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Steven R. Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future: Story, Tradition and the Recovery of Community* (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2017) 345 pp.

This is a book most fitted to *Regent's Reviews*, reflecting not only the College's ecumenical commitments, but also its Baptist convictions, and begins in chapter one with the December 2010 meeting of the BWA/ Catholic dialogue meeting at Regent's Park College in Oxford, which Steve Harmon attended. This book reflects the self-conscious transition by its author from patristic and systematic theologian to ecumenical theologian (ix). The result is a rich, hopeful, and deeply theological plea for Baptists to engage fully in the ecumenical vision of one, visible united church.

Baptists are part of the one catholic church, Harmon argues, and there is an ecumenical moment to be seized. The supposed insurmountable difficulties of the locus of the magisterium, or the place of *sola scriptura* are not impossible barriers to unity, he claims. He is writing from the North American context, of course, and especially that of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to which he belongs, but he is very aware of the wider international perspective, and that of the Baptist Union of Great Britain especially.

The pursuit of an ecumenically-engaged Baptist identity is one that I would whole-heartedly embrace, but I am aware, as is Harmon, that this is not universally welcomed. There are plenty of, often quite strident, voices that see such a journey as not only fraught with dangers to Baptist identity, but simply wrong. Ecumenical engagement by Baptists in England (Scotland is different) is amongst the more committed of the varied Baptist responses to the ecumenical vision, but even here — in a country that rejoices in the broadest spectrum of churches in membership with its national ecumenical instrument (CTE) of any European country — ecumenism is currently undergoing something of a 'winter season.' There is plenty of often quite superficial local collaboration, especially where social projects are concerned, but real steps towards greater unity are often resisted.

The call embodied in this book for Baptists to be a pilgrim people on the way to full visible unity might seem, therefore, a pretty naive one. However, I wonder if this might actually be, as Harmon claims, the time to re-invigorate not only the whole ecumenical project (and since receptive ecumenism is actually already in our Baptist blood, Harmon discerns — as we have received so much by way of theology, liturgy and hymnody from others — there, is as good a place as any to start) but specifically Baptist engagement in it.

Harmon wrestles with matters of authority, the place of Scripture, tradition and the place of Baptist denominationalism. His conversation partners are, more often enough, Roman Catholics — as one might expect from the author's participation in the Baptist/Roman Catholic bilateral conversations — but not limited to them. Divisions within Baptists in the United States also figure large, as do recourse to the Fathers of the Early Church. It is this breadth of theology, history and ecumenical literacy that make this such a fine book, and, since he

makes few concessions to a popular readership (the text is replete with very full footnotes), one that seeks to engage at depth with the issues concerned.

I found this so engaging, I read it at a single sitting — with a break for lunch — and found I wanted to read and read until I finished it. It is not often that I can say that of a theological text! I shall want to return to it time and again, I suspect, as I make my own journey as a committed Baptist, ecumenist and 'catholic Baptist.' Here is a kindred spirit that both encourages and challenges me, providing clues as to how I can continue with an identity that embraces all three characteristics. I fear that if I were to give a very full description of the way the argument unfolds the readers of this review might believe they have enough information, and defer reading the book itself (always a danger!) — and that would be amiss. Instead, let me say that this is simply an indispensable book to be read by any Baptist taking the ecumenical challenge with any seriousness. Expensive? Sadly yes. Value for money? Undoubtedly! Multiple copies in our Baptist libraries, please.

Paul Goodliff
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R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II, *Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 194pp.

This is an important and timely book addressing the need for a much more informed understanding of the ecumenical movement in the churches at large, among pastors, and above all among those who teach in our theological colleges and seminaries. How far, if at all, do ecumenics and ecumenism feature in our standard curricula? Maybe they get a passing nod in modern church history or a glance from courses on mission. If so, that is symptomatic of the wider and deeper malaise of churches these days turning in on themselves and away from the world, leaving the gospel of reconciliation with little visible embodiment apart from the annual formality of the Week of Prayer for Unity.

The authors, American Protestants, combine evangelical sympathies with a wide-ranging empathy with all Christian traditions, and display a high estimate of the modern ecumenical story, yet with an honestly critical appraisal of certain of its developments. First of all, in addressing the “perplexed” they target some basic misconceptions. Ecumenism is neither syncretism, nor a patching together of different churches or organisations into a superficial union, nor just cooperation in evangelistic efforts or social service. It is an inclusive affair. “Genuine ecumenism is neither only a matter of doctrine nor only a matter of practice, but rather the earnest pursuit of theological consensus *and* a common way of Christian life. And ecumenism takes place neither only at the level of the officially sanctioned ecumenical dialogues nor only at the grassroots level” (p10).

The story of the modern ecumenical movement from the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference onwards, with its several trajectories of evangelical missionary endeavour, Faith and Order (doctrinal dialogue) and Life and Work

(social and international justice), is told succinctly, together with the formation of the World Council of Churches and its inauguration in 1948. The 1960s is labelled “The Great Decade” of ecumenical advance, above all for seeing the impact of the Second Vatican Council and the arrival of Roman Catholics fully centre-stage. Later chapters deal with the place of evangelicals in modern ecumenism, the problem of basic differences, ecumenical reception, and ongoing criticisms of the ecumenical movement. Readers and teachers on this side of the Atlantic will need to make some adjustments for its use in their context. In particular, while evangelicalism is a major part of both the American and British scenes, there are special factors which have made it much more of a political phenomenon in the USA than in Britain. I myself found most arresting the chapter on basic differences. As the writers point out, not only are certain disagreements over the nature of the church, authority, ministry and sacraments defiant of discernible resolution at present; but, they ask pointedly, might these be due to still deeper fissures in the underlying bedrock of understanding of how God, humanity and world are related to one another? It is good to be brought up short by such warning signs on the road, because that makes the journey still more interesting—and urgent.

There are certain questions I would like to ask in turn. The first concerns the overall perspective which views Edinburgh 1910, generated by missionary zeal, as the original pure wellspring of the modern ecumenical movement, compared with which later ecumenism lost its first love, downplaying the evangelistic calling. Clearly at work here is a proper desire to keep evangelicals on board—or encourage them to join again—the ecumenical ship, and to warn “ecumenicals” not to ignore them. Edinburgh therefore is of major interest. But Edinburgh 1910 was not the sole ecumenical player, even then. Already active was the churches’ international peace movement originating in the 1908-09 Anglo-German churches exchanges (in which British Baptists incidentally played a leading role), leading to the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches which in turn was a major stimulant in the formation of Life and Work in 1924. The evangelical impulse has always flowed *alongside* the other ecumenical streams. To press to excess the founding claims of any one stream is to diminish the movement as a whole. Following on from this, Nelson and Raith are themselves most clearly sympathetic to the “Faith and Order” stream, and one has no quarrel with that. But it is surprising that having stated the inclusive nature of ecumenism their account largely ignores the actual achievements in the “Life and Work” area. Their complaint that the WCC gives the impression of merely voicing left-leaning political concerns overlooks the vital work, for example, on the relation between ecclesiology and ethics which was a special emphasis during the 1980s and ‘90s – and in which the Faith and Order Commission itself made a major contribution.

All this perhaps demonstrates that this book will serve a most useful purpose in both informing and stimulating discussion, and is thoroughly commendable for that purpose.

Keith Clements
Portishead

Andrew Picard and Myk Habets (eds), *Theology and the Experience of Disability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Voices Down Under* (Routledge, 2016) pp. xvi + 282

This book had its origins in a conference held in 2013 in New Zealand, sponsored by Carey Baptist College and Laidlow College in Auckland. The aim was to bring together people from a whole range of backgrounds and perspectives so that these various voices could be heard and be held in conversation. The vast majority of contributors are based in New Zealand or Australia – the exceptions being John Swinton from Aberdeen, whose work, one senses, had a significant impact on the conference, and Amos Young from the USA; they represent varying academic and professional backgrounds but all are seeking to engage in theology; some write living with disability in their own lives, others from an engagement with people with disabilities, at times professional through their work, but always personal and committed. The book's title plays on the theme of 'down under'. Recognising that in a global, so essentially Western, perspective the Islands such as Australia, New Zealand, and Samoa are constructed as being 'down' and 'under' by those who therefore see themselves as 'up' and 'over', this is paralleled to the similar experiences of many people with disabilities.

Although there are, as to be expected, differences of perspective within the authors, there are also a number of shared commitments. Disability is understood through a social model, as a socially constructed category which has entailed a shared experience of oppression and injustice; the diversity of human lives is welcomed within which human personhood is understood in relational terms; theology is always practical and must work towards the integration and mutual enrichment of theory and practice.

The book offers 20 chapters which are arranged in three areas, under the themes of being, belonging, and becoming. These are not separate categories but offer more focussed perspectives, first on anthropology, then on a practical ecclesiology, and finally the impact of an eschatological perspective. The overall aim and hope of the book is to offer resources to renew theology, church and society, that is the authors believe that the perspectives of those who are seeking to do theology 'as and with people with disabilities' have much to contribute beyond any sub-discipline of theology, sociology or medicine and should lead to doing theology and being church in radically different ways.

Some chapters are more narrative in form, offering the accounts of lived experience from a first-person perspective. Living with cystic fibrosis, the consequences of major accident, autism, Cerebral Palsy, deafness, and severe intellectual disabilities are some of the contexts from which the essays of the book arise. Others begin with the biblical text. Rod Thompson, for example offers a narrative reading of 2 Samuel 9 which sees the welcoming to the King's table of Mephibosheth in a positive light as an example of the Davidic rule at its best; Louise Gosbell interprets Luke's parable of the great banquet against the background of a detailed study of cultural dining practices in the Greco-Roman world. Both chapters only just hint at contemporary contexts but provide

insightful biblical resources for others to use in their own reflections. Elsewhere Job in the Old Testament and James in the New Testament are starting points.

A number of chapters draw more explicitly on empirical research drawn quite naturally from the southern hemisphere. One chapter uses the results of the Australian Church Life Survey as the basis for reflection; a second gives an overview of a larger piece of empirical research the author had conducted in five Australian churches. The kind of conclusions they come to would seem to have clear resonances in other contexts. Others again take a more theological perspective; Myk Habets, for example, reflects on the Patristic and Orthodox concept of theosis to tentatively explore the eschatological future for us all, whatever our disabilities.

All in all, this is a helpful and important collection of essays. The variety of voices and approaches is generally a strength, both fundamental to the approach of the initial conference and wider project, but also enabling a continuing engagement with the book. Reading as a father of a daughter with some significant disabilities, I found the book moving, challenging and helpful, finding many points of resonance with my own theological development, but also seeing new insights and possibilities. For me it was the biblically orientated chapters, and the resources they offered, that I found most stimulating, together with the chapter by Amos Young on 'Disability and the Renewal of Theological Education'. Here Young is not arguing for more space in what is normally a very crowded the curriculum for disability theology, but ways in which theology done as and with people with disabilities should lead to a renewal of the whole approach of theological education.

While this reader was familiar with a reasonable amount of the secondary literature engaged with in the essays, he was not aware before of most of the authors of the essays themselves. In all areas of theology it is important to enable a whole range of global voices to be heard, but perhaps in disability theology more than most. This book then, which to British theology offers a new set of voices, is a very welcome addition in this area, and it is good that Routledge were willing to publishing it.

Anthony Clarke
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E. Jerome Van Kuiken, *Christ's Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy: Fallen or Not?* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017)

I can gladly concur with the fulsome commendations on the rear cover of this book: notwithstanding its relative brevity, it serves as a competent and surprisingly comprehensive guide to this sharply defined point of contention within at least one broad stream of recent theological reflection.

Following a general introduction to the question of the form of human nature the Son assumes (with the helpful heading of 'the falling out over fallenness') Van

Kuiken proceeds to summarise, within his first main chapter, the contributions of five authors who, albeit in rather different manner and sometimes different terminology, have argued for the fallenness of Christ's human nature. The idiosyncrasies of Edward Irving's initial challenge of what had become reformed orthodoxy are not glossed over but his conclusions (or at least the form of his conclusions) are balanced by summaries of the contributions of Karl Barth, Thomas Torrance, Colin Gunton, and Thomas Weinandy. The inclusion of Weinandy here is of particular interest since, as a Roman Catholic, he stands somewhat apart from the tradition inhabited by the other participants in this debate.

Chapter Two, in similar vein, summarises the responses of five authors who have defended the notion of the unfallenness of Christ's human nature: Marcus Dods, A. B. Bruce, H. R. Mackintosh (perhaps surprisingly), Philip Hughes, and Donald Macleod. If the chapter has a weakness it springs both from the possible imbalance of significance between these responders and at least some of the advocates examined in the first chapter and also from the tendency of the chosen authors to respond rather more to Irving than to more recent writers.

Given that both advocates and opponents of the notion of the fallenness of Christ's human nature root their arguments in the early tradition of the church, chapters three and four explore the sources they have utilised, considering first Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssen, and Cyril of Alexandria (as representatives of the Greek tradition), and then Tertullian, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and Leo (as representatives of the Latin tradition). These two chapters, testing the validity or otherwise of the manner in which modern advocates and responders have utilised these sources, constitute the crux of the present author's thesis yet, for this reviewer, the analysis here proved rather less than convincing. I have no way of knowing how this published work differs from the original dissertation presented at Manchester University but if a doctoral dissertation is usually depicted as examining a theme through a microscope these two chapters (indeed, the book as a whole) feel much more like a landscape viewed through a wide-angle lens. In the first place, in such confined space, it is simply not possible to do full justice to such sources and the manner in which they have been employed. In the second place, and more fundamentally, any ancient author (or modern author for that matter) is liable to differing interpretation, not least when the questions those ancient authors were addressing are rather different from that which is at issue in contemporary debate. In particular it would not be difficult to challenge Van Kuiken's highly favourable assessment of Leo and, similarly, differing interpretations of Cyril remain at the root of divisions within the eastern churches ever since the Council of Chalcedon.

The final chapter, entitled 'the fleshing out of the findings' reflects on the outcomes of the previous two chapters in a manner that, if not wholly decisive, leans rather more to the favour of those who argue for the fallenness of Christ's human nature. The author then attempts to classify the differing contributions, to unpack some of the assumptions underlying the use of particular terms within this debate, and to identify some of the tangential issues the debate raises (such

as Hamartiology and Mariology). The book includes an appendix attempting to identify Irving's rather imprecise references to patristic sources, an extensive bibliography, and a single though thorough index.

The very factors that may render this work less than effective as a doctoral dissertation are what render it effective and helpful as an introduction and summary of this contemporary debate. Those nuances of interpretation this reviewer would seek in chapters three and four of the book could possibly turn an enjoyable and accessible introduction into an impenetrable quagmire of subtle qualifications. As it stands (and as far as it goes) this book fulfils its aim as an introduction to a debate which may whet the appetite of its readers to think and to delve more deeply.

I say 'as far as it goes', since there are a couple of places where so easily the argument could have been developed further, issuing in a more decisive and distinctive contribution to the debate beyond mere summary and analysis. Most obviously, the fifth chapter's discussion of terminology could easily have been expanded (to what degree are the different authors simply using terms differently?). But more significantly, Van Kuiken could have expanded his reflection on Barth by noting the paradigm shift of understanding the incarnation of the Son as defining of our humanity both in its sinfulness and in its chosenness: it is not that Christ assumes a humanity already defined in Adam but that Christ defines humanity by assuming it. Such an insight, if fully developed, rather pulls the rug from under the assumptions of so much of this debate.

I was also left pondering (not for the first time) the degree to which understandings of the nature of Christ's humanity run parallel to understandings of the atonement (a theme not really explored in this book). If Christ's death and resurrection are a victory over sin, suffering, and death then surely he must assume our humanity in the state that he finds it in order validly to secure such a victory. Similarly, if Christ becomes what we are in order that we might become what he is, then again it would seem necessary that he truly and wholly becomes what we are. However, if Christ, as a wholly innocent and pure victim, endures the penalty appropriate to our sin, then his essential separation from that sinful nature would seem a necessary prerequisite. If the notion of penal substitution is (relatively) a theological novelty then perhaps notions of Christ's unfallen humanity flow in its wake.

John E. Colwell
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Angus Paddison (ed.), *Theologians on Scripture* (London: T & T Clark, 2016), 235pp.

I received this book in the hope that it would offer some fascinating and insightful reflections on the place and role of scripture in the life of the theologian. I had hoped the book might be in the vein of Darren Marks (ed.), *Shaping a Theological Mind*, in which a group of theologians reflected on the

shapers and journey of their theology. Some of the chapters in *Theologians on Scripture* are similar to the Marks book; they are autobiographical and self-reflective, telling the story of how scripture was encountered and read. These I think are the best chapters. Where scripture can often be one step removed from a lot of theology, that is, the engagement is implicit rather than explicit, I found it fascinating to hear about the place of scripture in the lives Zöe Bennett, Timothy Gorringer, Stephen Holmes, Christoph Schwöbel and Graham Ward. Too much theology lacks the personal, so anything that gives an insight into the habits, experience and practice of a theologian I find illuminating.

Angus Paddison gathers a diverse sense of contributors to this book – practical theologians, Christian ethicists, systematic theologians, black theologians, feminist theologians, Methodists, Orthodox, Anglicans, Baptists, and more. Paddison sees the book as part of the broader conversation taking place in theological readings of scripture. It is part of an on-going series of work he has been undertaking (see early *Christology and Scripture* and *Scripture: A Very Theological Proposal*). Paddison has chosen contributors who are not on the ‘frontline’ of that conversation. They were all asked the same set of questions around their theological understanding of scripture, the impact reading scripture has had on their theology, with whom and for whom do you read scripture and how have you used biblical studies in your work. Great questions. So the disappointment that a good number of the contributors ignore some of them. I would have been tempted as an editor to return their chapter and ask them to have another go!

Zöe Bennett accounts for how she first encounter scripture, and then Barth, and then the book of Revelation with Christopher Rowland, and onto liberation readings. She then explores the place of the Bible in her present context as a practical theologian, the place it has alongside experience. Timothy Gorringer tells how it wasn’t until he began to read Barth, post degree and post ordination that he first began to develop a theology of scripture, later this was joined by reading Ched Myers’ commentary on Mark, *Binding the Strong Man*. Other influences have been Kelsey, McIntyre and from his time in India, Bas Wielenga and Tom Veerkamp. Gorringer then explores some of how scripture has featured in his work which has engaged with public issues of justice, economics, geography and more. Tom Greggs explores how his work seeks to hear scripture in the community of the church, in the communion of saints, in the context of post-Christendom and in the context of the community of the children of Abraham (that is, the practical of scriptural reasoning). Stephen Holmes says scripture begins for him primarily in the context of worship, it is read, preached and prayed, and moves on to reflect on the impact that has for the use of scripture in doing theology. Christoph Schwöbel offers an account of the way he has journeyed with scripture through his life, as child, student, lecturer, in ecumenical and multi-faith situations. Likewise Graham Ward tells a very honest and vivid story of his relationship to scripture, from first reading the gospel of Mark, of belonging to a house-church in Manchester, from the impact of reading English at university, to his use of scripture in his various scholarly works.

Theologians on Scripture is a book to read, because it causes the reader to reflect on their engagement and encounter with scripture. It makes us reflect on how we use scripture, who we read it with and where. Many of us will read it in the context of churches, and fair numbers as ministers and preachers and perhaps the answers will appear obvious, but the different chapters in this book invite us to think more deeply and challenge us to consider afresh the place of scripture in our lives.

Andy Goodliff

Belle Vue Baptist Church, Southend-on-Sea

Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 192pp.

Those familiar with Barth's theological exposition of 1 Corinthians 15, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, and his theological commentary on *Philippians*, have every right to be excited about the publication of these early lectures on Ephesians. It should, however, be noted from the outset that the bulk of the commentary is on Ephesians chapter 1, (90 pages) while Ephesians 2-6 are a mere 8 pages of summarised observations on the remainder of the epistle. The balance of the volume is made up by a rationale report (8 pages) from the translator, and two essays: 'Barth, Ephesians and the Practice of Theological Exegesis' by Francis Watson, and one of the late John Webster's last pieces, "A Relation Beyond All Relations": God and Creatures in Barth's Lectures on Ephesians.' Watson's essay is characteristically sharp, affirming Barth's preference for theological exegesis and his concern not to permit historical criticism to obscure the message, but on the other hand, rightly refusing to accept the implied opposition between historical critical considerations and theological questions raised in the text.

Here is a flavour of Watson arguing for a more balanced relationship between historical criticism and theological exegesis:

"In the case of a New Testament letter, the relationship between author and addressees is an explicit feature of the text itself, establishing at the outset the communicative situation presupposed in the letter as a whole. It is not clear why this aspect of the text should be so emphatically downgraded or why those who attempt to engage with it should be caricatured as mere antiquarians using unreliable methods to reach uncertain answers to unimportant questions."(p.17)

The essay by John Webster, who died in 2016, is a poignant demonstration of what the world of New Testament and theological study lost in not having the planned Brazos theological commentary on Ephesians from his hand. Professor Webster's most recent work had been a series of essays, gathered into several valuable volumes including the two volume *God Without Measure*. His soundings in these early Barth lectures are beautifully measured and articulated, and must have chimed with much that he was himself writing, for here too, Barth is expounding one of the most Christologically freighted epistles in the New

Testament, and concentrating on its most theocentrically founded chapter. God without measure would be a distilled precis of Ephesians 1. These two essays by Watson and Webster, one time colleagues at Aberdeen, are gems of mature judgement. There are twenty pages of supporting and significant endnotes offering context, references to secondary literature and theological observations where further elucidation on Barth's meaning or approach is necessary. The commentary itself is in the form of lectures delivered from Nov 10, 1921 – Feb 23, 1922. The last lecture on February 23 is a theological overview of Ephesians 2-6. Essentially Barth's exposition of Ephesians 1 is a profound and passionate sounding of a text layered with immense themes incapable of exhaustive or even adequate exposition. As P T Forsyth acknowledged, "it is hard for words to stretch to the measure of eternal things." That, however didn't stop Barth at least making the attempt to bring human words into the service of the Word, if only to demonstrate the burden placed on every reader and hearer of the Word. Quotation gives a better sense of what Barth is here attempting. On page 108 Barth composes a concerto on the phrase "according to the riches of his grace..."

"God's grace is so much richer than we can conceive or imagine that his light illuminates our darkness: in that place where we can detect only the triumph of sin, where even the Son of God is accounted as sinful and allows himself to be so reckoned, precisely there, God's grace and truth triumph by his blood. His grace is that great, his truth that deep. No human parable is adequate for *this* reality. This reality signals the parable that is the end of all parables."

What follows is a weaving of the themes of grace, resurrection, forgiveness and the eternal wisdom of God breaking into human knowing in the knowledge of forgiveness in Christ. This January 18th lecture is a masterclass in theological exegesis, as Barth tells the Gospel truth "that takes our breath away, because that is how God breathes his breath into us."

Ephesians 1 is one of the highest theological Alps. To have Barth's early engagement with such a text enables his readers to trace a theological voice with a developing tone and timbre that will mature into the better known voice of the Church Dogmatics. Barth's Christo-centrism is everywhere evident in his at times lyrical account of the exalted Christ in whom are embodied the mysteries of eternity and the purposes of God. "The one who determines all things is not determined by them. The origin is not bound by cause and effect. His name is above all names...even the new aeon is a second order reality; it transcends this world but is not the ultimate reality."

The history of the interpretation of Ephesians 1 may help explain Barth's long trawl through this particular text. Calvin's sermons lingered in chapter 1, and even more so Thomas Goodwin, who wrote hundreds of pages in the manner of Puritan precision, studying down to the fundamentals of "Gospel truth". Barth's own son Markus takes 154 closely packed pages in the Anchor Bible commentary, published almost simultaneously with Martyn Lloyd-Jones' six stout Banner of Truth volumes, the one on Ephesians 1 having a couple of dozen sermons in 450 pages. Harold Hoehner, one of the more recent large scale

exegetical commentaries has 170 pages of exegesis and theological exposition on these 23 verses.

All of this highlights the theological riches and textual thickness of the passage Barth chose as his lecture course in 1921. In Barth's classroom the students were not listening to lectures, they were encountering a teacher gripped by urgent truth, insisting that in this text they encounter the exalted Lord of the church. Behind the lectures is the homework of Barth, consulting Lietzmann, Dibelius, Blumhardt, and of course Calvin. But whatever light was thrown on the text by historical critical enquiry, the determining question was about the living Word waiting to burst from those long ago sentences about what God was about in the pivotal events of incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

This is not a commentary on Ephesians; it is less than that and more than that. Exegetical detail can be found elsewhere. Anyone preaching on Ephesians 1 could start with Barth and look at the alpine heights of Paul's mature theology of grace lavish beyond telling, sealed with promise, and poured into the One in whom is revealed "the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ...".

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Benjamin J. Burkholder *Bloodless Atonement? A Theological and Exegetical Study of the Last Supper Sayings* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2017), xx + 272 pp

What does Girard's theory of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism have to do with Tom Wright's reading of the scriptures through the hermeneutical lens of exile and return? If your first thought is, 'Not a lot,' then you have already grasped the central thesis of this study, which essentially uses Wright to critique Girard. Girard is criticised for understanding the human plight in the light of his own theory of human nature based on mythological texts, whereas Wright is preferred because the gospel writers locate their story of Jesus within the biblical narrative of exile and return, and so, to interpret the gospels correctly, they must be interpreted in this historical and theological context, which means understanding the death of Jesus in terms of his bearing the punishment of exile. Providing summaries of Girard and Wright and assessing their respective approaches takes more than half the book, before the reader gets to the exegetical core of the study, which is an analysis of the Last Supper sayings in the synoptic gospels: 24 pages are given over to Mark, just 10 to Matthew, and 23 to Luke. According to Burkholder, Girard and his supporters are mistaken in their attempt to excise notions of violence and sacrifice from their soteriology: there is no such thing as a 'bloodless atonement'. Evidence from the Targums is used to support the notion that 'the blood of the covenant' was understood to have atoning significance in the first century, and the highly developed theology of atonement found in Hebrews is also enlisted in the same cause, though the claim that Hebrews ascribes atoning efficacy to the 'blood of the covenant' is unpersuasive. Although Burkholder may overstate his case, the analysis of Mark

and Matthew rightly foregrounds interpreting the death of Jesus in terms of sacrificial atonement, while atonement is also given a significant place in Luke's soteriology.

Girard is thus wrong and Wright is right – though it is not quite as simple as that. The brief, last chapter explores ways of accommodating Girardian insights into a broader understanding of soteriology, perhaps centred around the theme of covenant. This part of the book is less predictable, and sketches out a potential basis for more fruitful ways of engaging with Girard, and thus does leave the reader with some good food for thought.

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Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: OUP, 2016)

Matthew Thiessen is to be congratulated for having written one of the most thought-provoking and bold reappraisals of aspects of Pauline theology written in the last few years. It is crisply argued and full of potential significance. I add the word *potential* for the simple reason that many of Thiessen's contentions will need a season of critical interaction and engagement, to sift out the wheat from the chaff. But in demanding this kind of critical attention, Thiessen's book shows itself already to be of critical value, even for those who will end up disagreeing with some of his key moves.

Thiessen's argument consists in a reframing of Paul's letters by focusing on the identity of his addressees. This reading, in the introduction, is contrasted with what Thiessen calls anti-legalistic (or Lutheran) readings, on the one hand, and anti-ethnocentric (or New Perspective [NP]) readings on the other. Agreeing with criticisms of the anti-legalistic reading, Thiessen applauds the NP for resisting the claim that Judaism was legalistic, but finds fault with the NP for underestimating "how deeply ethnocentric [Paul's] own thinking was" (7). Indeed, he claims that Paul "continues to distinguish between Jewish and gentile identity because he thinks that these are God-ordained natures" (7). His new argument for the coherence of Paul starts by noting the paradoxical statement in 1 Corinthians 7:19 ("circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping the commands of God [is everything]"—translation mine). The solution, for Thiessen, involves drawing a sharp line between Jewish and Gentile identities, which he takes to align his project with the "Paul within Judaism" perspective (though this perspective is, like others, inadequately named as almost all readings of Paul seek to understand him "within Judaism"). Rather than setting Paul in opposition to Judaism, his letters all need to be read as exclusively addressing Gentiles.

This assumption is then extended throughout the book in two major sections. In the first part (chapters 1-3), Thiessen analyses two texts, namely Romans 2:17-29 (and its wider textual frame) and Galatians 4:21-31, in order to exonerate Paul from any attack against Judaism or the Jewish law, a move accomplished

primarily by emphasising the Gentile identity of the addressees. Furthermore, because Paul's letters seek to understand the relationship between Gentiles and Israel's God, this first part begins by surveying the different ways second temple Judaism could understand the relationship between Israel's God and Gentiles (or otherwise put, the Gentile problem), such that Paul's response is situated within these second temple discussions and not against them. At this point he discusses a variety of models that he elaborated in his 2009 monograph, *Contesting Conversion*, namely sympathization, ethical monotheism, eschatological participation, conversion, and exclusion. In light of these analytic distinctions and categories, Thiessen proposes that Paul opposed Gentile circumcision not because of some deficiency with the Jewish law (either because it is legalistic or ethnocentric), but because he rejected one particular solution to the Gentile problem, namely conversion.

In practice, in chapter 2, these commitments involve claiming that Paul's interlocutor, in Romans 1-2, is a Gentile who has sought to adopt the Jewish law. And while the Gentile moral problem is highlighted in Romans 1:18-32, in a more contentious move Thiessen maintains that the identity of the one addressed in Romans 2:1-16 is also a Gentile, only this time it is "those who believe they have attained a virtuous life" (54). This leads to the claim that Romans 2:17-29, and the "so-called" Jew (here reading *ἐπινομάζη*, in 2:17, in the middle voice, not as a passive), is a Gentile who seeks to live like a Jew (here building on the work of Runar Thorsteinsson). This facilitates a rereading of the identity of the one targeted in 2:21-23, the nature of the citation in 2:24, and so on. Chapter 3's rereading of Galatians 4:21-31 involves emphasising only the legitimacy of eighth day circumcision (cf. Phil 3:5). This, so Thiessen argues, is why Isaac was seed of Abraham while Ishmael was not (for Ishmael was circumcised at age 13). So when Gentile converts to Christ seek circumcision, they do so in a way that is not strictly covenantal. (Of course, this demands an extended excursus dealing with the obvious counterargument concerning Abraham's own circumcision, which took place when he was 99 years old). It follows from this that Paul's language in Galatians 5:3 (that anyone undergoing circumcision is obliged to obey "the whole law"), relates to the whole law *pertaining to circumcision*. Hence, these Galatian Gentiles seeking circumcision find that "in the very act of undergoing circumcision, [they] failed to keep the entire law pertaining to circumcision" (93). The reason is simple: they failed to circumcise on the eighth day. Paul's rhetorical question in Galatians 4:21, then, can be heard with fresh force: "tell me, those who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?". The argument as a whole, as well as that relating to Romans 1-2, also seeks better to appreciate Paul's handling of scriptural citations and allusions.

The second part of the book (chapters 4-5) provides a constructive account of Thiessen's understanding of Paul's own solution to the Gentile problem. Beginning with Paul's commitment that Gentiles must indeed become sons of Abraham, Thiessen traces Paul's answer to the way Gentiles become Abraham's seed. He makes particular use of Galatians 3 (in chapter 4), which makes it clear that faith, which makes one a son of Abraham, involves the reception of Christ's *pneuma* (Thiessen leaves the Greek untranslated). But why is it so important, for

Paul, that Gentiles become sons of Abraham at all? Thiessen's argument attempts to draw the threads of the previous chapters together (in chapter 5) by tracing out Paul's purported reasoning step-by-step (pp. 135 and following). First, early readers understood the phrase "stars of heaven" (see Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4) to indicate that Abraham's seed would be "qualitatively like the stars", and as such is not simply an indication of quantity (namely, lots of descendants as there are lots of stars). Second, stars were identified as divine or angelic beings. Third, these stars were understood to be pneumatic beings, thus linking the reception of the *pneuma* with the promises associated with Abraham and his seed. Thiessen concludes:

When claiming that God had promised the *pneuma* to Abraham and his seed (Gal 3:14-16), Paul intends his readers to recognize that Gen 15:5 and 22:16-18, in promising that Abraham's seed would be like the stars of the heaven, contained the implicit promise of the *pneuma*, the stuff of the stars/angels (159).

Gentiles who receive Christ's *pneuma* thus become Abraham's seed, and in this way Paul solves the Gentile problem.

What to make of these creative proposals? The following six critical points can be made only briefly, though really each demands qualification and greater clarification, which is indeed a sign of the success of Thiessen's monograph.

First, despite Thiessen's occasional lip service to Paul's language which seems to relativize the distinction between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, and so on, (e.g., Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11; Rom 10:12)—or undercut the importance of such identity claims (e.g., Phil 3:4-9)—he has arguably not sufficiently reckoned with Paul's grasp of the new identity in Christ. Such verses problematize claims that Paul remained "deeply ethnocentric", or as "ethnocentric as the thinking of his opponents" (An interesting contrast, at this point, would be John Barclay's recent *Paul and the Gift*, which may fall off of the other side of the horse). Arguably, the import of all such identities are profoundly relativized by Paul, but precisely so remain in play. Indeed, I would go further to suggest that the implicit commitment to a particular politics of identity leads to problems in a few other places (such as his inordinate emphasis on Abrahamic descent, deployment of the moniker "Judaism" etc.), but that is a matter that will require more extended and careful elaboration elsewhere.

Second, as one who also wishes to move beyond both Old and New Perspectives, I doubt those committed to these Perspectives will see themselves suitably reflected in his summary of their interpretive trajectories. His rhetoric, at these descriptive points, tended to oversimplify more complex realities.

Third, his construal of Romans 2 does not strike me as the most obvious reading of the passage. I can agree that Paul is engaging an interlocutor, but a different reading can avoid some problems, namely that Paul is addressing a *Jewish* follower of Christ (a counter-missionary), and this leads to a somewhat different construal of the data. On this, I think Douglas Campbell can account better for the text – except when it comes to Rom 2:21-23. Paul speaks to those who call themselves Jews because they *are* Jews. Furthermore, in Galatians, why would Paul's opponents compel Titus to be circumcised? To be noted is that this

happened while they were in Jerusalem (see Gal 2:1-4), which suggests the issue is raised by *Jewish* Christ-followers. This also has implications for the next point.

Fourth, his argument relating to eighth day circumcision was clever and helpful. However, he needs to do a little bit more work (cf. 82-84) shoring up the obvious counterargument against emphasising eighth day circumcision given that Abraham was also not circumcised on the eighth day. Plus, in this regard I question his selective deployment of data in Acts, in his conclusion. After all, and as pointed out to me by Erin Heim, Paul made sure that Timothy was circumcised “because of the Jews” (Acts 16), despite the fact this was not on the eighth day. As noted in the previous point, it is probably *Jewish* Christ-followers who sought to compel Titus to be circumcised. Are we to assume that these “false brothers” in Jerusalem, who slipped into spy on the freedom “we have in Christ”, were Gentiles? In Antioch this is more believable, but in Jerusalem? And if they weren’t Gentiles, but Jews, then does not this undermine the thesis that it is a Gentile misreading of the law of circumcision that forgets about the requirement of the eighth day?

Fifth, chapter 5 makes a generally plausible and constructive case, but the three steps in his argument rely on limited textual data from within the Pauline corpus, and thus strike this reviewer as speculative. To take an example, Galatians 3:14 (and the link between the blessing of Abraham and the reception of the Spirit) is certainly suggestive for Thiessen’s argument, but he places a lot of pressure on this verse (in the absence of, say, any explicit mention of the stars). This is not to falsify his suggestions, and Thiessen is alert to interpretive questions that cannot be ignored, so simple denial of his thesis is not sufficient. On these issues, I remain convinced that a robust christological dynamic is primarily at work, which may alter the way the interpreter handles some of the steps in answering the issues in play.

Sixth, Thiessen’s account of *pneuma*, leaning heavily as it does on Dale Martin and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, at least attempts to understand Paul’s language in terms of its historical particularity. It is far too easy anachronistically to speak of the “Spirit” in Paul. That said, it seems to me that Volker Rabens successfully undermined the viability of the physical/material spirit thesis Thiessen accepts (see the various editions of Rabens’ *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*), and the constant refrain that *pneuma* language not be understood as “merely metaphorical” (116 and following), betrays not only a misunderstanding of Rabens, but also of metaphor theory.

Whatever reservations I may wish to express in this review, I am convinced that Thiessen’s work ought to be read by all Pauline scholars. He has written a monograph that demands attention and interaction, even where disagreement may result. Not many works on Paul can be said to be “must reads” irrespective of one’s research interests, but this is one of them. Thiessen is to be congratulated for writing a truly pioneering work.

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Brett Gray, *Jesus in the Theology of Rowan Williams* (Bloomsbury, T&T Clark 2016) 189pp.

Rowan Williams has not written the kind of dogmatics or systematic theology that would provide a comprehensive way to discover how he views Jesus. His writings tend to be more occasional, diverse and expressed in a variety of genres — sermons, papers, monographs — which makes this book by Brett Gray on Williams' theology of Jesus such an invaluable work. It is not a full-blown account of William's theological development, nor a theological biography of Williams (we are indebted to Mike Higton for that), but rather an exploration of the remarkably coherent and consistent understanding of Jesus throughout Williams' writing. It started its life as Dean's doctoral thesis, and I suspect that it has been re-worked somewhat from its original iteration, and thus better suited to a wider audience.

Gray argues that understanding a theologian's wrestling with Jesus Christ takes us to the heart of their theology, and this is certainly true of Williams. He begins with poetics — Williams often writing about other writers, notably Dostoevsky — and the analogy of creation being God writing his story. The way to understand God's relation to both the created order and to himself is derived from Nicholas de Cusa. God is *non aliud*, 'not-other.' This has two meanings: God is not '*an*-other', part of the created order competing for space with it, or a 'thing', however great the difference from all other 'things'; and God is '*not*-other' — God is maximally present to all things and causes, even if 'he does not want to be Everything' (17). Divine action is not one cause amongst many — his is not *an*-other form of causality, but the 'generatively grounding of creaturely agencies' (17, here Williams critiques Marilyn McCord Adams) for He is 'every other thing's context.' (12) The discussion moves on to de Certeau and Augustine. The problem of the incarnation is that 'the one who is not *an*-other, but who generatively is *not*-other to creation, becomes *an*-other within it.' (28) That is the discussion for chapter 2.

In the life of Jesus, the 'Author' of the divine grammar is found "the generativity of God's presence as *not*-other to his creation, while the possibility of anxious conflict inherent within any *an*-other is brought into a unique abeyance." (29) This is a Christology self-consciously related to Chalcedon and the Alexandrian configuration of the human and divine realities in one coherent life, adopting a (not uncontroversial) view that sees Alexandrian Christology, Chalcedon and the tradition that arose in its wake as fundamentally continuous. The Word constitutes the 'person' of the human agent, and is expressive of the divinity that grounds it as the source of a particular life that is *an*-other in history. Using the analogy of a musical performance, Williams describes how a person can at once be utterly themselves as a performer at the limit of their skill, and yet be saturated with another's vision — that of the composer. So, the life of Jesus is 'two sorts of life, one of them unconditionally powerful, one utterly vulnerable, but lived inseparably in one person.' (*Tokens of Trust*, cited in Gray p.30). In a similar analogy, Williams describes how, in Orthodox icons of the Transfiguration, Christ emerges from a dark background, evocative of divinity undergirding his humanity. This use of the analogy by Williams has been accused

of adoptionism, but Gray argues the opposite — the entire human life of Jesus is a divine gift, with one agent and one flow of action.

The way this is unfolded by Williams is close to that of Maximus the Confessor, the late Patristic theologian as he wrestles with Chalcedon. There are two wills, one human and one divine, at work in the one agent, Jesus, but they are not competitive, for the human will is deified in its agreement with the divine, but without ceasing to be fully human. Maximus appears in multiple points in William's doctoral thesis on Lossky, and, to continue the musical analogy, Jesus's human life is a virtuoso performance, without a false note, and willingly submissive to the score that represents the composer's will.

The life of Jesus is also fully of its time and culture, into which it interjects a surprising novelty that is transformative in two regards that the story of Israel had taught attentive listeners to come to expect — creation and judgment. Jesus poses a questioning judgement on the conflictual ways of humanity, while mediating God's creation of new possibilities. This is mapped onto crucifixion and resurrection, with the crucifixion being the judgment of Israel's arbiters of truth on the life of Jesus, but which becomes the judgement of God retroactively following the resurrection's endowing of that death with meaning. Justice is about attentive truth-telling, and especially about the 'endemic process of mutual diminishment and competition' (35) inherent in the human condition. In the processes of maturation, all human beings are inducted into a world of mimetic competition, learning that achieving our desires requires our competition with others. Jesus's performance is of the non-competitive presence of God by *an*-other within our turbulent human history. There is in Jesus, as in God, an absence of anxious self-assertion, and only a human intervention can heal our violent continuities, while only divine freedom can enact such an intervention. Echoing René Girard, Jesus is also the pure victim, who does not reciprocate in kind.

I was particularly struck by the way in which Gray demonstrates how the divine freedom from competition, in Williams' work, is a judgment against "the world of human systems of manufacturing meaning and, *above all*, [my italics] against religiosity." (37) Religion is created in manifold competitive sectional interests, and has a dark side, enamoured of power. "The specifically divine nature of the judgment enacted in Jesus is, in part, glimpsed in the way his story functions as a universal crisis for religious constructions, and the way it creates a community of reflexive self-criticism." (37) Christianity can become a "large-scale tribalism", but with a Christologically mediated divine judgement on religion persists within it, this possibility "is, at least, forestalled." (37) The Crucified one is a 'ray of darkness' that disrupts our religious fantasy.

This judgement is most intensely experienced, for Williams, in the eucharist. Something similar to a Lutheran *theologia crucis*, where the cross is empty of worldly meaning and power, but supremely significant of God, and where Jesus crucified becomes God's speech, "the *signum* of the divine *res*." (39) The eucharist is an eating and drinking of judgement upon religious pretensions.

In the resurrection, the creative power of God is manifest, and he countermands ideological religion's verdict on Jesus, no longer vulnerable to humanity's violence, "but is a living, transhistorical, presence." (40) This is God's last word that creates new possibilities for humanity, "He is God's generative presence as *not-other* to a community that instantiates those possibilities." (40) For Williams, the creating of the new community is vital, and has the potential to bring together the whole world in a new unity and intelligibility. "This divine freedom, the difference of God communicated to humanity, creates a universal community — one that is not just an-other community in a world of sectional competition, but one that seeks to be *not-other* to the whole world." (41) This interplay of politics and theology, of Christology and ecclesiology is argued coherently by Gray drawing, as he does, upon the multiple sources in William's work.

This chapter continues with discussion of Williams' doctoral thesis on Vladimir Lossky, concluding as it does with discussion of Georges Florovsky, William's lectures on T.S.Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and his substantial monograph on Arius. All are concerned with the place of history in theological sensibility. In conclusion, the resurrection allows us to move beyond the impasse Williams interprets in 'Burnt Norton' — the options of escape from, or surrender to, a meaningless and vicious history — by hearing God's eschatological last word. The risk that God entails in the incarnation is a "perilous commitment to interaction. God, in a certain sense, surrenders the possibility of divine self-definition by becoming *not-other* to a historical agent.... to being a *signum* that can be misidentified by creatures in even idolatrous ways." This complexity is the subject of the ensuing chapters.

Space will not permit as detailed a description of other chapters. Suffice it here to note that in chapter 3, Gray discusses William's discussion of Christology in relation to literature, with particular attention to the role of parody. Williams writings on Dostoevsky in particular figure here. In particular the figure of Myshkin in *The Idiot* is an opaque, and ultimately, failed icon of Christ. Unlike Myshkin, "Jesus fully inhabits his agency in time and a human context, making choices and committing to the human and historical drama in which love's work is accomplished." (79)

Chapter 4 wrestles with the way that Christ's humanity is 'complexly unfallen.' The work under discussion here is "'Tempted as we are': Christology and the Analysis of the Passions." (*Studia Patristica*, Vol. XLIV, 2010), a work reflecting upon certain patristic interpretations of the temptations of Christ. Jesus has no destabilizing personal history of error, and so is "not subject to every species of testing we know." (84) Christ enters into post-lapsarian history, but is not marked by an "impaired judgment which distorts created freedom". So, Williams agrees with Cassian's unfallen humanity assumed by Christ, although he remains cautious about what this might actually entail. "Jesus 'lives in that — for us — unimaginable place where instability is always real yet always contained, on the threshold between freedom and self-enslavement.'" (85) Christ performs God's love without break or stumble, a flow of perfection, 'there is nothing in this performance that blocks out the composer.' (86) This discussion is taken further

by Gray in returning to William's engagement with Maximus' theology of the two natures. Jesus' human nature finds its expression in a uniquely unfallen and deified mode of hypostatic existence — without ignorance or instability. This is exemplified in Maximus' discussion of Gethsemane. For Williams, "'Jesus really does grow and learn as a human being, yet that maturation is a constant bringing to light, bringing to a particular life, something that is already real at the centre of his being, that is more than just a human psyche — the given abiding presence of God the Word.'" (95 citing Williams).

In chapter 5 Gray expands this complexity through discussion of two logics in Williams — the logic of harmony (as exemplified in the musical analogy) and the logic of *synchrisis* — juxtaposition, already introduced earlier in discussion of Bakhtin's work (83, 86–9). It represents a world in conflict with its source and itself. This is worked out Christologically in Jesus being "a hair's breadth from being incapable of not sinning." (103). There is a beautiful discussion here of the inarticulate cries of the neo-natal Jesus "a baby's 'insistent presence without shame or restraint, crying and clutching', which are 'note-perfect' in their performance of the Word which is 'the shattering strangeness of God. These cries come close to the wordless cry of the cross. (106) There follows further discussion of the silence of the cross, and then to the way in which the presence of God in Christ is evasive of human purchase. So, Jesus is as much an object of doubt as of faith, and "there is no straight line from the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith." (110) It is this illusive quality of William's theology that so often is rendered as ambiguous, and which those wishing for easy certainties find lacking in him. For me, this is precisely what makes him one of the most significant theologians of our time, and equally, one of the most important public intellectuals. He holds to a clear and orthodox faith, without pretending that is at all simple. This is no more clear than in the way Williams uses Scripture as the mediation of Christ, discussed in the closing sections of this chapter.

Chapter 6 engages Williams' work on the philosophical theology of Donald MacKinnon, and 'tragedy.' Finally, chapter 7 considers William's eschatological vision. This discussion starts with the church as the community which is "the place-holder in time for the one who is *not*-other to it." (146) This community, established by the kenotic dispossession of the God who stakes a place in history, grounded in the grammar of the incarnation, "is not a political order on the same level as others, competing for control, but a community that signifies, that points to a possible healed human world" (146, quoting Williams, *Wrestling with Angels*, 72) It points the non-defensive way of living that is Christ's — love's difficult work. Gray discusses all of this in relation to Williams' interests in Hegel, which was spurred by his friendship with Gillian Rose. The conversation continues by reference to William's *The Wound of Knowledge*, his 1990 book on spirituality, and within it his exploration of Gregory of Nyssa's apophaticism. "God's unknowability persists in the intimate presence of one who is not-other to us, and not as an infinite distance. But this presence can never be determined datum, never *an*-other object. This ... is the grammar of *non aliud*." (154) This shapes the eschatology of Williams, which is one of infinite deferral, of never quite arriving, of being "swept up into the Son's journey to the Father who eternally pours life into the Son." Jesus perpetually evades our grasp. This

chapter closes with another extended discussion of William's theology of the resurrection.

Gray concludes with three questions, which do have the feel of the 'for further work' section of a doctoral thesis. The dialogical language of the divine life in maximal encounter with human vulnerability pushes Williams to "the edges of acceptable Christian speech about Jesus's soteriologically necessary *dissimilarity* to us, raising the question of his very capacity not to sin." (175). The only word that in the end can be spoken is the wound of silence. Secondly, William's eschatology is so *sotto voce* as to require difficult excavation, and is tied to his refusal to be tied to an over-determined version. This is linked to Williams' under-pronouncement of discussion of the Ascension, and its corresponding parousia of the Risen Christ. This is related to the way in which Williams wants to 'mythologise' such events, I suspect. The third area for discussion for Gray is the relative absence of attention to the beginnings, with so much weighted towards the middle and the end of history. There is no original undisarranged peace, no Eden. "How can evil be 'historicized' (except mythologically) if there is no Edenic history?" (177) Gray espouses in its place "a theology that places its weight on Christology, and eschews counterfactual accounts of a primordial unfallen existence. The important Adam is the 'second' one, the last word as opposed to the first." (177)

While no exclusive alternative to reading Williams himself, this re-worked doctoral thesis on the central theme of Williams' work, his Christology set within its wide contexts, is a good place to begin and to map that journey in Williams' thought. Given the often 'occasional' nature of Williams' output (sermons, papers, articles etc.), alongside his considerable output in the form of monographs covering a wide range of interests, and the lack of anything resembling a fully-worked out systematic theology, grappling with Williams' thought requires a considerable outlay in time and expenditure, and so we owe those like Gray in this book (and Mike Higton in his earlier exploration of his theology, *Difficult Gospel*, SCM, 2004 — now requiring an update, I guess) a considerable debt of gratitude in making the theology accessible. Now, I say accessible, but it should be recognized that just as Williams is not an easy theologian to grasp, albeit a thrilling one when achieved, neither is this work anything other than complex. But it is entirely worth the effort, and makes an important contribution to the understanding of this polymathic theological mind. Literary scholar, poet (now, there's a good place to start with his work), patristic theologian, biblical theologian, public figure and, above all, contemporary interpreter of the Christian faith to a thinking audience, Williams remains amongst the most important 20th and 21st century British theologians. His recent venture into more 'popular works' (*Meeting God in Paul*, 2015; *Being Disciples*, 2016; and his collection of occasional articles and addresses, *Holy Living*, 2017 are amongst those in my library) only deepens this latter role of public interpreter of the faith.

If you are seriously interested in Williams, you'll want this book.

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Vincent J Miller (ed.), *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si'* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), pp. i-xv + 277.

A collection of essays by 13 Catholic scholars explore the implications of Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'* and its importance for the relationship between climate change, justice and the world's poor. Through a division into three parts the book examines the scientific basis for the current environmental crisis, the theological and ethical challenges to action, and the practical response for individuals and governments. The well-written essays produce a helpful and coherent text. There is a strong Catholic emphasis to both the additional works referenced and in the outworking of the themes developed for the doctrines of the Catholic church.

Pope Francis wrote an exhaustive encyclical to all the churches of the Roman Catholic communion, in which he affirmed that all species give glory to God, who cares for each one. He recognises the seriousness of the global environmental crisis and draws out its implications for the world's poor and disadvantaged. He identifies the human causes, and lays the blame fairly and squarely on the activities of the developed world.

With St Francis as his inspiration the Pope expresses his concern about our common home and the need for global, sustainable, integral, development. He challenges us to avoid the short-term outlook that has dominated politics, and calls for a new political will. He maintains that we recognise that the destruction and wanton disregard for the environment is both a sin against ourselves and against God. Miller observes that sin shatters our knowledge of God and our communion with creation. Each of these essays offer helpful commentaries and call for action in response to the Pope's message.

The scientific consensus was outlined by the Pope, who developed the thesis of the climate as a common good or a global common. In rehearsing the scientific observations of drought, flood, loss of rainforests, and reduction in biodiversity he challenges the developed world to see the impacts on the poor in the form of water poverty and crop failure. These demonstrate global inequality and injustice, and threaten the breakdown of society. He observes that world leaders fail to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Miller observes that a dialogue with science is central to the Pope's thesis, and that common goods are achieved by humans working together. Brecha concludes that a holistic approach is necessary for developing strategies to both mitigate climate change and to enable sustainable development in the future.

The Pope concluded that economic powers continue to justify the current global system where priority tends to be given to speculation and the pursuit of financial gain, which fail to take the context into account, let alone the effects on human dignity and the natural environment. Miller observes that there are sinful

prejudices woven into the fabric of our culture, society and economy, and market systems do not take into account the 'external costs' such as pollution.

The theme of interconnectedness runs through a number of these essays focused on the Pope's challenge to recover Christian values and goals in our relationship with the environment, others, and God. These are the pre Fall relationships of Genesis 2, which we see broken in Genesis 3. Castillo notes that these broken relationships are the result of sinful lust, and that our call is to serve, care and cooperate with God.

The Pope rightly recognises that ecology teaches us that everything is interconnected. Ehrman examines biodiversity, which is a vital part of our common home. Environmental degradation affects social structures and cultural identity, the very meaning of life and community. This is not just in our own time, but challenges us to consider what kind of world we want to leave for those who come after us.

In the face of human interference with the planet, Groppe calls us to a renewed vision of the origin and purpose of creation and to understand our calling within the created order. She recognises creation *ex nihilo* as an intentional act of freedom of divine love, and emphasises the Pope's call to a conversion from anthropocentrism to the use of the common goods for God's purposes. Christie states that ecological conversion flows from loving awareness, which is also a painful awareness leading to repentance, a change of mindset, a lifestyle free from our obsession with consumption and the immediacy of living.

Central to our ecological conversion is an option for the poor as the gravest effects of climate change are felt by the poorest. Dávila notes that environmental harm and ecological harm directly impact the poor and are the result of destruction and exploitation through a web of production and consumption that is environmentally unsustainable and spiritually toxic (p.156). The Pope commends to the church new lifestyles, which demonstrate a covenant between humanity and the environment. Furthermore, he challenges us to an ecological conversion whereby the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in our relationship with the world around us. He calls us to find joy and peace in a life of simplicity, with love overflowing in our acts of care for creation.

Annett observes that the Pope recognises the various global governmental attempts to address environmental issues, and that he stresses the need for transparent political processes in finding agreement on the governance of the 'global commons'. The Pope rightly notes that any technological solution will be powerless to solve these serious problems if we lose our moral compass to live in harmony, make sacrifices, and treat others well. The same is certainly true of allowing market forces to control our decisions.

While recognising that technological creativity has brought vast benefits to humankind, the Pope warns against the global view of technological progress, the mastery of creation, domination, and exploitation. Annett rightly observes that we emphasise progress, but such progress must be in the service of all humanity and requires a global cooperative response.

The last part of the book explores our response emphasising the Pope's view that climate change, global poverty, and inequality are threatening the foundation of our 'common home'. Unsurprisingly it is the selfish actions of the rich nations rather than population growth that are seen as the main culprit in our current situation. Edenhoer and Flachslund call for global education about the market economy and poverty, pointing to the need for reforming the ways in which economic decisions are made, whereby environmental and social aspects become part of all financial decision making. In costing mitigation Brecha maintains that the external costs of pollution and the impacts for future generations should be added to the technological and economic costs of the present.

DiLeo and Biviano call for individual and international action in addressing sustainability and environmental concern. They maintain that our individual and collective choices have a moral dimension, and our ethical positions expand to global relationships. International law remains a necessary complement to the ecological and theological conversion called for in *Laudato Si'*, bringing together, justice, prudence, and the common good.

The authors agree that the encyclical presents a message that we all need to hear and act upon. They also call us to at least be ready to support those who call for enforceable agreements to reduce carbon emissions and wish to see financial assistance, through the Green Climate Fund, given to the developing world in their attempts at sustainable development.

There is a wealth of material here for anyone who wants to explore the breadth and challenge of *Laudato Si'*, which is, as these authors maintain, without doubt the most important encyclical to emerge from the Catholic Church in recent times.

John Weaver
Bedford

Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017) 209pp

Simon Oliver sets out to explore the origins, nature and purpose of existence, addressing two key questions: How are we to distinguish between God and creation? and How does creation relate to God? He examines the biblical creation texts before exploring the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* through the thinking of Augustine and Aquinas, especially relating to 'being' and God as the source of existence. From this basis Oliver considers the themes of participation and providence, suffering and evil, before turning his attention to the rise of science with the attendant themes of materialism and reductionism. The book culminates in a discussion about the current environmental crisis facing the world, which he argues is the result of a failure to recognise God as the giver of

creation, and a failure of an appropriate response by human beings to the God revealed in creation.

This is a most interesting text, which is secured in some of the fundamental philosophies of the Church. Some important arguments arise, which give a most useful reflection on the current discussions of the relationship between science and faith, and on human responsibility for the environmental crisis. Alongside these there are helpful thoughts on the relationship between the interpretation of scripture, the Church's traditions, and the validity of scientific discoveries.

In a careful consideration of the Genesis accounts of creation Oliver follows a well-trodden path. He notes that an ordered and rational cosmos is the foundation on which science is based, and a sacramental universe demonstrates God's blessing and providence. He considers the 'Fall' to represent the human assertion of self-sufficient autonomy in the face of God's providence, and evil and disorder to be an alien intrusion into the fundamental goodness and intelligibility of creation. Drawing on Origen, Oliver points out that the Christian Church took the anagogical and allegorical sense of interpretation of the Genesis texts.

He argues that creation *ex nihilo* is the most convincing doctrine for the origin of creation, in which we are able to distinguish between God and creation. He is quick to state that big-bang science and *ex nihilo* theology are not the same, as *ex nihilo* is not an explanation, but a statement of faith in the being and nature of God. Drawing on Augustine and Aquinas Oliver expresses creation as wholly contingent because it only exists by participation in God's eternal simplicity, and creation is an expression of God's eternal nature as self-giving love.

In a discussion of Aquinas' causes, Oliver focuses on God's giving love, whereby creation has its own existence and integrity, which is received as God's gift. He maintains that God makes creatures real, potent and free secondary causes, but 'creation's freedom is exercised within God's loving guidance of his creatures toward their end in the Good, despite the rebellion of sin and the dissolution of created existence caused by suffering and evil.' (p.88)

Having noted the early Church's approach to scriptural interpretation at four levels: literal, moral, anagogical, spiritual, Oliver states that nature was also viewed in this way with natural objects interpreted symbolically and allegorically. However, Oliver observes that the Protestant Reformation radically changed the hermeneutical framework for both scripture and nature. There was a move toward the individual reader interpreting the text under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which tended to focus on the literal sense of the scriptures. In nature this led to a literal view of natural creatures and phenomena as 'objects' whose structure and design revealed the creator's ingenuity and power. Thus science developed through the probing of objects by empirical methods. The move to a mechanistic cosmos was encouraged through the works of Bacon and Newton. This paved the way for creation seen as an artefact, which can be reduced to its component parts, and which can be investigated without reference to its intrinsic purpose.

This all lays a foundation for our current environmental crisis, where human beings have power to manipulate nature, which no longer has a spiritual value. Oliver emphasise the distinction between nature and culture. Human understanding of our own evolution reasserts the separation from nature by our dominance over nature.

In addressing the environmental crisis Oliver notes that there is a distinction between two approaches based on nature and culture. An emphasis on nature leads to natural forms of transport, farming and sustainable consumption, while an emphasis on culture leads to economic policies, scientific interventions and international protocols. The one relinquishes control over nature, the other exerts more control.

Through his view of creation *ex nihilo* Oliver brings us back to the understanding of creation as a gift from God, an utterly selfless gift, which we receive. He maintains that creation's ability to receive the gifts of God is a gift in itself; God creates the gift and the recipient of the gift. Our response is through praise and thanksgiving. Human sin is to refuse God's gifts, whereby we reject our created nature and assert our own autonomy outside God.

The environmental crisis lies in the idea that creation's value is based supremely in its utility to human beings. The free market engenders the commodification of the natural world. This book is the antidote to such thinking and is for anyone wishing to engage with the doctrine of creation as it applies to our own engagement with life in the world today. Oliver sees the Eucharist as a focus on God's gift to us of the divine life, the sustenance of his creatures and the means of communion, where we participate in the life of God. What is missing here is practical suggestions of how we might respond to the clear arguments that are laid out. However, I would commend this text for the thoughts developed and through these encourage the reader to find ways of responding to our current environmental crisis.

John Weaver
Bedford

Samuel Wells and Ben Quash with Rebekah Eklund, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (2nd Ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 428pp.

The first edition of this textbook was published in 2010 and seven years on there is already a second edition. This is the best introduction and account of Christian ethics I know. If I was teaching Christian ethics, this would without doubt be by set text.

Wells and Quash present Christian ethics in three forms, what they term, universal, subversive and ecclesial. Universal ethics is ethics for everyone, regardless of whether they are Christian or not. Subversive ethics is ethics for those who feel overlooked, it is often an ethic of liberation and is focused in

particular on issues of race, gender and class. Ecclesial ethics is ethics for the church and is associated with virtue and character. When reading a Christian ethical argument, it is worth recognising what form is being presented.

The book tells the story of Christian ethics and then introduces the three forms described in brief above, and then applies them to various ethical issues under the headings: Good Order (war, church and state), Good Life (economics, work, media), Good Relationships (marriage, friendship, sexuality), Good Beginnings and Endings (abortion, euthanasia) and Good Earth (animals, crops, ecology).

It is clearly written, accessible, and help identifies the different approaches and is, therefore, an excellent guide and starting point.

This new edition includes a new introduction, gives more attention to Catholic and Orthodox thinkers and updates and expands sections on the ethics of race and on that of social media. This might not be enough to warrant buying the book again if you own a first edition, but if you don't have a copy, I strongly encourage you to get one. Everyone minister would be greatly helped by having a copy on their shelves and sharing its insight with their congregations. My sense is that we generally don't do Christian ethics these days in churches or we don't it well, and Wells and Quash's book is an excellent remedy to that situation.

Andy Goodliff
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I. Leon Harris, *The Holy Spirit as Communion: Colin Gunton's Pneumatology of Communion and Frank Macchia's Pneumatology of Koinonia* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), xxi + 240pp.

As the title suggests, this book is an attempt to summarise the respective pneumatologies of Colin Gunton and Frank Macchia both to compare and contrast their respective accounts and to explore the manner in which their understanding of the person of the Spirit impacts their relational accounts of the Holy Trinity.

Following a general introduction the volume devotes both a specific introduction and four chapters in turn to Gunton and Macchia though these two sections are of rather unequal length, perhaps reflecting the rather unequal weight and influence of these two writers, and raising in turn the question of appropriateness of their comparison. I say 'comparison' but there really is little by way of comparison here. There is no evidence offered of any sustained engagement of Macchia with Gunton and I am unaware of any awareness in Gunton of Macchia but, more strangely in a work such as this, there seemed to me to be little attempt to draw these two thinkers into conversation with each other and, where comparisons are drawn (for instance in Gunton's use to the term 'communion' and Macchia's preference for the untranslated term '*koinonia*'), I found them less than persuasive. Rather Harris offers a simple

description of the pneumatology of these writers and the manner in which that distinctive pneumatology impacts other aspects of their thought.

In Gunton's case I wonder whether this analysis is quite the right way around: is it the case that Gunton's distinctive understanding of the Spirit impacts his understanding of the Trinity or is the reality of the matter precisely the reverse. Harris rightly draws attention to the influence of Richard St Victor, Edward Irving, and John Owen on Gunton's developing thought but perhaps doesn't acknowledge sufficiently the early nature of these influences. Moreover there is some tension between Harris's apparently favourable reference to Lyle's assumption that Gunton relied on secondary sources in his engagement with the Cappadocians (p. 43) and his later acknowledgement of Gunton's 'predilection' for the patristic fathers (p. 104). In fact Gunton was a classicist who began his tenure of the King's College professorship by immersing himself in the Greek and Latin texts with which he subsequently engaged. Though Harris devotes a chapter to Gunton's ecclesiology he is here skating on extremely thin ice: surprisingly given Gunton's profound commitment to Congregationalism I am aware of only two essays by Gunton on the theme of ecclesiology, one appearing in *On Being the Church* and repeated in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, the other being his Drew lecture, a focused engagement with the ecclesiology of Robert Jenson. Of the latter Harris appears unaware which is a pity since it might have informed a rather sharper comparison between Gunton and Macchia on the nature of the church's communion.

While I can claim some familiarity with the work of Colin Gunton I have no knowledge whatsoever of the work of Frank Macchia and therefore cannot comment on the fairness or otherwise of the summary here presented. From this summary it would seem to me that Macchia is placing extraordinary weight on the phrase 'Baptism in the Spirit', a phrase but sparsely occurring in the New Testament and rather differently interpreted by the majority of the church for the overwhelming majority of church history. But more significantly, given the repeated acknowledgement that Macchia roots his theology in the experience of salvation, there is surely far deeper ground for contrasting Macchia with Gunton (not to mention Barth) than is attempted in this discussion. One of the earliest conversations I ever had with Colin Gunton (in the late 1970s) concerned the charismatic movement (with which I was deeply involved) and Barth's conclusion that pietism and liberalism amounted to the same thing – a pretence to talk about God when we are, in reality, talking about ourselves. Though a resolute defender of Gunton, I recognise that there are valid criticisms of his work and, certainly on the basis of the summary presented here, there are sharp criticisms to bring to Macchia – but in this latter respect particularly this present effort disappoints.

I'm sure I'm not alone in viewing my own published thesis with a degree of embarrassment. A PhD is a junior research degree and it is rarely characterised by mature reflection. There is originality of contribution, there is competent description and understanding (usually heavily dependent upon direct quotation rather than reflective and analytical summary), but mature assimilation is unusual. I have no way of knowing the degree to which this thesis has been

edited for publication; I have no way of knowing the degree to which the examiners recommended publication or the questions to which they invited response (though I could think of several); but a more mature, reflective, and sharply critical comparison of these writers would have issued in a more worthwhile publication.

John E. Colwell
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Ryan Anderson Newson, *Radical Friendship: The Politics of Communal Discernment* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

In this book Ryan Anderson Newson who teaches religion and philosophy at Campbell University argues that the 'baptist' practice of 'communal discernment' offers a way of faithful Christian engagement with political issues. This faithful engagement is possible in two main integrated ways. First, the practice offers Christians a 'competent' way of moral discernment. Second, participation in the practice forms Christians into the sort of people who can participate meaningfully in and regard other out-church grassroots activities of radical democracy as expressions of the coming Kingdom of God.

In chapter one, Newson highlights the powerlessness that many people feel faced with pressing political issues that appear beyond the ability of human beings to respond with any sense of competence. He attributes this sense of powerlessness and the accompanying apathy it creates to 'political liberalism'. He defines such liberalism as a constellation of forces which prescribe the world in a certain way, reduce the citizen to a consumer, and the political participant to an occasional voter. Philosophically this analysis and his proposed antidote to such draws heavily on the work of radical democrats who argue for the importance of participatory local politics. In chapter 2, he offers a thick description of communal discernment as practiced in the Anabaptist tradition. He claims this is a practice which enables a form of moral competence based upon 'communalism, humility, and contextualisation'. These factors mean that the competence in moral discernment does not lead to an 'overconfidence' but remains comfortable with contingency and pluralism without falling into relativism. In chapter 3, continuing as it were the Anabaptist theme he discusses the practice of 'binding and losing'. In this discussion he considers questions of power and authority. He argues that in its biblical context this practice was aimed at restoration not punishment and located authority in the community as a whole in such a way as to ensure that the processes do not fall on the weakest members of the community. In chapter 4, Newson draws now most explicitly on James Wm. McClendon's influence which has been present throughout. Accordingly, Newson maintains that communal discernment can function as a formative and transformative counter-practice to the dominant practices of liberalism. Thus, he argues that communal discernment requires and in turn teaches the value of patient receptivity, local attention, and the importance of honest confrontation in democratic activity. In chapter 5, with reference to the concept of 'friendship', he claims that participation in communal discernment can make people aware of

and supportive of grassroots democratic activity beyond the Church as a place where God is active in establishing God's Reign.

This is a stimulating and at times demanding book. I like Newson's description and discussion of the nature of communal discernment not least in terms of it offering a process that can lead to competent local decision but is always open to the future leading of God and the correction of others. I also resonate with the idea that a particular 'baptist' polity should have significance for our preferences regarding the types of political democratic engagement we favour and support. This said, I felt that at times the integrative arguments concerning the nature and practice of communal discernment and the nature and practice of radical democracy were somewhat forced and less convincing. In part this is because I would want to draw a greater theological distinction between communal discernment as a Christian congregational practice under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the practice of local participatory politics, without negating that God may indeed be active in the latter as well as the former. I am also not fully convinced that participation in Christian practices necessarily ethically prepares people for engagement in other, including similar, activities. It may be that the specificity of the political liberalism Newson addresses and the language of radical democracy limit the interest of readers beyond the context of the United States of America. This would be unfortunate. For this is an interesting book concerned to simultaneously address a practice of baptist polity, and a situation of political concern, and while maybe not in exactly the same way, I would certainly concur that both of these issues are important and related.

Stuart Blythe

Acadia Divinity College, Nova Scotia

Peter Stevenson, *Preaching*. SCM Study Guide (London, SCM Press, 2017), 268pp.

Do we need another book on preaching? This is the question that Peter Stevenson asks at the very beginning of his SCM Study Guide. He is correct to answer in the affirmative. Moreover, the 'we' is significant. A great deal of the literature on preaching now comes from the other side of the Atlantic. Much of it is of high quality, and some quite advanced. But it also comes laden with cultural indications which means it often does not quite fit our own context. We, on this side of the Atlantic, certainly do need another book on preaching, and Stevenson's book could be it – it will be of use to students and all beginning their work as preachers, and many a minister or experienced preacher would do well to get a copy and give themselves a refresher in the basics.

Stevenson begins by trying to define preaching. In answer to the commonly made criticism that preaching is a poor educational method he correctly (in my view!) asserts that preaching is more about encounter than education. He then sympathetically describes a number of accounts of preaching that take a much more sacramental view of preaching. This being said, his final working definition (p. 19) seems a little prosaic: 'Discovering the word of the Lord from the Bible,

for this group of people, at this particular time, and then delivering that Word in the power of the Spirit, in ways that people can understand, so that they can respond in worship and service.' All satisfactory understandings of preaching will somehow blend human words and divine Word, our action and God's, Scripture and rhetoric, text and context, the Spirit's moving and a human response. For a definition I would prefer something more obviously Christocentric which underlines the sense of encounter with the Risen Christ (as on the Emmaus Road), but Stevenson's definition serves well enough to help him unpack the discipline of preaching in this book.

Subsequent chapters explore the stages of preparation (hermeneutics and sermon design) and delivery (including 'sermon performance'). There are lots of worked examples and pointers for reflection, with the reader encouraged to subject their own experience to scrutiny in the light of the matter under consideration. For instance, a chapter in the sermon preparation section on 'Looking for Trouble,' works through Psalm 139 with one analytical tool, and John 13 with another. Then Stevenson turns to the question of how what has been found becomes material for a sermon. With this book those who find reflection on their practice difficult ought to find the tools to do so fruitfully. A final brief chapter considers aspects of the spirituality of preaching. Along the way Stevenson introduces his readers to some of the key hermeneutical methods and to some of the main ideas in the homiletical literature – but does so with an enviable deftness and lightness of touch, and with a fine and clear writing style.

There is a video introduction to each chapter available on line, and a series of eight appendices which illustrate and unpack some of the material in the book – with sermons for funerals and an ordination, as well as guidelines for using *Lectio Divina*, and further analytical tools in worked examples. This is such a practical book that for this reader at least, there were sometimes just a few too many shaded boxes and questions for reflection breaking up the sequences in the main chapters – but many others will find this layout very helpful, I am sure. This is a fine book, with a wide appeal. Whether you have been preaching a lifetime or are just beginning there will be something of interest and help in this volume. As Stevenson says (p. 210) 'preaching is a costly and painful business. But ... [is also] ultimately worthwhile, because by the grace of God, it is life-giving.'

Rob Ellis
Regent's Park College, Oxford

Michael Green, *Radical Leadership in the New Testament and Today* (London: SPCK, 2017) 101pp

This is a short, easy reading book the heart of which is an exploration of a number of New Testament books and authors and their attitudes to leadership. So there are chapters that focus on Jesus in the Gospels, the writings of Peter, Luke, Corinthians, the Pastoral Epistles and Paul more generally. Green's central

thesis is that while there is no clear ecclesiological blueprint in the New Testament there is a clear and unified understanding of leadership which focusses on character, a vision of Jesus and preaching the truth.

The style of the book is popular – one can imagine much of the book being given as addresses, say to a Christian Union audience; there is clearly a deeper level of scholarship behind it but this rarely comes to the surface. Seeking to cover significant ground very quickly – 8 pages on Luke and 9 pages on Corinthians – means that texts and issues are dealt with in broad brush strokes, and at times a little superficially. The chapter that explores women in ministry offers the greatest depth of engagement with both specific texts and some of the wider scholarship when Green argues quite strongly for an inclusive approach. I say quite strongly, because having rejected those who would argue for a male leadership paradigm in fairly strong terms, quite dismissive of their arguments, his somewhat surprising conclusion is that while to say that 'leadership is male' is an overstatement, perhaps leadership is in fact normally male. His example of Margaret Thatcher as a gifted woman leader, who might be the exception, itself will divide readers!

While the theme is leadership more generally, written for a general popular audience, the book does in fact have a feel of a manifesto about it. And this maybe the reason why, when Green begins by recognising that there are already many books on leadership, Christian or otherwise, he offers one more. The book is framed in its opening and closing chapters by a discussion of ministerial training, a subject on which Green has strong views. Portraying Anglican ministerial training as strongly academic in a residential community, and assuming that other denominations are the same, his central argument seems to be that the church is doing the wrong things probably with the wrong people. Training is too academic, too cosy, too concerned for books and grades or career and homes, too removed from the world and not sacrificial enough; he suggests that if we followed Jesus' pattern of training then what we did today would be more practical, much more about evangelism, apologetics, preaching, healing and deliverance. Green's only positive comments concern St Miletus College, and these are repeated both at the beginning and end of the book. There is of course, a touch of irony here, for Green, who was educated at Oxford and Cambridge and who has written more than 50 books, seems clearly to have benefitted from his education.

Essentially the book offers Green's vision for what ministry and leadership in the Church of England should look like. This may be an attempt to influence Anglican politics and future decisions, especially with Bishops now having more influence over training pathways. This also gives the book a certain polemic feel. The style is to strongly present the case, generally presented as a clear scriptural mandate, rather than to offer a more careful argument. Even in the chapter on women in ministry, where I would strongly agree with Green, those with other views are fairly summarily dismissed. There are quite a lot of clichés from leadership material – transformational leadership, clear vision, magnetic example – and with an army background there are quite a few illustrations from military sources, but without any discussion of the appropriateness of these or the

difficulties of comparing army and church. There may well be those in Anglican theological colleges who might agree with some of Green's main points but feel that the book offers something of a caricature of even residential Anglican training. And Green certainly shows no knowledge of the fact that almost all Baptist ordinands undergo ministerial formation while ministering part-time in a placement context.

While interesting to read Green's own views, some of the many books alluded to at the beginning tackle the issues involved more thoroughly and carefully. There are more detailed discussions available of the same biblical material which weigh up the exegetical issues more fully. Green does recognise that there is a gap between the world of Jesus and our own but there is a sense sometimes that this gap is forgotten in a too simplistic reading of Scripture. There are other explorations of ministerial formation (as it is now more widely known – with its greater emphasis on character and spirituality) that discuss both historical developments and future possibilities. And while it is certainly true that there seems to be a wide variety of ecclesial structures in the New Testament, contemporary churches do defend their particular practice in part at least from the New Testament. Green's book is then one of many leadership books that treat leadership as if it were a discreet subject removed from any understanding of ecclesiology. In addition to those general principles that Green highlights, such as character and collective team work, there needs to be the greater recognition that leadership is only exercised in particular church communities and the wider understanding of the nature of these communities significantly shape how leadership is framed.

Anthony Clarke
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U. M. Lang (ed.), *Authentic Liturgical Renewal in Contemporary Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)

Authentic Liturgical Renewal in Contemporary Perspective is a compelling collection of papers from the Sacra Liturgia conference held in London in July 2016. Whilst this volume primarily serves to present the breadth of thought on the function and future of Roman Catholic worship, it delves into the theological, pastoral, ethical, sociological and missiological implications of liturgy and worship in such a way as to be of considerable interest to the wider Christian community.

As someone unfamiliar with Roman Catholic liturgy, the opening remarks by Dominique Rey and address by Robert Cardinal Sarah encapsulate its profundity, as the place where transformative and sustaining encounter with Christ is made possible. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the key text on liturgy which emerged from the Second Vatican Council, recommends that the sacred liturgy should impart vigour; adapt to changing institutions and contemporary needs; promote unity amongst Christians; and strengthen mission. There is no question from the outset that this volume will present the sacred liturgy as being uniquely

powerful and effective, and that participation and immersion in the liturgy should be encouraged, that transformation may occur.

The papers that follow are a fascinating examination of how the church has and should continue to progress towards authentic liturgical renewal and of the possible results of doing so for the contemporary world. Beginning with the theological implications, Helmut Hoping explores how liturgy and trinitarian theology might be related and co-forming: Hoping's recognition that Trinitarian theology and liturgy share their root in doxology leads to an understanding of the 'living language of prayer' as the most authentic answer to the mystery of the Trinity. He presents a challenge to theologians, that understandings of trinity must connect with the prayer of Christ and of the church, and cannot be confined to academia. Hoping then proceeds to expound the Trinitarian content of the Eucharist, and while he concludes that the prayer formulae are essentially patrocentric, the sacrament as a whole indicates Christ as the centre of the heavenly liturgy in which the church may participate, by the power of the Spirit.

Charbel Pazat de Lys OSB follows Hoping with a paper on the public nature of the liturgy. Liturgy is public in that it is the official worship and place of sanctification for an institutional and eschatological society: the church, united under Christ, the head, with the Holy Spirit as the source of that unity. That the church is the Bride and Body of Christ must be perceived in 'concrete familiar rituals'; the author suggests this may be achieved by fostering a recognition of the sacred, recognising the details of the liturgy that bring about unity, and by recognising that within the liturgy all are invited to participate in the tending to the active presence of God. While, as a Baptist, I resist the proposal here that hierarchy nurtures this sense of personal identification and involvement, this seems to tend rightly towards the ministry of all believers. My tradition ought to learn from the author's commitment to expressing unity and universality in worship. For the Roman Catholic church, Gregorian chant, Latin and sacred music are tools to this end; what tools might Baptists find for expressing universality?

The particular strength of this volume is in its portrayal of more unusual aspects of liturgical renewal. Michael P. Cullinan's paper on the ethical character of the mysteries, or sacraments, draws on orthodox thought to argue that the liturgy of the church shapes and contains her ethics, with the Eucharistic emphasis on the transfiguration of matter as the supreme example of the link between liturgical, sacramental life, and the Christian moral life. These ideas set the stage for the scope of the transformative power of the liturgy to be widened to encompass the whole of creation, in the paper presented by David W. Fagerberg. For Fagerberg, the 'liturgy should overflow the sanctuary': he speaks of how Christ might be visited beyond the Eucharist in the poor, and how a charge of grace is received and discharged, in both the mass the world. I have often heard non-conformists reject the focus on the liturgy as is seen more commonly in Catholic or Anglican worship, on the basis that it detracts from the church's engagement in the mission of God to the world in social action. I would contend, with Cullinan, that authentic liturgical renewal as expressed in this volume compels and empowers the church to do just that.

Jules Geldhof continues in a similar vein: 'The liturgy is any time when the Church is doing what she is supposed to do [...] when the body of Christ is sacramentally seen and ecclesially realised'. In addition to its enabling the church to recognise and join in with God's activity in the world, the liturgy challenges secular culture, and so is instrumental in the salvific and redemptive work of Christ. Liturgy, this volume suggests, has a missiological, and even soteriological function. Bullivant, however, observes that the neo-evangelistic motivations behind *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, though providing the necessary space for the sacred liturgy to speak to different cultures, had not yet been realised. One may reflect at this stage on the Nairobi Statement on worship and culture: the sacred liturgy need not be contextual at the expense of its being counter-cultural, for it is at its most powerful when the two are held in tension.

The remaining papers, whilst elucidating the historical context behind *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, did not offer the same breadth of critical reflection on liturgy and worship as those preceding, and so I did not find them as accessible or illuminating when approaching the subject matter as a non-Catholic. This said, in spite of the statement in Robert Cardinal Sarah's initial contribution that the 'Catholic liturgy is the singly privileged locus of Christ's saving action in our world today', the volume as a whole portrays the immense value of liturgical worship and the importance of its continual renewal, and so presents a challenge to all engaged in leading or facilitating public worship to take liturgy seriously.

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Regent's Park College, Oxford

Helen Leneman, *Musical Illuminations of Genesis Narratives* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018)

In this new volume in the *Scriptural Traces: Critical Perspectives on the Reception and Influence of the Bible* series, Helen Leneman introduces the reader to a diverse range of musical adaptations of historical narratives from the Torah. Selecting from a much wider pool of works, her choices enable her to focus in depth on how the personalities and emotional responses of some of the most significant Old Testament figures are developed and filled out through music and drama. While the authors and composers of these works evidently go far beyond what is recorded in scripture in their retellings, Leneman suggests that they represent a recognizable continuation of the Jewish *midrash* tradition, commenting on and fleshing out scriptural accounts to make them more accessible and applicable to changing times and audiences. Works discussed include the stories of Eve, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Rachel at the well and Joseph. Authors and composers include some well-known names such as Handel, Schubert and Faure, but include many more who are less well-known, and in particular several Jewish composers who come to their own scriptures with refreshing interpretations for wider audiences. Leneman also discusses several women composers and composers from other non-Western cultural groups who

even now struggle for acceptance as mainstream composers in 'Classical Music' circles.

The book proceeds according to biblical chronology, bringing for discussion several musical works for each scriptural account. Each chapter starts with a selective commentary on the scripture, before proceeding to some brief background information for each composer and their era, and concluding with an extensive discussion of the work, examining plot, libretto and musical style and effects. In cases where Leneman provided more detailed contextual background, for example the contemporary German society and politics surrounding Kurt Weill, her ensuing analysis of the music seemed more effective. Leneman has helpfully provided links to online performances of almost every work including the obscure ones which makes the book much more engaging to read, even if the price for these helps is to have the main text broken up with strings of web links. In some cases plot descriptions become very lengthy too, but illustrate just how many extra details have been imagined and added to the original stories in order to connect with a particular society or era. Biblical purists may find this wearing as the musical interpretations tend to reveal much more about the mores of their composers and the societies for which they were writing than of scripture itself.

The scope of this book is ambitious. As well as knowledge of scripture Leneman's writing requires a reasonable grasp of musical terms and techniques as not all her terms are explained. I wondered at times for whom this book is primarily written, lacking as it does a final conclusion. However, as well as reviving interest in some little known work, it provided plenty of food for thought and reflection. Music can be an effective tool for realising well-loved and oft-rehearsed narratives freshly into each new context in an accessible way. A good example is Sally Beamish's work *Hagar in the Wilderness*. Leneman's analysis of this musical retelling of an age-old story can remind us how Sarah and Hagar's relational and cultural agonies continue between Israel and Palestine today. Thus they become more personal and relevant to any contemporary listener. Today's movie industry has not lost all interest in serving up new versions of biblical narratives from time to time, however strongly adapted or stretched to fit fashionable points of view. Leneman's book reminds us that this is not a new phenomenon. Each age has taken scriptural narratives and retold them, more or less accurately, according to taste and sometimes at the cost of losing any original intention, but always with the aim of engaging, entertaining and perhaps inspiring a new generation to engage with ancient stories afresh.

Margaret Gibbs
Perry Rise Baptist Church, Forest Hill

Douglas J. Brouwer, *How To Become a Multicultural Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)

For almost three decades Doug Brouwer served as a Pastor in predominantly white churches across the United States. At the age of 59 he moved to

Switzerland to become Pastor of the International Protestant Church in Zurich, an English speaking church with people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This book is his story.

The book is structured around ten lessons that Brouwer learned. These are: the meaning of 'home', the implications of the church's name, the issues that arise in styles of leadership, theological and ecclesiological differences, communication, language, stereotypes, nationalism, music and hospitality. With each chapter he gives illustrations of the issue, his reflections on it and what is to be learned from it.

So for example, in his chapter on leadership (always an important issue in multicultural churches), Brouwer notes his struggle to cope with what he saw as being inefficient meetings where it took a significant amount of discussion and reflection to come to decisions that reflected the whole leadership team. He says, 'But something has changed in me. I have begun to see our work differently... Getting work accomplished in a multicultural church is going to take time, sometimes lots of it. Meetings will almost inevitably feel unwieldy' (p.48). He goes on to show how building a multicultural leadership team requires intentional behaviour, it doesn't just happen, which is something many Pastors of multicultural churches will identify with, and concludes the chapter with reflections on Moses and Jethro and the need for someone from a different culture to point out to Moses the weakness in his approach.

Although this book has emerged from the international church scene, which is unique in many ways, there is much in this book that those of us who are Pastors or leaders in UK multicultural churches will identify with and learn from. It is an easy read, with an informal style (Brouwer is a blogger too!) but Brouwer has a knack of homing in on key issues and unpacking them helpfully. There is also an aspect of this book which is about Brouwer re-learning ministry in a multicultural context and discovering afresh insights into church ministry which will inform and inspire Pastors and leaders in any congregation. There are few books in this area, (David Packer's compilation *The International Pastor Experience* is another useful read) so this comes as a welcome addition.

Malcolm Patten

Blackhorse Road Baptist Church, Walthamstow

Melody R. Briggs, *How Children read Biblical Narrative: An Investigation of Children's Readings of the Gospel of Luke* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017)

There is a dearth of academic research on children's religious awareness, and specifically their approach to a biblical text as readers, research that draws its conclusions from listening to the voice of the child, and setting primary data drawn from high quality empirical studies to critique and evaluate scholarly theory. Such research is invaluable in furthering the support that church and school can offer to children to enhance their appreciation of biblical narrative, and potentially facilitate their spiritual growth. In this book, Melody Briggs has

offered up the results of just such a project, which should become an important resource not only to researchers but also to teachers and church-based children's and youth workers engaged in the task of facilitating children in their reading of scripture. In doing so, she challenges some of the accepted strategies for children's -and adults' - Bible reading; her findings therefore, although by self-declaration limited in scope, include insights for all of us who try to excite new - or habitual - readers of scripture.

The book is divided into three sections, covering respectively Briggs' theoretical base, her methodology, and finally her analysis. For the practitioner, the first and last of these are most germane to their work, the middle section being predominantly of academic interest establishing the credibility of her process and thus securing academic validation for her findings. Although helpfully describing the group work she undertook, the very detailed accounts given of each stage are oriented towards the specialist, and despite an attempt at simple explanation of each stage of the process are probably beyond the range of interest of the 'ordinary reader'. This review will focus mainly on the first and third sections.

Briggs' opening account of the theoretical framework is theological and developmental, but refreshingly also literary. Here she introduces the disciplines she will employ - biblical studies, children's literary theory and practical theology - and outlines her research project which centred around two groups of 11-14 year-olds in a comprehensive school, the first comprising churched children who read Luke's Gospel 'on their own terms', the second drawn from a broader sample in the same school, analysis of whose parallel reading strategies ensured some triangulation. First, however, she evaluates the Gospel itself, elucidating key critical themes currently pre-occupying commentators particularly from a literary standpoint, following this with a discussion of the place of the reader both as they both engage critically with the text, and experience it from within. She particularly homes in on, and later uses as an analytical tool, two approaches to knowing posited by C.S. Lewis, namely '*looking at*' versus '*looking along*' the text; the latter offers her a new perspective, designating as it does the reader stepping back and assessing a narrative from the position of inside experience. This resonates with her findings from the children's readings. Next in this section, Briggs analyses and critiques theories about children as readers, taking in the range of development theories before finally discussing the strategies often employed in the pedagogical settings of church as well as school to confront children with biblical text, frequently overlaid as they are with wider agendas which detract from the children's ability to read - and have fun with - the gospel as a literary whole.

Having then gone on to describe her methodology in fine detail, establishing her credentials as a doctoral-level researcher, Briggs begins to set out her analysis. Here the study reaches the height of its significance and interest. Returning to her headline question, 'How do children read the Bible?', she summarises as her overall conclusion that these children adopt a 'puzzle-solving' or inductive reasoning approach, and that participation in text-reader transactions produces inside experience of the text. As the child 'looks along' the text, and participates

with its narrative imaginatively and empathically, he/she is able both to inhabit it in its context and dialogue with it in the light of personal experience. Some of the children's spontaneous experiences resemble those found in other contemplative approaches such as Ignatian reading of scripture which is similarly inductive. Thus Imagination and empathy are identified as two key components of the toolkit children utilise in bible reading. The third highlights the forms in which the children search for meaning, both asking of the text 'what's going on here', and of themselves 'How does that relate to me?'. In her final chapter, Briggs draws this all together by exploring how the children, reading the Gospel as any other narrative text untainted by the overarching evangelistic or moralistic agendas that might drive their school or church teaching now or in the future, enjoy and critique the plot. Here she exposes how some of their insights conform with those of gospel commentators discussed in the first section, while others offer contradictory but equally plausible alternatives from within the text itself. As I found in my own research with girls in the same age bracket, the depth of theological insight and reflection of which early teens show themselves to be capable should serve to engender more respect for them as independent and creative thinkers who have much to contribute to a holistic appreciation of Biblical narrative.

Briggs has offered children's and youth leaders as well as students of child faith development a valuable resource for helping them grow, particularly in bringing literary theory and generic reading strategies to the table for discussion in this context: this serves as a welcome corrective to the framework of pedagogical and developmental theory that more commonly structures our study in this field.

It is a book for in-depth study, which will primarily be used by researchers into both faith and child development. As with so many research studies, its essence would be of value to practitioners but so often a 'popular' version doesn't materialise. However, Melody Briggs has also published a Grove Book: *Interpreting Bible Stories with Children and Young Teens* which I presume serves this purpose. Nevertheless the church minister and youth worker as well as the scholar would learn much from reading the full account of her research project, which brings together 'the world of biblical narrative and the world of the child reader, which will in the process open up new avenues between them', which surely is an aim those of us keen to excite young people in their reading, appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of reading biblical text, would whole-heartedly share.

Anne Phillips
Derbyshire

Walter Brueggemann, *God, Neighbour, Empire* (SCM, 2017), 165pp.

Daniel and his den of lions. Moses and his tablets of stone. Jael and her tent-peg. Stories we (perhaps) learn in Sunday-school, stories we (perhaps) read in our

devotions, stories we (perhaps) glean moral homilies from for our pulpits. But how do they connect? What are they, in fact, *about*? What is the scarlet thread that joins them? How does divine history become theology?

I think it is, sadly, undeniable that folk in our churches are often woefully ignorant of the great story of the Bible, why it matters, and how it is constructed from the little stories of heroism, tragedy, and downright inscrutability. The project of piecing together the big story from the little ones is called biblical theology. In the field of biblical theology there are a handful of giants; one of these is Walter Brueggemann.

There is not one biblical theology; the old, old story is richer and broader and deeper than that. Thus we can follow the developing story of Temple, of land, of covenant, of the people of God, and so on. Brueggemann himself has written on a number of themes which develop during the course of the testaments. In this book he unpacks, with charm and energy, the glorious theme of God's fidelity.

God's fidelity, as Brueggemann describes it, is encapsulated in 'a semantic cluster which reverberates in Israel's liturgic imagination' (p.41); five great words that describe God's faithfulness to his creation (and hence to Israel) and which overflow into the life of Israel as a propulsion towards the common good. The five great words are these: *mispat* (justice), *sedeqah* (righteousness), *hesed* (steadfast love), *raham* (mercy), *amunah* (faithfulness). These words, and the system of divine and human fidelity of which they are both product and prescription, form a sort of counter-narrative to the totalising claims of empire. We are thereby 'invited to subversion, resistance, and alternative' (p6); to participate in a struggle to create and perform a life not seduced by a[n anti-neighbour] totalism' (p.70).

It is stirring stuff. Sometimes I have trouble reading it sitting down. I want to agree, chime in, debate, and sometimes argue with the author. I am naturally (or perhaps by long immersion in his prior writing) sympathetic to Brueggemann's thesis, and appreciate his eminently quotable prose. Indeed, his preaching voice is sometimes almost audible as I read – and I mean that as a genuine compliment. Nonetheless, I cannot deny that in places I feel he has suppressed the 'counter-testimony' (ironically, since he has published elsewhere on the presence of counter-testimony within the Hebrew Bible) in the cause of making his single, though not simple, point. The Hebrew Bible's attitude to human kingship and empire is not as uniformly negative as he implies. The military actions of Israel cannot always be cast as the uprising of the downtrodden peasant against well-equipped oppressors. We might wish it, but wishing does not make it so.

But this is a small paperback, not a doorstop. It is a book written for the readily-kindled in the churches, not the dour scholar in her ivory tower. It is a book which will fire the imagination, deepen the understanding, and just might help us to build the kingdom of *mispat*, *sedeqah*, *hesed*, *raham*, and *amunah* which it describes. Read it. Preach it. Live it.

Helen Paynter
Bristol Baptist College

Dolores Kamrada, *Heroines, Heroes and Deity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)

This book is a modified version of Kamrada's doctoral thesis, in which she investigates a number of narratives from the Hebrew Bible which fall within the so-called 'heroic' tradition – folk stories of military heroes, often designated *gibborim* in the Hebrew. Kamrada considers that the whole book of Judges is dedicated to these great warriors, and that the theme then continues with Saul and Jonathan, concluding with David. She argues that certain key themes link these stories, notably the action of the divine spirit; the language of *herem* (total extermination of the enemy); and the use of the Urim and Thummim to ascertain the divine will.

From this rich selection of stories, Kamrada chooses to consider three in detail: the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, the story of Samson, and the Saul-Jonathan-David cycle. Her approach throws fresh light on some puzzling stories. Consider the story of Jephthah and his daughter, for instance; a disturbing account of a hero whose rash promise to the deity results in him being compelled – apparently – to sacrifice his only daughter. Comparing this story with other folklore parallels from the Ancient Near East and the Graeco-Roman classics, Kamrada shows the many points of contact which it shares with traditional folk tales, tracing in detail the war vow made by Jephthah and its consequences, in relation to its biblical and extra-biblical parallels. From the putative baseline story, she then deduces a significant theological 'tweak' which the Deuteronomic redactor has given it. Particularly comparing Jephthah's adult (though young) daughter with the child Isaac, she notes the apparent willingness of the woman, concluding that while the Akedah serves as a condemnation of child sacrifice, the Jephthah story provides justification for *self*-sacrifice in extreme circumstance – an act comparable with the holy vow of *herem* which is irrevocable and irredeemable. Her act of sacrifice is then immortalised in ritual – female ritual – an assertion of the 'right of women to have their own exclusively female ritual(s) within a patriarchal society' (p.64).

Kamrada's thesis represents important scholarship which those of us working in the area of these Hebrew narratives will be unable to ignore. Her work is heavily shaped by form criticism, as she utilises an anthropological analysis which leans towards structuralism. She seeks to compare the presumed basic story lying behind each narrative with its final biblical form, in order to uncover the process of editing and memorialisation which has resulted in the text we now have. Such a technique is necessarily speculative – one constructs a hypothetical 'ground zero' and then uses it as a platform for building a further hypothesis, whose security is necessarily and forever dependent upon the solidity of the original theory. Nonetheless, her careful and thorough scholarship is a significant contribution to the field. For the non-specialist, the book will be a heavy read, as it is highly technical, although it does take the determined reader deeply and thoughtfully into these intriguing narratives. Kamrada's will not be the last word on the matter, but it is an important word.

Helen Paynter
Bristol Baptist College

Carey Walsh and Mark W. Elliott (eds.), *Biblical Theology: Past, Present and Future* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2016) 233 pp.

As a church, we do Biblical theology every week - every time I choose an Old Testament reading to complement a New Testament one I am preaching on, every time the Sunday School leader uses her lectionary-based material to prepare a session for the children, every time we use scriptural verses to make sense of a situation or as a basis for prayer, every time I go into schools and answer the question "What is God like?" Under the unceasing pressure of pastoral ministry, my congregation and I are constantly taking actions which predicate on unarticulated and unexamined theological beliefs. And the same hidden Biblical theology forms my public apologetic whenever a grieving family asks for answers, or the BBC asks for a two and a half minute slot giving the Christian perspective on the week's news.

This is why a book like *Biblical Theology: Past, Present and Future* is so important. Even though some of the articles may seem to deal in minutiae, each contributor in their own way forces us to examine our assumptions. The same questions ring out time and again: Does the Bible have a single mind, or *dianoia*, which can serve as an interpretive key for the whole book? What role does canon play in our Biblical theology? Is it even appropriate to speak of Old Testament *theology*, rather than *theologies*, let alone of a single Biblical theology encompassing both Testaments? Is it Christian academics, Jewish scholars or faith practitioners who have a privileged understanding of how the Bible works - or is it none of the above? Has Biblical theology as a discipline come to a natural end as it fragments into myriad specialised sub-disciplines, and loses contact with the worshippers in synagogue and pew?

This volume is a collection of papers that have been commented on and reworked in the context of a set of sessions from SBL conferences between 2012 and 2014. The papers are grouped into three sections. The first of these examines some major contributions to Biblical theology in the early modern era. The work of Gabler, Vitringa and Baur is discussed as an illustration of the way in which Biblical theology could be said to have become conscious of itself as a discipline. Then follow two papers on different aspects of Magne Sæbø's *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*.

Having established some recent history of the discipline, the book then turns to methodological considerations for Biblical theology in the present day. This section starts with a helpful overview of recent works in Biblical theology, and then we have a series of papers in which, as one might expect, Brevard Childs looms large. We are offered a categorisation of the different ways of 'doing' Biblical theology along a spectrum from BT1 (historical description) to BT5 (theological construction). This is followed by a plea to revive the 'salvation history' approach as the unifying principle of Biblical theology. Then comes an interesting reflection on the lectionary as Biblical theology in action, followed by an approach to reading the Hebrew Bible which is informed by Bakhtin's literary theory. The final paper in this section is an entertaining paper by N.T. Wright, which is also an eloquent plea to theologians to reclaim Paul's perspective, and

allow Paul to teach us not only the faith content of our theology but also its method. His line (attributed to Bernard Williams) that the problem with pragmatism is that while it is undoubtedly true, it simply doesn't work, had me chuckling for hours.

The book concludes with some papers exploring a constructive way forward for Biblical theology in the future. We have a suggestion that Brueggemann's notion of countertestimony may serve us well in a postmodern era (if that is indeed what we are still living in ...) This is followed by a critical evaluation of Scott Hahn's Biblical theology of the New Testament, and then a welcome contribution from a Jewish scholar arguing that whereas Protestant Biblical theology has seen the Bible as being 'about' God, one Jewish theological perspective sees humanity as the focus of the Bible. Next, John Goldingay draws a parallel between 'middle axioms' in ethics and 'middle narratives' in Biblical theology, and their relationship to the 'grand' scriptural narratives. Finally, we have a paper looking at various scholarly accounts of the book of Revelation, and suggesting that this is one New Testament book which may be of particular relevance in today's pluralist environment.

I came away from reading this book being far more alert to the unexamined assumptions I make daily when reading my Bible as a Christian minister. I would recommend it to all those who wish to use or speak about the Bible with greater integrity, whether in their private or their professional lives.

Rosa Hunt
Salem Baptist Chapel, Pontypridd

G. Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker (eds.), *Finding Lost Words: The Church's Right to Lament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017)

The subject of lament and the church's need to rediscover its lost words of complaint in worship has been gathering momentum in recent years. This book offers an excellent introduction to this emerging subject from both academic and practical perspectives, and succeeds in making recent scholarship accessible to an interested, if pragmatic readership. But this collection of essays also offers a bold and compelling thesis of its own. David Firth establishes this argument in his foreword, claiming that the removal of lament from the worship in the Churches of the West is nothing short of heresy. It is heresy, he claims, because much contemporary worship has colluded with the culture of the in offering an endless diet of positive experiences which subtly suggest that expressions of pain, sorrow or disappointment in worship are acts of unfaith that concede too much about God lacking overall control. Of course he acknowledges that there is a rightful place for praise and thanksgiving when life is well, but insists that if praise exists at the expense of people's brokenness finding an authentic expression of complaint before God, then such worship denies deep truths about Christ, about individuals and communities. The consistent argument throughout this book is that without honest admissions of such pain there is little opportunity for true Christ-centred healing or liberation.

With so much at stake, it is good that the book manages to achieve a consistency of lucid style and well structured argument across its five main sections. The authors' desire to connect theory and praxis is ever present without ever feeling contrived, and while every reader will have their favourite chapter, and could easily examine such in isolation, there is a compelling internal trajectory. It begins with three historical essays that record the place and subsequent demise of lament in the Western church before section two grapples with some of the theological issues arising from a reclaiming of lament from the Psalms. The next section unpacks recent scholarship on the Psalter to assist in the exegesis of the scriptures of lament and part four draws these previous academic considerations into the pragmatic challenges of preaching, singing, praying and pastoral care. The final section delivers what is so often absent, but eagerly sought after by interested readers, some 'worked examples' of sermons, songs and pastoral experiences that grappled with lament.

In the first section Rachel Ciano reviews the demise of lament and argues that reclaiming these 'lost words' is exactly what people of faith should do before a faithful God in the midst of trouble. Ian J Maddock illustrates this affirmation with an examination of how historical figures such as John Calvin, Matthew Henry, John Wesley and Charles Simeon have approached Psalm 77. However, Baptist readers will probably be most taken with Alan J Thompson's chapter 'Consolation for the Despairing' which explores Spurgeon's endorsement of lament in public worship as a genuine experiences for true believers and his leading congregations in the corporate expression of lament in song.

This takes us to the six essays of the second section all of which grapple with the theological issues raised by psalms of lament. These include chapters that address the impact of speech-act theory to considerations of if, and how Christians are to bring their complaint before God in the light of the resurrection victory of Jesus. At the heart of this section are two essays by David Cohen and Geoff Harper that reiterate a common thread throughout the book, that lament is not an indication of a failing faith but quite the opposite, it is an essential component of a spiritual life that continues to trust in God through the realities of life.

The third section contains four essays that address the challenges of preaching on the psalms, reminding those who stand in the pulpit, that these passages of poetic lament must be read in the overarching contexts of the Psalter as a whole and done with an appreciation of the self-involving nature of these scriptures. Andrew Sloane's chapter on 'Weeping with the Afflicted' in particular examines what happens when as individuals and communities of faith, we place the words of another's lament upon our lips and reminds us that, 'while lament may not be our native tongue *now*, perhaps it once was, and it is certain that at some point it will be'.

While theory and praxis have never been far removed from one another in the preceding chapters it is the fourth part of the book that specifically addresses the challenges of using lament in contemporary congregational life. Peter Davis

examines the task of preaching, Malcolm Gill offers insight on how to pray and Kirk Patson reflects on the use of lament in pastoral care. However it is the chapter on singing lament by Robert S. Smith that many will find most helpful. Smith contends that the contemporary church is neither 'adept nor comfortable with singing lament' and goes on to examine what has been forsaken through this loss of congregational appetite for the darker Psalms. Through an examination of Psalm 137, Smith notes the power of music to augment the emotional reality of words spoken from the heart. He examines how the careful synthesis of words and music enables a gathered people to find consolation for the troubled spirit and unity as a congregation in the face of difficulty. He readdresses the potential heresy of churches who do not lament, concluding that such a failure leads congregations into lives of unreality and deprives them of a full knowledge of God of scripture. For any priest or pastor these may well be the chapters which ground the scholarship most closely to their daily life, but it is perhaps a sad omission that there was not a further chapter to be included here, one that examined how the congregations might rediscover lament beyond the immediate borders of the church and in the art, music and literature of contemporary culture.

The fifth and final section continues the pragmatic direction with examples of the use of lament within the life of the church. This includes three full-text sermons on Psalm 13, 88 and 137 and an excellent reflection by Nick Freestone on the song writing process of weaving together the lyrics, music and theology of Psalm 88. As one of only two women contributors to the book, Sharon Wood concludes with a quite personal chapter on lament within the context of pastoral care among women. This proved to be a much needed perspective on the importance of lament amidst the harsh realities of testing times and her words make a fitting conclusion to the book as a whole: 'We cry and cry out, knowing Jesus did too, In the company of God's Spirit and his people, we do not groan alone.'

This collection of essays is a compelling argument for the church to rediscover the lost words of lament it has forsaken in recent years. It is not too bold a claim that failure to do so may leave congregations worshipping on the edge of heresy. As such this is a book not only full of wisdom that deserves to be read, but which also urgently needs to be put into practice.

Craig Gardiner
South Wales Baptist College

Kate Kirkpatrick, *Sartre and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)

Stanley Hauerwas has said, on more than one occasion, that because of the sentimentality that pervades Western Christianity today, the church has great difficulty in producing interesting atheists. He argues that the god that most atheists deny today, the god preached in most of our pulpits, is not even worth denying. Kate Kirkpatrick argues, in this offering to Bloomsbury's "Philosophy

and Theology” series, that Jean-Paul Satre is an atheist that is most definitely worth listening to, someone who is of great interest because of the ideas he offers, and his direct engagement with theological thought; Kirkpatrick says that “the intersections between Satre and theology are as rich as they are underexplored” (p.13) and this book offers us a journey of Sartrean discovery, one that I am certainly thankful for.

In chapter 1 we are introduced to a brief biography of Satre’s life and engagement with philosophical and theological thinkers and themes, drawing from some still unpublished works that offer us, the reader, insights in Satre’s influences that have yet been explored. Chapter 2 is an exploration of the theologians that Satre engaged with early on in his philosophical education. Within both these chapters Kirkpatrick explores Satre’s received theological inheritance of sin as “nothingness,” and his subsequent insights into Christianity, nothingness, and “lack,” and how his thought in these areas are hugely important to theological thought today.

French literature during the late 19th, early 20th Century, experimented with theological content and depictions of Christian lives, of which Satre was no exception, and Chapter 3 offers perspectives on Sartre’s own literary content.

Chapter 4 focuses on his most famous work, *Being and Nothingness*, and pays attention to the most pertinent points of his existentialism and the theological points therein. Chapter 5 is a brief analysis of Satre’s now famed “Existentialism Is a Humanism” delivered on 29 October 1945 in Paris, a lecture that was both decried as “Luciferian” and “celebrated as the highest moment of Western theology.” (p.124) Unlike modern attempts by popular modern atheists, Satre’s lecture was hailed as a triumphant, and relentless exposition of the “consequences of the denial of God’s existence.” (p.124)

In Part 3 Kirkpatrick examines Satre’s legacy in Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and liberation theology. Chapter 6 discusses Satre’s limited but interesting influence on Karl Barth and Paul Tillich, before moving on to “Satre and Catholic theology” in chapter 7.

Chapter 8 considers how Christos Yannaras and John Zizioulas use Satre in their theologies of personhood, and how he sharpens and expands their views.

Chapter 9 then shows how influential Satre was within black liberation theology, an influence that informed Martin Luther King Jr. and James H. Cone. Chapter 10 then brings the book to a close, arguing that Satre’s work continues to be needed for the theology of the future.

The whole book is wonderful, and Kirkpatrick has produced a book of deep insight, highlighting how the work of Satre “is fascinating for theologians because it is a theologically informed atheism haunted by questions of divine love, freedom, and grace.” (p.210) This is no small thing, for in a time such as this we need those who are able to not only think well, but who think through in all seriousness what it really means to worship the God of Jesus of Nazareth.

Kirkpatrick's chapter "Sartre and Liberation theology" is remarkable for it shows with incredible clarity how Sartre's work challenged objectifying behaviour, and how "the structure of human experience still involves the possibility of reducing or being reduced to the status of an object." (p.209) As Kirkpatrick says, "Sartre stood against oppression without attempting to speak for the oppressed . . ." (p.194) This desire "to hear" is not only to see liberation for the oppressed, but in their liberation to see oppressor liberated, ". . . when blacks assert their freedom in self-determination, whites too are liberated. They must now confront the black man as a person" writes James H. Cone. According to Kirkpatrick, Sartre's understanding of freedom, of true freedom, "involves committing one's whole being to the cause of the oppressed." (p.201) Kirkpatrick writes that Cone reads Sartre as one who "will not let theologians rest in complacency," (p.204) reminding them that any theological discussion must never be abstracted from the reality of humanity, of the concern for real human beings. This kind of theology that Sartre challenges us with directly challenges the sentimentality that Hauerwas rightly laments, and can, I believe, produce the interesting kind of theologians the church so desperately needs today.

Joseph Haward
This Hope, Newton Abbott

Rodney Wallace Kennedy (ed.), *Preaching Conversations with Scholars* (Wipf & Stock, 2016), 132pp.

In this book Wallace Kennedy, pastor of First Baptist Church of Drayton (2003-2016) offers his sermons to the response and critique of a group of scholars, including the American Baptist theologians Steven Harmon, Beth Newman, Philip Thompson, Brad Kallenberg and Derek Hatch. Back in the early 1990s Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon did a similar exercise as Hauerwas responded to the preaching of Willimon (see the book *Preaching as Strangers*.)

I like Wallace Kennedy as a preacher simply because he has footnotes, that is his sermons display that he reads – commentaries, the tradition, theology and more. In addition we learn that before he began a sermon, he gathered with a small group just to read the lectionary passages for the following Sunday and converse together. These are sermons that take preparation and time to craft before they are preached. He is a scholar-preacher, which probably makes it easier for those scholars to respond.

This short book includes thirteen sermons, many on the gospel of Mark, each with one or two responses. I find there is always much to be learned about homiletics from reading the sermons of others. On the basis of providing me with new thoughts and possibilities when I next come to preach Mark's gospel, this book is worth getting. But in addition, the responses see that it is possible to build bridges between the church and the academy, that a good preacher can bring the learning of the scholar into the lives of a church congregation, and that this can offer a depth to a sermon that speaks into the present context. The responses also allow the argument of each sermon to be reflected on further.

For those who preach regularly, this will be a helpful book.

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

Doug Gay, *God Be in My Mouth: 40 Ways to Grow as a Preacher* (SCM, 2018), 148pp.

Whether you're at the beginning of learning to be a preacher, whether you've been doing it for some time, or whether you've lost count of the years and the sermons you've prepared and given, this new book from Doug Gay is worth a read. Here's why?

First, it's easy to read, with forty short chapters.

Second, it looks at preaching in general: how we approach it, how we prepare for it, how we speak a sermon, and how we make sure it lives in the preacher and the congregation.

Third, it's full of helpful little nuggets of thought, which for those starting out will be helpful starters and for those longer into a preaching ministry will be either handy reminders or gifts to refresh perhaps a going stale pattern.

Fourth, Gay does not offer a theory of preaching, but a treasure chest of ways to grow as a preacher. Everything I was asked to read about preaching when I was at college did little for me, and probably like most preachers, it took me a good while to find my voice. *God Be in My Mouth* will aid that process of finding your voice, and get you thinking about things that most books on preaching don't address. Those of you who teach preaching, you could do a good thing by getting this book into your hands of your students.

Five, Gay's book brings together some of the best preaching advice from some of the best preachers, so it will either save you having to buy all their books, or give you an appetite to go and read more.

Six, Doug Gay is someone who still believes in preaching and that preachers can grow as preachers in their approach, their preparation and their delivery.

Seven and finally (just in case any or worried that this might end being forty reasons to buy this book), this could be a great book for Lent, for those of us who preach, to read a chapter a day, and who knows, the sermons that emerge in Holy Week and onwards into Easter, might find new life and response.

Andy Goodliff
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Keith Clements, *Look Back in Hope: An Ecumenical Life* (Resource, 2017). 423pp.

Keith Clements is a Baptist minister, who has pastored churches, been a tutor at Bristol Baptist College, International Secretary for the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland and General Secretary of Conference of European Churches, as well as being an internationally-renowned scholar of the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In this his latest book, he writes the story of his life, one which as the subtitle suggests as for much of it been an ecumenical one.

What is offer here is one Baptist account of being a Baptist and being committed to ecumenism. There is here a personal history of Baptist life, especially from the 1960s to 1980s, to supplement Ian Randall's much broader history of the 20th Century. From the 1990s onwards, we are drawn into a history of the new ecumenism that began as a consequence of the inter-church process and then wider into events in Europe.

The book begins with an exciting account of baby Keith, escaping with his parents and siblings from China in 1944, it goes on to tell the story of his time in Cambridge, being introduced to theology and especially Bonhoeffer. It was at university that Clement's ecumenical life really began and so shaped the rest of his ministry and career. Here is a passion and excitement for ecumenism rarely encountered today. And here the book ends with a sense of frustration and disappointment regarding the current ecumenical fortunes in England and despair at a UK choosing to leave Europe. For Clements, due to his experience, is both an ecumenist and a European.

Clements tells his story well and it is a fascinating insight to one life which unexpectedly found itself moving from Bristol, to London and to Geneva. I encourage Baptists and others to read it, if only to inspire you and challenge you with an ecumenical vision sorely missing. Like other reviews have commented, the book's one let down is a multitude of mistakes that could have been picked up and corrected in copy-editing. But this is a minor frustration in an otherwise wonderful and important book.

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

Martyn Payne, *Messy Parables* (Bible Reading Fellowship, 2017), 173pp.

Messy Church burst onto the scene in 2004 and has grown at an astonishing rate across churches in the UK and around the world. With that has come a number of books to support the running of Messy Church congregations. The first three were books largely with ideas for Messy Church services. But more recently have come books which pick up particularly themes – hospitality, togetherness, making disciples – and the theology of Messy Church. All of this is really encouraging, for this initiative, project, phenomenon, call it what you will, has shown a real desire to reflect theologically and practically about itself. What

might have been (and more still be) a fad, is seeking to becoming something that thinks carefully about what it does, how it does it and where it fits in the story and mission of the church.

This latest book, *Messy Parables*, is a more practical book. It offers 25 retellings of Jesus' parables. Each comes with a way of telling the story with lots of involvement and a prayer idea to follow. It begins with why story telling is important and how to become a good Messy Church storyteller.

Whether your church does Messy Church, this is an excellent book to add those involved in telling Bible stories in an all-age context, whether in a church service or a school assembly.

I for one will look for to the continuing helpful set of resources and reflective practice that Messy Church offers.

Andy Goodliff
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