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# Reviews

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**Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Summa Theologiae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), xvii + 368pp.**

The word ‘companion’ is reassuring, a comforting and comfortable word, offering the promise of another to walk with me, talk with me, advise me when I’m straying from a pathway, point me in other possible directions. To name a book a ‘companion’ is rich with all such promise and, when it comes to the reading of Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*, such a companion (for most of us) is needful. The *Summa* is a text that, in its form and structure (before we get to its content) is strange to us, a window into a quite different way of thinking theologically than that to which we are presently accustomed. The prospect of a companion (or rather companions) as we approach the text is therefore attractive and to be commended. To name a book a ‘companion’ is also, of course, making a negative assertion, telling us what the book is not (or is not claiming to be). This collection of essays is not an ‘introduction’ either to Thomas or his *magnum opus*. Certainly there are essays here of a more introductory nature - Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt’s chapter on reading the *Summa*, Timothy Radcliffe’s winsome chapter on Dominican spirituality, James F. Keenan’s commendably accessible chapter on the virtues - but in the main this is not a collection of essays intended for the novice, for anyone wholly unfamiliar with the *Summa* and the pathway through it. Rather here are a series of conversation partners as we try ourselves to listen to the text, companions who direct us along well-worn pathways but who also alert us to other possibilities of reading.

Following an introductory chapter by the editors the book contains twenty four chapters unequally divided between three sections, Part One offering six essays on structure, background, and approach; Part Two, the bulk of the collection, with fourteen chapters on key themes within the *Summa*; and Part Three with just four essays on the reception of the text within different traditions. At various points throughout the collection the authors remind us that they are engaging specifically with the *Summa Theologiae* and not with Thomas himself or with his wider corpus. As has already been indicated, those seeking a broader and more basic introduction to Thomas and his writings should look elsewhere (and there is a wealth of possibilities for such initial engagement, not least works by some of the authors who contribute here). As with any such collection of essays there are peaks and troughs - an assessment that probably reveals as much about the reviewer as that reviewed - and it would be unfair (and impractical in such a brief response) to comment on each chapter. Nonetheless the list of contributors is a roll-call of leading scholars who have engaged with Thomas with only a couple of perhaps surprising omissions.

Having acknowledged throughout this response that the collection is not intended as an introduction there is one respect where a larger scale route map might have proved helpful even to those reasonably familiar with Thomas’s work: not a route map to the *Summa* itself (several of these chapters offer such reading guides) but rather a route map to the variety of ways in which Thomas can be read and is, in fact, read by this variety of reading companions. In this regard the unfamiliar may find this collection a little confusing as seemingly

contradictory ways of interpreting the *Summa* tend to be assumed rather than explained or defended. The last one hundred years has witnessed a new richness of approaches to Thomas's work, challenging the more sterile approach (in this reader's view) that dominated from Trent to Vatican One. Is Thomas primarily a philosopher or a theologian, is his dominant background Platonist or Aristotelian, is his purpose what we would now term systematics or what are might now term spiritual direction, is he offering a positive philosophical theology or is he outlining this in only a negative sense to pave the way for that which has been revealed – that Thomas himself was probably oblivious to such polarities isolates the degree to which they determine the assumptions of these reading companions and perhaps our own.

*John E. Colwell*  
*Budleigh Salterton, Devon*

**Paul Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), xxii + 591pp**

'I beseech you in the bowels of Christ think it possible you may be mistaken'  
Oliver Cromwell,  
Letter to the General Assembly of the church of Scotland  
3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1650.

In reviewing a publication it is not always easy to strike the appropriate balance between description and response. Since this is a second edition of a book perhaps the necessity for full description is qualified – though the many revisions and additions included here render this more a re-working of a book than merely a second edition. Certainly the book is both scholarly and clear (itself a rare combination) with extensive footnotes and an accessible style. Moreover, the brief conclusion (six and a half pages) genuinely concludes and restates the theme of the book succinctly (just in case the reader had missed its constant repetition throughout the preceding chapters). The thesis of the book is simply stated: the doctrine of the immanent Trinity preserves the freedom of God and, thereby, his acts of creation and redemption as gracious acts, yet this doctrine is jeopardised by Karl Rahner's over-simple equation of the immanent and economic Trinities and by (what Molnar perceives as) the consequent tying of God to creation, history, and redemption, and also by the denial of a *logos asarkos* (an un-fleshed Word of God) which denial itself is indicative of this burring of the economic and immanent Trinities. In the background (and often in the foreground) of this second edition of the work lies the sadly acrimonious dispute between Paul Molnar and Bruce McCormack (together with their supporters) concerning the interpretation of Karl Barth's theology and the degree to which his understanding developed particularly regarding the relationship between the doctrine of election and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Following a revised Preface, Molnar develops his argument over ten chapters, mostly conforming to the template of how (in Molnar's view) various



theologians, influenced at least in part by Rahner, either forfeit or endanger the freedom of God by their qualification or rejection of a proper understanding of the immanent Trinity. At various points Gordon Kaufman, Catherine LaCugna, Sally McFague, Bruce McCormack, Douglas Farrow, Robert Jenson, Jürgen Moltmann, Alan Torrance, Eberhard Jüngel, and Colin Gunton (among other supporting thinkers) fall, to a greater or lesser degree, to Molnar's censure. Alongside George Hunsinger, the key theologian to be commended by Molnar is T. F. Torrance and an appendix is devoted to Molnar's response to Gunton's criticisms of T. F. Torrance. Now I certainly cannot claim a comprehensive knowledge of the works of all of the thinkers that Molnar targets (though I am persuaded that some of his criticisms in some respects and in some cases may be justified) but my familiarity with the work of Alan Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel and particularly of Robert Jenson and Colin Gunton leaves me cautious concerning Molnar's treatment of the others. The repeated (and sometimes quite explicit) tendency of the study is to draw inferences from the thought of these writers and to censure them on the basis of these inferences rather than on the basis of what they actually say.

Now with some justification one might question the value of a book formed around a writer's criticisms of other writers, especially when those criticisms are focused not just on what they explicitly state but, in some cases, on inferences drawn from what they explicitly state. Surely of greater value would have been a work devoted primarily to the theological justifications for Molnar's view and, perhaps more especially, to the textual justification for his interpretation of Barth – and it is in these respects that this reviewer remains entirely unconvinced.

Without necessarily wholly endorsing Bruce McCormack's interpretation of Barth, McCormack at least acknowledges development in Barth's theology and some inconsistencies in that development – Molnar offers virtually no acknowledgement of the former and limited acknowledgement of the latter (the overwhelming majority of the references to the *Church Dogmatics* in this volume are drawn from *CD I/1* and *CD I/2*). And, where Barth may seem to lend himself to interpretations other than those of Molnar and Hunsinger, Molnar is eager to rescue Barth from himself by surmising what Barth intended to say (see, for instance, p.201).

Barth's discussion of the Doctrine of God (*CD II/1*) certainly feels like a fresh beginning and, as both McCormack and Gunton have argued (albeit in different ways), Barth's placing of the doctrine of election within his doctrine of God (*CD II/2*) is of staggering significance. Quite explicitly for Barth Jesus Christ is not only the elected man but also the electing God. In Jesus Christ God elects himself to be this electing God or, as he argues earlier in *CD II/1*, the true God is self-determined being; his freedom is neither capricious nor arbitrary but the freedom to be constant as the one he is, the one who loves in freedom. It is this freedom of God's acts of creation and redemption that Molnar is at such great pains to maintain but he seems to hold that for God to be truly free in such acts *ad extra* he must be somehow other in himself *ad intra* and for this reason the immanent Trinity cannot so simply be equated with the economic Trinity.

Certainly Barth maintains a doctrine of an immanent Trinity as a means of preserving the freedom of God's election – as self-determining being God *could have been* other than he is, he *could have been* God without us – but in actuality God eternally has determined to be God in this way and not another, he eternally has determined in Jesus Christ to be God with us and not without us. One does not need to posit a God-behind-God in order to preserve the freedom of God's eternal decision to be God in this way and to be so eternally and consistently. Moreover, to ask whether God's love *ad extra* is a reiteration or an effecting (or actualisation) of his love *ad intra* is probably (in my view) to misunderstand Barth's distinctive account of eternity as pure simultaneity and his election of himself and of us in Jesus Christ as a living event.

More bizarre yet is Molnar's repeated insistence (following George Hunsinger) that Barth maintains a doctrine of a *logos asarkos* when at least some of the references Molnar cites in support of the claim appear to assert the opposite (e.g. p. 113 cf. especially CD III/1, 54 & CD IV/1, 52). That there is no eternal Son of God other than or behind the one who takes our flesh in our time and space does not render this taking of our flesh as other than a free eternal decision. In this respect McCormack would seem to be justified in preferring to speak of a *logos incarnandus*.

My interaction with a book is evidenced by my pencil scribbings in the margins and at the conclusion of chapters. My repeated comment throughout this volume is 'you just don't get it, do you?' It is not, I suspect, that Molnar understands the arguments of Bruce McCormack, Alan Torrance, Colin Gunton, Robert Jenson, *et al*, and disputes their conclusions, it seems more probable that he simply (and doggedly) refuses to grasp the interpretations they are asserting.

*John E. Colwell*  
*Budleigh Salterton, Devon*

**Graham Ward, *How the Light Gets In. Ethical Life I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 354pp.**

How many multi-volume Dogmatics do we need? Well, at least one new set in each generation, I guess, responding to the changing culture, and possibly at least one responding to differing traditions. Where is the successor to the wonderful, but somewhat idiosyncratic series by McClendon for Baptists, I wonder? His three volume Systematics from the 1980s also starts with Ethics in its subtitle. Graham Ward is in the process of providing us with the former.

Graham Ward is Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford, and with this book he begins a four-volume account of Christian doctrine, not just as a set of cognitive beliefs but also as set of embodied cultural and religious practices. He writes in a deliberately multi-disciplinary way, drawing upon not only the usual theological disciplines — systematics, philosophical theology, biblical studies and so forth — but upon Critical Theory, literary studies,

theoretical physics, and contemporary culture. Above all, in this volume, historical studies.

The title immediately reminded me of M. J. Hyland's novel of the same name — and Ward acknowledges his debt to that book's title from a former Manchester colleague — and the ensuing exploration of the Christian faith is indeed luminous and erudite. Light certainly gets in. Ward not only is enabled by his literary and critical studies to range widely across cultures, contemporary and older, but also to write with a voice that is at times almost poetic. The book opens with a description of entering Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. "We enter the Cathedral. .... The word 'God' softly implodes, becomes meaningless in its diaphanous forcefield that enfolds this place with its elevations, tall, curved arches, and attenuated sight-lines." (p.3) This sense of place, of the whole of life engaged in the pursuit of the holy lies somewhere near the heart and thrust of this book.

The first chapter, 'Credo', is a journey with the Fathers, placing the development of the creeds within their political and historical contexts. Creeds are as much a political tool as a theological one, he argues, and serve both to shape the life of the believer, and transform their heart. "The doctrine is a part of reception into a holy fellowship." (26) At the heart of this chapter is a discussion of Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Lectures*, delivered in that city — newly re-established by Constantine — which was a place where the holy was intensified, "It was a site of God's presence, of sacramental and ontological value." (26) The language of the faith may be a human language, but it "can take the impress of the divine ... It is more than just doctrine; it is life." (34)

'Summa', chapter 2, begins where the book started — with a return to the Cathedral in Oxford, and from there expands into the wider world of Medieval scholarship and divinity. The twelfth century Renaissance was as profound an intensification of intellectual and cultural development as the much better-known fifteenth century Italian one. At the heart of this chapter lies Hugh of St. Victor, and the integration of reading Scripture and reading the world that it addresses: "The cosmos became liturgical for all things are recognized to by(sic) [be] hidden with Christ in God." (45) The long discussion is about Hugh's *De Sacramentis*.

With 'Dogmatics', chapter 3, we move on to the Reformation, and after a discussion about whether this was the great 'good' as Protestant history has viewed it, or the disaster that some (John Millbank, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Eamon Duffy, for instance) now regard it, the continuities and discontinuities with the pre-ceding Thomist scholasticism are analysed through Melancthon's *Loci Communes* of 1521, the first Protestant dogmatics. The opening sections of this chapter I found especially helpful, focusing in part upon Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*. There is so much I would like to quote, but let me resist everything except this. "The turn out for elections ... presents a strong case for social atomism and disenfranchisement (among other things) and the increasing move towards management methods governing any modern (and financially successful) institution points to the cultural dominance of



instrumental reason disenchanting the world." (71) The theological problem with an account of the secularisation of the West, "the great disembedding", or what in shorthand might be described as Western modernity, is whether this is part of the providential outworking of the purposes of God as they move towards the realization of divine promise, "or we allow fallible human beings to have power to swing the Kingdom off its course." (73) In common with my own theological writing, Ward engages with pictorial art, and here discusses Holbein's "The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb", amongst others, so as to deepen the theological argument. It works.

Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* is explored as a religious education of the emotions "The language of the faith it professes is performative." (89) Things need to be known by experience, above all, salvation. "What is important with the dogmatics presented in *Loci Communes 1521* is that doctrine is not propositional." (107) Furthermore, the understanding of what Scripture is changes at this point, becoming increasingly 'de-narrativized', with an emphasis upon God speaking directly through them to the individual. "Any movement towards the privatization of religion came not from some anonymous secularizing civil society, but from Christians themselves in their hunger for the immediacies of religious experience; a hunger that drove them to conclude that liturgical practices of the faith were cosmetic externals." (108)

Chapter four is the exposition of how Ward approaches Christian systematic theologies. The changes that created the possibility of modern theological practice — the detachment of theology from *lection divina*, the shift towards adversarial confessionalism, the professionalization of 'theologians' in the secular university, etc., — arose with the early Reformation (hence the discussion of Melanchthon in the preceding chapter.) He calls it 'an engaged systematics.' That is, one which is related to cultural and social life, and especially the life of the Church. Engaged systematics rejects confessional systematics, because they all work on the basis of adversarial violence (even the irenic posturing of *Lumen Gentium*.) This is in part derived from an ecumenism from below (Ward has no time for the kind of top-down ecumenism, which is "disappearing like water into sand." (117)), and that looks towards a coming catholicity. Not that the contents of the Christian faith are without value — far from it — but they are "the start of a biblical, liturgical, and ecclesial formation led in and through a life of embodied practices all of which can be summed up as prayer." (117) It also rejects a *lex credendi/lex orandi* distinction in which doctrine is viewed as a 'second order' reflection upon 'first order' ecclesial practice (although versions of this such as Geoffrey Wainwright's *Doxology: A Systematic Theology* are suggestive.) All human discourse is mediatorial in character, because human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and Christ is the Mediator par excellence.

So, an engaged systematics looks something like learning the language of what is believed (and the death of Polycarp in the mid-second century is the exemplar of how that works) including the materiality of such discourse (architecture, vestments etc.) The language is ever being learnt anew as the languages through which it is voiced shift and alter. "Our theologies do date, just as the emphases

within our theologies come and go out of fashion." (129). Two aspects of this learning to speak of Christ today come to prominence: context and epistemology. This results in a refusal of the policed confessional sect, with its 'extrinsic obedient response to revealed propositions' (John Milbank, cited p. 137)

So, an engaged systematics is pedagogical — it is a learning of the faith, with *conversio* leading to *formatio* — and performative, fostering discipleship and obedience to the work of the Spirit in Christ, and orientated to an ethical life that reflects the transfiguration that turns hearts of stone into hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26–7). It is also provisional, being a product of its time and radically incarnational.

Part Two of the volume is really the beginning of the systematics, treating revelation. In this review I will discuss this more briefly. We are lost in some kind of dark forest, but it is God who has communicated God's self out of love, and out of that initiative we respond. The theological endeavour that emerges from this response is, as Evagrius Ponticus in the late fourth century stated so succinctly, "if you are a theologian you will pray truly, and if you pray truly, you will be a theologian."

Truth and proclamation, interwoven in a kind of double-helix that recognises that the life in Christ is lived in a complex manner in the present, arises from the relationship between Christ, the Scriptures and the traditions of the Church. This is an important corrective to an over-emphasised *sola Scriptura* — there cannot be a hierarchical distinction between the Scriptures and the Church, such that the latter participates in Christ in a lower order way than the former. The relationship between the two constitutes a large part of chapter 7. If Ward rejects the hierarchical priority of the Word of God for Protestants, and the teaching office of the Church for the Catholic model, where does the relation lie? He argues it lies in every Christian being a bearer of the Word, called to hear it, understand it and proclaim it.

Chapter 8 explores how faith seeks understanding, taking its title from Anselm. "If theology is a proclamation of life in Christ, as that life issues from the double-helix of Scripture and the Church, then the oxygen and blood which sustains that life is faith seeking understanding." (225) There follows discussions of phenomenology and analogy (with reference to Anselm.) Chapter 9 asks what makes a belief believable? The answer encompasses right- and left-brain believing and cognition, faith and virtuality. The main partner in this discourse is de Certeau.

Part Three (chapter 10) concerns *Sittlichkeit* (Ethical life.) Ward begins again with an area of contemporary interest, here the way in which things evolve and the science of signal transduction. However, the main conversational partner is Hegel, and his *System der Sittlichkeit*. Now, Hegel can be famously difficult and gnomic, and this ensures that this chapter is amongst the more challenging to digest. There are other ways of deriving an ethics of virtue derived from praxis, "... humility and love emerge from a dialectic of confession and forgiveness worked out within concrete social and cultural praxes" (306), but to do so in

Hegelian terms must be amongst the more difficult. I understand why Ward has taken this route (he has written elsewhere on Hegel), but I do wonder if this might have been treated differently for the ease of the less-philosophically competent reader.

Beautifully, the book ends in the place it began — Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, — and Ward once again at his more poetically luminous, and, I daresay, "preacherly". I wonder if those two paragraphs have ever been incorporated into a sermon — they deserve to be.

On a minor matter, there are some typos, which is disappointing in a book of this quality. For instance, a sentence on page 26 makes little sense: "Place for Cyril evoked." The remainder of that sentence is missing, or else the sentence stands as it is written and its meaning is unnecessarily opaque. It is uncertain whether Renaissance should be -de-capitalized (p. 36), and "by" should be "be" on p. 45. I noted others, but the point is made. OUP proof readers up your game, please.

This volume reflects the broad range of interests that combine in much of Ward's work, although this does not make the work easy to digest. This is theology from and for the academy rather than the average Christian reader. From the theological 'bread-and-butter' of interaction with theological classics —from Cyril to Melancthon — to discussions of science and art, culture and philosophy. This volume achieves what 'engaged systematics' aspires to be: the proclamation of the faith within the cultural context of our day. So, do we need confessional systematics? Ward would answer with a resounding "no", although I am not so sure that some reflection upon confessional specifics is no longer needed. Do we need a new systematics that addresses the context and culture of our day? Absolutely we do, and I cannot wait to read the successive volumes as they are published to see how well Ward will achieve that goal. On the basis of this first volume, it will hold a place as one of the more important theological enterprises of our day.

But most importantly, Ward is determined to re-unite what has for far too long been put asunder — the integration of theology understanding of the faith and the practice of that faith, summarised as prayer. Would that every theologian prayed and engaged with the culture we find ourselves in. Buy this book, and pray that nothing intervenes to prohibit Graham Ward's successful completion of this project!

*Paul Goodliff*  
*Abingdon Baptist Church*

**Preston Sprinkle (ed.), *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016)**

The cottage industry in writing about the Christian response to homosexual relations shows no sign of abating. What is changing in that arena is a new openness amongst evangelicals and evangelical publishing houses (like

Zondervan) to question the traditional non-affirming stance held by the more conservative expressions of the church. A decade ago a book like this one would have been unpublishable, if not entirely unthinkable, but the landscape is changing, and I have a suspicion that whether the church likes it or not, the younger generation of Christians in the West, at least, will shift the balance towards a generally affirming attitude towards same-sex relationships within my life-time (and I am almost at retirement age.). Roman Catholics will probably defy the official teaching of the Church, and accommodate homosexual couples in some way nonetheless, while the African (and to a lesser extent, Asian and Middle-Eastern) churches will hold to a rejection of the legitimacy of same-sex relationships for much longer. While the church will remain divided over this issue, the balance will have moved to such an extent that it will seem as strange, offensive even, for a mainstream Protestant church to discriminate against homosexuality, as it would be now for such a church to be overtly racist.

However, at the moment, the debate continues to be lively, and this book edited by Preston Sprinkle adds to the usual controversies about biblical hermeneutics by including contributions from theology and the Christian tradition. Two of the contributors, William Loader and Megan K. DeFranza, hold to an affirming view, while Wesley Hill and Stephen Holmes hold to a more traditional view, although not in a way that is so non-affirming (the editor uses the term "traditional" in preference to "non-affirming") as to please anyone holding homophobic prejudices. Each contributor writes a defence of their viewpoint, and then other contributors respond more briefly. This format gives the sense of a seminar taking place, with differing opinions being voiced and challenged, albeit in a generous and gracious way.

Let me illustrate the pattern of each contribution from a closer view of the first contributor. William Loader writes from the perspective of ancient Jewish and Near-Eastern writing, and argues that the responses from Greeks and Romans was complex, and varied. The issues as Romans, for instance, saw it was the normality of the male sexual organ (women, in this scheme, were defective) and shame associated with anything 'effeminate' or passive. Roman men might penetrate slaves, conquered enemies or women, but should not allow themselves to be penetrated— their society was strongly patriarchal and — to use a term that they would not recognise — "macho." Something of this culture remains deeply embedded wherever shame and honour ethics predominate. In his conclusions from a careful analysis of the Biblical texts, he can find little scope for seeing consenting sexual relationships between those of the same gender as acceptable —Leviticus rejects it, as does Paul. He argues that Paul saw every human being as heterosexual, so that homosexual acts were perverse. However, he also affirms that this understanding of Paul, derived from his Jewish background, is wrong — some people are homosexual by nature. What are we to do with this changed understanding of the diversity of the human condition? He does not want Scripture to somehow say what, to him, it clearly does not, and so his response is to argue that this is one of those areas where First-century understanding needs to be supplemented by 21st century knowledge (I suppose a similar argument would be made about the geometry of the earth — the Bible assumes a very different cosmology to the one taken for granted since Galileo.)

He opts for the view that Biblical demands do sometimes need revising, and this has, at least, the virtue of intellectual consistency and honesty. Those who wish to hold to a First century understanding, on the grounds that the Bible brooks no contradiction, then have to explain away somehow the experience of many gay people, but dogma, in this case, trumps experience, and Loader is unwilling to adopt that perspective.

In the responses, Wesley Hill —himself a gay man — affirms Loader's exegesis, but rejects his conclusions. Eros is more than physical sexual behaviour, and while, he argues, this is not permitted in Scripture, "the larger *sensibility* of same-sex attraction" (p.58) might have its place. The appropriate sexual response to homosexual attraction is celibacy, but the ability to enhance one's affective capacity through a gay sensibility is to be encouraged. Stephen Holmes challenges the hermeneutical principles (or, rather, their opacity) behind Loader's stance; his avowed "setting aside" of Scripture in some respects (Holmes argues we can never "set aside" Scripture, even if we interpret it with fresh insight); and also the character of all sexual desire — it is all inherently disordered by sin and the Fall, hetero- and homo-sexual alike. Which means it all needs to be redeemed by Christ.

Finally, Loader responds to the criticisms of his fellow-contributors with a brief section that clarifies some of them, while confirming his overall view. In nuce, the New Testament is limited in its understanding of human sexuality, and if we accept what is generally held in contemporary society, then to forbid responsible expressions of sexual behaviour for same-sex oriented people is to compromise two other biblical principles — compassion and justice.

DeFranza covers similar Biblical ground, drawing especially upon evangelical and conservative scholars, but argues that in this regard, as in so much else, we need to continue to listen to each other. She notes that Christians *have* learnt to disagree over matters of pacifism, women's ordination or the nature of baptism — and wishes to assign this issue to the same generous-hearted disagreement. Her hope is that churches will increasingly welcome and bless homosexuals, both those who choose to live celibate lives, and those who wed. Her fellow contributors respond with grace and challenge, and she notes in conclusion the place of Augustine in the formation of theological perspectives upon marriage for those with whom she disagrees.

Hill's chapter takes as its starting point the theology of marriage, and engages in conversation with another recent book, Robert Song's *Covenant and Calling*, with which he disagrees significantly. He movingly describes his own first awakening of love and desire for other males, accompanied by his own desire to be obedient to Christ and the Christian way, while the church seemed to have nothing positive to say about his sexual orientation at all. He asks the question, 'how should a gay man or woman actually live?' His answer lies in the calling of spiritual friendship, drawing upon Aelred of Rievaulx's seminal work on this theme for his own 12th century monastic community. This emphasis might be applied more widely than simply as a response to same-sex orientation, and take

a much greater place in the nexus of relationships that comprise the church (where the Western nuclear family has become something of an idol.)

Holmes' chapter argues that there is no need to change historic Christian ethical positions, but rather to 'restate them more carefully.' (p. 167) His brief is not so much exegetical as theological, and he argues that the pastoral response to LGBT people is not so much to become more lax in our pastoral dealings with them as to become more rigorous in our dealings with straight people — to reaffirm that human sexuality is primarily oriented towards procreation, not towards pleasure, and to restate an ethic that takes this orientation seriously.' (p.168) He affirms Augustine's arguments and notes the ubiquity with which Christian liturgies for marriage are derived from his discussion of the goods of marriage, and that this must inevitably exclude LGBT from that sacrament.

He argues that there can be only three ways in which the inclusion of sexually active gay and lesbian people in the church can be accommodated: (i) the Christian understanding of marriage might be developed in a way that opens it to same-sex couples; (ii) we might create a wholly new way of life that sits alongside marriage and celibacy, offering an ethically acceptable alternative for same-sex couples or (iii) we might accept the wrongness of same-sex sexual activity, but make a pastoral accommodation for some people who live that way (in the way we also treat divorcees.)

Holmes contradicts the extension of marriage argument on the grounds that the tradition very clearly places procreation as the primary purpose of marriage. It may offer many other goods (a form of ascetical practice that produces Christlikeness, for instance) but it must be oriented towards procreation. Should we marry post-menopausal women, then, since they cannot have children? On those grounds alone, we probably should not, but he suggests there are other reasons why this becomes permissible. Should sexual activity between marriage partners beyond the woman's loss of fertility be similarly illegitimised, I wonder? I assume not! He asserts that Eugene Rogers' *Sexuality and the Christian Body* is the best theological argument for extending marriage, but does not accept fully those arguments.

Is there a third mode of committed and faithful relationship that the church might accept, alongside marriage (oriented towards procreation) and celibacy? Robert Song offers the best arguments for this, but Holmes questions whether the strong links between sexual activity, marriage and having children in the Christian tradition can be easily broken to achieve this.

What Holmes does offer is a pastoral accommodation to people in such relationships. In the same way as Protestant and Orthodox churches have enabled divorced people to marry and remain in good standing with their church (or polygamy in some missional contexts), he argues that the churches might make such accommodations towards those in appropriate same-sex relationships. This is not to affirm the relationships ethically, but a wise response to the huge pressures upon churches in Western contexts to find some room for accepting such relationships might continue, compatible with whole-hearted



participation in the church's life. Allowing imperfect relationships while affirming the ideal is compatible with a number of circumstances, not just sexual ones.

Holmes is aware that an Augustinian theory of marriage might just be "plain wrong" and Loader in his response states as much (not quite plain wrong, but certainly in need of adjustment) and proceeds to argue why. In this regard, I have some sympathy for Loader's position, and question whether the absolute prioritising of procreation over the other goods inherent in marriage (a stable context for the raising as well as generating of children, love and companionship and so forth) is not just an assertion of Augustine's derived from certain presuppositions. If in Christ all things are new, might the procreative priority derived from an ancient procreative necessity where the majority of live births would not survive to procreative potential post-puberty anyway, be re-ordered by the law of love within the church? There does need to be procreation in order for there to be a successive generation, but its ultimate priority might be re-ordered in a changed social and medical context. The fact that this Augustinian privileging has produced the Roman Catholic ban on contraception, ignored by (one assumes) most citizens in the dominant Catholic society of Italy, and rejected by most Protestants, already suggests that the other goods in marriage have become as important, if not more so, than generating children. Holmes is right to remind us of the tradition (since most Protestants live in practical ignorance of it) but Sprinkle in his conclusions questions whether the New Testament itself has not begun a journey of relativizing this good — a journey that has continues apace.

All four contributors write well, argue coherently, and debate graciously. This is a model of how the church might approach this matter, in contradiction to the often ungracious and plain wicked ways we have demonised one another across the fences we build. When I train churches using the Baptist Union's Human Sexuality material, I wonder if the most important thing I say is at the beginning — we will conduct ourselves with grace and civility, listening carefully before judging, and remain in fellowship in Christ, even when we profoundly disagree.

*Paul Goodliff*  
*Abingdon Baptist Church*

**Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler, *Christ, Church and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark 2016)**

The work and legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer has an enduring capacity to fascinate each new generation of Christian disciple and academic theologian. The completion of the critical edition of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in German and English has enabled the current generation of scholars to engage with his life and work, (along with his early interpreters) with fresh perspectives and from emerging contexts. T & T Clark have been at the forefront of publishing a number

of significant contributions to this scholarship and this volume of essays, edited by Michael Mawson and Philip Ziegler is no exception.

At a cost of £80 this book is unlikely to attract the casual reader in the first flush of Bonhoeffer interest, say after reading *Discipleship, Letters and Papers* or one of the recent popular biographies. This is perhaps no bad thing for the essays do assume a reasonable level of general theological literacy together with a prior familiarity with Bonhoeffer's life and legacy. However, those who are already conversant in theology and Bonhoeffer studies will not be disappointed should they make the investment. The gathered essays arise from a series of events hosted by the University of Aberdeen and while the length of the contributions varies, the quality is universally high. They are loosely arranged in four sections: Christology, hamartiology, ecclesiology and the 'Jewish Question'.

Every reader will approach these subject areas and the individual essays therein with a natural preference for one topic over another, but they all reward careful reading. In the first section Christopher Holmes examines Bonhoeffer's theology of Christ and suggests it might need to be strengthened through a more robust dialogue with Trinitarian theology particularly the recent thought of Katherine Sonderegger. Later, Stephen Plant deliberately adopts the theologically evocative phrase of a 'new perspective' on Bonhoeffer's thought, suggesting that it's problematic relationship to the early councils can be overcome if read alongside Lewis Ayres' work on Pro-Nicene Theology. However it is the opening chapter and the compelling work of Christiane Tietz's apparent tautology, 'The role of Jesus Christ for Christology' that offers one of the most engaging contributions. Tietz considers the role of Jesus Christ in the doctrine of creation, exploring the historical rationale behind Bonhoeffer forsaking the traditional 'orders of creation' in favour of 'orders of preservation'. Following Bonhoeffer, Tietz believes that orders of creation allow for almost anything to be theologically and ethically justified, but 'preservations' seek to maintain the world for the gospel of Christ. Historically this allowed Bonhoeffer to argue against the 1930s German order of 'Volk', which by its nature sought to deny to ethnic and cultural universality of the gospel. Tietz argues that in these days when we no longer have to deal with the far-right ideology of the 1930s (although we might note just how much the contemporary world may have shifted on that in the two years between her writing and this publication) still Bonhoeffer's orders of preservation have an important contribution to offer. One is to critique again the resurgent natural theology that has little time for a robust theology of sin. The other is of relevance in the debates on human sexuality. Tietz argues that from the perspective of Bonhoeffer's 'preservations' the idea that heterosexual relationships are divinely ordained is a weak one, and a more telling enquiry would concern itself not with the sexual orientation of those within a Christian partnership, but rather whether that order preserves the world for Christ in matters such as discipleship. Tietz compellingly suggests it does. Thus from the beginning of the collected essays, Tietz establishes the importance of allowing Bonhoeffer's theology to interrogate new arenas of interest and shows how this might be creatively achieved.

That trajectory is continued in the section dealing with Bonhoeffer's theology of sin. Here Eva Harasta turns to Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* to examine the ontological

tensions of being in Adam and being in Christ. Philip Ziegler continues that theme in his treatment of ethics within Bonhoeffer's theology of salvation. But it is the longer essay of Tom Greggs, looking at Bonhoeffer's hamartiology from within his ecclesiology that proves the next compelling read. Greggs helpfully illuminates the influence brought to bear on any doctrine by the fundamental theological location in which any thinker places it. This in itself is instructive. However he goes on to show how Bonhoeffer's focus on community as the primary location for all doctrinal formation necessitates an understanding of sin, in which its horizontal dimension (the individual separated from the community), is inseparable from the vertical consequences of a disrupted divine-human relationship. Thus salvation for the person *in se conversus* is found in being delivered from the attempt to remain alone and understand itself out of itself, by turning outwards towards Christ and others.

Such issues of relationality, and particularly human personhood, are continued into Michael's Mawson's essay on how *Creation and Fall* can help develop and expand a theology of disability beyond the more recently established anthropological approaches.

The final two chapters, by Michael DeJonge and Andreas Pangritz re-examine the 'Jewish Question' of the 1930s. DeJonge argues for a deep Lutheran understanding of the Two Kingdoms in which he argues that Bonhoeffer's rationale for resistance is less focused on sympathy for the Jews and more deeply rooted in his concern for the theological legitimacy of the State. Pangritz too re-examines the context of the Jewish Question, locating Bonhoeffer's response with a wider network of context shaped by Karl Barth, and the lesser known Elizabeth Schmitz and Wilhelm Vischer. He argues that is the theological and activist influence of such others that moves Bonhoeffer from the internal ambiguities of his writing in 'The Church and the Jewish Question' to the unequivocal statement from Ethics, 'Driving out the Jews(s) from the West must result in driving out Christ with them, for Jesus Christ was a Jew.' Whilst little is made of the contemporary applications of the theology outlined in this final section, readers who are attentive to these chapters as well as to many contemporary ethical concerns may have 'ears to hear' much that will enrich their thought and deeds.

If proof were ever needed that the legacy of Bonhoeffer's life and work remain a fecund source of radical theological and ethical possibility, then these essays from T & T Clark should convince the new reader beyond any reasonable doubt.

*Craig Gardiner*  
*South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff*

**John G. Flett, *Apostolicity: The Ecumenical Question in World Christian Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 390pp.**

John Flett's first book, *The Witness of God*, was a study of the phrase 'Missio Dei' and the theology of Karl Barth. It was an argument for the centrality of mission to the task of theology, not as something we do after we have done theology.

This, his second book, takes up the question of *Apostolicity*. Like the first it makes a bold argument. As the subtitle suggests – The Ecumenical Question in World Christian Perspective, Flett puts into conversation the ecumenical movement and world Christianity, with the claim that the focus on ecumenism and unity has failed to take World Christianity, that is, Christianity beyond the Europe and North America seriously.

Apostolicity is understood as continuity and being sent, or cultivation and communication. Flett's issue is that communication is always secondary to cultivation, so that the latter controls or sets limits on the former. Flett's argument is that there should be a reverse, where communication is made primary. This itself, says Flett, is obscured by the Protestant/Catholic schism, so that 'schism determines the ecumenical treatment of apostolicity' (51). The disagreement over whether each other are apostolic, overlooks that both Protestant and Catholic agree about the primacy of cultivation, there is, says Flett, a "missionary imperialism." World Christianity is received in the context of this schism. This, Flett, sets out to challenge, by offering a new 'constructive redefinition of apostolicity' (53).

The first half of *Apostolicity* sets of this argument, through a close reading of WCC ecclesial texts, a reading of the late Robert Jenson's theology of church as culture and the claim that church as culture leads to mission as colonization, in which 'global' Christianity seeks to resist a 'world' Christianity. 'Global' here means the (largely) European cultural Christianity, against the diverse, pluralistic differing ecclesiologies of 'world' Christianity. Chapters 6 and 7 see Flett offers his different interpretation of apostolicity, from a perspective of world Christianity. Flett does not deny the importance of structures, institutions, order, liturgy, and the such like, that dominant ecumenical theology, but he does challenge that Christianity can be understood in 'terms of a singular historical course and so the church in a singular cultural form' (56). That is, instead of trying to make world Christianity fit into a singular global Christianity, we should see world Christianity as a faithful continuation of the New Testament witness and the church through history, as it always crossed cultural boundaries. Apostolicity must be defined christologically, that is, as the book concludes,

'The church finds its identity, not in itself and the gifts given to it, but beyond itself in the history of Jesus Christ. The church apostolic is the church determined by its living Lord and his mission. Apostolicity is the concrete interpretation of this Christological determination.'

At one level Flett is simply arguing that work of missiologists like Sanneh, Walls, Bediako and others need to be taken much more seriously by ecumenical and systematic theologians, where they are largely left on the margins.

Both *Apostolicity* and the earlier *The Witness of God* set out to redefine mission, ecumenism, ecclesiology and theology. Reading *Apostolicity* throws you into a conversation, this is no introductory text, but its arguments are made carefully and you will find yourself, perhaps into a world still largely unknown, which is precisely one of Flett's problems. Flett argues for a different starting point, one

that rejoices in world Christianity and seeks to wake the rest of us, who live largely outside it, to reconsider its place. I'm part of the problem – I have no Sanneh, Walls and Bediako or similar on my bookshelves. I'm aware of them, but have not seen them as necessary reading for my being a minister and theologian. In anything Flett has made me start a new reading list, hopefully he might see this as a start.

*Andy Goodliff*

*Belle Vue Baptist Church, Southend-on-Sea*

### **John Kiess, *Hannah Arendt and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)**

Before reading John Kiess's book, the only work I had read in full by Hannah Arendt was *The Human Condition*, though I had also been aware of her influence through Adriana Cavarero's study of narrative from a feminist perspective. Kiess's comprehensive overview inspired me to go out and purchase both *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as my next reading challenges. I am aware that in so doing, I fall into the trap of being a selective theological reader of Arendt – Kiess is at pains to note that Arendt needs to be understood within her own body of writing and thought. By abstracting certain key themes (as I am tempted to do!), Kiess believes that we can end up misunderstanding her.

Arendt initially became interested in and studied theology, and she wrote her dissertation on Augustine and love; but philosophy became her main arena. She was of the WW2 generation of thinkers who reflected deeply on human nature in the light of that extended and violent conflict – and as a Jewess she brings a particular resonance to that thinking. Arendt is often raided by contemporary theologians, yet she was not a Christian and was indeed often critical of Christianity (mainly in its passive form) - but she thinks in such a unique and original manner that we cannot, as ministers and theologians, ignore her insights into human being.

Kiess offers a discussion of key areas of Arendt's thought, and I was especially interested in the chapters on the problem of evil; the notion of *amor mundi*; and Arendt's concept of 'natality'. Kiess sets out his stall by giving us a biographical chapter on Arendt's life as a public philosopher. Arendt studied under several 'stars': Bultmann, Heidegger (with whom she had an affair), and Jaspers. She found herself disillusioned with Bultmann's demythologisation, articulating an admiration for Jesus as one who lived the salvation story, not one who preached an abstracted doctrine. This led to her reflection on the importance of meaning as *action* as well as meaning as 'being'.

Arendt's well known political interest began in earnest with the destruction of the Reichstag, which forced her to realise that politics had become personal – not only was she Jewish and therefore a target of the regime, but her academic mentor Heidegger had become a Nazi (along with other colleagues). She fled from Nazism, first to Paris and then the USA, where – perhaps unsurprisingly,

given her revelation about action - she was an activist for Jewish groups. She also reflected extensively on the statelessness of refugees and what it is to be recognised as a person. This thought has a timely significance for us today as we see so many displaced groups moving round the world.

When Arendt returned to academia in 1951, her first work was *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in which she explored the idea that the Nazi camps aimed not to change the world but to change human nature itself. The camps reveal what it means to be human through what is so brutally removed: wordliness (being a meaningful agent in the public world); plurality (the relational aspect of human being); mortality (human finitude, but also reflecting on the fact that totalitarianism depended upon eliminating others) and natality (that each human is a 'surprise', a new thing).

Arendt may be most publicly known for her writing in the *New Yorker* about the trial of Eichmann in Jerusalem. In her attendance at the court she became aware that although Eichmann's crimes were hideous, he himself seemed very 'normal'. From this observation arose her notion of the banality of evil. Eichmann's detachment from the reality of the evil he sanctioned generated Arendt's appraisal of the role of the bureaucratic state in allowing evil to flourish by abstracting it from personal experience.

Kiess offers a wealth of philosophical and theological perspectives on Arendt, and reading this book whet my appetite to access more of her work. She may have been critical of aspects of Christianity, but her work raises serious and enduring questions about a God of justice and mercy which we cannot afford to ignore. As a Baptist, part of a denomination that places a high value on justice, I have determined to become more familiar with Arendt, having read Kiess's book. If you are already immersed in Arendt's writings, then my guess is that you'd still enjoy Kiess's explorations of the philosophical/theological connections within her work.

*Sally Nelson*  
*St Hild College, Yorkshire/ Northern Baptist College*

**Curtis W. Freeman, *Undomesticated Dissent: Democracy and the Public Virtue of Religious Nonconformity* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2017), xviii + 269pp.**

According to the Preface of this engaging study its conception was prompted by the happenstance of an unplanned visit to Bunhill Fields (on finding Wesley's Chapel closed for the day). Surrounded by such a 'cloud' of dissenting witnesses it is hard not to reflect on the history of English Nonconformity and Curtis Freeman unfolds that story through the lens of three dissenters buried in a courtyard at the centre of Bunhill Fields: John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, and William Blake, and specifically through their most famous writings: *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Jerusalem*.



Following a preface that relates this chance visit and introduces the theme, the book begins with a chapter entitled 'Domesticating Dissent' that outlines the dissenting tradition from its beginnings through to the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. A chapter is then devoted to each of the three chosen authors and their chosen works: 'Slumbering Dissent' (John Bunyan); 'Prosperous Dissent' (Daniel Defoe); 'Apocalyptic Dissent' (William Blake). Through each of these chapters, while focusing on the specific author and his specific selected work, Freeman manages (in impressive and thorough detail) to relate the wider history of English dissent as the context that gave rise to these works. Moreover, each chapter moves forward to relate both the initial and the subsequent reception of these now lauded writings – in each case demonstrating (amongst other things) the manner in which these works, once divorced from their initial context, have been domesticated through selective reflection to the degree that the radical nature of their original comment and challenge is effectively silenced.

The fifth and final chapter of the book, entitled 'Postapocalyptic Dissent', focuses particularly on the history of Nonconformity in America, ponders the place of dissent in the context of a constitutional separation of State and religion and concludes that, alongside the basic conviction that conscience, though not an infallible guide, ought never to be bound or coerced (219), the tradition must continue as 'a check against the tyranny of the majority and the domination of the powerful' (220). Freeman doesn't flinch (particularly when reviewing the history of the early American colonists) from recognising the depressing tendency of some supposed dissenters to deny to others the very freedoms they claim for themselves. And just as dissent can itself issue in intolerance so liberalism can be notoriously illiberal and the pressure to conform to the liberal mores of political correctness pertains both sides of the Atlantic.

Nonetheless, while the North-American context of this work, with its commitment to the separation of state and religion, inevitably issues in the reduction of dissent to more general issues of the freedom of conscience, this reviewer was left pondering the continuing pertinence of a dissenting tradition in the more specifically English context of that state sponsored religion in which it grew. Without wishing to give way entirely to cynicism I suspect that most who presently worship in Baptist churches have even less awareness of a tradition of dissent than they have of congregational polity or the significance of believer's baptism. In an age of ecumenical engagement and post-denominational flux, in a spiritual context in which a church is joined on the merits of its crèche facilities and worship style rather than its theological commitments and vision, in a society in which Catholics and Anglicans may find themselves dissenters alongside Baptists and Independents, is there yet a distinctive dissenting witness more specific than a general respect for the freedom of conscience? While few would view the Church of England with the disdain explicit in Blake and more subtly expressed in Bunyan and Defoe, might there not be place for prophetic protest against the remaining trappings of a sacral society and, in particular, its perceived religious endorsement of militarism? The subtly coercive illiberalism of liberalism provokes dissent universally but might not the peculiarly English context that provoked Bunyan, Defoe, and Blake provoke us still?

Notwithstanding the thorough scholarship that undergirds this book the text is unfailingly accessible and engaging – perhaps one of my most enjoyable reads this year.

*John E. Colwell*  
*Budleigh Salterton, Devon*

**Myra Blyth and Andy Goodliff (eds.) *Gathering Disciples: Essays in Honor of Christopher J. Ellis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 268pp.**

It has occasionally been observed by those of us who have followed Chris Ellis' writings for the last few decades, that the formula '*Adjective-God*' is a favoured opening; whether for a prayer, a piece of liturgy, or a hymn. It is therefore entirely fitting that the word-play inherent in the title of this volume produced in his honour should echo that formula. Chris's ministry has not only been one which gathers disciples to the person of Jesus Christ, but also one which then shapes those disciples to become gatherers themselves.

By way of anecdotal introduction before moving to a review of the book, this reviewer first met Chris Ellis in Sheffield in 1991. I was studying Biblical Studies at Sheffield University, and discovered in Chris's preaching and worship leading an authenticity to the experience of Christ combined with a deep awareness of the complexities of biblical hermeneutics. I attended his church for five years, and his encouragement sustained me through a difficult process of application for ministerial formation. Many years later, when he was principal of the Bristol College, he again encouraged me to not give up on my vocation to higher academic study. So I add my voice to those of the contributors of this volume in expressing personal gratitude that Chris has both gathered me to Christ, and encouraged me to share in the task of gathering others.

The introduction by Neville Callum notes that, 'there are not many roles in Baptist life that Chris has not held. He's been a pastor of five Baptist churches, a Baptist college principal, Baptist Union president, as well as being moderator over the years of the Union's Doctrine Worship Committee, Faith & Unity Executive, and the Baptist Union Council.' (p.xiii). Callum goes on to note that these roles do not tell the full story of Chris's wider ministry in ecumenism, liturgical writing, research into Free Church worship, and the writing of hymns. To this list, I would add that he has considerable skills as an artist, in tapestry, and in singing.

It is Chris's writing of hymnody which gives shape to this volume, with each of the fourteen chapters taking its inspiration from one of his hymns. Baptists of a certain era will be familiar with his more well-known hymns 'Passover God', and 'Made in God's Image' (both of which were included in the Baptist Hymnal, *Baptist Praise and Worship*), but there is a treasury of hymns written by Chris which deserve wider recognition. They point to the importance of deep reflection on the words we use to speak and sing of God, and to the significance of communal worship in gathering disciples.

Robert Ellis offers a critical reflection on the task of Baptists doing theology, in dialogue with Chris's doctoral thesis *Gathering: Spirituality and Theology in Free Church Worship*. Robert Ellis identifies the importance, for Baptists, of theology being an activity which is grounded in the life of the congregation, rather than emerging in the abstract. This leads to his exploration of Chris's concept of 'Liturgical Theology', where 'the beliefs of the Christian community [are explored] through a study of its worship practices'. (p.5). The hymn for this chapter, 'Learning and Life', is examined to show how Trinitarian theology emerges through the process of singing to the Trinity. But beyond all this, Robert Ellis offers some deeply personal reflections on a lifetime's acquaintance and friendship with his brother.

Craig Gardiner examines how 'worship confronts the powers', with the naming of Jesus as Lord functioning as a politicised challenge to the 'powers and principalities of the age' which would seek to suppress the naming of Messiah in worship. Through engagement with Walter Wink, Gardiner shows how worship challenges the 'Domination System', shaping communities of resistance, who rehearse their resistance through the repetition of communal worship. So Christ is encountered in the acts of gathering, of preaching the word, of sharing communion, of symbolic action, of intercession for the world, and of sending out; and as Christ is encountered, his people are shaped to be those who fearless proclaim the lordship of Christ in all the world.

Shona Shaw explores the relationship between Baptist worship and the congregational song. She notes that although through their earliest decades Baptists didn't sing hymns at all, since the mid-eighteenth century the singing of hymns has been the building block for Baptist worship services. The key themes of loving encounter, inclusive performance, sacrifice and silence, improvisation from the heart, and embodiment form the structure for this chapter, with the tension between rehearsal and performance emerging as a metaphor for the way gathering to worship prepares the community of faith to perform their faith when they leave the worship space.

Paul Goodliff offers reflections on Baptists and discipleship, noting that deep within the Baptist tradition is a commitment to liberty, which challenges those who would seek to construct a more repressive approach to Christian discipleship. Drawing on the traditions of both old- and new-monasticism, Goodliff offers a theology of 'mutually submissive fellowship', which he sees taking shape in Baptist congregations through the church meeting of the local gathered congregation, and secondarily through wider covenantal relationships between both ministers and churches. Discipleship, properly understood, thus finds its roots in obedience to Christ through the promises and practice of baptism, which calls and roots the believer in the community of the faithful.

Stuart Blythe invites readers to consider the practice of congregational discernment as an act of contextual discipleship. Using as an example the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014, Blyth explores the relationship between theology, ecclesiology and politics, suggesting that there is a need for 'congregational discernment on matters that matter' beyond simply those that

matter locally to a given congregation. He suggests that it is as the community seek to know and obey the mind of Jesus Christ that they are equipped to engage in contextual discipleship about the complex issues of society and culture. He concludes by asserting that this is a missional, as well as theological, imperative.

Beth Allison-Glenny addresses the divisive topic of Baptists and same-sex marriage, offering a creative analysis of Baptist interpretations of scripture on the complementarity of male and female. Beginning with the question of whether gender is a potential bar to ministry and ordination, she draws a parallel between the processes by which Baptists have addressed the issue of women in ministry, and those which they are using to address the question of same sex-marriage. Both approaches are, she suggests, typically informed by a 'soft complementarian' understanding of 'what it means to be embodied as women and men in the image of God'. (p.91) She cautions that such a view, which sees women and men as *together* embodying the image of God, retains a binary understanding of male and female that is 'ultimately unhelpful for the emancipation of women' and counter-productive to the discussion regarding same-sex marriage. Does a woman still needs a man (in ministry or in marriage) to fully reflect the image of God (and vice versa)?

Sally Nelson turns attention to the topic of baptism, using the scriptural metaphor of dying and rising with Christ. She draws attention to baptism as a multisensory experience which viscerally initiates candidates into the death of self; she points to the way baptism contextualises the lives of candidates by placing them as part of a bigger transcendent story; and she suggests that baptism functions as a transition ritual which re-shapes candidates' priorities. All of this gives rise to 'the community of the baptised', who live the future they hope for into being in their present, becoming 'a mechanism of revelation in a hostile society: truly ethical, truly political, truly missional.' (p.125).

Myra Blyth surveys Baptist manual for worship, focussing particularly on their orders and patterns for celebrating the Lord's supper, to offer a reflection on the changing theology and practice of British Baptist communion practices. The shifts that she identify fall into two broad categories: firstly, communion has become less a 'backward-looking memorial meal' and more of a 'present- and future-oriented kingdom feast', and secondly communion has discovered a 'fresh focus on covenant theology'. (p.129). Blyth explores the relationship between communion practice and the social context of the day, and rightly asks which issues in the contemporary context are driving such changes. To this end, she identifies such issues as the place of the unbaptised child at the Lord's Table, the relationship between the local church and the wider church, and ecumenical practices.

Ashley Lovett keeps attention on the communion table, but focuses on the missional imperative that arises from the Eucharistic act. He suggests that Christians are called to 'embody Christ in the world' (p.153), and that the communal act of gathering at the Lord's Table to share the broken body of Christ, shapes the body of Christ which is the church, ever more closely into the image of Christ. Lovett uses the various patterns for the Lord's Supper that are found in

the Baptist service book *Gathering for Worship* (compiled and written by Chris Ellis and Myra Blyth), noting that the 'Simple Pattern' shapes Christians to be dependent on scripture and orientated towards Christ-like living. The 'Hungering for Justice' pattern shapes Christians towards lives that pursue justice and peace by pointing them to the one who meets them in brokenness and poverty. The 'Re-Membering and Reconciling' pattern shapes Christians who 'look away from themselves and towards participation in Christ's ongoing life through his body the church.' (p.164). Lovett then argues in favour of a greater diversity of Eucharistic practice, including the use of gesture, movement, silence, and story-telling, all rooting the Lord's Supper in the wider context of Baptist worship and the ministry of the word.

Ruth Gouldbourne takes the practice of communion to a wider space, and draws a link between the sharing of bread and wine in the service, with the communion believers share with the saints throughout all time and space. Picking up the observation that if you want to know what Baptists believe, you need to look at what they sing and pray, Gouldbourne looks at the way Baptists have sought to articulate their beliefs about the great divide between the living and the dead, and between those who will never and can never meet to worship together. To this end, she traces a theology of the 'communion of saints' which is rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ, with the expressed hope that those who are parted 'for a while ... shall *still* be joined in heart and hope to meet again', (*Blest be the Tie that Binds*, p.177). Gouldbourne thus suggests that the sharing of bread and wine is one of the moments when the church across generations and geography stands 'always in the same relation to the Risen Christ - and therefore, together.' (p.179).

Tony Peck reflects on the ecumenical engagement of European Baptists, offering a personal reflection on the challenges of unity and diversity in the European Baptist Federation (of which he has been the General Secretary since 2004). He notes that there is a high commitment from the leaders of the fifty-nine member bodies of the EBF to meet with one another for mutual support, but recognises the wide diversity of responses to ecumenical co-operation at local, national, and international levels. Peck's argument is that ecumenical commitment grows out of ecclesiology, with the EBF functioning ecumenically even on behalf of those member bodies who remain reticent to do so at a more localised level. One of the key areas for disagreement that Peck recognises is that of baptismal practice, with attempts to provide a common language for different practices failing to achieve widespread acceptance. It is in this context that EBF continues to represent its member Unions, and to function in ways that might be understood ecclesially.

Paul Fiddes returns to his well-trodden path of Trinitarian Theology, offering a profound reflection on the triune creator in hymn and theology. He takes as his starting point the hymn by Chris Ellis, 'Living God, we come to worship', and suggests that it is 'truly trinitarian' because it 'enables worship of a God who is Trinity, living in eternal relations of love.' (p.204). For Fiddes, a hymn which simply *describes* God in Trinity is lacking compared to one which enables its singers to *engage* in the triune God; and this is because the Trinity is not a static

entity, but a living relational reality. The Trinity cannot be *observed* so much as *experienced*, because an understanding of God-in-relationship invites those who hear the call to enter into and participate in that relationship; God is encountered in movement not stasis. Therefore, those who would encounter God do so not because someone or some thing has mediated God to them, but because God has acted in issuing the invitation to participation in God

Nigel Wright engages Ellis's hymn 'Lord God of Power' to address the issue of divine sovereignty, noting that Baptist tradition has (at least some of) its roots in Reformed Christianity, and is thus an heir to the Calvinistic perspective on an all-powerful God. Wright recognises that this is a mixed blessing, pointing to positives such as 'a Reformed concern for sober government, the education of the populace and the health of the people', as well as negatives such as 'a prurient concern for the private morality of the citizen and, most unwelcome, a mandate for the civil power to punish and eradicate heresy or theological dissent'. (p.223). The discussion ranges over election, predestination and Calvinian spirituality, to a plea for a reshaped doctrinal landscape where the historic Baptist tension between Arminius and Calvin resolve in a creative commitment to the love of God, which suspends judgment about the final scope of salvation but trusts in the persistence of God to seek the lost.

Andy Goodliff offers the concluding chapter in dialogue with Ellis's hymn 'Missionary God', in which he asks what it means for a Baptist to sing and speak of the 'missionary God'? Goodliff traces the use of the phrase from its origin in the launch of Ellis's hymn at the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BMS in 1992, to its current status as a popular phrase to describe the type of God Baptists think they are engaging with in their missionary activity. Goodliff offers a fascinating reflection on the use of the concept 'missionary God' in the writing of Paul Fiddes, Stephen Holmes, John Colwell, and Nigel Wright; on the basis of which Goodliff offers four reflections on Baptists and mission. Firstly, he asserts that a missionary Union must be ecclesial; secondly he argues for greater attention to the relationship between mission and apostolicity; thirdly he cautions against 'faddism' in missionary activity; and finally he calls readers to reflect deeply on mission and discipleship.

This is a fascinating volume, which amply fulfils its stated aim of honouring the life and ministry of Christopher J. Ellis. But it does so much more than this – it is a profound and stimulating exercise in Baptist theology, written by some of the most able and articulate Baptist theologians of the current generation. It will stand the test of time, and inspire many to become 'gathering disciples'.

*Simon Woodman*  
*Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church*



**Hannah Bacon, Wendy Dossett, Steve Knowles (eds.), *Alternative Salvations: Engaging the Sacred and the Secular* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)**

The publisher describes this book as:

*'By considering transformative ideas and experiences which are explicitly articulated or implicitly structured in languages of religion and spirituality, Alternative Salvations probes concepts including 'religious', 'secular', 'spiritual', 'post-Christian', and 'post-secular', providing a series of studies which question the functionality of these broad categories.'*

Now that description may not grab everyone's attention but the first sentences of chapter 12 caught mine: 'I begin my chapter with an invitation to join me on a theological fence. Perhaps, not the most comfortable place, but certainly the most interesting and. I hope, fruitful position from which to start our explorations.' I suspect many reading this book will find themselves on the fence as they read the very varied chapters both in subject matter and ability to convince someone to jump off the fence onto their side.

The questions about salvation: what do we mean by that term; salvation from what to what; how salvation is effected; is there ultimately universal salvation – all continue to dominate current Christian (and Muslim) discourse and debate. This book brings fresh ideas and propositions to bear on that ongoing debate. Part one looks at contemporary secular salvation narratives and tries to show how different cultural forms, social practices and secular discourses are influenced by, or can be interpreted through, the lens of religious and theological accounts of salvation.

The chapters look at such varied topics as: atheist's 'salvation'; The Twelve Step Recovery process for alcoholics; weight loss; drug culture; Transcendence and Transformation in everyday life; and public policy surrounding HIV-AIDs in Kenya. These categories are usually seen as outside traditional religious contexts, yet, as the contributors are keen to demonstrate, they are not free from religious connections and ideas.

Part two explores alternative accounts of salvation that have their origins in established religious traditions. Orthodox religious beliefs are challenged as chapters pose critical questions about gender, the status of animals, and the political dimensions of salvation.

Some chapters engaged me more than others but I suspect that is based in my own particular interests. I was fascinated by chapter 10 that, in the light of the recent terror attacks from 9/11 onwards compares the ideas of martyrdom exhibiting themselves in extremist Islam with Christian ideas that martyrdom included suffering and dying like Christ for one's faith. It was uncomfortable reading as contemporary Christians condemn Islam but forget their own violent and bloody past.

Other chapters that engaged me were those that looked the subject of Universal Salvation in both Christianity and Islam where tensions are surprisingly similar: is there everlasting torment or is that torment a refining fire that fits us for eternal life; will God ultimately save all humanity. I also found the chapters relating to gender fascinating, particularly the one relating to weight loss. The chapters, which are relatively short but packed with content, in *Alternative Salvations* offer specific challenges to the black and white dogmas that so easily dominate religious thinking and belief but also offer points of contact between secular thinking on 'life in all its fullness' and traditional religious systems whilst also challenging conventional doctrines of salvation. I have enjoyed sitting on some of the fences provided and it has been a fruitful journey.

*Julie Aylward*  
*Borstal Baptist Church, Rochester*

**Oliver O'Donovan, *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology; Volume 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), ix + 236pp.**

This is the third and final volume of Oliver O'Donovan's masterful trilogy on *Ethics as Theology* and, like its predecessors, it presents significant challenges to any reviewer. In the first place (and most obviously), being the final volume of a trilogy it assumes (though is not dependent upon) a familiarity with the discussions of the first two volumes. Briefly (and over-simply), Volume One, *Self, World, and Time: An Induction* sought to present ethics as a discrete discipline, rooted not in that which might be supposed to be self-evident but rather in a disciplined reflection on the actualities of human experience. Volume Two, *Finding and Seeking* continued this critical reflection on practical reasoning through the lens of the theological (Pauline) virtues of faith, hope, and love. This present and final volume ponders the eschatological end or goal of such practical reasoning by considering the significance of the counter-intuitive inversion of the apostle Paul's ordering of these virtues, culminating in love rather than hope, since the greatest of these is love.

The first three chapters could each be considered as introductory in some sense: chapter one reflects on the supremacy of love, chapter two on the ends of action, and chapter three on the rootedness of ends in communication and community. The next four chapters explore these introductory markers in relation to the themes of sanctification, work, friendship, and meaning. It would probably be misleading to describe these four chapters as the 'body' of the book but for me they were the most stimulating. In particular I found O'Donovan's informed yet original reflections on work and friendship to be extraordinarily insightful and thought provoking. The final chapter, 'The Endurance of Love', serves as a conclusion to the volume (and, perhaps, the series of volumes). A fairly brief combined index of names and subjects is provided together with a rather more full index of scriptural references.

Those familiar with O'Donovan's work will not be expecting an easy read: the book is beautifully written but the prose is dense and demanding. It is a difficult

(perhaps impossible) book to summarise since the chapters comprise less a developing argument than a series of reflections on related themes, themselves an outworking of an argument introduced in *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (1986) and revisited in the opening chapter of the first volume of this series. Consequently each of these chapters can be read with benefit in isolation from the others, they are reflections on a theme that provoke reflection rather than an argument that provokes response.

I appreciated this volume immensely (and am grateful for the invitation to review it) – which leaves me puzzling why this sincere appreciation is tinged with a degree of dissatisfaction. In the preface to this volume O’Donovan repeats his rejection of what he terms methodological monism and as one who would always promote agency over action, virtue over deontology or teleology, the connected narrative of life over discrete decision or dilemma, this might explain such unease were it not for the fact that, in this reviewer’s view, O’Donovan in practice adheres to the same set of priorities.

More fundamentally my unease arises from the rather odd title of this series, *Ethics as Theology*, and with the methodology that is an outworking of this title. In *Resurrection and Moral Order* O’Donovan sharply criticises Barth’s focus on Christ that leads him to his rejection of creation ordinances. This criticism is repeated in the first volume of this series where Barth is accused of collapsing ethics into theology. O’Donovan is rightly critical of any supposed Christian ethics that is barely Christian, that is secular ethics with a mere Christian veneer, but I am left wondering whether methodologically he might not succumb to the same pitfall: O’Donovan’s extensive and detailed references to Scripture and the Christian tradition, like his references to the wider philosophical and ethical tradition, tend to illustrate and support his reflections rather than give birth to them. For Barth (and arguably for the apostle Paul) there can be no creation ordinances other than or beyond Christ; it is his true humanity that constitutes the divine command and invitation; ethics is theological inasmuch as it is primarily and ultimately Christological. Moral reasoning, like any form of reasoning, does not occur in a vacuum, it is specific to a community and a tradition. Theology certainly cannot be reduced to ethics but neither can moral reasoning become theology unless that specific theology is its explicit grounding rather than illustration and support.

*John E. Colwell*  
*Budleigh Salterton, Devon.*

**Michael Hardin, *Mimetic Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017)**

René Girard (1923–2015) was a French anthropologist who developed the theory of the scapegoat and that all violence can be traced back to the system of mimesis (imitation) and mimetic conflict. In this short book, Michael Hardin (who Girard regarded as his best interpreter) unpacks Girard’s mimetic theory, a theory he believes to be “comparable to Einstein’s theory of relativity. . .or

Darwin's evolutionary theory in that it explains more of the data than previous theories." (15)

Anyone within the academic world should be aware of the work of Girard and its impact, not only on theological studies, but also upon many disciplines within the sciences. As a theory it undoubtedly has its critics, yet, as new anthropological discoveries are made, Girard's work continues to gain further credibility. However, this is not necessarily translating into the church pew, and for the regular church goer the work of Girard is unlikely to be part of their Biblical studies, sermons or home groups. This book by Hardin has been written to help address that reality.

After the prelude, chapter two explains who René Girard was, maps out mimetic theory in simple terms, and how the theory is being used in theology and biblical studies. "Religion and Revelation" is the title of chapter three where Hardin seeks to lay the groundwork of the whole thrust of this book, namely, how do we deal with the problem of violence, "A Christian theology that does not acknowledge from the outset the problem of violence and ask about its character and function and origin is a theology without hands or feet." (35)

Chapter four may well be the most controversial within the whole book as Hardin seeks to reframe how the Bible is read and heard in light of Girard's mimetic theory. For those with any knowledge of the work that has been happening within anthropology, mimesis and Biblical studies, then how Hardin approaches the Bible will be of no great shock, but for those who are new to the conversation, of which this book is certainly aimed for, then buckle up for the ride!

For Girardian thinkers like Hardin the biggest problem that humanity has always faced is violence, and the resulting problem of how violence has been merged with the sacred; in other words, according to Girard, we are violent and have projected our violence onto God, a violence that God has never been part of, nor will ever be part of. Chapter five deals with how we understand atonement and eschatology, building on from the previous chapter of biblical interpretation, if God is indeed nonviolent.

Chapter six then asks, "So what?" and the impact upon our ethics and spirituality if we take all that has been said seriously; what does it look like to live nonviolently?

This is a very useful book, easy to read, and full of valuable insights that can be explored further through the works recommended in the postlude. It will not be for everyone, and it will certainly create heated discussion (a book that could be part of a theology group), but for those who have serious questions around the nature of violence, how Scripture portrays God and violence, and our own violence, then this book could well be something of value.

*Joseph Haward*  
*This Hope, Newton Abbott*

**Joseph Haward, *The Ghost of Perfection* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Resource, 2017)**

As a young Christian, coming from no background of church or faith, I was handed an orthodoxy which was expected of me. Like every human, I was deeply tainted by sin and deserving of God's wrath, the cross took that wrath, and the most important thing was to get people to believe in Jesus by whatever means to save them from hell. It sat uncomfortably with me, but there seemed to be no other way of understanding the gospel which had literally (and in more than one sense) saved me. In time there were others touchstones of orthodoxy offered to me: that God always heals unless we lack faith, that unless all our issues were resolved and we were whole in every sense, we were short of God's best. Thankfully I serve now somewhere where these things are not the benchmark of acceptability, but those early years sometimes cast a long shadow.

I wish I had been handed a book like *The Ghost of Perfection* much earlier. Joe Haward takes some of the major themes both of the church and of wider society – Mission, triumphalism, relationships and sex among the stimulating ten chapters – and has taken a fresh look at them with the help of a rich tapestry of thinkers from the Desert Mothers and Fathers to iconic films such as *Inception*, and with a range of disciplines including sociology and psychology as well as theology. He encourages us to look carefully at the gospel, specifically the person of Jesus, in a way which encourages us to embrace and value our humanity and see it as of infinite worth to God. In so doing, he highlights aspects of theology which can strip us of our humanity rather than treasure it: such as the risk in mission of people become fodder for our success rather than an opportunity to love people as they are. Indeed one of the many memorable quotes (which I hope might encourage you to read the book to check out the all-important context) is that “mission has become the idolatry of the church”.

One of the areas Joe particularly focuses on is violence, and in doing so will no doubt raise some theological hackles. For example, he sees the cross as dealing with our violence rather than the wrath of God – and our understanding of the cross is such a shibboleth of acceptability for so many. Unsurprisingly he is influenced by Rene Girard and offers a helpful and accessible way into his thinking which has proved rather impenetrable for many. Joe sees violence as expressing itself in subtle ways in much of our theology and at times the book makes for disturbing reading as it unmask these. At times it is a demanding read, and without doubt I will return to it to wrestle a bit further. At other times – in particular the chapter on trauma – it is profoundly moving.

The call to love is central to the gospel, and this book at times exposes the shallowness of the “love” we offer – love so we can change you to be like us, love which sees you as an object of our evangelism. It is a book which challenges us on this and so many other fronts. In an era when church growth has become the holy grail, he reminds us that not all growth is healthy and our calling is neither to be a flourishing business nor a “community of sentimentality” but the much more demanding call to be a community of genuine relationship offering hope to people as they are not as we think they should be.

I can't guarantee you will love it as I do. But I can guarantee you will be made to think. I recommend it so that you can make your own mind up. A masterly debut.

*Jeannie Kendall*

*Carlshalton Beeches Baptist Free Church*

**Justin Thacker, *Global Poverty: A Theological Guide* (London: SCM, 2017)**

Justin Thacker's theological guide to global poverty is a work of Daedalian complexity which attempts to analyse the response to global poverty with learned and penetrating theology. However, it is, as it suggests, merely a theological 'guide' to global poverty. This allows Thacker the comforting redoubt of critique but in so doing robs us of the ground breaking insights you might hope for. His leftist analysis sometimes conveniently overlooks facts and changes the goalposts of what represents 'poverty', but Thacker should be congratulated for synthesising multiple voices and marshalling their reflections into an authentically Biblical view of a just, empowered and shalom orientated society. Into this Thacker is at his best when he is considering the eschatological implications of a joyfully, powerful, resurrection theology when addressing the poor as a natural implication of lives fully committed to Jesus. However, for all of the positives, the biggest preoccupation I had as a reader was the question of who is this book actually for?

If Thacker's *Global Poverty* is intended to help undergraduate theological students understand some of the contours of poverty and critique them with systematic theology then it works. For those of us who live and breathe in a bubble of addressing global poverty, there are plenty of truisms in this book which enjoy broad agreement and it is pleasing to have these ideas acknowledged and affirmed. Thacker has many quotes, references, and adopts a diligent literature review but his navigation of theology owes much more to Chris Wright and many of his conclusions are attributable to Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize winner and author of 'Development as Freedom'. If you are involved in integral mission practice be prepared to be affirmed but not necessarily surprised.

If you are leading a church (or are studying with 'a view' to ministry) then there are many challenging thoughts that spread beyond international development and begin to address what shalom might mean in your own community. On a more practical level, Thacker does land some punches which might make you think twice before you agree the next mission budget. Christian Aid and the International Justice Mission take a beating, Tearfund, as it happens emerges with glowing colours and BMS even gets a brief oblique mention. Thacker's work has obvious value as you think through what it means to be distinctively different in a globalised and profoundly unequal world. So, if you want to thoughtfully dissect the secular, the capitalist, the rhetorical and political from the authentically Christian, in the multi-billion industry that is poverty alleviation then you will find Thacker to be a helpful and informative friend.

At this point, all is going well, but then we confront the thorny issue of popular appeal. This is good theology but it won't blow your imagination in the way that Hauerwas, the Wrights (Chris and Tom), Volf or Moltmann do. Neither is this accessible popular theology, written in anecdotes and punchy prose. Ortberg, Hybels, Chan and Yancy are not looking nervously over their shoulders. Intrigued by the book's horizon of popular appeal I gave *Global Poverty* to a Christian friend, a former FT journalist and someone who is pretty good at sifting the remarkable from the worthy. His conclusion was that the book "*strains a little for academic legitimacy and resorts to unnecessary complexity to achieve it*". Lots of nodding agreement once you wade through the soup of punctiliousness. Yet there are some great ideas that Thacker explores but how I wish they were painted in more vivid colours than the author deploys and in bigger font than the publisher is prepared to utilise!

However, for all of the good that exists in this work, my lasting frustrations are with substance rather than style. The author has a habit of setting up marginal and false hypotheticals which he takes great pleasure in demolishing. This leads to dangerous gaps. What is more, Thacker runs the risk of marginalising good theology by pursuing less important or irrelevant lines of inquiry.

For example, the author frequently ignores large areas of relevant discourse such as 'social contract' when discussing public sector bribery. When you live and work in these contexts you begin to see that corruption is not just a relativist issue which creates an awkward hypocrisy for the West, it is actually a scandalous injustice against the excluded poor.

Or Thacker attacks the purely economic metric for defining absolute poverty (those living on less than \$1.25 a day) and juxtaposes this with the justice motif associated with poverty in Scripture. In other words, poverty is more a matter of social resilience or shame as it is a simple reduction to measures of cash income. Within mainstream international development, we all agree (perhaps apart from the Secretary for International Development Priti Patel but that is another story) and we use the Human Development Index as a poverty measure/rank not the \$1.25 a day schema! In practice, there is no actual antithesis at play.

The author seeks to be earthy in applying his theology but often makes lazy judgements on existing attempts to engage with institutions of power. No one thinks that governments or markets are perfect but they are willing to consider thoughtful engagement when they are thoughtfully engaged with. For example, matters of psycho-social recovery are now mainstreamed in post conflict or sudden onset disaster response inputs. DFID have a faith partnerships initiative and use faith communities as exemplars of resilience. Social belonging, dignity, community self-help groups, rights based approaches aiming at addressing exclusion, complex national integrity systems and access to justice are all well-worn concepts across the rich and varied tapestry of the development sector. Many of these methodologies are found in government funded programmes. The faith community are major influencers of thought and practice within this sphere in the UK already. If the book is a call to offer a prophetic voice to transform vulnerability, then mainstream development practice has been listening for

some time. This has been as true of DFID and FCO policy as it has been of many socially conscious private companies.

Thacker also dismisses huge banks of data that point to unrepresented levels of human resilience and then quickly moves to dismiss the millions lifted out of poverty in China or India by market forces as invalid because of inequality. He reduces the value of the Sustainable Development Goals because (despite the long path of Judeo-Christian jurisprudence), these targets represent a secular human rights agenda. They also aim to ambitiously end extreme poverty, how can this be as 'the poor will always be with us' Thacker asserts, somehow equating Jesus generic and multi-layered reference to poverty with the specific sector metrics expressed in the SDG. I find it hard to understand why the SDGs were so readily dismissed. Every serious group walking with the poor in transformational development are working within some aspect of this SDG framework. Likewise, the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) articulate brilliantly a collective commitment to transferring power and enhancing the dignity of the poor. The CHS is big news for the international development sector but is, I think, entirely ignored by Thacker.

In summary, Thacker's *Global Poverty* will make you elated, frustrated, challenged and indignant in equal measure. All told, I would recommend you invest time in giving this book the thorough consideration that it rightly deserves.

*Steve Sanderson*  
*BMS World Mission*

**Nigel Scotland, *The New Passover: Rethinking the Lord's Supper for Today* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016)**

Baptist thinking and writing on the Lord's Supper is limited and patchy. There is without question a need for a fuller Baptist engagement with this vital practice of the church, even acknowledging the good work done by Michael Taylor, Keith Jones and Christopher Ellis. It is often said we have a practice but not much of a theology.

As such Nigel Scotland's book *The New Passover* might appeal to Baptists who, as heirs of the Reformation and its appeal to go back to the sources (*ad fontes*), will appreciate his attempt to give a biblical basis for the Supper, both in terms of its meaning and its practice. The underlying argument of the book is simply stated. It is that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus in the context of a Jewish Passover meal because in large part it was meant to follow the same form. He writes,

It seems clear that Jesus intended that his disciples and all his subsequent followers should understand and treat the Lord's Supper in the same or very similar ways that they understood and kept the Jewish Passover. (p.5)



In the light of this claim, Scotland contends that much contemporary practice is far-removed from Jesus' intention and that it is time for all the churches, but he particularly singles out the mainline denominations, to rethink the way they practice the Supper. Much of what we do now, he says, is just not warranted, and worse is unhelpful in that it obscures both the meaning and the benefits that Jesus intended his people to draw from remembering him in this way.

The first chapter attempts to give reasons to support the thesis that Jesus understood what he was doing as a new form of the Passover. And in this he is not at all convincing. While there is no doubting that the synoptic gospels place the last supper within the context of a paschal meal and that the events of the Passover are hugely significant for helping us understand how Jesus understood his coming death, it is stretching things to suggest that because Jesus said he had eagerly desired to eat this Passover (Lk 22.15), or that because they 'reclined' at the table, we can see that Jesus meant the Lord's Supper to be eaten in the same form that had been common for the Jewish Passover celebrations.

Each of the subsequent chapters builds on this premise by taking a theme drawn from how the writer understands the Jewish practice of Passover and extrapolates from these their significance for the Lord's Supper. For Scotland each of the themes he identifies, an agape meal, a fellowship meal, a meal of ordinary bread and wine, and so on, are vital elements of what his New Passover should be like. To this reader some of the themes were far more important and worthy of reflection than others. A whole chapter, for example, to argue that the Lord's Supper should be a sit-down meal seemed quite unnecessary. And other chapters, such as the ones on a celebration meal and a thanksgiving meal, often seemed to repeat the same arguments.

Throughout the book Scotland quotes heavily from sources that support his thesis and which give weight to the point he makes in a particular chapter. He draws particularly from the early church fathers and the Protestant reformers. Apart from the first chapter, in which he responds to the argument that the Lord's Supper was not intended to be in the form of a Passover meal, he doesn't engage with any of the counter-arguments. When he does mention those who came to other conclusions, such as those who argue for a change in the substance of the bread and wine, it is often to do little more than highlight what went wrong, and therefore who is to blame. Despite this lack of a more rounded engagement, the sources that Scotland uses provide an interesting background into how some sections of the Church have viewed the Lord's Supper over time. Perhaps the really disappointing thing is that he does little more with them than quote them as proofs to bolster his case.

There are also some quite spurious claims made for which he offers little support beyond the argument that this is obviously what Jesus or the biblical authors intended. One such claim comes in the chapter on the Lord's Supper as a home-based meal. Having made the point that Jesus could have used the synagogue as the basis for the meal, he writes,

But by his institution of the Supper, Jesus focussed on the home or the house-hold as being the basic unit of society and in so doing made it plain that Christianity is rooted in the home and proceeds from the home. (p. 77)

One wonders how this squares with Jesus' seeming dismissal of his own family because those who did the will of his Father in heaven were his true mother, sisters and brothers.

The frustrating thing for this reader is that I think Scotland's premise is basically correct, that the meal that Jesus gave his followers to remember him should be simpler than we have often made it. He just doesn't argue it convincingly. This is not to say that I think that current practices of celebrating the Lord's Supper are wholly without merit, for there is much in the patterns used by the different churches that I believe is rich and worth keeping. The developments of these different expressions of the Supper through the ages, for good and for ill, deserve a fuller and more rounded engagement than they get here. Perhaps Scotland even knows this, or at least he grudgingly concedes that wholesale change is unlikely, for his closing appeal and one I would endorse is that the church makes more effort to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the simple ways he sets out in addition to what it is already doing.

*Ashley Lovett*  
*Sockets Heath Baptist Church, Grays*

### **J. Gordon McConville, *Joshua: Crossing Divides* (London: T & T Clark, 2017)**

The book of Joshua is, perhaps, one of the most challenging books in our Bible. This is mainly because of the theological problems presented by its narrative of violent conquest, and the purposes for which it has been co-opted. Gordon McConville is a scholar of distinguished pedigree, who is well-placed to offer an authoritative guide to the issues raised by the book, a task he achieves with admirable clarity in this book.

*Crossing Divides* book is slim, and an accessible but not light read (I read it cover-to-cover on an international flight). After a helpful introduction and outline of the book, it offers concise but meaty discussions of four of the major ways in which the book needs to be considered: the 'higher critical' questions of source, composition and dating; the 'literary' reading of the book as a coherent narrative; the question of the historicity of the book (which contains a very helpful discussion of the nature of historical writing, often misunderstood); and the theology of the book. Each chapter is followed by a helpful but not overwhelming bibliography. None of these approaches is without its areas of controversy, and in each case McConville offers a fair and balanced assessment of the issues.

The final chapter of *Crossing Divides* comprises an important examination of the understanding of Joshua by modern interpreters, discussing its use by some as a

pro-violence text, and then considering how a pacific reading of the book can be sustained. To borrow a quotation from McConville's previous chapter: 'Its meaning [lies] not on the surface of the narrative, but in its capacity to engage the imagination of its audience so that it shaped their view of themselves, God and the world'.

I am asked from time to time to recommend a book to ministers preparing for a preaching series on a particular biblical book. I will, in future, highly recommend *Crossing Divides* to anyone enquiring about the book of Joshua for such a purpose. While it will not provide a framework which can simply be dragged and dropped into a week-by-week sermon series, it offers something much more useful for those who are prepared to put some hard work into their preparation: a very valuable and balanced engagement with the key issues raised by the text. The book would also provide a substantial but accessible introduction to the book for undergraduate study. I am pleased to have it on my shelf, and am confident I will refer to it regularly.

*Helen Paynter*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**David Firth, *1 and 2 Samuel: A Kingdom Comes* (London: T & T Clark, 2017)**

I am becoming increasingly impressed with the succinct and useful guides to individual books of the Old Testament which T&T Clark are publishing under their *Study Guides* imprint. This latest offering, by well-respected scholar David Firth, is no exception. It would provide a useful resource to the undergraduate; to the biblical scholar for whom Samuel is outside their repertoire; and perhaps for the preacher who wishes to engage deeply with the text while preparing a preaching series. Note, however, it does not set out to provide a commentary on Samuel, but rather an introduction to the major issues faced by scholars who seek to study and interpret it.

Chapter 1 contains a digestible but thorough consideration of the important question of what sort of writing Samuel is. Firth concludes that it can, and should, be read as a number of things simultaneously: as history, 'a primary reason for such a reading is an attempt to understand what happened in history'; *and* as prophecy, 'forming part of the prophetic message to the exilic community'; *and* as artful narrative; *and* as myth, which involves us 'drawing on contemporary anthropology as a guide to reading'. Above all, Firth argues that it should be read as scripture. Why does all this matter? Because otherwise we risk getting tangled in obscure questions that are naïve, or anachronistic, or based on a faulty premise. Firth's reading strategy opens up multiple ways for the book actually to address us.

The following chapter goes on to discuss the question of the literary coherence of the book (1 and 2 Samuel should be regarded together). Through detailed but not bewildering argument, Firth argues that the whole book – including 2 Sam. 21-24, often considered an appendix – consists of a carefully structured whole.

He argues that both the introduction and the conclusion provide important hermeneutical keys to understanding the whole book. Why does this matter? Such a proposal is important, not just at scholarly level, but also to the man or woman in the pulpit. How are we to understand what the book of Samuel is trying to tell us? By attending to the interpretation that the text itself provides. Throughout, Firth presents a very lucid account and overview of the major issues that scholars face when considering the text. Of particular value is the very helpful account of the various textual traditions which underlie our English translations: the Masoretic Text in its various forms; the Dead Sea Scrolls; the various versions of the Septuagint. After a fairly brief description of the various texts and their provenance, he gives a sequence of selected examples to show how each can contribute to the debate around particular issues.

Helpful, too, is Firth's pragmatic verdict on source-critical questions of the text; following a useful summary of the major issues, he concludes, 'The challenges of identifying sources within a putative source are such that we should be content with recognising their general presence, since the level of uncertainty in identifying such sources is relatively high' (p.49). The book concludes with a chapter on the theological themes of the text, and another on the various chronological patterns occurring within Samuel.

Throughout, Firth combines a believer's love and commitment to scripture with a scholar's rigor in its analysis. In my opinion there is no better way to approach the Bible, and many will benefit from his sharp insights.

*Helen Paynter*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**Lester L. Grabbe, *1 & 2 Kings: History and Story in Ancient Israel* (London: T&T Clark, 2016)**

It just so happened that I received six books to review more or less at once, and after a quick glance at all six, I put this book at the bottom of the pile because it seemed the least interesting. When I did get round to reading it, however, I realised what a misjudgment that had been. Lester L. Grabbe's volume on 1 and 2 Kings forms part of the T&T Clark Study Guide series to both Old and New Testaments. As the introduction states, "this is a good place to start for the person wanting to begin studying the Bible seriously, especially with the aim of learning how a section of the text has been analysed and commented on by professional scholars of the Bible."

In the first chapter, Grabbe introduces the reader to some principles of textual criticism, and some of the issues involved in establishing as early a version of the text of 1 and 2 Kings as possible. In doing so, Grabbe introduces us to some key concepts and acronyms used by biblical scholars. I found this both helpful and fascinating, as I am one of many ministers who loved Biblical Studies at college, but have not had the time to pursue it since.

Grabbe then goes on to establish the main concern of the book: to what extent can 1 and 2 Kings be read as 'history'? Of course, this first involves establishing what exactly the word 'history' means now, and has meant over the centuries. After considering various viewpoints, Grabbe summarizes his common sense understanding of history by stating that any working definition must include what has in the past been deemed history by common consent, as well as the work of modern historians. Grabbe's work is not itself a commentary in the usual sense of verse by verse exegesis, so it is helpful that he ends his first chapter by providing a list of major commentaries on 1 and 2 Kings.

Having considered issues of textual criticism in chapter 1, Grabbe then goes on to discuss form and source critical issues in chapter 2. He identifies seven main genres in the text under study: list, report, official report, legend, Königsnovelle, historical story and history. As already stated, Grabbe's main concern is to identify in what ways and to what extent the books of Kings can be read as religious and political history. He then moves on to analyse the role which court chronicles may have played as sources for the Deuteronomic history.

Having dealt with major issues of text, form and source criticism, we now enter the main body of the book, which provides a form critical outline of the entire text divided into 3 major sections: Solomon to Omri, the Omride dynasty to the fall of Samaria, and the fall of Samaria to that of Jerusalem. In each section, Grabbe uses up-to-date archaeological and extra-biblical evidence to analyse to what extent the books of Kings provide us with history, both religious and political. Grabbe's overall conclusion is that the historical data in the biblical account seem to increase gradually as one goes through the books. His arguments are carefully constructed and thoroughly footnoted, and this gives the reader confidence in the fascinating conclusions which the author reaches. The book concludes with a chapter on hermeneutical perspectives, touching on reader response, feminist and postcolonial analyses.

Looking back over this review, the reader might be forgiven for thinking that Grabbe's book is a massive tome. It is not - it is only 95 pages long. If you are a preacher looking for a classic-style commentary, or if your theology is such that Grabbe's conclusion that the books of Kings function primarily as story rather than history would distress you, then you might be advised to look elsewhere. However, the book is quite justified in calling itself a study guide for those wishing to acquire the latest scholarship in a painless way. I would recommend it without hesitation to such a readership. Grabbe writes carefully, respectfully and in an engaging way. I look forward to reading other volumes in the same series.

*Rosa Hunt*  
*Bethel, Penyrheol*

**Helen Paynter, *Reduced Laughter: Seriocomic Features and their Functions in the Book of Kings* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 242pp.**

The books 1 and 2 Kings present all kinds of difficulties to the reader. Why do the prophets Elijah and Elisha act with an alarming disregard for ethics? What should one make of the ridiculous aspects of some of the stories? Why are so many of the narratives so full of blood, guts and gore? In this excellent book, Helen Paynter faces up to these and many other questions by offering a seriocomic reading of the central section of the book of Kings.

Helen Paynter is a Baptist minister, Old Testament scholar and tutor at Bristol Baptist College. *Reduced Laughter* is the published version of her PhD thesis. In it, Paynter draws on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and his successors and their use of the term, *seriocomic*. According to Bakhtinian thought, seriocomic literature employs comic features to very serious ends. It embodies the social construct of carnival, reducing the laughter in the process but retaining its satirical edge. Through fantastic, grotesque and scatological description, it satirizes the world of the text. It pokes fun at accepted institutions and norms, inverting hierarchies and profaning what is sacred. It thus introduces a dialogical element that calls into question the presumed assumptions of the surface narrative.

In *Reduced Laughter*, Helen Paynter explores the seriocomic genre, constructs a diagnostic method for detecting its presence and applies it to the book of Kings. Taking a literary and synchronic, final-form critical approach to the text, Paynter treats 1 and 2 Kings as a 'single integrated text' and concentrates her efforts on the central section (approximately 1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 13). She offers a close reading of the central narratives and discovers in them a preponderance of seriocomic features. She goes on to argue that these features function, in conjunction with literary mirroring techniques, to subvert the reader's attitude to Elijah and Elisha (and thus to prophetism in general) and to the nations of Aram, Israel and Judah. A satirical and subversive, thus partially concealed, seriocomic humour is at work. The ethically questionable actions of Elijah and Elisha are not an embarrassing side issue best ignored. Rather, they introduce ambiguity into the mind of the reader. Elisha seems to abrogate the power of YHWH to himself. Once recognised, this raises questions about Elijah and about the role of prophets throughout. The nation of Aram is also held up to seriocomic scorn but this serves to hold up a mirror to Israel, and then, through Israel, to Judah. The word of God spoken through the prophets is important but nations, rulers, people and even their prophets often fail to live by it.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. I found Paynter's approach to be convincing and well argued and I greatly appreciated the many exegetical insights in the finer detail. It is a paragon of clarity and a joy to read. It will be of most interest to Old Testament scholars, none of whom will be able to ignore it. I hope it will also find a wide readership among educated Bible readers, expositors and preachers. It offers new possibilities for all who seek to interpret the book of Kings and throws much light on some of its more difficult passages. It is a fascinating book and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Robert Parkinson  
Didsbury Baptist Church

**Athalya Brenner-Idan and Archie C.C. Lee (eds.), *Samuel, Kings and Chronicles: Volume 1 (Texts @ Contexts; London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016)***

For (too) long, the scholarly interpretation of biblical texts has been almost exclusively by white, male, Western scholars. The ethos behind the texts@contexts series, of which this is the latest publication, is that texts will speak to us in fresh ways if we *decentre* the interpretations – in other words, if we hear the responses of scholars from (for example) the minority world, the LGBT community, and so on.

This is a standard scholarly approach nowadays, but in case not everyone reading this review is familiar with it, it merits some introductory remarks, I think. Without wanting to get too technical, the key question is whether the Bible's communicative action(s) towards us lie(s) in the events that led to the writing of the text; in the text itself; or in the way that the text causes us to respond. This book focuses on the third: on the contemporary *reception* of the Old Testament texts from the first Temple period.

For me, an important criterion of usefulness in such a reading is whether the novel reception is based on the superficial elements of the text, or on good exegesis of its deeper themes. Some reception critics might counter that such 'good exegesis' has generally been conducted by white male scholarship, and I concede that this is often the case. However, to ignore preliminary exegesis decentres the communicative action of the text too far – in my opinion – into the eye of the beholder. It also fails to take account of the spiralling nature of hermeneutics – which is never a one-off event, but an ongoing dialogue where all participants (should) mature their stance as the conversation progresses. The contributors are by no means indifferent to this exegesis-reception tension (see pp. 29, 68 for example). As a result, Brenner-Idan and Lee have compiled an exciting collection of thoughtful, cutting-edge scholarship which seeks to read these texts in their own context and then in the new context.

This book is not for the faint-hearted. I cannot imagine many of the undergraduates I teach relishing it. But for the academically-minded minister, it presents a stimulating collection of decentred readings of familiar passages. I will give just two examples here.

Charlene van der Walt uses an intercultural community reading technique to interrogate the story of the rape of Tamar. Tamar, she says, is regarded in standard commentaries as an *event* (to develop the character of Absalom, or David), rather than as a *person*. However, women who participated in the community reading (*lectio divina* followed by discussion) expressed surprise that such a story should be found in the Bible. Tamar's voicing of the violence

which she experienced was perceived as empowering similar verbalisation of violence suffered by the interpreters, often in silence.

Gilbert Okuro Ojwang writes a well-argued and subtle paper relating the laws and customs underlying the Naboth's vineyard narrative to the new Kenyan land laws. Unlike the experience of most Westerners, in Africa 'land is tied closely to one's identity, human dignity, historical, social and cultural continuity'. Ojwang's reading not only illuminates the text for people in his own context, but brings fresh insight to readers like myself, who begin reading without this innate understanding.

I commend this book to those who seek deeper engagement with the Old Testament in a global context, and are willing to think hard and wrestle with the texts and their interpreters.

*Helen Paynter*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**Lester L. Grabbe *Ancient Israel; What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* (Rev. Ed.; London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 365+xxii pp.**

The author is founder of the European Seminar on Methodology in Israel's History and this is a revised version of a book he describes as 'not a history of Israel but the preparation – the *prolegomena* – for such a history' (xxi). As such, the book functions as an extended introduction to its subject with a particular focus on the methodological issues.

In his opening chapter Grabbe sets out his own clearly formulated principles of historical method and most of the rest of the book is his attempt to apply these to the sources available in preparing a history of Israel. The book reviews and assesses all the significant past attempts to reconstruct Israel's history. It sets out the key sources for the different stages of Israel's history and offers an assessment of the value of their contribution to the construction of a reliable account. One result of this is that the book has some of the qualities of an encyclopaedia. If you want to know what a particular inscription says, or what claims the Assyrian records make about a particular war, Grabbe tells you what we know and offers a critical assessment of the source's reliability.

Such an approach runs the danger of becoming rather dry, but for the most part, Grabbe avoids this danger. He does this by offering judicious outlines of his conclusions and by ensuring that his commitment to his primary audience – other scholars – does not exclude his secondary audiences – students and general readers. As a result of this we get transliterations of key terms and explanations of decisive questions along with summaries of what a reliable historian ought to be saying about things like the Patriarchs, the united monarchy and the exile.



The author attempts to offer a mediating position in the sometimes acrimonious debates between the so-called 'maximalists' and 'minimalists'. The former are those who accept 'the biblical text unless it can be proved wrong' (24) while the latter accept it 'only when it can be confirmed from other sources' (24). For Grabbe, of course, the Bible's evidence has to be assessed in exactly the same way as any other source. Those who simply assume, on the grounds of their commitment to Scriptural inerrancy, that the Bible's own accounts of Israel's history are unchallengeable, represent an extreme maximalist position, one that Grabbe does not regard as offering a serious contribution to critical scholarship. The book offers a fair assessment of the state of the argument and offers helpful suggestions as to way forward.

On the whole the author achieves his aims admirably. There are points, perhaps inevitably given that much of the book is methodology, where things get repeated. Furthermore, it seems to me that Grabbe too readily accepts later dates for the books of the Hebrew Bible and draws conclusions from this. I realize that his method as an historian leads him legitimately to these positions but I suspect that some of the questions are more finely balanced than he implies. For example, it seems to me that the idea that the Bible's histories of Israel, containing, as they do, so much self-critical material – and in which even the greatest heroes are shown to be deeply flawed – were invented in whole or in part in the exilic and post-exilic periods, stretches credulity almost as much as do positions that treat the Bible's text uncritically. Grabbe seems aware of this but does not always take the point as seriously as he might. But then I have to acknowledge that I read the Bible from a faith perspective and so instinctively tend to favour more conservative reconstructions of Israel's history.

This is a significant book for those who are interested in the current debates about Israel's history and want a thorough and accessible guide to the sources and to the methodological questions that need to be addressed.

*Steve Finamore,  
Bristol Baptist College*

**Tim Carter, *The Forgiveness of Sins* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2016), 426pp.**

This is a detailed study of the phrase 'forgiveness of sins' as it is found in the Bible from Tim Carter, Baptist minister and scholar. The phrase is one which is said in the Apostle's Creed and a common response to what God does in Jesus would probably include something to do with the forgiveness of sins. But what is forgiveness and how does it work? Carter explores in fourteen chapters the origins of the phrase and its meaning through Old Testament, New Testament and in other early church documents.

Carter's book is a demanding read, but a fascinating one. Most illuminating for me were the central chapters that turn to use of 'forgiveness of sins' in the gospels, particularly Luke. In one chapter Carter applies 'labelling theory' to

those called 'sinners' in Luke's gospel and in another how the death of Jesus is connected to forgiveness of sins, which includes discussions of relevant passages in Hebrews, the letters of Paul and the accounts of the Last Supper. Carter then moves to look at Luke's gospel again in particular and how differing manuscripts in what they include and not include offer different perspectives on Luke's soteriology. As an aside Carter here demonstrates that there is no simple reading of the Bible in English.

Carter's argument is to challenge the links often made between the death of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins and to ask the question how does God forgive? In so doing, like others, he finds certain penal readings of atonement to be lacking biblical support. This book will require you to revisit some claims that get frequently made in much preaching and teaching, in so doing Carter has done us a great service, in drawing us back to the Bible, and helping us ask again what it is to declare the forgiveness of God and to proclaim the atoning death of Christ. As he says, 'the task assigned to the church is to find fresh and relevant ways of expressing that forgiveness and to ensure that it is always freely and readily available.'

At the same as reading this book, I've been reading Tom Wright's recently published *The Day of the Revolution* and it would be an interesting exercise to put the two books into conversation, especially with regards Wright's own interpretation of 'forgiveness of sins.' The popularity of Wright (amongst ministers and church members) and the way he doesn't often point to alternative readings from his own, means Carter's book would offer a helpful different take.

Baptists need more ministers like Carter, whose ability to research and write, mean they become a gift beyond just a local congregation, and demonstrate that faith is always on going activity of understanding.

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

**Carol Hebron, *Judas Iscariot: Damned or Redeemed* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 288pp.**

Carol Hebron tackles a detailed study of the ways in which the character of Judas has been portrayed in films, from the beginning of the silent period, up to 2014.

She begins by considering how Judas has been understood in Christianity in the first two thousand years, through plays, art and literature. She identifies some divergent material, especially the gnostic "gospel" of Judas, which portrays Judas in a positive light. However, she notes that Judas has generally been identified negatively throughout most of this time as an archetypal Jewish "Christ killer". It is only really in the twentieth century, following from the horrors of the holocaust, that Judas, along with the Jews, has had a re-evaluation. This has led to significant attempts to retreat from interpretations which appear to be anti-Semitic, as Christians corporately seek to repent of this attitude.

She selected twenty four films to study. These are not all English language files, as she deliberately wanted to avoid a “Hollywood” focus, but instead to aim at a more global perspective. She decided to study the Last Supper scene in particular. Her choice of films was determined not only by the presence of this scene, as most Jesus films contain this, but also the way in which Judas was included in that scene, and the visibility of his role in the wider context. This meant that she approached each film with two analyses. One of Judas in the film as a whole, the second analysing the Last Supper scene.

She examines each film through three “lenses”. First, how does the film use its sources to construct the film. Second, how does the film maker present the content of the film. Third, how does the constructed portrait tell us something about the time and social context of the film itself. Then she addresses the specific question of how Judas is portrayed by that film.

So Hebron looks at each of the films in turn, dividing them into different eras. The first era, the silent era, spans 1902-27. She concludes that this era includes a variety of representations of Judas, but they leave the viewer in no doubt that Judas was the one who betrayed Jesus.

The second era is the years 1930-60. At the beginning of the period she observes an extremely anti-Semitic portrayal, which is no longer there after the war. In the post war films Judas has a variety of other motivations and is portrayed more sympathetically.

The third era, of the “biblical epics” in the sixties, sees these portrayals develop further, where Judas is no longer presented as the archetypal Jewish Christ killer, and Hebron makes a number of really interesting observations about how and why this is done. So Judas is presented as more of a political character, or one struggling between the path of peace and violence.

In the era of the seventies, Hebron examines films that I remember well from my childhood Easters, especially *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I probably remember the songs rather better than the characterisation, it has to be said, but Hebron points out the transformation of Judas into the hero of this film.

Moving towards the new millennium is Hebron’s fifth era, taking in the eighties and the nineties, with the controversy of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and the *Jesus* film. The latter, she claims, carefully avoided anti-Semitism by presenting Judas as the loyal disciple who is pre-ordained to hand Jesus over to the authorities.

The films of the new millennium, she argues, show that Judas’ filmic portrayal had been completely rehabilitated. Judas has a role in the divine plan, “the damned Judas has become the redeemed Judas.”

The importance of this study is that it looks at the way that the character of Judas is presented in popular culture. Film and TV portrayals of Judas both reflect how

he is understood, and also influence how people in churches might understand Judas. Judas himself appears briefly in the New Testament, so for the lay person it is very often works of art, literature and other forms of popular culture that have a great impact on their understanding. I think for this reason Hebron's study is of interest not just to the academic, but also to those such as ministers and preachers who engage with people in the informal learning context of the churches.

Students of film and popular culture would also find much to engage them in this book. In this review I have only sketched briefly a few of Hebron's analyses. Her complete analysis of each of the twenty four films, as well as the over arching trajectory of Judas' portrayal, rewards close reading.

Her study also has a wider value in that it helps the reader to think about how changing attitudes and understandings in society have an impact on the work of the cinematographer, and the cultural lenses that we ourselves use as we read the Bible. As someone who is normally more interested in biblical studies, and actually doesn't watch a huge number of films, I found it a fascinating and engaging read.

*Nik Hookey,  
Newcastle Baptist Church*

**Daniel M. Gurtner, Grant Macaskill, Jonathan T. Pennington (eds.), *In the Fullness of Time: Essays on Christology, Creation, and Eschatology in Honor of Richard Bauckham* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016)**

Richard Bauckham is a biblical scholar and theologian whose long and distinguished career has covered subjects as diverse as: the development of the understanding of Jesus as divine; and an examination of the biblical perspective of time and eternity. As a result, this Festschrift in his honour is gloriously eclectic. It also boasts some extremely eminent names, including – but not confined to – Jürgen Moltmann, James D.G. Dunn, and N.T. Wright. I here describe three very different offerings it contains.

James Begbie, in a fascinating paper, interacts with Bauckham's work on the nature of eschatological time, and a paper by musicologist Karol Berger. Berger has compared Bach's representation of time with Mozart's, claiming that Bach's is circular whereas Mozart's is linear, and arguing that this represents a shift from a premodern 'Christian' understanding of time and eternity, to a modern, secularised understanding of cause and effect. Begbie brings this thesis of Berger's into conversation with Bauckham (and yes, it does become confusing with three interlocutors whose names being with 'B'), arguing that Berger has misunderstood the true nature of eschatological time. This matters, according to Begbie's argument, because the view that Berger claims for both Christianity and Bach is an escapist concept which devalues temporal life, and death.

In a very different paper, Sean McDonough develops Bauckham's work on the historicity of the fourth gospel. McDonough focusses on the rather obscure comments by the gospel writer, that Jesus baptised (3:22) but that in fact it was his disciples, not Jesus himself, who did it (4:1-2). McDonough argues that the gospel writer uses these verses to show Jesus' essential continuity with John the Baptist's ministry (renewal, extra-temple forgiveness), yet fundamental discontinuity (numerical superiority, Spirit baptism). He then goes on to compare the fourth gospel account with the synoptic chronology, working on the basis that the gospel writer assumed his readers to have knowledge of the synoptic tradition. If this is the case, then the "baptism of Jesus – temptation – return to Galilee" sequence in the synoptics has been paralleled in the fourth gospel with "baptism of Jesus – baptising by Jesus – return to Galilee". Could the reports of Jesus baptising somehow be parallel with his temptation? Yes, says McDonough. In the synoptics, the temptation is cast in terms of a private spiritual battle with the temptation to power and cheap success. In the same way, in the fourth gospel, the temptation is to start a public mass-movement; a temptation to messianic self-aggrandisement. In this understanding of John's account as a historically grounded portrayal of the life of Jesus, the return to Galilee can be understood as a strategic withdrawal from the Messianic expectations of the crowd.

Different again is the lucid and logical paper of Philip Alexander, seeking to probe the question: does early worship of Jesus prove that he was understood to be divine? To this end Alexander examines Old Testament 'texts of monotheism', intertestamental apocalyptic texts, and early Christological writings. First, he argues that angelic rebuke of a mortal falling before him (e.g. Revelation 22:8-9, but also found in the intertestamental writings) demonstrates that the worship of angelic beings sometimes took place. Second, he makes a case that there is little evidence for universal Jewish monotheism. Thirdly, he explores the nature of agency; that obeisance before the agent is regarded as obeisance to the monarch. In other words, 'worship' does not prove that the 'worshipper' is attributing deity to the being before whom he is bowing. This paper is not – I think – intended as a threat to the Christian understanding of the deity of Jesus, but is part of an ongoing conversation between the author and Bauckham on the question of how the New Testament writers viewed him.

I can't in all honesty claim that this book is 'essential' to any but Richard Bauckham's bookcase, but for aficionados of eclectic theological investigations, it will prove compelling.

*Helen Paynter*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**Mark Oakley (ed.), *A Good Year* (London: SPCK, 2016)**

Seven bishops of the Church in England at the invitation of the St Paul's Cathedral Adult Learning Department enjoy themselves explaining what it means to have a good time during one of the seasons of the Church Year.

For Sarah Mullally a good Advent is a 'time of deep and dark shadows', pity about the 's'; whilst Rowan Williams enjoys himself amongst the carols emerging with 'we sing these with gusto year by year; and as we repeat these strange, lumpy, difficult words, we quote without realising it from Pope Leo the Great and the Nicene Constantinian Creed, and it doesn't do us any harm because these somewhat mind-bending ideas, are what Christmas is about'. So he's obviously not talking about 'See him lying on a bed of straw'.

Libby Lane describes Epiphany as the season of hospitality which after a brief pause ushers in Lent which Justin Welby wishes to be as much for the raising of hope in our society as in the churches. Stephen Cottrell plunges into Holy Week with baptism-anticipating joy and sternly demands that we take Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter as one act of worship and none should be anymore missed than watching Hamlet and deciding to skip Act 2. Stephen Gorham is the most interesting for me as he explored Easter themes through the art work of David Wynne, Piero Della Francesca, Stanley Spencer and Peter Eugene Ball.

Karen Gorham jumps into Pentecost with an atrocious old joke and then concludes that 'a good Pentecost is about establishing a pattern to live by, as well as seeing our life as a journey or pilgrimage which brings us encounters, challenges and opportunities that, equipped by the Spirit of God, we can rise to.' Mark Oakley in his introduction requires that Christians learn not just for information but formation and a thorough immersion in the Seasons will breathe life into our faith. The Church Year he is claiming has to be totally embraced. There is no point being half-hearted about it. It's more than a change in what we sing in a service. It is a desire to explore the pathways of God through the rich diversity of music, poetry, art, scripture and prayer.

Two observations:

- Bishops in the Church of England are ordained into a ministry that 'feeds God's pilgrim people and so builds up the body of Christ'. Where is that ministry among Baptists? The automatic answer would be that it is in the ministry of the local church pastor or elder. So where does that leave people with trans-church responsibility such as college tutors and regional ministers?

There was a time when our College Principals combined in writing about concerns that faced the BUGB. Are the Associations such a disparate crowd and the role of their Regional employees so geared to technique and management that they deny us all the nurturing gifts of some of our Regional ministers?

- This book feels dated because it has two important omissions; Eastertide and Ascension. Both have received growing prominence in recent years and need to be given room. For Easter is more than the final act of the God of Resurrection and Ascension leads us into the worship of the Lord of the whole Creation. It has now been given its own Sunday. This highlights the weakness and strength of keeping the Church Year. The Ascension is easily lost in the patterns of our worship but its significance was not lost on Paul or Luke. It is the harbinger of

Pentecost and provides the dynamic for a bold Christian non-conformity. Only one Sunday? Surely not.

*John Rackley*  
*Leicester*

**Heath W. Carter and Laura Rominger Potter (ed.), *Turning Points in the History of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), xviii + 297pp.**

Mark Noll retired as the Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. This volume, as a foreword by his friend Nathan Hatch explains, is conceived as a tribute to his achievement in writing about the history of American Evangelicals and fostering the growth of Evangelical historical scholarship. That is why this collection of twelve essays, covering from the early eighteenth to the late twentieth century, has 'Turning Points' in its title. One of Mark's most popular books is called *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 2012). The problem with the volume under review is that not all its chapters refer to turning points: several, such as one (very helpful in itself) on the rise of the domestic ideal among North American Evangelicals in the nineteenth century, describe long processes. Nevertheless, the essays, all by able authorities in their fields, do illuminate the trajectory of American Evangelical history from the Great Awakening and the engagement with the Enlightenment to the Lausanne Congress of 1974 and the associated permeation of radical Latin American humanitarian thinking. Edith Blumhofer's essay on the emergence of Pentecostalism in Chicago casts light on a dimension of the movement that has often been overlooked because of the greater celebrity of developments on the West Coast. Local events, Blumhofer, makes clear, shaped global Pentecostalism. Again, Grant Wacker shows how, with his 1949 revival in Los Angeles, Billy Graham brought the tradition of revivals into the modern age. There is a contribution by a Briton, Richard Carwardine, who explains how agitators on the eve of the Civil War in North and South gave moral intensity to the question of slavery because of their Evangelical approach. There is also a contribution by an Australian, Mark Hutchinson, who relates American to global Evangelicalism. The African American experience is not neglected, for the legacy of the Civil War in creating religious segregation and the great migration of black Southerners to the prospering cities of the North of 1916-30 are both the subject of chapters. The perennial issue of disestablishment and the rise of Fundamentalism, in a particularly clear essay by George Marsden, receive coverage too. So this volume usefully introduces the sheer variety of American Evangelicalism, in which Baptists form the largest denominational family. There is far too little appreciation in lands outside the United States of the diversity of its Evangelical past and of the wealth of scholarship that has been lavished on its Evangelical history. Often questions asked of American sources could equally be asked of British sources and the answers could be illuminating. The essays here will provide a window into the current state of debate on a wide range of subjects

and might well challenge historians to write on topics that have been unduly neglected in British historical writing.

*David Bebbington*  
*University of Stirling*

**Anthony R. Cross, *Useful Learning: Neglected Means of Grace in the Reception of the Evangelical Revival among English Particular Baptists* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 533pp.**

This publication by Dr Anthony Cross examines some lesser known “means of grace” in Particular Baptist life and how they interacted with the Eighteenth Century Evangelical Revival. The means of grace examined primarily being association life, theological education for the ministry, and personal relationships between key Particular Baptist figures. To Cross, it is clear that these areas profoundly influenced Particular Baptist life and played a key role in the re-energisation of it towards the end of the eighteenth century, in addition to more regularly discussed means of grace such as prayer, the work of the Holy Spirit, preaching and evangelism.

Whilst it is generally accepted that many Particular Baptists were initially lukewarm, at best, in their reception of the Evangelical Revival of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we see here how its influence started to spread and take hold as men, converted through its influence, entered the ministry and were far more open to its ideas than their predecessors had been. Whilst Andrew Gifford was one of the few Particular Baptists who initially supported George Whitefield at a time when most Particular Baptists were ‘cool’ towards the revival, we hear of the lasting effect Whitefield had on John Fawcett and see how the ripples of the revival spread through Baptist life and belief.

Chapter 1, entitled ‘The State of Baptist Churches in the First Half of the Long Eighteenth Century’, coupled with the appendix entitled ‘Particular Baptist Church Statistics from 1718 and 1851’, are a helpful reminder of what a desperate state Particular Baptist churches were in by the middle of the eighteenth century, with a declining number of churches, theological differences, and an inwardness of spirit which stifled life and growth. It is in this context that we learn of the growth and revitalisation of Particular Baptist life across the latter decades of the century as the revival started to give new vigour and sound theological underpinnings to Particular Baptist churches.

The book places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of good theological education for ministers. Whilst in modern British Baptist circles the theological education and overall preparation of ministers for pastoral life is fully accepted, it must be remembered that this was not always the case, just as it continues to be viewed with scepticism in some other Christian traditions. This book notes the growing importance and influence of ministerial training and education, and the move away from the ‘anti-education’ position occupied by men such as John Hirst. The book examines training carried out by John Davison at Trowbridge in



addition to the more well know and better documented developments at Broadmead and Bristol. Latterly we see the developments of the next wave of Baptist academies, such as those at Stepney and Abergavenny. Cross explains that, for John Fawcett, the theological education of ministers did (and I would argue still can) play a key role in revival. His views being similar, in this respect, to those of the American revivalist Charles Finney who also believed that revival could be brought about by Christians via forms of 'preparation' coupled with fervent prayer.

The book shows some truly detailed historical study, with one such example being a particularly interesting analysis of Benjamin Beddome's hymns in relation to David Bebbington's famous quadrilateral for defining evangelicalism. In fact, detailed textual analysis is one of the hallmarks of this book. Additionally, one of the great strengths of this book is that it moves beyond the obvious to show the more obscure elements of history. It could be argued that this is indeed one of the purposes of the book as a whole, but at a more granular level this is demonstrated by the fact that, as previously mentioned, the early Baptist training of ministers by Davison is examined and people who, to many, are lesser known figures such as Alvery Jackson and Samuel Medley, receive attention. A quote from Alan Sell shows the importance of a figure like Jackson in the development of evangelical Calvinism.

It is interesting to see in a number of the chapters how individual Baptist ministers influenced their colleagues and parts of the book do read rather beautifully like a 'family free of faith', for example the chapter focusing on the influence of John Fawcett includes a section entitled "Training up many, who may shine as stars of the first magnitude in the firmament of the church below: Some of Fawcett's Students and their students." This section includes figures such as John Sutcliff and William Ward. Similarly, the chapter entitled "The First Baptist Academies" gives details of the influence of the early Bristol educators on a number of younger men.

The best historical study does not just look back but inform the present and future too. This book achieves these aims. We are reminded of the importance of good training and of associating with each other and not becoming inward looking. The book ends with accounts of the founding of colleges abroad, such as Jamaica and India. In many ways this is a fitting conclusion as it shows how evangelical Calvinism, through the spread of education and the need for ministers to work together, not only impacted Particular Baptist life in England but also far beyond these shores.

*Ian McDonald*  
*Shirley Baptist Church*

**Ian Birch, *To Follow the Lamb Wheresoever He Goeth: The Ecclesial Polity of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1640-1660* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 228pp.**

In this book we can read Ian Birch's important PhD completed at the University of St Andrews. It is important because it fills a gap in Baptist studies. While there has been a lot of attention given to the beginnings of the General Baptists, the Particular Baptists, as Birch remarks in the introduction have largely been ignored. *To Follow the Lamb* sets out to right that wrong. The book title comes from the preface to the 1644 confession of the Particular Baptists.

Birch begins by giving a brief history of how the Particular Baptists, as they became known, emerged and then follows with five chapters on their ecclesiology. Chapter 2 sets out the contours of Calvinistic Baptist ecclesiology, chapter 3 it's Christological shape, chapter 4 the theology and practice of discipline, chapter 5 the development of ministry and chapter 6 the place and role of associating and Associations. In terms of this last chapter we see again that for Baptists independence was always balanced with a strong interdependence.

Birch is an excellent guide into the minds of the Particular Baptists of the mid-seventeenth century. The book is an easy read and on this basis it will hopefully be widely consulted as a window into the early Particular Baptist beliefs about church, discipleship and ministry. In reading this book, I wondered how much our contemporary Baptist life has moved away from these early Baptist beginnings, and what it mean if we chose to revisit them as we continue to consider what it means to follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

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

**Robert Joustra & Alissa Wilkinson, *How to Survive the Apocalypse. Zombies, Cylons, Faith, and Politics at the End of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016)**

This book is a Christian perspective on recent blockbuster television series, using the work of Charles Taylor, the Canadian philosopher, as an interpretative lens and guide. It is heavily dependent on Taylor's *A Secular Age* and *The Malaise of Modernity*. If you are interested in an analysis of *Games of Thrones*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Walking Dead*, *Mad Men*, *House of Cards*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Her* then you will enjoy this book, especially if you esteem Charles Taylor's philosophy. The analysis of these television programmes and movies is perceptive and very informative, whatever you believe.

There is an excellent short history of ideas about both secularity and the apocalypse. Even if the television series do not appeal you, you may find the themes of modernity, secularity, post modernity, the culture of authenticity, and apocalyptic views, intellectually stimulating.

At first, given the title of the book, I was disappointed with the lack of reference to the plethora of movies about the apocalypse and that there was no reference to Kim Newman's magnificent and wide ranging *Apocalyptic Movies* (originally *Millennium Movies*), and other relevant film critics. It quotes Frank Kermode and not the film critic Mark Kermode.

However, I acquired a real taste for this book, and heartily recommend it, particularly to culturally aware and philosophically inclined Christian millennials, who are identified in this book as being between 18 and 33 in 2014. The millennials are the ones who have watched, sometimes binge watched, the above mentioned television series in their millions all over the world. They have been phenomenally successful. I am a baby boomer, the post war generation who became teenagers in the 1960s, but I became aware of these series through my sons, their DVD box sets and taste for Netflix. On reflection, the themes and narratives in the book and these television blockbusters and movies transcend specific generations. Certainly there are Christians who would find some of television programmes, like *Breaking Bad*, dark, depressing and downright unedifying.

The authors clearly have a good sense of humour. The chapter on how to survive the zombie apocalypse is most amusing. You have to have a humour deficit if you do not find it either funny or fun. And there are some great turns of phrase. I can see that *Game of Thrones* is an anachronistic postmodern fairy tale, and find that I have a better understanding of the many dystopian narratives in popular culture.

*John Race*  
*Hornchurch, Essex*

**George Lings, *Reproducing churches* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2016), 233pp.**

In the field of UK fresh expressions of church, there are few more respected voices than George Lings, Director of the Church Army's Research Unit and Visiting Fellow of St John's College Durham. This book is a theological reflection upon church reproduction, in which the author proposes that the church is both called and enabled to reproduce itself in non-identical ways. I suggest that it helpfully addresses two issues.

For much of Christian history, the prevailing model of church planting was the mother-daughter form. Churches planted churches that looked like themselves and shared the same theological outlook and often a similar demographic and sociology too. The transmission of an identical spiritual DNA was a safeguard of whatever orthodoxy was understood by the sponsoring congregation. More recently the mother-daughter model has been subject to revision, drawing upon a more incarnational theology to underpin church planting. This assumes that each new church plant ought properly to be an authentic expression of the

people, place, culture and time in which it is located rather than reflect the nature of a more distant mother church. Lings' book offers a theological rationale for well-resourced churches to engage in arms-length investment in priming new expressions of church which may be dissimilar in key aspects to their sponsor.

The second helpful aspect of this book is that it addresses a gap in the theology of mission among many Christians in so-called inherited churches, where mission is limited to personal evangelism and as the remit of specialist evangelists / church planters. Lings argues that all churches have both the calling and the capacity to reproduce. He suggests that this is inherent in the nature of church, rather than just another thing to fit into a busy church programme of competing activities. The church reproduces, he contends, because ontologically it is in the nature of church to replicate, even if it does so in non-identical ways that respond to local conditions.

The author bases his assertion upon a review of understandings of reproduction from creation and covenantal theology and lessons from the gospels, reflecting upon key scriptural passages. Perhaps most persuasively, Lings explores the church in mission through the lens of Christology, drawing upon examples from the character and life of Christ. He also draws much from trinitarian theology, declaring an ontological basis for the church to reflect the Trinity as community-in-mission. For the Trinity, mission is not simply a function – a task to be done or a commission to be fulfilled – but an aspect of the character of God which will be reflected in our own imperfect spiritual DNA.

Lings mourns the loss of church reproduction as the norm through the influence of Christendom but, as this construct recedes, he offers in his final chapters some practical suggestions for how the church can re-engage with its own intended missional nature. He writes primarily as an Anglican and therefore this book addresses firstly the context of the Church of England. Yet there is much here that can stimulate and provoke thinking among Baptists too. We may need to challenge our churches to explore whether we see mission as a task that we do rather than an expression of who we are. Better resourced churches engaging in church planting may need encouragement to invest in initiatives which look and feel quite different to their own culture. Perhaps most of all, we need to draw our sense of mission from the community-in-mission that is at the heart of our understanding of God.

This is a book that, in its depth, evidently draws upon the author's years of experience in researching the lessons of church planting in the Anglican context. It is a readable and persuasive challenge to pastors, evangelists, church planters and students of theology. I commend it.

*Ivan King*  
*Church from Scratch, Southend*

**Andrew P. Rogers, *Congregational hermeneutics: How do we read?* (London: Routledge, 2016), 309pp.**

As a Christian and as a pastor/teacher, the Bible has been, and continues to be, invaluable to me in shaping and challenging my understandings of God, my fellow human beings, creation and myself. Week by week, whether in services, in smaller groups or in so-called 'quiet times', Baptist Christians are constantly encouraged to engage with the Bible and to see this is a source of God's guidance, as a model of the virtues of Christian faith and as a series of accounts of how God has persisted in his desire for relationship with humankind through the ages. Yet for something so central to our Baptist understanding of faith in Christ, in my experience congregations rarely ask questions about the nature of scripture and how we approach it. Instead, much is 'understood' but not articulated about the Bible, what it is and how we approach it.

I suspect this owes much to the fear of what might happen if we confronted the many different understandings of the nature of scripture to be found in the average congregation. If the Bible is thought to be foundational to Christian understanding, there is an inevitable disquiet about probing what the Bible is, what it means and what it may not be or mean. This book reveals some of the hidden beliefs about scripture in the church context.

No text can be read without interpretation and each of us brings the lens of our culture, education, tradition and theology to the reading of scripture. To help the reader explore how we both recognise the influence of our many different interpretive lenses and the impact they have, the author of *Congregational Hermeneutics* takes two specific examples of British churches for study. Both evangelical, one is the mould of so-called inherited church, with a century of direct experience and a large hinterland of evangelical history. The other is a Charismatic new church. Rogers' approach is one of applied theology and hermeneutics based upon an ethnographic study. He examines the ways in which these two churches handle scripture and the cultural approaches they bring. As he introduces us to the subject churches, he explores their inherited understandings of the Bible as a sacred text and then considers how their understanding now shapes both their thinking and actions as followers of Christ.

Perhaps not surprisingly, we discover the importance of worship songs and authoritative, monologue teaching in shaping the congregational view of scriptural meanings. Interestingly, however, there was evidence of a flexibility of understanding in smaller Bible study groups in the same churches. This suggests that a change in the setting and context of the hermeneutic experience in the same church may have a significant bearing. A proclaimed scriptural understanding in the context of the whole gathered community may serve congregational cohesion, while concealing less certainty at the level of a small-group Bible study or among individuals.

I found the theological evolution arising from Rogers' ethnographic study to be largely persuasive. He argues that we can best approach scripture through a framework of virtues, which he explores in some detail: honesty; faithfulness;

openness; humility; confidence and community. Some of this is very sensible: for example, humility. What we think we know, we know provisionally. Another is community: one of the safeguards we have as Christians is to balance our sole reading of scripture with reading alongside others and allowing their understandings to help inform our own. The author develops this theme well. Where I remain to be convinced is the author's proposal that we should adopt a more rule-centred and explicit hermeneutic which, he contends, will lead us to trust and rely upon the gospel more. I am glad that the author's desire for certainty, helpfully moderated in this work to 'confidence', is acknowledged to be in tension with the provisionality of our understanding. He reasserts Newbigin's "the locus of confidence is not in the competence of our own knowing but in the faithfulness and reliability of the one who is known."

This a serious work of practical theology which addresses a topic that is largely untouched in our churches. In my opinion, this book will most suit those in pastoral and teaching ministry as well as more experienced students of theology. It will leave the reader with a great deal to think about in terms of their own approach to scripture, as well as how their churches view the texts with which we try to engage week by week.

*Ivan King*  
*Church from Scratch, Southend*

**Robert S. Dutch, *'Let there be light!' Nuclear Energy: A Christian Case* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017)**

This text is a wide-ranging, comprehensive and informative exploration of nuclear energy for the non-specialist. There is an open examination of the pros and cons of the nuclear power industry. The author spent almost all his working life within the nuclear power industry and at times this text reads as a public relations document for that industry. However, this would be unfair as a great deal of space is devoted to the arguments against and the associated risks within the industry, and after his scientific work in nuclear power Dutch was course administrator and tutor in New Testament Greek at Bristol Baptist College. Hence his desire to present a Christian case for nuclear energy.

Dutch emphasises the positive, acknowledges the negative, and advocates the key role of a nuclear source of electricity in the fight against anthropogenic climate change. There is a detailed exploration of our nuclear universe; the risks and benefits of nuclear energy; and the concerns and questions raised by the general public. He notes that the key questions involve: safety, radioactive waste management, the impact of radioactive discharges on people and the environment, and security of the plants and radioactive materials.

Dutch quotes from a survey conducted in 2015 by the Institute for Mechanical Engineers which revealed that 58% of those questioned supported nuclear power generation. He believes that we need both nuclear and renewables in our attempt to avoid catastrophic climate change.

We can observe that while nuclear power produces no CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, it does waste huge amounts of heat energy and carries the environmental concerns of radioactive leakage and waste disposal. As many of the UKs nuclear power stations reach the end of their lives the UK government has given the go ahead for the first new power station, Hinkley Point C in Somerset. There has been a great deal of discussion over the cost and therefore value of this power station, which will come on line in 2023 or shortly after.

Dutch observes that the UK justification for nuclear power involves: securing energy supplies, meeting low carbon objectives, and economic benefits in terms of jobs. While there are risks of exposure to radioactive materials, leaks, the cost of decommissioning and the removal of waste, the author notes that the benefits are said to outweigh the risks.

Currently 19% of UK electricity is produced by nuclear power stations, which represents 48% of low carbon sources of electricity. It is calculated that to meet the UK commitment of reducing GHG emissions to 80% below 1990 levels some 20-38 GW of nuclear power electricity will be needed. Hinkley Point C is designed to produce 3.2GW, a mere 10% of this figure.

Dutch notes that there is qualified cross-party support for nuclear energy, which also comes from the TUC and even from some leading environment commentators such as Mark Lynas and George Monbiot. In addition he states that Sir John Houghton (former chair of the IPCC scientific working party) has suggested that nuclear power is important for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and believes that the new generation of reactors address the concerns of waste disposal and accidents.

Dutch concludes his discussion with a Christian approach to nuclear power. He believes that the earth is important to God and that human beings are part of the community of creation. A nuclear universe with radioactive elements is part of God's creation, and nuclear energy production has an important role in the reduction of Greenhouse Gases. He notes that while the Church is clear in its support of a low carbon economy it is largely silent of the issue of nuclear power. He believes that this is because church leaders are not equipped to guide their congregations about nuclear energy.

This is an immediate and easy to read introduction to the subject, which will greatly help Christian leaders to engage with the debate.

*John Weaver*  
*Bedford*

**Marion L.S Carson, *Human Trafficking, the Bible and the Church* (London: SCM, 2017)**

*Human Trafficking, the Bible and the Church* is a timely piece of scholarly research addressing one of the most pressing matters of injustice within our world today, that of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. With over 13,000 people estimated to be kept in modern slavery in the UK today, there is a pressing need for the British Church to learn about and respond to this injustice.

Carson's book is remarkably similar to the author's previous book *Setting the Captives Free*, both addressing the same questions and subject matter. Rather than being a resource and workbook for churches to wrestle with the issue of human trafficking (as was *Setting the Captives Free*), *Human Trafficking the Bible and the Church* offers greater depth and academic rigour.

The book asks 'what the Bible has to say about contemporary human trafficking.' This is done through addressing two questions. The first question asks, 'what does the Bible say about slavery in general' and 'how can it inform a Christian response to modern-day trafficking of persons?' What follows is a biblical and historic overview concerning slavery and prostitution.

Like *Setting the Captives Free*, Carson addresses the difficult hermeneutical questions of why within the Bible 'slavery is accepted as the norm, and nowhere is there a direct prohibition against it'. For Carson, these difficult Biblical texts are outweighed by the 'Golden Rule'. This 'law of love' is noted as being first implemented by the Quakers in the 1700's, but 'became the hermeneutical key for the antislavery campaign as a whole'. Through this hermeneutical lens, the book offers a rigorous helpful overview of the Bible and Slavery.

Taking key Old and New Testament texts Carson gives a helpful overview of these issues relating to their historical and cultural Biblical contexts. Indeed, this 'law of love' hermeneutic would be helpful when relating to other contexts of oppression. Carson concludes that 'while it is true that slavery is never denounced or prohibited, the overarching message of Scripture is one of redemption'. As within *Setting the Captives Free*, there is perhaps a lack of critical response to the Biblical texts. There is no major critique that the Bible does not condemn slavery, but is rather complicit in it. Carson's hermeneutical approach is therefore accepting of the Biblical text rather than questioning if it could be viewed as an oppressive text.

The book gives particular consideration to a subset of modern slavery, sex trafficking. What follows is a helpful overview of the complexities of the 'problem of prostitution'. The second main question of the book asks 'how should Christians respond to this, and how can the Bible help them to do so?' Carson encourages a response beyond 'simplistic preconceived ideas about prostitution.' Rather the Bible should inform Christians to work towards 'justice, dignity and freedom that are at the heart of the canonical vision for God's people.'



In summary, *Human Trafficking, the Bible and the Church*, offers a rigorous overview of the themes of slavery and prostitution within the Bible, as well as exploring how the church responded to these issues in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This overview provides a good theological foundation on which the church can increasingly respond to the injustice of human trafficking. The book is a valuable piece of work and a gift that each church should be encouraged to interact with.

*Dan Pratt*  
57 West, Southend-on-Sea

**Helen Paynter, *Immigration and the Church: Reflecting Faithfully in Our Generation* (Grove Pastoral 149; Cambridge: Grove, 2017)**

Newspaper headlines have been screaming about the refugee crisis engulfing Europe for a number of years; churches have been quietly welcoming the stranger in our midst over that time; and many Christians have been attempting to respond creatively to the presence of refugees just beyond our shores in Calais and Greece.

Now Helen Paynter, Baptist Minister and Tutor at Bristol Baptist College, has written an incisive, irenic and richly theological reflection on this situation that will be an asset to anyone wanting to get better informed about what is going on. As the motto of Grove Books suggests this is not the last word on this subject but it is a first word that leads in a number of helpful and suggestive directions.

Paynter begins with a well-informed overview of the language and statistics of the situation. She arrests her readers with sentences like, 'one in every 113 people alive today has been forcibly displaced from their home,' (p3) and 'the issue of migration is an exemplar in how the use of language can and has become an ideological weapon.' (p4). This kind of writing sucks the reader into the presence of a lively and incisive guide through the thickets of this issue.

The disputes over what labels to hang around the necks of displaced people are live and revealing. Are those clamouring to reach safety in Europe 'migrants', 'refugees' or 'displaced people'? One of the organisations which whom we have been working in Calais over the past two years refers to the arrivals in our midst as 'exiles'. For me this captures something of the sense of dislocation that most who lived in Calais' jungle felt. And it captures the temporary nature of their displacement; so many of our new friends would dearly love to go home if they could. But it also carries suggestive theological nuance that opens the doors to reflection on a rich Biblical theme. Paynter doesn't use this term, settling in the main on 'migrant'.

Her opening chapter concludes with some brief remarks on the complexity of migratory flows into and out of Europe over recent generations. Nearly every section of her work cries out for elaboration - she only has 30 pages to play with, about 6,000 words - which I hope might be forthcoming in the fulness of time as

she continues to wrestle with these problems. But this work is carefully and well referenced, giving the reader plenty of scope for following ideas and building on the reflections contained here.

Paynter explores the nature of welcome and neighbour love in chapter 2, interacting with the abjection theories of Julia Kristeva in a way that throws light on how the Bible deals with 'othering' and what resources it might offer us as we offer welcome to the stranger in our midst. In chapter 3 she interacts with the Italian theorist, Giorgio Agamben, a philosopher who is not exactly a household name in our churches. She reflects on the migrant as one who embodies *bare life*. Her focus here might have been clearer: I could not make my mind up whether those of us who entered the Calais camp in possession of our passport and ticket home were really in 'the state of exception' as Agamben envisages it. That said, however, her reflections in this area were moving and helpful. And her application of Agamben's language to Jesus was very powerful. In chapter 4 Paynter turns to Maslow and how his hierarchy of needs informs discussions of migration. She does it in a way that suggests that one response to the current crisis is driven by consumerist complacency on the part of those in European cities objecting that there is no room for these newcomers, that our housing stock and health services are already over-stretched by domestic demand in these times of austerity. I think I would have liked a paragraph exploring whether austerity is necessary or is a political choice exercised by those claiming the country cannot afford to respond.

Finally, Paynter explores how we might recenter our faith by seeing in the eucharist a model of welcome and inclusion that could be adopted by every Christian community in the land.

In her conclusion she suggests that she has avoided writing a political book because that might have alienated her readers. It strikes me that this issue above all others is political to its very core and that she could have been a bit bolder in drawing some political threads out of her argument. However, this is a minor quibble. Paynter has left us all in her debt by producing a brief, deep and rich theological reflection on the most pressing issue facing the people of faith in our generation: how will we welcome the stranger in our midst. This is a book for all to read and digest and especially for churches to get hold of and use as a resource for small group discussion ahead of taking action in their communities in response to this pressing need.

*Simon Jones*  
*Spurgeon's College, London and Peaceful Borders*

