is much of worth here, and the book will be useful to many, but perhaps there was also an opportunity missed.

Stephen Holmes
University of St. Andrew's

James D. G. Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 448pp.

'The Jesus tradition', writes Professor Dunn, 'was not at first a written text to be read by individuals in the solitude of their studies, capable of fine literary analysis and redaction. It was not carried around like a sacred relic fixed in written form. It was a living tradition, lived-in-and-through tradition ... Not so much kept as used, not so much preserved as performed, not so much read as heard' (p.79). The premise from which Dunn starts in this collection of essays is that first century Galilee was an oral

culture where most people were illiterate. As such they *heard* the stories of Jesus rather than read them, as accredited teachers kept alive the community's memory through repeated performance when disciples gathered for worship, and this not simply after Easter but during Jesus' lifetime as the impact of his teaching and healing spread.

Scholars, says Dunn, like everybody else, have their unexamined biases, which determine their conclusions when they are not making a conscious effort to override them. This he likens to the default setting on a computer. The default setting for NT scholars has been the literary paradigm, meaning that we typically think in terms of texts and written sources which the evangelists edited. No doubt the evangelists did edit each other's work and the tradition that came to them, but the unique blend of fixity and flexibility that characterises the Gospels is not simply due to this editing but reflects that way stories were remembered, words of Jesus being 'fixed' but details of the story being 'flexible'.

This book consists of a collection of essays written over the last twenty years or so. Some develop Dunn's thesis in relation to particular NT writings – Q, Matthew and John for example – others engage in dialogue with critics and colleagues in the field. The publishers are to be congratulated on rescuing them from the obscurity of learned journals and *Festschriften*. They are all characteristically clear and readable, and anyone (a working minister for example?) who wants to get up to date with this area of NT study will find they well reward the time spent studying them, for to recognise that the variations in the Gospels' accounts of Jesus reflect the flexibility of an oral tradition that goes back to Jesus is to say that the Gospels put us in touch with Jesus himself and the impact he made, and still makes, on his disciples.

Alastair Campbell
Abingdon

Tom Wright, *Creation, Power and Truth: The Gospel in a World of Cultural Confusion* (London: SPCK, 2013), 128pp.

Few theologians have addressed the great issues confronting Christian faith today with the sagacity and erudition that Tom Wright displays in his biblically-informed critiques of contemporary cultural trends. Once again, Wright has produced an engaging book teeming with cogent insights that draw compelling comparisons between biblical and modern – or postmodern – worldviews.

In this little book Wright offers a Trinitarian critique of three salient features of the contemporary cultural and political landscape. These features – defined as “Gnosticism”, “imperialism” and “postmodernism” – are the focus of the three chapters into which the book is divided. These three contemporary challenges to Christian faith are addressed in turn by a vigorous appeal to Trinitarian theology. Thus, in order to challenge the dualistic tendencies and false dichotomies posited by Gnosticism, Wright argues that Christian faith needs a renewed emphasis on God the Father as Creator. Moreover, maintaining the focus on the Trinity, Wright avers that the powerful idolatries generated by neo-imperialism can be properly countermanded by a renewed emphasis on the Son of God as the only true Lord of heaven and earth. Finally, completing the Trinitarian focus, Wright contends that postmodern relativism

can itself be deconstructed through a vigorous theology of the Holy Spirit, who leads God's people into all truth.

In the first chapter Wright critically interrogates the gnostic myths that have enervated the church's public witness. Tellingly, Wright includes the church itself in this indictment: "Those of us who argue for classic Christian belief and morality in today's church must come to terms with the fact that we, too, have all too often colluded with the gnostic imperative" (p.10). Comparing the "two versions" of Jesus, Wright comments that, "The canonical Jesus instructed his followers to deny themselves and take up their cross. The gnostic Jesus tells you to discover yourself and follow your own star" (p.16). This section concludes with an appeal to Christians to confound contemporary Gnosticism by living in the light of the "new creation", which actively anticipates the transformation of public, political and economic life into the Kingdom of God and takes seriously the imperative to grow in personal and communal holiness (p.34).

The second chapter offers a compelling critique of Western imperialism and the neo-colonial rhetoric that continues to be invoked to justify Western military intervention in supposedly "less democratic" or "less civilised" countries. He calls on Christians to engage in prophetic critiques of the social, economic and political injustice that characterises so much of contemporary public life. Wright demonstrates the link between Gnosticism and the injustices of neo-imperialism, explaining that, "our semi-gnostic propensity to concentrate on a spiritual message over and against, or to the exclusion of, the claim of God on the entire creation has led us into a radical inability to say anything very much to, or about contemporary political issues, not least because we are afraid that if we try we will be shouted down and told to go back to our real business of saving souls" (p.45).

The third and final chapter addresses the challenge posed by the cultural trends associated with postmodernism, particularly the claim associated with Nietzsche and Foucault that all truth claims amount to nothing more than thinly disguised assertions of power. Wright affirms the inseparability of love and truth. Furthermore, he maintains that truth is "not simply a matter of stating the way things are in the world." A "radical evil" has distorted the world and our perception of it, meaning that truth is not a matter of naïve "correspondence", but lies in the "interplay between creation, judgement and new creation" (p.86).

Although there is much to commend in this book, Wright's argument is not without its shortcomings. For instance, his arguments (which amount to little more than groundless assertions) against pacifism (p.64) are weak and unconvincing. Towards the end of the second chapter the argument lacks the nuance, clarity and focus that are present elsewhere in the book. Moreover, his argument that "policing will sometimes involve restraint; restraint will sometimes involve violence" seems to play into the hands of the same kind of imperialistic ideologies that he critiques in chapter 2. For instance, although he criticises the imperialistic ideologies that lie behind Western intervention in the Middle East (such as the disastrous invasion and occupation of Iraq), Wright nevertheless makes the curious claim that "some kind of transnational policing is necessary in some parts of the world, and if the UN can't provide it we must find ways of enabling it to do so." The most troubling part in this sentence is the word "we", especially if it implies that "we" have the right to override the UN in order to "police" certain "parts of the world" that don't behave in a way that "we" consider proper.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, I would gladly recommend this book to students and to friends – whether Christian, Muslim, agnostic, atheist, etc. – who are interested in understanding the relationship between faith and public life. The book will also be a valuable addition to the reading list for the ‘Public Theology’ unit that I will teach next year. The writing style is elegant and lucid, yet accessible enough to sustain the interest and attention of those who may not have received a formal theological education.

Wright’s book is a pleasure to read and should be studied carefully by all who are interested in learning about the contribution that theology can make towards the critique and renewal of public life in the present age of “cultural confusion”.

Joshua Searle
Spurgeon’s College

John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone: Part 1, Psalms 1-72* (London, SPCK, 2013)

A new addition to the popular ‘For Everyone’ series, John Goldingay has written a gem of a book exploring the first 72 Psalms. The writing springs from his deep and thoughtful engagement with the Hebrew Scriptures over many years. The added sparkle to this volume is the inclusion of his own testimony, appropriately used, to illuminate and enrich an encounter with the text.

He has used his own translation of the Psalms, and the freshness of language simply enlivens the reading of them. From Psalm 19,

*‘May the words of my mouth be favourable to you,
and may the talk of my mind come before you,
Yahweh, my crag and my restorer.’*

His commentary on the text reveals again the key themes of God’s faithfulness, trustworthiness, unfathomable life and fierce love for all creation which in God’s mercy is abundantly poured out onto it. The commentary is helpful and accessible – with a number of linguistic and contextual nuggets dropped in at regular points. Where the volume succeeds is in its ability to help people pray with the Psalms – and is one more tool in the kitbag of this reviewer who is mounting a campaign to see the Psalms used far more regularly and creatively in Baptist worship. Goldingay helps the reader to make connections between the life of the Psalmist, of the people of God living in a different culture and time, and their own life and situation. His commentary often begins by referring to something that has just happened on the world stage. Whilst hazarding the danger of dating the book too quickly, Goldingay models how the Psalms can help us to pray here and now holding global events before God in prayer. He helps the reader to think theologically. For example,

‘The presence of Psalm 22 in the Psalter as a prayer for people to pray makes it possible for us to ask, “Why?” and to utter our protest; the fact that Jesus takes up the question encourages us to assume that we can ask it to’ (p.71).

He helps the reader to live more faithfully too. His commentary on Psalm 27 is a call to recover the ‘one thing’ as the focus for living, which is an antidote to the chaotic and distracted living that mark the experience of many of us. He also weaves through the key Biblical preoccupation of ‘Who is God?’ rather than ‘What is God like?’ with skill and purpose.

I was tempted to say that this book is probably not for scholars who regularly immerse themselves in the text, but actually it is, along with the women and men sitting in our congregations week on week. It combines wisdom and hope, and will help our prayer life. It could well be used in sermon preparation on the Psalms, as a reading group book, as a study guide for the whole church, or as a personal devotional book. I commend it to you.

Sian Murray-Williams
Bristol Baptist College

Stanley E. Porter, Matthew R. Malcolm (eds.), *Horizons in Hermeneutics: A Festschrift in Honor of Anthony C. Thiselton* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 272pp.

Anthony Thiselton is something of a polymath (at least, within the relatively limited world of biblical scholarship). His abilities as a reader of texts and as an exegete are obvious to anyone who has consulted his commentaries on 1 Corinthians. Yet his major contribution to the field of biblical interpretation lies in the lifelong commitment to exploring the work of interpretation itself: hermeneutics. In major studies such as *The Two Horizons*, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* and *Hermeneutics: A Short Introduction*, Thiselton has introduced his colleagues, students and readers to the riches of hermeneutical theory and mediated the thought of central figures such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur to a wider audience.

This volume of essays in Thiselton's honour, with contributions from colleagues and former students, is written with the express intent to 'reflect on the impact of Professor Thiselton's work, and thereby to contribute to an exemplification, extension, or critical adjustment to his and related approaches' (ix). It is divided into three sections: Facing the Other; Engaging the Other; Projecting Possibilities. Broadly speaking, these headings correspond to Thiselton's own scholarly concerns for exegetical work on the biblical text as 'other', the significance of the 'effective history' or 'reception history' of the biblical text, and the transformative potential of the biblical text in the present. The resulting collection is a rich feast of reflections on different texts, interpreters and challenges. Whether there is enough coherence in the essays, beyond the concern to unpack aspects of Thiselton's thought, is up for grabs, in my view. But there are some good things nonetheless.

The first section contains essays by John Goldingay (on poetry and theology in Isa 56–66), Robert Morgan (Thiselton's interpretation of Bultmann's *Sachkritik*), Mark Chan (Paul's Christology), Matthew Malcolm (the nature of New Testament rhetoric) and Richard Briggs (Paul's reading of Numbers and the task of theological hermeneutics). For me the most helpful of these was Morgan's typically astute reading of Bultmann and his importance for understanding the task of New Testament interpretation today, along with Malcolm's delineation of the relationship between the forms of argumentation we encounter in the New Testament, their common source in early Christian proclamation, and their shared purpose in effecting transformation of believers.

The second section contains only three essays. James Dunn offers another account of the way in which the early Jesus tradition was transmitted (and thus interpreted) but with reference to John and *Gospel of Thomas*. For anyone interested in current

debates about the place of *Thomas* within early Christianity, it makes for essential reading. Dunn argues that the evidence suggests that John interprets the Jesus tradition ‘from the inside’ whereas *Thomas* does so ‘from the outside’ (pp.146–147). David Parris argues that a better understanding of metaphor (drawing in the notion of ‘conceptual blending’) enables us to discern the ‘incredible amount of cognitive cargo’ (p.174) that might be compressed into a phrase such as ‘Physician, heal thyself!’ (Luke 4.23). Finally, Richard Bell reflects on 1 Corinthians 2.16 as a resource for developing a ‘theology of the mind’. This is perhaps the most challenging and difficult essay in the collection, but the conclusion is fascinating: to have the ‘mind of Christ’ is not simply about sharing Christ’s values or perspective but rather taking Christ’s form in the world and thereby becoming ‘co-creators’.

The final section moves clearly away from any attempt to interpret a particular part of the biblical witness and the essays instead focus on the nature of the interpretative task itself. The stand out contributions here, in my view and for different reasons, are first Tom Gregg’s judicious account of what a ‘hermeneutics of love/*agapê*’ might look like, and how the process of Scriptural Reasoning (a developed method for enabling members of different faith traditions to read each others texts in conversation) might embody such hermeneutical commitments in a pluralist world. Then, Stan Porter’s critical treatment of the so-called ‘Theological Interpretation of Scripture’ movement, offers some provocative insights into the limitations of that movement not least from within the perspective of its own interpretative aims and commitments. It is something of an irony that this essay follows one by Stephen Fowl (a key contributor to the theological interpretation movement) on Scripture and a Divided Church which makes the important point that disagreement about interpretation need not compel ecclesial division, and that the current divisions within the church inevitably dull our ability to interpret Scripture faithfully. As I have argued elsewhere, Baptists have every historical and theological reason to affirm both proposals. A final essay, by John B. Thompson examines and compares the resources that Thiselton and Stanley Hauerwas offer in relation to the identity of Christian communities today.

A short introduction by the editors, brief biography of Thiselton’s scholarly career, and a helpful list of his publications over more than forty years, complete the volume. As a whole it forms a fitting honorary volume, and the individual contributions will undoubtedly be important in their respective fields. If you are interested in Thiselton’s work, or in looking at concrete examples of how sophisticated hermeneutical theory works itself out in relation to specific texts and issues, then you will find much here of value.

Sean Winter

Uniting Church Theological College, University of Divinity, Melbourne

Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 198pp.

Last year our church engaged in something called *the Community Bible Experience*. We committed to reading the whole of the New Testament in 40 days using a version that has been specially put together for the task by Biblica, the publishers of the NIV. Called *The Books of the Bible: New Testament*, the volume presents the whole of the NT shorn of chapter and verse divisions, stripped of sub-headings and laid out in a

single column. The reader is simply presented with the NIV text. Furthermore, the editors have attempted to put the books into a new order, based on date of production, author and possible geographical provenance. It makes for an exhilarating read.

The volume opens with Luke-Acts presented as a single text that gives an overview of the life of Jesus and his earliest followers that sees the action move from the margins of Israel to its capital, Jerusalem, and then on to the centre of the then known world, Rome. If readers wanted a single volume to read alongside the text presented this way, then they could do no better than to choose this book by Luke Timothy Johnson. What we have here is insight into Luke-Acts combined with a call to today's church to embody the prophetic persona of its lead character, namely Jesus himself.

Johnson focuses on Luke-Acts as a work of Christian prophecy that profiles the prophet at the heart of our movement in way that invites us to follow in his world-transforming footsteps. It is almost as exhilarating a read as Luke-Acts itself. The author opens by noting how strange it is that Luke's single-volume work has been divided; how puzzled Luke himself would be by the separation of the two parts of his work. But happen it did and Johnson says that his aim to read the two halves of Luke's account together to provide a single coherent guide to its themes.

Taking his cue from Cadbury's early twentieth century treatment, Johnson focuses on the theme of prophecy because, he argues, Luke portrays Jesus and the early apostles as prophets. Anyone reading Luke-Acts who is familiar with Israel's prophetic tradition would see Jesus and the apostles standing firmly within that tradition. While this may be obvious in regard to Jesus, Johnson argues that it is just as plain with regard to the early church. He argues that Luke characterised the church in terms of its 'prophetic manner of life – being led by the Spirit, sharing possessions, engaging in itinerant mission, exercising servant leadership, bearing powerful witness before religious and state authorities.' (p.4). Each of these phrases would provide chapters in a study of Luke-Acts. But Johnson goes further.

He argues that the canonisation of these texts mean that they speak God's word; 'in short, they are prophetic for every age of the church, challenging and calling it into question.' Two introductory chapters exploring the literary and then prophetic shape of Luke-Acts are followed by six chapters exploring the character of the prophet, then the prophetic spirit, word, embodiment, enactment and witness. The book itself, though immersed in up-to-date biblical scholarship is gloriously free of footnotes and references; there is even no bibliography. It seems to be Johnson's intention that Luke-Acts, properly placed in its context, is allowed to speak for itself. In many ways what Johnson produces is the very best kind of narrative criticism, allowing the story that Luke tells to draw us into God's story and find the shape of our lives in its text.

Although he does not use this language, Johnson presents Luke-Acts as a missional text. It does not merely recount the story of Jesus' mission followed by that of the early church, it presents it in such a way that we are offered a model of how to be missional in our own contexts. 'What would make a church prophetic in Luke's view is its total dedication to responding to the call of God in every circumstance, more than to cultivating institutional self-interest ... Whether small or large, simple or complex, local or universal, the essential character of the church must be the desire to answer to the living God' (p.70).

Luke-Acts calls us as individuals and communities to a life where we hang loosely to our structures, institutions and possessions, always alert the wind of the Spirit picking

us up and taking us to new places of mission. So Johnson invites us to see that ‘the single greatest countercultural act Christians perform is to worship together and proclaim that Jesus is Lord. To cease from the constant round of commerce and consumption, to resist the manipulation of media that insists that working and possessing defines worth, and to proclaim with the body language of communal gathering that Jesus, not any other power, is Lord is to enact the politics of God’s kingdom and to embody the prayer “your kingdom come.”’ (p.124).

Johnson urges us to see that Luke-Acts calls us to prophetic witness, the proclamation of the saving acts of God through Jesus – and not only in our churches, but also out in the market squares of our towns and cities, in the cultural centres of our societies. But it also calls us to embody and enact that witness in our corporate life.

This is a work of scholarship to put a spring in your step and set your mind racing with the possibilities that await any church willing to be taken by God’s Spirit into the life we see outlined in the pages of this ancient text. So with Luke-Acts in one hand and this excellent volume by Johnson in the other take your church on an adventure into the heart of God.

Simon Jones

Bromley Baptist Church and Spurgeon’s College

Jenni Williams, *God Remembered Rachel: Women’s stories in the Old Testament and why they matter* (London, SPCK: 2014), 156pp.

This book is framed by two key questions: Is the Old Testament sexist? And why should we read it? It sets itself the task of looking at the stories about women in the Old Testament, and asking how they can function as part of a contemporary faith journey. To this end, Jenni Williams engages carefully with the original contexts for the stories, in dialogue with a range of contemporary feminist writers. The list of women is interesting, from well known characters such as Leah, Rachel, Dinah, Ruth, Naomi, Deborah, Rahab, Hagar, Hannah, and Sarah, to the lesser known stories of Michal, the unnamed Levite’s concubine, and the woman of Shunem. The issues addressed through these stories are distinctively female, and unnervingly contemporary. The saga of the two sisters (Leah and Rachel) speaks of a loveless marriage, an eternal triangle, infertility, infidelity, a dominating father, and a weak husband. Themes of sexual violence and the objectification of women are found in the lives of many of the women whose stories are explored, and issues of surrogacy emerge in the offering of handmaidens to Jacob, and in the heartbreak of Hagar. Ruth emerges as a heroine in the style of Jane Austen’s Elizabeth Bennet, bound by societal convention yet undefined by it. Sarah is seen as a woman caught in a spiral of patriarchal oppression which ultimately defines her, making her a ‘monstrous victim’ who internalises ill-treatment of others, doing to them as others have done unto her. The murder and dismembering of the Levite’s concubine is the end result of premeditated gang-rape, and presents an uncompromising perspective on the silencing and objectification of the female person. For those who might be tempted to think that the Old Testament has little to say to women today, this book is an invitation to think again. These stories speak of tragedy, abuse, the imbalance of gender power, and the faithfulness of God, in ways that transcend their original ancient near eastern context. The voices and stories of these women survive, crying out against injustice,

subverting power, proclaiming faith, and resonating to our own world in ways that retain the ability to both challenge and encourage.

Simon Woodman
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

Mike Higton and Rachel Muers, *The Text in Play: Experiments in Reading Scripture* (Eugene, Origen: Cascade, 2012) x + 247pp.

This is an interesting and unusual book. Perhaps the key words in the title are ‘text’, ‘play’ and ‘experiments’. It is a book about the Bible, Biblical interpretation and hermeneutics, but never simply in the abstract, as throughout the book it focusses on specific texts, varying from the Genesis, Psalms, Luke’s Gospel and Romans. This is undoubtedly one of the strengths of the book, that the vast majority of the chapters are based on specific biblical texts which are explored at some depth, and sometimes, as in the later chapter on setting the mother bird free (Deuteronomy 22:6-7) the text is read as a way more figuratively about the reading of texts! There is then a ‘playful’ approach to these texts, where play is being used in a deliberately multi-layered way. For the authors it means approaching these biblical texts in a way that goes beyond a literal reading, but also in this way enables texts which might otherwise be deliberately passed over to be included, to be kept in play. And these approaches are experimental, enabling the authors to move in directions they have not been before, and encouraging the reader to take such a journey with them.

These experiments are focussed in three sections. The first is described as playing with the text. The six chapters here start with Augustine’s various readings of the parable of the good Samaritan, and are followed by discussions of the imagery of breastfeeding in 1 Peter, the injunction for women to be silent in 1 Timothy, sexual relations in Romans, 1, marriage in Ephesians 5 concluding with Psalm 2. The authors comment on the deliberate pattern, beginning with a less controversial text and an a familiar interpreter, moving on to ‘harder’ texts, before ending with what appears a more straightforward text which their play makes more problematic. Drawing on one particular scholar’s (David Clines) historical-critical approach the authors ponder what it means to read the psalm from the perspective of those who are now the vassal states subject to the king in Jerusalem, and held in chains.

During these chapters the authors do not offer a clear definition of what it means to ‘play’ with the text, but what does become clear is that for them such a definition does not exist. However we do build up a mosaic of their approach. Standing in the current of modern hermeneutics they are certainly shaped by reader-response theory and what they bring with them to the text, and on occasion draw on the reception history of particular texts. But equally they can draw on more literal meanings and more critical scholarship. They do not want to avoid hard and challenging meanings in texts but are equally very sensitive to the ways some texts have been experienced as oppressive rather than liberating. Playing with the text is not for them about finding definite answers, and certainly not one answer, true for all occasions (here again more narrative and reader-response approaches are influential). The authors themselves point out that this is not a systematic discussion of hermeneutical theory, but embedded in their practice of reading texts is a whole range of hermeneutical issues that the reader seems invite to ponder.

The second is around the theme of ‘Scriptural Reasoning’ a practice which has developed over the past twenty years often linked with David Ford, Professor of Divinity and Director of the Inter-faith Programme at Cambridge. The essence of Scriptural Reasoning is that texts are read in community by those of different faith traditions, normally as here, from Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions, with the aim of each participant offering hospitality to the others in terms of hearing how they read the text, and holding the differences. What the authors seek is ‘not the discovery of an answer but the opening up of a space for discussion and inquiry, for argument and exploration.’ (p. 88) Equally, Scriptural Reasoning does not begin with an agreed understanding of why or how such a process should happen or a shared hermeneutical approach to texts, it simply chooses to create the space to begin.

So this section begins with a consideration of Psalm 1 in which some of the traditional Christological readings shaped, for example, by Augustine in which the righteous man is read as Jesus Christ, are put alongside Jewish readings. In this example, this highlights the differences of approach within the Christian tradition, for more historical-critical readings have eschewed any Christological interpretation. This then leads to a chapter in which Scriptural Reasoning is described as the authors narrate a fictionalised account of an actual meeting of Scriptural Reasoning in which one of them participated, followed by a short chapter which looks at the practice from a more theoretical perspective. It argues that Scriptural *Reasoning* is the active process of exploring texts of the Scriptures of the three faiths to find ways of living with others and living in the world in which there is some kind of shared settlement, rather than simply a set of individual ones. It is a process of dialogue. The following chapter then seeks to both explain and illustrate the process by drawing on texts from the Hebrew Scriptures the New Testament and the Qu’ran, which explores place and hospitality and so the way that blessing and dialogue may happen together.

There are then five further chapters which each offer an example of approaches to Scriptural Reasoning based on texts, whether drawing on texts from the three traditions together, or a text from one tradition. These chapters offer examples when the principal reader of the text reads a text from their own faith tradition, helped by those from the other faiths, and also a text from a different faith tradition.

There is a deliberate journey through these chapters to move deeper into process, although most of the chapters make sense on their own as individual pieces, which generally they were before being brought together into the book. These chapters avoid some of the criticisms that can be levelled against Scriptural Reasoning, that it plays down genuine differences – the authors for example think that there can be a genuine Christological reading of Psalm 1, but one that is still open and hospitable to other readings rather than simply rejecting and replacing them.

The third shorter section draws, in some ways, these two strands together, and offers playful readings of another set of texts from the Hebrew Bible which are read in conversation with Jewish interpreters. The section is given an overall coherence by focussing on texts that consider the way humans relate to the natural world around them, and particularly animals. It begins with a fascinating reflection on Noah and Jonah, considers the Deuteronomy commandment to let the mother bird go, and explores both environmental ethics and hermeneutic practices, and ends by reflecting on the fact that a variety of Old Testament reference to animals would have been written and copied onto vellum made from animal skins. There is less here in this third section to make it something clear and progressive in its own right.

The book is at its best when it focusses on specific texts and offers some different yet insightful readings, so that even when a reader might not agree with the authors' interpretation of the scriptural text there is much to learn. It assumes some knowledge of hermeneutics and having that background is helpful to enter more deeply into the text, but the book could be read with little detailed knowledge of hermeneutical theory. Is their practice a helpful way of reading Scripture? Two chapters explicitly reflect on this from the particular Christian traditions of the authors, one from an evangelical charismatic Anglican perspective and the other from a Quaker background, in which both authors find significant points of contact and similarities between ways they have learnt to read Scriptural texts in their traditions and their current practice in the book. It would seem to be helpful to a reader in two clear ways. First it helps in the process of helping a reader recognise what she or he brings with them to any text and the assumptions which can be gently challenged by those who read from a different vantage point. Second it offers a way to engage with those of other faiths which does not try to pretend there is no difference or seek a nominal agreement, but offers space to hear the voice of another. This then seems a very helpful way forward.

Anthony Clarke
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Angus Paddison & Neil Messer (eds), *The Bible: Culture, Community, Society*, (London, Bloomsbury: 2013), 192pp.

Love it or hate it, it seems one cannot avoid it. Now into its fifth century, the Authorised 'King James' Version of the Bible remains a religious and cultural artefact without peer. In 2011, the year of its 400th anniversary, Oxford University Press reported it as their best-selling book. The AV wasn't the first Bible to be produced in English (Wycliffe, Tyndale, and others got there first), and it certainly isn't the most accurate, or the most up-to-date. But it is, probably, the most influential. However, whilst the text of the AV has remained constant for over four centuries, what people have done with it has altered dramatically. From hearing it read in worship, to engaging it in personal study, to the rise of the secular academy, to the contemporary discipline of Biblical Studies, what we 'do' with the Bible is far more fluid than the text itself.

This volume, edited and contributed to by Paddison and Messer, is the proceedings of a conference held in July 2011 at the University of Winchester, at which speakers and attendees explored the influence of the Bible, and particularly the AV, on culture, community, and society. The published essays are diverse and interesting: there will be something for most people in this volume. The question which unites these essays is, 'how can we operate with biblical dexterity and daring for the sake of our time?', or to put it another way, how can 'the text of life' and 'the text of the Bible' be read together?

The volume has three sections, which reflect the three emphases of the original conference. In the first, contributors seek to locate the contemporary cultural context within which the Bible is encountered. So David Fergusson explores the challenges of historical criticism, and the fluid and occasionally fraught relationship between the church and the academy. Richard Bell then addresses the tensions that are often cited when the Bible is read in a 'scientific age', offering an approach that takes both scientific and biblical accounts seriously. Ellen Davis engages the texts about Elijah,

and asks what it means to speak of ‘history’ in the way these ‘Iron-Age’ stories are encountered in the contemporary world. To this end she notes challenging parallels with our world: water shortages, the commodification of land, and the necessity for resource-sharing between the powerful and the powerless. Jacob Phillips reassesses the contribution of historical criticism, and through engagement with Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers a hermeneutical model which neither dismisses historical criticism, nor relies upon it to bolster theological assertions.

The second section explores what it means to read the Bible in the church and community, particularly regarding the way in which it shapes a collective vision for human communities by engaging imaginations and shaping collective responses. Zoë Bennett invites readers to imaginatively enter the world of the text, drawing on the story and work of John Ruskin. Ben Quash asks what it would mean to inhabit the biblical text as a ‘city’, with readers seeing themselves as citizens of the text, rather than as members of an ecclesial community. Matthew Prevett addresses the often controversial topic of biblical authority within the church, pointing to the active role of the Spirit as the mediator of authority.

The third section focuses on reading the Bible in the public sphere, raising questions of accountability, insight, and authority when the Bible is read by those of differing religious convictions. Gavin D’Costa and Peter Admirand explore the impact of pluralism on the way in which the Bible is read; addressing questions not only of divergent streams within Christianity, but also of readers who bring other perspectives to their engagement with the biblical text. Issues of anti-Semitism, Hindu and Islamic interpretations, and the insights of post-colonialism, feminist, and liberationist hermeneutics are addressed.

The final three essays explore the place of the Bible’s voice in public theology, particularly in engaging secular political debate. Andrew Bradstock proposes a ‘conversational’ hermeneutic, whilst Neil Messer and Angus Paddison address the core question of what, if any, authority the Bible may exercise in public policy debates. They explore this through two case studies from contemporary British politics, looking at the debates surrounding assisted dying, and human fertilization and embryology, concluding that the counter-testimony of scripture takes its place in the public world through the community that chooses to live and embody the story of scripture. Finally, W. Bradford Littlejohn offers a transatlantic perspective, tracing contemporary debates on the role of the Bible in social and political discourse to the ongoing influence of the early-modern Puritans.

This is a challenging and worthwhile book, which invites readers to think through what it means to inhabit the biblical text in and for our times. It suggests that a collaborative, community-based approach, is one which allows for a greater level of critical engagement than the ‘me and my Bible’ approach so beloved of some readers of the AV.

Simon Woodman
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Sean Winter (ed.), *Immense, Unfathomed, Unconfined. The Grace of God in Creation, Church and Community* (Melbourne: Uniting Academic Press, 2013), 378pp.

I guess it's to be expected that a book on the grace of God should be inadequate to the task. The title confesses as much – "immense, unfathomed, unconfined". The phrase is taken from one of Charles Wesley's anti-Calvinist hymns in which he deliberately uses the word 'all' eight times and lest the point be missed about a universal atonement which all are invited to appropriate by faith, he trumpets the words 'general', 'universal' and finishes with the couplet

Lift up the standard of thy cross,
And all shall own Thou diedst for all.

It is entirely appropriate to spell out the title in Wesleyan terms because clearly Norman Young, the subject honoured in this collection of essays, was a man of similar generous theology. He is described as openhearted, ecumenically committed and responsibly concerned for the integrity and care of creation. The contributors are mainly colleagues, past students and others who gathered to celebrate Young's eightieth birthday, and the 50th anniversary of his ordination. In that sense the book is a personal gift, acknowledging the indebtedness, affection and respect in which he is clearly held.

The essays are centred on the theme of Grace, and are grouped under four main organising perspectives, namely Biblical, Historical, and Methodist perspectives on grace, with a fourth section on The Life of Grace. A final three chapters of personal reflections include a brief account of Norman Young's own theological pilgrimage. As expected in such a gathering of papers the essays vary in thematic approach, in scholarly engagement and in the overall quality of the content. For readers not present at the conference, or to whom Young's life and work are unfamiliar, some chapters lack the more personal context which would give them relevance to wider readers.

The four essays which explore the biblical witness to the grace of God are each stimulating and helpful reflections on biblical text. The first essay by Suzanne Boorer, "Is the Priestly Creation Theology Relevant to the Church Today", offers an intriguing Old Testament hermeneutic in which the anthropocentric theological concerns of human createdness and the future of creation and humanity, are placed into the vaster context of new creation through the Lordship of the crucified risen Christ. Randall Prior's essay on "The Grace of God and a New Humanity" focuses on pastoral care as understood in the ministry of Jesus in Luke. This is a provocative and needed insistence that pastoral care is Christological, the continuing ministry of Christ through the redemptive gospel love expressed by a worshipping self giving community.

Sean Winter's piece on re-enacting grace in 2 Corinthians can be summarised in his own words: "God's grace is a transformative power, and thus the atmosphere of the new creation. Life lived with concern for the other, in mutual solidarity and support, marked by the characteristics of generosity, thanksgiving, suffering and joy, bears witness to the fact that the church in this new world, is, in fact, breathing." Neil Richardson's fine paper on Paul and a new ecumenism is both eirenic and challenging; in a pluralist, fragmented, and jagged edged world "divine grace...supremely in the Incarnation [is] boundary crossing and world transforming. All four biblical essays use that word, "transforming" a reminder perhaps that grace is

essentially and always, the activity of God, who is for life; that is why “grace” is not helpfully rendered as a stand alone term. Grace is always qualified and personalised in Christian discourse as “the grace of God”.

The six essays comprising the Theological Perspectives on the Grace of God reflect the diversity of interests within the Conference, and in truth they vary in interest and quality. Gerald O’Collins’ essay is a charming and thoughtful meditation on “Easter Grace”, in which the veteran Catholic theologian shows just why his own theological writings are so valued by students. The essay is studded with biblical references, and is a persuasive linking of Abelard’s description of grace as “Easter grace”, with the new life of the Christian which is a recapitulation of Christ’s Easter gracing of the world. This is a rich chapter and one of two personal favourites in the book. It gives theological and biblical content to Maria Boulding’s use of the word “Eastering” as shorthand for living in the life of the risen Christ, who lives in the believer and the believing community. “Grace in Two Theological Traditions” compares and contrasts Barth and De Lubac on grace, offering both a rapprochement and a differentiation in two major traditions which are not, or need not be, as irreconcilable as the history of the two traditions suggest. This too is an enlightening piece of ecumenical theology, of which Young would approve.

I have long been an admirer, and student, of Wesleyan theology, hymnody and spirituality so I looked forward to the essays in the section “The Grace of God in the Methodist Tradition”. There is a veritable renaissance of Wesleyan theology these past few decades, as that particular tradition has been going through its own “ressourcement” and restatement. The name of Geoffrey Wainwright is its own guarantee of quality, interest and weighted thought. His essay on Wesleyan hymnody and Chalcedon is a superb piece of constructive theology rooted in poetic forms and creedal formulae, contrasted and mutually informative. Here’s a sample I can’t resist giving:” When Paul Tillich was still a figure in twentieth-century theology I liked to say to students that Charles Wesley had captured first Tillich and then Chalcedon in just two lines: “Being’s source begins to be, / And God himself is born.” How good is that?

The other essays in this section deal with intra-faith love, responsible grace, Christian perfection, Eucharistic hymns, Wesleyan hermeneutics, and assurance of faith. Each of them touches on major Wesleyan themes, the most successful of them in my view Bruce Barber’s “Unlocking the Truth, Unsealing the Book” on Charles Wesley’s hymnal hermeneutics, and D’Arcy Wood, “Assurance of Faith: The Holy Spirit in the Hymns of Charles Wesley.”

The Grace of God and the Life of Faith section has five essays two of them quite specific to issues in the Uniting Church, theological education and ordination. “The Earth as the First sacrament” is a short but suggestive essay by Theodore Runyon whose book *The New Creation* is a substantial and persuasive restatement of Wesleyan theology for a world in ecological crisis and facing pluralist tensions as human cultural diversity splits along fault lines of ideological, moral and religious commitments. As a piece of practical, shrewd and downright important spiritual writing, John H Smith’s Grace and Grumbling is essential reading for those of us whose capacity for complaint is often greater than our disposition to gratitude. A reflection on obedience in the Rule of Benedict this touches on a disposition which starting as an irritant, can slowly or quickly turn toxic when it dominates the atmosphere of a community.

These essays cover the grace of God in creation, church and community. Some are more successful than others, but all of them honouring a scholar of considerable stature and esteem, reflecting his ecumenical spirit, theological passions and his long career in theological education.

Jim Gordon
Aberdeen

Stanley Hauerwas, *Without Apology: Sermons for Christ's Church* (New York: Seabury Books, 2013) xxxii + 169pp.

At my time of life, and given the number of cherished projects that remain uncompleted, I only agree to review a book if I would buy it and read it anyway either because of its importance and significance or (and not necessarily exclusive of the former) because I know I will enjoy reading it. There are few theological writers I enjoy reading as much as I enjoy reading Stanley Hauerwas (which makes me question whether I am a good choice to review this book). I know of no writer who engages and challenges to a greater degree and find myself more stimulated in my (rare) disagreements with him than in my agreements with not a few other theological writers.

Colin Gunton used to opine that you could always tell when a theologian had ceased to preach (or never started) – far too much that presents itself as academic theology at best remains inaccessible beyond the academy and, at worst, betrays a detachment from the Church's life and witness. Even in his most demanding work I would never hold Stanley Hauerwas guilty of such faults but even by his exemplary standards of challenging engagement this collection of sermons is a model of scriptural reflection, philosophical perception, and compelling argument. As the title of the collection suggests, these sermons, though thoroughly accessible, remain thoroughly demanding in their thoughtfulness, in their easy familiarity with the tradition, and in their uncompromising presentation of the claims of discipleship.

Though some of these sermons are linked by the place in which they were delivered, and though most follow the lectionary, readers will search in vain for a common link between them beyond their single author (preacher). Most of us who preach in various locations are grateful for the structure and discipline of the common lectionary but, while Prof. Hauerwas demonstrates extraordinary skill in integrating the passages set, I was left wondering on occasions by the tenuous nature of their relatedness (it must be possible to improve on this lectionary).

It is hard to review any collection of sermons or essays: it would prove tedious to comment on all and imbalanced to isolate one or two. But the introduction to this volume alone merits its cost and will strengthen the resolve of those who continue to believe in the centrality of preaching. Moreover, the collection ends with three 'other writings', on 'leadership', an 'open letter' to Christians beginning college, and on sex and Christian ministry. If you read nothing else of this volume read these essays – how I wish they had been there to read forty years ago.

John E. Colwell
Budleigh Salterton, Devon

Stephen Cherry, *Barefoot Prayers: A meditation a day for Lent and Easter* (London: SPCK, 2013), 133pp.

Cherry follows up his Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book of 2011, *Barefoot Disciple*, with an offering of daily prayers and meditations. What links these two books are not merely the title 'Barefoot' but a spirituality that is humble, vulnerable, embraces the divine and the mundane and the bodily. A key feature of the barefoot spirituality of *Disciple* was an openness to learning and change. *Prayers*, likewise encourages the reader to be open to God and the world around them and in this encounter experience the richness of change. It is therefore a welcome companion for those who seek to develop a Christian spirituality that pervades the whole of life including its materiality and everyday aspects.

While it is marketed as a Lenten or Easter book, Cherry himself notes that it was not written for Lent and only a few of the prayers have been written for specific days: the Sunday before Lent, Shrove Tuesday and Palm Sunday. It is therefore a book for all seasons and would work well as a morning reflection for individuals, couples, families or friends before entering the business of another day.

The book has a short introduction giving some brief thoughts on prayer. This, as is common with many books on prayer, is not a consideration of *how* to pray, but forms three short reflections on *what* prayer is. Like a good appetiser this wets one's appetite for more on this subject matter and it would be interesting to see Cherry develop these sketch thoughts into a book length treatment of what prayer is.

The rest of the book is divided into eight weeks of prayers and meditations. Each week starts with a short introduction to the theme around which the prayers for that week are gathered. I say prayers, but the line between what is a prayer and what is poetry is deliberately blurred by Cherry. This comes from his belief that there is a sacramentality to poetry and as such it not only conveys meaning but grace. His prayers for Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday are paradigmatic of this approach and invite the reader not simply to pray but to ruminate on the words and pictures he paints with them. Even if one does not share Cherry's sacramental understanding of the world and language his prayers will I think lead many closer to God.

His prayer for the Tuesday of week three titled *Listening Day* gives, I think, instructions on how we should read this book and presents a challenge to not only the business of our age but our addiction to instant results:

When reading, slow me down ...
Give me a sense of what lies
behind the passage I see.
let me eyes read between the lines,
around the words, above
and below the paragraphs.

This collection of modern day Psalms invites us to journey with Cherry on a path of honesty and grace. In reading his prayers we may not walk barefoot, but as we walk in Cherry's shoes we experience alterity from we shall be all the richer.

Brodie McGregor
University of Edinburgh

Helen Cameron, John Reader, Victoria Slater with Chris Rowland, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing: Pastoral Practice and Public Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2012), 160pp.

I was reading this important little book as our church wondered whether or not to allow the provision of a rough-sleeper facility on our premises; a family wanted to give the tribute to their mother at her funeral and I conclude four decades as a part/free time University Chaplain. It spoke to all three.

It attempts a number of things:

- It is an introduction to the use of the Pastoral Cycle and Theological Reflection and an illustration of how it could be put to work.
- It considers how we read Scripture in the context of the encounter with contemporary society
- It is primarily for Christians who have an 'authorised' ministry within church structures or exercise a 'chaplaincy' among various secular institutions and the former who straddle both.
- It introduces the notion of 'blurred encounter' by which is meant pastoral situations where boundaries of authority and responsibility are crossed and a Christian may feel compromised, unfamiliar, unclear of their contribution.
- It reflects on 'lived experience' from contributors to a 2-day consultation and explores some important events and situations e.g. an encounter between a faith-based charity and the NHS.
- It offers tentative suggestions as to the future of Practical Theology and the meaning of 'life in all its fullness' i.e. human flourishing.

It raises a number of issues

- It relies on a vague notion of 'Church' which is closer to centralised models rather the dispersed nature of Baptist churches. I was left unsure what it might make of 'gathered churches' and it could be taken as disparaging (p.1).
- It deliberately builds from a theology of Creation rather than a theology of Christ. It espouses 'we watch God at work and join in' as a missiological way of contemplation and action.
- It notes that the selected members of the consultation struggled to apply scripture. It sounded like the house-group experience where a passage of scripture is read and then the group gets on talking about everything else. Even the suggestion of the contributors as to where the consultation could have integrated Scripture more seems to amount only to an 'it happened to Jesus too' comparison. The follow-up reflection by Chris Rowland addresses this powerfully.

I was left wondering how their model of theological reflection could become part of the discernment patterns of local churches and the development of apologetics and discipleship courses. For this is too important to be left as a means of reflecting on ministerial practice. It could inform the role of mentors and support groups for such as NAMS and Ministry Refresher conferences.

In addition I wonder where Congregational Studies and such reflection on Public Theology can meet for their mutual benefit.

Two regrets:

There is an unfortunate typo on pg xv which invents a non-existent chapter seven which destabilises an otherwise excellent overview.

Unfortunately the concluding text does not answer the final question, what is human flourishing? It should read, what supports human flourishing? In answering that question it succeeds.

John Rackley
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John Roth (ed.), *Constantine Revisited: Leithart, Yoder and the Constantinian Debate* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 216pp.

Peter Leithart's polemical book, *Defending Constantine* (IVP, 2010), has had a much greater impact in North America than in Britain. Not only is the author based there, but the influence of the neo-Reformed movement is much stronger in the USA than elsewhere, and it is only perhaps in that context that his extraordinary proposal of a reconstituted Christendom is likely to be received with much enthusiasm.

Leithart sets himself three main tasks – to restore the reputation of Constantine I as a flawed but authentically Christian emperor; to undermine the authority of John Howard Yoder's writings and counter the growing influence of Anabaptism, and to advocate a restored form of Christendom as a preferred option to contemporary secular government.

Since the book's publication in 2010, a spate of rejoinders and reviews in journals and blogs have taken issue with its various claims or offered support. *Constantine Revisited* is a collection of essays, some previously published as articles, by a mixture of theologians and historians, which offer the most penetrating set of responses to Leithart's book thus far. These essays examine and critique Leithart's reading of history, his understanding of Yoder, his approach to the relationship between theology and history, and his proposal for a restored Christendom. There is also a very brief response by Leithart.

Although the several authors explore different facets of *Defending Constantine*, there is inevitably some overlap and some of the later chapters add little to what has already been written or investigate increasingly abstruse points. The first two chapters by John Nugent and Alan Kreider are, in my view, the most accessible, wide-ranging and significant. But all of the authors find aspects of Leithart's work to affirm alongside their disagreements with him. And the tone of the essays is respectful and gracious – not always the case in theological debates and certainly not always the case in disputes between Reformed and Anabaptist Christians.

Without trying unduly to homogenise these responses to Leithart, it is probably legitimate to conclude that significant holes appear in his historical summary (which, by his own admission, is based on secondary rather than primary sources) that undermine the rest of his work; some of his criticisms of Yoder can be substantiated but not enough seriously to threaten his remarkable influence that extends well beyond the Anabaptist community; and, although his proposal for a reconstituted Christendom is ill-conceived, Leithart has raised some important questions about the

future of western societies.

Defending Constantine is a significant contribution to a neo-Reformed pushback against what is perceived to be the growing influence of Anabaptism in North America and other western nations. This pushback seems slightly bizarre in light of the very limited impact of Anabaptism in most contexts, but Anabaptist perspectives have frequently appeared threatening regardless of their actual influence. Leithart is also a spokesperson for those who cannot regard the demise of Christendom (including its informal American version) as anything but a disaster, opening the door to godless secularism, and fail to recognise the opportunities of post-Christendom. *Constantine Revisited* is a helpful and measured response by scholars from Anabaptist and other traditions.

Stuart Murray Williams
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John Hull, *The Tactile Heart: Blindness and Faith* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 152pp.

This is a collection of all but two previously published items which surveys the work of John Hull over two decades. In addition he offers a commentary on what he has written and how his views have changed.

This book charts the way in which becoming blind altered the way he thought about God, faith and education.

There are chapters on the use of scripture and the way blindness is used as a metaphor both in the gospels and by hymn writers. His trenchant critique of the way in which Jesus could use 'blindness' as a synonym for careless or stupid or stubborn attitudes goes beyond that particular issue to how Scripture is used in a different context. Can we still use the metaphor even if we acknowledge its abusive tone? Certainly liturgists should recognise that some well-known hymns should be removed from the canon. A dramatic rewriting of one of the verses of 'Amazing Grace' makes his point

The core of the book provides substantial reflection on the implications of blindness for both spirituality, theology and the nature of being a person.

He reflects as do others like Vanstone, Pailin and Frances Young that to live in the world of disability questions common assumptions about how we are made in the image of God. Is the broken body of Christ the perfect image of God?

The notion of 'world' is important to Hull. To live in the world of blindness is not an alternative world to the world of the sighted. There is One World. We inhabit differently. There is no hierarchy of experience only the empire of the sighted which controls and awards itself priority.

His final piece returns to the field of education from which he set out originally. He asks the reader to ponder whether blindness is a characteristic or distinct human state. He affirms the latter. He argues that a teacher needs to be able to enter into the different worlds which those who are being taught may inhabit. He writes: in so doing a teacher may become a trans-world professional and to that extent, a better teacher.

Perhaps that hope could be extended to the leader of worship, the interpreter of scripture and the preacher too.

John Rackley
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Stephen Pattison, *Saving Face. Enfacement, Shame, Theology (Explorations in Pastoral, Practical and Empirical Theology; Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 206pp.*

I was half-way through writing a book about the psychology and theology of shame, a subject that had hitherto been largely ignored by theologians and psychologists alike, and my son had asked me to join him at the old SPCK bookshop on the Euston Road. He was starting a theology degree and wanted to buy some books with his father. As we walked into the shop there prominently displayed was newly published by Cambridge Stephen Pattison's *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology*. I took a deep breath, realising that Pattison had written the book I might have, went back to the drawing board and completed *With Unveiled Face. A Pastoral and Theological Exploration of Shame* (DLT, 2005) for a different audience. I was greatly helped by Pattison's work in writing that book, as I would have been had he already published *Saving Face* (although I think I'd lay claim to the original idea of the face as a metaphor and lens through which to study shame.)

While shame is certainly a strong theme of *Saving Face*, it is by no means the only theme explored. Rather than being a book about shame seen through the lens of the 'face', this is rather a book about the face, and the search for a restoration of this image in contemporary Christian theology and practice, in which shame plays a significant part. His earlier work remains Pattison's book 'about shame.'

Faces are the windows on the soul, 'the centre of the self, the entrance to the person.' (p.3) So, Pattison continues 'If the pastoral task is to help to include those who are rejected and marginalised within God's loving gaze – to help them find face before God's face and so to find face ourselves and maybe together to have the possibility of seeing God face-to-face – then we need to think much more carefully about faces of all kinds and to take them, whether metaphorically or physically, more seriously.' This book does just that: it takes the face seriously.

Part one is devoted firstly to the human face: its ubiquity, its functions and the loss of face that comes with shame (ch.3) and the ambivalence that is always attendant when we seek to know the 'other' through the face (using, as I did, the work of Levinas). Pattison focuses upon the facial characteristics that bring shame: disfigurement, the immobility of the stroke victim; and the difficulties that arise in some conditions, such as autism, to read other's faces.

The second part takes the theological turn, with a discussion of the face in the Bible (ch.5), and then the tradition of a thick seeing of the divine life up until Thomas Aquinas (ch.6) where this reaches its zenith. Chapter 7 explores why this vision was lost, and in chapter 7, how a more positive approach might emerge. In the closing chapter the theme of shame re-emerges with a discussion of practices that are more inclusive.

This is a book that synthesises theology, praxis and the physical reality of our enfaced existence. Read it alongside David Ford's *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* and

a close attention to 2 Corinthians 3 and 4, and you will mine a rich seam of theological and pastoral enquiry.

Paul Goodliff
Baptist Union of Great Britain

James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 198pp.

This latest book by James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, appears as the second volume in a projected trilogy of works that engage critically with the implications of liturgical anthropology for a renewal of the ways in which we understand Christian worship and spiritual formation. Although the main aim of this book is stated simply as “the renewal of Christian practice” (xvii), Smith also endeavours to formulate a new research agenda for scholars working in the fields of the philosophical theology and the sociology of religion.

The most suggestive practical proposals made in this book are concentrated in the introduction, in which Smith discusses the implications of his “pedagogy of desire” for the way we conceive the task of Christian formation, particularly in relation to theological education. The key anthropological insight that underlies Smith’s thinking is the notion of human beings as “liturgical animals” or “as creatures who can’t *not* worship and who are fundamentally formed by worship practices” (p.3).

Concerning the task of theological education, Smith argues that the mission of the Christian university should be envisaged more in terms of transforming character, rather than disseminating information. He thus advocates “a holistic education that not only provides knowledge but also shapes our fundamental orientation to the world” (pp.4-5). This is a compelling (if not altogether original) thesis, which Smith articulates with erudition and vigour.

This point about the formational imperative of theological education will resonate with lecturers and pastors, who are tasked with teaching students and congregations, who sometimes seem to regard Christianity as a list of propositional truth claims that we believe in or a system of beliefs or intellectual ideas to which we assent. Seeking to refute these unexamined assumptions, Smith argues in favour of an alternative anthropology that privileges the role of affectual modes of being and perception (i.e. love, imagination and pathos), as opposed to rational calculation, as the primary factors that govern our pre-critical orientation to the world. Smith thereby issues a salutary reminder that anthropological explorations of the human condition must go beyond a rational analysis of existing empirical ‘facts’ and take seriously the way that dreams, visions and the imagination shape and determine our being-in-the-world.

Addressing the issue of theological education directly, Smith asserts that the efforts of Christian institutions of higher learning must be directed towards not merely producing thinkers with a Christian worldview, but forming agents with a kingdom mission (p.12). Instead of being fixated on questions of knowledge and worldview, theological education should be conceived as a holistic and integrated task that is directed towards the transformation of those “material practices that shape the imaginative core of our being-in-the-world” (p.15).

This emphasis on liturgical practice and the transformation of the way that we relate to the material world corresponds well with some of the defining features of incipient postmodern theology, which criticises the intellectual idolatry of modern theology and rejects both absolutism and relativism as false dichotomies posited by the idolatrous pretensions of the flawed Enlightenment Project. In this sense there is a deep affinity between Smith's "pedagogy of desire" and the postmodern mysticism of Pete Rollins, who has skilfully exposed the ways in which our beliefs are revealed more in our material existence (how we live) than in our abstract ideals (what we profess).

Having set out these premises in the introduction, the remaining chapters are directed towards the elucidation of the philosophical principles that undergird this conception of liturgical formation. In chapter 1, Smith uses the notion of "erotic comprehension" as a theoretical point of departure from which to castigate the captivity of modern theology to a flawed anthropology that falsely privileges the intellect to the detriment of the imagination and disregards the narrative matrix within which Christian worship and formation are situated.

Unfortunately, in chapters 1 and 2 the argument becomes unnecessarily convoluted and at times quite repetitive. It is clear from the introduction that Smith was sensitive to the charge of "anti-intellectualism" that was levelled by some critics at the first volume in the series (*Desiring the Kingdom*). It appears, however, that in his eagerness to preclude such criticism of this second work, he has overcompensated by overwhelming the reader with a morass of theory derived from the opaque insights of phenomenology and existential philosophy. This reviewer was not convinced that Maurice Merleau-Ponty or Pierre Bourdieu contributed anything of particular value to the discussion concerning the transformative efficacy of liturgical practice.

Thankfully, this kind of repetitive, long-winded theorising does not detract from the overall quality of the book. The second part of the book, which is much more concise, relevant and lucid, offers a rich repository of original insights. The reflection on how narrative infuses life with meaning and the ways in which story-laden practices determine the co-ordinates of our imaginative engagement with the world is particularly insightful. This section also contains a cogent definition of the term, "liturgies" as "social practices that capture our imaginations by becoming the stories we tell ourselves in order to live" (p.139). Liturgy refers to ritualised practices, which fundamentally transform how we relate to our material reality as beings-in-the-world. The *telos* of liturgical practice is the inculcation of virtues that empower human beings with the ability to reconfigure their material existence.

As already noted, the book is not without certain shortcomings. Although this book is a welcome addition to the scholarship on theological education and makes encouraging moves away from the fixation with "intellect" and "worldview", Smith writes from a Reformed perspective and his conclusions reflect the emphases (i.e. "desire" and "accommodation") of this particular tradition. He also writes for a primarily North American audience and his illustrations are mainly drawn from that context. Another gripe that I have with this book is the author's repeated use of the word, "And", to begin his sentences. Accepting that it might sometimes be appropriate on rare occasions to use a conjunctive in this way, there seem to be far too many instances of it in this book.

This persuasive and insightful book consolidates Smith's position as one of the leading voices in current conversations on the cultural significance of theology. This book should be studied with interest and profit, particularly by pastors and teachers

who are concerned about how imaginative liturgical practice can contribute to the reinvigoration of worship and spiritual formation in our churches and theological colleges.

Joshua Searle
Spurgeon's College

Brian Brock and John Swinton (eds.), *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 528pp.

Roy McCloughry, *The Enabled Life: Christianity in a Disabling World* (London: SPCK, 2013), 144pp.

The theology of disability is experiencing something of a surge, both in terms of new publications and new courses of study - and hopefully this increasing interest in the subject is also indicative of greater practical awareness at the level of church and society. Here are two books on the theme.

Both books deliver an overview of disability theology, but aimed at very different readerships. If you are a student, pastor, or interested party, then McCloughry's concise volume will give you some insights into the key areas and issues, with a grounding personal dimension from his own experience of living with epilepsy. If, on the other hand, you are already familiar with the theological dimensions of the disability debate, you might enjoy a voyage through Brock & Swinton's *Reader*, which is a collection of essays by different writers, analysing some of the 'giants' on whose shoulders we stand and offering a selection of excerpts from each source.

I read through the McCloughry in a couple of hours and found it accessible, well written, and thoughtful. It does not offer detailed theological analysis although it is definitely not short on profundity, and charts the way to greater depths for the interested reader. It begins with a very short but helpful chapter on the nature of power, which McCloughry locates in what we perceive socially as 'normal'. He clearly describes the way in which *inclusion* is *delusion* if it means only that 'abled' society looks for ways in which those with disabilities can access the 'normal' world, which is designed for those who do not have disabilities. This is one-way traffic. True inclusion must mean that the 'non-disabled' (and who exactly are they?) also enter the world of disability. This idea underpins the whole book, which ends with a dialogue between McCloughry and Jean Vanier, whose l'Arche communities embody the principle of participative egalitarian living.

McCloughry describes the experience of having a seizure and how that event can destroy a life and a career because it is misunderstood by wider society. In subsequent chapters he explores how disability can become linked to assumptions of morality because 'normal' is presumed to be good, and to be the arbiter of human experience. He dips into our understanding of creation in the image of God; into the ethics of eugenics; into healing and cure; and into the way in which communities can become 'enabling' rather than disabling. There is a good reading list at the end, which includes some recent publications and helpful endnotes of key points.

The Brock & Swinton *Reader* is a substantial tome and not intended for a single sitting. It begins with the early church fathers and makes its way through the scholastics, reformers, enlightenment thinkers, and the 20th century German

theologians to the present day - including contemporary perspectives from Reinders, Vanier and Hauerwas. Each chapter is an analysis of a key theologian with respect to disability, substantiated by significant extracts from that key thinker. The *Reader* is intended to 'plug the gap' of the historical Christian perspective on disability and to address the dangers inherent in perceptions of 'normal' or 'ideal' humanity.

The book's timeline spans almost two millennia, and attitudes towards, and experience of, disability have of course changed enormously over that period. In the introduction the editors defend the volume against the difficulties of trying to track a 'modern' issue across such a span, and I believe their project to be largely successful, given the editors' caveats.

In a few of the chapters I personally felt that the search for the disability theme was stretched - for example, in some of the early church chapters, in which the Christian contribution to 'disability' issues is little more than a general attitude to human perfection or social responsibility; or the chapter on Julian of Norwich (which, for me, collapsed disability into suffering). As stated above, the editors explicitly warn readers *against* trying to read modern disability issues into the past, and invite us to see the tradition of the church not as an inert deposit but as something that lives and informs the present. The temptation is to be sucked into trying to eisegete these ancient texts. Guilty!

Ideally, you need to read the book and take your pick. Perhaps it will help if I identify a few of my personal highlights. The chapter on Hegel is fascinating, since Hegel was often in his writings derogatory in his attitude to people with disabilities; yet the author, Martin Wendte, works hard to rehabilitate Hegel's philosophy so that a more sympathetic analysis of disability can be uncovered. Does he succeed? Read it and see.

I also loved the chapters on Calvin, Bonhoeffer and Barth: we always want to know what they said, don't we? Bonhoeffer's interest in Bethel, a village for the 'weak and fragile' which he visited in 1933, led him to reflect on the revelatory nature of disability, sickness and suffering, and the nature of true community. In Bonhoeffer's response I was strongly reminded of Vanier's approach at l'Arche. The chapter contrasts Bethel with Buchenwald, where a very different view of weakness prevailed - a fascinating and deeply disturbing theological comparison. I also particularly warmed to Bonhoeffer's warning that presumed benevolence 'to the weak' is unchristian - being condescending rather than evidencing humility. This view of disability is still common in Christian circles today: we 'do good' to people thinking we are fulfilling Christ's command to love, when actually love is not about beneficence and power but about genuine sharing and mutuality, entering the world of the other.

The chapter on Vanier by Hans Reinders is superb, and I will be digging into that for sermons and papers for a while yet. I am personally challenged by Vanier's remark that l'Arche has to be lived before it is understood, and what that means for the community of the church and its choices and preferences in today's world.

I could go on, but I would rather leave it to you to go digging in this particular goldmine.

Sally Nelson
Wetherby Baptist Church

Benjamin Myers, *Salvation in my Pocket: Fragments of Faith and Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), x + 145pp.

This short book is a collection of 55 brief reflections. Arranged in alphabetical order, it covers a multitude of topics. The reader turns over the page, suddenly finding themselves captivated by a tale of Karl Barth's arrival in heaven, or instead the author being chatted up in a bar, before they themselves are being enriched by a reflection on the Psalms. There are pieces on childhood here, days at the beach, the library, and – a personal favourite – the abhorrent nature of the expert cyclist. Yet despite its almost scattergun approach, there is genuine consistency: the intimacy of faith and prayer, of sorrows and struggles, of joy and peace, embraced in the conviction 'that beneath the surface of things there lurks an invitation, gentle and alluring'; the book feels haunted by Christ.

Each of the 55 reflections – both the hits and the misses – is a carefully crafted celebration of the particular. Readers are guaranteed to come across a treasure or two, a nugget that will render their efforts of lasting value. And Myers is most definitely a wordsmith. He writes wonderfully. At one stage, he describes love as 'a mode of attention stretched out across time', and it is clear from his work that we are in the company of a writer who is deeply attentive to the world, in love with the creation, sitting before his life, like a monk would an icon. There is no argument to critique here, no unconscious agenda to reveal. It is simply a work in spirituality: a life shaped as a whole, oriented towards the ordinary, confident that therein can be found the holy; a gentle reflection on the joy of life, sorrowfully lived. All it lacks is humour.

Benjamin Myers will be well known to many of us already. His blog, Faith and Theology, is one of the most popular theology blogs around. Much of the material in *Salvation in my Pocket* has been drawn from his blog, though – to my mind – Myer's material works much better in print. This is because the internet is too busy, too slippery, too superficial to bear the weight of his words. Their beauty is held better by the printed page, where it feels as if the words have been written by hand, lovingly crafted into existence with notebook and pen. This is therefore a rare book. It should be carried around, transforming a bus journey, a waiting room, a park bench or those five wasted minutes between the grind of appointments. Because, wherever it is read, *Salvation in my Pocket* will help us to pray.

Lincoln Harvey
St Mellitus College, London

Clint C. Bass, *Thomas Grantham (1633 – 1692) and General Baptist Theology* (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2013), 242pp.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the recent Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Day Conference at which this book, along with two others, were officially launched. Despite being a highly significant figure in his own lifetime – he did meet with the King on several occasions – Grantham's life and theology has not received that much attention and analysis from Baptist historians.

In this study, Clint Bass attempts to bring Grantham, and the world of the seventeenth century General Baptists, back to the fore. This is not an autobiography in the traditional sense and Bass cleverly uses Grantham and his theology as a focal point

for a wider study of General Baptist thought and practice in the seventeenth century. Chapters are devoted to General Baptist ecclesiology, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Laying of on Hands, General Baptist Soteriology and the Godhead. Whilst Grantham is the prime subject of the study, this style of publication gives the reader the chance to see the man and his theology within the wider denominational and historical context.

If viewed from a distance Grantham could be seen as an early would-be ecumenist. He approached the Particular Baptists about the possibility of greater cooperation and between the two denominations and he did make overtures to the Church of England in an attempt to develop closer relations between the two denominations, however in reality Grantham's views were far more complicated. His attempts to draw Baptists and Anglicans together were based around the desire for the Anglicans to correct their problem doctrines and become more like General Baptists – this is certainly not ecumenism as we now understand it. Similarly, despite desiring closer ties with Particular Baptists on one hand, he could also be highly critical of them and even refused to share communion with fellow General Baptists if they differed from him on the thorny issue of the laying on of hands, an issue which was of such importance in the seventeenth century that an entire chapter is devoted to it. As Bass writes in his conclusion, "His overtures of greater unity were offset by other biblical convictions" (p.213).

For those with little prior knowledge of the book's subject, chapter one provides an excellent overview detailing the early life of Grantham. This provides a good foundation before the discussions of his theology in the remaining chapters. Despite coming being of "humble standing" (p.17) and not receiving any formal education, Grantham became very well read and even learnt Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He was baptised in 1652 in Boston, Lincolnshire, but was in fact converted a number of years before whilst attending a paedo-baptist congregation. After taking up his first pastorate in 1656, Grantham then endured a number of years of persecution, including during both the interregnum and the reign of Charles II. Bass argues that his views on Church of England often fluctuated, depending on how much persecution he was facing at the time.

Whilst chapter three is dominated by a discussion the 'Granthamite' and wider General Baptist view on baptism, the latter part on the chapter which looks at the Lord's Supper is particularly interested. Grantham was a strict Biblicist with regards to not just the theology of the Lord's Supper, but also its practical administration, for example, if the bread was not actually broken during the administration of the Lord's Supper it rendered the ordinance illegitimate. Grantham viewed the Lord's Supper it as "...a visible preaching of the word" (p.96), further underlining the importance it held in for him.

Grantham was truly a giant of seventeenth century General Baptist life and thought, and was clearly respected beyond his own denomination. He, like many pastor-theologians of his day, often engaged in protracted pamphlet debates with colleagues and opponents with whom he differed on both major and minor theological issues, and he worked tirelessly to fight the false doctrines which had invaded some sections of the General Baptist community. His involvement in the protracted debates between leading General Baptists about the person of Christ is well documented in chapter six.

This is an excellent publication, which helps fill a significant hole in Baptist history. The book is well-presented and well-researched. The structure of the book,

interweaving the life and theology of Grantham alongside the wider General Baptist scene, is an interesting way of presenting the material, which has clearly been meticulously researched by Clint Bass who should be widely commended on producing such a fine study.

Ian McDonald
Birmingham City University

Michael Bochenski, *Transforming Faith Communities: A Comparative Study of Radical Christianity in Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism and late Twentieth Century Latin America* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 286pp.

In this consideration of radical theologies, Michael Bochenski brings together insights from what look like two very different contexts and exploring them in parallel, uses each to illuminate the other.

Since both emerge from contexts very different from our own immediate one here in the UK, the insights gained come fresh and creatively.

Given the distance from our situation of the two contexts; 16th century reform, in particular the radical reform of the east of Europe and the Roman Catholic church of Latin America in the 20th c, Bochenski does an excellent job of making both accessible to the non-specialist – and more than that, interesting and challenging.

The links, parallels and connections that he traces between Liberation theology and Anabaptist theology are explored by topic and context rather than chronology, and he takes his reader through matters including the way in which people considered and responded to violence, the nature of communities and the relationship of Christian communities to the whole social context, and questions to do with evangelism and the nature of the gospel. Some of the links that he uncovers are surprising, especially those to do with violence and with involvement in the wider society; using the breadth of the Anabaptist story, including material that has been largely neglected, relating to the eastern part of the movement, he presents a more nuanced understanding than we are sometimes given.

It is an engaging read, offering new insights into each theology, and, even more significantly, into our own situation, and the ways in which rethinking some of what we might assume can open new possibilities and offer new resources.

This is not an “easy” read; it involves concentration, and taking ideas seriously, as well as being open to learning new situations. But it is a deeply satisfying one, broadening horizons and offering creative ways for congregations that have a withdrawn, and sometimes isolationist heritage to engage with the wider world in theologically sustainable ways.

Ruth Gouldbourne
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

John W. de Gruchy, *Led into Mystery: Faith seeking answers in life and death* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 288pp.

Human beings tend to have a fascination with death and Christians are no exception. Christian publishers continue to commission material at the popular end of the market, offering us the ‘memories’ of people who (they claim) have been clinically dead and permitted to see some of the secrets of the afterlife. Here, of course, it is the mysterious nature of what lies beyond that is key: the attraction of the unknown that we must all face. Hence our fascination, despite scepticism and the difficulty of establishing any convincing basis for the claims that are made.

So it was with a degree of caution that, having been asked to review de Gruchy’s book, I discovered that its topic is life, death and mystery. I imagined that it would be free from more gaudy claims and might take one of two forms. Either it would be a first-person exploration of the topic as part of the grieving process or that this would be a theological reflection upon mortality (the author has published previously on the topic of humanity).

De Gruchy, who is a South African theologian, achieves something rather remarkable with this book. While grief for his son Steve, who drowned at the age of 48, undoubtedly informs, steers and drives this theological enquiry, this is not a maudlin self-examination or just the exposure of a raw and understandable emotion. Rather, this tragic event creates the scene for a scholarly exploration about the meaning of life and death, yes from the perspective of Christianity but also in tandem with a scientific enquiry about human existence. For in bringing his theology of mystery into dialogue with neuropsychology, the author explores the boundaries and distinctions between body, mind and soul and whether the concepts of mystery and hope are uniquely human. While there are indeed references to the narrated experiences of those who claim to have temporarily moved beyond life into ‘life’, this is a serious theological study.

At the heart of the book is an exploration of the word “mystery.” While the word has many interpretations in modern English, the author suggests that mystery is one of the most important keywords of Christianity and its theology.

In an age when we are all conditioned to look at any topic through a scientific, empirical lens, how should Christians deal with the mystery that lies on the edges of human experience and knowledge? This book’s title derives from Karl Rahner’s comment that theology is about being led back into mystery, revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the creative presence of the Spirit in the life of the world. De Gruchy urges the reader to enter an exploration of this in depth: to be bold enough to explore mystery through faith, myth, parable, poetry, the novel, music and art.

Ultimately the author does not leave the reader at the point of death but, acknowledging that death is to be confronted by all of us, he asks what it means for us to live now with hope when so many of the forces that shape our destiny are hidden in mystery and not susceptible to scientific measurement and investigation. For he contends that we are most truly human when we engage with mystery, accompanied by hope and faith.

Ivan King
Church from Scratch, Southend-on-Sea

Esther D. Reed, *Theology for International Law* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 350pp.

Do read this book if you want to see how high quality Christian theology can respond to topical problems such as: the use of torture (chapter 3), whether the traditional just war criteria are inapplicable to the ways in which the “war” against terrorism is being fought (chapter 4), how the idea of humanitarian intervention has become a justification for war (chapter 5), whether Christians have a special calling to love their fellow citizens (chapter 6) and how the universal claims of Christianity and Islam intersect with those of human rights (chapter 7). Reed’s discussions of each of these topics are illuminating and insightful.

Reed calls her theological approach to these questions Protestant Thomism. This is not, however, the Calvinist Aristotelianism of seventeenth and eighteenth century Scotland (described by Alasdair McIntyre in chapter XII of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*) but an attempt at a Barthian reading of Aquinas’s natural law.

Don’t read this book if you are looking to see how Barth’s later theology denies his own (in)famous *Nein* to natural law in his debate with Brunner. That is not the route Reed takes. Don’t read this book if you are looking to see a defence of the now dominant reading of Aquinas according to which the natural law is discerned as a result of general revelation rather than through the use of *unaided* natural reason. Reed takes this for granted. Don’t read this book if you want to know how Protestants should react to the New Natural Law theory of Boyle, Grisez and Finnis. Reed doesn’t discuss it.

What she offers is not a theology *of* international law, but rather some theological insights *for* international law. What she says about the topics she discusses is well-informed, up-to-date and illuminating. Her discussion of how the rhetoric of humanitarian intervention is used helped me to see why Russian propaganda for the annexation of Crimea, which occurred as I was reading the book, was couched in terms of protecting the rights of Russian speakers.

I would suggest, however, that if you do read the book you begin with the concluding theses. It is here that Reed provides her answers to the proponents of Realpolitik and her most powerful demonstration of how Christian theology still has important things to say to the politicians, peace-makers and people who come into contact with international law.

David McIlroy
Spurgeon’s College

Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis (eds.), *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church* (Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology; Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 238pp.

In 2002 Jeff Astley published *Ordinary Theology*, which argued that theology (academic and ecclesial) needed to take more seriously and listen more carefully to the ordinary ‘God-talk’ of Christians in church congregations who had received no formal theological education.

Ten years on from that book, this collection continues that conversation in two ways. The first part of the book looks at ordinary theology as a project and offers analytical and theological perspectives upon it. The longer second half of the book provides a number of examples of research done into congregations and the ordinary theology that is expressed.

This is a fascinating group of essays, exploring the nature and nurture of Christian belief at a local level. It is a (wake-up) call to listen carefully to the way Christian faith is articulated amongst those many of us serve and ministry. Whilst we must continue to read Barth, Gunton, Moltmann, Hauerwas, Coakley, at the same time, we must not be ignorant or dismissive of faith in a more 'ordinary' tongue. Anthony Lees-Smith explores the difference between a 'father tongue' (read academic theology) and a 'mother tongue' (ordinary theology), arguing we must take the latter more seriously. Jeff Astley argues we need to acknowledge with more weight where people are and begin in theological reflection, rather than an act of bulldozing to the ground, and so establish a genuine conversation. Astley talks about academic theology as 'extraordinary' theology.

The second half of the book demonstrates ordinary theology in practice. Several of chapters are tasters of broader pieces of work, some published, some forthcoming. To highlight just a few: Ann Christie explores the soteriology of Jesus as exemplar that she found dominated in her study of ordinary Christology. Chapters from Andrew Rogers and Andrew Village explore the Bible; Rogers in terms of congregational hermeneutics and Village in terms of reading and how 'ordinary reading' is being understood by scholarship. Other chapters cover eating, worship, prayer, learning and occasional church-goers.

For the minister, this book will encourage you to listen carefully to your congregation and to think more intentionally, for example, about what is communicated in terms of how the Bible is read, preached, interpreted, what is sung and prayed. For the student, this book will challenge you to see the gap between academy and church in terms of God-talk and to see the tension and assumptions made. I am in no doubt that studies and research into ordinary theology will continue to grow and that this will produce both interesting and exciting conversations at the interface between ordinary and extraordinary theology.

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

David Nixon, *Stories from the Street: Towards a Theology of Homelessness* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 202pp.

I was interested to read this book as part of my current work includes listening to stories from the street. Eighteen months ago I became chaplain to a day centre for rough sleepers in West London and to hostels for those with long term alcohol dependency, those coming out of prison and ex-service personnel who have been homeless. Overall, I was disappointed.

As its title suggests the raw material of the book largely comes from interviews with homeless or recently homeless people. Eleven structured and in depth interviews were held, together with some facilitated contextual bible study with a group of homeless

people. However the book began life as a PhD, and this clearly shows. Part One of the book, 'Methods and Mapping' outlines the methodology used together with a theological and sociological basis for it. These are largely drawn from liberation theology and understandings of story. This section is not an easy read, and if the author was hoping the ordinary person, perhaps volunteering in a Churches Winter Night Shelter, or the Christian employed in a homeless charity wanting to think through their faith, would read this book then I fear they will give up here.

Much more readable is Part Two, 'Results'. A first chapter in this section looks at the current context of homelessness with a useful brief history of homelessness and housing in the UK. A useful overview and summary, one difficulty is that the housing and homelessness scene is currently in constant flux. As government welfare reforms continue to be implemented the demographic of those who are homeless is being changed by the increased use of benefit sanctions, benefit caps and the so-called 'bedroom tax', not to mention the continuing changes in immigration policies. Inevitably a chapter on history in a book is only as up to date as its publishing date. The next chapter gives summaries of each of the lives of the interviewee. This is followed by three chapters which draw out common themes found in the narratives under the broad headings of biography, emotions and spirituality. The section concludes with a final chapter that relates the stories and themes that emerged from the contextual bible study group.

Part Three 'Conclusions' begins with two chapters that seek to draw out a theology of homelessness in the light of the research. A useful summary of the salient points of this is found at the end of chapter 10. A final chapter 'Stories of a Homeless God' offers a reworking of the Trinity in the light of what has gone before. Nixon posits understanding the triune God as: God the Father, compassionate Father of those who are homeless, God the Son, radical story teller, God the Holy Spirit, power to tell the story anew. There are interesting pickings in these chapters for those preaching on themes of incarnation and discipleship, telling of a God making God's home with humanity, intentionally homeless that we might ultimately come home to God.

Clearly Nixon was affected in his own thinking by the encounters he had with people who are homeless. Indeed in his prologue he narrates the encounter that sparked his whole research. I hear his testimony reflected in the many stories that those in our churches who volunteer with the Winter Night Shelters tell. Real encounter with people who are homeless is often transformative for the person as they realise 'they are just like us' and 'homelessness can happen to anyone.' At the same time some people who are homeless have insights into faith, society, the human condition that mean they can bring to the established church good news from the poor. I am endlessly enriched in my role by the encounters I have. However the danger is that we over romanticise people who are homeless and underplay the complexities. Nixon does call for the church to not just engage with the immediate needs of the homeless person but to listen to their stories and allow such listening to lead to deeper engagement in matters of social justice. However I am left with a problem over the sub-title of this book. To seek just a theology of homelessness can seem to be affirming of homelessness itself per se. That God's grace is to be found amongst those who are homeless is to be celebrated and can challenge us. However I suggest what is needed is a theology of housing, home and homelessness if the church is truly to be an advocate for human flourishing in the communities in which we live.

A final epilogue entitled 'Occupy' is a comment on the 2011 Occupy camp set up outside St Paul's London. It adds nothing to the book and seems rather one Anglican vicar's reflections on his own traditions response to a particular moment.

So if you buy this book, start reading at section two, go onto three and if you want then take the time to grapple with section one. If you want to start a discussion in your church about why you are taking part in a winter night shelter, how to respond to the homeless sleeping on your church steps or whatever then you might do better to base your discussions on the more accessible Grove booklet *Homelessness: Grace, Truth and Transformation* by Jon Kuhrt and Chris Ward.

Ruth Bottoms
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Matthew Guest, Kristen Aune, Sonya Sharma and Rob Warner, *Christianity and the University Experience: Understanding Student Faith* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 256pp.

The authors of this book have produced what is widely heralded as a ground-breaking sociological survey of religious attitudes among British undergraduates.

The cultural currents gushing through British Universities produce a turbulent, volatile, melting pot in which any attempt to identify religious or cultural trends looks doomed. A sociological survey attempting to glimpse what it is to be a student, a Christian, an atheist seems futile when the influences upon a person's convictions are bewilderingly diverse. Such a survey, in the first instance, begs serious questions about just how realistic a picture can be conjured up by data from questionnaires that can only make mechanical, two-dimensional assessments of a multi-dimensional, fluid, vibrant identities. The attempt to say anything worthwhile and authoritative on this topic feels like an attempt to capture the wind in a box.

The authors, however, seem well attuned to the difficulties of such a study, and in particular are alert to the staggering array of influences upon students, the growing complexities of interpretations of Christianity and Secularism, and tread very carefully before drawing conclusions. The study takes with utmost seriousness the transitional state of our culture, deeply aware that the modern era is passing, that life can no longer (if it ever could) be cleanly carved up into tidy sections, neatly defined and easily categorized.

Christian and the University Experience guides the reader carefully but competently through overlapping, interconnected aspects of student life, with some results that are likely to challenge many popular assumptions: The enormous distinction to be drawn between Christian Unions' doctrinal statements and the actual thoughts and lives of its members; the large numbers of 'hidden Christians' with little or no communal dimension of their faith; the resilience of self-identifying Christians to secularizing influences. Certainly, the conclusions drawn cohere with my own experience (six years in student chaplaincy at the University of Cambridge) but may well, as the authors suggest, be surprising to many.

The book is highly informative, accessible, and interesting from start to finish. By the time you reach the end, it is clear that the value of this book reaches far beyond the

university experience, raising fascinating insights and questions about the shape of western Christian belief in the coming generation.

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George Lings (ed.), *Messy Church Theology: Exploring the significance of Messy Church for the wider church* (2013), 288pp.

Messy Church is an all-age phenomenon that has spread across the country since the first such group met in St Wilfrid's Church, Cowplain, in 2003. The monthly gatherings for craft, worship and a meal, have proved so popular that this Fresh Expression of church has grown at such a rate that theological reflection upon its practice has struggled to keep pace with it.

As someone who has been involved in the setting up of a Messy Church, and having written an MTh essay on the subject, some lingering questions remain: Can Messy Church be church in its own right? Can Messy Church form disciples? Can Messy Church truly be an all-age community?

So it was with some interest that I received this book to review. My first impression was of a book that Messy Church wants to be taken seriously. Gone are the stylistic paint splodges at the beginning of each chapter, the font is small, and it is considerably longer than I had expected.

I had been hoping for a book that would give a theological underpinning to the Messy Church movement, systematically reflecting upon the elements included in a standard Messy Church meeting. This is not that book. *Messy Church Theology* is a collection of essays that will help Messy Church leaders evaluate their local Messy Church meeting, address difficulties they face, and provide tools and suggestions as to how a Messy Church might develop in time.

Messy Church has allowed the movement to grow in a very loose manner. Contextualised versions of Messy Church have been encouraged, so Messy Churches can vary considerably in practice. This is reflected well in *Messy Church Theology*, in part by the inclusion of six case studies demonstrating how Messy Church can be contextually relevant. It would go against the ethos of Messy Church to produce a monological theological treatise, so twelve different voices have been asked to contribute essays to the book. Not all contributors approach Messy Church in the same way, most clearly Tim Waghorn, who advocates weekly meetings of Messy Church and stresses the limitations of Messy Church in forming disciples.

Most of the authors have a background in the Anglican Church, working in Fresh Expressions or the Church Army. As a result the book can assume an Anglican norm and familiarity with its hierarchical structure. For example, much is made of difficulties faced in Eucharistic practice in Messy Church if the priest is not present. One would expect a different focus in the theological questions facing a Baptist based Messy Church wishing to practice communion.

The essays are split into three sections, the first of which is 'Messy Questions'. It has two opening chapters that help assess which Messy Church congregations can be said to be a church in their own right. The basis for this is the criteria set out in the Anglican report *Mission-Shaped Church*, from which the Fresh Expressions

movement was born in 2004. Then there is a chapter that explains the growth of Messy Church, before the section culminates with a chapter answering the question ‘Does Messy Church make disciples?’ This chapter uses both qualitative data and interview answers to demonstrate that Messy Church does develop discipleship by bringing about changes in behaviour, belonging and belief.

Section 2 is entitled ‘Messy Foundations,’ and begins with a chapter advocating ‘Messy Theology.’ This is a theology that accepts curiosity, is untidy and does not always deal in definitive answers. Following this is a chapter by John Drane that explores discipleship in scripture, and argues that discipleship is messy, and therefore does not fit easily into neat faith development stages. Messy Church, he argues, has stumbled upon a way in which discipleship can be incarnated in contemporary culture. The section then has a chapter explaining the history of children’s work in the church, arguing that Messy Church is a natural development from traditional Sunday School. The chapter has a good analysis of the make-up of the Messy Church movement. Only a small proportion are set in a Baptist context. The section closes with a theological reflection upon the DNA of Messy Church, which looks at the core elements of the movement, and asks whether it is possible for any Messy Church to live up to the ideals of all-age inclusivity that it holds to.

Section 3 of the book is entitled ‘Messy Practicalities.’ This section looks at how Messy Churches can mature over time. The first chapter explores language of maturity, arguing that true maturity is in fact very messy. It poses questions for Messy Church leaders to ask as the church matures, and suggests that true maturity can only be maintained by constant engagement with scripture. Then we have Waghorn’s chapter on the limitations of Messy Church. This is followed by Bob Hopkins, who gives tools and frameworks to help leaders assess faith and discipleship development in local Messy Churches. Paul Moore, co-founder of Messy Church, then asks what older Messy Churches may come to look like. He faces up to the problems posed at the start of this review, that have already been addressed in the book, before returning to the four marks of the church discussed in the first chapter. The conclusion is that Messy Church meets these criteria to different degrees, with the major challenge faced being the difficulty in forming community and deep relationships between congregants.

The book assumes much prior knowledge of Messy Church, so I would not recommend it as a starting point for someone seeking to find out about it. You would be best to go to the Messy Church website, or to purchase the first Messy Church book. If you would like to read an extended case study on Messy Church and a theological analysis of its core elements I would recommend George Lings’ Grove Booklet, entitled Messy Church. However, if you are involved in a Messy Church, wish to theologically reflect upon your practice, and seek ideas for how the congregation could develop over time, then this book is well worth a read.

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Anne Richards, *Children in the Bible: A Fresh Approach* (SPCK, 2013), 146pp.

It is over a decade since Marcia Bunge edited *The Child in Christian Thought*. She followed it several years later with a second collection of essays, *The Child in the Bible* and, in between and since, there have been a number of theological and biblical

studies about the child (see books by Miller-McLemore, Mercer, Marty, Jensen, Brennan amongst others).

Anne Richards seeks to offer ‘a fresh approach’ to reading the biblical material about children in asking what is God’s relation to children. This is also a work of practical theology as Richards wants to ask what difference that makes to issues around children, parenting and communities in today’s world.

The book is divided into five chapters, each exploring something of how God relates to children. These are God finds children worthy of calling; worthy of life and salvation; worthy of commission; worthy of healing; and worth of blessing. Each chapter ends with some questions for reflection and a possible activity. The characters of Samuel, Jesus, Jeremiah, Ishmael and Isaac, Samson and other unnamed children all feature as Richards explores these narratives, but also in conversation with more recent incidents involving children, like Lulu who wrote a letter to God, or the court case involving the child who desired to be baptized against one parent’s wishes.

There is much in this book which will enable the reader and church congregations to have a better view of the child, to see them not as empty vessels or blank slates, but as those God intends and calls into relationship. So much of our children’s work and our view of children tends towards the sentimental, the work of Richards (and others above mentioned) challenge us to move beyond this understanding, to a richer, more complex, view of children, which is theological.

This book would make a good group study in a church home group or those who play a part in nurturing children in the church or those who are simply parents.

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Ben Quash, *Abiding*. The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book 2013 (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 249pp.

Graham Tomlin, *Looking through the Cross*. The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book 2014 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 217pp.

The genre of ‘Archbishop’s Lent Books’ is a curious one: the idea that, in the season of Lent, Christians will read a devotional text (as if they would not do so at any other time, perhaps,) and so this is serviced by the Archbishop’s commissioning of a book by a practicing theologian. Clearly the former Archbishop likes London theologians too, for Rowan Williams commends Ben Quash from Kings College, London, and while it is Justin Welby who commends the 2014 book by Graham Tomlin, Dean of St Milletus College, it was Williams who commissioned it. The results are distinctive. Where Ben Quash uses his own story as a thread that runs through his exploration of abiding (meaning full, personal commitment, and owing much to St Benedict’s Rule) and illustrates his theme from the arts and literature (Quash is Professor of Christianity and the Arts), Tomlin returns to that most familiar of ‘Lent book themes’: the cross, and is more distant, perhaps: with less personal disclosure. In a way it is like an echo of that old question for the preacher: how much of my own story do I put into the sermon?

The trick is to read these books slowly, for they are not intended for academic reflection so much as growth in discipleship. Neither are difficult to understand (woe

betide the writer of a 'difficult' Lent book) but both in their own way are demanding: for that is the way of discipleship, abiding in the One who transforms life, power, suffering and even evil through the cross.

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