

Reviews

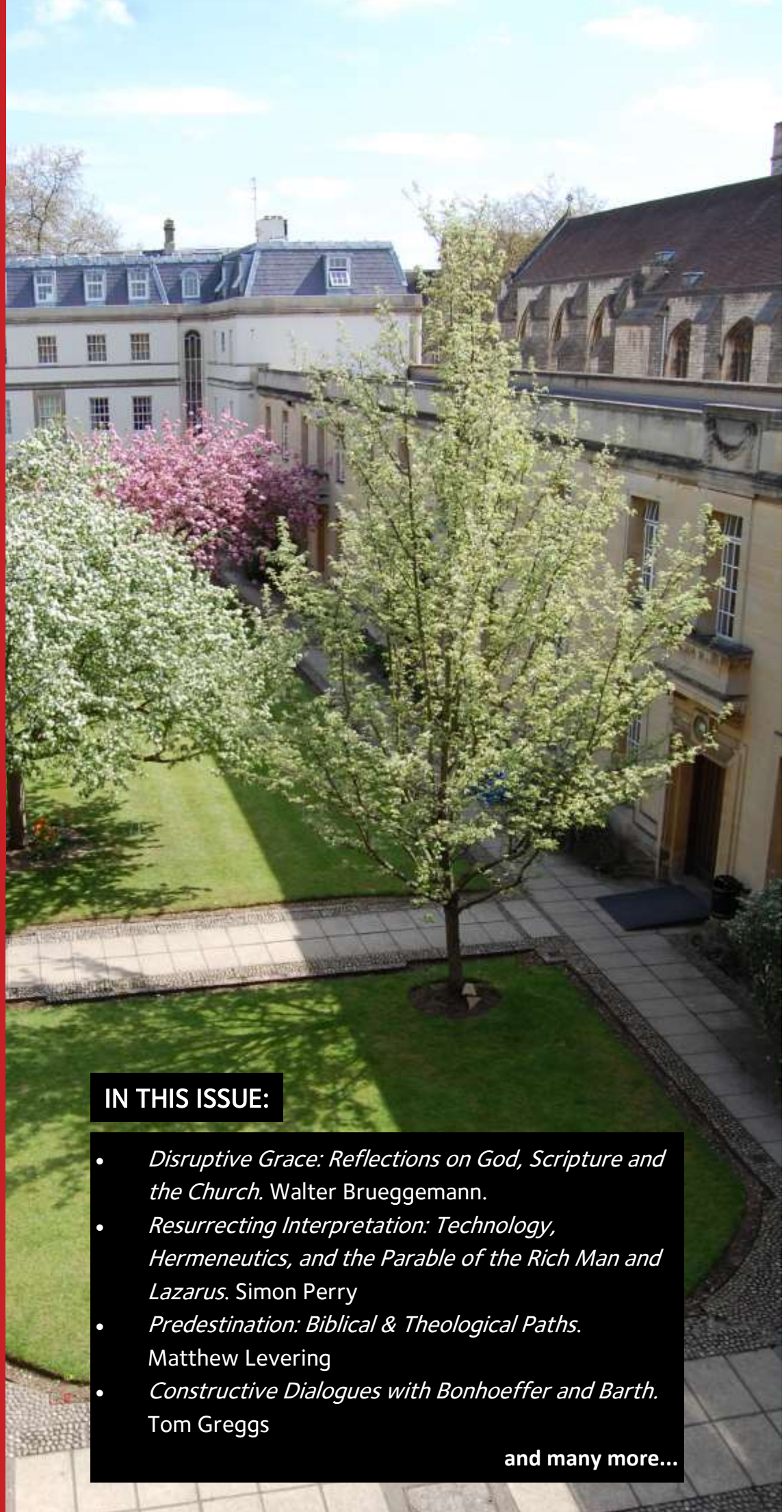
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and many more...



Editorial

Walter Brueggemann is probably the most important Old Testament voice of his generation. For the last thirty years he has offered us his reflections. Notable publications include *The Prophetic Imagination*, *Interpretation and Obedience*, *The Message of the Psalms*, *Finally Comes the Poet*, *Texts Under Negotiation*, *David's Truth* and his *Old Testament Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, in addition to commentaries of Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Cambridge University Press are publishing a long awaited commentary on the Psalms next year.

Brueggemann keeps writing, we keep reading, and many of us remain grateful. This edition of *Regent's Reviews* considers a number of his recent publications (it is hard keeping up with all of them!). Get holding of even one of these titles will be welcome addition to your bookshelf and your preaching and living the gospel.

Baptist minister Helen Dare has recently engaged Brueggemann in her contribution to *The 'Plainly Revealed' Word of God? Baptist Hermeneutics in Theory and Practice* (reviewed in *Regent's Reviews* 3.2. April 2012) and this is a taster of a larger piece of work she is undertaking. Baptists have a longer history of producing Old Testament scholars (Robinson, Rowley, Wheeler Robinson, Clements, Russell, Mason and more recently Deborah Rooke and Nathan MacDonald) and it would be good to see more continuing this trend, perhaps being inspired by the work of Brueggemann and perhaps engaging his work for the church.

Elsewhere in *Regent's Reviews* are reviews of works from some new younger theologians like Tom Greggs, Simon Perry (Baptist minister and chaplain at Robinson College, Cambridge), Matthew Levering and Norman Wirzba. Subjects covered are the theology of Karl Barth, public theology, predestination, food, interpreting scripture, theodicy, apologetics and mission.

A final note is to congratulate Ben Dare and Myra Blyth on being awarded their PhDs over the summer. Ben's thesis is in the area of theology and the ecology in conversation with Jürgen Moltmann and Myra's work explores theological and practical responses to violence amongst local churches. We look forward to the publication of their research in the future. It is also worth noting that the Whitley Lecturer for 2013 is Rev Dr. Michael Peat, who will be sharing some of the fruits of his doctoral research (awarded last year) in theological ethics. It is good to see Baptist theological and biblical research continue to flourish.

Andy Goodliff
Editor
October 2012

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Walter Brueggemann, *Disruptive Grace: Reflections on God, Scripture and the Church*. Edited by Carolyn J. Sharp (SCM Press, 2011), 394 pp.

We have grown used to the wisdom and exegetically grounded biblical theology of Walter Brueggemann in his many books, but his papers and addresses have been less familiar to the 'theological general public', and less accessible to those without proximity to a theological library or Athens account. This shortcoming is admirably alleviated in this collection of his addresses edited by Carolyn Sharp, and which date from 2002 to 2009, (with two chapters previously unpublished.) The papers are typically addresses to clergy groups or seminaries, so are far from being academic papers in the normal sense, and for this reason, these addresses and lectures have a wide appeal.

Illustrative of the tenor of these addresses is *Summons to a Dialogical Life* (pp.17-31) where Brueggemann argues that 'the singers of songs and the tellers of tales' invite us to think about the character of God, with an artistry that 'is required to practice the *complex interiority* of God that makes possible a *dialogical exteriority*' (p.22). God is capable of self examination, is capable of 'more than one possibility', and by becoming a covenantal partner in a variety of ways, evidences his essential freedom to be faithful: 'fidelity, wondrously articulated in the Hebrew triad of *hesed*, *raham* and *amunah* is the hallmark of this God in relationship, not a mechanical predictability but a fully personal capacity for being with and being for and being over against, and staying with and calling out.' This means that not everything is settled ahead of time, that the traditional attributes of orthodoxy, "omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence" simply will not do: they fly in the face of what the Bible tells. The God of philosophical orthodoxy will not work biblically, will not work in Trinitarian terms, and most of all it will not work pastorally, 'for who among us in our ecstasy, and especially our agony, needs a God of certitude? For it is the ache of our heart and the yearning of our body that we should finally be attended to by one who is full of grace, and before grace, truth' (p.23).

Brueggemann is the kind of theologian who wants to take what Scripture actually says with the utmost confidence and the utmost seriousness, letting Scripture, the Hebrew Scriptures especially in Brueggemann's case, begin the conversation, rather than some set of pre-determined philosophical categories. As Barth would have it, what has Jerusalem to do with Athens? Christian theology has been dogged by a too-frequent submission to Athens and an ignoring of the cry of Jerusalem. The God of the Hebrew Scriptures is the God who is moved, 'This is no unmoved mover, no settled certitude, but a partner evoked and moved to fresh engagement, stringent and caring, passionate and indignant...' (p.27) This is a reaction to a kind of Calvinism, seen through the prism of Barth, with, no doubt, Luther peering over his shoulder.

This is the God whom Brueggemann then brings into dialogue with Freud, Buber and Levinas, and with whom the Cartesian self of the Modern World has to do. The alternatives to this free dialogue with God is *absolutism* (an attractive, seductive alternative to relationship of risk and love, and into which God is unhelpfully recharged by the Western theological tradition, overly informed, as it is, by Hellenistic categories) and *autonomy* (the unencumbered self of the postmodern world, an invitation to live without rootage or tradition). In the face of such conformist absolutism and unfettered autonomy, the Bible speaks of the risky business of covenantal existence. Such a God is the one who ultimately sends his Son to suffer, and such covenantal life is life poured out and broken for others. Which brings Brueggemann and us to Jesus. This chapter is typical of

Brueggemann's style and content: enormous Biblical literacy put to the service of profound Christian theology, not afraid to unmask the Emperor's new clothes of what passes for 'Christian' theology as much as the flimsy outfits worn by the modern world. The result is pastorally rich and truthful, 'a sure help in time of trouble.'

Other chapters consider the Sabbath as an antidote to anxiety, the prophetic imagination as 'a means of evangelical proclamation that does not overlook the terror and grief of the marginalized, the exploited, and the forgotten, but rather stands in solidarity' (p.97), and, in *The Land Mourns*, (pp.155-172), the huge question of creation care is addressed in the context of a time when 'religious communities are excessively preoccupied with issues of personal salvation and redemption' so that, 'the big issues of Creator-creation suffer disregard' (p.155). Solomon is Brueggemann's starting point, with his hunger for wealth, and where everything and everybody had become a commodity. Through the prophetic writings of Amos, Isaiah 5, Micah 2:1-5, Hosea 4:1-3, the folly of a society that believes it is God's chosen people so can live beyond limit, 'simply living out the dream of Solomon, who had imagined he could have it all immediately' (p.166), is exposed. The outcome for Brueggemann of this ancient crisis is a verdict upon our own greater crisis, requiring a re-ordering of our theological and religious preoccupations away from the privatised world of our personal salvation, and to a greater attention to living within creation's limits.

A fascinating chapter (4) looking at the countercommands of Sinai, which re-envision human relationships as neighbours, not masters and slaves, shows how similar to Pharaoh's Egypt is our contemporary world. A global market system supported by an undisciplined militarism in the service of limitless consumer entitlement is echoed in the predatory economy of Pharaoh. From such a modern prison, as much as from the ancient one of the narrative of the Exodus, the call of God is 'to let my people go': set them free from the bondage to anxiety, and endless emails, mobile phone 24/7 availability, multi-tasking and absence of kindness. 'It is the news, from Sinai and always again, that the pharaonic enterprise among us is not legitimate and need not be the story of our life' (p.89). In the light of this news we are to talk the talk of truth telling and walk the walk of neighbourly fidelity, 'the daily practice of generosity, hospitality and forgiveness' (p.90).

The addresses that are rooted in the wisdom literature, comprising Part III, *The Writings*, consider lament, the necessity for dialogue (where he notes how easy it is for the church to silence dialogue, in his case, in the United Church of Christ, where that silencing comes from the Left, while in British Baptist life I suspect it is more likely to come from the Right), worship as an act of poetic imagination and wisdom (especially Proverbs) as practical theology.

In *Impossible Talk/Impossible Walk* (pp.287-295) Brueggemann pursues themes familiar to any student of Tom Wright: the relation of the gospel to the power of the Empire (in Brueggemann's case, 'The American Dream') 'Christians are to live and act in the community in ways that refuse imperial models of power and that in fact subvert the power assumptions and value systems of the empire' (p.289). The practices that are most resisted by empire, the most demanding and the most obvious are forgiveness, hospitality and generosity. They subvert the endless score-keeping, exclusion of the unwelcome and the control of commodity as the holding of power in the empire. The church knows better than that, though, God knows, it has often seemed more like empire than church, and forms the basis of its practical theology and defining practices of obedience.

However, for church folk, inevitably embroiled in the culture of empire, to walk that walk might seem impossible, but Brueggemann argues only if they do not first talk the talk: in liturgy, in sermon, and in study. Thus, through imagination that the empire might be contradicted, through Sabbath keeping that is the antidote to imperial anxiety, and most by those four verbs that carry such sacramental freight, - *he took, he broke, he blessed, he gave* – we can live a life not sanctioned by empire, be walkers and talkers of a new life and live in freedom from the fear and coercion that are the hallmarks of empire.

This is a stimulating collection of addresses, with rich seams of imagination, protest, careful exegesis and godly wisdom that I found utterly beguiling. Buy it, read it, integrate its wisdom into your discipleship and thank God for Walter Brueggemann.

Paul Goodliff
Baptist Union of Great Britain

Walter Brueggemann, *Subversive Obedience - Truth-Telling and the Art of Preaching* (ed. K. C. Hanson; SCM, 2011), 111pp

For those familiar with Walter Brueggemann's work there is nothing especially new in this volume, predominantly because it is a compilation of earlier articles; all published in the *Journal for Preachers*, of which Brueggemann is one of the editors; though revised for this present volume. Being not particularly new does not, of course, mean that there isn't much to value here, and if you are unfamiliar with his work then this is an excellent introduction to his way of thinking and writing. Though many of the themes and ideas found here are explored more extensively in his larger works, this is an excellent introduction into his thinking, as his writing style can feel slightly awkward when first encountered, leading to difficulty in understanding his way of thinking.

Brueggemann has written extensively and insightfully on preaching and this collection of articles adds to that body of work by taking us on a journey of understanding; exploring what it means to preach the truth of the bible's message in a way that is both faithful to the original text, properly received by a contemporary audience, and faithful to the prophetic preaching tradition. This is a daunting prospect for any preacher, no doubt, yet a delicate balancing act with which many who preach regularly will be familiar with.

There are eight essays in the volume, all focussing largely on Old Testament texts, unsurprisingly as Brueggemann is one of the foremost Old Testament theologians of our time, and all engaging in significant depth with both the text and the challenge of communicating it in a fresh and life-changing way. They all work together to help us engage with the concept of 'Truth-Telling', showing that the truth takes many forms, but that godly truth is sometimes found in unexpected places and ways; if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. In the Preface Brueggemann says, '... the truth must be spoken, for our lives depend on it, truth that subverts our best self-deceiving certitudes. The church has no monopoly on this vocation of truth-telling. But it is nonetheless the emancipatory vocation of the church.' Telling the life-changing truth of the biblical witness is the responsibility of preachers, and as such, ensures that we are bearers of truth which leads to emancipation.

In the foreword K. C. Hanson says, '[Brueggemann] does not look for easy answers. He does not look for a comfortable hermeneutic. What he does so well is listen to the text and interact with it in

creativity.' I feel certain this is what every preacher intends to do each time they look at scripture with the intention of seeking understanding, and attempting to communicate that understanding effectively. If we are willing to put in the effort to engage with Brueggemann's essays in this volume, then I feel certain we will be rewarded with a reinvigorated desire to preach God's truth with emancipatory power.

Steve Smith

Earls Hall Baptist Church

Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching An Emancipating Word* (Fortress / Alban Books, 2012), 158pp

Walter Brueggemann, *Journey to the Common Good* (Westminster John Knox, 2010), 125pp

Walter Brueggemann, *The Word that Redescribes the World: The Bible and Discipleship*. Edited by Patrick Miller (Fortress / Alban Books, 2011 [2006]), 237pp

Walter Brueggemann is 79 this year, but books bearing his name still come at an astonishing rate. This is because Brueggemann continues to accept invites to speak and lecture and write and someone is kindly editing them together for our edification and enjoyment. (It is also true that some books do continue a fair few essays already published, but put in a new collection – so it is worth checking the contents beforehand). Reading Brueggemann's many writings on the Old Testament has saved many a preacher wrestling with how to preach an Old Testament text. Brueggemann shows us how to be faithful to text, but also how it speaks into our present context (for us Brits we have to do some translation, but not much!). Brueggemann's work edifies – it builds our understanding, opens our imagination and draws us into encounter the living God. It is also enjoyable to read – reading a Brueggemann essay is not a chore, but a delight.

The Word that Redescribes the World gives us eleven essays that seeks to demonstrate how the biblical text seeks to 'redescribe' the world we know. Every essay is a challenge to let the Bible challenge the way we are scripted by the world in ways that stunt our discipleship.

Journey to the Common Good offers the church some ways to respond faithfully to the economic crisis and divisions of war. He argues for the practice of neighbourliness.

The Practice of Prophetic Imagination is Brueggemann's latest offering to the preacher struggling to find a language and a voice to preach the gospel. The common themes and phrasing that we have come to expect from his hand are all there in a new key and a fresh challenge that the gospel is disruptive and world-altering.

Picking up one or all these books will aid the preacher and teacher trying to help her congregation resist the marcionite heresy that doesn't know what to do with the Old Testament and also provide the tools to name, resist and re-imagine being Christian in our present context.

Andy Goodliff

Belle Vue Baptist Church, Southend

William Kolbrener, *Open Minded Torah: Of Irony, Fundamentalism and Love* (Continuum, 2011), xiv + 179pp

For those who regularly engage in a search for sermon illustrations or pithy nuggets to season other types of devotional gatherings, or indeed for points to ponder for personal edification, this little book presents itself as a potential source of inspiration. It consists of 42 short essays (average length of between three and four pages), each of which is a reflection that draws on and combines everyday experience, scriptural commentary, philosophy, literature, psychology and a range of other topics in varying proportions. Thus, reflections on the response of school authorities and classmates to a special-needs child lead into a consideration of the commands to love both one's neighbour and the stranger; the experience of being called a fundamentalist provokes a reflection on the multi-faceted (though not infinite) nature of truth. However, its riches will not be as readily accessible to the average British pastor as those of some other types of literature that deal in what might rather unkindly be termed 'improving sound-bites'. This is because, as might be inferred from the book's title, its author is a practising Jew, and though he now lives in Jerusalem he is steeped in American culture, having been brought up in New York. Many of the cultural and religious references that appear in his short meditations thus lack resonance for British Christian readers; I certainly found, as one who is familiar with the Old Testament but not so much so with Jewish practice and tradition, that some of the meditations were less meaningful than I would have hoped, precisely for this reason. Some, too, move ahead more by means of association of words and concepts than by logical progression of thought, a style that I find rather disconcerting and somewhat too reminiscent of 'stream of consciousness' approaches. That said, others have a directness that makes for challenging and uplifting reading; in fact, the best essays are the ones that are most focused and stick to making a single clearly defined point, rather than trying to take in too many related aspects of the topic or make too many links to literary, cultural and philosophical sources. A good example is the meditation on the sukka, the ceremonial 'tent' of branches in which observant Jews live for seven days during the autumn festival of Booths or Tabernacles or Sukkot; the point of this observance, suggests Kolbrener, is to recall the years in the wilderness when God was the only source of security, and reorientate oneself to what really matters. Then there is the reflection on the story of Phinehas (Pinhas) in Numbers 25, who stands up to confront evil when even Moses is held back by ambivalence, the thought being that we must be ready to step up to the vision that we see, even if others don't see it or are too afraid to act on it. In sum, though Kolbrener's intent to show 'how open mindedness allows for authentic Jewish engagement in an age otherwise defined by fundamentalism or unbelief' (as the cover blurb puts it) results in some unusual perspectives on Torah interpretation as well as some perceptive readings of the biblical text, the main beneficiaries of his wisdom will be those who are a part of the tradition out of which he writes.

Deborah Rooke
Centre for Christianity and Culture, Oxford

Peter Enns, *Ecclesiastes* (The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary; Eerdmans, 2011), xiv + 238pp

'Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.' So writes the author of Ecclesiastes in a typically self-deconstructive and ironical comment. And indeed, it seems that he is right, as yet another study of this most morose of biblical texts is published. This is one of

the latest volumes in the Two Horizons commentary series, a project which aims to bring together biblical exegesis with theological reflection on the texts being expounded. The net effect of such an approach on the present volume is that it is divided almost evenly between exegetical comment on a section-by-section basis, and more overarching discussion of theological themes and questions relating to the book, with a particular focus on a Christian theological reading. I have to confess to being somewhat wary of such approaches, on the grounds that the understanding of the Old Testament material in its own right can often be compromised and indeed impoverished in an attempt to 'see Christ in it' at every act and turn. However, Enns has not perpetrated such disrespect on Ecclesiastes, and his treatment of the text is both critical and theologically sensitive. He begins with a 29-page introduction that gives a broad orientation to the biblical book as he sees it and sets out the parameters within which his exegesis will proceed, including significant themes and concepts in the book, its literary structure, and questions of date and authorship. Adopting a critical (though not sceptical) perspective, Enns rejects the traditional idea of Solomonic authorship for the book, but argues for the author wanting to create a Solomonic persona without actually claiming to be Solomon. After all, who else but a king of Solomon-like stature will have the resources to embark on the exhaustive quest that Qohelet describes in the course of his book? Enns also argues for the basic unity of Ecclesiastes, which involves seeing the third-person prologue (1.1-11) and epilogue (12.8-14) as part of the main authorial construction, and taking the contradictions and tensions in the book seriously as part of its message rather than trying to explain them away or ignore them. This means that every part of the book needs to be read in the context of the rest of the book in order to see what it is really saying – always a good principle, but in the case of Ecclesiastes an absolute must. Enns's exegesis proceeds on these bases, and the section-by-section exegetical comment – set out more as continuous prose than in a verse-by-verse format – is both very detailed and very readable, giving clear explanations of themes, issues and Hebrew vocabulary. The theological comment in the second part of the book falls into three main sections: theological horizons of Ecclesiastes, the contribution of Ecclesiastes to biblical theology (and biblical theology to Ecclesiastes), and the significance of Ecclesiastes for theology and praxis today. In these sections Enns's wise and judicious treatment continues, and as before the Old Testament material is given space to speak in its own right before any attempt is made to bring a Christian perspective to bear on it. The section on theological horizons of Ecclesiastes revisits and pulls together themes that have emerged over the course of the exegetical commentary; the section on Ecclesiastes and biblical theology (the largest of the three sections) adopts a helpful understanding of biblical theology that sees biblical books in conversation with each other rather than as all having to say the same thing, and discusses Ecclesiastes' conversation with other OT books before moving on to its dialogue with the NT. Enns defines the model of conversation between the OT and NT that he adopts as 'Christotelic', a concept also presented in the Introduction, which involves 'allowing the gospel to orient us to the types of questions we bring to Ecclesiastes' (p. 139) rather than 'seeing Jesus' in every verse or looking for how Ecclesiastes falls short when compared with the gospel. In the light of this approach, Enns outlines a number of continuities between NT themes and Ecclesiastes, while remaining careful to preserve the integrity of each instance rather than amalgamating them into a single generic theology. The final section, effectively on putting Ecclesiastes into practice in Christian life, sees Ecclesiastes as modelling the honest and open expression of doubt, acknowledging the suffering that we often endure, and yet advocating the continuance of faith despite everything – a model of life that is as valid for Christians as it was for Ecclesiastes' first readers. Altogether, in terms of both its content and its methodology, this is a judicious and helpful treatment of a biblical book to which I suspect few Christian ministers would

readily turn for sermon text or solace, but which (as Enns's commentary shows) has a good deal more to offer than many realize.

Deborah Rooke

Centre for Christianity and Culture, Oxford

Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Eerdmans, 2012)

The book of Hebrews stands apart from the rest of the New Testament, neither letter nor gospel, neither narrative nor apocalypse, this anonymous sermon offers a distinct voice in the midst of the Pauline-Johannine-Synoptic cacophony. There have been a few landmark commentaries on Hebrews, and this significant offering from Gareth Cockerill in the NICNT series aspires to be another. It is comprehensive, sensitive, and thorough, and engages with a wide range of secondary literature through extensive footnotes. This commentary will be of particular use to pastors and students, combining a genuine contribution to the study of Hebrews with an accessible analysis of the text.

Cockerill opens with an extended introduction, which addresses the two key areas of 'Hebrews in Its Environment', and 'The Message of Hebrews'. The first of these seeks to locate Hebrews within the cultural / linguistic / literary / religious world of its composition. On the subject of authorship, Cockerill recognises that definite identification is impossible, but errs in favour of Martin Luther's suggestion of Apollos, whose description in Acts certainly matches 'the kind of person who wrote Hebrews' (p. 9). The literary genre of Hebrews is identified as 'sermon', and the author becomes 'the pastor' throughout the commentary. The original recipients emerge as a 'house church' comprising a marginalised group of Christians, with some strong links to Judaism, possibly pre-70, and possibly in Rome. The second introductory section on the 'Message of Hebrews' helpfully surveys the use which the sermon makes of the Old Testament, analyses the sermon's rhetorical structure, and considers its abiding message. The structural analysis is original and helpful, and informs overall shape of the commentary.

The main commentary follows a familiar pattern of working through the text section by section, with an English translation of each passage preceding detailed verse by verse exegesis. The commentary pays close attention to the theological significance of each verse, and explores Old Testament and other allusions in detail. Cockerill adopts a broadly evangelical perspective, and sees Hebrews as presenting the Christian faith in continuity and fulfilment of the Old Testament. A concern for perseverance under persecution, and for the sole sufficiency of Christ as saviour, are recurring themes. It is worth noting that this will be the final volume in this series to be produced under the editorial oversight of Gordon Fee, who uses the Editor's Preface to allude to his 'onsetting bout with Alzheimer's disease' (p. xii). This commentary will be a valuable addition to any pastor's bookshelf.

Simon Woodman

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 2011)

Kenneth Bailey is well known, and justly so, for his work on the Jesus tradition and Lukan parables. With years of experience in the Middle East, he brings to the task of New Testament interpretation a keen eye for those aspects of the Mediterranean cultural background that potentially cast new light on the biblical text. In this lengthy book on 1 Corinthians he turns his attention to Paul. The result is a commentary on the letter like no other. The key question is whether the distinctive approach that Bailey takes to Paul's rhetoric is convincing. As the following will make clear, I am not sure that it is.

Bailey makes three key assertions about 1 Corinthians. The first is that the letter is composed according to the canons of what he calls "Hebrew rhetorical style". Effectively, this is to claim that Paul draws on the parallelism of the Old Testament prophetic tradition (Bailey has Isaiah and Amos in mind especially) and develops patterns of argumentation that correspond to three basic forms: straight, inverted and step parallelism. Once this is understood, the interpreter is in a good position to discern what is of central importance, theologically and rhetorically for Paul. In addition, this form of analysis enables Bailey to suggest thematic connections and coherence for aspects of the letter that are often (by means of verse numbering, or received opinion) kept separate. This leads to the second main argument of the book: that 1 Corinthians is not so much a careful response to a highly specific set of circumstances pertaining to the Corinthian situation alone, but rather a series of homilies addressed to all the churches on issues faced by many. Thus 1 Corinthians is a series of essays in epistolary form on the themes of: the cross and Christian unity; sex and relationships between the genders; the relationship between the Christian and pagans; the worship of the church, with reference again to the role of men and women; the resurrection. Each 'essay' follows a similar structure: the statement of a tradition; the identification of a problem; the setting out of a foundational theological idea; restatement of the problem; a personal appeal. Thirdly, Bailey believes that supporting evidence for his analysis of the text, and his understanding of the imagery and metaphorical aspects of Paul's argument, comes from consideration of twenty three non-Greek, ancient and modern versions of the letter (in Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew). This specialist information about the manuscript and translation tradition of 1 Corinthians brings a whole new set of data to bear on the interpretation of the letter.

An example might help the reader of this review to follow the argument. In contrast to the standard division in which 1 Cor. 4:14–21 is viewed as the conclusion to the appeals begun in 1:10, Bailey argues that the essay on Sex begins at 1 Cor. 4:17 with a statement of the 'tradition' of teaching that Paul offered to all the churches and to which Timothy pointed the Corinthians as a reminder. The verse looks forward to the material that follows, not backwards to the material in chapters 1–4. Bailey notes that none of the non-Greek editions or translations he has consulted introduce a paragraph break at 5:1. The problem is then stated in 4:18–5:6a: the Corinthians are arrogant, immoral, and need to deal with the immorality represented by the case mentioned in 5:2–6. This call to action is then unpacked as Paul deals with potential objections in 5:6–6:8. The issue cannot be dismissed as a purely private matter (5:6–8); should not lead to the conclusion that all contact with immoral people is to be avoided (5:9–11) and cannot be dealt with the courts (5:12–6:8). 1 Cor. 6:9–12 then states the basic theological principle about the nature of 'kingdom ethics', and supplements this with a theology of the body in 6:13–20. In 7:1–39 Paul offers an alternative to immorality by outlining forms of sexual practice that are consistent with the gospel, culminating in the final appeal in 7:40.

It has to be said that all of this is rather ingenious and the ingenuity extends down to the micro-level of textual analysis. The problem is, however, that Bailey rides too quickly and too easily over those textual markers that suggest Paul does begin a new topic at 5:1 or turns to a different matter in 7:1 as he begins to tackle issues raised by the Corinthians in their previous letter to Paul. In the end, Paul writes Greek letters, that correspond in significant degree to the conventions and rhetorical techniques of informal and formal Greco-Roman epistles. While Bailey's alternative explanations are often suggestive, they do not, in my view, overturn the established view that 1 Corinthians is a highly contextualized letter, written to deal with specific problems that have developed in the history of Paul's relationship with the congregation (Bailey's explanation of the theme of the 'essay' in chapters 1–4 is the least convincing in the book) and as a result of the Corinthians' defective eschatological understanding.

In summary, if the comments above whet your appetite for a new approach to 1 Corinthians, then you will want to take a look at Bailey's study. But I wouldn't want it as my only commentary on the letter.

Sean Winter

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J. Patout Burns Jr., *Romans: Interpreted by Christian Commentators (The Church's Bible; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2012)*

This is the second New Testament volume to appear in the series 'The Church's Bible' (the first was on 1 Corinthians and Old Testament commentaries on the Song of Songs and Isaiah have been published). The aim of the series is to compile extensive excerpts from patristic commentary with appropriate introduction and analysis of the main approaches and ideas that characterize the various examples of early Christian exegesis. The commentaries are structured on a canonical chapter-by-chapter basis and preference is given to extended passages of explicit commentary (in contrast to allusion or quotation). This means that one can read the volume and get a good sense of the interpretative strategies and exegetical sensibilities of Ambrosiaster, Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine and Theodoret of Cyrrhus to name just the main authors whose work appears in this volume devoted to Romans.

Three things can be said by way of initial assessment. First, the selections and introductions to each chapter are judicious and helpful, while the translations themselves, often newly minted, are clear and in the majority of cases make the material more accessible to the modern reader than would otherwise be possible. Secondly, in an age when the virtues of patristic exegesis are finding new appreciation, not least within the framework of the broader call for a theologically oriented engagement with the biblical texts, a volume like this is an invaluable introduction. Those who preach from Romans might like to consider consulting or purchasing it as an alternative to yet another modern 'critical' commentary on the text. To enter into the world of Origen or Augustine is, to be sure, to breathe different air from of the world of Tom Wright or James Dunn. It is none the worse for that, although readers should be alerted to the more problematic aspects of early Christian interpretation: the portrayal of Judaism being the most obvious example. Patristic commentary is concerned above all to let the text speak, and in speaking to do its work of transformation of the believer. Finally, readers should be aware that the IVP Ancient Christian Commentary series also has a volume available on Romans, edited by Gerald Bray. This volume takes a more verse-by-verse approach, and so excerpts from the commentators are briefer, but

take in a wider range of authors. Those who wish to buy a compendium of patristic commentary on Romans should probably take a look at both volumes before choosing the one that they prefer.

Sean Winter

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Simon Perry, *Resurrecting Interpretation: Technology, Hermeneutics, and the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (Wipf and Stock, 2012)

Have you ever wondered why (or how) reading works? How it is that static marks on a page can become thoughts and ideas capable of changing and transforming lives, communities and environments? Does meaning exist within the words of the text, or in the mind or the reader, or somewhere else? If these questions are interesting in the abstract, they become crucial when we turn to the text of the Bible. How are we to read, hear and engage with the 'word' of God? Simon Perry's excellent book, *Resurrecting Interpretation*, takes us to the heart of the issue by pointing us to the Word resurrected: the resurrected Christ is seen to reside at the heart of our engagement with the Bible as holy scripture.

This is the published version of a PhD thesis, and so the usual warning applies: this is a complex book which engages at length and in depth. However it is also readable, and difficult concepts are carefully explained. Perry appropriate Heidegger's understanding of 'technology' to provide a way into the problem, suggesting that if the text is merely a 'resource' to be mined for meaning, it loses its capacity to communicate truth from 'beyond' the reader. As a counter to this, Perry highlights the 'presence of the Holy Spirit in and through the interpretive endeavour', adding that 'the role of the Spirit in the reading process is ... in direct relation to the resurrection' (p.17). The importance of Perry's approach is that instead of running from Heidegger or denying technologist reading strategies, he instead embraces their insights whilst constructing his own path through the maze to a Christ-centred hermeneutic.

After detailed critical engagement with the insights offered by Rudolph Bultmann, Stanley Fish and Jaques Derrida, Perry offers his own constructive hermeneutical proposal through a careful reading of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16.19-31). The crucial verse is the final one: 'If [the rich man's brothers] do not listen to Moses or the Prophets, neither will they be convinced even by someone who rises from the dead.' Perry suggests that a biblical hermeneutic should be firstly Christological (expecting to encounter Christ in our engagement with the text); secondly somatological (allowing the body of Christ, i.e. the church, to shape our construal of the text); and thirdly eschatological (cognisant of the way our hopes for the future affect our reading in the present). If, as the Rich Man discovered, the text of the law and the words of the prophets are ultimately unconvincing mediators of the Word eternal, where is one to go to find meaning? Perry suggests that, 'in short, the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is God's interpretation of the world' (p. 125). It is not the resurrection itself that convinces, however: it is the resurrected Jesus, present within the community of faith instituted by Christ and constituted by the Holy Spirit, who mediates God's word through the encounter with holy scripture.

Simon Woodman

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education Underground 1937 – 1940* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Volume 15; Fortress Press / Alban Books, 2011)

Good theology needs to be contextually engaged and the details of personal biography can rarely be underestimated in assessing the work of any theologian. This is perhaps never more true than when examining the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For years, the global and personal historical background to Bonhoeffer's published works has been acknowledged as highly influential on his theology. To that end his friend Eberhard Bethge made an early collection of significant papers to supplement Bonhoeffer's then published theology. These were published in German (*Gesammelte Schriften und Mündige Welt*) and in English as *No Rusty Swords, The Way to Freedom and True Patriotism*. Much of these then appeared as the background to Bethge's commanding biography. The subsequent decision to publish new annotated editions of the Bonhoeffer corpus together with documents from his literary estate was universally welcomed when it began in German in the 1980s and this book is now the 15th volume of the English translation of that project. It covers in exhaustive detail the period from November 1937 to March 1940. As those familiar with Bonhoeffer's biography will know, this then begins with the closure by the Gestapo of the illegal seminary in Finkenwalde and the first underground teaching of the Collective Pastorates for the Confessing Church. It involves the publishing of Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* and his writing of *Life Together*. It is shaped by the events of the *Anschluß* of Austria in March 1938 and the *Kristallnacht* Pogrom of November that year. It marks a bleak period in the witness of the Confessing Church as it struggled to oppose the ascendant Nazi Regime and narrates the details surrounding Bonhoeffer's decision to return from the safety of America to Germany as he anticipated the outbreak of war in September 1939. There are over 500 pages of collected original documents, a helpful Editor's Introduction by Victoria J Barnett and a significant Afterward by the Editor of the German Edition, Dirk Schulz. All this, together with an exhaustive bibliography and comprehensive index section, comes to over 700 pages, but for those involved in the serious study of Bonhoeffer few if any of these will be without interest.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first and largest of these gathers letters, documents and Bonhoeffer's own diary entries and gives a fascinating insight to the heart and mind of the man behind the then published books and the subsequent popularised myth of the singularly resolute radical martyr. What emerges is an altogether more real person, one who treasures his relationships of family and friends and yet who acknowledges his personal responsibility for the decisions he must make in life. In this we glimpse someone sufficiently self aware to admit that his motives for action are never completely clear to himself and yet we also witness man in whom the twin vocations as pastor and academic are symbiotically evolving into maturity. Letter after letter, both community circulars and personal missives reveal his persistent pastoral care of those he trained for ministry but also his commitment to encourage them to remain committed to the scripture and prayer and to think as critical and responsible theologians, particularly with regard to their changing, perilous social context. And yet there are here too, illuminating pericopes of how he himself must wrestle with the consequences of that theology and the cost of being a disciple of Jesus. Most notable here are the papers, including the full diary entries, that reveal his existential insecurity over the decision to go to America and then to return almost immediately to Germany set on war.

The second section comprises 'Exercises, Lectures and Essays'. This outlines his seminary teaching on a variety of practical subjects such as Marriage, Pastoral Care and Counselling and the exegesis of the Pastoral Epistles. It also gathers together his Bible Study Seminars on basic concepts in the New Testament and the well known Lectures on Temptation. Here too we find the incisive commentary on his encounters of church life in America, Protestantism without Reformation with much penetrating analysis that remains as true now as it was then: viz: 'a church that is independent of the state is no more protected from secularisation than a state church.'

The final collection consists mainly of sermons and outlines of worship services. The various texts of Bonhoeffer's preaching show how seriously he took the proclamation of scripture but also how skilfully he connected the world of the bible to that of his congregation. However it is the extended and unfinished meditation on Psalm 119 that is perhaps of greatest significance here. This was Bonhoeffer's favourite Psalm, references from it litter his work and he regarded his reflection on it as a high point of his own work. But its value here is perhaps less as a commentary on the Psalm as it is on what it says about someone whose life was shaped through the continual challenge and comfort of the scriptures.

The two and a half years of Bonhoeffer's life documented in this volume are often less attended to than the years of resistance and prison, or even the preceding turmoil of the early Church struggle at Dahlem and Barmen. But this was a calm between those two storms: a time in which Bonhoeffer's evolving theology would inform significant personal decisions and in turn, those biographical landmarks would mature the thinking of the man who would later pen Ethics and offer the world his radical theological Letters and Papers from Tegel prison. This period of biography is then critical to appreciating Bonhoeffer, the man, his theology and his actions in life and there simply is no greater companion to reaching that understanding than this volume. Its overall size, price and detail will mean that it will rarely be the first port of call for the casual reader. However it will quickly prove its worth as an essential additional resource for any serious student of Bonhoeffer, the Confessing Church or this history of Germany in the 1930s. Additionally it may yet offer fresh inspiration and challenge to those still wrestling with the nature of ministerial formation and theological education today. In all these regards this significant book shows clearly that there is much yet to be learned by many from Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

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Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus* (Eerdmans, 2011), 409pp

What does a 'good' death look like? Many would choose one that is brief, with pain and distress minimised. With the 'medicalization' of death, this is achieved by the administration of not only strong painkillers, but also anti-anxiety drugs to ease the fear with which most approach the process of death. While many Christians have little fear of what lies beyond the grave, many share the wider population's anxiety about what leads up to those final moments. Behind this view of the end of life lies much of the challenge to the current law that criminalises any assistance to the terminally ill in avoiding a painful and slow process of dying. What is sought is a swift and controlled death, and so the desire to achieve that is promoted by those who advocate euthanasia while the terminally ill are far from those final days, hours or moments.

Verhey wryly opens the book with the observation that 'People have been dying for a while now' (p.1). Indeed, he almost joined their company before writing this book, so it is the fruit not only of a fine ethical and theological mind, but also lived experience. For much of the Christian era, a swift and, perhaps, largely unconscious death was far from a 'good' death. Allen Verhey contrasts the ideal of death in the 'art of dying' in the fifteenth century, with the medicalized death offered today in the West. Behind these two pictures Verhey turns back to the death of Jesus to give some longer perspective.

The questions that the fact and anticipation of death give rise to are, of course, ancient. Who are we? Why are we alive? What happens after death? If the answers to those questions are multitudinous, the answers that Christianity gives are far from monochrome. Is death to be welcomed by Christians, or glorified even? The admonition of St Paul that to be with Christ is better, and the cult of the martyrs would suggest this is a strong response. Others would point out that death is the last enemy, and is the most demonized of human experiences. It is this ambiguity that gives rise to so much variety in response.

The most recent episode in the history of the human approach to dying is the 'medicalized' death, the triumph of mid-twentieth century medical science. Severe ill health meant people began to go to hospital to die, just as they went there to give birth. So, the beginning and end of life take place in palaces of medical science. Prior to this period, most gave birth at home and died there as well. The great advances in medical science notwithstanding, the opponents to this medicalized approach (among them Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and her book *On Death and Dying* (1969), which has been conceived of as a rejection of medicalization in favour of a return to Romanticism, and the Hospice Movement, with its deeply Christian roots) have pointed to its shortcomings: the denial, almost, of death and the continuing status of dying as the new taboo subject. Verhey exposes the shortcomings of its opponents too, and this section, chapters 1 to 4, are amongst the strongest in the book.

Verhey contrasts the medicalization not with its contemporary opponents, but with a much older tradition: that of the 'art of dying', *Ars Moriendi*. This genre would today be called 'Dying Well for Dummies', Verhey wryly observes (p.79). Conduct literature was popular in late Medieval times, and against the back-cloth not just of 'normal rates of death from disease, famine, violence and so forth, but the extraordinary virulence of The Black Death of 1348-50, to which perhaps a third of Europe succumbed (whether that was Bubonic plague, as is most commonly assumed, or some form of rapid-onset blood poisoning, as has been more recently suggested) brought death to the forefront of the popular imagination. There were some who genuinely believed that all of humanity would be wiped out, and such terror meant death haunted the imagination. Death was thought of with terror, and the Fifteenth century vision lacked everything elegiac or tender, not least because the experience of dying from Plague was often one of being abandoned to isolation, unimaginable agony and death that could not come swiftly enough. The Christian response was to show how to die well, and *Tractatus Artis Bene Moriendi* gives the Christian soul the advice on dying well. The dying person is warned of the temptations confronting the dying, advocates a short catechism about repentance and assurance of God's pardon, offers instructions on the imitation of the dying Christ, and suggest prayers for use by the dying. The last two sections admonishes those caring for the dying and gives prayers for use by those who accompany the dying.

Thus the ideal death was not one where the process was cloaked by analgesics and fogged by anti-anxiety drugs, but one where the victim was alert, conscious, able to approach death in full faith,

with assurance of forgiveness, surrounded by those who would counsel and prayer for them. This approach comes from the belief about the transition from life to death, that is simultaneously, the transition from Death to Life eternal. Any momentary pain and fear now is a small price to pay for an eternal reward, and so the focus is upon the soul.

In offering his critique of this movement, Verhey (who has elsewhere offered a virtue approach to ethics based upon the imitation of Jesus, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture and the Moral Life*, Eerdmans, 2002) rejects the platonic and stoic worldviews that underpinned the Late-Medieval world, and turns instead to the biblical accounts of Jesus' death to offer the more-thoroughly Christian paradigm for dying well. The closing chapters (Part 4) function as a contemporary version of *The Art of Dying Well*. Rooted in the virtues, and expounding the practices that prepare us to die well in Christ, this is a recovery of a lost theme in pastoral care: the cure of souls as preparation to die. Where much of the focus of pastoral care throughout the Christian era has been precisely to prepare people to die well in Christ, its very absence from much current pastoral care is perhaps the most telling sign of our culture's loss of eternal perspective. To live *sub specie aeternitatis* is no longer seen as especially helpful and the concomitant preparing for death widely ignored, or avoided as 'morbid' or 'gloomy'. Yet, preparing people to die helps them to live well. Perhaps this timely and important book might assist in some way to reverse that trend.

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William T. Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W. Bailey, Craig Hovey (eds.), *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology* (Eerdmans, 2012), 800pp + index

The thing about a "reader" is that reading it for review is precisely the wrong way to read it. It is absolutely not the sort of book you sit down and read cover to cover – except, in order to give a fair overview and response to it in a review like this, that is how it has to be read!

However, that weirdness aside, this is a worthwhile book. Designed to bring together important texts in a variety of areas of political theology, this will serve well as a resource for students (and their teachers!) and preachers.

There are 11 sections to the book, each containing a selection of readings drawn from a wide variety of sources. The sections include "Reading the Bible Politically," "Liturgy and Politics", "Gender and Race" and "After 9/11". A short essay outlining themes picked up in the readings and putting them into context introduces each section. The essays vary in helpfulness and the amount of previous knowledge that they assume, but without them the book would be much weaker.

The sections are of varying lengths – and it is here that the weakness of reading the book cover to cover shows. It is designed as a resource; providing material on a particular area or topic together in one place. In some of the sections the materials interact directly with each other. This is very helpful, particularly in the case of the Niebuhr brothers, and Rowan Williams and George Weigel. In other sections, although the readings (on the whole) are dealing with the same fields and often interacting with the same background material, there is little in the way of overlap. The introductory essays are particularly useful in pointing out commonalities and divergences. One thing that would have made the book more accessible would have been a couple of sentences introduction to each excerpt, giving date and context.

The editors have not taken just one line; within the selection there is a wide range of viewpoints and approaches represented. Ecclesiologically, the range covers John Howard Yoder and Alexander Schmemmann, theologically, Karl Barth, Walter Wink and Musa W. Dube. Anybody trying to read the whole thing will find that some of the excerpts are easier to read than others – and this will no doubt reflect pre-existing interest, and knowledge.

This is a very useful resource. I anticipate keeping it on my shelf to dip into as I am find myself wrestling with particular issues. And more than that, by engaging with some significant thinkers on important and world-shaping issues, I look forward to learning how to think more clearly.

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Matthew Levering, *Predestination: Biblical & Theological Paths* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 228pp.

Matthew Levering, a young Roman Catholic scholar from the States, has added to his growing list of publications this wise and scholarly book on a theological theme which continues to be important. The book is well organised, very clearly written (the author explaining complex ideas in accessible ways), and has a clear line of argument which runs from its introduction to its conclusion. It's a nicely produced volume too. We'll come back to the price.

The structure of the book is clear and helpful, with an introduction which lays out the arguments in summary followed by a chapter on the bible and then successive chapters on Patristic, Medieval, Reformation, and twentieth century periods. In each of these historical eras Levering chooses four writers with whom to interact, before summing up by returning to the two affirmations he believes need to be foregrounded in every treatment of the subject.

The introduction sets out the main argument which is, briefly, that an adequate treatment of predestination must hold together two affirmations without resolving completely their inherent tension: that God chooses some for salvation rather than others, but that God loves all equally. Rather than a logical puzzle to be clarified, this paradox needs to be approached as a divine mystery. He finds these affirmations in the biblical witness. Rather than an in-depth survey of the whole of Scripture (which Levering admits would require a book of its own) he contents himself with a very brief sketch and then focuses on Romans 9-11. It is refreshing to see a systematic theologian deploying the insights of biblical scholars in discussing texts in this way, though his treatment is necessarily brief. Neither does he attempt to dwell on the theological or pastoral motivations of the writers 'behind' the text.

In assessing texts, as with theological arguments generally on the subject, there will always be texts on either side of the argument. It is interesting that so often there is a preference for resolving the tension by repeating first or loudest those texts which affirm the omnipotence of God rather than those which speak of his waiting for our free response (as implied in the prophets, and in much of the challenge of evangelists in the New Testament, for instance. This tendency often reminds me of what Whitehead called paying God 'metaphysical compliments.'

In any case, Scripture shapes Levering's two affirmations: that God's love for his creatures has no 'stinginess' but also that 'from eternity' God allows some to remain in their sin (p.34f) – an

interesting way of presenting the issue which immediately appears somewhat to mitigate divine responsibility.

Such qualms are not evident in Augustine's work – and in the next section of the book we have discussion of Origen, Augustine, Boethius and John Damascene. Each of these writers, as in the succeeding chapters, is explained with brevity but real insight – presenting Augustine's teaching on predestination in the light of his concerns about human pride is illuminating and convincing. But he does not stop to ask at this point – is Augustine's framing of the issue correct, can or should it be qualified in any way? Even if we accept his assessment that Augustine's concern to avoid the pride which might come from feeling that we have merited God's choice (as Origen suggests, though on his way to universalism), or indeed that we have had anything at all to do with our salvation, these premises are not so much probed as accepted. In this section it is John Damascene, probably the least well known to non-Patristic specialists, who Levering sees as particularly promising, with his effort to separate foreknowledge from predestination, and his emphasis on human/divine cooperation.

In the medieval period we review Scotus, Aquinas, William and Ockham and Catherine of Sienna. It is in the latter, again little known to many readers one suspects, that he finds much of interest and encouragement – a familiar reliance on mystery coupled with the affirmation of God's 'magnificent love' in tension with God's 'transcendent causality' (p.97). As he notes, if she had exercised more systematic rigour, she would have hit problems! For William, God's predestination amounts to little more than his 'intuitive foreknowledge' (p.88) – this appears to make talking about predestination a strong way of speaking of God's seeing what will happen, a kind of metaphor. This 'seeing' is itself dependent on the future events – rather than the future events being dependent on their being seen, as it were.

Many of these writers have wanted to speak both of God's supreme will, but also of God permitting certain actions which are not divinely willed. Calvin rejects this position as illogical, and in the 'early modern' chapter we read about Calvin, Molina (middle knowledge), Leibniz and de Sales. Calvin's attempts to absolve God, once the willing and permitting distinction is set aside, appear unconvincing to Levering – though in doing so it might be argued that Calvin is showing some of the rigour found wanting in Catherine. If God can withhold permission, it appears to me to make little sense to argue that in no way is that which is permitted divinely willed. In some sense, it clearly is divinely willed. Levering again champions the bookies' outsider – Francis de la Salle - in whom he finds echoes of Catherine alongside a refusal to limit God's love for those who are not among the elect. But how much consolation is this if they are lost anyway?

What Levering might do is probe these positions from a different angle of view: what elements in the writers' context or circumstances might have led them to have framed issues in the way that they did? For instance, in Calvin's case, the view of Alister McGrath and others that predestination is really Calvin's theological solution to a pastoral problem (why do some not respond to the Gospel?) is not explored. If that is the case for instance, one might find other arguments to deploy against it, and, indeed, suggest alternative explanations for the problem.

The sub-heading for the twentieth-century discussion is 'God's absolute innocence,' and it is a neat way of indicating the trend in this theological field – and perhaps the cultural imperatives which help drive those trends. Bulgakov, Barth, Maritain and von Balthasar are considered, and their various strategies in defence of God's innocence (with some tendencies towards universal

salvation) appreciated but found wanting. This leads Levering to explore the two core affirmations in his final chapter. This is a thoughtful reflection, tender in places and majestic in others, in which again the mystery of God's love is affirmed. If you are more persuaded than I am about the utility of divine permitting (which has another run for its money here), you may be persuaded by it. I am left reflecting that the final position that God elects some to salvation but permits others to miss the mark – must mean that he has elected to permit these individuals to miss out. Well, technically the final position is doxological mystery – and, actually, that's probably the only place to end.

If you are interested in the question of predestination you will want to read this book. It is thorough, clear, illuminating, balanced. Even if he does not take you to his conclusions in full agreement, there will be much of profit in the book for you. However, the price is a real deterrent. You will probably either have to access a library copy somewhere, or hope that OUP have predestined a paperback.

Robert Ellis
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Tom Greggs, *Theology Against Religion: Constructive Dialogues with Bonhoeffer and Barth* (T & T Clark, 2011)

This is an ambitious project, all within in the tight compass of one volume. In fact there are several projects woven together to form a single whole. The remarkable thing is that the result has genuine coherence and is a pleasure to read.

It is only towards the end of this book, that the author's primary intention becomes clear; to make a contribution to the causes of global reconciliation and peace by encouraging serious dialogue between people who, individually, are deeply committed to seemingly incompatible religions.

Two substantial chapters, only reached in the last section, Part 3 of 3, provide a clear theoretical basis and a practical agenda for engaging in genuine inter-faith dialogue. This is very much of-the-moment, highlighting as an example of best practice the recent letter from 307 Muslim leaders, *A Common Word Between Us and You*, respectfully inviting Christian communions around the world to enter a conversation. For Greggs this exemplifies good practice in a variety of ways: it demonstrates an appropriate humility, respecting the other (in this case Christians) by calling Christians to be fully faithful to their own scriptures; it invites conversation in the expectation that each party will come to understand itself better (each in its own identity) as a result of engagement; and it opens the possibility of the practical outcome of mutual hospitality, with real potential for building tangible reconciliation and peace. In the very last sub-section the reader is given a concise summary of a practical approach to dialogue under the title Scriptural Reasoning, a method of group study in which participants coming with their own strong commitments to different religious traditions and different holy texts read selected samples from their scriptures together: in a spirit of humility, expecting each to come to a better self-understanding, and looking for practical peacemaking outcomes from their meeting.

This is, however, Part 3. Parts 1 and 2 have already undertaken some major tasks. In them this book provides a clearly focused exploration of the way that the theme of religion was handled in the theologies of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, what their theologies of religion actually looked like. At a superficial level it is easy to imagine that Barth and Bonhoeffer will end up classified poles

apart on this issue; we hear Barth declaring “Nein!” and we hear Bonhoeffer opening the way into ‘religionless Christianity’. The argument of this book is that, at a deeper level, there is hugely more convergence than we might at first have imagined. The details will need to be checked by Barth and Bonhoeffer specialists, but the overall strategy has a great deal of credibility. At root Greggs is arguing that, because these theologians share so much in their understanding of God, they emerge with a view of their own religion and (often by implication rather than explanation) the religions of others that also have much in common. It is Barth’s radical commitment to the Godness of God, Godness that is the antithesis of every kind of idolatry that will not allow Christian believers to become overly attached to the essentially human construct of the Christian religion. It is Bonhoeffer’s radical commitment to authentic discipleship (approaching the question as it were from the other end, from below rather than from above) that brings him to the same conclusion, demanding that we set our face against allowing the Christian religion to become another occasion for the kind of pharisaism that Jesus so clearly opposed. They meet, says Greggs, in a shared commitment to a radically christocentric, world affirming, understanding of the God who calls Christians to worship and discipleship.

In Part 1 there is a necessary careful exploration of the historical relationship between Barth’s and Bonhoeffer’s work. Barth was a major influence of Bonhoeffer, and this was evident in Bonhoeffer’s own teaching and writing. Bonhoeffer, however, did not simply agree with his teacher but pushed at boundaries of his own. All this, however, was brought to an abrupt end with Bonhoeffer’s untimely death. At that time Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* had only been published as far as the end of the first volume, in two parts. This means that an immense amount of Barth’s later work was able to develop significantly beyond anything that Bonhoeffer could have anticipated and, in measure, also draw on the trajectory that Bonhoeffer had so creatively initiated, most clearly evident in Barth’s late work *Humanity in God*. Careful attention to the details of this complex pattern of development in ideas enables Greggs to argue a clearer understanding of the convergence between these two great theologians around the ways they approach their theological approaches to religion.

Part 2 then presents a significant leap. This is the leap that underlies the use of the term ‘constructive’ in the strap line of the title. For Greggs constructive dialogue with Bonhoeffer and Barth (I never quite understood the order of their names in the title) means that he gives full weight to fact that these writers were living and working in a very specific and quite extreme historical contexts. This means in turn that these theologians are unlikely to provide off-the-peg solutions to twenty-first century issues concerning the meeting of religions. Barth is primarily concerned about Christianity’s self-understanding and only by ‘constructive’ implication provides resources that enable us to engage with others; and it is similar with Bonhoeffer. Greggs, however, provides a convincing case that careful constructive dialogue enables us to bring the full force of Barth’s and Bonhoeffer’s monumental theological imaginations to bear on issues of our own time. This kind of construction can be very precarious, inviting inappropriate leaps and hidden bounds, obscuring real and sometimes unbridgeable differences in context. Greggs, however, makes the leap with precision and appropriate care.

Why, then, spend two thirds of this book on such a detailed analysis and constructive dialogue with Barth and Bonhoeffer; why not progress direct to Part 3 and get down to the original purpose of tackling contemporary concerns around the meeting of world religions? If I have understood his motives aright, Greggs recognises that much which purports to attract the label ‘inter-faith’ is, in fact, very lightweight and trivial. It can easily disguise unnamed motivations that still hope for

conversions rather than increased self-understanding; and it can fall into the trap of looking for common themes and rituals, rather than celebrating the particularity of each individual religion. Greggs line of approach is very similar to that of Lindbeck on this latter point; he is not looking for common denominators between religions at all, but seeking to help us better to understand significant others.

My own view is that the complex web of explorations that form this book result in a very stimulating and challenging whole. In a final concluding piece, Greggs focuses on two key words to make retrospective sense of his project, mystery and hope. At the deepest possible level, he argues, Christians will want to engage in inter-faith dialogue because an understanding of God as mystery, central to their own religion, demands it. This God will not be bounded by the specificity of anything as particular as a religion; the Godness of God will always demand humble self-criticism and radical openness to the other who might just speak the word we need to hear. At a very practical level, in a world deeply divided along religious lines and ever threatened by inter-religious violence, it is this same Godness of God, that Christians have come to understand through Christ, that opens a window of hope in the world. I am really glad to have read this book, and suspect that others will find it satisfying too.

Richard Kidd
Northern Baptist Learning Community

Benjamin Myers, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams: A Critical Introduction* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 160 pp

Ben Myers' guide through the theology of Rowan Williams is not an easy book, especially given that it is an 'introduction'. This relatively brief paperback requires a slow and thoughtful reading. This is not any form of "Idiot's Guide" to Rowan Williams – nor is it the kind of analysis conducted from a patronising stance 'outside' the texts under consideration. Ben Myers invites the reader into the darkness, struggle and pain of human existence, because only from there can we begin to grasp the dynamic of Williams' thought.

His description of resurrection, for instance, is not simply the divine 'conjuring trick with bones,' nor an alternative to the stark horrors of death, nor a free ticket to eternal bliss. To grasp something of what resurrection means, we are brought to the brink of the existential abyss, to peer into the depths of human loneliness and alienation, to face head-on the traumatic realities of the human condition. Williams / Myers (at times their voices merge) leave us no way out, no shallow consolation, no bogus refuge that would save us from exposure to the godless nothingness that shrouds human experience. Only when exposed to this sheer and absolute absence, appreciating its monstrous weight, acknowledging its final say over who we are, only then do the cosmic tremors of resurrection begin to rumble. It is for this reason that Myers' introduction is not an easy read: it is less a dry and detached argument, than a daring invitation into a region undergoing an earthquake.

If we want an objective, measured, systematic critique of Williams, this is not the place to look. For instance, I would like to have seen Myers devote more energy to the distinction he makes between the fluid, groundless, self-effacing theologies of post-modernism and Williams' own position, which can feel excessively 'un-concrete,' inoffensive and post-modern. The Hauerwases of this world clearly state their position, identify their enemies, attract controversy and pay the price. Williams,

at the other extreme (and for understandable reasons) often treads so carefully, so lightly, that his own position remains clouded in ambiguity and mystery. These dimensions of Williams' thought, so brilliantly highlighted by Myers, left me hungry for more in the way of explanation.

But explanation is not Myers' priority. Outlining the breadth of Williams' theological influences (Augustine and Hegel, Russian Orthodoxy, Wittgenstein and Freud, Mackinnon and Gillian Rose), Myers' lucid exposition has a strong poetic quality. In fact, *Christ the Stranger* is poetic theology in which the voices of Myers and Williams slowly fade, leaving the reader confronted by the disturbing, disruptive, liberating Christ to whom they point.

Simon Perry
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Sebastian Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate* (SCM, 2011)

Sebastian Kim describes *Theology in the Public Sphere* as a work of 'constructive public theology' – one to do with the practical application of theology in the public sphere. It focuses on 'real world' examples of public theology in action, explaining some of the background to these and, from these examples, Kim articulates his vision of what public theology is, as well as what makes public theology theoretically and methodologically distinct from other theological disciplines.

The book is divided into three sections, each with a number of chapters. Section one begins by introducing the concept of theology engaging in the public sphere – where this discipline has come from, and the reasons for it. The second chapter in this section discusses the nature of the Bible, which is described as a 'public book', including the ways in which different Christian communities throughout the world have interacted with it, drawing on indigenous religious and scholastic paradigms in interpreting it within their own contexts. The third chapter takes the emergence of 'eco-theology' as an example of how public theology is done in the contemporary world, bringing together voices from across global Christianity and from many disciplines, including ecology, biology, eco-feminism and business.

The second section of the book looks at a number of different examples of public theologies from around the world, with a chapter each on India, and the development there of ways of doing theology in public and engaging positively with the Hindu majority; Korea, and the development on minjung theology; Latin America and 'liberation theology'; and a chapter on the responses of Western churches to the Iraq War. The chapters in this section each begin by giving background to the different theologies and national contexts to be discussed, before explaining the ways in which public theologians have sought to interact with other bodies in the public sphere. Kim then teases out some of the lessons to be learnt from these practices of public theology, and how they inform the methodology of the discipline.

The final section takes a look at some recent examples of public theology in action in Europe: Rowan Williams' lecture on Sharia Law; the Danish cartoon controversy; and Christian and other religious responses and contributions to the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill in Britain.

Kim describes the 'public sphere' as the place of interaction between 6 main bodies – the state, the media, the market, civil society, academies and religious communities. Kim argues throughout the

book that 'for healthy interaction in the public sphere, a plurality of voices is needed' (p.12). Kim's vision for public theology is one in which the claims that Christianity wants to make about the whole world and its vision for humanity – as distinct from its claims about and vision for Christians – are articulated in such a way that they are open to inspection, critical analysis and discussion by all the other bodies engaged in the public sphere.

This openness to inspection and critical engagement by others outside of the Church is an important theme throughout this book. For Kim, public theology is not about the Church trying to assert or negotiate control of the public sphere, to make its voice count as the only authoritative one in any given context. But nor is Kim content with a vision of secularism in which religion is relegated solely to the private sphere. Christianity, he argues, has a vision for the whole of humanity, not just for the private lives of its adherents, and if Christians believe their vision for human flourishing is a good one, they have a duty to share this with the rest of society. But they must do this, he argues, by negotiating with other voices, by allowing this vision to be challenged, and seeking to articulate it in such a way that it stands up to scrutiny even if the theological ground out of which it has grown is not one which others share.

Kim uses the language of 'permeation' a lot, especially in the final section, and it is clear that he sees the role of public theology as enabling Christian insights to shape the world as one among other valid voices. In discussion of Rowan Williams' lecture on Sharia Law, for example, he argues that the establishment of supplementary parts of the legal system for religious people – even where, as Dr Williams suggests, these do not limit one's recourse to the wider legal system – may not be appropriate. Ultimately, he argues, this continues to keep religion in the private sphere, rather than allowing it to interact with the wider world. Instead, the insights of religious legal traditions should be allowed, he suggests, to 'permeate' and influence British law; that, in the public sphere, a multitude of voices should be brought together in dialogue and, through rigorous cross-examination and debate, negotiate a common vision for society.

Theology in the Public Sphere will be useful to those practicing public theology, students of theology, and those with an interest in translating theological ideas into practice. It may also serve as a useful introductory text to theology in the Indian, Korean and Latin American contexts, as Kim's treatment of these complex examples of public theology in action is both fascinating and inspiring.

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Mark J. Cartledge and David Cheetham (eds.), *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes* (SCM Press, 2011), 193pp

This book of papers originated in the Intercultural Theology seminars held at the University of Birmingham in the academic session 2007-08, with some chapters originating later than that. Not surprisingly, the majority of contributors teach at Birmingham, and the academic concerns of that Department are reflected in the themes that emerge, notably the contribution of Pentecostalism to the contemporary theological landscape.

Intercultural theology is a methodological commitment to taking seriously the cultural context in which theology is discussed. While it can be wedded to inter-faith dialogue in a liberal plural context, or be a project for global theology or interreligious theology, it is not necessarily so.

Rather, it is a commitment to the inclusion of a wider range of contextual and cultural information within theological dialogue than has usually been the case.

The theme of Pentecostalism is reflected in Mark Cartledge's paper on Pentecostal theological method, together with Allan Anderson's paper on African Pentecostalism, and Richard Burgess's paper on the Nigerian Pentecostal contribution to intercultural theology. Martyn Percy reflects upon the year 2008 in Anglican-American life, and the dilemmas that arose from the appointment of Bishop Gene Robinson. Kirsteen Kim analyses feminist theologies from the global South, contrasting the 'South' with its social concerns and the East with its emphasis upon the spirit. Werner Ustorf and Graham Ward lay foundations for the whole enterprise in analysing the cultural origins of 'intercultural theology', and political discipleship, respectively.

The value of any collection of papers often lies in the individual contributions, rather than the sum of the parts, and this is partly true for this collection. However, if anyone wants to discover what 'intercultural theology' might be, as understood in the Birmingham tradition, could do no better than to start here. It seems that University theology departments often require a distinctive 'brand', and this book reflects one of Birmingham University's current enterprises, rooted in its long tradition of celebrating black theology and Pentecostal theology. That longer tradition is now being recast in a broader intercultural context, to the benefit of us all.

Paul Goodliff
Baptist Union of Great Britain

Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (IVP Academic, 2012), 270pp

Steven Holmes' recent work, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life*, (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2012), strongly emphasised the need to return to the sources in a defence of the Nicene settlement against revisionist trinitarian theology. This accessible and straight-talking monograph sets about the same task, albeit in a very specific area of doctrine. Whereas Holmes had the big names of twentieth century theology in his crosshairs, Kevin Giles aims his critique at the softer target of (generally conservative) popular evangelical theologians. The result is an examination of the context and content of a trinitarian debate in which he expresses the historical position with a great deal of clarity and skill. A recommended read, not only for the particulars of the subject, but also for the lessons to learn concerning the necessary depth of understanding that today's generation of church leaders need to attain as a core component of their vocation.

I confess that reading up on the doctrine of 'the eternal generation of the Son' was not on my radar prior to this review. My initial reaction to the title, which I hope at least some others might be honest enough to also admit, was that of dread. A shady memory was recast of doctrine classes by an enthusiastic lecturer whose wavelength I never seemed to be able to tune into. Happily, Giles' work lies at the accessible end of the spectrum. His thesis is simple. He believes that a significant number of evangelicals (by which he generally seems to have Australian and American contexts in mind) have called what he considers to be a key plank of trinitarian doctrine into question. Therefore, he argues by way of response in defence of the Nicene formula, i.e., Christ is 'eternally begotten' of the Father.

For myself, I was unaware of the “threat” that Giles makes much of in his opening chapter. It seems to me that the evangelicals that he writes to refute, such as Wayne Grudem have cocked-a-snook at the creed, often in throwaway comments. It appears that his foils are suspicious of systematic theology proceeding from creed rather than exegesis. This impression is reinforced in chapter 2, which is a helpful, if simplistic rationalé for the use of theology in an evangelical context, rather than the tacit assumption that Scripture can be profitably read apart from tradition, reason and experience. Likewise, chapter 3 is also concerned with method. Giles demonstrates the well established point that doctrine is better constructed from a sweep of biblical narrative rather than from isolated texts.

The four chapters at the heart of the book provide the historical perspective – the point being that the Nicene formula has proved useful to the church, that it has withstood criticism, and that ‘eternal generation’ remains a crucial aspect of the creed. Giles argues that the doctrine is there to ensure the following two points: Firstly, Father and Son are distinct, one begets and the other is begotten. Secondly, those distinctions are eternal. Together with the doctrine of the eternal procession of the Spirit the anchor is in place for a doctrine of the Trinity. Three “persons” defined by eternal relations yet those three united in all other respects as one God. This position, as Giles, explains, was arrived at after centuries of reflection and after road testing a number of alternatives that proved inadequate.

Bringing the argument back to the present, Giles delivers a searing critique of those that idly dismiss doctrine without having done their homework. It is not sufficient to analyse creedal formulae with the rudiments of biblical exegesis alone. Theological language takes meaning from historical context and therefore has a precise definition that cannot be guessed simply from Scripture. To ignore that is to open the door to all manner of confusion, such as existed in the Church prior to Nicea. The result of such sloppiness is inevitably Christian reflection that fails to base itself in tradition, experience or reason, and is therefore commonly half baked in its exposition of Scripture. Such will either be good theology or (more likely) bad theology, one opinion to rank amongst others, but as Giles wisely states, it will not be doctrine, for it ignores the constituency to which doctrine makes its appeal, the whole church, across geography and across time.

Just how muddled the use of trinitarian theology has become is exemplified in Giles’ description of various evangelical camps that appear to reject the phrase ‘eternally begotten’. On the one hand, complimentarian Grudem ejects the doctrine on the basis that it does not supply a strong enough case for eternal subordination of the Son to the Father. On the other hand egalitarians Milliard Erickson and William Lane Craig reject the same doctrine on the basis that it cannot be read other than to imply subordination! Why the great interest in whether the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father? Because the doctrine is seen to be critical to the argument for or against the indelible subordination of women. Giles reinforces from the historical perspective that the primary concerns in the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity were heresiological and doxological. One cannot make ethical or ecclesiological capital out of them because the historic doctrine of the Trinity does not refer to the church or to human behaviour.

My minor niggles with the book include a lack of bibliography, a lack of breadth of theological engagement and a tendency to overstate the case. These “minors” do not greatly detract from what is a consistently helpful piece of work.

Roland Sokolowski
Spurgeon’s College, London

Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Brazos Press / SPCK, 2011)

Trying to get to grips with the Bible continues to be a significant subject and so leads to expanding literature on the subject, whether more recently on hermeneutics, or rather, as here, reflecting on what kind of book the Bible is.

Christian Smith's contribution divide neatly into two parts, the first offering a critique of a common evangelical understanding of the Bible, which Smith describes as biblicism, and the second suggesting an alternative understanding, which Smith will claim as more truly evangelical. Smith traces biblicism back to the likes of Charles Hodge and BB Warfield, both professors at Princeton and with the rise of fundamentalism in the USA. Smith does not offer a simple definition as such, but describes Biblicism by a 'constellation of related assumptions and beliefs about the Bible's nature, purpose and function' (p. 4), which shape an overall view without always being exactly the same. Smith offers ten key assumptions which come together in various ways: divine writing; total representation; complete coverage; democratic perspicuity; common-sense hermeneutics; sola scriptura; internal harmony; universal applicability; inductive method; handbook model.

Smith offers a number of critiques of biblicism, such as the tendency to favour some texts over others and a seeming arbitrary decision to interpret some passages as culturally shaped and to others, but the heart of this first part which takes the majority of space is about what Smith describes as 'pervasive interpretive pluralism'. In other words, although the theory of biblicism is that the plain meaning of the texts are clear to all in their most obvious literal sense, in practice biblicists come to such contrasting conclusions on such a wide range of significant issues, that the whole theory is thereby undermined. Smith offers many examples and seems to make a convincing case.

At this point, just over half way through the book, the question of the intended reader comes into sharp focus. The book is clearly written from an American perspective and for, mainly, the American market. Its tone feels a little too polemic to be trying to persuade convinced biblicists to rethink their position, although that may be simply the perspective of a more sedate English reader! And part of the strength of biblicism seems to be its emotional appeal that the Bible must be true. It may be that there is a significant group within American seminaries who find themselves on the fringe of biblicism and shaped by its tradition who might find this book helpful. This leads to a second issue of readership. There are some occasions when the author makes few assumptions and is eager to explain fully – so the terms exegesis and eisegesis are explained. At other times Smith writes assuming significant theological literacy in his readers, so 'it did not seem to trouble Hodge that Scottish commonsense realism entailed a highly optimistic view of human knowledge that was inconsistent with his own Augustinian-Calvinist heritage, which emphasizes the epistemologically and noetically devastating effects of original sin.' (p.57) Some sections and chapters in particular seem to be written with these kind of theological expectations.

Moving on to the second part, which, to this reviewer, offered the most interest and potential, Smith offers three key foundations on which to build, in his terms a more truly evangelical approach to Scripture. The first is a Christological hermeneutic in which not only is the Bible read throughout from the perspective of Christ and his death and resurrection, but there is a distinction between Christ as the Word of God and the Bible as the Word of God because it is a witness to the

Word, Christ. Both explicitly and implicitly the influence of Karl Barth stands behind this chapter which in many ways is an exposition of his position. The second is an appreciation of the complexity and ambiguity of the Bible, as part of its God-given nature, and so something to be embraced rather than to be explained away. Thirdly, Smith offers a view of knowledge and language other than that mediated through the enlightenment which has so shaped evangelical thinking. This, in particular, offers a way of thinking about the Bible not as a flat handbook that can be consulted on any issue, but a place where God speaks and is encountered.

Smith seeks to find a place between the fundamentalism of evangelical tradition, the protestant liberalism it opposed and the new developments of postmodern relativism. He has a high view of Scripture as place where God speaks. If the book brings to a wider American audience the work of Barth and others on a Christological approach to Scripture, and a more nuanced approach to language than that, to this reviewer, would be a very good thing. There is a place for a book of wide appeal in the British market which sensitively and critically charts the dependence of evangelical thinking on the enlightenment and offers new ways forward, but, despite much of interest, especially in the second section, this is not it.

Anthony Clarke
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Jon C. Laansma and Daniel J. Treier (eds.), *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation* (T & T Clark, 2012)

Hebrews is often perceived as the Cinderella of NT studies, rarely receiving the attention of the Pauline Epistles. This book originates from a concern the fall from favour may be in part due to the predominance of a historical critical method, which the editors consider not the most suited to Hebrews or at least not without its difficulties. Instead the editors explore whether listening to the interpretative approach of those who have engaged with Hebrews in previous eras, predominantly those from a pre-modern and thus pre-historical critical time, may be helpful in guiding the renewal of interest in Hebrews.

This book offers the reader the opportunity to walk a corridor of the historical interpretation of Hebrews, pausing to look through windows upon various specific interpreters and areas of discussion. But as is the way with such collective works, a quick glance is all space affords and the curious reader will need to delve beyond this book for a comprehensive grasp of any one interpreter of Hebrews. Not that the chapters lack depth, but they are covering vast areas in a single chapter. As such this book is not an end in itself but a means of perusing various viewpoints upon the interpretation of Hebrews from which to identify areas for further study.

The chapters which focused on this task were the real highlight of the book. Keating's exploration of Thomas Aquinas' Christology as shaped by Hebrews and to what extent this was influenced by a Chalcedonian Christology was particularly enjoyable. Mattox's chapter on Martin Luther's Hebrews' lectures successfully surveys the parallels in Luther's extensive use of the OT and Hebrews OT quotations. Allen on Calvin stops short of seeking to prove the foundational influence of Hebrews on Calvin's Christology but explores conceptual ties between Calvin's work on Hebrews and his dogmatic distinctives. Kopic's chapter on Owen's Hebrew's commentary reviews his typological approach to Hebrews. Lastly Barth's view on Hebrews by McCormack leans more towards Barth's Christology than his handling of Hebrews, but offers some useful reflections.

In the end the discussion that emerges is essentially around the nature of exegesis and the relationship between Theological Interpretation and Historical Critical approaches. Greene-McCreight's concluding chapter contrasts with what the other contributions work towards and tentatively offers a possible way of viewing these two together. Greene-McCreight's chapter disrupts the cohesive nature of the book but arguably for the better, encouraging the reader to engage more critically and establish their own position.

This book is part of the 'Library of New Testament Studies' series aimed at those wanting to engage in more detailed study. This is reflected in the level of knowledge presumed by the contributors and serious engagement with the points raised would require further reading and a good library. However, as a collection of essays around a clear theme but from varied angles it also acts as a convenient orientation to the Hermeneutics applied to Hebrews, but please note it does not cover Hebrews' Hermeneutics of the OT on which many books are already available. For those interested in Christology as expressed in Hebrews or in the Hermeneutics applied to Hebrews it offers a valuable contribution.

Anthony Gill
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Andrew Davison (ed.), *Imaginative Apologetics. Theology, Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition* (SCM, 2011), 169pp

Beginning with a predictably erudite foreword, an apology for apologetics, by John Milbank, this collection of essays explores the ways in which the defence of the Christian faith might be undertaken in today's world (that is, the world of the secular West: I am not sure how applicable it might be to the global South.)

Milbank starts with the sense of apologia as the defence speech in a trial, and especially in a trial that may lead to death. Both Socrates and Jesus come to mind, both giving a defence 'because it concerns a truth beyond all known legal and cosmic bounds, and therefore a truth that is threatened with legal and scientific exclusion' (xv). Indeed apologetics becomes 'a bold proclamation and confession in the face of extreme danger. It lies at the very heart of faith and of theology' (xvii).

The subsequent papers often consider what role the arts and literature might play in apologetics, and root the nature of reason in both the realms of logic and of imagination, of intellect and desire. Aquinas is quoted approvingly (could he be quoted in any other way?), 'truth is something good, otherwise it would not be desirable; and good is something true, otherwise it would not be intelligible' (*Summa Theologiae* I.79.11 ad 2. p.xxv). With the 'New Atheists' often in mind as the prosecution, and Thomas Aquinas as the presiding genius, the authors explore philosophy (John Hughes' *Proofs and Arguments*, pp.3-11, and Andrew Davison's *Christian Reason and Christian Community*, pp.12-28) and the arts (such as Donna Lazenby on the new atheist novel, *Apologetics, Literature and Worldview*, pp.46-58; Michael Ward on C.S. Lewis, *The Good Serves the Better and Both the Best: C.S.Lewis on Imagination and Reason in Apologetics*, pp.59-78).

Stephen Bullivant asks why the new atheism has had such power, and how recent Roman Catholic theologians have had the courage and intellect to challenge it. The text of the apologia must be matched by the text of the works of mercy that provide the context for that challenge. 'On the one

hand, we must preach the gospel – argue for Christ; constantly finding new, intellectually robust means of doing just that. But equally we must look to ourselves and strive, individually and collectively, to provide a fitting ‘backdrop’, against which this proclamation will get a hearing.’ (p. 96)

Finally, in the closing section Graham Ward situates apologetics within cultural hermeneutics (pp.115-125); Richard Conrad explores defining moments in the history of apologetics, from Pentecost to John Paul II and present day considerations (pp.126-141); and finally, Alister McGrath argues for a more honest account of the history of the debate between science and religion than is often told, with a renewed focus upon the scope of human reason. He then turns the philosophical tools of science to the advantage of apologetics, arguing for science’s character as inference to the best explanation (of which Darwin’s theory of natural selection is a good example) as a means of doing apologetics (pp.142-157).

This is an interesting collection of essays, and useful for those who wish to engage with the great task of defending the claims of Christianity against a sceptical and positivistic culture that too often skims over the surface of things in its antipathy to ‘depth.’ Perhaps a little pricey for what one might take from it, it should certainly be in the College library, and probably in the professional apologists’, but not really for the average working pastor, I fear.

Paul Goodliff
Baptist Union of Great Britain

Dennis Kennedy, *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 249pp

You may have heard about the death of the author: Roland Barthes’ epigram has become shorthand for approaches to texts which highlight the role of the reader as opposed to the writer. Amid a plethora of books which focus on playwrights, or production, Dennis Kennedy’s *The Spectator and the Spectacle* focuses on the audiences for whom performances are staged, and the relationship between the audience and the productions they observe. Erudite and witty, Kennedy covers a remarkable range of performance types and touches upon a wide variety of themes, though it is not part of his project to draw them together into a grand argument. His own background in theatre, and the front cover shot of the Globe Theatre, gives the correct impression of the book’s centre of gravity – the stage. But Kennedy roams much more widely – through tourism, heritage, sport, and game-shows, for instance – in exploring the many ways in which we find ourselves to be spectators at a spectacle of one sort or another. Religious sites or themes are often not far away (and sometimes addressed directly): though I was passed this book to review because of its section on sports spectating, one can see various ways in which Kennedy’s observations touch upon such sites as worship and preaching too.

Kennedy begins by trying to define his terms: a spectator is solitary, while an audience is a collective. A ‘simple’ audience is the one which gathers ‘bodily’ for an event in a theatre, stadium or (perhaps) church; a ‘mass’ audience is dispersed but ‘gathered’ by mass media, via TV, cinema screen, internet, etc; a ‘diffused’ audience denotes those who live in media-saturated worlds where everything is in some way turned into spectacle and we are somehow always spectators (p.155). These notions of spectator and audience turn out to be concepts through which a good deal of experience in contemporary western culture can be understood, and Kennedy’s scholarly tools

include not only practical and theoretical knowledge of performance history but also significant writers in sociology and cultural studies.

His opening chapter reminds us that the behaviour of audiences (in the theatre, concert hall and church) is socially conditioned: the patterns of acceptable and expected behaviour vary from age to age and social circumstance to social circumstance. Many theorists give accounts of audiences as basically passive groups, sitting and silently ingesting what is given to them – including its often hidden and sinister socio-political undertones. Kennedy repeatedly questions this perspective, and offers a picture of different kinds of spectating – sometimes engaged, sometimes bored, sometimes resistant, sometimes merely politely going through the motions (pp. 13, 169). We spectate for various reasons, not always those assumed or demanded by the conveyors of the spectacle (ministers, please note). Applause ties the audience to one another and to the performers, but the form of applause is again socially controlled – a short section on the history of the curtain call is most enlightening.

A chapter on stage directors reflects on the way meaning is mediated to and processed by audiences. Directors are a modern phenomenon, a consequence of industrial processes in the theatre but also of the notion that one coherent meaning needs to be focused in the production. A chapter on the avant-garde shows how those who see themselves at the cutting edge of innovation often have an ambivalent attitude to the audience, sometimes bordering on the contemptuous (ministers, please note!). The central section of the book uses Shakespearian productions and audiences to pursue the themes. The chapter on the use of the bard by east and west during the Cold War highlights the way in which 'dissident Shakespeare' had a meaning which changed according to where the audience is located (p.89), and the chapter on 'the spectator as tourist' shows how the experiences of spectator and tourist are inter-related, and sometimes circular: Disneyland becomes part of American culture rather than an attraction within it, and Kennedy's visit to the Globe Theatre as a tourist sees him become an object to be observed by other tourists on a tour.

The final section becomes a little less cohesive as the author examines sport (much taken by the socially-sanctioned ability of sporting spectators to express extreme emotion, and displeasure as well as approval), gaming, museums, and religious ritual. In this last chapter – giving descriptions of a local ritual observed in Kerala and a Catholic mass – he admits to being present as an unbeliever, and wondering what difference that makes if any to the way in which the performers respond to him, and he to the action.

I came to this book for the sport – and there is some interesting material here on that subject, though often not in the sports chapter. I leave the book with some new shards of insight into my own theatre-going, a new realization of what Kennedy sometimes calls the spectacularisation of contemporary life in which we are always and everywhere constructed as spectators, and some new half-formed thoughts about congregations as spectators. This deeply impressive book might similarly impress you.

Robert Ellis
Regent's Park College, Oxford

Thomas G Long, *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith* (Eerdmans, 2011)

The problem of theodicy gives the church a serious image problem. The world hears of our faith in a God who is all-good and all-powerful, and waits accusingly. Along comes the next natural disaster, or the latest massacre of the innocents and the challenge is thrown down with renewed gusto – ‘well, is your God good or powerful, for surely he cannot be both’.

The theodicy problem is usually addressed as a God question – as in ‘your God has some explaining to do’. It has centred on what we mean by ‘God is good’ and ‘God is powerful,’ areas we as pastors need to work hard at in order to have more to offer than simplistic platitudes.

Long’s approach takes a subtly different tack. Rather than exploring theodicy as a problem about God, Long explores it as a problem about faith. Rather than ‘putting God on trial,’ the agenda for an unconvinced world, he addresses ‘faith put to the test,’ the agenda for Christians who can struggle to hold on to faith in the face of the most appalling suffering.

Long has some important historical reflections on the relatively recent emergence of theodicy. Helpfully, he offers pre-enlightenment examples of how Christians reconciled faith in a good God and the reality of suffering. Then, these things were accepted as part of the judgement of God, punishing us for our sins, a view still held in communities around the world today.

But his early focus on 1 November 1755 and the great earthquake of Lisbon, a tragedy that “destroyed a city and but also symbolized the destruction of a worldview reminds us that the holocaust, 9/11, the 2004 tsunami and the 2010 Haiti earthquake are but the latest devastating examples of this paradox of faith in God.

Long insists that pastors have no choice but to be ready to face these questions from the pulpit, and reminds us that philosophers have tried to land the knock-out punch on God before, and others have risen to God’s defence. This is important material for if the only person we engage with is Richard Dawkins, then we miss the depth of discourse that this subject has yielded over the years. Long reminds us of other contributors, from Augustine and Aquinas in antiquity, to contributors from the last 50 years, including J L Mackie, John Hick, Alvin Plantinga and Harold Kushner whose book ‘When bad things happen to good people’ published in 1981 was a runaway best seller.

Kushner’s exploration of the book of Job led him to a radical conclusion that, in effect, changes the notion of omnipotence. ‘I no longer hold God responsible... I can worship a God who hates suffering but cannot eliminate it more easily than I can worship a God who chooses to make children suffer and die, for whatever exalted reason’. Whilst Long acknowledges that this book has been pastorally helpful, others have suggested that in effect Kushner has created an alternative cosmic force, a rival to God, who has been let off the hook.

Some books start well and fade but this one doesn’t. Long’s chapter on the book of Job is taken as foundational, a chapter that merits close attention before we dare to preach on this crucial but enigmatic text. He draws out from commentators like Stephen Mitchell some interesting insights, such as the ‘enormously satisfying... prominence’ of Job’s daughters at the end of the book – and

reflects on the contrast with the earlier male compulsion to control. Tackle that carefully from the pulpit – but do tackle it!

The final chapter is for the pastor-preacher, and is clearly written by one who knows this craft, and the challenges of being real in the face of congregants who know true suffering. The book is worth the money for the reminder to all of us that "Preachers do not preach because the sermon is finished; they preach because it is Sunday. The time has come." As a reminder not to duck the theodicy problem, this is so important. Long reminds us that this is a mystery but one that must be addressed.

Taking the parable of the wheat and the weeds as his final guide towards the summit of his argument he skillfully reprises the themes of the earlier chapters. Only in the final pages does he touch on the interplay between time and eternity, the existential reality of suffering set alongside the eternal in-breaking of Christ's death and resurrection. This subject matter could have been expanded valuably but this is a minor quibble.

This is a truly helpful book, one that I wholeheartedly recommend for a Pastor's study. I do so because it's well written, seriously attentive to the contribution of others, alert to the ongoing problem of suffering and the regular need of people to hear their pastors address this from the pulpit.

David Kerrigan
BMS World Mission

Martin H. Manser and Debra Reid (eds.) *Who's Who of the Bible* (Lion, 2012), 304pp

The front cover of this book boldly claims to offer readers 'everything you need to know about everyone named in the Bible.' The list of characters detailed in its pages is certainly comprehensive, but it's hard to recommend the book as anything more than a starting place for enquiries on obscure personalities. It adds little extra value to other basic reference works, such as the ubiquitous *NIV Compact Concordance*, but fails to provide the level of detail to be found in introductory volumes like those of John Drane on the Old and New Testament.

The book is not without its merits. It's helpful to have material organised in sections such as 'Pentateuch' and 'Gospels,' and it's useful to find dates available for each character. But in other places the level of detail provided is disappointing: most of the so-called 'Special Features and Articles' amount to no more than a page of basic information. Readers would be advised to find the extra money needed to acquire the more extensive one-volume dictionaries available to them.

Trevor Neill
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R. J. Berry (ed.), *The Lion Handbook of Science & Christianity* (Lion, 2012) 288pp

This is an excellent, up-to-date, wide-ranging reference book that explores the relationship between faith and science. It draws upon the knowledge and expertise of some 26 scientists who are also Christians, ably brought together by R J (Sam) Berry, who until retirement was Professor of Genetics at University College London.

Beginning with a discussion of scientific methodology and the nature of faith, the book explores all the major fields of scientific research and discovery. The authors provide the historical and social context of the scientific enterprise and helpfully provide details of the personalities involved in the most significant conceptual revolutions in science. The authors discuss biblical interpretation, cosmology, evolution of life, mind-brain, intelligence and the soul, genetics, the environment, and ethics, following a pattern that this reviewer is familiar with (see *Christianity and Science*, SCM Core Text, 2010). The authors do not duck any of the difficult questions raised by science and offer very helpful discussions of biblical interpretation, particularly in regard to Genesis 1-11.

Open-minded Christians will find a great deal of material to inform and encourage their engagement with the modern world of science and technology. We are also challenged in our attitude toward the care of creation, and in addressing the questions raised by genetics in the fields of medicine and agriculture. There are also sections that carefully consider Creationism and its more recent expression in Intelligent Design, exploring where these views raise theological problems and concerns.

I believe that it is a text that will encourage ministers and church leaders to enter into a dialogue with young people and adults studying or engaging in areas where science plays an important part. It provides understanding about science and gives confidence for faith, and will provide substance for any apologetic offered to those who do not attend church or are antagonistic toward the Christian faith. It will also provide ammunition in any debate with the so-called New Atheists, who adhere to the views of Richard Dawkins.

The book is beautifully illustrated with many colour photographs and prints, which together with the historical notes and explanatory descriptions of key scientific discoveries, make it an ideal text for anyone wishing to explore the implications of scientific knowledge for the Christian faith.

John Weaver

Brian Draper, *Less is More: Spirituality for Busy Lives* (Lion 2012)

This is a book of wisdom – simple, engaging and, at times profound. It offers simple advice and asks gentle but searching questions about how we live our lives, what our priorities are and how we live proactively, rather than reacting to the pressures and pace which threaten us.

Brian Draper is a former editor of *Third Way* and an associate lecturer at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. He contributes to Thought for the Day on Radio Four and runs Echosounder, a consultancy which works with leaders and organizations to nurture their ‘spiritual intelligence’.

Less is More is not an explicitly Christian book and it is not a book about Christian spirituality. Unless I’ve missed something, the first reference to Christ is in the epilogue. Yet it is deeply spiritual and its wisdom is informed by Christian values. It could be read in an engaged way by someone with little or no religious faith, though whether they remain in that state might be a cause for speculation. Some years ago, Tony Campolo wrote a book entitled *Following Jesus without Embarrassing God*. This little book does not embarrass but it does gently provoke.

Here is something you could give to someone who is not a Christian and which may well provoke them to examine their lifestyle and their values in such a way as lead them to leading questions. But it is also a book which many Christians could read with profit – especially those who would like

a deeper spiritual life, but for whom life always seems to get in the way. Stillness, attentiveness, rhythms, connections and focus these are all ideas to be explored in an anecdotal and practical way.

An example of the book's style is the author's invitation to live 'poetically' and the distinction he makes between 'pose' and 'poise'. He quotes the novelist Ben Okri:

Nothing can live in art or in life that does not find the form unique to itself by which its individual soul can be expressed... For the outer condition of life must correspond to the inner, and the outer condition of form must correspond to the inner condition of the work, its content, its dream...

He comments, 'The word, if you like, must be made flesh. The inside of our life needs a form in which to express itself to the outside... There is an artistry to life, then, that we often neglect in our fast-paced rush for what is "more, bigger, faster".' He goes on to talk about the importance of 'gesture', not rushing to the next appointment or the next task, but living 'gesture by gesture', giving attention to the people we meet, the food we taste and the sights, smells and sounds we encounter. He invites us not to maintain an act or strike a pose in order to impress others, as that will leave us tightly coiled and stressed. Rather, we should exhibit poise, which speaks of balance, composure and readiness. 'Pose is about the veneer, the surface; poise, on the other hand, comes from the inside out.'

This is a short book and that is both its strength and its weakness. It is short enough for a train journey or short bites (as it were) in a lunch break. It is short enough that someone might actually get around to reading it (to much profit). Yet its brevity left this reader wanting to go deeper. The bibliography helps, as there are some authors cited that you might well want to follow up. And then there is Draper's earlier book *Spiritual Intelligence*. But this book is what it is – a little book of wisdom – and it is to be warmly recommended.

Chris Ellis

West Bridgford Baptist Church

John Corrie and Cathy Ross (ed.), *Mission in Context: Explorations: Inspired by J. Andrew Kirk* (Ashgate, 2012), 248pp

The request to review this book came at the right time. I was beginning a sabbatical looking at mission and so a book stimulated by Andrew Kirk's missiology was just what I needed to kick-start my research.

This festschrift contains fifteen essays by a list of contributors that reads like a Who's Who of missiologists with names such as: René Padilla, J Samuel Escobar, Wilbert R Shenk, Vinod Ramachandra, and Alan Kreider. There is also a contribution from one of Kirk's children, Daniel Kirk. The contributors both explain and expand Kirk's thinking about missiology in today's increasingly diverse world.

The book is divided up into four sections: J Andrew Kirk: his life and work; What is mission?; Truth in a pluralistic world; Culture, education and religion. The essays explore a wide range of issues including: poverty and injustice, environmentalism, secularism, the place of scripture in a pluralist culture, science and faith, liberation theology, and, oppression and reconciliation. Through these

essays we are reminded of the need to connect theological study with the practical reality of the world. Also that evangelism cannot be separated from committed engagement with the issues of justice in the context of oppression and power.

The first part gives an in-depth background to Kirk's extensive experience, teaching, and writing, reflecting his many achievements in the field of missiology. He has spent his life in theological education in South America, UK, and across the world. The essays put Andrew's life and work in the wider context of the places, particularly Latin America, where he has been massively influential and give the main themes of his writing and teaching.

Part two explores the themes of global partnerships, liberation theology, mission in the early church, and nation building. Part three looks at the area of apologetics, epistemology, hermeneutics, and the nature of truth in a pluralistic world. The final part looks at the spheres of culture, education, and religion where the themes of liberation, politics, and contextualisation are promoted.

The book gifted me with many streams of thought and action to pursue. One such stream is the concept of 'listening love'. This is a key gospel imperative in our engagement with others, especially in the context of today's world, where the twin issues of plurality and secularism are a particular challenge to the churches. This listening love must be characterised by humility, vulnerability, availability, receptivity, and patience, and is one that Christians should increasingly practice. We are reminded that we need to pay particular attention to understanding and engaging with our local context. We are reminded that any church involved in proclamation must also give a concrete demonstration of the gospel of Jesus

One question has stayed with me: 'Can the West be converted?' These essays have challenged me to believe that it should be, the question is whether it can be and how that might look in practice.

I found this an extremely stimulating and refreshing book, even though I knew little of Kirk's work previously. All the essays were informative, as well as challenging, and I found much to inspire me in local mission. Only one essay defeated me but that is due entirely to my lack of knowledge in the field. I would recommend this book to students and ministers alike- it would sit productively alongside Bosch's seminal work *Transforming Mission*.

Julie Aylward
Borstal, Rochester

Dwight J. Zscheile (ed.), *Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 201pp

What does it mean to *form faithful disciples of Jesus Christ* in a missional church in the light of *God's mission in the world*?

That was the question posed ahead of the sixth annual Missional Church Consultation held at Luther Seminary (St Paul, Minnesota) in November 2010. The question and some 9 different responses are the subject of this book. The subtitle of the book is *Missional Spiritual Formation* and this, along with the title and question, suggest the book is concerned with discipleship in churches that have a renewed focus on sending, churches that sit on the margins of the contemporary Christian scene, churches that have moved away from the dominant emphasis of gathering on

Sundays for 'services' and the pastor-teacher mode of leadership. It is not. Rather the authors all seem to presume the dominant model, and are writing about the formation of a missional spirituality, a mission-focused discipleship, primarily within that context, not beyond it.

In part this is because, as the editor acknowledges in the Introduction, the missional label is widely used and means different things to different people. The opening chapter does attempt to establish 'A Missional Theology of Spiritual Formation' but, although it has some useful definitions of both 'missional' and 'spiritual formation', it goes little beyond emphasising the centrality of the Trinity and the role of the Spirit in forming a community that responds to the world. Well-argued but there is nothing radically new here.

It also seems that the other authors were not given this chapter to form the background to the themes that they chose to explore. As far as I could tell there is no single argument in the book, no key idea about missional spiritual formation being worked out, just a collection of essays that comes across as looser than I think the editor might have hoped. As with all such collections the reader will find some essays more helpful than others.

Having said that all of the chapters are worth reading, even if all are not easy to read (not just because it is aimed at an academic audience, but also because some of the writing is poor), and patience and perseverance will be rewarded. The subjects covered include the value of Short Term Mission trips (a significant phenomenon in the US church), the gaps in the presumed missional trajectory of the Bible, the need for a different approach to discipleship among children and young people, and the lessons that might be learned from the experience of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

In the chapter 'Formation in the Missional Church', Richard R. Osmer draws on the writings of David Bosch and Jürgen Moltmann, arguing that 'the church lives in the tension between identity and relevance, between the pole of gathering and upbuilding, on the one hand, and the pole of sending and self-giving, on the other' (p.51). In this context missional formation is, and the emphasis here is a good one, the process of the community "taking form" as it lives into and out of its missional vocation. What this suggests is that an emphasis on gathering or on sending, over against the other, stunts or distorts the growth of the community. I have colleagues who lean in both directions. This suggests that they need each other more than they perhaps realise!

The other chapter that left me with much to think about was the one on 'Ministry in the First Third of Life' in which Nancy S. Going challenges our 'fascination with developmental stages' (p.125). when it comes to our children's and youth ministry. She argues for a move away from an education based methodology to a recognition of the relationships that many young people already have with Jesus and wonders how we might nurture these and even allow them to shape our ecclesiology. She asks, "What if [the young people we fear losing] stay and we never let the unique, uninhibited, unencumbered power of their newly formed or reformed relationships with Jesus shape and move us?" (p.141). It's a very good question and one that I want to wrestle with further.

While there is much in here to chew on, the book is not a handbook or how-to of missional spiritual formation. Readers will need to work out for themselves ways to apply the lessons that they learn from *Cultivating Sent Communities*. I recommend it to those who are ready to mine for the nuggets but would advise those looking for something more straight-forward and instructional to try elsewhere.

Ashley Lovett
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Grays, Essex

Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation* (T&T Clark, 2011)

The clue to this volume is in the title, it is a 'theological' introduction to the Bible and its interpretation. Whether you like this book or not will depend on whether you like the reformed 'theology' that is at play in the account it offers of biblical hermeneutics. In contrast to Simon Perry's substantive volume on the same topic, *Resurrecting Interpretation* (also reviewed in this issue), Scott Swain offers an introductory book aimed primarily at students of biblical studies.

The three strands of *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading* are doctrinal concepts which Swain interweaves in his quest for a coherent Christian reading strategy for the Bible. The relationships within the Trinity are seen as pointing to the theme of 'covenant', which 'is one of the most important means whereby the triune God communicates his life to us' (p.7). It is this Trinitarian, covenantal context which Swain sees as the locus of the theological significance of the Bible and biblical interpretation. Scripture is thus presented as an act of divine revelation, and 'stands as the perfect textual vehicle of God's word' (p.9). Those who engage in reading this text as 'scripture' do so by the Holy Spirit, who 'creates communicative fellowship between God and readers' (p. 9). By Swain's account, the revelation of the Trinitarian God encountered through the reading of scripture is provisional at best, sufficient for the present but ultimately to be 'replaced by face to face communication and communion' (p.10).

Swain is consciously influenced by the hermeneutical work of Kevin Vanhoozer, particularly in his development of 'covenant' as the means whereby God binds creation 'to himself in a relationship of obedient service' (p.19). In the covenantal obedience of God's people to God's word, God's kingdom is revealed. God's kingdom and covenant are seen to be fulfilled in Jesus, who mediates God's covenant to humans as the word of God personified. Holy Scripture offers 'a harmonious witness to the glory of the Word made flesh' (p.60), as the word incarnate is encountered through the word inscribed. This provides the basis for Swain's exploration of the Bible as 'God's inspired Word', which is 'authoritative, true, sufficient, and clear' (p.61). From this engagement with 'God's word' springs the ethical life of the church, as Christians become the 'people of the book' (p.95).

Scripture is seen to have a authoritative place within the church, and the reading and teaching of the Bible is a matter of great importance. Ministerial teachers must 'demonstrate that their teaching is nothing other than the teaching of the Holy Spirit speaking in Holy Scripture' (p.104), and must do so in accordance with 'the articles of our faith', (for example, the Apostles' Creed is seen as providing 'a faithful representation of scriptural teaching (pp.108-9)), and in 'charity towards God and our neighbour' (p.118). Christians who would read the Bible themselves should do so according to a pattern of prayer, explication, meditation and application (pp.125-136).

Those who are seeking a reassuring voice to counter the disconcerting claims of poststructuralist, technologist, or postmodern biblical hermeneutics will find in Swain a ready and accessible friend. But those who are more interested in meeting such challenges head-on might well look elsewhere.

Simon Woodman

George Hunsinger (ed.), *Thy Word is Truth: Barth on Scripture* (Eerdmans, 2012) 254pp

'The identity of Jesus Christ was to be understood in light of his resurrection or not at all, if it was to be understood in light of the apostolic witness'. This encapsulates Barth's groundbreaking hermeneutical efforts, according to an essay written in 1966 by Rudolph Smend paraphrased in this volume. Barth's hermeneutic was adopted 'not naively but deliberately and consciously'; it operated 'postcritically', or from the standpoint of a 'second naiveté'. Here we find ourselves at the heart of what Karl Barth was attempting to do, or better, to be drawn to do. Smend's paraphrased and translated essay is the third essay and centrepiece of this stimulating collection. The German author was best known as an OT scholar, but found Barth's hermeneutic fascinating and 'postcritical'. The major question put to Barth is that of his acceptance of historical critical method, does he take sufficient account of the 'assured results of OT scholarship', assured at the time of asking anyway, and of the work of NT scholarship likewise?

Smend's essay probes this issue with great clarity. Barth of course says that he does accept the validity and helpfulness of biblical critical work as a factor to be taken into account, but avoids 'historicism' in the narrow sense and with its own foundational presuppositions. Smend reminds us that Barth's *Romans*, 2nd edn, strove to get at the Sache or subject matter, the very content of what Paul was saying in his letter, saying at the time of writing and saying to us now therefore. The text is asking and answering its own questions, and not necessarily the questions that primarily interest historical critics; indeed such critics need to become more critical if they are to 'understand the Bible as it understands itself and indeed in the only way that it can be understood.' But Barth does stress that Scripture is a human document, human speech as it arose from a certain people at a certain time, in a certain language, and this human dimension means that historical critical work is very important. On the other hand historicism, a world view, can easily assume a dominant position and seek to reconstruct events in the texts to fit with positivistic assumptions, exegesis becoming slave of foreign prejudices, usually undeclared. Hans Frei agreed that a historicising process of hermeneutics became obsessed with positivistic reference, losing the theological narrative depiction of divine or personal identities. Might add that some evangelical hermeneutic has also been similarly obsessed!

Smend uses the work of de Wette, 1806, *Criticism of Mosaic History*, to help assess and explain Barth's hermeneutic, a fascinating move given that de Wette has been taken as a force of scepticism in the past. He argued that the stories of Moses and Jesus could not be reconstructed by historical methods, and Barth would agree that stories behind those in the texts could not be retrieved by modern critical methods and so at that point it could do no more. De Wette was correct in thinking that the biblical writers were not intending to write neat 'history' in the modern sense – not that prejudices can ever be avoided as Gadamer has stressed. What the biblical authors wanted to do was portray God's action in the world in a way that would awaken faith, de Wette argues their interest is in religion. Barth used a kind of analogy in his interpretation of biblical narratives involving apparently legendary or fiction-like events, and did not boil off the unusual, novel, surprising or miraculous, as would a strict modern historian. For Barth we are dealing with the divine when engaged by revelation, by the overall fact of Jesus Christ. Legend-like stories would have their analogy with Christ: the raising of Lazarus has the double referent of Christ's rising also, being pointed to ahead of time. Barth is not a synthesiser of biblical contradictions; he prefers to

let two accounts speak in diversity, again in the theological unity of the divine action, a kind of stereo which increases the dynamic of revelation.

Smend's essay is indeed a splendid centre-piece to the book. But there is much more, including what we may call 'worked examples' of Barth's hermeneutical readings, for example David and Abigail, 1 Sam 25 in *CD IV/2* (pp.424-32). Katherine Greene-McCreight in her chapter 5 unfolds Barth's typological exegesis at work in his reading of Leviticus 14 and 16, the sacrificed bird, for example, signifying the resurrection and grace of God (*CD II/2*, 361). Two OT commentators' works are then compared and contrasted with Barth's, and she finds that notwithstanding scholarly excellence they 'do not come near the success that Barth has with the unfolding of the literary and theological qualities of these ritual narratives' (p.83).

The collection contains essays on inspiration and reliability of Scripture in Barth, the role of faith in reading Scripture, as well as other discussions of Barth's exegesis of passages from the OT and NT. Barth is carefully explained and explored by experts in the field and a very engaging book is the result, any preacher and pastor would benefit from reading these essays.

Timothy Bradshaw
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Jeffrey P Greenman & Gene L Green (eds.), *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective: Exploring the Contextual Nature of Theology and Mission* (IVP, 2012), 267pp

This is quite simply an excellent book. It is a collection of 15 articles that were presented at the annual Wheaton Theological Conference in 2011. The rationale for the book is found in its opening sentence, 'During the twentieth century, the geographical centre of the church moved South and East, so the heartlands of the Christian faith are no longer in the North Atlantic region but rather in Africa, Asia and Latin America' (p.9). And yet we still suffer from the premise that Western theology is somehow neutral, objective and universal. As Samuel Escobar (one of the contributors) and Steve Bevans have reminded us – all theology is contextual. So the authors of this volume not only take a high view of Scripture but also acknowledge their social location to see how God is addressing the needs and concerns in their own contexts. I enjoyed the range of themes, approaches and styles. This is not a studied, academically dry tome. The writing styles do reflect their contexts – free flowing narrative, staccato tones as well as critical distance.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section is "Setting the Stage" in which the rise of global theologies is surveyed by mission historian doyen, Andrew Walls. Lamin Sanneh then demonstrates how the translation principle not only encourages discipleship but also brings out new ways of understanding the gospel, 'commencing a process of rethinking that had an impact on both the personal and cultural spheres' (p.43). The final chapter in this section considers the challenge of global hermeneutics and explores what this turn to context and the role of community mean for hermeneutics. The second section is entitled 'Non-Western Theologies' – an unfortunate title as it could imply that Western theologies are the norm. There are six chapters surveying theologies from Latin America, China, India, Africa and the Middle East. Each of these chapters provides fascinating insights into their contexts and while some of their questions may not seem to be our questions, in many ways they are because we are all part of the human condition. Khio-Khng Yeo reflects on the difference between 'Christian Chinese theology' and 'Chinese Christian

theology' (p.102). He opts for the former as he claims that this pays attention to the relationship between theology and Chineseness both biblically and Christianly. Ken Gnanakan reflects on a theology of spirituality, a theology of suffering, health and wellness, and creation from an Indian context. Ruth Padilla DeBorst (the only woman contributor!) looks for songs of hope from the contemporary Protestant context in Latin America. The fourth section has four chapters on 'North American Theologies' – First Nations, Latino, Asian American and African American. This is entirely appropriate for a book emerging from this context and it is good to see North Americans acknowledge some of their diversity. Terry leBlanc from the First Nations context relates a wonderful story about a Cree leader gaining wisdom from his mother (cf. Job 12:12) when confronted with the devastation of an imminent hydro project (p.174). Juan Martinez discusses the motif of exile which is a key experience for many Latino immigrants and poses this question acutely, 'But are Latino evangelicals ready to incorporate 'undocumented' into the theological lexicon, with all the marginalization that this implies?' (p.191). The final section 'Next Steps' has two chapters which deal with implications and learnings from global theology. Greenman explains why Westerners need to take global theologies seriously: i) because we all belong together in the global church, ii) because theological education is becoming increasingly multicultural and we need to take students' contexts seriously, iii) because it is a matter of intellectual integrity to be familiar with the global discourse, iv) because it will help Westerners to uncover our theological and cultural blindspots.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. A couple of critical observations - I was very disappointed that there was only one woman contributor and that is a major, almost inexcusable, absence. The articles are written by good scholars but many tend to remain at a survey and historical overview level. On the other hand, it does make it an excellent introductory level book on the contextual nature of theology. Finally, I was particularly struck by Mark Labberton's plea to 'pay attention' – let me conclude with that. 'To live attentively to the world in God's name is our human vocation. ...Ministry beckons God's people to pay attention to the particular work of people, relationships, culture, economics, religion, sociology, power, art, land and more' (p.229). Indeed – this is the nature and work of contextual theologies at their best.

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David B. Burrell, *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 204pp

David B. Burrell is a distinguished Catholic scholar who was for many years Professor of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, a respected Catholic research university in Indiana, USA. He is currently teaching Ethics and Development at Uganda Martyrs University. He is a member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross (C.S.C. Congregatio a Sancta Cruce), an educational religious order founded in France in the early nineteenth century and established at Notre Dame since 1841.

Burrell has specialised in 'comparative theology' for some forty years, including translating some of the key works of the Persian jurist, philosopher and mystic Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), regarded by many western scholars as the most influential Muslim after Muhammad himself. Prof. Burrell draws heavily on Al-Ghazali as his key Muslim interlocutor in this latest book and brings him into conversation with fellow medieval scholastics, the Jewish rabbi, philosopher and student of the Torah, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), and the Christian philosopher and theologian Thomas

Aquinas (1225-1274); they are also regular protagonists in Burrell's earlier studies. From which it may be inferred, rightly, that Burrell's work is highly learned and not really an opus for the beginner in interfaith or comparative theology.

This current study is arranged thematically, with each chapter drawing on sources from across the Abrahamic traditions to explore Creation, Divine and Human Freedom, Human Initiative and Divine Grace, Providence, and Eschatology. Perhaps the most interesting section of all is a final chapter entitled, 'Respectfully Negotiating Outstanding Neuralgic Issues: Contradictions and Conversions', in which Burrell attempts to address what he suggests may be 'too irenic' an impression given by his earlier chapters where differences have perhaps been absorbed by the similarities, or at least minimised by the overarching themes which he has been exploring. Many of the historic differences between the traditions remain what Burrell characterises as 'front-line challenges' in the current debates; these include: diverse approaches to and understandings of scripture, the Christian doctrines of incarnation and Trinity, Muslim attitudes towards Jesus, and Christian attitudes towards Muhammad. He promotes dialogue as a positive way forward through such impasses, and helpfully reminds us that 'dialog (sic) is between persons rather than doctrines'. While not eliminating such differences, this approach may nevertheless lead to clearer statements of belief and foster, if not agreement, at least mutual understanding. He recognises that for Christians there remains the difficulty of the claim to 'supersession', which is implicit in the chronology and explicit in the theology, of Islam. Whilst some Jews have recognised in Jesus a more or less legitimate claim to continuity with, and even for a few the fulfilment of, the Hebrew Scriptures, such a model will not work for Muslim claims for the Qur'an. But might it be possible for Christians to recognise within the Islamic tradition, 'an authentic revelation of the same God whom Jews believe forged the first covenant with Moses, and whom Christians believe forged a new one in Jesus' (p.178)? This is not an easy book, but it is well worth the effort in wrestling with as we attempt to come to our own answers to such vexed questions.

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Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge, 2011), 244pp

Norma Wirzba and Fred Bahnson *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation* (IVP, 2012), 182pp

Food and Faith is a delightful book, wonderfully written, with much to ponder. How often do we stop and think about food? Its such a part of everyday life that perhaps we've never wonder what faith, theology and God have to do with food. Norman Wirzba helpfully leads us in seven chapters to explore food and eating from a Christian perspective. He is not the first, there have been a number of recent books, which have begun to explore food biblically and historically (in terms of the Christian tradition). Wirzba is a professor at Duke University and has written previously on ecology and keeping sabbath.

The book engages with contemporary food politics - issues of food production, food security and food scarcity - in the context of exile, sacrifice, eucharist and saying grace. The subtitle is a 'theology of eating' and this is a work of serious theology, engaging with the Christian tradition. The index reveals an engagement with a theology of creation, death, the Trinity, eucharist, sacrifice and

resurrection. Wirzba explores the language of 'communion - literally 'one who shares bread' in the context of eating together, but helping us see that eating together brings us in relationship with the earth and ultimately with God - 'eating is a spiritual exercise'.

Chapters on gardens and gardening and saying grace are full of food for thought, theological depth and practical wisdom. In other chapters are conversations around eating disorders, vegetarianism, and feasting and fasting, amongst others.

Making Peace with the Land is a good companion piece. Written for a broader audience and part of the *Resources of Reconciliation Series*, it covers some of the same ground as *Food and Faith*, but more accessible and with a more deliberate focus around reconciliation. Within the chapters are little narrative examples of how churches and others might be reconciled to the land in terms of growing food and eating food. A brief study guide is included at the end and the book could work as a small group study or as sermon series.

Both books will leave you looking at food and eating in new ways and hopefully encourage us to new habits and practices that recognise in renewed ways that food is gift from God and eating, when our table manners are learned from participating in the eucharist, is a taste of heaven. My imagination was fueled in new directions and pushed me to begin to explore possibilities for putting what I have learned into practice. I am convinced that the church of the future will be one in which we see food – our growing, cooking and eating – as central to our discipleship.

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