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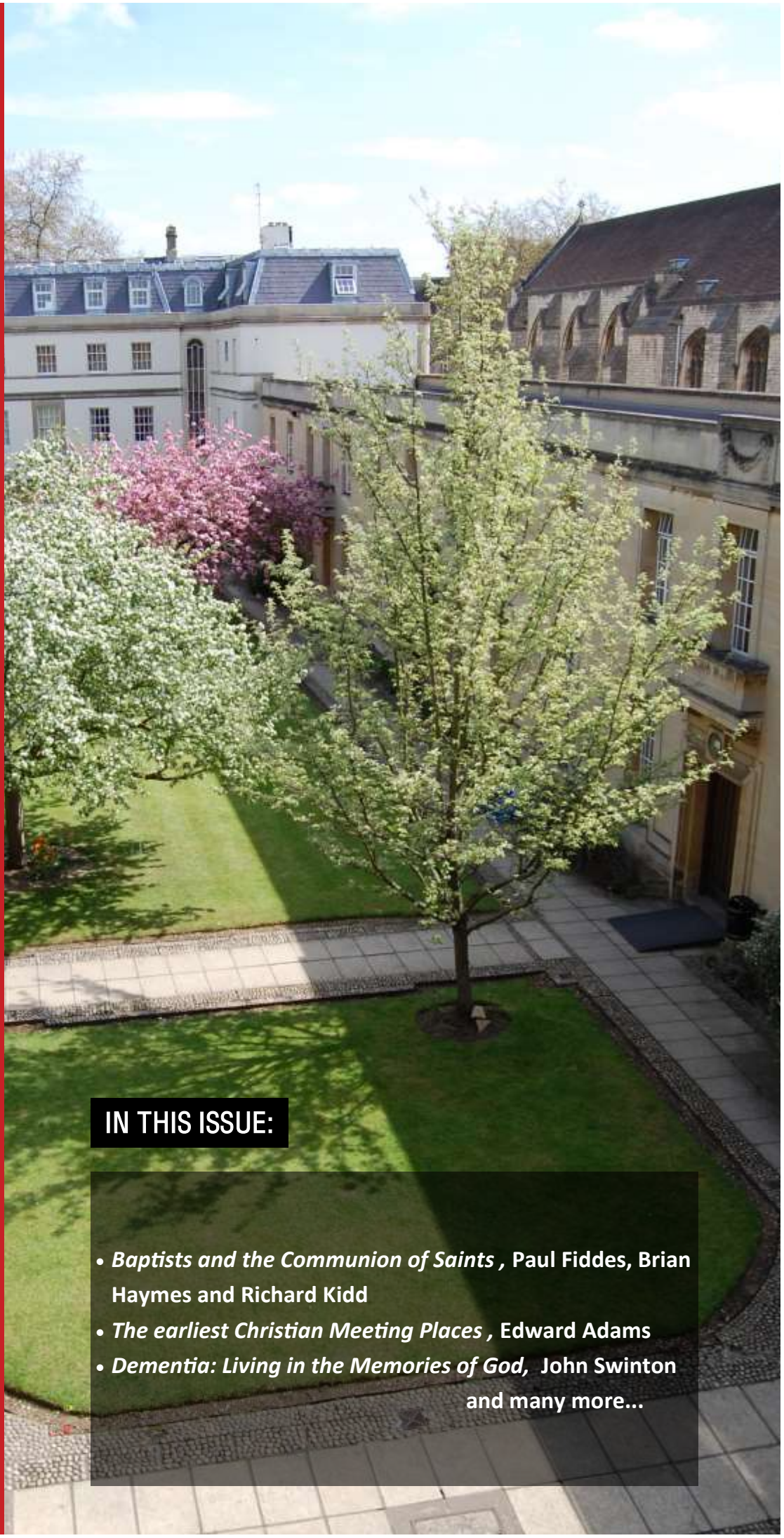

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Editorial

A wide range of reviews are included in this latest edition of *Regent's Reviews*. Two important works of Baptist theology *Contesting Catholicity* by Curtis Freeman and *Baptists and the Communion of Saints* by Paul Fiddes, Brian Haymes and Richard Kidd are reviewed. Simon Oxley and Myra Blyth, two former members of staff at the World Council of Churches each engage with Michael Kinnamon's book on the future of ecumenism. As the Baptist Union of Great Britain begins to a review of ministry it might be helpful to read Graham Tomlin's study of priesthood, *The Widening Circle*. This edition of the journal also stretches to include theological reflections on sport, health, disability, dementia, nationalism and mental health, as well other works in the areas of biblical studies and historical theology.

Enjoy!

Andy Goodliff
Editor

Robin Parry, *The Biblical Cosmos: A Pilgrim's Guide to the Weird and Wonderful World of the Bible* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014)

One of the problems we face, when reading the Bible, is that it's too easy to assume that the characters in it, and the writers of it, saw the world in the same way that we see it. The fact that the Bible is mostly read by us in *our* language (thanks to the efforts of William Tyndale *et al*) lulls us into a false sense of security; that these people we are reading about are speaking *our* language. And the problem is, they aren't. Not just linguistically, but in terms of their world-view, and their whole understanding of the way the universe works. They're a world away from our post-enlightenment Western scientific mid-set. They lived in a world where the flat earth stood at the centre of the cosmos; where there was a vast ocean of water in the sky; where chaos dragons, mystical mountains, and demonic deserts were real; where the dead went to an underground world; where stars were sentient beings; and where, if you travelled up far enough, you could break through into God's heaven. We don't believe any of this. So if we want to understand the Bible, we need to understand world of its writers and character.

Robin Parry offers himself as a guide to the '*weird and wonderful world*' of the Bible, and does so as a committed 'Bible-believing' Christian, who holds to the divine inspiration of the Bible as Holy Scripture. He makes this point, because this is a book aimed at Christians, with the contention that the journey on offer is one into a faith-full engagement with the text of scripture. That said, this is also a book by a serious biblical scholar: Parry knows his stuff, and brings to bear his extensive scholarly engagement with the world of the Bible. There are footnotes for those who like such things (although they are mainly to biblical references rather than secondary literature); and there are also pictures and illustrations (by Robin's daughter Hannah) which bring the manuscript to life, and make it accessible for those who might baulk at page after page of uninterrupted text.

The tour begins with cosmology, and Parry introduces a created world where the earth on which humans walk is merely one flat layer of a cosmos which has as its lowest level the underworld, or Sheol, then the surface of the earth, then the starry heavens, and then above these the highest Heaven where God dwells. He shows how this can be make sense of a variety of otherwise confusing biblical stories, from 'Hezekiah and the Reversing Shadow' (2 Kgs 20.8-11), to 'Joshua and the Static Sun' (Josh 10.12-14). The journey then continues, exploring the sea, and the chaos monsters and dragons which live there; Egyptian and Mesopotamian mythology are seen to undergird biblical stories from the creation narratives, to the Psalms, to Noah's flood, to Jonah's gargantuan fish. The tour then heads land-wards, and mountains emerge as places where humans can go to get closer to the heavens above, and so mountains such as Zion, Sinai, and Carmel become holy places where prophets such as Moses, Elijah, and Jesus go to encounter the divine presence. Parry then takes us through deserts and along rivers, all the time locating the Holy Land of Israel in the cosmology of the ancient near east. He then invites readers to join him on a voyage to the underworld, and he shows how beliefs about Sheol, Hades, and the realm of dead influence Israelite and Christian understandings of the afterlife. The reader is then invited to ascend to the heavens, to explore the world of the sky, where celestial

bodies are seen to be the outworking of the beings that dwell in the world above. Then, rising again, to the highest heaven of God's temple and throne room, we join biblical visionaries such as John of Revelation in entering the house of the Almighty God above. The tour concludes with an exploration of how an understanding of biblical cosmology affects the way we understand the teachings and stories of Jesus. In the concluding section of the book, Parry raises interesting questions about the attempts by some contemporary Christians to assert a biblical cosmology in the face of scientific evidence, and the fundamentalist / creationist agenda is seen to be a category error that is ultimately unproductive for biblical Christianity. Parry concludes by exploring what it means for a contemporary Christian to believe in heaven, hell, the afterlife, the ascension of Jesus, the spirituality of the created order, and the idea of sacred space and place.

This is a fascinating book, and one which deserves a wide readership.

Simon Woodman
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London

Nancy deClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 1051pp.

This book has xxii pages of preliminaries, 1010 pages of text and 41 pages of indices. It is written by three authors each of whom is a significant player in a vibrant and energetic generation of Psalms scholars working new seams of scholarship and bringing out of the riches of the Psalms treasures old and new. Psalms commentaries compete in a crowded field and their usefulness will depend on (i) whether the authors bring something new into the discussion; (ii) who is consulting and reading it and for what purpose; (iii) how it compares to viable alternatives.

So far as (iii) above is concerned, its closest rival in the field of Evangelical scholarship is the work of VanGemeren, published by Zondervan and recently revised in the Expositor's Bible Commentary and running to over 1000 pages. It too deals with exegetical analysis and textual probing, historical and contextual details and theological reflection. Another rival is the three volumes of John Goldingay, published by Baker, which likewise brings traditional disciplines to bear on these rich and robust texts, but in the hands of an innovative and independent thinker with a firm commitment to the Old Testament as Christian Scripture, and as a confessed Evangelical. Allen Ross has already published two of a projected three volume exposition published by Kregel and also seeking to fit that perhaps too ambitious defined market of scholar, student and preacher. Given the Evangelical commitments of the New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT), this volume on the Psalms inevitably has a number of similar commitments and scholarly presuppositions to these three substantial presences in the field. So what does the NICOT bring that the others have missed? How does the approach of the three authors differ from VanGemeren, Ross and Goldingay?

Having used all these commentaries now, it becomes clear that this NICOT volume pays more particular attention to the canonical shape of the Psalter and recent study of

how and why it is edited and formed in its canonical order. This has significant implications for how texts are read and understood in their internal relations within the Psalter, and also for the intra-textual possibilities within the wider canon. Given there are three authors of this commentary, and they have split the Psalms between them, there are three different styles and approaches to the Psalms each has been allocated, raising the issue of comparison in the quality and depth of treatment. This also makes for a diversity of voices and this is no bad thing for a book itself diverse and complex. Jacobson in my view offers most help to those who want to see the connections between exegesis, hermeneutics and exposition. His Reflections section is thoughtful, avoids moralising and superficial homiletic hints, and is theologically alert and informed. He is the only one of the three who has such a section. The other two embed their theological reflection in the flow of their exegetical treatment, and the result too often is a token sentence or two of application or suggested theme. The editor should have encouraged a more consistent approach.

Decisions about detail of treatment sometimes appear arbitrary, especially since the following page allocation includes the translated text. Psalm 23 has just under 9 pages, Psalm 51 just over 5, Psalm 103 has 9, Psalm 119 has 7 pages of comment, excluding the translated text, Psalm 121 has 3, and the entire Psalms of Ascent, 120-134 a mere 54 pages averaging 3.5 pages each including the text. Jacobson and Tanner are typically fuller, Walford nearly always the most economical. This gives the commentary an unevenness of attention. Psalm 119 is a problem for commentators because of its length, construction, complexity, repetitiveness and subject matter. By far the most satisfying treatment is the 70 pages in Goldingay, while Brueggemann manages 3 pages! But in this level of commentary more is needed than is given on Psalm 119. Each Psalm is signed by the one who wrote the exegesis. An annoying consequence is that each Psalm begins on a new page, even if the previous page only has a few lines printed on it. This means the book has the equivalent of approximately 80 blank pages – could these not have been used to advantage in a more substantial exposition of Psalm 119? If that adds a few dollars to the price it would be worth it. Alternatively, since almost every Psalm has a blank space after its entry, could there not have been some attempt to include a conversation with the tradition of Psalms reception in the Church? The index has Gunkel, Mowinckel, Westermann and Gerstenberger so the form critical tradition is well represented. But no single reference to Augustine, Aquinas, or Calvin, (though Luther is cited 16 times) or to the wider Patristic, Monastic and Reformation traditions comes close to what C S Lewis called ‘chronological snobbery.’

One particularly strong feature is a fresh translation supported by copious textual notes; all three writers are deeply schooled in the text, and have enjoyed the collaborative enrichment of working together for years on this commentary. Given that each section has been considered by three closely allied scholars, there is a sense that the final product has been carefully sifted and crafted. It is free of technical jargon and exegetical in-speak and is readable, accessible and carries an overall authority that comes from the authors’ familiarity with the texts and the conversations they inspire. There is little doubt in my own mind that this is a significant addition to the field of Psalm studies, not because it supersedes Goldingay or VanGemeren, but because it supplements them. Yes there will be duplication if you have all three and use them together, but there are significant differences of emphasis and exegetical style. These are rich, deeply dyed and thickly textured, sometimes unruly, often

obstinate texts, in addition to which they are a treasure of the church and a deep abyss of possibility and demand. My own inclination is to read widely and deeply, comparing and questioning.

For example this NICOT volume read alongside Brueggemann's recent one volume commentary, and Clinton McCann's excellent contribution in the New Interpreter's Bible would make for a fairly engaged three-way conversation. But I wouldn't want to be without J L Mays, Artur Weiser, Robert Davidson and John Eaton and one or two of the older still experts on the theology and text of the Psalms. I intend to read my way through this commentary; it is as readable as that. For now my rating is a comfortable 4 stars. If you have VanGemeren and or Goldingay do you need this volume? That depends on who you are and what you use commentaries for, point (ii) raised earlier. Preachers will be glad of a substantial one volume commentary, up to date, alert to the relation of the Psalms to the life of the Church, and written by three scholars who clearly love and live in these texts. Scholars will want to consult the translation, notes and supporting exegesis which I found full of surprises and insights. Those who love commentaries, and I am one of them, will be glad of another addition to a commentary series that has established a reputation for faithful scholarship exercised within a faith commitment to the inspiration of Scripture.

James Gordon
Aberdeen

Michael F. Bird, *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) xiv+394 pp.

This is a book about the four Gospels recognised by the church since the second century, how they came to be written, why they were written and how they came to be 'canonised'. The first Christians had every reason to want to preserve memories of their founder and his teachings, so that 'The cumulative weight of evidence supports the existence of a tendency in the early church to preserve the Jesus tradition. The memory of Jesus was pertinent and important to the early church and they were equipped with means of preserving it accordingly' (p.66). The early Christians were a remembering community (witness the frequent references to 'remembering' in the Gospels). This remembering was driven both by the impact Jesus made and by the challenges the churches faced to which the remembered words of Jesus spoke. In such a situation, 'Recollection and communal narrative become fused, so that, 'the past shapes the social reality of the present and the recollection of the past itself is shaped by the social situation of the community. Social memory then constituted a negotiation between the relics of the past and the contingencies of the present.'[p.107] A lengthy chapter then takes us through the Synoptic Problem and the relationship of John to the other three. Bird reviews all the main options for literary dependence and concludes that the two-source theory is basically right, with the addition that Luke also took pieces from Matthew (in addition to being dependent on Mark, Q and special material of his own (=L)). John is shown to be both independent and dependent on the Synoptics in that while John's sources are quite different, knowledge of the Synoptic tradition has provided him with some shared stories and a

similar overall shape. Turning to the question of the genre of the 'Jesus books', Bird sides with a growing modern consensus that Graeco-Roman biography provides the nearest parallel to the Gospels, but that since they obviously aim to preach, they should be seen as 'biographical kerygma'. Strangely, the author has nothing to say about the possible aims and distinct theological emphases of the different Gospels (redaction criticism). Finally, we learn how and why these particular writings, and no others, came to be recognised by the church, enabling them from early in the second century to affirm (as Anglicans using *Common Worship* still do): *This is the gospel of the Lord*.

There is nothing particularly original in all this, and the book breaks no new ground. The author designates his approach as 'evangelical and critical.' While engaging with a very wide range of ancient sources and modern scholars, both English and German, Bird is clearly closest to James Dunn, Richard Bauckham, Richard Burridge, Martin Hengel and N. T. Wright (to whom the book is dedicated).

This is a comprehensive survey of its subject. Each chapter is followed by an excursus, in which more technical matters are discussed such as, 'Patristic Quotations on the order of the Gospels', or, 'The text of the Gospels in the second century'. At the same time, Bird wears his learning lightly and has written a book that can be read with profit by students and scholars alike.

Alastair Campbell
Abingdon

Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Rev. Ed.; GrandRapids: Eerdmans, 2014), lxii + 982pp

Writing from within the Pentecostal tradition, Fee's prayer is that the commentary 'will help us hear the voice of Paul, inspired by the Spirit, in a still clearer way in our own day' (p. 20): readers of the commentary are likely to find that Fee's prayer is answered, as his detailed exegesis is a model of clarity. Fee skilfully combines his faith and his learning: it is a measure of his integrity as a scholar that he refuses to be constrained by conservative evangelical expectations of orthodoxy and continues to argue, on the basis of his expertise as a textual critic, that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is an interpolation into the text of Paul's letter. The main body of the commentary engages with the text of 1 Corinthians (with Greek words transliterated), while interaction with other scholars takes place in copious footnotes.

One of the reasons why Fee says he has updated his commentary from the original 1987 edition is that the bibliography of articles in scholarly journals has multiplied over 300% over those 25 years. Well, maybe so, but Fee's revised bibliography of articles only contains 20% more than that of the original edition, while the bibliography for commentaries and other significant works is up by just 10%. Fee has been highly selective in updating his bibliography: more could and should have been done to refer to and interact with recent scholarship on this letter. Such engagement as there is tends to take place in the footnotes, where Fee records how he differs from or has been supported by other scholars over the past 25 years: there is also the

occasional additional paragraph dedicated to interacting with more recent scholarship on a specific issue.

Another change from the original edition is that Fee has now been able to base his study on the 2011 edition of the NIV text, which he considers a vast improvement on the 1978 translation of 1 Corinthians, which was not of a high standard. There has also been a move away from referring to 'chapter and verse' in the text of the commentary, since this is a later imposition on Paul's text: however, navigating ones way through the commentary to a particular verse is still easy to do.

Although the new edition is 100 pages longer than the first edition, the text of Fee's original commentary remains substantially the same – the 20 page Introduction is identical. Such modifications that Fee has introduced are to be welcomed, but are not so substantial that they render the first edition of the commentary obsolete. Those who already have the 1987 edition need not feel constrained to replace it. But those who don't yet own a copy of Fee will find this revised edition of his commentary a valuable resource and a worth-while investment.

Tim Carter
Brighton Road Baptist Church, Horsham

G. K. Beale with David H. Campbell. *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*. (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2015).

Greg Beale's landmark NIGTC commentary on The Book of Revelation was published in 1999, and quickly became an indispensable dialogue partner for serious scholars of the apocalypse; however its depth, detail, and indeed *length*, made it less useful for pastors, students, and interested other parties. The solution to this problem is his newly published 'Revelation: A Shorter Commentary'. This latest work eliminates most of the detailed engagement with the Greek text, and also gives considerably less attention to Jewish interpretations of Old Testament passages referenced in the book of Revelation. Those wanting to engage with scholarship published since 1999 will need to look elsewhere – Beale has refrained from widening his scope to include recent secondary material, preferring to concentrate on the argument and exegesis that emerged from his earlier analysis. As Beale puts it, 'the longer commentary serves as one big footnote to this shorter commentary' (p. viii). What this results in is an accessible, scholarly, and above all *useful* commentary.

This commentary is unashamedly aimed at preachers, pastors, and Christians, which puts it firmly in the realm of devotional scholarship. Beale expects his core readership to be people of faith, and whilst on the one hand this may lead to some frustration from scholars seeking a more objective perspective, on the other hand it will be appreciated by the many church-goers who will reap the fruits of his labours to open the text of Revelation to their context. Having said this, Beale is no religious conservative, and he takes a firm stand against the prevalent 'end times' readings of Revelation, arguing instead that the relevance of this text for Christian life and

discipleship is to be found in the encouragement it offers to those facing tragedy, suffering, and apparent Satanic domination.

Beale pays careful attention to the way in which the book of Revelation makes use of the Old Testament, and grounds John's self-identification as a 'prophet' (1.3) in the tradition of Old Testament prophecy. By this reading, John's voice joins those who went before him in calling the people of God to a renewal of commitment, and a rejection of idolatry. This call, Beale asserts, echoes down the centuries to the contemporary context, and it is here that Revelation's pastoral message resonates with present day Christians. Beale plays it safe with authorship (John the apostle), and dating (90), and follows the trend in using categories derived from dispensationalist / millennialist interpretations to give shape to his engagement with the text. Each section concludes with 'suggestions for reflection', which will offer preachers a ready way into the text. Overall, this book does a convincing job of straddling the gap between church and academy, and will certainly help those who are looking for a credible and faith-full alternative to less helpful readings.

Simon Woodman,
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London

Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

It is sometimes claimed (by those getting frustrated with the leaky roof on the church hall, for example) that the true church could meet in the forest if necessary, and that church buildings are of, at best, secondary importance. It is also sometimes said (by those frustrated with ecclesial structures) that the early church met in houses, so why should we be any different? In this monograph, Eddie Adams addresses the question of whether the evidence supports these assertions, by taking a detailed look at the evidence for early Christian meetings places. In doing so he challenges, and indeed unpicks, the dominant scholarly assumption that the earliest Christian meeting places were 'almost exclusively' houses.

Adams notes that the 'house-church' assumption has had far-reaching consequences, within scholarship, ecclesiology, and worship. So, the move from private homes, to adapted residences (such as that at *Dura Europos*), to larger halls, to post-Constantinian basilicas, is widely held to mirror the rise in political and economic status of Christianity. Also, the understanding of the emergence of the eucharist as a 'communal household meal' is predicated upon Christians meeting in private homes around the table, with its eventual separation from the meal-table being triggered by the shift from house-church to basilica. In addition, there are many who have argued for a return to the 'primitive' house-church worship of the early church, seeking to replicate this 'idealised community' in a contemporary context.

However, does the evidence support the assumption? In a fascinating survey, based on original research, Adams takes us beyond the world of the domestic, into an exploration of a far greater variety of meeting-places than are usually cited. From shops, to workshops, to barns, to warehouses, to hotels and inns, to rented dining rooms, to bathhouses, to gardens, to watersides, to urban open spaces, to burial sites;

the consensus of the '*domus'* starts to look decidedly shaky; especially in a social context where most Christians would have lived in tenements than luxurious detached villas. Adams marshals literary and archaeological evidence to compellingly suggest that whilst there is indeed good evidence for houses as meeting places, it is not exclusive, and that a variety of other types of spaces could plausibly have served as early Christian meeting places. He offers helpful suggestions as to how each of the different spaces might have affected the development of the community that worshipped there, with different environments facilitating different practices.

In his conclusion, Adams questions whether the term 'house churches' remains an appropriate designator for early Christian worshipping communities; given that many such groups did not meet in houses at all, whilst even those which did meet in a domestic setting did so, it seems, in ways far removed from the practices of the contemporary 'house church movement'.

Simon Woodman,
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London

Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes and Richard Kidd, *Baptist and the Communion of Saints: A Theology of Covenanted Disciples* (Baylor University Press, 2014), 184pp.

For several years now, I have invited people to begin the Lord's Prayer with the reminder that we are sharing the words which Jesus taught us with God's people "through time and space". And as we have come to celebrate Communion, I have regularly invited people to meet here with the people of God "across geography and generation". Now I have found a book which helps me to ground such theological instincts in careful and Baptist theology.

In this discussion Baptist and the Communion of Saints, Fiddes, Haymes and Kidd explore aspects of the theology of life continuing after physical death, of covenant as understood by Baptists, of meeting God through the community, and of sharing in water, bread and wine. They do this self-consciously as "Baptist" thinkers, exploring why Baptists have not been at home with the "traditional" theology of the communion of saints, exploring what it might mean for Baptists, with our distinctive theology of the presence of Christ in the gathered community to understand all as saints and some as "the saints" – those in whom particular disclosure of God takes place to and for us, not through their effort, but in God's gifting. There is a discussion on what it means to pray with saints, and not to them, and an exploration of what it means to speak of life in God as being "eternal".

This is not an easy read. As might be expected of these three writers, there is evidence of much careful thought, no easy or simplistic answers, and an expectation that the reader will work at the ideas. Though it is clear that the book is a result of discussion among the three, the writer of each chapter is identified, and each is personal in ways that reminds me at least that each of these three, in their own way is, for me, one of "the saints".

The theme that runs through the whole book that links the various aspects of the argument is that of “covenant; the covenant of God with the people of God, and the covenant that makes the people of God a people. And the assertion is that this covenant is not only experienced within our own generations, but, since all the saints are held in life in the love of God. The relationship with one another in God continues and can be celebrated; we pray together. This is explored in a variety of ways, using philosophy, science, history and bound together in theology. In the final chapter, there is good pastoral reflection on what difference (if any!) such a doctrine might make; the so-what questions. And there are answers given relating to ecclesiology, worship, baptism, communion, and to the care of the bereaved. I believe that the whole discussion is important, and indeed, this last chapter will not make sense without it. But in this last chapter, the writers make very clear the importance of the book; this is not an essay in speculative thinking, but the attempt to explore a significant part of the rich and wide Christian tradition which, for good historical reason, but with bad results, Baptists as a theological community, have lost touch with. I am grateful to the writers for helping us find a way to reclaim this, and to begin to find way, as Paul prays in Ephesians, that we “with all the saints” might know the love of God.

Ruth Gouldbourne
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London

Curtis W. Freeman, *Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists* (Baylor, 2014), 466pp.

This is a very very good book and this is indicated by those who have commended it - Sarah Coakley, Ephraim Radner, Carl Braaten, David Tracy, Gerald O'Collins , Robert Louis Wilken and fellow Baptist, Paul Fiddes. This may well be one of the most important books written by a Baptist, both for its vision of Baptist life for Baptists and also for its vision of the church for those of other traditions.
The book tells something of Freeman's theological pilgrimage to becoming an 'Other Baptist.' The term 'Other Baptist' having its origins in being the only box Freeman felt he could tick in a list of various types of Baptist. There is something then of the confessional nature in the book. In Freeman's usage it describes a Baptist who is catholic, one who is seeking to chart a way beyond fundamentalism and liberalism.

Freeman defines an Other Baptist as one in which there may well be: frustration with both lukewarm liberalism and hyper fundamentalism; a desire to confess the faith once delivered to all the saints, not as a matter of coercion, but as a simple acknowledgement of where they stand and what they believe; a recognition of the Trinity as the centre of the life to which they are drawn; a longing to be priests to others in a culture of self-reliance; a hope of sharing life together that is not merely based on a common culture or determined by shared interests; a commitment to follow the teachings of the Bible that they understand and being open to receive more light and truth that they do not yet understand; trusting in God's promise of presence in water and table; a yearning for the fulfillment of the Lord's prayer that the church may be one' (p.26).

The book demonstrates the influence of James McClendon and to lesser extent

Stanley Hauerwas, both of whom have played very important roles in Freeman's journey to Other Baptist-ness. Another of reading the book is as one very long footnote to the Manifesto that Freeman, McClendon and others published in 1997, which was a cry for Baptists, particularly in North America, to a more radical way of being Baptist and catholic.

Contesting Catholicity comes in two parts. The first part sets out what Freeman understands as the 'sickness' in Baptist life. The sickness largely being an individualism, which has its roots in modernity, rather than Baptist beginnings, and is pervasive amongst Baptists, whether fundamentalist or liberalist. Freeman sees in postliberalism, and the work of Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, a faith that is best expressed as a 'generous orthodoxy' (Frei's phrase), which moves beyond the rigid positions of fundamentalism and liberalism.

The second part of the book explores what a theology for Other Baptists looks like in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, the doctrine of the church, the reading of the Bible, the Lord's Supper and the practice of baptism. Freeman demonstrates a real gift of narrating the way Baptists (in Western Christianity) have thought through and lived out their theology, moving freely across four hundred years of history. In this way Freeman follows his teacher McClendon in a way of doing theology that is embodied, not abstract, and that is rooted in local church communities. The voice that resounds throughout the book (one I had not come across before) is of a Baptist pastor and theologian named Carlyle Marney, active in the 1950s and 60s, who Freeman sees as articulating the basis and direction - a Baptist pilgrim road as it were - for Other Baptists. One of the things I most enjoyed about the book is the way Freeman does his theology largely through narrative (pointing to the influence of McClendon and Hauerwas).

Reading the book I found myself saying 'this is me'. I am an Other Baptist, or at least seeking to be. The book in many places was a means of *confirmation* rather than an *initiation* into a new way of being Baptist, but this may reflect that my reading habits in the last ten years have been from a similar shelf to Freeman - Hauerwas and Fiddes especially. If you're a signed up catholic Baptist, what there is to enjoy here is the clarity of the argument, the depth of the reading and analysis and done in a way that is particularly Baptist, but at every point with a catholic vision and intention. Freeman is writing theology for the whole church, not *just* the Baptist branch. Miroslav Volf's 1998 work *After the Likeness* put John Smyth (and Baptist theology) on the radar for a new audience, Freeman provides a form of sequel in which Smyth and those who have followed in his tracks are the central characters in 'a dissenting movement within the church catholic' (Fiddes).

The message to Baptists then is stop being anti-catholic whether aggressively or with indifference, because if we are not an expression of catholicity, then, if not going too far for Freeman, (and to borrow a phrase from Hauerwas), 'your salvation is in doubt.' The message to everyone else is you need to take us Baptists as offering a *catholic* tradition and vision that sits alongside others and so is contested. Freeman certainly provides a rich description of that catholic baptist tradition and vision and for that we must thank him.

I read this book over three nights, such was the pull of its narrative and its possibility of being an 'Other' Baptist, it now deserves to be read again, more slowly. I hope many others will do the same.

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

Michael Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 167pp

The post-war ecumenical movement, symbolised in the founding of the World Council of Churches, was carried forward on a wave of optimism for its first few decades. It was the same kind of optimism that saw the creation of instruments of mutually shared responsibility to create a better world such as the United Nations, internationally, and the National Health Service, in the UK. It seems to me that we no longer share that optimistic spirit and both these institutions and the sentiment that formed them have come under question.

In the light of that, Kinnamon explores an important question for us about the possibility of renewing the ecumenical movement. True to the spirit of the sub-title, *Questions for the Future of Ecumenism*, each short chapter raises a question. The chapters are crafted from addresses given in various places at different times and, on occasion, that shows. Kinnamon has served as a staff member of the WCC and in various ecumenical and academic positions in the United States. Although much of what he writes is rooted in an American context, the questions are of wider relevance. Where this book is strongest is in his affirmation of what has been achieved through the ecumenical movement. We can only understand the significance of the dictum of William Temple that ecumenism is the 'great new fact of our era' if we remember how scandalous relationships between the churches once were. Kinnamon suggests that, although we may not have a fully united Christian community, the incomprehension and bitter rivalry between churches has been replaced with better mutual understanding and the ability to pray and act together. He does not say this but one wonders whether now that we have learnt to be nice to one another, we consider the ecumenical task has been completed.

Kinnamon lists what the churches have been able to say together about the nature of the church and how it should order and live its life. We have been able to reflect together on issues that violently tore Christian communities apart. We have been able to advocate and act together on issues that threaten the life of our planet and the lives of people suffering economic, social and political injustice.

The ecumenical movement is often described in terms of Christian unity. Yet from the beginning it was understood as a renewal movement, as indicated in the book's title, for the churches. One wishes that he could have given greater attention to the question whether the Christian unity discourse has been focussed on how we may express our unity without actually changing too much, ie without any renewal. In terms of relationships between churches, he devotes chapters to the Roman Catholic

and Orthodox churches thus, probably unintentionally, underlining a perception of the Protestant nature of the ecumenical movement.

Peace, he argues, is not simply an agenda item of the ecumenical movement but of its essence. Reconciliation lies at the heart of the gospel and so peace between churches and peace between peoples are all of one piece. He recognises that two of the strands of ecumenism, unity and justice, are often seen to be in tension and reminds us that what often divides societies – racism, sexism, economic disparity, violence – also divides churches. The ecumenical movement gives us a way of social witness to the world and to one another. He argues that, whilst only God can overcome evil, we cannot let systems of justice go unchallenged.

If councils of churches, internationally, nationally and local, have been reduced to being agencies of cooperation in those areas that suit member churches' purposes, how can we renew ecumenism? Throughout the book we can find pointers, the most significant of which seem to be – mutual accountability, especially between church leaders whose churches have made a commitment to ecumenism; greater diversity of participant churches even though coming to consensus may be more difficult; greater involvement of laity and younger people (no special mention of women). In particular, there needs to be a renewed emphasis on the spirituality of ecumenism. Not a soft assertion that we are all one in the spirit but a hard commitment to opening ourselves up to God's grace – complementing our preoccupation with acting with a desire to pray. Councils of churches and the like need to become arenas of committed relationship in Christ rather than forums for cooperation between institutions. Kinnamon argues that, although we may have lost the optimism of earlier days, the renewal of the ecumenical movement will come through our hope in God.

Simon Oxley
Cheadle, Greater Manchester

Michael Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 167pp

This short but profound analysis of the current state of the ecumenical movement is a rich gift. The author is admirably self aware, he acknowledges that he writes as an insider – a long term servant and advocate of the ecumenical movement, and his bias is to seethe movement revitalized at nonpoint does this passion slip into nostalgia, Kinnamon's analysis draws directly from his first hand experience and insider knowledge and results in a very honest and authentic critique.

The aims of the book are clearly set out and rigorously adhered to. The book has five aims: practical; applied; historical; critical and realistic. On all counts this is a successful exercise without being exhaustive. It is rather a primer for the student of ecumenism and for leaders and laity keen to get a thoughtful and informed overview of the current state and future prospects for the ecumenical movement.

The book sets out to be very practical, and to that end offers concrete steps for living ecumenically. The author apologizes for many lists but no apology is needed for the lists range widely and are useful tools. On the theological level he includes helpful

listings with succinct summaries of complex theological documents, which give the reader a critical overview of large swathes of ecumenical history and practical guidance on how to read further into the subject. At a more applied level he includes very practical lists of actions and ideas from programs and experiences that challenge leaders and laity to implement and build on the successes of the movement.

The book is both global and local in orientation and perspective. Many ecumenical documents fall short on this count remaining at the level of grand schemes and broad generalities. Kinnamon demonstrates an enviable ability to translate and make global issues and themes immediately accessible and relevant from the local perspective. Perhaps his long experience as an educator has honed this skill in him but equally his obvious ability to listen to the voices of others who do not share his views and whose life experience challenges his own worldviews means that he engages critically with the issues. This is evident his description of the churches engagement with environmental agenda This chapter reveals how his perception of the importance of this subject has been changed by the ecumenical debate while at the same time sharpened his awareness of the need for ecumenical discourse to grapple with complexity and not fall prey to romantic idealism.

The chapters which draw on the authors experience as an ecumenical leader and particularly his experience as Gen Sec of the NCC ISA provide invaluable insights into the tensions within ecumenical life which need to be creatively held and not ignored or dismissed. Equally poignant is the chapter entitled how can the orthodox help other understands them better? This is a wonderfully honest and sensitive piece, which seeks to model the best in ecumenical dialogue. Where difference is extreme and raw – and that is centrally true of the discussions inside the WCC between some protestant and orthodox representatives – it is vital as Kinnamon shows to engage in conversation with rather than about the other. This chapter takes the form of a letter and carefully addresses the areas of huge misperception –fuelled by statements o both sides- and urges for new vocabulary and more importantly greater awareness of the need to speak the truth in love, and how.

The book builds the case for hopeful realism. A telling contrast is drawn between the optimism of the 60's and the realism of the present day. Fifty years ago ecumenical statements spoke with confidence about Christians being committed to working for the transformation of the world Today such bold statements have become heartfelt prayers –as seen in the title and statements of the 2006 assembly in Porto Alegre "God in your grace –transform the world". The contrast is clear: "those who are optimistic speak of what they can accomplish " while others " who live in hope, give thanks for what God can and will accomplish regardless of how difficult the present may seem". His conclusion is not that we sit back and wait for the kingdom but that our efforts are a participation in God's mission and understood as a response to the one in whom we hope. There is an honestly, humility and realism here, which is offered as the basis for the renewal of the ecumenical renewal movement.

This book is a gem. Not the last word by any means, but a creative and constructive contribution to an urgent debate. I warmly commend it.

Myra Blyth
Regent's Park College, Oxford

Nathan Crawford, *Theology as Improvisation: A Study in the Musical Nature of Theological Thinking* (Leiden/ Boston: Brill 2013)

This book began as Nathan Crawford's doctoral thesis for Loyola University of Chicago. This fact belies the greatest strengths and weaknesses of its writing. On the positive side, it is rigorously researched. In his quest to re-imagine the nature of theological thinking the author is willing to draw deeply upon ancient aspects of the Christian tradition (Augustine) and engage with the theological challenges set by Continental philosophy, particularly Heidegger and Derrida. But he does this while at the same time seeming to revel in being overly complex and deliberately opaque to the extent that all but the most dedicated of readers may have more than one occasion to wonder if continuing will be worth the effort. Ultimately patience and persistence in this endeavour do bring their own reward, but I fear the best of what Crawford has to offer here may be lost to many who might give up along the way.

Crawford joins a growing body of thinkers who draw on musical metaphors, especially those found in jazz and other aspects of improvisation to inform their theological reflections. At the heart of the book is the metaphor of 'attunement' and the ambition that in a pluralistic context, this imagery offers a way to think about God that is open-ended and free from the totalising biases that Crawford feels have dominated Christian thought, (particularly Luther Schleiermacher and Barth) since the Reformation. The required diffidence inherent in his own project restrains the natural inclination to refer to an argument or a thesis and so he offers a *'modestly proposed solution'* of attunement. However despite some hints within the Introduction as to what attunement is (and how it might fulfil the theological promise of Crawford's ambition) there follows two chapters of intense ground-clearing engagement with continental philosophy: Heidegger's musical analogies are examined and rejected in favour of Derrida's understanding of attunement as a plurality of non-dominating voices that offer hospitality to the Other. All this feels like an unnecessarily long overture to finally bring those who have persisted to the heart of the proposal Chapter 3: *'Finding the Groove'* and the idea of attunement as a musical way of thinking theologically. (Ironically, there is a neat summary of his thinking that appears almost Cadenza-like in his concluding chapter. To read it at the beginning might have helped better frame the opening discussions and sustained those who were wondering where it all might lead.)

This third section is certainly the most compelling of the chapters, and it is the hinge by which this *'modest proposal'* should turn toward a more constructive and adoptable position. As such, the success of the subsequent examinations of David Tracy and St Augustine and indeed the whole book, depend heavily on whether or not this chapter convinces. Crawford argues (or at least suggests) that attunement for the theologian parallels that of the improvising musician in that they must be listening to a tradition, to other musicians and to the audience in a way that leads to the transformation of the form of music. There follows an impressive engagement with the multiple traditions of jazz to make his point, namely that if theologians followed the same metaphor then the resultant thinking about God would be something that values *'openness over closure, formlessness over hegemony and multiplicity over totalization.*' However this argument is undertaken without a hint of ironic reflection that this in itself might be a totalising and excluding choice of musical genre. Leaving that criticism to one side there is a much more pressing problem for this section of the book. Some of his

critique of the 'closedness' of preceding theologies may be justified in part and within a more pluralistic context these approaches may also require a more open ended development, but Crawford provides insufficient rationale for the dichotomous chasm he perceives between either formlessness or hegemony, between multiplicity of totalisation. There is perhaps here both a theological and a musical misunderstanding. Most musical performance requires more than listening attunement to otherness. There is something that provides a unique differentiating foundation that says with certainty, *"tonight we are performing song 'x' and not song 'y.'"* Musician / theologians such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer have been very open to the fragmentary nature of divine epiphany and yet insisted that there be some such 'cantus firmus' that enabled theology to say with some humble and non totalising conviction, we believe 'a' but not 'b.' So while Crawford goes on to argue in chapter 5, that the incarnation attunes humanity to God through Christ, it is difficult to shake the feeling that he sees theology as having no choice of discourse other than those which lead to the oppressive silencing of the Other or the formlessness that precludes it from saying anything with certainty? Surely the incarnation demands more? Cannot the church say, do and be more? There are theological middle grounds that suggest that there is indeed more. There is much recent work that has avoided hegemonic oppression and yet offered theology, the church, its worship and mission some deep rooted and practical alternatives to the choices offered here. Yet creative thinkers such as Jeremy Begbie and David Cunningham are curiously absent from Crawford's thought here. This pivotal third chapter, fascinating and erudite as it is, ultimately then fails to convince. That failure echoes through the subsequent chapter where Crawford examines David Tracy's discourse on dialogue as an example for how melodic fragments might be bound together without creating a hegemonic whole. Similarly for all the musicality and opened ended mystery that may be located within the theology of Augustine, (Crawford's final theological example) history hardly attests to the man of Hippo being a shining example of the *'nonconstraining form of theological endeavour'* Crawford has proposed.

These reservations are confirmed when, in his own conclusion (entitled *Conclusion: Well sort of*') Crawford affirms that theology cannot offer a conclusion. The point is made again and again: *'Improvisations do not conclude. They end. They finish. Theology should not be any different.' ... ' and, yet,*' he says *'we must try.'* In his trying, Crawford has been successful in reminding us of the difficulty of saying anything about God, and the dangers of totalising what is too easily spoken. But his attempt to say something more feels less compelling. That theology ought to be tentative is agreed. But the attempt to theologise within this book, while imaginative and compelling in places, seems haunted by the fear of saying anything that might lead to too great a certainty let alone conviction. Perhaps that is why what the book might have offered, some examples of the ethics that flow from a commitment to the non-totalising methodology he proposes, is left undeveloped on the penultimate page. There is much within the interaction of the arts and theology, particularly music and improvisation, that is fertile ground for Christian thought and action. Nathan Crawford's innovative writing has undoubtedly made a significant contribution to this arena of thought and one which will continue to be a critical reference point to others who share his concerns of totalising theologies. But too often this book felt disengaging in its complexity, too fascinated by its own philosophical hinterland and too lacking in a conviction about what theology might have to say about God who

might transform the character of those already caught up in the conversation or entice others to enter into dialogue for the first time.

Craig Gardiner
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Neil Messer, *Flourishing: Health, Disease and Bioethics in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 238pp

With a General Election looming, the various UK political parties are currently at pains to demonstrate the superiority of their plans to resource the NHS in the coming years, knowing that the electorate as a whole considers this a high priority. This year, the Anglican and Methodist Higher Education Chaplain's Conference focused on the concept of 'well-being', a familiar buzzword within Higher Education Institutions at the moment, but one which raises questions without obvious answers: What is 'well-being' and how is it related to 'health'? What policies and practices promote 'well-being'? What contribution can people of faith make in seeking answers to these questions?

Against this backdrop, Neil Messer's latest book makes a timely and significant contribution to the mission of the church in the public arena. Through careful analysis of the work of various conversation partners, Messer admirably demonstrates that what Christians understand by 'health', 'disease' and 'illness' should draw on 'some of the deepest of Christian convictions about human life before God and in the world God has made' (p. 210). As this statement suggests, the method of Messer's reasoning assumes that theological sources have *a priori* authority. However, he recognizes that the primacy of God's self-revelation in Christ for discerning the meaning and role of 'health' in human flourishing entails serious attention to insights from other relevant disciplines that can be '*critically* appropriated according to theological criteria' (p. 105).

To enable this annexing of diverse insights, Messer devotes the first half of the book to clarifying the questions and challenges which a theological enquiry should seek to address. He does this by analyzing representatives of a spectrum of philosophical accounts of 'health', 'disease' and 'illness' (ch. 1), before bringing to the foreground challenges to several of these accounts from a range of disability perspectives (ch. 2). His starting-point for mapping the territory of philosophical considerations is the well-intentioned but problematic definition of "health," proffered by the World Health Organisation in 1948, as 'a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (p. 2). In his conclusion, Messer affirms that this vision has qualities to which a theological outlook should be attracted, particularly its emphasis on individual and social dimensions. However, against the grandiosity of making "complete" a prerequisite for an acceptable threshold, he argues that theology will insist on a more delimited definition of 'health', and open-minded humility about the diverse, often counter-cultural, patterns of bodily life which reflect a Christocentric understanding of human flourishing.

In chapter 1, evolutionary and phenomenological perspectives demonstrate the drawbacks and hone the strengths of the World Health Organisation's definition of 'health'. In the process, they point to the importance of clarifying how 'disease' / 'dysfunction' (an *objective* condition) and 'illness' / 'impairment' (one's *subjective* experience) are both distinct and related. The various disability perspectives explored in chapter 2 deepen this enquiry, offering a concise, but carefully nuanced overview of this field. I particularly appreciated the way in which Messer navigated the complexities of 'social' and 'socio-medical' models of disability (he observes that, for academic study, the 'medical' model of disability is generally dismissed as redundant, although it's assumptions may still be prominent in "unreflective" practice). He draws attention to the way in which spectrums of views emerge *within* each model, and both operate as 'living traditions', subject to revision, over time, in response to criticism and new contexts. Those exploring how disability justice can be more fully realized, in particular congregations as well as throughout the Baptist Union, would find this chapter, and the theological reflections on disability in chapter 3, particularly relevant and informative.

It is in the latter half of the book that theological sources come explicitly to the fore, beginning with scriptural material informing an account of Christian healing ministry which, countering some unfortunate misunderstandings, endorses the place of medicine and its proper relationship to a qualified understanding of "wholistic" spiritual care. Theological groundwork leading to his proposal of sixteen "theological theses concerning health, disease and illness" (outlined and defended in chapter 4) reflects recent constructive work in Christian Ethics that integrates insights from Karl Barth and Thomas Aquinas, work spearheaded by scholars including Eugene Rogers and Nigel Biggar. Here, Messer supplements Barth's account of health as "strength for life" and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's observations about living in 'the penultimate', with insights from Aquinas concerning the teleological structure of human living and the importance of the virtue of 'prudence' for discerning what flourishing entails in particular circumstances (which, honouring Barth, Messer reframes as 'attentiveness to God's command' (p. 172)). The result expresses a vision of human flourishing which encompasses, but is not synonymous with, a definite account of 'health' as a 'penultimate good, concerned with the fulfillment of proximate human goals or ends' (p. 181), but which is also flexible enough to embrace diverse and atypical ways for an individual to fulfill God's vocation, resisting the pressure to 'normalise' the human body.

There is little with which I would want to quibble in *Flourishing*. Messer's commitment to engaging with various academic disciplines (including science, philosophy, sociology and theology) and multiple viewpoints within each, is welcome, and achieved without loss of direction or clarity of expression. Readers acquainted with any, or in fact none, of these disciplines would find Messer's writing engaging and informative. Though I would have liked to seen more explicit reference to the ways in which Barth illustrates the scope for vocational variation in responding to God's command in relation to health (as he does, for example, when considering aborting a child whose prenatal growth threatens the mother's life), I doubt this would do more than underline the message about contextual discernment that Messer substantiates with sociological and theological work on disability. Certainly the cogency of his account of 'health', 'disease' and 'illness' is demonstrated as he brings it to bear on three controversial issues that are key concerns for healthcare

policymakers (and therefore of interest to anyone intending to vote!): the distinction between 'therapy' and 'enhancement'; the appropriate allocation of healthcare resources, and the role of a concept of 'quality of life'. Christian reflection on a wide range of bioethical questions requires an understanding of human purpose, and the role of our bodies in realizing it, that is robust, resolutely theological, and alert to insights and values arising from various quarters. To this end, *Flourishing* makes a valuable contribution.

Michael Peat
University of Bristol

Nigel Biggar, *Between Kin and Cosmopolis: An Ethic of the Nation* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 109pp.

This book arises out of Nigel Biggar's 2011 Didsbury lectures, and sets out, in very accessible form, his views on questions such as the extent to which Christians can have a proper loyalty to and preference for their own nations, as well as the broader themes of immigration, sovereignty and empire.

Biggar writes with the benefit of years spent teaching in Ireland, where questions of identity, loyalty, nation and empire have been bitterly contested for hundreds of years. He brings that experience to bear on the question of Scottish independence, though without knowing what the result of the 2014 referendum would be.

Biggar's starting point is that Kantian cosmopolitanism is, for all its appeal of impartiality and universal concern, not what Christians are called to. Instead, it is proper for us as finite individuals "to have affection for, feel loyalty to" and to work to sustain the communities, customs and institutions that have enabled us to flourish (p.7). Even though nations are contingent phenomena to which we owe only a relative loyalty they can, because they embody, preserve and pursue forms of the human good, exert moral authority over us and oblige our love (p.9). Because nations deserve loyalty and respect only to the extent that they promote the human good, national sovereignty is not absolute (p.19). Like O'Donovan, Biggar makes justice rather than identity or self-determination the centrepiece of his political theology. Secession from an existing political unit is therefore justified if there is seriously unjust oppression which continues unremedied (p.21).

In his second chapter, Biggar defends the establishment of the Church of England as having created, and continuing to sustain, a liberal humanist space (p.35) which cannot be maintained by the impossible fantasy of a morally, anthropologically, and metaphysically neutral public order (p.45). His argument is, of necessity, based on a mixture of history and pragmatism.

In his third chapter, Biggar argues that because there is a natural moral law that applies universally and is prior to all human, positive law (p.56), it follows that rulers are obliged not to grossly oppress their own peoples and to rescue other peoples from gross oppression. This classical Christian vision rejects the idol of absolute sovereignty and underpins the idea of just war as a means of correcting injustice,

which is one of the major themes of Biggar's work. Biggar's book came too soon to see how this idea that there is a responsibility to protect those in other countries who are being grossly oppressed was misused by Russia to intervene in the Ukraine. His argument needs to be read alongside the reflections on the subject by Esther Reed in her *Theology for International Law*.

In the final chapter, Biggar sets himself the hard task of defending the empire. His basic contention is that 'empire is no less morally complex and ambiguous than nation' (p.74), and therefore a larger political unit is not intrinsically more unjust, and therefore less legitimate, than a smaller one. Even the obvious problem that empire 'comprises the imposition of rule by one people upon another' need not result in oppression and exploitation if 'the imposition of imperial rule can have the salutary effect of imposing a unifying, pacific, and law-abiding order on peoples otherwise inclined to war among themselves' (p.91).

Biggar's argument begins by asserting that empires are not automatically unjust as a category of political organisation, that the actions of the particular empire in question must always be scrutinised in order to determine the empire's character. The least that can be said is that he overstates his case. It may be possible to imagine an empire which is not tyrannous, exploitative, imperialist and oppressive, and Biggar is right that, on occasions some empires have acted in ways which do not fit those epithets, but surely the judgment of both the Bible and history leads to the conclusion that empires have a strong tendency towards exploitation and oppression.

This short book deserves to start many erudite dinner party conversations. It is peppered with historical illustrations which make it easy to use as a lens through which to view the nationalist tensions of our age. Biggar has given us a very short introduction to his thought which calls us to re-examine our assumptions about the vices and virtues of nationhood.

David McIlroy
Spurgeon's College

Gerard Hughes, *Cry of Wonder* (Bloomsbury, 2013), 336pp.

The fact that the author died within a few days of the publication of this book gave poignancy and significance to its completion. One can now imagine it might have been dictated from his death-bed and it certainly comes with the force of a last testament.

For many, Gerard Hughes was in the forefront of the Spirituality Movement of the last three decades of the last century. He maps his journey from a strict and long formation as a Jesuit into a wider appreciation of 'other Christians and people of other faiths and no faith'. It is a phrase that he repeats endlessly throughout the text. But he is making a point. It is this; that in Christ's Way God accompanies us into questions and discoveries which will take us beyond whatever tradition we may follow.

This experience will arise with anyone who sits light to any form of human authority, looks into the wisdom of their fears and responds to their felt-response to what they hear or see.

This is dangerous, some might say subversive thinking. The irony is that although he did not always enjoy the sanction of his superiors in the Order and the Church without their permission he would not have reached where he did.

So this might be read as a man tidying up his life but he was hoping for more. Ever the Ignatian he asks the reader to respond to each chapter through their 'felt-response'. It is listening to theology through biography; both that of the author and the reader.

The book is in three sections: Unity, Peace and Holiness. Its central theme is discovering God waiting on you in the depth of your experience and let there be no other authority than God in Christ.

For those who know his first book, *God of Surprises* it will read like an updated version. But they will be pleased to know the personal story behind many of his insights. For any who come new to him you may need to persist with his style which is repetitive; but here is help in how to listen creatively as a community, praying and working for Peace and discovering our own theology in the events and relationships of our life. It provides guidance for a ministry of pastoral mission without mistaking that for maintaining the church or growing new ones. For the church whatever its form is always servant to God 'who is in all things'.

John Rackley
Kibworth, Leicestershire

Martyn Percy and Pete Ward (eds.), *The Wisdom of the Spirit: Gospel, Church and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 216pp.

This set of essays are written to honour Andrew Walker, who was Professor of Theology, Culture and Education at King's College London. Walker, almost single-handedly created a research centre generating a range of important pieces of research into church and faith, which were both empirical and theological. A great tragedy is the recent closure of the Theology, Culture and Education centre at King's, but Walker legacy will live on through his students, a number of which are contributors to this book.

The different essays reflect the interests of Walker, through his work in the 1980s on charismatic Christianity in the UK, specifically the house-church movement, to his work in the 1990s and 2000s on the renewal of the church through a turn to tradition, caught in the phrase 'Deep Church' borrowed from C. S. Lewis. Former students offer essays on Alpha (James Heard), gender in Evangelical Christianity (Kirstin Aune), counter-trends in Evangelical theology and culture (Rob Warner) and a reflection on Walker's contribution to the academy and the church (Pete Ward). Other friends and colleagues provide essays on Walker's connection with C. S. Lewis

(Alister McGrath), the future of revivalism and evangelicalism (Martyn Percy), Pentecostalism (William Kay), Walker's bridging of sociology and theology (David Martin), charismatic experience (Nigel Wright) and ecclesiology (William Abraham). The final chapter consists of an interview with Walker conducted by David Hilborn.

Why read this book? Two reasons, first, if you've never read Andrew Walker, you will get introduced to his work as one of the most perceptive readers of contemporary, and especially charismatic Christianity. As Pete Ward writes, 'Andrew has been a key figure behind the scenes in helping the contemporary Church to think about its faithful expression of the faith' (p.174). If you have read him, this book will encourage you to pick up *Telling the Story*, *Remembering the Future* or *Restoring the Kingdom* again. Second, this book provides in one volume an excellent set of essays that engage with the future of evangelical and charismatic Christianity.

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J. Denny Weaver (ed.), *John Howard Yoder: Radical Theologian* (Eugene: Cascade, 2014), 438pp.

I wrote my PhD thesis on a comparative study of Jürgen Moltmann and John Howard Yoder as free church theologians. In the course of my research I had opportunity to meet and converse with both of them and so formed distinct impressions of the personalities behind the theologies. I took immediately to Moltmann, finding him warm, friendly and helpful, thus establishing me as a life-long fan. By contrast I found Yoder awkward, forbidding and uncongenial, much contrary to what I was expecting of one whose theology, in so far as I understood it, I had begun to find engaging and attractive. In time I was also to stand back from Yoder's theology because of what seemed to me to be questions with which he refused to engage. Rightly or wrongly I began to feel that his commitment to non-violence was the tail that wagged his theological dog (see page 10 of this book), that his trinitarian theology was under-developed and functioned mainly as a way of undergirding the non-violent way of Jesus resulting in a 'unitarianism of the Son', and his refusal to develop his thinking more systematically, rather than in scattered essays, did not serve others in seeking to understand his various positions. With this background I read this book with considerable personal interest and although, still with reservations and disagreements, can happily say that it has helped me to re-embrace many of Yoder's perspectives. Of course, already being well shaped by them (though to an extent I had forgotten), I did not find it hard to agree with the basic thrust of the exposition.

The book is divided into three parts. In part 1 J. Denny Weaver gives a fundamental analysis of Yoder in which he claims to give the heart of what Yoder was about. He also claims that all the writers in the volume share this same interpretation. This enables others in Part 2 to explore the roots and origins of Yoder's theology and then in Part 3 to expand his theology into other spheres. The whole book is well set out, clear in its exposition and its writing, well summarized at crucial points, and constructive in its intents and applications.

Although Yoder studies have proceeded apace since his death (the book claims sixteen different approaches can be discerned), Weaver is quite clear that the proper core of Yoder's theology is the way in which it makes the narrative of the historical Jesus fully normative. Yoder's problem with systematic theology was that, 'you will end up defending your system rather than talking about Jesus' (p. 7). The theology is therefore Jesus-centred and Christ-orientated. Yoder then takes seriously the task of interpreting this narrative within the various changing contexts into which the church is called to speak. Seen in this way, the Nicene formulas concerning the person of Christ are the expression of the Jesus narrative in a particular context and time. In turn this relativizes them in importance and this gives rise to the accusation that Yoder is theologically heterodox. However he has no desire to reject them or to deny their truth, simply to recognize their contextual nature and to subordinate them to the biblical narrative about the form of God's presence in Jesus. Other interpreters therefore recognize Yoder's essential orthodoxy. Affirming the relative nature of Nicene christology enables Yoder, and the authors of this collection, to point out what Nicene orthodoxy obscures, namely the call to concrete discipleship and the way of peace that is intrinsic to the biblical Jesus proclaimed in narrative. It is this approach that makes Yoder a radical theologian, as the book title indicates.

Yet any engagement with Yoder is now confronted with a massive problem, namely that in the later part of his career Yoder was exposed as a serial and long-term sexual abuser of women, especially the competent and intellectual women who were emerging often as his own students within the Mennonite tradition. For women in particular the Yoder legacy is therefore polluted. Given that Yoder's theology itself stresses the union of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, his behaviour threatens to derail his contribution. This is particularly acute once his misdemeanours are named, as they should be, as sexual violence, a form of 'destruction to a victim by means that overpower the victims consent' (p. 334). Even more disturbing, Yoder was reluctant to show remorse for his actions, attempted theological justification of them (along the lines of 'experiments in intimacy'), and showed himself resistant to church discipline, despite the prominence the practice occupied in his whole theology. As a whole therefore the book is a sustained and plausible attempt to reappropriate Yoder's theology while recognizing and lamenting his sexual violence and separating this out from his personal failure. The need to address this dimension makes this volume unusual and unique.

Conscious of the absence of a woman's perspective in these chapters, the book attempts to provide some balance by including a foreword by Marva Dawn and an afterword by Lisa Schirch. It is well worth studying.

Nigel Wright
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Ian Mobsby and Mark Berry, *A New Monastic Handbook: From Vision to Practice* (London: Canterbury Press, 2014) 207pp

This work begins at two points which will be familiar to thinkers about New Monasticism. The first is the prediction by Bonhoeffer that:

> "...the restoration of the church will surely come only from a new type of monasticism which has nothing in common with the old but a complete lack of compromise in a life lived in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount in the discipleship of Christ. I think it is time to gather people together to do this...'

The second is the widely held belief that we now live in post-Christendom times, where UK church attendance and memberships continue to decline sharply. By contrast, we are surrounded by evidence of a diverse and widespread spiritual hunger which the churches are failing to satisfy.

In order to test these two assertions, we need a critique of the concept of New Monasticism, defining and describing it and drawing on examples from the relatively short life of this stream. The founders of the Anglican MOOT community in London and Safespace in Telford offer this approach to examining New Monasticism, as understood in their contexts. Both of the authors are respected practitioners in the field, able to bring a well-grounded theological examination to bear on practical examples.

I anticipated that there would be good coverage of such topics as the rationale for a return to some monastic principles and what, if anything, could be carried forward from older models. I expected that these authors would refer both to 'rules' and to rhythms and practices in daily life. I also hoped that there would be an exploration of community living, whether this is actual shared living-space or the links between a dispersed community. Mobsby and Berry cover these topics well in their book, which I would describe as a general introduction to the field.

What I had not anticipated was their welcome emphasis on the missionality of communities living within the New Monastic paradigm. Hospitality was a noted element of many monastic communities of the past but, essentially, these were disciples who had withdrawn from the world-at-large. This work invites the reader not only to listen to God, but to pay attention also to the surrounding culture. It proposes this as an act of love and an aid to discovering the Christ who is already involved in loving and redeeming the people within that culture. Monasticism, in this sense, is not closed or turned-in upon itself, but an open invitation for all to participate, in the company of others, in encounter with God within their own context.

This book is readable and self-contained, employing stories, either as the basis from which theological assertions can be made or to ground points in practicality. The tendency towards an Anglican focus (which is not exclusive) does not limit its applicability within other traditions and streams. It is reflective, theological and practical. Scripture, culture and reason are brought together, coherently and in a readable style.

It seems to me that the format of the work means that it is most likely to prove useful as a general introduction to the topic.

Ivan King
Church from Scratch - Southend

Roger L. Walton, *Disciples Together: Discipleship, Formation and Small Groups* (London: SCM Press, 2014)

The disciples in the earliest churches met in the intimacy of family homes, to break bread, receive teaching, to pray and to share life together. They wanted to love God and to love their neighbours and they 'earthed' their experience of God in the homely setting. There has long been a case for small groups in larger churches.

Today, to complement the gathered church in worship and shared endeavour, we need a more intimate basis for the nurturing of disciples, the application of teaching in context, the deepening of community and a sense of loving accountability. Not all churches are large, however, and small - often rural - churches can also benefit from looking at what small groups can offer, including what has worked in other places. Roger Walton, chair of the West Yorkshire Methodist District, writes a work that is, firstly, about discipleship. As a Methodist, he shares the belief held by Wesley that discipleship should be a shared, rather than a solitary, journey.

A distinctive of this work is that it is only after he has explored the missional, worshipping, community and formational aspects of discipleship for around half the book that he then examines the usefulness of small groups as a tool to aid in the formation of Christian disciples. Carefully drawing upon the scriptures to reinforce each point, the book begins with mission, echoing the view that all discipleship is missional.

In some reflections and questions after this first half of the work, Walton suggests that well-trodden ways-in to faith, such as Alpha, which bring people to the threshold of faith and invite people to step inside, may not easily translate into the reality of sustained Biblical discipleship. He asserts that this has often been served better through catechesis – learning what faith is by participating in the Christian life, being given the lens of a Christian world-view through which to examine daily life afresh.

He argues persuasively (and correctly, in my view) that too many courses for enquirers appeal much more to the intellect than to the kind of immediate immersion in the Christian life which we see from Jesus' calling of His first disciples in Mark 1: "…and immediately they left their nets and followed Him." This book suggests that enticing and wooing enquirers may be less effective in the long term than asking them to come with us as we journey with Christ. After all, our faith is primarily in Christ, from which position we then seek understanding.

Walton draws well on other writers in the field, not least in a chapter summarising research in the field of church-based small groups. He manages to blend theory and evidence of good practice well. *Disciples Together* has an excellent bibliography to assist with further reading.

I commend this book to pastors seeking to deepen the effectiveness of their church's small groups and also to students wishing to explore the theological, missional or sociological aspects underpinning a Christian approach to small groups.

Ivan King
Church from Scratch, Southend-on-Sea

Christopher C. H. Cook (ed.), *Spirituality, Theology and Mental Health* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 222pp.

This collection of chapters around the theme of spirituality in mental health care is edited by one of the leading theologians of mental health and the care of those suffering from its disorders. Christopher Cook is Professor in Spirituality, Theology and Health at Durham, with an academic background prior to theological education and ordination in the Church of England in psychiatry, specialising in addiction. Crossing these two disciplines provides just the expertise necessary to take proper note of the place of spirituality in mental health care – especially important when so many psychiatrists view spirituality as part of the disordered mind rather than a contribution to mental well-being.

These 'boundary disputes' as Cook describes them, have recently been subject to a schedule of recommendations by the Royal College for Psychiatrists on spirituality and religion (2011) and they support presuppositions for appropriate interventions by the psychiatric profession, such as taking a spiritual history, supporting healthy religious beliefs, while challenging unhealthy ones, and referral to, or joint-working with trained clergy (pp.4-14). These recommendations do not cover the most contentious of these disputed areas – praying with patients. It is an issue that is occasionally reported in the press, when a Christian professional in some area of health care (a GP, nurse or health visitor) is challenged and faces dismissal over questions of 'Christian witness' or prayer. In our secular society, such boundaries are not meant to be crossed (an issue that the church has been far too slow to challenge in its underlying secular and Enlightenment presuppositions.) In addressing all those questions of ethics, scientific principles and professional practice that arise in debates about spirituality and psychiatric practice, the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries helps prevent the debates collapsing into acrimonious disputes.
The book is divided into two parts, the first of which concerns practice, with questions raised by Colin Jay 'what is spiritual care?' (Jay is a Health Care Chaplain); a discussion of the changing relationship between religion and spirituality by Patricia Casey, Professor of Psychiatry at University College, Dublin; a discussion of the substantialization of evil in Augustine and psychotherapeutic literature and Chris MacKenna's exploration of deliverance ministry (MacKenna is the Director of the St Marylebone Healing and Counselling Centre.) In naming this first part 'Practice' the reader should not be under the illusion that this is a 'how to do this' section. Rather, in common with the second part, these are rigorous academic papers that are derived from the 2010 conference at Durham that spawned the book. With too little written from such a perspective, this is to be welcomed.

The second part, then turns to theory and research. All the contributors in this part come from the academy, and from theological and religious backgrounds, rather than medical ones. Loren Stuckenbruck explores demonic invasion in ancient Jewish and Christian texts (notably the Gospels); Mark Wynne uses William James' The Varieties of Religious Experience to show how an experience of alienation (a particular form of mental un-ease) can be addressed by religious commitments and practices; Christopher Cook looks at the concept of transcendence in both psychiatry

and religion as a common point of reference; Douglas Davies' chapter discusses myth as meaning-making; John Cottingham looks at the way in which analytical philosophy of religion most often focuses upon questions of epistemology, but an examination of the religious life of those who follow a particular religion are concerned with practices that have moral growth at their heart and the search for inner integrity: and so a convergence between religion and psychotherapeutic goals are possible. Finally Simon Podmore questions whether imagery of the God-forsaken God, symbolized in the cry of abandonment, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?', might serve contemporary pastoral theology and psychotherapy as a source of palliative consolation.

This is all well and good, and there is so much that is rich and integrative in this book that I cannot but welcome it with much enthusiasm. However, what is telling is the way in which theologians seem to default to discussion with psychotherapists, rather than psychiatrists. These two professions should not be confused, for there is in some quarters as much hostility towards psychotherapy from the highly medicalised psychiatric world as there is towards spirituality and religion. Only recently has Oxford appointed a post in psychotherapy (occupied by Rev'd Dr. Alasdair Ross, Dean of Kellog College) after a century of its development, and it did so in the teeth of opposition from the psychiatrists at Oxford. There is still much misunderstanding between therapists and pastoral practitioners, but even more so between psychiatry and theology: and I welcome any attempt to narrow that gap and ease this disputed boundary. Christopher Cook is in that rare capacity as understanding both from the inside: may he continue to stimulate those conversations as he has done in this excellent start to mutual understanding.

Paul Goodliff
Bicester

Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2014), 199pp.

Every theological student, ministerial students especially, will be familiar with the rhetoric of 'theological reflection', but are often then instructed in just one tool to enable it: the 'reflective cycle.' The development of the multi-centred Doctorate in Practical Theology, under the auspices of the British and Irish Association for Practical Theology, has enabled some ministers (and others) at doctoral level to develop a wider pallet and this book is the fruit of that collaboration. Now at Glasgow, Heather was for a number of years a tutor at Northern Federation for Training in Manchester, and so will be familiar with a certain cohort of 'Northern' students fortunate enough to have been taught by her. Now a wider audience can explore the varied means of doing reflective writing as a part of theological reflection. This is also a sign, if one were needed, that practical theology has long shed its (ill-founded) reputation as 'hints and tips for student ministers.' The tools analysed in this compendium are rigorous and appropriate to the particular discipline of practical theology.
Those tools include autoethnography and journaling, both richly illustrated from Walton's own life and work; and life writing. Part four is rather different, exploring as

it does 'poetics.' This is writing as creative act, challenging presuppositions and the loci of power. This is, I think, the jewel in the book: the reason you should go and buy it. Such poetics are incarnational, public and subversive…just the kind of church and ministry we so urgently need.

Paul Goodliff
Bicester

Graham Tomlin, *The Widening Circle. Priesthood as God's way of blessing the world* (London: SPCK, 2014), 178 pp.

In many ways this is a very straightforward book, and one that I wholeheartedly endorse and commend. Priesthood is the fundamental means of God's mediating of himself to the world, and it takes a number of expressions, each residing inside the wider sphere like a Russian doll. At the cosmic level, the widest sphere, Christ, the great High Priest, mediates divine presence to creation. He is the object of God's election (pace Barth) and thus God has eternally chosen Christ. In place of the uncertainty (and, at its most extreme, the monstrous injustice) of God electing some humans to salvation, the remainder to eternal damnation and everlasting torment – an uncertainty derived from Augustine and Calvin – Barth insists God's election is of Christ, and of humanity in Christ, is one of salvation, healing and exaltation. Christ is the Priest who mediates God to all that is, for God has chosen him to do so.
There follows this bold assertion an exploration of priesthood in Hebrews (where else?) and then some historical background to the rise of priesthood in Christianity. For the fact is, when we think of priesthood, it is somewhere near the first instance of it that Anglican and Catholic presbyteral ministry lies. As Baptists we hurrumph! at that point and 'bang-on' about the priesthood of all believers (and generally misinterpret it as the priesthood of every believer, and further misapply it to mean the ministry of everybody in some undifferentiated chaos on the basis of 'the priesthood of all believers' (and Tomlin recognises and refutes this on pp. 64-65). But there is some truth, Tomlin says, in both the priesthood of believers, and the priestly ministry of some. You might expect the Principal of St Milletus to think so, but he weaves the story in such a fashion as even anti-clerical Baptists might approve. For priestly mediation is God's way of relating to the world. To put it another way, the world and the Church is thoroughly sacramental.

Luther was the first to argue that priesthood properly belongs to every Christian, and that baptism is the basis for all Christian ministry, 'we are all consecrated priests through baptism' (Luther, cited on p. 57). Luther, however, does not confuse status with function. All share in the basic identity, be they priest for layperson, prince or pauper, but not everyone shares the same function, 'there is no basic difference…except for the sake of office and work.' In dismantling sacerdotalism, he does not reject the purpose of priests, but in an egalitarian way, expands them to every Christian. Luther does not favour chaos, however, and has a strong doctrine of the calling of some to perform the priestly role on behalf of the whole church (what Nigel Wright describes as the ministry of all and the leadership of some.) So, there must be a proper priestly function for all humankind, for the Church, and for those called to lead it. All Christians are priests, not in the individualistic and pietistic understanding

of late Protestantism, where this is interpreted to mean I have an unmediated relationship with God, and need no other to assist me in this, but rather in the understanding that we all need one another to mediate Christ, as Luther put it in a Christmas Day sermon, 'he who wants to find Christ must first find the Church.' The priesthood of all believers is not the same as the priesthood of each believer, but rather a radical interdependence of all within the Body of Christ (a note sounded in a different context by St Paul, of course.) Calvin says much the same, Tomlin argues, but uses language of participation in Christ.

The priesthood of humanity in the created order is to mediate the rule of God, rooted in Genesis 1, and its notion of the stewardship of creation . Humanity stands between creation and God, and is called to stand in that relation as Christ does: one of perfecting, not destroying. Here, Tomlin argues, is the proper context for the contemporary concern for creation care. Human beings bear the imago Dei, but are also required to grow in the likeness of Christ….which is where the Church enters the story. Where creation nestles, doll-like, in Christ through humanity, the Church nestles inside creation through the Church. 'The image of God in humanity is broken. How are people to be restored to their proper place in the divine economy, the divine pattern of mediation?....The answer is that the Church is the agent through which Christ, through the Holy Spirit, recalls humanity to its proper place, and restores it into his own image' (p.96). Chapter 5 develops this priesthood of the Church.
If mediation is the basic principle at work thus far, the argument must continue in answering the question, 'how does the Church fulfil its priestly role?' The response, says Tomlin, is the Church needs its ministers, its 'priests', to become what it is intended to be. The true role of 'priests', ministers, or whatever we want to call them, is discovered when we relate them to this divine pattern. God chooses a part to bless the whole, and so with ministry: God blesses the church through the particular calling upon individuals to shape the Church, so that it can shape humanity in its priestly role toward all creation. Tomlin finds little grounds for that role in some form of apostolic succession, and its accompanying tendency to be superordinate to the laity, separate and individualistic. Instead, he looks to the WCC Lima document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), where ministry is derived from the Church's overarching call to priestly mediation of Christ to the whole of humanity. Ministers continue to be part of the 'laos', the people, and are a distinct kind of laity, called to serve and lead it, not an ontologically different kind of Christian.

So, 'ordination is not a commissioning for ministry, but a setting apart for a particular kind of ministry' (p.116). with baptism as the foundational ordination to ministry, in common with every other Christian. Chapter 6 explores what this means: being examples of Christ, representing him, even if they are 'no better nor worse than any other baptized Christian, not called to any exalted status, nor called out of the laity, not elevated in any way' (p.119); with a focus upon the Church, rather than the world (which is the focus of all ministry exercised by the priestly Church); having a role in the perfecting of the Church, concerned for its maturing; care for the flock, leadership of it and a deep love for it. In this context Tomlin discusses the Word, sacraments and the Spirit. 'Where does Christ's presence 'show up' within the world?' (p.123). Tomlin answers in the classic Reformed answer: in his word and sacraments, as the Spirit enables them to respond with faith.

The book then concludes with priestly leadership: all very wise. In the end this is a book about Christian ministry. Yes, for sure, placing it in a wider set of priestly relationships, but at its heart it is a defence of a Reformed but contemporary account of the 'ministry of all and the leadership of some'. And a fine account it is, too: one that many Evangelical and mainstream Anglicans will find familiar, but one also that Baptists should find recognizable. The sadness of our currently weak theology of ministry amongst Baptist churches is illustrated in the fact that many will not find this recognizable, either because we have unconsciously become over-clericalised and still default to ministry of one person, or we have not recognised the dangers of an overly-egalitarian approach that leaves no place for the calling and pastoral leadership of an ordained ministry. Where 'anybody can', sadly, too often 'no-one does.' The answer is not found in a dash towards the independence of the local, as some kind of answer to the failings of the few, but a strengthening of formation, support and sense of obedient and humble service that are the true marks of Christ's servants in every age.

Paul Goodliff
Bicester

Stephen J. Plant and Toni Burrowes-Cromwell (eds.), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Letters to London* (London: SPCK, 2013), 122pp.

The first thing I noticed about this book is how very short it is. This book contains 122 pages. These include introductory and background material, an interview with Ernest Cromwell, and an Afterword by Toni Burrowes-Cromwell. The letters from Bonhoeffer themselves take up 30 pages only (the other side of the correspondence has, not surprisingly, been lost). These 30 pages include a couple of photographs, facsimile reproductions of a couple of the handwritten pages, and extensive footnotes. And each letter begins and ends on a new page. All of which is to say, if you are looking for an *extensive* addition to the Bonhoeffer canon, this book is not it: the proportion of the words in this book actually by Bonhoeffer is low. None of which, however, is to say that this book does not have important things to say, both through the letters of Bonhoeffer and through the Editors' own contributions.

A few bits of historical background from the first section of the book are necessary to include in a review. Ernst Cromwell – the recipient of (most of) Bonhoeffer's letters – was born in 1921 in Nuremberg to Philipp and Lotte Cromwell. Philipp was a secularized Jew, a veteran of World War One and a lawyer with a thriving legal practice. Lotte was a 'convinced Lutheran', though not a regular church-goer. As Hitler rose to become Reich-Chancellor, a number of experiences and rumours coalesced, convincing the family that they must leave Germany. Philipp left for London, and after gaining modest employment, Lotte, Ernst and his brother and sister joined him in early 1934. Ernst was 13 years old and the eldest of the children. Ernst would serve in the British Army during World War II, and upon volunteering changed his name permanently from Ernst to Ernest. Thus the interview is with Ernest (aged 90) but the letters are to the teenaged Ernst.

Bonhoeffer, in the Autumn of 1933, accepted the pastorship of two German-speaking churches in London: St Paul's German Reformed Church in the East End and St George's United Church in Sydenham. It is via the Sydenham church that the

Cromwells met Bonhoeffer, and Mrs Cromwell decided that he should make arrangements for Ernst to be confirmed. It is worth noting that Bonhoeffer had already been prominent in the Confessing Church movement before leaving Germany for London, and in addition to his duties as pastor of these two churches, Bonhoeffer appears to have spent much of his time in England encouraging German-speaking Christians to support the Confessing Church's stance against Nazism and attempting to influence the views of English churchmen.

It is in the midst of this that Ernst becomes Bonhoeffer's confirmand. The confirmation classes all took place at Bonhoeffer's home over the Christmas (1934) holidays. In interview, Ernest explains that the distance by public transport from the Cromwells' family home in West London to Bonhoeffer's was too great and so the young Ernst stayed with Bonhoeffer over the holidays. The instruction took the form of a close-reading of the Sermon on the Mount.

The letters themselves are all written after Ernst's confirmation. The first few – written in the last months of Bonhoeffer's time in Britain – concern arrangements for a trip to Scotland in March 1935. Bonhoeffer invites Ernst (and two other teenagers from his church who, in the event, were unable to attend) to go on a short walking trip with him around and on Ben Nevis. Two of these letters are written from Anglican communities Bonhoeffer had been visiting (and reveal that the previously assumed order of Bonhoeffer's visits to Mirfield and Kelham is incorrect). Shortly after the trip, Bonhoeffer returned to Germany, but found himself back in Britain again in the summer of 1935 at the behest of the Confessing Church. During part of this visit, Bonhoeffer stayed with the Cromwells, and this is referred to in the letters. A number of the later letters are written from Finkenwalde, and contain insights into Bonhoeffer's state of mind at that time. One of the final letters seems to be to Ernst's father, Philipp, and thanks him for a financial donation, returning half of it. The letter – which was sent from Sweden or Denmark whilst Bonhoeffer and some Finkenwalde students were visiting the Church there – and establishes a kind of coded message Bonhoeffer may use in future to write from Germany requesting further funds if necessary.

While the letters do help to fill in (and correct) a few biographical details about Bonhoeffer and his time in Britain, I suspect these will not be of interest to many outside of quite specific fields of study. Where the letters have perhaps more to say is through their modelling of an approach to catechesis through the particular experience of Ernst. As Plant writes in conclusion to his opening essay, '[t]hey show us Bonhoeffer as he tried to nurture the seeds of Christian faith in a young man in ways that would have a lasting impact on his life... to the discerning eye, somewhat hidden by the quotidian clutter of rail fares, jokey asides and banter, within these letters a few precious jewels can be seen sparkling when the light falls on them in a certain way.'

Much light is shined on these jewels by the non-Bonhoeffer parts of this book. Plant's opening essay provides helpful background and context to the letters, and unpacks the implications of some of the biographical details they reveal. His interview with Ernest clarifies some of the details in the letters, and gives insight into Ernest's side of the relationship. Burrowes-Cromwell's concluding essay unpacks expertly some of the implications of these letters for both catechesis and church youth work more generally.

Two themes seem to shine through particularly strongly in this book. The first is that, ahead of all else, Bonhoeffer engages with Ernst as a friend and, in many ways, an equal. This is something Ernest draws attention to in his interview, noting "from the moment 'go' he said, 'Call me *du',* and I called him that." Bonhoeffer makes jocular reference to this in one of his letters, which opens with 'Thanks very much for your disrespectful letter; I'm looking forward greatly to your even less respectful presence on Sunday.' There are times in the letters when Bonhoeffer talks about his inner feelings, his trepidation at returning to Germany and, later, the challenges and joys of life at Finkenwalde. There are places where it is difficult to tell whether Bonhoeffer is writing to a teenager or a lifelong friend. There are other places where it is clearer, such as Bonhoeffer's giving of advice to Ernst, who appears to have asked how to respond to evangelistic overtures from a teacher connected with the Oxford Group.

The second is a sense throughout the letters that Bonhoeffer relies very strongly on other people and his relationships with them. This comes across both through what Bonhoeffer says – particularly about the community at Finkenwalde – but also in *how* he speaks. There are many places in the letters where Bonhoeffer speaks in the first person plural. In some places, this seems designed to draw Ernst into his work as a participant in it (he states that he sees Ernst as part of the Confessing Church in some way); in others it seems to reflect that Bonhoeffer is speaking as a member of a community rather than an individual. This is perhaps most clear in the final letter, where Bonhoeffer writes "Now, as far as we can see, during the next year your life will not change outwardly in any essential way. Ours here will probably change considerably." The use of the plural form in the first of these sentences seems to suggest that Bonhoeffer has discussed Ernst with others in his community, and that the conclusion he passes on is one reached through corporate discernment.

The immense importance of friendship and community to Bonhoeffer seems to permeate all of the letters in some way and to have conditioned the way that Bonhoeffer chose to interact with his young confirmand. By treating Ernst as a fellow participant in the life and work of the Church, Bonhoeffer is able to relate to him as a peer, in recognition that they both have things to learn from one another. This helps Bonhoeffer to avoid the pitfalls of appearing supercilious. It also earns him Ernst's respect and, as is clear from the interview with Ernest aged 90, some of the lessons learned from his interactions with Bonhoeffer would stay with him for life.

These themes are unpacked further in Burrowes-Cromwell's afterword, where she draws on the particular interaction captured by the letters to expand on a vision for the future of Church youth work – both within the Church and in the wider community. As Burrowes-Cromwell puts it:

> 'With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that the Second World War would drastically affect the lives of both the letter writer and the recipient. Even so, their friendship held its own significance by featuring:
>
> The safety of parental awareness and other adult support;
> Unconditional acceptance of the teenager;
> Respect for the life experience of the mentor;
> Respect for the age and learning status of the teenager;

Mutual trust, allowing discussion on a range of subjects (apart from matters of faith and devotional living);
Open attitudes to self-change (in both mentor and young person);
Some really good doses of fun!

Such secure bonds of friendship set no limits to what is achievable – even beyond age, space and time.'

Ashley Beck
London

Shannon Craigo-Snell, *The Empty Church: Theater, Theology, and Bodily Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Despite the title this book is not about empty churches although early on the author poses the question as to why a person should bother going to church. Rather, the title is a 'play' on words. It refers to British theatre director Peter Brook's 1968 book entitled *The Empty Space*. Accordingly in her book Craigo-Snell offers a 'performance' account of the way in which participation in Christian worship is formative. The primary way in which she does this is to define Christian worship as a performance with reference to the themes of 'event', 'doubleness', and 'interaction'. Although her use of the term performance is broad in keeping with current research her primary analytical and analogical partner is theatre studies.

As the chapters proceed Craigo-Snell argues that Christian worship is an embodied performance 'event' which shapes us (Chpt. 1). This shaping of how we think, feel, will, and act takes place through our 'interaction' with the Bible, one another, and Jesus Christ (Chpt. 2). This said, the reality of sin means that our practices have a 'doubleness' and so can shape behaviour for ill rather than good. As a consequence of this we need to develop strategies to resist performances which uncritically reinforce the status quo (Chpts. 3 and 4). All of this human action, however, is not so much about creating the event but creating the space in which God by the Holy Spirit can appear with grace (Chpt. 5). In making her arguments she brings a variety of theatre directors, Constantin Stanislavski, Augusto Boal, Bertolt Brecht, and Peter Brook into conversation with a range of theologians including Ignatius of Loyola, Letty Russell, Delores Williams, and Karl Barth.

This is a clearly argued, extensively referenced, deeply informed, academic book. It makes a contribution to current discussions on the formative nature of Christian worship but specifically from a performance studies perspective. As such it creatively brings the dialogue concerning the practices of worship and Christian formation into conversation with the dialogue between theology and performance studies. One interesting outcome of this complex conversation is to stress that worship creates a particular type of 'knowing' which does not negate the importance of the intellect but involves emotions and body as well. Another is to suggest that we need to develop practices of 'alienation' to self-critically explore our established behaviours.
The above said, I was not always convinced at a practical level of the validity of the analogies which were being suggested between Christian worship and performance

studies. I am simply not sure that people gather for Sunday worship with the same intensity and intentionality as those who participate in either Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* or Stanislavskian 'physical action' actor training (Chpt. 2). As a consequence I wonder where that conversation leaves us. In turn when she engages with some of the ideas of Boal (Chpt. 3) Brecht (Chpt. 4) and Brook (Chpt. 5) which are concerned with changing the practices of theatre she translates these primarily into changed attitudes in Christian worship. In fact she offers very few suggestions about changed practice in her whole book. In this respect, as indeed in the illustrations she gives from theatre and in a number of the arguments she makes, I found her to be somewhat classical and conservative in approach. To put that differently, despite the inclusion of some acknowledged radical theologians and performance scholars she seems to operate in relation to actual practice with quite a conservative understanding of what constitutes church worship on the one hand and theatre on the other.

This is good book. It is fascinating at the level of theology and performance theory. I am not sure, however, that we will all easily recognise our own chosen favourite performances or Sunday worship services in what we read described. Be this as it may Craigo-Snell acknowledges that she is working with generalities rather than particularities and the ideas offered are well worth reflecting upon, testing, and working out in practise.

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C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2014), 246 pp.

This book review had an interesting beginning. Having promised Andy the review by a certain date and finding myself nearly at the deadline, I was not too worried: I am a quick reader. I also can write fast, especially under pressure. So this was not going to be a problem – until I picked up the book again and re-read the title: *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus.* Somehow writing a quick book review on this did no longer seem right.

Smith and Pattison have consciously borrowed the term 'slow church' from 'slow food' movement. The image of a meal forms the structure of the whole book: the content is imagined as a three-course dinner. This seems quite attractive and appropriate given the importance of food in the culture and ministry of Jesus, who in the gospel stories is frequently found breaking bread and sharing meals. The food metaphor somewhat breaks down at the point of the vignettes for the three 'courses' – ethics, ecology and economy – but they do reflect the deep conviction of the authors that these three seemingly 'unspiritual', but central aspects of life are crucial for those wanting to follow the way of Jesus.

This book resonated with me on a number of issues that I find worrisome: the frequent fascination with success in 'doing church' understood as numerical growth; importing and copy-pasting attractional and technocratic church models; and, of course, that constant temptation of relying on and manipulating by power. Instead,

Smith and Pattison envision small, deeply rooted, 'slow' communities of believers who learn the Christian worldview around the table and keep on gathering, talking and eating together in order to discern concrete, holistic, contextually appropriate ways to live well – within and without the church confines. This discernment will be rooted in Scripture which will form the basis of their 'continuous improvisation' – which, for the authors, is the authentic way to uphold scriptural faithfulness.

It may also be significant that *Slow Church* has been written by 'proud amateurs,' as Smith and Pattison put it. They are not pastors or theologians, but real, 'normal' members of two local Christian communities. They are, however, very well read – theological resources including. Thus one of the benefits of this book is an impressive bibliography which will be helpful for anyone – or any group – interested in exploring thoughtful, humble, missional call of the church: from Parker Palmer to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to Tertullian. Quotes abound – sometimes somewhat at the expense of the flow of the authors' argument.

Slow Church is addressing the US Christian context, but as it assumes intricate interconnectedness of our world, there will not be much that is not interesting or relevant to the UK context. (There are also references to some UK-based resources.)

The argument for a 'slow way' of being a church is not necessarily original, but this book certainly provides a good read on Christian authenticity. Those who are questioning (or despairing over) the temptation of successful, efficient and fast modes of doing church –being part of the 'fast food' culture – will find in this book a helpful way to think about ethical orientations, environment and finances in the light of the call of the Gospel. What I think may be particular helpful is Smith and Pattison's exploration of our understanding of work and the ways Christian communities can encourage people to discriminate between 'good' (meaningful, creative) and 'bad' (depersonalizing, isolating) work (Chapter 6). Each chapter is followed by a few suggested questions, or 'conversation starters', which can be an invitation for a house group or the whole church community to read it together – perhaps whilst sharing some food too.

Lina Toth (Andronoviene)
Scottish Baptist College

James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 148pp.

This is a short book about a big book. In 2007 The philosopher Charles Taylor published a long 900-page book called *A Secular Age*. The Christian philosopher Jamie Smith has published a short 148-page commentary on Taylor's book. Smith believes Taylor's thesis is an extremely important one and *How (Not) to be Secular* is an attempt to bring Taylor's to a wider audience, beyond just the academy, to 'ministers, pastors, church planters, and social workers who are engaged in "religious" work in a secular age (p.xi).

Smith, following Taylor, provides a history and description of our secular age - how did we get to where we are, and where is it that we are at. The book ends with some suggestions on how we might or might not live faithfully in this secular age. In this brief book we are offered a narrative of our (Western) history and the current landscape in which we inhabit.

The key point is the language of 'secular age' and how we use the word 'secular.' Smith draws attention to Taylor's 'threefold taxonomy of "secular"' (p.20). Secular$_1$ is to understand secular as the opposite to sacred; secular$_2$ refers to a space which neutural and areligious; and secular$_3$ in which religious belief is presented, but contested, belief is under pressure (pp.20-23). This is the narrative: we've moved from secular$_1$ to secular$_2$ and now increasingly we are in a secular$_3$ age.

Chapters 1 and 2 tell the story of how we moved 'from a world in which belief in God was the default assumption' to our present secular age where belief in God seems to many unbelievable (p.47). Chapter 3 describes our present what Smith calls 'the "feel" of the secular age' (p.60), in which we live in an immanent world, but in which a sense of transcendence still exists. Therefore the self is under what is termed 'cross-pressure' as our secular remains 'haunted' (p.61). The disenchantment (the shift to a purely immanent world) is joined by a *desire* for re-enchantment, and the overwhelming immanence of how we construct reality is opposed by *feelings* of transcendence. This is the same for all people, whether they have religious belief or not. Those without belief, struggle to shake off the feeling of something more and those with belief, are opened to that belief being contested. Chapter 4 moves on then to reject the 'secularization theory' that emerges from a secular$_2$ standpoint, which claims we moving ever further to a world without belief or religion. We are in a post-secular age, in which individual spirituality remains. Chapter 5 argues for a 'level playing field' in which neither an exclusive humanism or Christianity or any other worldview can claim to be free of critique, in this new space, Christianity has the chance for a new hearing, but it needs to recognize the present situation. This provides new hope and new possibility for a Christian apologetics in the midst of a new wasteland (p.138). This is something of a cautious hopeful note in which the book ends. This is certainly no a revivalist tract! It ends of a similar note to Alasdair MacIntyre's famous *After Virtue*, where MacIntyre says we are waiting for another Saint Benedict, Smith suggests that some may find that 'they've been waiting for Saint Francis' (p.139).

For those for whom Taylor's *A Secular Age* is too daunting, *How (Not) to Be Secular* is a welcome offering. For Taylor's argument and Smith's presentation are, I suggest, essential reading for those who find themselves in pastoral ministry. We need this kind of guide to our times. This is not always an easy read, there is quite a bit of technical language – the book has a glossary of terms – and so it might be best read with others, a church small group willing to be stretched or a group of ministers wanting to have a clearer sense of this secular age.

Andy Goodliff
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Frances Young, *Arthur's Call: A Journey of Faith in the Face of Severe Learning Disability* (London: SPCK, 2014), 180pp.

The literature on theology of disability was, until recently, quite modest, although there is now a growth of interest and research in the area with a concomitant expansion of books and courses. So, twenty-five years ago, Frances Young's earlier semi-autobiographical book *Face to Face* was a major member of the disability 'canon', and a very good read. *Arthur's Call* is to some extent a revision, but it is so much more besides.

Arthur is Professor Young's son, born with profound disabilities. In *Face to Face*, the personal journey of this family through Arthur's childhood and young adulthood is offered with great honesty and a depth of theological reflection. However, Arthur grew older! At 45 years of age he had to leave his family and enter residential provision, and *Arthur's Call* is in part an examination of the personal and social dynamics behind caring long term for people with serious disabilities. But the extra years also took Frances Young to new places of theological revelation, and a key experience was to become acquainted with Jean Vanier and l'Arche. The result is that *Arthur's Call* is written from a different place.

There is a chunk of the book devoted to the two visits of Frances and Arthur to Lourdes, and the fascinating dynamics of a Methodist professional theologian engaging with Catholic pilgrimage and worship deliver some great insights into the true nature of healing as being founded in an accepting and inclusive community - and the healing is as much for Frances as it is for Arthur.

After the more autobiographical main section, Professor Young offers two theological chapters on creation, and the cross and redemption. These are examples of excellent reflective thinking grounded in experience, and leavened with occasional poems (which I confess I didn't much like, but that is entirely a matter of taste). In ‘Creation’, Young helpfully explores our human alienation from the natural world or 'wilderness', and explains how the modern world has given us an illusion of control over the environment that belittles both God and suffering. In the wilderness, she notes, 'Isn't success an irrelevant category?'. Exactly. Exposure to the wilderness reminds us of the reality of our fragility and smallness in the universe - but many of us are able to avoid the wilderness most of the time. Disability, on the other hand, can effectively banish us there for life, and success is the security fence that keeps us in place.

In the chapter on ‘The cross and redemption’, Young makes use of Mary Douglas' categories in *Purity and danger* to show why we often avoid those who are 'blemished'. We stay away from that which we fear, and use ritual and structure to keep it at bay. Modernism arguably does this by putting people with special needs into segregated medical environments. In contrast, Young explores the biblical insights into how the outsider can bring redemption to the community. The cross is interpreted as a judgement on human attitudes, with judgement here being understood as revelatory of human exclusion mechanisms. Young critiques the limited interpretations of atonement that are often associated with the cross, and opens up the imagery to something richer and deeper in which suffering becomes a redemptive experience. These are short chapters in a very accessible book, and more could of

course be said, but Young has made a good call in terms of content that will get people to think about the theological implications of attitudes to people with disabilities. For that, this work is simply excellent.

I would recommend this to any pastor or student of theology. Sooner or later, someone with disabilities will come into your church. That person may or may not have the same physical, intellectual or social capabilities as most of the members. How are you going to respond? It is salutary that there is no extended discussion of ramps or accessible toilets in Young's book! That is the response of modernism, and we are called to transcend that in the grace of the crucified Christ.

Sally Nelson
Cliff College; St Barnabas Theological Centre; Moorlands Midland Centre

Samuel Wells, *Crafting Prayers for Public Worship: The Art of Intercession* (London: Canterbury Press, 2013), 123pp.

While I have read many books on prayer, this is only the second I've come across that particularly addresses the challenge of preparing and leading intercessions. Wells describes his intention as making intercessions a joy as well as a duty. He further believes that carefully prepared and well-led prayers can be a 'profound gift' to congregations by giving words to people's deepest yearnings.

The book has seven chapters which are split into two unequal parts. The first part (consisting of chapters 1 to 4) focuses on the theory of crafting prayers for worship, while the second provides a generous selection of examples covering the liturgical seasons, ordinary time and occasions (chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively). This division, however, does not mean that the reader has to keep flicking back and forth between the earlier and later chapters as Wells helpfully illustrates his points in part one with good examples. What the second part offers is a far greater breadth than is possible in the midst of the explanation and argument.

The first chapter argues for a Trinitarian basis for public prayer, which is always in essence 'a plea for salvation' (p. 7), because the context is the broader story of God's creating and redeeming purposes. Having insisted that public prayer is a particular type of speech, that of speaking to God for the people, Wells then explores three ways in which that might happen. Following Hans Urs Von Balthasar, he describes how well crafted prayers bring together both epic (broad, objective, telling a story) and lyric (particular, subjective, speaking from experience) language in a synthesis that he says gives all prayer a dramatic quality. Those leading intercessions, he writes, 'are placing our own, lyric, suffering and apprehension in the light of the epic landscape of God's providence', and his ultimately good purposes for all he has made (pp. 14-16). While the concepts he uses might stretch some readers, this idea that public prayers belong within and are part of the bigger picture of what God is doing is important if we are to take Wells seriously and make more of an effort in preparing and leading intercessions.

The second chapter introduces the traditional Anglican 'collect' as a good basis for intercessions with its 'time-honoured' shape. Wells sees in the five-fold structure of the collect a pattern that is simple, elegant and flexible. That pattern recalls God's actions in the past (memory) as a basis for our petitions (hope) in the present. Wells notes that these petitions do not need an 'exact correspondence' to the biblical text but rather can be phrases 'full of resonance and heavy with multiple applications.' (p. 26) For Baptists who have a strong preference for practices with a basis in Scripture (so Chris Ellis in *Gathering: A Theology of Spirituality and Worship in the Free Church Tradition*), this approach should have plenty of appeal even among those who might be wary of the Anglican context. When it comes to the petitions themselves, Wells contends that public prayer often falls down by not being clear enough about what we want God to do. In the spirit of Jesus' command to ask, seek and knock, he says we need to look for those verbs that name the action we want God to take. When we don't do this should we be surprised that there's little expectation among our congregations that God will act?

Having talked us through using the shape of the collect for our intercessions, the remaining two chapters of theory look at the influence of context and other considerations such as balance, responses and silence. Wells mentions two contexts, the social – our place and time, and the liturgical – where we are in the Christian year and how the intercessions fit into the whole act of worship. 'An act of worship,' he writes, 'is like a symphony, where each movement picks up and echoes and improvises upon the previous one, such that the whole is a reverberating sum of the different resonances in the parts.' (p. 46) The different patterns that we find in 'Gathering for Worship' reveal a turn towards more holistic view of worship in Baptist churches, although it is hard to say whether that is actually reflected in practise.

While my experience of worship in Baptist churches is not extensive, I am going to dare to suggest that prayers of intercession get little attention in our preparations. For some, then, Wells' suggestions might seem to be making the whole exercise of crafting our prayers like too much work, and in that denying the free movement of the Holy Spirit. This is not his intention but there is a possibility that the guidelines he offers to help liberate our intercessions and make them a joy, for both leader and congregation, could become a stick by which it becomes easy to beat ourselves up. To put what he says into practice will demand a lot more of us and perhaps also make it much harder to involve others in this part of our worship. The question will be whether readers are convinced by his argument that the result will be worth the effort.

The examples in the latter chapters largely speak for themselves. To aid the reader, Wells typically appends an italicised comment or two, giving the context or a note on what he was hoping to achieve, perhaps in the structure of the prayer or by quoting a verse from a well-known hymn. Here is just one example of one petition for the season of Easter.

> Risen Christ, you invited your disciples to touch you. Touch us today. Offer your gentle touch to those who have known harshness, or anger, or brutality, or rejection. Teach us how to touch one another in ways that are a blessing. Inspire us to see how our hands may be your hands, our face may be your face, our presence may be your presence. And make us eager recipients of your touch when it arrives from your messengers and angels, and when it comes in the

touch of those often treated as untouchable. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

The prayer continues with petitions to the risen Jesus as Prince of Peace, for peace in places of conflict, as Glorious Saviour and as Ascended Lord. (pp. 80-81)

This is a short and generally accessible book but that doesn't make it a light read as there is much here for the thoughtful reader who wants to learn how to make a better job of leading the church in public prayer. It is worth buying for the many good examples which will teach as much as the theory.

Ashley Lovett
Socketts Heath Baptist Church, Grays

Gavin D'Costa, Paul Knitter and Daniel Strange, *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses to the Uniqueness of Christ in a Pluralistic World* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 240 pp.

This is an intriguing book. Its topic is the question of Christ's uniqueness in a pluralist world. Hovering in the background is the question of salvation and who might or might not be in the category of the saved. The book consists mainly of papers by three theologians, two Roman Catholic and the third Evangelical Reformed. Then there are responses by each to the papers of the others, and finally some brief rejoinders to those responses.

Each theologian operates with different presuppositions and uses a different theological method. It is hardly surprising that they come to different conclusions. Nevertheless, there is plenty of incisive argument on the way.

Gavin D'Costa offers the first contribution. As you would expect, it is informed, insightful and generous. Professor D'Costa understands the work of a theologian to be the explication of the authoritative statements of the Roman Catholic Church. On the basis of these he explains that, while the views of others must be heard respectfully, the uniqueness of Christ must be sustained. However, this need not mean that those who have never heard the gospel cannot be saved. The grace of God may extend to them, or to some of them. D'Costa makes his case by making an analogy with the saints of the Old Testament who are saved by Christ even though they had not heard the gospel.

Next up is Paul Knitter who represents a different wing of Roman Catholicism. Professor Knitter is greatly influenced by the teachings of Buddhism and believes that these help him to be a Christian. He does theology in a way that, he insists, takes Christian revelation seriously, but which is always in dialogue with other faiths and belief systems. The result is that his understanding of the uniqueness of Christ is rather more nuanced that those of his fellow authors. As a consequence, his understanding of both salvation and of the means by which it is accomplished is rather different.

Finally, we are offered the views of Dr Daniel Strange. These are articulated in very clear terms and advocate the reliability of the Scriptures, the objective uniqueness of Christ, salvation through him alone, and hence the necessity for faith in him is one is to be saved. The non-Christian religions of the world are not means of revelation but are essentially idolatrous. Their followers are deceived.

The three scholars treat each others views courteously, recognize the common ground that exists, and honestly face their disagreements. The book is a good and helpful one. However, I cannot escape the conviction that their differences in Christology, authority, ecclesiology and missiology are all rooted in their adoption of different theological methods. Of course, a book where each writes a paper advocating their own methodology and then responding to the others would probably have been rather less interesting.

Nevertheless, as an example of serious dialogue on an issue of considerable significance, between theologians from different positions, this book is to be welcomed.

Stephen Finamore
Bristol Baptist College

John Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God* (London: SCM Press, 2012), 287pp.

This book is profound and challenging, disturbing and hopeful. It is occasionally a demanding book, with some technical matters requiring concentration from the reader, but it is earthed in the lives of real people as well as the research of specialists and the reflections of theologians, psychologists and medics. Like much of the best theology it is written from faith for faith.

Swinton begins by considering the standard reactions to dementia, noting such assumptions as the assumed 'disappearance if the self,' and then outlines his intention to re-narrate the condition. In imposing some sort of narrative on dementia (mainly a medical narrative of loss and lack) we actually shape the condition itself – it is to some extent socially constructed. Swinton wants to suggest an alternative narrative for dementia, one not defined so exhaustively by medical and neurological considerations. In particular, his examination of the nature of selfhood suggests – in ways with much in common with so much other work on the 'social self' in recent times – that the most devastating loss of self suffered in dementia is that which is lost through social relationships.

Arguing that dementia is a 'complex psycho-socio-neurological disease' that 'emerges out of a complicated dialectical interaction between neurological impairment and interpersonal processes,' he concludes that it is best understood as 'the product of both damaged neurons and the experience of particular forms of relationship and community.' He goes on to say that, as much as any 'loss of mind,' the problem is that 'it provokes others to presume that there is a loss of mind,' a

presumption ‘projected back on to the individual.’ Actually, the self remains intact through dementia – any loss of self that does take place relates to a ‘failure of community.’

Swinton examines the nature of personhood, reviewing a good deal of the philosophical and ethical debate. He casts doubt upon concepts of person grounded in hypercognition or hypermemory, and which are individualistic in nature – the dominant concept in our western tradition. Instead he argues that ‘Personhood is primarily a *relational* concept . . . The thing that makes a human being is his/her relationships.’ He goes on, ‘to be human is to be (1) dependent and contingent, (2) embodied, (3) relational, (4) broken and deeply lost, (5) loved and profoundly purposeful.’

The re-narration of dementia takes a decisive further step, beyond the social understanding of theological anthropology developed to this point, with Swinton’s asking ‘who are we when we have forgotten ourselves and those whom we once loved?’ He explores the nature of our memories uncovering two telling perspectives: that often our memories are unreliable, and that we also access our memories through the memories of others – who, as it were, hold our memories for us. He gives the convincing example of the mother recalling the early childhood memories for her son who then appropriates them as his own. Drawing on the seminal work of Martin Buber, he asserts that it is our relationship with the divine Thou which undergirds our existence as persons, along with the web of human relationships into which we are born and in which we live. So Swinton answers his question by affirming that it is not our memory that matters in the final analysis, but God’s. ‘*We are not what we remember; we are remembered*. Memory is first and foremost something that is done for us, rather than something we achieve on our own.’’

There is more, as Swinton unpacks and examines his case. Those who suffer from dementia (and Swinton’s re-narration has no desire to suggest that dementia is not a distressing affliction) need to be cared for by people who will ‘remember them well’ because ‘memory is both internal and external. Some of it is held by the individual; some of it is held by her community; all of it is held by God.’ His final sections deal with dementia-care as a form of hospitality for strangers (with a rich theological exploration of the various dimensions of this beyond dementia-care) and a profound reflection on a theology of visitation (again, with implications beyond the foreground issue of dementia). ‘The term “visit” has its origins in the Latin word “videre,” meaning “to see, notice, or observe” (hence the word “video”), To visit someone is to see them . . . [and] there is tendency not to see people with dementia properly . . . To learn to rethink dementia in fundamental ways requires that we learn the practice of *visitation*.’

This thoughtful, thought-provoking, and often inspiring book should be read and noted by all those involved in pastoral care. It is a very good book. If you are interested in the theological questions and/or pastoral issues that arise in the context of dementia you should read it. It may not definitively answer all the questions and not all of its answers are themselves without problems, but it is a model of how to engage in theological reflection on a vital and agonising reality. Outstanding.

Rob Ellis

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Robert Pope (ed.), *T & T Clark Companion to Nonconformity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 751pp

This substantial and unique volume will prove invaluable to all students of Nonconformity and the Free Church Tradition in England and Wales, as well as to the general interested reader. (However its price may mean that libraries. will be the main purchaser.)

The first 500 pages comprise a series of 23 essays on different aspects of Nonconformity. The emphasis is mainly on an historical account, though theological considerations are also present, especially in relation to Christology pneumatology and church polity. Baptist scholars are well represented by John Briggs, Densil Morgan, John Coffey, Peter Morden, Stephen Holmes, Karen Smith and Ian Randall. Others come mainly from the Congregational, Reformed and Methodist traditions. These essays cover a wide range of subjects about the life of the free churches themselves: bible, preaching and liturgy, hymnody, home life, church architecture, mission and ecumenism. Even more interesting for this reviewer, are those dealing with the influence of nonconformity on aspects of the wider society such as culture, business, education and the Labour Movement of the early 20th century.

The final essay is a very useful Structured Bibliography on sources by Clive Field. This is followed by an 'ABC' of major nonconformist traditions, movements and people. There is much useful material here, though some surprising omissions. For example, the Methodists Donald Soper and Leslie Weatherhead are included but not the other member of the London 'Methodist Triumvirate', noted preacher Edwin Sangster. And neither William Carey nor Andrew Fuller find a place, though this is somewhat compensated for by the excellent essay by Ian Randall on 'Nonconformists and Overseas Mission'. It is sad though perhaps inevitable that women are hardly represented at all – Anne Steele being the sole Baptist example.

From the wide range of material here, including some fascinating by-ways along which the reader can journey, certain central themes emerge. The preoccupation of 'old dissent' with guarding its doctrinal boundaries and contending for freedom of conscience and religion, the influence of the Evangelical Revival, especially on the founding of Methodism and a renewed concern for home mission among the older dissenting traditions. The continuing of the tradition into an influential 'Free Church' consciousness in the 19th and early 20th century, characterised by opposition to the continuing Establishment of the Church of England, as well as seeking to influence society in matters of both individual morality and social justice. Robert Pope rightly sees the origin of the 'free church conscience', a phrase coined at the time of scandal surrounding Charles Stewart Parnell in 1890, as having its origins in the writings of pioneer Baptists Smyth and Helwys in the early 17th century. Indeed the essays reveal that a central concern throughout nonconformist history has been the outworking of freedom of conscience in nonconformity's attitude to the state, certainly a challenge in times of persecution and discrimination, but also more subtly

during that period in the late 19th century where Free Churches became thoroughly institutionalised and in some way part of the national 'establishment'.

At the present time when many of the historic nonconformist/ Free Churches are in sharp decline and when for Baptists other alliances may have become more important, it is easy to see this volume as a most valuable record of a tradition that is now fast disappearing Indeed John Briggs, concluding his contribution on 'The Changing Shape of Nonconformity 1662-2000', raises many of the pertinent questions that must be asked about how this tradition continues today and on into the future. Nevertheless his quotation of Ernest Payne's summing up of the 'basic Free Church contention' that 'Faith comes before Order', the Gospel before the Church' may well find a wide resonance among contemporary churches of a wide range of traditions. In that sense, perhaps, the nonconformist tradition can be renewed.

Tony Peck
European Baptist Federation

Lincoln Harvey, *A Brief Theology of Sport* (London: SCM, 2014), 130pp.

As someone who thoroughly enjoys both playing and watching sport I found the thinking of this book thought-provoking. Lincoln Harvey's *A Brief Theology of Sport* both clear and systematic in thought and flow. It is in two sections and both are enjoyable, at times playfully engaging with the subject. The first section outlines where sport and religion have been closely connected, including an insightful appraisal of how the church has wrestled to know what to do with sport, often with the church responding on the side of caution.

In the second section he tackles the theology of God, Sport and the churches potential response to his theological assertions. His main line of thinking is that God created people just because he could, no reason and no need to. In the same way people play sport, because we can. We don't have to, can't be forced into real and true sport, and there is no reason other than playing the game.

I was frustrated at times when the understanding of sport and how we relate our Christian faith seemed to be disconnected from reality of the world we live in. At several points, when there might be a "yes but what about" objection to his views Harvey mentions the doctrine of Fall as the obvious complicating issue in the human experience which includes sport. He suggests in several places that the church needs to find a new way of understanding sport, but ultimately it leads to a similar place as others in the church have done before. In the penultimate chapter he outlines in more detail, although briefly, some of these areas of tension. These brief discussions didn't seem to really give the church any new ground to work with. He seemed to return to the same place he did at the start of the book saying it's ok to do sport and be season ticket holder, as long as you're aware of the tensions and understand what sport is for. For me this is where the book fell short of my expectations. Sport is a major political activity in both watching from the stands and playing it. In South Africa the way rugby was rejected by many in the country and way in which rugby was kept from many in the country is one example. Another recent example could be how the FIFA

World Cup isn't just bad news for England fans it is major tool of exploitation and oppression for locals. In these cases sport is not just sport. There needed to be a fuller discussion of how to be disciple and to participate in sport.

For me *A Brief Theology of Sport* does provide a more positive view of sport, but leads me as Christian realising that it isn't just playing sport anymore. As I try to work out the political statement Jesus is Lord while playing sport, I'm left with the question are these two becoming more and more incompatible? Do I really want my children deeply emerged in the sporting world? Do I really want my children to see this God-given gift of playing sport as a negative? I wished the author had written more so that this was offering the church a new way of engaging with sport. I hope that Lincoln Harvey will publish a much needed follow up, because his style and thinking were highly readable and engaging.

Rich Shorter
Church 123, Harold Hill

Dana R Wright and Keith J. White (eds.), ***The Logic of the Spirit in Human Thought and Experience*** **(Oregon: Pickwick, 2014)**

This text is a collection of essays on the work and vision of James E Loder Jr. It reflects the conversation from a Princeton Theological Seminary symposium in 2012 between members of the Child Theology Movement and former students of Loder. Together the group considered the implications of Loder's work, discerning a Christian way of being human in the world, with the text Matthew 18:2 and the child in the midst.

This interdisciplinary discussion begins in Part One with the CTM explaining child theology, interpreting scripture and holistic child development. It moves onto Part Two where educationalists apply Loder's pedagogical principles to Christian education and the synthesis of theory to practice. Part Three draws on the psychosocial sciences to identify the significance of Loder's 'transformational moment'. It concludes in Part Four with the implications of being human in a child-like way.

As a Christian Educator and developing practical theologian, I came to this book with interest and some naivety. Teaching developmental theory, faith stages and the place of children in the church there is much that caught my interest. Here is an example of the conversational approach that characterises Practical Theology, encouraging critical correlation across disciplines as the Academy has advocated. There has been disconnect between developmental frameworks and theology that has needed bridging but this form of integration is a challenge. I was particularly drawn to chapters written by those whose voices and work I am already familiar with.

Berryman applies Loder's five stages of the creative process to Godly Play, a method of spiritual guidance. The existential questions Loder applied are implicit within Godly Play conversely referred to as boundaries and limits rather than the void Loder presented. The 'opening' may resemble a conflict or harsh life experience that causes a sharp intake of breath – 'ooo'. It could be a softer sense of awe at the beauty of the world that evokes the 'ahh' of wonder. 'Scanning' is the process that helps make

meaning and sense, something children in particular are constantly doing. The 'insight' describes the flurry of brain activity that helps bring that which is imagined into being. This links with 'release' or development as Berryman describes the expression of creative insight that will also reflect the integral spiritual and moral disposition of who an individual is. The 'verification or closure' is that convictional transforming moment of consciousness of the presence of God. As with any process, there are people who become more energised at different stages, so in any group there will be openers, scanners, discoverers, developers and closers. Therein lies the challenge for spiritual guides to be aware of the distinctions and for the group to be gracious in their understanding of one another.

What I also heard through this text were resonating values between child theology and Loder with regards to a more holistic view of development. Wholeness is a theological concept that can be applied to development bringing together theologians and theorists to affect change in the social sciences in response to the relationship between the divine and the human spirit.

Loder describes the abyss between the divine and human spirit, as a void that needs to be bridged by an act of God, arguably already done through the cross. This void in Pauline texts is all that is loveless - a Godless space. The need for the convictional illumination and transformational experience at this point helps build relationship but is God coming close rather than any human endeavour.

It is worth mentioning that the intimate relational knowing of the Holy Spirit nurtures a sense of personhood that children are often more open to than adults. Loder exerts the importance of this for confirming the presence of God. Barnett argues further that this face to face encounter redeems the adult into the grace of the first uninitiated relationship with the Creator.

This is an important text for educators and theologians to engage with. These papers have set out Loder's legacy from both a theological and psychosocial angle to contribute to a Christian perspective and challenge the secularised view on the lifelong development process. It advocates a holistic engagement with body, mind and spirit and learning from the example and creativity of the child. These scholars have turned the key and opened the door to insights on the complexity of Loder's work that is accessible to those who previously felt the door firmly closed on them.

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Nichola Slee, Fran Porter, Anne Phillips (eds.), ***The Faith Lives of Women and Girls. Qualitative Research Perspectives*** **(Farnham: Ashgate, 2013)**

One way (for a male) to review a book on women by women is through a lens provided by a third woman. Drusilla Modjeska, in her *study of the writings of Australian women* describes the "enormous energy" required by women writers to maintain themselves intellectually and artistically (*Exiles at Home*, Australia: HarperCollins*, 1991*, 15). She documents the essential role of one person, Nettie

Palmer, in nourishing women writers and how her work as an editor created a supportive network in which women writers flourished.

It is a helpful frame by which to approach *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls*, edited by Nichola Slee, Fran Porter and Anne Phillips. Such an approach offers historical insight and encourages a respectful gratitude for their essential and nourishing role as editors and initiators of a supportive network in which research on female faith might flourish.

The Faith Lives of Women and Girls is part of Ashgate's Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology series. It consists of 19 chapters, all written by woman, all emerging from practical theology. Each chapter offers original qualitative research on the faith lives of women and girls, drawing on a range of approaches, including ethnography, oral history, action research, interview and case studies.

This alone makes the volume worthwhile. Reading as a minister, I found myself reflecting on my pastoral and ministerial practice. Anne Phillips chapter (God Talk/Girl Talk) offered new preaching resources, while Kim Wasey's chapter (Being in Communion) challenged my hopes regarding the impact of women presiding at the Eucharist.

The book raised what seems a perennial question in practical theology, concerning the relationship between sociology and theology. Some chapters felt more sociological and descriptive than theological. Other chapters, like Fran Porter's work on Irish women's understanding of God ("The 'In-the-middle' God: Women, Conflict and Power in Northern Ireland) offer rich theological insights (including for my Easter preaching at a youth camp). The quality of research and reflection did vary across the volume. This is perhaps inevitable in a volume that includes both experienced researchers and post-graduate students.

Studies of between six to ten women, as in Jennifer Hurd's chapter on understandings of death ("The Relevance of a Theology of Natality for a Theology of Death and Dying and Pastoral Care) or Francesca Rhys's unpacking of ordinary Christologies (Understanding Jesus Christ), raise questions about the place of sampling and representation in qualitative research.

The Faith Lives of Women and Girls lacked an overarching theme. The introduction suggested a distinct discipline. However the absence of a concluding chapter that synthesised a theme (or themes) raised questions concerning what makes feminist practical theology a distinct discipline. Is it anything that studies women? Is it, given that all 19 contributors are women, something done only by women? Or is it that 19 fine grained studies might, with the ongoing encouragement of contemporary Nettie Palmers, be the grit around which a pearl of great price, research resulting from the lived experience of women and girls, begins to develop?

I suggest the latter and look forward to reading further work from those who contributed to this important volume.

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