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Linn Marie Tonstad, Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics (Cascade, 2018)

Linn Marie Tonstad wants to be clear from the beginning: this new book on 'Queer Theology' is '*not about apologetics for the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in Christianity*'. Instead she sets out her more ambitious theological visions for '*sociopolitical transformation that alter practices of distinction harming gender and sexual minorities as well as many other minoritized populations*' (p3). Her vision is made with a consistent lucidity through five chapters that steer a careful course between the depths of academic rigour in queer theory and theology and the accessibility required by novices (like myself) to the discussion. For that alone, the book is to be welcomed. In moving that discussion beyond the established sphere of apologetics she further deserves to be read by those not only seeking an affirmation of the rich potential of queer theology, but also by readers who may come to the wider topic with theological suspicions and existential trepidation. This book affirms the words from the old hymn, there might be 'yet more light and truth to break forth' for God's people in these challenging times.

Tonstad begins her task with a critical review of how 21st western understandings of sexuality, gender and physical bodies in general has evolved through history, deftly summarising the thoughts of early Christian thinkers such as Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, leading on to the philosophical legacies of Descartes and Freud. The simple point being that assumptions of self-identity in gender and sexuality have forever been fluid and today's rethinking of these categories within queer theology stand within a long tradition. There is here too, an early hint of one potentially troublesome aspect to her thesis, namely can she articulate what it might mean to have an identity in Christ, queer or otherwise.

In Chapter 2 Tonstad rehearses her opening argument by visiting a number of apologetic strategies already deployed by queer theologians, if only to make the point that queer theology ought to be about so much more than defending the existence of queer and trans lives. Here she examines a number of well-trodden paths, including the contextual interpretation of key contested scriptures, the assertion that Christianity, rightly understood is about the crossing of binary boundaries, and reviews the ways in which scholars have sought to find a 'tribe' of queerness or things analogous to it within the biblical narratives, and even in the wounded body of Christ. But her conclusion remains firm: none of these and other avenues of apologetics are central to Christianity, and their continued presence risks distracting the church from genuinely valuable contributions that might be made from queer theology and theologians.

Having successfully cleared away the distractions of apologetics, chapter 3 articulates what queer theology might say beyond its own defence. This section is intended as an accessible account of queer theory, and while the style adopted is as engaging as Tonstad no doubt offers to the students in her classes, still there are complex patterns of thought that may have to be repeatedly wrestled with by those not fully initiated into culture and gender studies. Thus, she offers critical reviews of theories of 'naturalization' and 'essentialism' to help clarify what she understands to be helpful in queer theory, namely that it reaches beyond single issues of sex or gender and presents a radical truth-telling against the socially constructed fictions of heteronormative society, particularly economics.

The fourth chapter ventures into economics and beyond under the title '*Money, Sex and God*'. Here Tonstad engages with the work of Marcella Althaus-Reid, and the richest of her provocative imagery, to show how queer theology offers fecund opportunities to

name and overcome the self-serving interconnections that exist between the socially normative scripts of Christian religion, heteronormative sexuality and capitalist economics. Not everything argued in this chapter may be as convincing as Tonstad hopes, there are some potential inconsistencies that niggle and cry out for further explication, not least her assertion that queer theology should have no normative positions which she then seems to develop as one such position herself. However, her fundamental thesis retains its challenge: in moving away from what is identified as 'resemblance hermeneutics' queered thinking permits theology to depart from a God who is 'always more of the same, known in advance' (p87) and takes seriously the search for God amidst the messy and complex realities of people's lives.

The final chapter sketches some possible trajectories for queer theology in areas such as Christology, sin and ecclesiology. These are rooted in Tonstad's reaffirmation that Christianity is, in some senses, inherently queer: i.e. they both disturb normative assumptions of intimacy, social binaries, and radical inclusion. All this may be so, but the chapter also returns to one of the central difficulties of queer theology and the thesis of the book, namely that queerness is consistently at odds with the socially and theologically normative, 'disturbing but never defining' an identity. Many may wish to claim that Christian faith has something more concrete to say about who we are in Christ.

If readers are new to queer theology, Tonstad's book will serve as a compelling introduction to the topic (and indeed there is helpful appendix for suggested further reading). Those already engaged in the discipline will also find a lucid (if not infallible) argument that seeks to extend the reach of queer theology beyond mere inclusion apologetics. For novice and master alike there may be aspects to Tonstad's writing that fail to finally convince, but whether one agrees with her or not, her thesis is a timely one and the book deserves a wide and engaging audience.

Craig Gardiner
South Wales Baptist College

Martin Westerholm and Ben Rhodes (eds.), Freedom under the Word: Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis (Baker, 2019)

There has been renewed interest in recent years - at least in English language scholarship - in Karl Barth as a biblical exegete and theological interpreter of Scripture. This is part of a wider resituating of the Swiss theologian's desire to give an account to God's self-presentation in Scripture rather than being driven by hermeneutical and philosophical systems external to the Bible. Indeed, as Christopher Green begins his essay: "It is somewhat curious that Karl Barth, who understood himself as a careful student of Scripture, attracts much more attention as a dogmatic theologian" (p. 215). It is in the context of renewed interest in Barth's reading of Scripture that the book *Freedom under the Word* has been published. It is a collection of essays which originated as papers at the product of an Evangelical Theological Society study group and a 2015 conference at the University of St Andrews (p. 2). The book is dedicated, fittingly, to the late Professor John Webster who himself did much to reestablish Barth as a theologian of the Bible, not least through his careful essays in *Barth's Earlier Theology* and introduction essays (alongside Francis Watson) to the new translations of Barth's exegetical lectures on Philippians and Ephesians.

After two introductory essays outlining Barth's doctrine of Scripture both chronologically (Martin Westerholm) and systematically (Ben Rhodes), the bulk of the book is given over to exegetical evaluations of three main loci of Barth's thought: his doctrine of God, his doctrine of creation and his doctrine of reconciliation. The contributions either trace the development of Barth's exegesis of a particular passage - often just a single half chapter or verse, as in the case of Wesley Hill or Stephen Fowl - through his work, pointing out the impact this had on his theological work; or they examine a particular larger chunk of Scripture and assess Barth's argument. One essay that particularly stood out to me was Susannah's Ticcianti's essay "Israel and the Church: Barth's Exegesis of Romans", which both interrogates Barth's (later, *Church Dogmatics* period) exegesis of Romans 9-11 in the context of the charge of supersessionism, and also his engagement with the issue of anti-Semitism in Germany in the first half of the 20th Century. This is an important aspect of Barth's work to grapple with, given both wider context at the time Barth was writing and the way in which Barth's *Romans* expunges the question of Israel in favour of making a wider point about 'religion'. It was good, too, to have sustained engagement of Barth's reading of non-Pauline New Testament texts, with essays on John, Hebrews, Revelation and James.

Some contributors wished pointed out limits in Barth's exegesis. For example, Mark Gignilliat's characterisation that Barth possibly lapsed into 'a concordance approach to interpretation' (p. 142), meaning that he didn't trace the theme of Immanuel from Isaiah 7 and 8 through Isaiah 9:6 (a move that Brevard Childs makes in his 2001 commentary, for instance). Likewise, Christina N. Larsen criticises Barth's use of 'extra textual means to defend many of the key interpretative decisions' (p. 209) and at times even imposing his own theological views onto the text (pp. 210-2, in the context of Barth's (in)famous section on the creation of male and female.) Yet even these authors acknowledge Barth's 'sustained attention to the details of the text' (p. 207).

On a linguistic level, I have some niggles with some of the translation decisions from German. For instance 'Entdeckerfreude' (p. 58) is more correctly translated 'joy of discovery', with 'joy' being the main noun, rather than 'joyful discovery'. Similarly, in the same essay (p. 67), the English translation introduces a modal verb 'can' which doesn't exist in the German. Whilst these inaccuracies don't detract from the substance of the arguments, they are frustrating - especially considering that Barth reception has frequently suffered from poor translations which have affected his interpretation in the English-speaking world. Likewise, I missed standardisation across essays with regards to the English translations: are the German passages to be included inline (as for example in Wesley Hill and Francis Watson's essay, which is my preferred model where space allows) to allow for easy comparison of the German and English; or are the German originals just to be footnoted (as with essays from Martin Westerholm and Andrew B. Torrance).

Some chapters open up promising avenues for new research: for instance, if we take seriously Watson's suggestion that *Römer II* (1922) is 'a kind of workshop in which Barth develops a conceptuality that finds its proper home in the orderly world of the Church Dogmatics' (p. 69) - and the evidence Watson brings to the table suggests we should indeed take this proposal seriously - then a detailed comparison of both *Römer II* and the earlier *Römer I* (1919) would be instructive. It would also be interesting to look at the wider corpus of Barth's work - not least his letters from the period - to ask the question why this might be the case, when other exegetical works he was producing around the same time - for example his work on Ephesians (1921) or James (1922/3) stayed much

closer to the commentary form, as indeed do his later exegetical cycles in the same decade. Likewise Grant Macaskill indicates in his discussion of Barth on Christ and Adam where there are potentially helpful areas in Barth's dogmatic commitments which address the nature of correspondence and discontinuity within the apocalyptic school of Pauline studies. Such questions of course go beyond the scope of what can be argued in a single chapter, but point to exciting new avenues that this volume at times opens up.

David Bunce
Project Vienna, Austria

David B. Hunsicker, The Making of Stanley Hauerwas: Bridging Barth and Postliberalism (IVP, 2019)

I don't like labels: when used of oneself in any unqualified sense they tend towards presumptuousness and imprecision; when used of another they usually betray a lazy labelling that enables dismissal rather than serious critical engagement. Consequently I find the question of whether or not Stanley Hauerwas is truly Barthian (or post-liberal for that matter) both uninteresting and distracting. Though Hauerwas often uses the term 'Barthian' in self-reference to the best of my knowledge he never does so without some judicious qualification. But, if the reader can set aside such reaction to labels, what is offered in this study is as good an introduction to Hauerwas's thought and its origins as any other of which I am aware.

In his brief foreword to this study Hauerwas himself identifies his 'Barthianism' as the recognition that 'theology is best done in conversation with other theologians... '[w]hat one learns from watching Barth carry on his conversations is how well he listens to his friends... and his foes' (p. x). That Hauerwas listens attentively to Barth, as also to Aurelius Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Wesley, John Howard Yoder - not to mention Anthony Trollope - is indisputable even if one might not always concur with his interpretative discussions but, in response to a range of Hauerwas's detractors, Hunsicker is confident that, notwithstanding Hauerwas's criticisms of Barth, the direct (rather than indirect) influence of Barth on his thinking can be demonstrated and defended.

Hauerwas's chief criticism of Barth is that he deems that 'Barth may have given an account of Christian doctrine in which the material conditions necessary to make doctrine intelligible were not accounted for sufficiently' *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (Eerdmans/SCM, 2010), p. 87. However, Hauerwas's corrective focus on the community of the church is seen by many of his critics as a return to the anthropocentric Liberal Protestantism that he, following Barth, so resolutely rejects. Indicative of this lapse into Liberalism, for many of Hauerwas's critics, is his use of casuistry, a term and a process of ethical reasoning that Barth repudiated. Hunsicker is perhaps at his strongest in his defence of Hauerwas at this point, drawing attention to what should be blindingly obvious, that Hauerwas's use of the term is entirely distinct from Barth's: here and throughout the study Hunsicker engages attentively with key interpreters of Barth together with key critics of Hauerwas before concluding that any perceived conflict between Barth and Hauerwas is more apparent than real. A similar defence of Hauerwas's Christology (and Christological rootedness) is similarly mounted and here perhaps the indebtedness of Hauerwas to Barth could have been yet more robust given the narrational structure of Barth's exposition of the Chalcedonian definition across IV/1,

IV/2, and IV/3 of the *Church Dogmatics*. Indeed, it is Barth's narrational expression of a Christological ontology together with his growing impatience with historical criticism that gives substance to the claimed indebtedness to Barth of key post-liberal and narrative theologians (inexcusably using such labels as theological short-hand): it is not that Hauerwas lacks ontology but that he, like Barth, renders that ontology in narrational form, through the narrative of the Christian community and the stories of individual Christian disciples.

And here, surely, we encounter the deepest distinction between Barth and Hauerwas: whereas Barth's focus is Christo-centric the focus for Hauerwas is unapologetically ecclesio-centric. At the beginning of this study Hunsicker questions whether or not this might represent 'a chastened return to a theology of the third article after Barth' (p.2) and notes that the possibility of a Spirit-centred dogmatics seems to have been considered by Barth himself towards the end of his life. If, however, Hunsicker had continued to read the article he here cites (fn.3) he would have discovered that Barth goes on to dismiss the possibility precisely as courting a return to the anthropocentrism of Schleiermacher in the guise of pneumatology. But rather more 'odd' (and telling) is Hunsicker's following comment that he intends 'the term slightly differently, expanding "third article" to necessarily include its ecclesiological dimension in tandem with its pneumatological'. If Barth can be (and has been) criticised for subsuming a doctrine of the Spirit into a doctrine of the Word then maybe Hauerwas can correspondingly be criticised, not so much for subsuming a doctrine of Christ into his doctrine of the Church (though the criticism persists) as for subsuming a doctrine of the Spirit into a doctrine of the Church. Here perhaps is an indebtedness of Hauerwas to Barth that is debilitating in both writers.

John E. Colwell
Budleigh Salterton, Devon.

Ellen F. Davis, Opening Israel's Scriptures (Oxford University Press, 2019)

This is a marvellous book. Its an introduction to the Old Testament, suitable for those students wanting to understand how to read the Old Testament, but full of insight for those who have read and studied its pages for a long time. Ellen Davis has been scholar of the Old Testament for over thirty years and her long engagement with the text is evident as she takes the reader book by book offering literary, theological, historical, exegetical commentary.

The longer books get two chapters each — each book of the Pentateuch, 1 Kings, Isaiah, and the Psalms. Almost every book is engaged with apart from some of the shorter minor prophets — Joel, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah and Malachi. Davis explains this is for 'economy of presentation', although I would have like some brief treatments. Also chapters on some other books are shorter than perhaps expected due to Davis more extended treatment of them elsewhere — see her commentary on *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*.

Alongside being a scholar of the Old Testament, Davis is also a preacher, as evidence by several of her other books, most recently *Preaching the Luminous Word* (Eerdmans, 2016). This gives this introduction an eye not only for how the Old Testament might be studied, but also how it might be preached. She says her motivation for writing this book was a conviction that to read Old Testament is like Karl Barth said, to be invited into 'the new

world in the Bible.’ *Opening Israel’s Scriptures* is for Davis a work not merely of academic scholarship, but of ‘practical theology.’

Alongside teaching students for many years in North America, Davis has also spent time with and teaching East African students, especially in South Sudan. The book then seeks to include what she has learned not only from Western biblical scholarship, Jewish scholarship, but non-Western interpretations that often find a deeper connection with some of the stories, than those in Western contexts. This helps to ‘open up’ Israel’s scriptures as the title suggests.

Davis offers lots of ‘ah ah’ moments and help you make sense of the difficult and ‘boring’ bits of the Old Testament, not in explaining away, but in helping to read their purpose and their context. So she provides ways of imagining how one might preach from Leviticus, Joshua or Judges, not books a minister or preacher will often rush to. In the case of Joshua Davis suggests we are reading of a ‘metaphorical’ conquest and Judges is best read as ‘the beginning of the lengthy and unsparing critique of Israel’s national leadership.’ She argues in the case of 1 Kings that Solomon was never wise, that the book of the Esther is ‘the edgy Jewish joke in the Bible’ and that while the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles come in the middle of the Old Testament, they are better read as in the Hebrew Bible at the end and as such one step removed from the books of Samuel and Kings. Of Ezra and Nehemiah she makes some helpful comments on the troubling passages that condemn inter-marriage. With Chronicles Davis offers a way of explaining the supposed white washing of the kings in comparison to what we read in the Samuel-Kings account.

Most of us will never be able to master all the scholarship of every book in the Old Testament and so Davis brings to the fore some of those readings and her own interpretations which challenge some pre-judgments as non-specialist readers we might have and often better ways of receiving the Old Testament as theology, history and literature. She covers a huge amount of ground in 400 pages and does it with a skill that will make you, like Mary, ponder and treasure Israel’s story about God and herself.

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

Joel Marcus, John the Baptist in History and Theology (University of South Carolina, 2018)

Joel Marcus is probably most well-known for his 2-volume commentary on Mark in the Anchor Bible Commentary series. A brilliant achievement. This new book is part of a series of Studies of Biblical personalities — Walter Brueggeman has written a volume on Solomon, and other volumes look at Abraham, Caiaphas, Noah, David and most recently Bathsheba. Marcus’ book explores the question who was John the Baptist in history and theology. What might seem a straight-forward question is studied here by Marcus in seeking to see if the picture of John by the gospels is reliable or whether its been shaped by Christian interests.

Marcus seeks to examine the sources and explore: Who was John, in terms of Old Testament types and prophecies?; what was the purpose of John’s baptism?; what else did John preach?; who came to be baptised by John?; what was John’s subsequent

relationship to Jesus?; and what was Herod Antipas's relationship to Jesus? What becomes evident is that the sources 'disagree in some essentials.' Marcus' key argument is that 'there was serious competition between followers of the Baptist and followers of Jesus from the first century on' (p.9) and as such this shapes how John is presented in the gospels. The rest of the book seeks to make the case for the competition hypothesis and then a chapter on each of the questions asked above: John as a member of the Qumran, his Elijah role, the purpose of his baptism, his relationship to Jesus, and to Herod Antipas.

Marcus concludes his study by arguing that Christians have inherited a slanted picture of John that too readily exalts Jesus and ignores the 'independent significance' of John's ministry (p.114). It is Marcus' reading that it was only near the end of John's life that he came to view the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah. What emerges he suggests is that Jesus began in John's shadow, before emerging from it. John saw his own ministry has having an importance that too often gets quickly overlooked by the ministry of Jesus.

Most preachers have a preacher at least one sermon on John the Baptist, some probably a fair number, and they will occur most often in the season of Advent. This study of John invites us to see the wild prophet in something of his own light, independent of Jesus, and asks us to explore the implications for who John was and what he was about. Marcus challenges some of our fixed views of John, and with it, of Jesus, and suggests the relationship might have been somewhat different and so perhaps calls us to spend more time with John, before we rush to focus on Jesus. Marcus provides a careful study which alongside the six chapters is accompanied by eleven appendices. A good book for Advent.

Andy Goodliff

Belle Vue Baptist Church, Southend-on-Sea

Jesse Couenhoven, Predestination: A Guide for the Perplexed (T&T Clark, 2018)

Another useful offering in the *Guide for the Perplexed* series, this book deals with the tricky topic of predestination, and in my view Couenhoven tracks a clear and helpful course through the territory. This doctrine is one that many British preachers avoid today and one which perhaps, in the context of the secular liberalism of much of western culture, can seem almost old-fashioned. Couenhoven urges us to study it before dismissing it; that it is not fair to characterise it as Calvinistic pessimism, and notes that many of the giants of the faith have defended the doctrine. He reminds us that it can be understood hopefully as a relationship of love of humanity by God that precedes merit.

After a useful introductory chapter that situates the discussion and identifies the pros and cons of adherence to a belief in predestination, Couenhoven identifies for his readers some key landmarks in the development of the doctrine, exploring with balance the teachings of Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, and Barth. The main objections to predestination pivot around the concept of creaturely freedom and the problem of evil and have formed the centre of reflection for theologians from Augustine, who was the first to articulate the doctrine fully, onwards. All these great teachers in Christian history offer thoughtful responses, even if not always couched in the language we might use today.

The introduction itself is short, but helpfully outlines some really important material and resolves some common confusions. The author offers a clear distinction between predestination, divine foreknowledge and providence and also short explanations of common terms such as single and double predestination and infra- and supralapsarianism. This would be a great starting point for reading for students.

I liked in particular the way Couenhoven compares and analyses Luther and Calvin and sets them in a helpful frame of reference that does not make more of their differences than it should. The chapter on Barth exploring our election in Christ was succinct and enjoyable and, I think, a balanced and helpful piece of writing.

How does the book land? The final chapter is Couenhoven's own synthesis of his studies and sets out what he terms a 'moderate defence' of predestination. He argues that it offers true hope about an ultimate security in God's purposes for creation but also a more personal hope that our lives really do matter. The awkward squad of questions - control, luck, freedom, assurance, evil and hell - are addressed concisely yet thoroughly and Couenhoven concludes: 'In summary, my suggestion is that predestination either helps with the problem of divine goodness, when it is paired with an affirmation of universal salvation, or, when paired with a doctrine of hell, makes the problem not noticeably worse than it already is on libertarian views. A hopeful universalism like Barth's seems open to both of these possibilities. On grounds of epistemic humility it cannot rule hell out, yet it admits that universal salvation seems to make more theological sense. That may be the best way to offer hope while eschewing speculation'. This is a really useful addition to a series of books that deliver well-considered overviews of key doctrines with balance and commitment, and they are useful in teaching to cover a lot of ground quickly.

Sally Nelson
St Hild College, Yorkshire

Simon Cuff, Love in Action: Catholic Social Teaching for every church (London: SCM), 188pp

The issue of how the Church engages socially and politically with the world has caused controversy for many years and will no doubt continue to do so. Recently an article was published on The Gospel Coalition's website about Billy Graham and John Stott disagreeing about social responsibility at the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne in 1974. Roman Catholicism has not escaped this debate either.

This excellent book delves into Catholic Social Teaching (CST), sometimes described as "...the Catholic church's best kept secret", a body of theology which aims to engage the Catholic Church with the issues and problems of the world around, for example, economic, social and political concerns. Whilst it is generally accepted that CST grew from the Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* ("Of New Things"), written in 1891, Simon Cuff is keen to acknowledge other individuals who played a key role in the development of CST. Individuals such as Cardinal Henry Edward Manning and Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, who both had links to trade unions, and Thomas Aquinas whose ideas lie behind some of the intellectual framework of CST. It was the thinking of these individuals, and many others, which influenced the encyclical, written as a response to the social

problems occurring during rapid industrialisation – a situation that often pitted poor against rich.

Cuff dedicates a chapter to each of the key principles of CST, incidentally there seems to be some disagreement as to how many principles there are. It rather depends on the source you look at! Cuff opts for six, namely personal dignity, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, social sin and a preferential option for the poor. The chapters on the principles explore their backgrounds and ultimate outworking, but most helpfully contain the theological context and Biblical background for their existence. The cleaner/executive illustration in the chapter on ‘Solidarity’ is helpful and the EU example in the chapter on ‘Subsidiarity’ will probably make some smile and others cry given this country’s current situation!

Catholic Social Teaching has its supporters and its critics. Indeed, in the introduction, Graham Tomlin states that Catholic Social Teaching is not all “...leftie, trendy vicar stuff. A recipe for Marxism with a pointy roof.” The link of some of the early CST thinkers to trade unions will also cause some unease for some as will CST’s opposition to the death penalty. However, in chapter two, Cuff explains that socialism was condemned in *Rerum Novarum* and that Pope Leo defended private property as a natural right. Despite what critics may say, the encyclical was written partly due to the perceived threat of socialism and not in support of it.

The subject of chapter 6, ‘social sin’ is an interesting concept to read about and one which many will struggle with as it seems to move the responsibility for sin from the individual to structures and systems. Indeed, John Paul II was not comfortable with the idea of ‘structures of sin’ and more recent CST thinking has played down this angle, possibly due to the decline of Liberation Theology where it is originated. Overall, this is a well-written and informative book on an interesting topic. Indeed, it is a topic that should be of interest to all Christian traditions. CST may be “...the Catholic church’s best kept secret” but, as the book’s subtitle states itself, there is something in it “...for every church.”

Ian McDonald
Shirley Baptist Church

Angela Carpenter, Responsive Becoming: Moral formation in Theological, Evolutionary, and Developmental Perspective (Bloomsbury, 2019)

This text explores the relationship between the understanding of Christian theology about human becoming and the place of the grace of sanctification within the process. Carpenter explains her two-pronged approach. Primarily she provides an historical excavation and retrieval of Reformed sanctification looking at three key voices and perspectives on this. She follows this with an interdisciplinary dialogue with the sciences of human nature — engaging with evolutionary anthropology and developmental psychology.

The early chapters take the first prong approach in the form of a theological analysis. It examines John Calvin’s doctrine of sanctification where the understanding of God as a loving parent is the foundation for moral transformation. This is followed by the account of English puritan John Owen as the focus for the second chapter. This helps to clarify

the core of Reformed commitment to sanctification and expresses something of the theological anxiety around the subject of grace and divine integrity. The third chapter then offers the opposing stance of Horace Bushnell, American Congregationalist. Bushnell argues that the natural connection between parent and child and the familial care received in childhood is what shapes the will and character of the child. He did not see this as competing with grace but as a means of grace. Arguably this could be seen to build on from what Calvin presents.

The next two chapters of the book pick up the interdisciplinary exchange about human nature considering what it means to be human; and evaluating contemporary moral development research that highlights developmental psychology and key aspects of caregiving relationships. Before concluding the book with a synthesis of both the theological and social science accounts to identify the significance of nurturing relationships as a gateway to encountering the divine and a means of grace.

The book is rich in its analysis, subsequently not a quick nor easy read. It offers a robust argument for its focus on childhood and the significance of this in the parent child relationship but also the theological dis-ease that children have always raised. The examination of each of the theologians identifies sanctification being rooted in relationship. For Calvin this was the relationship in faith to Christ; for Owen it is the explicit work of the Spirit despite an individual's implicit awareness of it; and Bushnell's view that it is the normal human social formation that provides the means for the Spirit to work through. Moral formation is a complex aspect of human becoming and Carpenter helpfully brings a multi-faceted approach.

Sian Hancock
Bristol

Naomi Thompson, Young People and Church Since 1900: Engagement and Exclusion (Routledge, 2018)

Exploring the engagement of young people with the Christian church, this book journeys from the peak of the Sunday School movement at the beginning of the twentieth century through to its decline and concern regarding the absence of young people in church today. Thompson is sharing her research focusing primarily on the affect of internal factors rather than the more commonly discussed changes external to churches. These are viewed through the lens of youth work principles, crucially the relational process of informal education that emphasizes the value of voluntary participation that enables choice and of course, the dialogue that helps build that relationship, deepens understanding and encourages participation.

There are three key themes emerging from the study. Firstly, the value of social currencies. These were foundational to the early Sunday School responding to identifiable community needs but has subsequently moved to the rigidity of traditional practices. Thompson argues that the more structured practice expects young people to adapt to fit in. She critiques the 'spiritual currency' that churches perceive young people need and argues that in doing so churches lose the mutuality of exchange becoming more didactic in teaching.

The second theme of institutionalisation helps to explain the barrier for Sunday Schools adapting to the social currencies. Thompson clarifies her use of this term to describe the process of church becoming more rigidly structured. It highlights the tension that often exists between those investing in Christian youth work provision and those employed as church youth workers. It questions whose needs are being met, the young people or the church. The argument draws on wider research to show the longevity of the tension and the breadth of this issue beyond the UK.

Discourses of decline is the third theme which highlights that this decline in attendance is not as new a phenomena as often assumed. Thompson's chronological map indicates that the number of young people attending church has steadily declined since the 1960s. She argues that attitudes towards young people have contributed to their alienation from the adult congregation and struggle to move from the youth activities to integrate into adult life within the church. Whilst Thompson discovered evidence of young people believing without a sense of belonging, she also learned of many believing but feeling indifferent to the religious education and dislocation from community needs to the more insular 'family church'.

Thompson concludes that individual churches can be instrumental in their own decline. She argues for faith-based community work that is integral to youth work practice and looks beyond the confines of the church. There is much to be learned from the youth work model that:

- identifies, responds to and engages with community needs
- allows folk to engage with faith on their terms by providing space for meaningful exploration and discussion
- supports a young person's integration with the wider church/denomination specific rituals and practices.

Thompson reminds the reader that over time the voice of those leading Sunday school and youth work have been quietened in the structures mirroring that of the young people who believe but have little sense of belonging. She strongly argues that with belonging comes belief into adulthood and to belong, young people must be accepted into the wider social community of the church. It seems to me that this book bears hope to 'those who have ears, listen.'

Sian Hancock
Bristol

William L. Pitts, Jr., (ed.), Baptists and Revivals: Papers from the Seventh International Conference on Baptist Studies (Mercer University Press, 2018), 429pp.

David Bebbington, in the introduction to this collection of conference papers, defines revival as 'an intensification of spiritual life accompanied by a significant number of conversions'. His characterisation of the phenomenon runs like a thread through many of the contributions to this fascinating volume. The authors trace the contours of revival as it found expression in Baptist life and witness from the eighteenth to the twentieth-first century across a range of geographical regions: North America, Europe, and the Majority World.

Although international in scope, the vast majority of chapters explore the diverse facets of revival among Baptists in English speaking regions of the North Atlantic world. Part One directs attention to revival among Baptists in the United States and Canada. Chris Chun highlights the formative influence of the New England theologian Jonathan Edwards upon Baptists in America and Britain. Edwards was important due to his theological treatises, but also because of his account of David Brainerd, a missionary to Native Americans. It captured imaginations and inspired new initiatives in witness to the Gospel. Rosalie Beck continues the story of revivals among Baptists in America with an overview of Baptists in the southern states: North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Beck notes the critique of Jon Butler of the First Great Awakening ‘that the colonial religious movement in the South was not a true revival because the born-again Christians did not abolish slavery’ (p33). Rather than engage with this critique, Beck almost immediately asserts that, ‘contemporary scholarship affirms something revolutionary took place between 1755-1785 that planted Baptists throughout the South and brought thousands of ordinary folk into organized Christianity’ (p33). The cohabitation of revival and slave ownership remains a troubling feature of American Christianity and merits further scrutiny. The complicity of British Christianity with the North Atlantic slave also stands in need of exhumation and examination. These shadows of the past remind us that every generation of Christians runs the risk of living selectively under the Lordship of Christ.

C. Douglas Weaver recounts Baptist interactions with the early Pentecostal movement centred on the Azusa Street revival in 1906. He points out that interest in the Holy Spirit did not suddenly erupt out of nowhere. In the late nineteenth century, Wesleyans thirsted for the Holy Spirit in a quest for sanctification. The Keswick holiness tradition from England and Americans such as D. L. Moody and R. A. Torrey taught that a ‘second baptism’ of the Spirit empowered witnessing to the Gospel. In other words, evangelicals were looking for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Welsh Revival occurred in 1904 and several other revivals broke out at around the same time in different parts of the world. The Spirit is not the possession of any one people or any part of the world. Joseph Smale, a Baptist minister in Los Angeles, was expectantly preaching and looking for the empowering of the Spirit. Baptist responses to Azusa Street varied from sympathetic support by pastors such as Joseph Smale (see above) and Adolphus Spalding Worrell (a scholar in Greek and editor of many Baptist newspapers) to critical rejection from Baptists wary of emotionalism and convinced that the gifts of the Spirit died out with the Apostles. Weaver observes, ‘Baptists drawn to Pentecostal revival came from a Baptist background warmed by revival and a quest for a direct personal encounter with God’ (p86). He is surely correct that Baptists and Pentecostals both exhibit restorationist tendencies in the stories of their origins, convinced that they manifested true expressions of New Testament Christianity. Baptists claimed an authentic church order. Pentecostals claimed an authentic experience of the Spirit. Both these streams of the church offer salutary warnings of the dangers of reducing faithfulness to the Gospel to one ingredient, thus diminishing the Gospel.

Keith S. Grant reflects upon the impact of reading literature on the emotional life of evangelical Christians in the nineteenth century through a careful engagement with the diary of Edward Manning, a British Colonial settler in Nova Scotia (Canada). The ready availability of books (e.g., biographies) and magazines (e.g., mission journals), compared to earlier generations, coincided with an emotional sensibility in evangelical piety. Manning and some of his contemporaries wondered if the surfeit of publications

distracted from reading the Bible. Anxiety also emerged in relation to the sheer volume of material to read. How did one choose what to read? (A question every theological educator ponders when deciding which books to recommend to students!) A consequence of missionary literature in the Victorian era is that it prompted evangelicals to think about people in the colonies. 'Reading the outpouring of missionary literature was the primary means of "bringing the Empire home"' (p125). Weaver suggests that missionary literature enabled readers to 'imagine, or perhaps feel, their connection in that global community [the British Empire as a kind of shared project of the nation]' (p125). In practice, Weaver, suggests, drawing on the experience of Manning, the reader of missionary literature was moved to feel in three ways. First, Edward Manning exhibits sympathy for the missionaries in their adversity and suffering. Second, Manning experiences pity for colonial peoples. Third, Manning expressed gratitude for "'our superior privileges'" (p127). Perceived differences in race and real inequality in power between missionary and indigenous peoples hover unexamined in the background of this perspective. Further chapters consider revivalism and fund raising in the Southern Baptist Convention, student led revivals at Baylor University and the remarkable witness of Isabel Crawford, a Canadian Baptist missionary to Native Americans.

Part Two of *Baptists and Revivals* attends to Europe, mainly England and Scotland, and concludes with a late flourish acknowledging Baptist presence and activity on the Continent. Theology and theological education figure prominently in the accounts of revival in England. Peter Morden sketches the life, ministry and changing theological convictions of Andrew Fuller and his impact upon revival among Particular Baptists in the eighteenth century. Morden's study is a sobering reminder that theology does not occur in a vacuum and it has consequences. The introspective Puritan spirituality Fuller practiced for much of his life, experience of bereavement, personal temperament, and High Calvinism, which minimised the importance of human agency in responding to the Gospel, resulted in 'a lack of invitational evangelistic preaching' (149). Through reading the works of Jonathan Edwards and the influence of friends (Robert Hall, Snr, John Ryland, and John Sutcliff) he 'adopted an evangelical Calvinism' (149) that permitted the offering of Christ to the unconverted. Anthony Cross emphasises the influential role of theological education in Particular Baptist revival. Baptist commitment to theological education emerged at a moment when the church appeared to be at a low point of vitality. There was no dispute that the Holy Spirit was the agent of revival. Yet, the concept of "'means'" or the recognition that human agency had a place within the purposes of God resulted in a commitment to educating ministers capable of nurturing the faithful and communicating the Gospel to unbelievers. Such an agenda, understandably, prioritised biblical languages, preaching, and evangelism. Cross observes, with some irony, that "The importance of theology for the Evangelical Revival in general and among the Baptists in particular is widely recognized, but what is less noted is that theology requires the provision of theological education' (179). How we think about God remains critical and access to theological education continues to be of primary concern to Baptists across the globe. The nature of provision for theological education may change with time and across cultures, but the requirement to think theologically in ways faithful to the Gospel is a constant theme among Baptists. Other chapters in this section tell the stories of Baptist experience in England and Scotland during the Second Evangelical Awakening in 1859-1865, revival among Scottish Baptists in the early twentieth century, Baptist Chaplains and revival at the front in the First World War, Baptists in Lithuania, and the evangelistic ministries of three Romanian Baptists. The reviewer heard Iosif Ton preach and met him many years ago, and can testify to the forcefulness of his personality and power of his preaching!

The final section on Baptists in the Majority World makes interesting detours to New Zealand (once more to the English speaking world), Nigeria, and Bangladesh. The rapid expansion of Baptists in Nigeria contrasts with the more modest gains in Bangladesh, but each community represents an important example of witness in cultural milieus outside the Western world. Baptist growth in Nigeria has occurred in the midst of rapid social change, massive population growth, Civil War, and conflict with Islam in Northern Nigeria. Simon Ajayi, author of the chapter on Baptists in Nigeria, reflects that with increased violence and social disruption in Northern Nigeria a new emphasis on ecumenism across Christian denominations is emerging. The stories of Baptists in Nigeria and Bangladesh are potent reminders that revival can come at great human cost.

Baptists and Revivals is a worthwhile read and contains much of interest and relevance for Baptists in the twenty-first century. There are, however, several significant lacunae. The section on Baptists in North America is bereft of any study of revival among Black Baptists who constitute a major part of the Baptist story in that region of the world. It also skirts around the uncomfortable fact that White Baptist churches, which grew through revival, inhabited social worlds at ease with slavery, Jim Crow, and segregation. The section on Europe, especially the parts that explore the significance of theology for enabling Baptists to look outwards and engage in evangelism within the borders of Great Britain and the far reaches of the British Empire, do not address the sense of “superior privileges” that continued alongside the impulses to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples and abolish slavery. The Continent of Europe is a sliver of content in the section on Europe and the Majority World is, well, a minority report. Baptists in the Majority World remain largely invisible to the reader of *Baptists and Revivals*. The trajectory of this volume is very much in tune with the assumption that Baptist origins lie in England and spread to North America. Robert Johnson’s suggestion in *A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) that Baptist history and identity is better served by recognising the emergence of multiple centres of life and witness, that is, a polycentric approach to the worldwide Baptist movement, will, hopefully, enable broader historiographical horizons to frame future international conferences of Baptist Studies.

Julian Gotobed
University of Roehampton, London

Helen D. Morris, Flexible church: being the church in the contemporary world (SCM, 2019)

One image of the pioneer church planter is of the explorer building bridges to new places. Actually, explorers and cartographers both have a passion for making the undiscovered known but approach the matter in different ways. One will eagerly leave the safety of the known, aiming to find new places and people, driven by a dissatisfaction with the present and by an enthusiasm to blaze a trail. The other will want to trace the origins of the expedition, analyse the route taken and describe where it has reached in such a way that others may then decide if the same route is appropriate for them. They complement one another.

There is now a growing body of theology on church planting, fresh expressions, emerging church and so on. While pioneers are theologically aware as well as entrepreneurial, there is a sense that the ecclesiology of these new approaches to church

have necessarily been playing catch-up in charting new and evolving pathways that others may choose to explore for themselves, avoiding the traps and blind corners.

In *Flexible Church*, Helen Morris offers an ecclesiology for innovative expressions of church, intended to give practitioners a new model to enable them better to navigate the jungle of culture. Her aim is to encourage the contemporary church to maintain both flexibility and stability in order to communicate and demonstrate the good news of Jesus faithfully in a range of different contexts.

Morris is BA course leader and lecturer in applied theology at Moorlands College. This book draws upon her doctoral thesis and is motivated by questions arising from her personal experience of a wide variety of church in different locations and cultures. A repeating theme in her exploration is the contention that culture has changed massively in the past 50 or 60 years but that church had not adapted adequately in response. In too many cases, she found that the internal culture of western churches made for high barriers to entry for those outside the circle. Within the wider culture this often leads to a stilted view of church which frequently tends toward parody – perhaps with some justification.

Morris is plainly familiar with the key thinkers and pioneer theologians in the field of emerging / contextual church (for example: Mission Shaped Church, Moynagh, Frost and Hirsch) and handles prevailing concepts with assurance. She identifies various tensions and influences relevant to pioneering churches. A key distinctive of her approach is to appreciate but then set aside an ecclesiology drawn from social trinitarianism, preferring to draw upon the body theology found in the Pauline letters. She offers well-referenced and argued chapters explaining her choice.

The second part of the book advances a new framework for church in the form of the image of a suspension bridge. This 3-dimensional model offers two main anchoring points on opposite banks: a looking back at what we have inherited (Christ's birth, death, resurrection and ascension) and a looking forward to Christ's return. The two main compression towers represent conflict and suffering. The main cables at the height of the bridge reflect transcendence and immanence. Spiritual and religious influences form the vertical suspension cables. Finally, the streams flowing in different directions under the bridge betoken cultural, countercultural and institutional drivers and themes.

Suspension bridges are flexible by their nature and the flexibility in the book's title reflects her contention that there are tolerances and tensions in the relational directions of the church (up, down, in, out, of, towards and between). The bridge model is a serious attempt to bring together a range of influences which summarise the complexity of these tensions. However, her use of the bridge image characterised by gift-exchange is just too complicated to be memorable or, I fear, of any practical assistance to pioneers or ecclesialogists. In my opinion the model lacks coherence and a sufficiently developed rationale. As a model it is over-worked.

More positively, this work reminds us that there are alternative understandings of the church to sit alongside social trinitarianism. It is a thoughtful and reflective book that will earn its place in the ecclesiology section of theological college libraries; less so in the pockets of bridge-building pioneers.

Ivan King

Timothy Larsen and Michael Ledger-Lomas (eds.), The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions. Vol III: The Nineteenth century (Oxford University Press, 2017), 546 pp.

This third volume in a five-volume series, conceived to complement the Oxford History of Anglicanism, explores the Dissenting tradition from a global perspective, and this third volume on the Nineteenth Century is divided into five parts: traditions within Britain and Ireland; Traditions outside Britain and Ireland; Reflection; Activism and Congregation and living. The series editors acknowledge some of the challenges of terminology — in Britain this is more commonly called the Free Church tradition, for instance, and Presbyterianism in many places globally (and in Scotland and Ireland) constitutes a 'state church' in the form of, for instance, The Church of Scotland or the Korean Presbyterians, as does Methodism in Fiji. But this volume takes the broadest view and includes all who are not Anglican, Catholic, or Orthodox, (Pentecostals and charismatics being but a twinkle in the ecclesial eye in the Nineteenth century.)

The reason to distinguish Britain and Ireland from the rest of the world is not only an expression of the publisher's English context, but also because most of the Dissenting tradition has its origins within these isles and has represented one of the most significant "contributions to world history ... its multifaceted impact on religious life, thought, and practice. In particular, this one corner of Christendom has proven unusually fertile for the germination of new forms of Christianity" (xviii). From 1700 to 1930 English-speakers grew from over 12 million to 200 million, and Dissent benefited from this growth. It is easy to forget that what was so determinative for the Nineteenth century Dissenting mindset — the conflict between church and state, with Congregationalists and Baptists the fiercest critics of establishment — was by no means so significant elsewhere in the British Empire, especially given that 'the most successful Dissenters around the Empire were often Methodists whose position on church-state relations struck Congregationalists or Baptists as impure' (p4). A second mark of Dissent in that century was a fixation on the Bible as "the watermark of Dissent," (p6) a theme that Mark A. Noll explores in his chapter. This is part and parcel of that very British Dissenting conviction that Christ is head of the Church, and Scripture its activating force, with church members free to exercise private judgment and individual conscience in reading it.

A third theme in this set of essays, explored in the Introduction, is the way in which Dissent towards the end of the century, at least in Britain, tended to be hard to maintain, as Michael Watts has demonstrated: "Dissenters were gripped by a determination to impress their cultivated despisers, investing in ministerial education, 'Suburban Gothic', and fashionable theologies of divine immanence and evolution" (p7).

The authors of the various chapters are largely British or American academic, including the Spurgeon's College Research fellows Ian Randall (on Baptists) and Tim Grass (on Restorationists and New Movements), as well as that doyen of Evangelical studies David Bebbington (on Theology). Alongside Grass and Randall, in the first part, are Timothy Larsen on Congregationalists, Thomas Kennedy on Quakers, Michael Ledger-Lomas on Unitarians and Presbyterians and Janice Holmes on Methodists and Holiness. The second part explores the North American history, in similar if not exactly identical

configurations. Perhaps a weakness is the relative slimness of the chapter on the rest of the world, concentrating on Australia, New Zealand and Cape Colony. Almost two thirds of this volume comprise these two sections. These chapters could be described as lying between a lengthier denominational history and a shorter encyclopedia-style article and so will prove useful to the undergraduate student of church history.

Parts three to five explore themes such as Scripture or theology, and these chapters are perhaps less successful, suffering from the tight word limits in such a volume — greedily, I wanted more. Thus for all the excellence of his chapter, Bebbington covers his these in response to the Enlightenment legacy — Calvinism, Armenianism — and the impact of Romanticism. Andrew R. Holmes writes a useful chapter on missions and revivals, and Eugenio Biagini another on politics and social reform, extending the strict Nineteenth century into ‘the long-Nineteenth’ up until the outbreak of war in 1914 to include the triumph of the ‘Non-conformist’ conscience and polity in the 1906 victory for the Liberal Party, and brief canter through the crisis over Irish home rule. Michael Ledger-Lomas contributes a further chapter on ministers and their training, while Densil Morgan writes about the spirituality and worship of this Dissenting tradition — conversion experience, and the Sunday morning service of worship. The Independent Thomas Binney, of the influential King’s Weigh House, is credited with shortening the sermon from the usual hour or more to thirty or forty minutes — still the norm for many Baptist sermons even today. The place of Holy Communion is explored and the role of hymns and music.

Footnotes are plentiful throughout, with a select bibliography at the close of each chapter (no inclusive bibliography is present) and an index: sufficient for the style of this volume that aims for clarity of description without undue detail to detract from the larger themes.

Given the cost I assume the book will grace few personal collections, other than that belonging to the dedicated church historian, but it should become indispensable for college and University libraries, alongside its companion volumes, and will serve both Dissenting and Anglican or Catholic students well.

Paul Goodliff
Churches Together in England.

Barbara Brown Taylor, Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others
(Canterbury, 2019)

In the middle of the last century, various Christian writers, speakers and activists were household names even among those outside the church. Dick Shepherd, Leslie Weatherhead, C. S. Lewis, Tubby Clayton and David Sheppard among several others. In the present day, there are few Christian writers with anything approaching the same level of public name recognition. For a Christian and a priest to be a New York Times bestselling author, therefore, is remarkable. A new work by Barbara Brown Taylor needs to be appreciated, not least as her name may be as well known in the pew as in the pulpit.

Taylor is an Episcopalian priest. She lived out her holy orders in pastoral ministry for some years until she experienced a crisis. Her description of the specifics of the crisis in the early part of this book suggest that her priestly calling began to satisfy her spiritually

less and less. She mentions some of the signs that might tend towards a diagnosis of burnout: compassion fatigue, loss of faith in the church and so on. Yet — in a retrospective rationale that reorders what was plainly a very difficult time for her — she now interprets this as new kind of calling: to move on from her former boundaries of church and priesthood to pursue faith in God in new places and through new and strange eyes.

She accepted an invitation to leave the pastorate to take up a teaching position at Piedmont College (a local higher education college in Georgia), to teach religion at entry level. *Holy Envy* is the story of how she took a dry, fact-based course and enlivened this through personal encounters between her Bible-belt Christian students and practitioners of other faiths. This was plainly quite a stretch for her students who were largely unaware of other faiths and had their understanding flavoured with folk prejudices. By interacting with those of other faiths, would their own Christian faith be in jeopardy? Weren't all Muslims terrorists? The impression received is that, for her students, faith was often not something subjected to rigorous reflection but was accepted uncritically. Their worldview was, perhaps, limited by the faith they had inherited, their location in a rural setting in Georgia and by the lack of familiarity that comes about when you are constantly surrounded by people just like you. The success of the revised religion syllabus is shown in the wondering, enquiring minds of the students, liberated from their inherited faith to begin to explore for themselves. Over time the course becomes one of the most sought-after by students at the college.

The narrative tracks a parallel story of the author's own exploration of her Christian faith beyond her former boundaries. It records her appreciation of hints and traces of God in the faith and practices of others from very different backgrounds. The title derives from a former Lutheran bishop of Stockholm who offered some guidelines for interfaith encounters and conversations:

1. When trying to understand another religion, you should ask the adherents of that religion and not its enemies.
2. Don't compare your best to their worst.
3. Leave room for holy envy.

I have experienced holy envy, not least when living for 28 years in a Muslim majority neighbourhood when the streets on Friday would be crowded with the warm, good-hearted brotherhood of Muslims walking together to Jumma prayers. This stood in contrast with the process of going to church on Sunday: most people drove a similar distance and not a few seemed to be relieved once inside and out of public scrutiny. Once again with Muslim friends, I have envied their lack of self-consciousness in pausing a video to pray at the set times. Such holy envy can help us to reflect upon our own expression of faith and to ask how it is perceived by others.

Some will read this book and feel that Taylor is drifting away from the centrality of Christ in her faith, toward an uncomfortable relativism. There is certainly ammunition for this point of view in the text. I suspect that when considering this book readers will tend to hold one of two views. The first will declare that anything which does not give the unique centrality to Jesus Christ is flawed (I would agree) and quite possibly demonic at root. The alternative would be to recognise that Christ described himself as The Truth and that there may be imperfect echoes or hints of The Truth in unexpected places. For example, in the created world or in the sincere but flawed understandings of others. If I have grasped Taylor's main theme, it is that danger lies in failing to recognise the flaws in

our own understandings and practices and our shared brokenness with all our fellow humans. She helpfully, though uncomfortably, highlights disagreements within the main branches of the Christian church to illustrate this. So many of our religious practices and language tend to build exclusive communities characterised by suspicion of others.

To describe something as popular theology is to condemn it for some. Yet her theme self-evidently resonates with plenty of Christians and others. Pastors will find far more people in their congregations reading Taylor than other, apparently more serious works. What I will take from this book is Taylor's openness to being surprised by God in strange and unexpected places. To treat others' experiences with the same respect we hope they will show to ours. To be grateful for anything that may point towards the one Truth that others — and we — understand imperfectly.

Ivan King
Southend on Sea

Ian Stackhouse, Letters to a Young Pastor: Reflections on Leadership, Community, and the Gospel of Grace (Cascade, 2019)

In this brief, eminently readable book, Ian Stackhouse distils the wisdom gleaned from twenty five years of pastoral ministry into sixty short letters (none of which is longer than three pages), ostensibly written to someone starting out as sole pastor in what Ian describes as an average size, fairly contemporary Baptist church. A clear thread running through the letters is a much-needed affirmation of the traditional, core roles of ministry: visiting, pastoral care, prayer and preaching the word. It also provides a healthy antidote to the unhelpful expectation that a minister should live up to the executive model of being a successful 'church growth' leader.

Timothy, the fictional recipient of these letters, is married with a young child, and there are valuable insights here into the pressures that pastoral ministry can bring to bear on family life, and many trials and joys that befall ministers are honestly explored. The opening letters quickly establish this book's credentials as common misapprehensions about ministry are effectively brought out into the open and addressed.

It is a jewel of a book, in that it packs a wealth of insight into 116 pages that can be read in under an hour, but merit pondering at length. Does it cover every angle? By no means, but it does cover a lot of ground. It should, I think, be read by everyone starting out in ministry, and can be read with benefit by anyone within ministry, even those who (like myself) find that they not agree with everything that Ian says. Church secretaries and deacons could learn some valuable lessons from it as well.

While Ian acknowledges that some of the letters 'are a bit strong', the tone is always supportive and never overbearing or patronising. And Ian is honest enough about his own experiences in the introduction to lay to rest any concerns that, as both the real and implied author of these letters, he is setting himself on any kind of pedestal. He writes out of his experience of being a mentor, and the letters to Timothy exemplify the kind of supportive relationship a good mentor would have with a NAM. Ian expresses the hope that his book 'will encourage a new generation of pastors in the church to hold fast to the best of their vocational instincts'. It hits the bullseye and is highly recommended.

Tim Carter
Brighton Road Baptist Church, Horsham

Denis C. Bustin and Barry H. Howson, Zealous for the Lord: The Life and Thought of the Seventeenth-Century Baptist Hanserd Knollys (Monographs in Baptist History; Pickwick, 2019)

Hanserd Knollys is probably not as well known as he should be - certainly that is the opinion of the authors of this slim volume, and it is one shared by this reviewer. Bustin and Howson are both experts on Knollys, and this book is the distillation of their expertise and enthusiasm for him. Cast as a biography, *Zealous for the Lord* takes the reader through key moments of Knollys' life, from his early years as the son of a Lincolnshire vicar, through his own ordination, and then to his move into non-conformity. Having become convicted that his life and ministry were based on works and not grace, Knollys prayed a prayer of repentance, marking his conversion to Calvinism and leading, after an unhappy three year sojourn with the separatists in New England, to him eventually aligning himself with the Particular Baptists. On his return to England, he spent some time as a school teacher, and then as an army chaplain on the Parliamentary side. His preaching ministry in London and further afield attracted large crowds and great opposition, including the infamous episode in Suffolk when he was attacked in the pulpit (something this reviewer has written about at length elsewhere).

Knollys preaching proclaimed the essential equality of all people in Christ, regardless of their ethnicity, or social standing, and he called for toleration and liberty for all Christ's people; and he called for conversion to a life of personal holiness. He had fully embraced Baptist theology by the time of the 1646 revision of the First London Confession, and after a brief period of sympathy to the Leveller movement, settled in the less radical (and less politicised) position of calling for spiritual, rather than material, equality for all. However, Knollys' radical streak was not fully sated, and during the commonwealth years he flirted with the apocalyptic millenarianism of the Fifth Monarchists, eventually fleeing to Holland for a few years after serving three months in Newgate Prison following the restoration of the monarchy in 1661.

It was the last thirty years of his life, until his death in 1691, that saw the majority of Knollys' writings, all produced in a context of opposition and persecution towards those who would not submit to the Church of England. Bustin and Howson provide a helpful overview of these, locating them within Knollys' life including the impact on him of the death of his wife. The picture that emerges is of a pastor seeking to theologically interpret the momentous personal, political, and religious events of his time for himself and his congregation. He returned over and over again to the theme of eschatology, relating the world 'that is' to the world 'that is to come', and he believed the millennial kingdom was imminent. His views on the Catholics, Muslims, and Jews were informed by his apocalypticism, as he sought to locate the events of the book of Revelation within his own context, believing that the millennium would be inaugurated by the year 1688.

The final chapter asks the question of what 'Lessons we can learn from Hanserd Knollys'? His life and ministry spanned the formative years of the Baptist movement, through the civil wars and up to the Glorious Revolution, and in all this he sought to be faithful to the truth as it was revealed to him. A passionate preacher and pastor, he was nonetheless pragmatic enough to recognise that times and people change, and the

presentation of the gospel must similarly be adapted. Bustin and Howson describe him as, ‘a wonderful example of a godly pastor/leader whose life and ministry demonstrated a heart for the gospel of Jesus Christ... he called sinner to believe and repent; professors of the faith to make sure they have the power of godliness as well as the form of it; and saints to live unto God.’ (pp95, 97). A fitting epitaph for a lesser known Baptist hero of the faith.

Simon Woodman
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

Joanna Collicutt, Lucy Moore, Martyn Payne and Victoria Slater, Seriously Messy: Making Space for Families to talk together about Death and Life (Bible Reading Fellowship, 2019)

What I like about the Messy Church team at BRF is that they continue to keep thinking about how Messy Church can grow. The first three books, *Messy Church*, *Messy Church 2*, and *Messy Church 3*, were largely full of ideas for Messy Church sessions and they could have simply kept going with that — they have with their quarterly magazine — but alongside coming up with a continual set of possible ideas, they have looked to think more deeply. So they have published *Messy Church Theology*, *Making Disciples in Messy Church*, *Messy Togetherness*, *Being Messy*, *Being Church*, *Messy Hospitality* and more. Each one of these titles wants to offer a richer, deeper sense of being church through this fresh expression.

This latest book, *Seriously Messy* seeks to help Messy Churches tackle death and dying. They continue to stretch the conversation into areas you might not first expect in an all-age, multi-generational setting. The first part sets out why it's important we talk about death and with the whole church family, but also the care in how we go about that. Part two offers some theological reflections on remembering, saying goodbye, sleeping tight, being loved and finding safe spaces and the final part then provides how this might all be explored during a Messy Church session.

Seriously Messy is a great resource if you do Messy Church, challenging you to explore themes and parts of life often left untouched. The book is also helpful to any church that sees a need, or accepts the invitation, to talk death and dying in an all-age context. It might even be helpful to a family that has experienced bereavement and is looking for words and way to respond to that death.

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

Natalie Collins, Out of Control: Couples, Conflict and the Capacity for Change (SPCK, 2019)

As I read this book three popular dramas/Soaps were featuring storylines that included different strands of domestic abuse. The author is keen to point us to that precise phrase ‘domestic abuse’ rather than ‘domestic violence’ as that narrows our thinking in this field which is admirably portrayed in one of the story lines. In *EastEnders* the ‘classic’

domestic violence is portrayed as a 'perfect' husband attacks his wife whenever he believes she has annoyed, angered or put him down in public. He apologises afterwards but squarely places the blame on his wife for her alleged misdemeanour. In *Holby City* coercive behaviour is shown as phrases like: 'you're broken, you can't cope, and you need me' are used to undermine and control a talented doctor. This then escalates into violence and stalking. But the most interesting was one episode of *Doctors*. A woman calls the police to admit to setting fire to her house and asks to be arrested. Back at the station she begins to beg them to arrest her before a certain time. Everyone is baffled. Eventually husband arrives and turns out to be a solicitor who tries to get his wife to withdraw her statement. The police officer manages to get her on her own and she tells him that her husband loves and cares for her, she has wanted for nothing. But then, as they talk, she explains she has no key to her house, no money, she never goes out without him. He's looking after me, she argues. Eventually there is a light bulb moment and she suddenly realises that she has been abused: controlled and coerced.

Therein lies the problem that this book is at pains to highlight. Domestic abuse can be very tricky to spot and even harder to bring out into the light as victims have been so effectively groomed they often don't realise what has been happening to them. On the other side of the coin apparent perfect relationships can mask sometimes horrific abuse. In churches that can be exacerbated by the view that no Christian would ever do something like this, alongside teaching, in some sections of the church, that male is superior and has authority over a female.

All of us: in and out of churches, will be familiar with supporting friends, family and colleagues through the ups and downs of relationships. But how often do we ask the question: Is there something more sinister going on? What would we do if the answer was, yes? (maybe that's why we don't 'look' or 'ask'?)

Over the course of a lifetime, 30% of women and 16% of men will be subjected to abuse by a partner, yet so many of us are unsure exactly what constitutes domestic abuse, and wouldn't know how to react if we, or one of our friends or family, found ourselves in a relationship with an abuser. Natalie focuses on domestic abuse towards women in this book but she acknowledges that it can happen to men as well)

Natalie starts right from the basics, exploring what domestic abuse is, why it is perpetrated and the impact it has on children and adults. Filled with case studies, including Natalie's own story, this book offers much-needed advice on how we can address domestic abuse, both as individuals and as a church community.

I found her list of 'tactics' that abusers use really helpful:

- The Humiliator
- The Isolater
- The Threatener
- The Exhauster
- The Brainwasher
- The All-Mighty
- The Demander
- The Nice One

If we think back to the scenarios I highlighted earlier some of these tactics can be clearly seen. Another important point she makes is that the focus tends to be on building women's self-esteem rather than challenging behaviour of the abuser. We are reminded that abuse grows from attitudes and values not feelings. We are challenged to look at the

Christian culture around us and ask how we frame relationships and the value and autonomy of individuals, of mutual care and valuing, as well as challenging the prevailing culture that surrounds us. As a minister I know my focus has been on the abused rather than the abuser.

Natalie Collins has been working to address domestic abuse issues for over a decade, working directly with women subjected to abuse and domestic abuse perpetrators, and training ordinands, church leaders and congregations on domestic abuse issues. However this book remains highly readable, and packed with insightful teaching and steeped in theological insight.

This book is full of energy, insight, quirks and personal narrative. It will make you cry and make you laugh. As one reviewer I read comments: finding humour in tragedy is Natalie's great gift, as is her refusal to be cowed by what she has gone through. She is an empathetic as she has over a decade's experience leading workshops, raising awareness and capturing national media attention in her work against domestic abuse. At the end of each chapter there are comments and prayers to help the reader process what they have just encountered.

This book is both realistic and hopeful, full of helpful insights and advice including indexes. It is a book all church leaders should read and actually all church members. It will shock and challenge you. It will make you look with new eyes at the relationships that surround you, or even your own. It gives insights as well as practical help as to what to do next including some really helpful appendices with a list of other helpful resources and a Safety Plan to work through with someone.

Someone may just be freed from abuse because you read this book, so read it!

Julie Aylward

Kendall Vanderslice, We Will Feast: Rethinking Dinner, Worship, and the Community of God (Eerdmans, 2019)

In this book Vanderslice visits a series of 'Dinner Churches' across America. Dinner Churches are those who organised their worship and life through the act of sharing food together — worship and eating are one and the same. While this is broadly shared across the churches she visits, each one is its own kind of dinner church, none are some kind of McDonaldized version, but instead have made their own journey. Vanderslice's reporting of these churches allows her to showcase how they each go about their life. A shared liturgy of some kind is often involved. Interwoven around each church is Vanderslice's own reflections on food, faith and worship. It would be an interesting exercise to see what kind of dinner churches exist in the UK, I'm sure there will be some, to hear their stories.

I liked the story of Saint Lydia's started in response to the loneliness of city life, and that of Southside Abbey which gathers for pizza in an art gallery, and of Potluck Church where everybody brings something.

I read this book reflecting on how my own might begin a form of dinner church and there is much that is helpful in thinking about this might look and what's important to consider. This book is a great place to start thinking on whether a new congregational life

could emerge where you are and if it already does, an opportunity for you to reflect on what you're doing in light of other experiences.

As an increasing number of Christians begin to think more about food and faith (see in connection Norman Wirzba's book *Food and Faith*), food and the environment, and food and community, it is more than likely that different kinds of dinner church will emerge. *We Will Feast* is a good guide to those thinking and exploring in this direction.

Andy Goodliff

Belle Vue Baptist Church, Southend-on-Sea

Will Willimon, Accidental Preacher: A Memoir (Eerdmans, 2019)

It could appear to some that everyone at Duke Divinity School is writing a memoir. In addition to this one from Willimon, there have been recent offerings from Stanley Hauerwas, Lauren Winner, Richard Lischer and Kate Bowler. All of which I've enjoyed and *Accidental Preacher* is no different. I love a good memoir. Willimon is a great writer and preacher and here he continues to use those gifts in telling something of his life story. It's funny, challenging and honest. Willimon views his becoming a famous preacher as an accident, although one of God's design. I loved the story of how Will met Carlyle Marney, a Baptist, while in Amsterdam, and found his calling. The best memoirs invite you into a reading of a person's life, and the best Christian memoirs invite you into a reading of a person's life where God is alive and active. *Accidental Preacher* is that kind of memoir.

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