

# Regent's Reviews

April 2017  
Edition 8.2

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*
  - Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*
  - Gisela H. Kreglinger, *The Spirituality of Wine*
- and many more...



|  |    |
|--|----|
| Editorial.....   | 4  |
| Beth Kissileff, <i>Reading Genesis: Beginnings</i> (Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 288pp. ....   | 5  |
| Stephen Chapman and Marvin Sweeney (eds.), <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament</i> (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 540pp.....                                       | 6  |
| Philip R. Davies, <i>The History of Ancient Israel: A Guide for the Perplexed</i> (Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 200pp.....   | 7  |
| Stephen B. Chapman, <i>1 Samuel as Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 349pp. ....   | 8  |
| Katharine J. Dell, <i>Job: Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? An Introduction and Study Guide</i> (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 111+xiv pp. ....   | 9  |
| Michael F. Bird, <i>An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks and Romans</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 310+xii pp.....   | 11 |
| Andy Johnson, <i>1 &amp; 2 Thessalonians. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 367pp.....   | 12 |
| Richard N. Longenecker, <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1140pp.....  | 14 |
| J.R. Daniel Kirk, <i>A Man Attested By God: the Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 659pp. ....  | 15 |
| Sally Douglas, <i>Early Church Understandings of Jesus as the Female Divine: The Scandal of the Scandal of Particularity</i> (Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 229pp. ....                           | 16 |
| J. Gordon McConville and Lloyd K. Pietersen (eds.) <i>Conception, Reception, and the Spirit: Essays in Honour of Andrew T. Lincoln</i> (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 376pp. ....                  | 17 |
| Judith A. Merkle, <i>Beyond our Lights and Shadows. Charism and Institution in the Church</i> (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 237pp. ....  | 20 |
| Frances Flannery and Rodney A. Werline (eds.), <i>The Bible in Political Debate: What does it really say?</i> (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 195pp. ....                                  | 22 |
| James Wm. McClendon, Jr., <i>The Collected Works of James Wm McClendon, Jr. Volume 3</i> edited by Ryan Andrew Newson and Andrew C. Wright (Baylor, 2016), 281pp. ....                             | 23 |
| E. Allen Jone III, John Frederick, John Anthony Dunne, Eric Lewellyn, Janghoon Park (eds.), <i>Ecclesia and Ethics: Moral Formation and the Church</i> (Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 212pp. .... | 24 |
| Brian Davies & Paul Kucharski (eds.), <i>The McCabe Reader</i> (London: T & T Clark, 2016), 368pp.....   | 26 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Adam J. Johnson, <i>Atonement for the Perplexed</i> (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 212pp.....  | 27 |
| Fleming Rutledge, <i>The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Christ</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 669pp.....  | 29 |
| Christopher Ben Simpson, <i>Modern Christian Theology</i> (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 375pp. ....   | 30 |
| Gisela H. Kreglinger, <i>The Spirituality of Wine</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 257pp. ....   | 31 |
| David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, <i>Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 526 pp.....                    | 33 |
| John C. McDowell, Scott A. Kirkland, and Ashley John Moyse (eds.), <i>Kenotic Ecclesiology. Select Writings of Donald Mackinnon</i> (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 245pp. ....          | 35 |
| Pauline Ashbridge, <i>Protestant Paths: A Story of Dissent</i> (London: Kershaw Publishing, 2016), 147pp. ....  | 38 |
| Richard McLauchan, <i>Saturday's Silence: R. S. Thomas and Paschal Reading</i> (University of Wales Press, 2016) .....  | 39 |
| Paula Gooder, <i>Body: Biblical Spirituality for the Whole Person</i> (SPCK, 2016).....   | 41 |
| Paula Gooder, <i>Let Me Go There: The Spirit of Lent</i> (Canterbury, 2016), 128pp.....   | 41 |
| Michael Forster, <i>Being There: The Healing Power of Presence</i> (Stowmarket: Kevin Mayhew, 2015), 160pp.....   | 42 |
| Armand Léon Van Ommen, <i>Suffering in Worship: Anglican Liturgy in Relation to Stories of Suffering People</i> (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 169pp.....                                 | 44 |
| Ruth H. Perrin, <i>The Bible Reading of Young Evangelicals: An Exploration of the Ordinary Hermeneutics and Faith of Generation Y</i> (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 243pp..... | 45 |
| Martin Camroux, <i>Ecumenism in Retreat: How the United Reformed Church Failed to Break the Mould</i> (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 238pp. ....   | 47 |
| David Hoyle, <i>The Pattern of our Calling: Ministry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow</i> (London: SCM Press, 2016), 192pp.....  | 48 |
| Samuel Wells and Abigail Kocher, <i>Joining the Angels' Song: Eucharistic Prayers for Sundays and Holy Prayers, Year A, B &amp; C</i> (Canterbury, 2016), 313pp.....                    | 50 |

## Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of *Regent's Reviews*, offering again a wide range of reviews of recent biblical, theological and pastoral books.

On a separate note, Baptists have been busy writing and I want to draw attention to some of the most recent works:

*Challenge and Change: English Baptist Life in the Eighteenth Century* edited by Stephen Copson and Peter Morden (Baptist Historical Society, 2017)

*To Follow the Lambe Wheresoever He Goeth: The Ecclesial Polity of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1640-1660* by Ian Birch (Pickwick, 2017)

*Shaped for Service: Ministerial Formation and Virtue Ethics* by Paul Goodliff (Pickwick, 2017)

*Gathering Disciples: Essays in Honor of Christopher J. Ellis* edited by Myra Blyth and Andy Goodliff (Pickwick, 2017)

*The Forgiveness of Sins* by Tim Carter (James Clarke, 2016)

We have to have reviews of each of these titles in a future edition.

*Andy Goodliff*  
*Editor*



**Beth Kissileff, *Reading Genesis: Beginnings* (Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 288pp.**

Michael Gove told us that Britons have had enough of experts, and at first glance this book does seem a little like a concession to popularism. The editor, a Jewish scholar, has gathered together a range of experts in different fields and asked them to comment on aspects of Genesis from their own particular standpoint. Thus we have, for instance, a game theorist analysing creation as a game in which God is a player who plans rationally and avoids undue risk. We have an expert in appetitive behaviour giving us a neuropsychological explanation of why Eve ate the apple. We have journalists specialising in sex therapy commenting on Eve, and Jewish rabbis' attitudes to sex. An expert on face processing analyses incidences of failed recognition in Jacob's family, and a law professor comments on contracts in Genesis. An award-winning cookery book author discusses food and drink in Genesis 18. And so on – a dazzling array of eminent names and wildly differing perspectives.

But does it work? Well, I think it would be fair to say that some papers work far better than others. I am not convinced that it is always legitimate to read a text outside its genre. If we reject cosmogonic readings of Genesis 1 because we think that they violate the text's intended function, shouldn't we also treat game theorist and appetitive readings with the same suspicion?

The other problem, of course, with people writing from other fields of expertise is – um, that they are writing from other fields of expertise. Thus, I struggle to take seriously a paper which begins "Adam and Eve are minor characters in Genesis", no matter how many interesting insights followed (as indeed they did). The other niggle I had was that the book on occasion seemed to have been very hastily edited. The most prominent example was one paper which kept referring the reader to other chapters in the original book it had been taken from.

Having said all that, there are some absolute gems in this collection. Most of the authors display a real depth of knowledge about and passion for Genesis and the Torah. Given that the book comes from a Jewish perspective, it will be no surprise that a common theme is the need to interpret the Akedah, or the binding of Jacob, and the web of complex relationships in the Abraham-Sarah-Hagar-Ishmael-Isaac household. Again and again, different authors from different perspectives grapple and wrestle with these stories, providing a fascinating range of insights. One which stood out for me was Alicia Suskin Ostriker's discussion of the rivalry between Sarah and Hagar. She does this largely through various poems, which allow the tensions in the story to be explored without necessarily being resolved. One such poem is Wilner's *Sarah's Choice*, in which God initially asks Sarah to sacrifice Isaac and she refuses. Later, Sarah attempts to persuade Isaac to accompany her on a journey of reconciliation to find Ishmael and Hagar. Isaac, uncertain, questions what will happen if they set out, and Sarah's response took my breath away:

"But what will happen if we go?" the boy  
Isaac asked. "I don't know", Sarah said,

“But it is written what will happen if you stay.”

This is an original, and sometimes outstandingly good book which will be enjoyed by all who care about reading, preaching and living Genesis.

*Rosa Hunt*  
*South Wales Baptist College*

**Stephen Chapman and Marvin Sweeney (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 540pp.**

The *Cambridge Companions* claim to be ‘a series of authoritative guides, written by leading experts, offering lively, accessible introductions’ to the subject. This is the first Companion focussing entirely on the Hebrew Scriptures. In their introduction, editors Stephen Chapman and Marvin Sweeney disclaim any attempt to define the field, which is too broad for such an enterprise, but set out their aim to ‘offer one substantial, coherent exploration of various subfields of study relating to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament’.

To this end, they have subdivided the book into sections which reflect five broad areas in the study of the Hebrew Bible: issues of text and canonicity; the historical background; critical approaches to the text; the genres of the Hebrew Bible; and issues in the reception and use of the Hebrew Bible. Chapters are supported by end-notes rather than footnotes, which gives a reassuring feeling of accessibility to the reader. There are also suggestions for further reading at the end of every chapter. The book has a comprehensive index, which also incorporates the biographical index.

The book sat on my shelf for three months of a busy term waiting for me to get round to reviewing it. Ironically I was teaching, among other things, a first year undergraduate module on the Old Testament. When I eventually pulled the book down to look at it, I discovered that most of the information and facts I had been so assiduously gathering and culling from different sources for the course were now sitting in my hand.

Samuel Balentine’s helpful chapter on the wisdom literature is a case in point. Happily, I read this chapter just in time for my students to benefit from its clear and systematic analysis of the major questions surrounding the main wisdom writings of the Hebrew Bible. Inevitably it sometimes raises more questions than it answers (just what are Newsom’s 5 possible translations of Job 42:6, so tantalizingly hinted at on p.290?), but that, of course is what a good introduction should do - whet the appetite for more.

Other chapters that caught my eye include a helpful and balanced commentary on the Hebrew Bible and history by Marc Zvi Brettler; an enlightening analysis of Islamic attitudes towards the Hebrew Bible by Walid Saleh; and a fascinating tour through the use of the Hebrew Bible in art and literature by David Lyle

Jeffrey. In this last-mentioned chapter, I would have appreciated a greater use of image, and in colour, but no doubt the cost would have made this prohibitive. Perhaps Cambridge University Press might consider making a relevant internet resource available for a subsequent edition.

I appreciated this book and have enjoyed the serendipitous experience of dipping into whichever chapter took my fancy when I had a spare half hour. The book provides both a substantial background to the Hebrew Bible, and an appetising aperitif for further study. It would be a useful addition to the bookshelf of any minister.

*Helen Paynter*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**Philip R. Davies, *The History of Ancient Israel: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 200pp.**

When it comes to the question of the history of Israel, scholarship is significantly divided. On one side are the so-called maximalists, who interpret the archaeological evidence to be maximally consistent with the biblical account, and the Bible a valid source for historical research. On the other side, are the minimalists, who argue that the biblical account may not be considered a reliable record of events, and that the very term 'Israel' is itself problematic as a defined historical entity. Many scholars take a position somewhere in between the two poles of opinion.

Philip R. Davies is a leading minimalist scholar, and his slim paperback (166pp.) contains a lucid account of the history of the nation of Israel, as deduced through this lens. The reviewer, an Old Testament specialist whose sympathies tend towards the maximalist side of middle ground, found it readable, informative, and in places very helpful indeed. The chapters on historiography (the account which a nation renders to itself of its past) provide a useful framework for considering the debate about the purpose of the Deuteronomic literature, for example. Davies' insistence that a historiographic narrative tells more about the history of its own time than it does of the time it is describing is a helpful reminder of the complexity of interpreting these texts, even if I would wish to be more sanguine about the possibility of learning about the history of ancient Israel from (arguably) exilic authors. Davies' well-observed point that the term 'Israel' is used by the Hebrew Bible in a – sometimes – bewildering array of ways is a point to be well taken.

Nonetheless, I could wish that the presumption of the Bible's guilt (although the author is very careful to point out that the Bible is not 'on trial') were not so marked. In particular, I cannot go along with Davies' assertion that biblical history must nowadays be understood purely in terms of human cause and effect; nor with the presupposition that the biblical texts are inherently less reliable than, say, archaeological evidence – which also requires interpretation that may be ideologically driven. And I am disappointed that he seems to take

little account of the possibility of an oral tradition behind the undoubted late redaction of some of the texts in question. In the end, I consider that a broadly historical understanding of the exodus account is theologically important. (What does it otherwise say of a God who *defines himself* as the God who brought the nation out of slavery?)

I am pleased to have this book on my shelf and no doubt I will refer to it again and again. Whether readers of this review will wish to do the same may well depend on where they stand on the historicity issue, and perhaps on their tolerance for reading the more sceptical perspective that Davies offers.

*Helen Paynter*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**Stephen B. Chapman, *1 Samuel as Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 349pp.**

Stephen Chapman is an Old Testament scholar and a Baptist minister. In *1 Samuel as Christian Scripture* he offers a highly interesting and deeply insightful literary and theological exploration of 1 Samuel. The book is a treasure trove and a sheer pleasure to read.

Chapman presents his work as ‘a theological reading of’ 1 Samuel ‘rather than a commentary per se’ (p.4). Seeking to make plain not what lies behind the book but rather what lies within it, he provides a sustained exegesis of 1 Samuel from a Christian perspective. Though a specifically Christian reading, it recognises the pre-Christian provenance of Old Testament works and is deeply sensitive to the concerns of Jewish-Christian dialogue. A perceptive and generous work, it will find an appreciative readership both within and without the Christian community.

The book divides into three main parts. The central part contains what we might think of as the commentary proper. This is a close reading of 1 Samuel. It offers illuminative observations on the unfolding narrative and is best read alongside an open Bible. Here I think the reader must resist the temptation to treat the book like a reference commentary. That is to say, one should not leave this book on the shelf until an aspect of 1 Samuel requires explanation. Far better to read the whole of 1 Samuel, both the biblical book and Chapman’s commentary, slowly and carefully listening for what it might say to us.

The first and third parts of the book contain essays that frame the exegesis in the central section. The first deals with reading 1 Samuel as a book and with its relation to 2 Samuel. The third part is a brilliant essay on ‘1 Samuel and the Christian faith’.

The book is well laid out. Technical aspects are treated in the footnotes. This makes for easier reading of the main body text. Still, the footnotes reward careful attention - they are a goldmine of useful information and reflection.



Chapman's reading of 1 Samuel concentrates on 'issues of personal piety and true worship' and the 'threat of civil religion' integral to the rise of the monarchy in ancient Israel. While providing a sympathetic reading of Saul, Chapman contrasts the characters of Saul and David in terms of their inner religious disposition. Saul carries out ritual acts but without real conviction or true sensitivity to the will of God. David, on the other hand, acts out of sincere piety toward God. Even so, the very nature of monarchic power impinges on the character of David too. Thus, 1 Samuel seems to express 'doubt about the ability of *any* human king to serve successfully as God's viceroy' (p.255).

Chapman makes much use of terms such as 'religious faith' 'personal faith', 'belief' 'piety' and 'religion'. I found myself wondering just how appropriate such terms are for interpreting an Israelite text. They seem anachronistic. Yet Chapman is fully aware of this and offers a robust and, I think, convincing defence of his terminology and perspective. He is also aware that his approach 'may arise in part out of [his] own Baptist heritage and convictions' (p.18 n.55). Still, if Chapman's Christian reading of 1 Samuel turns out to be a somewhat Baptist, Christian reading that is surely no bad thing. But then, as a fellow Baptist, I would say that wouldn't I?

Chapman wants us to read the Bible slowly. I can think of no better way to do this than by carefully reading the book of 1 Samuel in one hand and Chapman's commentary in the other. This is a book to savour, to read from cover to cover, to reflect upon and to draw out insight, warning and understanding. I recommend it wholeheartedly to preachers, to Bible readers, and to any educated reader who may not have read the Old Testament for a while but might, with Chapman's help, give 1 Samuel a go.

*Robert Parkinson*  
*Didsbury Baptist Church*

**Katharine J. Dell, *Job: Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? An Introduction and Study Guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 111+xiv pp.**

Katharine Dell acknowledges that her own engagement with the book of Job has been deepened by a tragedy within her own life. This perspective informs her treatment of critical introductory issues to Job without ever dominating the discussion. The result is a thoughtful and useful study of a really significant text.

The author offers us six carefully considered chapters. The first is an introduction that sets the scene for the good things to come. There are some helpful insights, and, as with every chapter, there is both a bibliography and a list of suggestions for further reading.

Next we get a chapter that considers whether Job should really be categorized as wisdom literature. This strikes me as a good question as the book is, for the most part, quite unlike the other books usually accorded this generic designation. Part

of Dell's reason for questioning the standard view of Job's genre is her conviction that the views implied in Job are unlike those 'black and white' positions found in Proverbs, which is the 'classic' expression of the wisdom tradition. This is debateable. Proverbs strikes me as an eclectic collection of sayings that are not necessarily intended to be consistent with one another. Furthermore, some of them freely acknowledge the apparently arbitrary nature of a world in which, for example, the field of the poor might produce a great deal of food but it is all swept away by injustice. It is not that the Wise think that they can look on the world and find an assured order but rather that they are surprised and delighted to be able to look upon the world and find some rules of thumb worth passing on. Which brings us to Dell's discussion of Job 28, the great hymn to wisdom. She insists that here wisdom is inaccessible, in contrast to Proverbs where it can be gained. But is this right? Surely, as Dell acknowledges, the poem acknowledges that God offers wisdom to humanity when it asserts that the fear of the Lord is wisdom. This is not altogether unlike some of the proverbs collected by the Wise. Rather more convincingly, Dell points out the non-wisdom elements of the text and the parallels with both other forms such as psalms and laments, and with other biblical traditions.

Then comes a chapter suggesting that the genre of Job is best defined in terms of parody. There are lots of real insights in this argument and I found myself convinced that the author of Job parodies other writings, including some found elsewhere in the Bible. Dell acknowledges that parody is parasitic on other genres but I wonder if it is really appropriate to designate parody as a genre at all. To my mind it seems more like a rhetorical strategy. This minor point does not undermine the value of Dell's argument.

The fourth chapter helpfully compares Job with other literature from the Ancient Near East. This offers some helpful insight into the ways in which Job's author asks similar questions to others and compares their answers.

After this Dell discusses the theological issues raised by the book and this chapter contains useful discussions of disinterested righteousness, retributive suffering and the divine/human relationship. I wonder if Job is wrestling with the observation that, while some things may be generally true, they are not always so. As Qoheleth points out, the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong; time and chance lie in wait for them all. Perhaps the hyperbolic fairytale language of the prologue sets up a drama in which the characters cannot possibly know why misfortune has befallen Job. From their perspective his suffering is without meaning. His companions seek to apply the generalities they have learned but they are not relevant; indeed they miss the point. Sometimes suffering is arbitrary.

The final chapter considers postmodern readings of Job. Dell discusses feminist, liberationist, ecological and psychological appraisals of the text.

This is a fine introduction to the issues. You may not find yourself agreeing with everything that Dell says but reading her book will send you back to Job itself, to the Bible's other wisdom literature, and to the texts that Job parodies. There you

will discover that she has helped you look at the familiar words with fresh understanding. And you can't say fairer than that.

*Stephen Finamore*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 310+xii pp.**

This is yet another book about the Apostle Paul. This one is a collection of essays by the competent and thoughtful Michael Bird. And it's very good.

There are six essays. Each could be profitably read on its own but they have enough in common to form a natural collection. All of the essays are worthwhile and some of them are very good indeed. Current debates in Anglophone Pauline studies are always in the background and yet Bird manages to find fresh things to say. It is true, as one of the endorsements on the cover acknowledges, that the book has a tinge of N.T. Wright thrown in but it is none the worse for that; serious commentary on Paul can hardly ignore him.

The first essay functions as an introduction and gives the book its title. The essay embraces Paul's Jewishness but recognizes that this could mean lots of different things. It is interested in the kind of Jew he was and where he fits among his contemporaries. The conclusion, as the title suggests, is that while he has much in common with many, in the end Paul defies categorization. Put like that, the answer seems predictable but the discussion is thought provoking.

The next part looks at Paul's understanding of salvation. It's the weakest chapter of the book. Or perhaps it would be fairer to say that it did not explore the questions that I hoped it would. There is a depth and a range to Second Temple Jewish understandings of salvation and I had hoped that these would be explored in relation to Paul's thinking. Instead a rather narrower issue is addressed.

Then comes an essay on Paul's apostleship. The great man often referred to himself as the apostle to the Gentiles though Acts depicts Paul as exercising a mission to Jews as well. Bird marshals the evidence and demonstrates the plausibility of Acts in the light of Paul's own letters. He argues that the stress on the nations emerges in the course of time as Paul's mission and ministry develop.

The fourth essay is a little more polemical and none the worse for that. It is an excellent demonstration of the weaknesses of an influential approach to the interpretation of Paul. Bird reviews the exponents of the so-called apocalyptic approach to Paul which takes its lead from Käsemann and culminates, for now, in Campbell's seemingly unending *The Deliverance of God*. The focus is one of the school's classic commentaries, Martyn on Galatians. The project seems to be to try to ensure that the Apostle says what Barth says he ought to say; and Bird is having none of it. Yes, something new breaks in with the gospel but there are

elements of continuity with God's past saving acts. Bird is with Hays and Wright in believing that Paul saw Scripture as a story with a focus on God's promise to Abraham and its iteration in the Psalms and the prophets. Hence the conclusion, *contra* the apocalyptic school, that 'salvation history is the hub of Paul's argument, not its antithesis' (p159). Given that their view offers scarcely any role in the story to Israel, Bird even manages to accuse the school of being 'über-supersessionist' (p166).

Then comes an essay on the incident at Antioch (Galatians 2.11-14). Bird offers a plausible reconstruction of the historical context of the disagreement between Peter and Paul. He then argues that the dispute may be regarded as a defining moment in the development of Paul's own theological thinking; it marks the beginning of Paulinism and the beginning of a rift between Paul and the Jerusalem church.

The final chapter offers a discussion of Paul's understanding of the Roman Empire. This raises important questions. Was Paul a political quietest, as Romans 13 is usually believed to imply, or was he a radical, as some of his language about principalities and powers can be read to suggest? Bird seems to argue that he was a bit of both. However, any quietism is a matter of strategy rather than principle. He agrees with Taubes that Paul is a political theologian and Romans is 'a *political* declaration of war on Caesar'. The Apostle co-opts the language used to celebrate the emperor and uses it to convey the gospel about King Jesus. Bird defends his position on the basis of a reading of Romans that acknowledges that Paul's opposition to Rome is not thoroughgoing but nevertheless insists that the gospel is in competition with the claims of the Empire.

This is a terrific collection of interesting essays by a very good scholar of Paul. It addresses some of the current controversies in Pauline scholarship in helpful and accessible ways. There are a few points where I might want to take issue with him but on the whole he seems to be on the right side of most of the arguments and is able to offer considered, committed, believing expositions of the apostle's thought. There are insights here that will enhance our understanding of Paul and his thought world.

*Stephen Finamore*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**Andy Johnson, *1 & 2 Thessalonians. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 367pp.**

Writing about scripture always and inevitably involves the act of interpretation. However objective we may claim to be, there is no doubt in my mind that we cannot avoid the hermeneutical process in our writing. With this in mind I approached this commentary in the Two Horizons New Testament Commentary series with a degree of cautiousness. This commentary series sets out to provide theological interpretation of scripture for its readers. There is therefore – at the very least – a double step that is taken in the writing. First, the often

unintentional and subconscious process of interpreting the scriptures, but then the second, more overt, deliberate, and positively intentional act of interpreting and understanding the scriptures from a particular theological standpoint. As Johnson articulates, ‘the aim of interpreting Scripture theologically is to stimulate critical reflection on the church’s beliefs and practices in order to facilitate the church’s ongoing formation into the visible body of the cruciform, living Christ, to whom Scripture bears witness.’ Furthermore, it might be argued that while this intentional theological interpretation ‘is to stimulate critical reflection on the church’s beliefs’ one wonders about the degree to which it is intended to represent a particular Christian tradition’s interpretation and understanding, bringing to the text a previously agreed set of theological propositions. The positive aspect here is that if you happen to concur with the interpreter’s theological perspective then the commentary can be immensely helpful, but if not, then difficulty lies ahead. Hence, having owned up to my own peculiar prejudice, you will understand that I approached this commentary with a degree of wariness.

Johnson is open in seeking to provide an interpretation of the text that will better facilitate ‘the formation of the church into its proper identity as a missional community.’ He helpfully lays out what he discerns as the ‘overall missional framework...in Scripture’ that provides that backdrop for his interpretation of the text. Positively, Johnson brings to his interpretation clear evidence of a thorough knowledge of the culture, religion, and politics of Thessalonica. All that he writes is permeated with this broader perspective. Moreover, I was pleased to see that Johnson remains unconvinced by the assertions of a non-Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians, believing that contrary arguments ‘raise more questions than they answer.’ In facing the more controversial passages in the text Johnson carefully considers what is at stake, clearly articulating the relevant exegetical issues. For example, in commenting on 1Thessalonians 2:13-16 Johnson takes care to reiterate the key points, and insists ‘Paul’s inflammatory rhetoric is intra-Jewish polemic directed only at a very specific group of Judean Jews. To call it “anti-Jewish” would be anachronistic.’ The ‘specific group’ that Johnson has in view here is ‘most likely the Jerusalem leadership.’ In considering the ‘rapture’ passages – 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 2 Thess. 2:1-12 – Johnson makes a clear case for the argument that ‘The social context of first-century Thessalonica and other clues in 1 and 2 Thessalonians make it historically probable that Paul says what he does to assure his audience that the dead who had experienced public dishonour because of their suffering faithfulness would share in the public vindication/honour of their *kyrios* (Lord) as they participated in his victorious royal parade.’ John directly challenges the quasi-theology popular in the *Left Behind*’ series, asserting that ‘one must wear glasses fitted with dispensationalist lenses in order to such a connection.’ Whilst highlighting possible parallels for certain phrases from these passages found in Scripture, Johnson is explicit in defending his position that he is writing ‘a theological commentary that affirms that this letter is located not only in the context of first-century Thessalonica but also in the context of the canon of scripture.’ This is of course true in terms of the literature that is presented to us, but Paul did not write with this awareness, indeed Paul didn’t write Scripture, but rather pastoral letters to friends and colleagues.

However, even with certain caveats (and I do have several), I would want to commend this commentary. It is an excellent *theological* commentary on these very early Christian documents. For me, the real strength of Johnson's work here comes in the Theological Horizons section of the book. Here, over the course of one hundred pages, Johnson includes a number of excellent essays that tackle the key issues in the Thessalonian correspondence. In the first collection of essays Johnson considers 'The Death of Jesus and the Missio Dei', 'Holiness', and 'Eschatology'. He then considers 'Canonical Connections, including a stimulating essay on 'Paul's "Anti-Christology"'. A final section over theological issues comprising 'On the (Secret) Rapture', "'You wonder where the Spirit Went'", and 'Election, Mission, and the Triune God.' The only weakness for me comes in the very first essay on the death of Jesus. Johnson opens with, 'In the Thessalonian correspondence Paul barely mentions the death of Jesus.' However, and this is where I think the theological agenda gets in the way, he then seeks to reread what Paul says in other, later letters about the death of Jesus 'in a way that allows us to flesh out a connection between Jesus' vicarious death and *mission Dei* in the Thessalonian correspondence.'

That said, Johnson presents to us an overtly theological interpretation of the two Thessalonian letters. Many preachers, and pastors, and others who want to grapple with the issues presented in the text will appreciate it.

*Edward Pillar*  
*Evesham Baptist Church*

**Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1140pp.**

Richard Longenecker has long been a reader of Paul's letters. Back in 1964, he published *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, which Eerdmans have just reprinted with a new introduction by Douglas Campbell (a former student of Longnecker's). In 1990 he published a commentary on Galatians in the Word Biblical Commentary series. He now offers us his reading of Romans, having already published a set of essays on critical issues: *Introducing Romans* (Eerdmans, 2011). As part of the New International Greek Testament Series this is a long detailed study of Romans.

This is a solid engagement with the Romans text. For the student or the preacher its offer a close reading of the text as you would expect. The commentary offers exegetical comments, biblical theology and contextualization for today on each major passage. I think his instincts are right in seeing Romans 5-8 has the most important of the letter in terms of understanding Paul's gospel. He suggests Romans 1-4 is the gospel in Jewish Christian terms, and 5-8 the gospel in terms of Paul's preaching to his pagan Gentiles audience. I also agree with him where he reads *pistis christou* as 'the faith of Christ', something he has been arguing for a long time (see *Paul, the Apostle of Liberty*). He disappointingly underplays Paul's concept of 'sin' as power.



It strangely does not engage, aside from a very few references, with the work of NT Wright at all, and the work of Beverly Gaventa does not feature at all. Does that matter? Possibly not, but these are two of the leading voices in Pauline studies, who have published fairly substantial engagements with Romans, in Wright's case several monographs and a 400 page commentary. Likewise there is limited engagement with Douglas Campbell's work, although Longenecker speaks of it favourably.

For those likewise myself who find Moo or Schreiner too conservative evangelical, Dunn too new perspective and Wright too salvation historical, Longenecker does not fulfil the need for a commentary that reads the letter apocalyptically – we await Beverly Gaventa's forthcoming offering (of which her recently published *When In Romans* is an excellent preview). This is perhaps too dismissive of Longenecker and in Eastman's words it will be a 'standard resource' for many readers. If you don't have a substantial commentary on Romans, and probably every pastor should, I would suggest Longenecker is a good place to start.

*Andy Goodliff*

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

**J.R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested By God: the Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 659pp.**

On the opening page of this provocative study Daniel Kirk makes his key assertion: that Peter's testimony in Acts 2:22, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God through miracle, wonders, and signs" is thoroughly sufficient for understanding the Jesus who meets us in the pages of the Synoptic Gospels. Not only is this study significant, but I would suggest it is also persuasive. However, it is also important to note that Kirk is in no way denying the Creeds of the church, but it paying attention to the text and what is presented to us. Kirk deals with the text as it is, rather than as is so often true, as we would like it to be. Kirk is bold in his assertions, 'from a Christian theological perspective every point I have made in this book must be true: everything that Jesus is and does he does as a human being, and is demonstrative of his humanness.'

Kirk maintains that just we can discern a plethora of messianisms in early Judaism, so too there is no single idealized human mould into which we can fit every depiction of Jesus. Just as throughout Scripture human figures are seen as integral to the execution of God's power so too we should see the Synoptic Jesus. Kirk gives the examples of Moses, who bears the divine words and the divine glory, and David, who plays the part of God on earth as he rules on God's behalf. And yet quite clearly we don't regard these figures as divine.

Moreover, Kirk makes clear that the Christologies of the Synoptics are not at all identical, but differ in important ways. Matthew's Jesus, as with Mark's, dies as one who is God-forsaken. The 'secret' of Jesus's identity in Mark 'is truly a

messianic secret and not a divine secret.' Whereas, the lordship of Jesus in Luke is so enmeshed with God's lordship that it is not always easy to tell the two apart. Moreover, Kirk is clear that for Luke the hermeneutical key to understanding the scriptures of Israel is not at all divine identity, but that the messiah must suffer and die and be raised, and repentance preached to all nations. Kirk also counters the claim that the early church uniformly adopted an understanding of Jesus as ontologically divine suggesting instead that it is unlikely that Christology developed in a linear fashion. For it is only when we get to John's account that we are told a story of the pre-existent deity walking the earth. Paul's letters rarely articulate the 'divinity of pre-existence' and in Romans not at all. Furthermore, Jesus as the Human one 'postdates the Gospels as it finds its expression in Irenaeus's theology of recapitulation.'

Kirk argues that Jesus the Human One becomes the definition of the community who gather around him. Even as Jesus expresses relationship with God as 'Abba', even this is extended to his followers. Importantly, Kirk maintains that if Jesus, son of God and son of man, as healer and miracle worker is not acting as a human, then the connection with his disciples is severed. Even the death of Jesus, whilst unique and unrepeatable, must be embraced, and can be embraced, by those who would follow him. The authority of the Synoptic Jesus is given to him and is not one that is inherently his own. 'Jesus resurrection is, in fact, an enthronement of him as lord and Christ. This is Jesus's entrance into a heavenly reality of which Jesus earthly ministry was an anticipation and from which his death threatened to cut him off.'

While a great deal of the book is necessarily concerned with literary issues and exegesis, it is nonetheless thoroughly accessible to the interested person.

*Edward Pillar*  
*Evesham Baptist Church*

**Sally Douglas, *Early Church Understandings of Jesus as the Female Divine: The Scandal of the Scandal of Particularity* (Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 229pp.**

I can do feminism. Believe me. I run a local 'Feminist Theology Group' in Essex. But I will admit that it took me some time to tackle this tome which, I feared, could be a rehash of the Christa arguments. I need not have feared, for Douglas took me along a path less travelled.

For those reformed Christians among us who are happy that the Deuterocanonical books are known as the Apocrypha, or the Lie, it may be an unsettling path. Douglas's arguments rest heavily on these books, and early church sources, as her evidence that the early church was comfortable with the proposition that the Woman Wisdom of the Septuagint was personified in the man Jesus. We will all be familiar with the passages that lead us to identify the Holy Spirit engendered as female; *ruach*, the breath of God in Genesis 1 and Wisdom in Proverbs 8, for example. We may also be aware of the feminine

personification of Wisdom in Sirach. But Douglas goes much further and draws us into the imagery of Woman Wisdom 'created before all other things' Sir 1:4 made flesh as 'the firstborn of all creation' Col 1:15.

Douglas demonstrates that the person of Woman Wisdom is present throughout the Bible, from Job and Proverbs, through Sirach and Baruch, and onto 1 & 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Hebrews and each of the gospels, as well as 'orthodox' early church texts such as 1 Clement, the Didache and Justin Martyr.

To us, it may sound strange that early Christians would want to choose the language and imagery of Woman Wisdom; to convince a patriarchal society that Jesus was divine, the linking seems counter-intuitive. However, the claim is that early authors sought to make this link explicit as it *strengthened* their argument that Jesus was divine if he could be seen as the pre-existent firstborn of creation. However, the conscious linking of Jesus to Woman Wisdom was not to last, and indeed was lost. Patriarchal gender bias, the battle against Gnosticism, the heresy of the Montanists, who accepted women for leadership positions in the church, and others such as Tertullian, who is famed for his poor opinion of women, all contributed to the downplay of the role of Jesus as Woman Wisdom. One of the main questions to emerge for me is, if Woman Wisdom is Jesus, where does that leave the Spirit, which is the connection many of us make? Douglas takes this as a challenge; it requires us to rethink the persons and nature of the Trinity and she invites further investigation.

This is a thought-provoking book, opening up almost as many questions as it seeks to answer. Can our 21<sup>st</sup> century brains acknowledge the concept that the early church had few issues with identifying Jesus with the female divine as a way of reinforcing the church's claim to his divinity? How seriously do we take the Deuterocanonical books? How carefully do we read early church texts to help us explore the person of Jesus and the persons of the Trinity? Are we ready to call she, he?

*Melanie Smith*

*Crowstone St. George's and Westcliff United Reformed Churches, Westcliff-on-Sea*

**J. Gordon McConville and Lloyd K. Pieteresen (eds.) *Conception, Reception, and the Spirit: Essays in Honour of Andrew T. Lincoln* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 376pp.**

In 1991 I enrolled as an undergraduate student in the Biblical Studies department of Sheffield University and went to see my personal tutor, a certain 'Dr A.T. Lincoln'. Over the next three years his personal encouragement, and inspirational teaching, played no small part in my own desire to become a New Testament scholar. Twenty-six years later, I am delighted to be reviewing a volume produced in his honour, and my admiration for his scholarship and influence remains undimmed. It is clear from the list of contributors to this volume (which reads like a Who's Who of New Testament illuminati) that I am not alone in this.

The nineteen essays which comprise this volume represent a first-class compendium of research, and the names speak for themselves: Loveday Alexander, Stephen C. Barton, David R. Catchpole, Jamie P. Davies, James D.G. Dunn, Philip F. Esler, Stephen Fowl, John Goldingay, Michael J. Gorman, L. Ann Jervis, Sylvia C. Keesmaat, J. Gordon McConville, Robert Morgan, Angus Paddison, Lloyd K. Pieteresen, John W. Rogerson, Brian J. Walsh, John Webster, Catrin H. Williams, N.T. Wright.

The volume is structured around three key areas that reflect Professor Lincoln's work and influence: exegesis, theological interpretation, and theology and embodiment. His scholarship has been wide-ranging, covering many areas of New Testament studies, and the diversity of the essays on offer here is testimony to these extensive interests. A review such as this is not the place to offer an in-depth analysis of each essay in turn, rather it is to whet the appetite and inspire further, more detailed, engagement. To this, I will focus on five essays which may speak to the interests of many readers of this review journal. The first four share a common theme, taking up in various ways the issue of the 'sonship' of Jesus, inspired by Andrew Lincoln's recent monograph *Born of a Virgin? Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, tradition, and theology* (London: SPCK, 2013). The fifth addresses the issue of sexuality in the New Testament.

The opening essay in the volume is Gordon McConville's exploration of Isaiah 7.14, the text behind Matthew's famous quotation: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Immanuel' (1.23 RSV). McConville suggests that the fact that the child that is born is called Jesus (and not Immanuel) should alert readers to the key point that 'texts do not necessarily say exactly what they mean' (p.3). His subsequent analysis of the 'young woman' of Isaiah's text, and the quest to identify her son, takes account of the wider context of Isaiah chs 7-9, and concludes that Matthew's Christ-focussed re-reading of Isaiah is an act of theological imagination that parallels the imagination of the composition process of the earlier text. McConville concludes by challenging Christian readers to grapple afresh with what it means for them to say that 'Jesus Christ is Immanuel'.

Philip Esler similarly engages the Matthean infancy narrative, suggesting that we hear Matthew's opening statements of 'identity' within a context where 'identity matters'. Drawing a distinction between the ethnic identity of *the Jews*, and the socio-religious identity of *the Christ-followers*, Esler offers a reading of the genealogy and subsequent birth story as evidence of the interplay between competing mythologies of definition in the early Christian community, with the shared understanding of being 'sons of God' creating a community of siblings within the newly-mythologised family of Christ. He concludes with a timely warning of the dangers of generalising 'Christianity' versus 'Judaism' in either the ancient or contemporary context.

James Dunn continues the theme of the 'sonship' of Jesus with an essay on Johannine Christology, beginning with the prologue's startling claim that the Logos 'became flesh' (John 1.14). This theological explanation for the life of Jesus

finds its completion in the bold statement at the end of the gospel, that it has been written so that readers may believe 'that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God' (20.31). There is thus an apocalyptic aspect to the incarnation in John's gospel, as the Son is sent to reveal the Father (17.3), to incarnate the word of the Father (12.45; 14.9). Through a dialogue with Ernst Käsemann, Dunn concludes that it is John's Christology which is the gospel's lasting legacy, rather than its individualistic ecclesiology.

David Catchpole's essay draws these threads together in his engagement with Andrew Lincoln's monograph *Born of a Virgin?* He summarises Lincoln's argument thus: 'The starting point is that the Gospels provide support for at least two of three different reconstructions of Jesus' parentage: (A) that he had no human father at all, but resulted from some sort of divine liaison with Mary; (B) that he had a normal human father, Joseph; and (C) that his normal human father was a person unknown.' Noting that Lincoln's own conclusions take him ('just!') for an A + B situation, Catchpole's essay offers some further arguments in favour of C. Paying careful attention to the biblical text, contextual social practices regarding betrothal, and ancient understandings of conception, a conclusion is offered that the divine role in the conception of Jesus can be understood in terms of similar stories in Greco-Roman mythology. Is Jesus the son of God? Yes. Is Jesus the son of Joseph? Yes. In conclusion: who is Jesus' father? Who knows...

The question of whether Jesus became the son of God, or whether he was just 'born that way', brings us to the final essay under consideration in this review, that by Loveday Alexander on human sexuality. Entitled 'Good Sex, Bad Sex', this chapter offers her personal response to the role of the Bible in the debates within the contemporary (Anglican) church over sexuality and same sex marriage. Alexander notes that, 'the Bible actually says nothing about "homosexuality" as it is understood today – that is, about sexual orientation as a "given"' (p.259), and this provides the starting point for the extended analysis of *Same Sex Relations in the Bible* that follows. From Sodom, to Leviticus, to Romans 1, to 1 Corinthians 6, to 1 Timothy 1, the principle which Alexander adopts is that what is condemned as 'bad sex' is distorted heterosexual desire and not latent same-sex orientation. A responsible exegesis of these passages will involve, Alexander asserts, attention to questions of *context, canon, culture, philology, and translation*, and these are accordingly addressed in detail. On the basis of this analysis, consideration is then given to the development of a *Christian sexual ethic*, and for this a wider consideration is given to the New Testament passages which address sex and marriage more generally, with a picture emerging of a culture where marriage was normative for 'good sex', but where alternative lifestyles such as singleness, celibacy, and divorce were not uncommon, and did not inherently constitute 'bad sex'. The conclusion from this analysis is that, 'for Paul, "good sex" is a physical act of mutual respect and self-giving love set within a faithful, committed, stable relationship recognized by the laws of the land' (p.269). The pastoral consequences of this for the contemporary church are then addressed, and a plea emerges for a 'sexual ethic for people of homosexual orientation that starts from the same premise as our rejection of homophobia:

that is, from the recognition that sexual orientation is neither immoral nor defective *per se*, but a “given” of sexual identity’ (p.271).

There is much more of interest that could be said about this book produced in honour of Professor Andrew Lincoln, but this reviewer will close here by commending the book as a valuable resource for ministry and theology, which is itself a fitting tribute to one of our generation’s leading New Testament theologians.

*Simon Woodman*  
*Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church*

**Judith A. Merkle, *Beyond our Lights and Shadows. Charism and Institution in the Church* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 237pp.**

Are charisms for the whole church, or just an elite? What is the relationship between the charisms and the church? These are important questions that Judith Merkle approaches from a Roman Catholic perspective in this fascinating and frustrating book. I read it while at the first meeting of the third round of the World Council of Churches-Pentecostal Joint Consultative Group meeting at Fuller, Pasadena. I could not have taken a more interesting book to address the issues before us that week — discipleship and the Holy Spirit.

Drawing upon theology and sociology especially, Merkle argues that while we live in the institution of the Church, we have all been “infused with the gift or ‘charism’ of the Spirit, which is a fire within, and a source of meaning. Beyond the gifts of faith, hope and love, each has received an individual touch of God’s grace which is ours to give back throughout our lives” (p.xi). That could have been written (almost) by one of the Pentecostal team at Pasadena, and with a little more of a flourish might even have been head on the lips of the tele-evangelists that troubled me on the meagre diet that is American television (even if much else that they said was so dire I despaired of this version of Christianity!) As you might expect, chapter one sets the scene, with a nod to Scripture and Catholic church history (there is no mention of Pentecostalism). By reference to Lonergan and Secundo, amongst others, Merkle, shows how faith is built in relation to others, and gives a structure of meaning to life. In her analysis I wondered if the opposition of charism and institution, so often posed as the normative relationship, was paralleled by Alistair MacIntyre’s tension between the members of the guild, or community of practice, and the institution that holds them in relationship. I think they are different ways of approaching the same phenomenon, and one not unfamiliar when we think of the way in which Baptist ministers view the Baptist Union and its Ministerial team and regulations.

Monastic communities were the original charismatic communities, she argues, and with the development of the mendicant orders Aquinas developed a distinction between sanctifying grace — *gratia gratum faciens* — and the grace given to enable men to co-operate with one another — *gratia gratis data* —



which is equivalent to what Merkle is describing as charism. With the loss of stability of the enclosed community, the question for the Church was whether this new form was authentic? This is a question posed ever and anew in the story of the Church, from early Pentecostalism to the New Monasticism of today. The Catholic Church changed its mind, significantly, with Vatican II — where Pius XII viewed charisms as rare and marginal, the "turn" of Vatican II was to find them in more general ways within the Church and applicable to every baptised believer. Whether this is a form of domestication of the charisms, or a generous expectancy that the Church's ministry and mission is no longer the preserve of the elite (priesthood or religious) is not addressed, but I think this might be one point of divergence between the mainstream Pentecostal-Charismatic and the institutional Church.

In chapter two the antagonism between charism, office and institution is explored through the lens of Max Weber, and the secularization debate. In the Nineteenth Century this relationship was inherent to the theology of Johan Adam Mohler, with his emphasis upon the pneumatological aspect of the Church, transformed by the turn to sacramentality with Vatican II to the whole Church as *koinonia*. These might seem intra-Catholic concerns, but they do have a bearing on the relationship of giftedness and membership in the Baptist conception of the church.

Chapter three focuses first upon the sociological roots of the current replacement of a biblical *koinonia* with social contract, and develops this theme by reference to Weber and Tonnies' typology of community with distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (where the group precedes the individual) and *Gesellschaft* (where the reverse happens in Modernity.) This leads to a rehearsal of the now familiar *Communio* ecclesiology of Vatican II, and the way charisms inserts itself in this concept (with discussion, again, of Weber, Lonergan and Rahner.

While Part Two, beginning with a chapter on calling and society, addresses the place of charism in the Church, seeking to develop the theme of the book, it does so less coherently than in the earlier part. It is not easy to follow a structured argument in these latter chapters, although they have successful individual sections, on, for instance, spirituality (pp.116–120), or the description of what community in an open Church might look like (pp.135–141.) There is room for development in some areas — for instance, in discussing the place of virtuosi in the religious life (p.121) no reference is made to Nicholas Healy's important ecclesiological discussion of the place of elites in American Catholicism, and conversion seen through Lonergan's lens might benefit from a more extended exploration of virtue ethics.

And then some questions — is a theology of the cross that explains its purpose in "transforming evils into a supreme good" (p.152) really adequate? It is a strange conception to my Protestant ears. And is schizophrenia really a "displacement of psychic energies" (p.158)? Must recent understanding sees biological causes for this condition, not some inner psychic dysfunction. I also wonder whether her discussion of "buffering" in Charles Taylor's philosophy on pages 147–8 might

better be transferred to the place where the concept is initially discussed (p.88), there without adequate explanation.

These latter chapters seemed as if they might have benefitted from a rather different structure in order to enhance the argument. And if I have one overarching concern it is this. We are used now to theology done by Protestants utilising Rahner, or Schillebeeckx, and at ease with Catholic writers. In this book it is as if the Church is exclusively Catholic, and contributions from Protestant theologies ignored or devalued. Yes, this is a Catholic theologian, but a little more Catholic generosity would not go amiss.

This is a partially successful book, and one that does engage with the way in which the Catholic Church post-Vatican II is wrestling with this fundamental question of how does God work in the Church and through whom? There is a faint echo towards the close of a desire that those should include more women, and laity too, but I wonder if Merkle might have taken a bolder risk here and argued more forcibly for what, she claims, "59% of the American Church" (by which she means, Catholic Church, of course) support, namely, the ordination of women. Until there are these fundamental changes in the way in which the catholic Church values more than half its active members, un the West at least, the institution will always disempower the effects of the charisms she describes.

*Paul Goodliff*  
*Abingdon Baptist Church*

**Frances Flannery and Rodney A. Werline (eds.), *The Bible in Political Debate: What does it really say?* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 195pp.**

When Jeremy Paxman asked the then Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2003 if he prayed with George W. Bush during his one-to-one meetings with the President, he drew attention to a clear difference in relation to religion and politics between the United States and the United Kingdom. British politicians rarely if ever refer to their religious beliefs. This was perhaps demonstrated most crisply by the "We don't do God" stance of Alastair Campbell. For politicians aspiring to elected office across the Atlantic, however, faith and scripture are strands woven into the texture of political life. American politicians often cite the Bible in speeches and in support of their policies. Indeed, for a nation where the constitution guarantees the separation of church and state, either atheism or insufficient public evidence of religious belief would be a serious obstacle to a candidate's progress with an electorate where belief in God remains high. Alongside many different shades of Christianity, there is a pervasive idea that America is a new Promised Land, favoured by God above other nations. The recent inauguration address by President Trump included the words:

"There should be no fear -- we are protected, and we will always be protected. We will be protected by the great men and women of our military and law enforcement and, most importantly, we are protected by God."

Sometimes the nod to Bible-Belt sensibilities is perfunctory, as witness the early and clumsy attempts by then candidate Trump to align himself with Christianity, despite an evident lack of any understanding of the centrality of confession of sin and forgiveness. Evangelical Christian leaders, arguably desperate to shore-up their political leverage, moved with haste to proclaim the Christian faith of the candidate.

American politicians' handling of scripture tends to show a narrow grasp of doctrine. Yet it certainly spans a wide range of topics, each of which at times is a touchstone of orthodoxy – political, if not theological. These are key binary issues such as abortion and women's rights, homosexuality, family values, the environment and climate change.

Biblical references have been used by the USA to shape and flavour its foreign policy too. Until a major shift under Obama, late in his presidency, America was an unwavering and unquestioning supporter of Israel – not least because of a popular conservative evangelical idea that support for the state of Israel, at the very least, was consonant with their eschatology and the belief that we are living in the so-called 'end times'.

It is to explore this cultural phenomenon that *The Bible in Political Debate* is written. The fourteen essays in this book each take one of these key topics and ask questions of the relationship that Americans have with the Bible. The contributors are all experts in biblical studies and are drawn from a variety of understandings, positions and, interestingly, levels of belief and faith.

One of the central questions they address is to ask how people with sharply opposing positions have used the Bible to claim that God supports their position; or, perhaps more accurately, that they are 'on God's side' in the argument.

This is a work for Christians and people of faith who hear politicians and commentators buttress their opinions with appeals to scripture and wonder does the Bible really say that? Can the Bible be used legitimately or conclusively to settle key binary issues of politics? With an essay format, each issue is discussed without claiming to reach resolution, though the authors do not hold back from expressing their own views clearly. Commendably, the writers set about exploring their questions in ways intended to provoke the reader to respond with thoughts of their own.

*Ivan King*  
*Church from Scratch, Southend-on-Sea*

**James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *The Collected Works of James Wm McClendon, Jr. Volume 3* edited by Ryan Andrew Newson and Andrew C. Wright (Baylor, 2016), 281pp.**

Newson and Wright have done a great service to Baptist theology in producing three volumes of McClendon's theology. The previous two volumes collected together various articles, chapters and papers by McClendon. This third volume is a collection of sermons. With these volumes and the new edition of his 3-volume *Systematic Theology*, McClendon will continue to speak to and help those who 'baptistic' in their theology and those who want to see what a baptistic theology looks like. For a UK Baptist audience McClendon's work has not as yet as been significant as it might be. At IBTS McClendon has been, and continues to be, a key thinker in terms of methodology and theology, to the extent that it might be called a kind of McClendon school or centre.

This third volume includes 46 sermons by McClendon, a small number have already been published in McClendon's *Making Gospel Sense* (1995), but the majority are here printed for the first time. The book divides the sermons to follow the pattern of the Christian year – Waiting; On the Way; A Whole New World; The Time of the Spirit-Filled Community; The Ongoing Adventure; and Witness to the World to Come. The editors also provide helpful footnotes through the sermons to other places in McClendon's work – showing how his theology and his preaching were connected.

This collection of sermons perhaps provide one of the most helpful way's into McClendon's theology and for the curious person a good starting point before delving into his larger systematic theology. Independent of all this, reading McClendon's sermons are a gift to those of who preach regularly. I have found no better way than to become better at preaching than reading other preachers, so McClendon will join my shelf alongside Willimon, Brueggemann, Wells, Gunton, Rutledge, Hauerwas and others. McClendon's voice I hope will continue to stimulate those of us looking for a baptistic way of following Christ. It will only be to the benefit of the church, if took the time to read, engage and discuss his Baptist vision.

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

**E. Allen Jone III, John Frederick, John Anthony Dunne, Eric Lewellyn, Janghoon Park (eds.), *Ecclesia and Ethics: Moral Formation and the Church* (Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 212pp.**

This book is a collection of edited essays originally delivered at the inaugural *Ecclesia and Ethics* conference in May 2013, organized by the University of St. Andrew's, Scotland, an online, live, interactive conference of deep theological, academic and moral reflection. As the editors highlight in the preface, this publication is about 'moral formation and the church, which is approached from a variety of perspectives, theological traditions, and disciplines' (p.xi). This is a bold project, for, as Stanley Hauerwas highlights in the opening of his essay, any question about morality and formation 'cannot help but confirm the presumption that morality is a clearly identifiable set of principles about right or wrong acts' (p.71).

This publication is divided into three sections; part one explores the biblical-theological foundations for ecclesial ethics, part two looks at character formation and community, whilst part three focuses on exegetical applications, examining scripture and the praxis of ecclesial ethics.

The opening essay by Dennis Hollinger makes for a strong start, seeking to affirm a Trinitarian approach to ecclesial ethics, one that looks to take seriously both creation and redemption in Christian Ethics and how any 'ethic of Jesus or ethic of the Kingdom must be in continuity with creation, since the work of Christ and his Kingdom is a...re-creation.' So Hollinger makes the case for Christian calling within all spheres of life and work, in the sciences, education, law, media politics, art and much more, as well as the Church. Yet whilst Hollinger, quoting Gushee, wants to see Christ as who defines 'what humanity is to be' (p 10), seeing creation as Christ's, he seeks to establish a definition of created order as the 'norms for our lives collectively and individually.' (p.19) And here, a pointing to 'Eden' rather than the eschaton, is where Hollinger is weak in an otherwise compelling opening to this book.

Stanley Hauerwas offers a thoroughly Hauerwasian approach to habit as formation of ethics, drawing, albeit in a limited way owing to the space permitted to him, from 'Aquinas' understanding of how habit is fundamental for any account of how we are drawn by God into a life of beatitude.' (p.82)

And N. T. Wright offers a thoroughly 'N. T. Wrightian' approach to ethics and theology so shaped by 'the narrative of Israel in the way it is known in the Second Temple period', with the Messiah offering to God 'the faithful obedience that Israel should have offered...' (p.95)

There are some notable highlights within this collection of essays; Aaron Manby's essay on pacifism in the early church and its relevance to the twenty-first situation (pp.165-177) rings powerfully in our current political and ecclesial atmosphere; John Frederick's contribution to an ethic of the digital age transformed by cruciform love (pp.153-163) is a helpful voice in this digital age (although I would like to know what *kind* of cross-hermeneutic Frederick is arguing for); but in my opinion Michael Gorman's 'The Cross in Paul: Christophany, Theophany, Ecclesiophany' is the stand out piece in this collection, with a Pauline *theologia Crucis* shaping his essay on who God is, what the Church is called towards, and the ethics that shape her.

There is indeed a 'unity-in-diversity' within this volume that the editors hoped for, yet a real criticism of this collection is the absence of woman's voices, with only the essay from Mariam Kamell giving this collection a female presence.

Nonetheless, this is a volume of work that provides valuable deep theological reflection in the ongoing work and conversation of ecclesial ethics.

*Joseph Haward*  
*This Hope, Newton Abbott*

**Brian Davies & Paul Kucharski (eds.), *The McCabe Reader* (London: T & T Clark, 2016), 368pp.**

Every Monday afternoon for a term in the early 1980s, the thirsting-for-knowledge first year students of the Theology & Religious Studies Department of Bristol University received a visitation from a man on a motorbike, who peeled off his waterproofs, laid aside an ancient crash helmet and began to initiate us into the joys of the philosophy of religion, or specifically Thomas Aquinas. Herbert McCabe was witty, incisive and a gifted teacher, and above all able to render the great Doctor into someone understood and appreciated by those with more in mind than turning out an essay. He was a joy to listen to and to learn from.

A cradle Catholic, McCabe was a Dominican (at Blackfriars in Oxford from 1968) and a foremost translator and interpreter of Aquinas, with particular reference to the magisterial *Summa Theologiae*. Aquinas studies were then undergoing somewhat of a renaissance. Aquinas was an unavoidable Colossus of the Scholastics: you either went with him or through him.

Yet McCabe was no ivory tower philosopher. Influenced by Marxist theory (as was his fellow Oxford Dominican, Terry Eagleton), his theology was earthed in a passion for the political and social possibilities of religion, a world transformed in the image of Jesus Christ by love that was revolutionary in its nature and quite possibly in its application. He could be, and was, controversial, even outrageous. He was disciplined by the Roman Catholic Church. He was ready to name and to challenge the powers that distorted human living.

This collection of his writings is divided into three sections: philosophy and the doctrine of God, ethics and moral theology, essays on Aquinas and a small number of sermons. Others have previously been collected in the excellent *God Matters* but he published little before his death in 2001.

In these writings, McCabe ranges far and wide over the nature of God and the human condition – “Evil”, “Doubt is not Unbelief”, “Prayer” (“By all means pray to God for a Mercedes Benz. You won’t get one. But the process will be more valuable than any book on prayer” is one gem stuck in my student memory) and “Politics and Virtue”. “A Very Short Introduction to Aquinas” is a very good short introduction to Aquinas. His sermons crackle with life and theology. They are beautifully crafted, carefully thought through, irreverent on occasion, and deeply thought-provoking. A Roman Catholic to his roots and to his death, nonetheless he reaches out to those who wish to grapple with the big questions of life, the Universe and everything.

Aquinas constructed an overarching framework of the reality of God linked to the life of worship, prayer and service. Good (and not so good) Baptists could probably do with a dose of Aquinas to help them see a bigger canvas than is usually celebrated in worship, addressed in prayer, explored in house groups or used to engage in mission with those who seek after truth. Aquinas and McCabe’s God is no deity domesticated to human expectation and rules, no tribal god to be



rolled out to support those convinced of their own rightness and others wrongness, nor a divine comfort blanket amidst the uncertainties of life. So, go ahead, read this book. You won't agree with everything you find but in the reading you will discover something valuable about God, and you.

*Stephen Copson*  
*Central Baptist Association*

**Adam J. Johnson, *Atonement for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 212pp.**

If you are perplexed over the exact nature of Christian atonement then Adam J. Johnson's book offers a most comprehensive guide to the subject, although he warned that he has deliberately selected alternative viewpoints to those who offer more traditional interpretations of the subject. If you are not particularly perplexed over the theological complexities of redemption then Johnson would probably suggest, 'I think you ought to be!' In common with the shared approach of the series of 'Guides for the Perplexed' the author assumes the reader knows enough about the subject to be familiar with the core ideas and their leading proponents, but also that they have a desire to handle the scriptural and theological materials more critically and develop their own approach. Thus, rather than isolating well-established typologies of atonement, Johnson's approach is to widen the topic, exploring the underlying reasons for the complexities of Christ's saving work. He has not the pretension to suggest that his suggest answers will be simple, but does have the ambition to argue that for the dedicated reader, there is nonetheless a 'rich, varied and multifaceted' answer, rooted in 'the diversity of the eternal life of the triune God' (p.7). For if, as he suggests, atonement is about bringing humanity towards God, then, he maintains we ought to wrestle with what sort of God is revealed in our understanding of atonement and what kind of salvation is offered by that perception of God. So he claims, to 'rest content with what little knowledge of God we have would be to violate the very nature of the faith we have been given - to distain the complex simplicity which we are offered to delight in both now and in eternity' (p.15).

If all that sounds like a combination of rather hard work and bold ambition then you are right. Johnson will not let his reader rests without exploring the topic of atonement through a metaphorical 'treasure trove' of interconnected Christian doctrines. This includes not only reflections on the Trinity, but understandings of the divine attributes, Christology, hamartiology and eschatology. The reader is introduced to these far-reaching intentions from the beginning, but the less assured student may be comforted to know that while each chapter handles complex theology with deft confidence, it also includes a number of helpful illustrations. Thus Johnson establishes his central premise by recounting a pastoral conversation in which the question is asked 'which theory of atonement do you believe in?' to which the answer is given, 'all of them' (p.1). Johnson builds on that that vignette to eschew the faux simplicity of Aulen's famous tri-fold typology, (without ever dismissing the three traditional models), arguing

that there are 'better ways to engage the doctrine, better questions to ask' (p.3) about atonement than simply choose one of three (or more) competing theories. His approach continues in chapter two by examining five elements common to every theory of atonement, namely the cast of characters involved in the drama of salvation, the divine attributes revealed through the act of redemption, the theology of sin, followed by an exploration of how humanity is delivered from such sin and finally the purposes for which humanity is saved. In this way Johnson brings together the various strands of his theological interests and hopes to overcome the factious inclination within traditional articulations of atonement, seeking to draw the reader into a wider ecumenical and ecclesiological exchange of thought that proves to be of mutual enrichment for all.

This leads to the heart of the book, Johnson's contention that atonement is not just a work of Christology, but is an event within the life of God. Reminding the reader that atonement is a response to a divine problem as much as a human one, Johnson goes on to examine the objections raised by feminist theology as to the divine violence implied by a theology of atonement within the life of the Trinity. He concludes that redemption is salvation not just because it deals with humanity's sin but because it brings us into the fullness of the life indented by God. Thus, God's purpose in atonement goes beyond his fourth element of 'salvation from' and takes us to the fifth, the life-giving transformation for which humanity is saved, namely theosis.

Johnson continues his argument through chapter four, developing his foundations in Trinitarian theology to examine the divine attributes revealed through our understanding of atonement. To bring this aspect to life he explores the diverse themes within the soteriological of Jonathan Edwards, focusing on the ideas of justice and wisdom together with the idea of divine wrath within penal substitution. Through all this he argues that traditional soteriological approaches that emphasize any one particular divine attribute within atonement deny the complexities of redemption and are an inadequate understanding both of salvation and of God.

Having established the importance of understanding atonement through the Trinity, Johnson uses chapter five to focus on the work of Christ. Here he reiterates his desire to explore the complexities of Jesus' role in salvation, by arguing that atonement must be understood as part of the totality of Christ's life, as well as his death and resurrection. In short, there is more to atonement than the blood of Good Friday, the empty tomb of Sunday or even the Paschal Triduum, instead the work of atonement extends both before and after Easter, reaching from the incarnation to the Ascension, Pentecost and on until the second coming. Here again Johnson handles the scriptural and theological sources with ease, guiding the reader through a rich array of writers, all to reinforce a central point that 'once we begin to see the atonement as a work including but not limited to Jesus' death on the cross, we quickly expand to include the whole life of Christ.' (p.141).

Chapter six views the complexities of salvation through a wider cosmic angle, examining how redemption reaches beyond humanity to include the breadth of the created spectrum, animals, the earth and even its effect on angels and demons. Without in anyway diminishing the anthropological significance of atonement, Johnson skilfully redresses a tendency to focus on the human elements while ignoring the biblical affirmation that Christ's saving work extends to all creation.

Johnson's final chapter reaffirms that his purpose, 'to offer an expansive and vision-casting project resistant to overly simplistic summary' (p.175) and to that end, it must be said he has been successful. Atonement under Johnson is helpfully liberated from the usual choice between simplistic models, but rather reveals and relishes the existing complexities within those models and helpfully encourages soteriology to be confident in expanding its horizons. For some who seek a more exclusive resolution of atonement, (to know which model they should believe in), this particular approach will prove less palatable, but as an alternative, the intentions of this book are both laudable and generally well executed. Some may feel that in his passion to maximise the doctrine of atonement Johnson has tried too hard to be inclusive of every diverse theological perspective, finding room for all around an already crowded table, but leaving the reader wondering if, when pushed, all his guests will finally agree. But to test his thesis to those limits would require a longer book and one that went beyond the remit of the 'Perplexed' series. As it stands, Johnson's book is a most welcome addition to other 'Guides for the Perplexed' and deserves a long life as a complementary addition and necessary corrective to many other introductory texts on the doctrine of atonement.

*Craig Gardiner*  
*South Wales Baptist College*

**Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 669pp.**

This is an astonishing piece of theology. Out in paperback in July 2017. Where John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* has for a long time been the book that sits on most preacher's shelves, Fleming Rutledge's deserves to sit alongside, if not, dare I say it, to replace the Stott book. Rutledge remarks at the beginning that there has been no equivalent book on the cross since Stott's in 1986.

Rutledge may not be well known to folk in the UK. I picked up her first book *The Bible and the New York Times*, in second hand shop back in 2012 on the basis of a foreword by Will Willimon and commendations by Richard Hays and Ellen Davis. Since then, I have got copies of everyone of her books. I say books, but they are all, save one, collections of sermons. Rutledge is a wonderful preacher and has published collections of sermons on the letter to the Romans, the Old Testament, Holy Week and Easter and on big questions. Her other book is an excellent and insightful reading of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. With all this in mind, I was hopeful for her new book on the crucifixion, and not disappointed.

I read most of the book over the previous two Good Fridays. It comes in two parts. The first is focused on the crucifixion discussing its primacy, its godlessness, the question of justice and the gravity of sin, and a bridge chapter focusing on Anselm. The second half explores biblical motifs – Passover, sacrifice, ransom and redemption, justice, Christus victor, substitution and recapitulation, and also a chapter on the descent into hell, which deals with evil and theodicy. The breath of what Rutledge presents is impressive, almost no stone is left unturned.

What makes the stand out is it one of the first treatments from a preacher and pastor that seeks to lean heavily on the work of J. Louis Martyn (and those who have followed him) in seeing Sin as a cosmic power and the cross as God's apocalyptic act of rectification (which is favoured over the more normal translation of justification, argued most convincingly by Martyn). Rutledge was student of Martyn. Now in the saying this, this might put some prospect readers off, but I would hope not, for Rutledge provides such a compelling interpretation of the cross, which like a symphony, builds and repeats and develops as you read through her argument. Different chapters stand alone, but at the same time cohere. I found the chapter on sin especially helpful. The book argues that we understand the cross as both atonement and deliverance, this 'parallels' the view of sin as a responsible guilt and an alien power.

Rutledge is first and foremost a preacher and the book is offered as a means of helping preachers and also those who listen to them. She is also a very good preacher and so her writing pulls you along as she presents the different issues and motifs. You can see why this book took twenty-two years to write – probably all books on the cross should take this long.

A member of my congregation as re-read Stott's *The Cross of Christ* many times, I think I will likewise be reading and re-reading Rutledge's *The Crucifixion* many times (I might even see if my church member will try this new book). It seems to me that the task of the church is to proclaim God's salvation in Christ, and then to explain that from which we have been saved. This is what Rutledge sets out to do, and for this reader, does with insight and power. In the introduction, Rutledge says that these days there tends to be less preaching on the cross, symbolised by less attendance at Good Friday services, *The Crucifixion* will help preachers to find the courage and words to follow the apostle Paul, and hopefully their will be a church and a world willing to listen. All this goes to say you will not be disappointed if you buy yourself a copy.

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

**Christopher Ben Simpson, *Modern Christian Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 375pp.**

*Modern Christian Theology* does what it says on the cover: it addresses theology of the modern period, and is intended to be a textbook, not a 'read'. I currently teach doctrine at Levels 4 and 5, and have been using a combination of Daniel Migliore's *Faith seeking understanding* and Alister McGrath's *Christian theology: an introduction* as core texts, so I was keen to see whether this book would be on my list of recommendations next year.

I like the clean visual layout of the book – it has a large format, clear print, tables of main points and photos of key theologians and philosophers - even one of Billy Graham in the section on 20<sup>th</sup> century evangelicalism (there's only a line of text about him, but he was a key influence on Christianity of the time and merits his mention in the broad sweep of the book). The chapters each begin with a boxed outline of their contents, which act as a guide within this 'go-to' book – you can look up your topic (key scholars and writers, movements, and ideas) and find a short explanation that will give you a quick overview of the area in question. The book tracks key transitions through the modern period and includes some interesting (albeit brief) material on, for example, process, postliberal and postsecular theologies, to which one could direct students for a quick insight and some further reading suggestions. As an example of a well-known theologian, I thought the summary of Barth's context and work (which occupies a whole chapter) was potentially very useful as an early encounter for students with the scope of the work of this great thinker.

The back cover claims that 'This work tells the story of modern Christian theology against the backdrop of modernity itself', and this is an accurate summary of the style and content. It provides a good complement to elementary systematic texts which cover the whole sweep from early church and patristics onwards. I will begin to put this book on reading lists as a helpful resource to start to fill in knowledge gaps.

One thing that I disliked was the style of writing – many of the sections rather oddly slip in and out of the present tense – so, with reference again to the section on Barth, Simpson writes: 'as the Nazis are in the process of taking over in Germany, Barth is vocal in his criticism of them. The university lets him go, and he returns to Basel...'. I am not sure what this style achieves, and it is not always consistent. However, it wouldn't stop me from making use of this book and directing students to it.

*Sally Nelson*  
*St Hild College, Yorkshire*

**Gisela H. Kreglinger, *The Spirituality of Wine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 257pp.**

Pour yourself a glass and settle down for a good read. Perhaps, though, before you begin reading or even take a sip, you might swill the liquid around the glass and breath deeply of its aroma. Take a sip, let it roll around your tongue. What flavours have you picked up through smell and taste? Drinking a glass of wine

can seem a very sensuous experience, and it is an activity which engages all of our senses. We can't always pick out all the flavours on the label, but for many it is a deeply satisfying experience (when drunk responsibly, of course).

A book on the spirituality of wine is unexpected but promising; a good book on the spirituality of wine is a delight enhancing theological reflection and one's appreciation of a good glass. Gisela Kreglinger has written that good book. Here is the book to go with the glass you have just poured.

The book is in two parts, Sustenance and Sustainability. The first takes its route into the subject through a series of chapters examining wine in Scripture, Church history, the Lord's Supper, communal feasting, and the spiritual theme of attentiveness. The second is more oriented towards the practice of wine making and has chapters on technology, health, and alcohol abuse, bracketed by chapters on the vintner as practical theologian, and viticulture and soul care.

Kreglinger's unique book has some strands which recur repeatedly and insightfully throughout the whole, including the history of wine and its place in Scripture and the Christian tradition, and a sense of *terroir* (the French term, difficult to translate precisely, but giving a sense of place rooted in the soil and all the local characteristics which - in the case of wine - accounts for much of its distinctiveness in body, nose and taste), as well as ecological questions.

The insights offered are many and various. For instance on wine and the Eucharist we read of the scriptural associations between wine and blood, and have already gathered something of the unique complexity of wine:

"There is an excess of meaning in a choice wine, in part due to its aesthetic beauty... As we receive the cup and see the thick red liquid...; as we smell its lovely fragrance; as we take a sip and feel the thick liquid on our lips and our tongue; as we taste and enjoy the complex flavours of wine and enhanced by its smell - we can learn to allow our sensory experience to teach us something not only about the significance of Christ's blood but also about its preciousness. Christ's sacrifice stands out from all other sacrifices... We can now taste life in a way we have never been able to taste before..."

(Of course, this does not work quite so well with unfermented grape juice stacked full of artificial preservative and labelled 'do not use as a beverage.')

There is much to ponder in Kreglinger's observations on our connectedness to place and the significance of that connectedness (our *terroir*); on the complexity of taste that makes wine so distinctive among everything else we eat and drink ("taste and see" takes on new meanings - and there is good few paragraphs on the science of taste and our attentiveness to taste and to God); and on the spiritual and theological commitments enacted by vintners. All of this receives considered and wise theological reflection from the author.

There are some weaknesses, and some may irritate. We hear a lot from vintners in the new world and the old as they reflect upon the meaning of their work - but rarely in their own words: Kreglinger too often paraphrases and reports their



speech rather than allowing us to hear them in their own words. There is some repetition as themes recur in a new context, and occasionally, as she recalls the good days of wholesome wine production before the modern wine industry got into gear, it can feel a little elitist (though accounts of how some wine producers give us that “oaky” flavour, and etc, do give one pause for thought...).

But these criticisms are quibbles on what is an unusual and very readable book, which will nourish not only your appreciation of wine but also your spiritual reflections of a personal and communal kind. Raise a glass to Gisela Kreglinger!

*Robert Ellis*

*Regent's Park College, Oxford*

**David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 526 pp.**

*Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* is a formidable work in which the authors' erudition and intellect – as well as compassion and sensitivity – are on conspicuous display. For several years, I have used this book as the bedrock of every course on Christian ethics that I have taught. It was therefore with great interest and even some excitement that I heard about the publication of the new and updated edition and I was glad of the opportunity to reacquaint myself with this classic work. Thankfully, the second edition lives up to my high expectations.

*Kingdom Ethics* was published to critical acclaim in 2003. Since then, the book has gained an international readership and a wide reputation as one of the leading works in contemporary evangelical theological ethics. Since its first publication, *Kingdom Ethics* has sold more than 30,000 copies and has been translated into several languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Korean and Spanish. Aiming to respond to world changes and new scholarly discoveries, Stassen and Gushee decided to work on a second edition to bring the book up to date. Sadly, just as they were beginning to work on the new edition, Stassen fell ill and died of cancer in 2014. Gushee thus assumed sole responsibility for the second edition, employing a 'revision team', consisting of younger Christian ethicists whom Stassen and Gushee had trained.

While there are some significant differences between the first and second edition, the basic aim is the same: namely, to let Jesus, in particular his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, set the agenda for Christian ethics. Nevertheless, there are some important changes, most of which, in my view, are constructive. From a careful reading of the second edition, it is clear that the book has been improved in many ways. Readers familiar with the first edition will notice some substantial changes to the layout of the book. The structure has been simplified from 24 chapters divided into seven 'sections' (in the first edition) to 22 chapters divided into two 'parts' (in the second edition). Gushee and his revision team have also made several judicious stylistic changes to the text, which have added clarity and comprehension to several passages. The second edition also has a

noticeable international ambiance, in contrast to the much more limited focus of the first edition, in which almost all practical illustrations were taken from North America.

As well as the structural changes, the content of several chapters is substantially different. Arguably, the most noticeably modified section is the chapter that addresses the issue of homosexuality. Even the basic terminology has changed. Whereas the relevant section in the first edition is entitled, 'Homosexuality' (pp.307–11), the same section in the second edition is entitled, 'LGBT Persons and Same-Sex Relationships' (pp.264–68). This seemingly minor terminological alteration marks a significant shift in emphasis, which is reflected in the substance of the ethical reflection that follows. Instead of discussing 'homosexuality' in terms of concepts and ideas, Gushee aims to shift the debate onto a discussion about 'the lives and relationships of LGBT persons'. In the new edition, Gushee remarks that this discussion has 'advanced and intensified considerably' since the publication of the first edition in 2003. This shift in emphasis reflects Gushee's own change of mind on the issue. In a footnote, Gushee explains that he now takes an 'evangelical revisionist posture', which he writes, is 'different from the approach that we took in the first edition of *Kingdom Ethics*'. Although Stassen was too ill to engage fully with Gushee's new thinking on this issue, Gushee notes that Stassen took pride 'in being the faculty sponsor of the gay student support group at Fuller Seminary' and adds that, 'in several of our last conversations he declared definitively that this book's section on LGBT issues needed total revision' (p.267).

Another significant feature of the second edition is a more pessimistic – or 'realistic', depending on your perspective – assessment of the church's potential to facilitate the transformation of society, according to the values of God's kingdom. The first edition was more optimistic about the role of the church as an agent of kingdom transformation. The first edition, for instance, describes the church as 'the beachhead of the kingdom, the place in which the reign of God begins to be made manifest here and now' (p.230). Interestingly, this description has been removed from the second edition. Instead, as Gushee puts it in his Foreword to the second edition, 'Christian churches are far too often seduced by the powers and ideologies of this world, to the point that the churches sometimes actually end up opposing rather than participating in the actual work of the kingdom of God' (p.xiv). The second edition is therefore much more concerned with the notion of 'kingdom ethics' as 'a minority and resistant ethic'.

This change in tone and emphasis reflects what was, from my perspective, the only significant shortcoming of the first edition: namely, the lack of an explicit ecclesiology and the absence of a sustained reflection on the connection between the kingdom of God and the embodied Christian faith community. Whereas the first half of the book tends to focus much more on the kingdom, the second half is generally more concerned with the specific social role of the church. Although the second edition offers a more chastened optimism concerning the role of the church as an agent of kingdom transformation, the second edition, in my view, shares the same deficiency as the first edition, in so far as it does not explain clearly the connection between 'church ethics' and 'kingdom ethics'.

Nevertheless, these are relatively minor objections, especially when set against the backdrop of the monumental achievements of *Kingdom Ethics*, which will continue to serve as the essential and definitive guide to Christian ethics for a new generation of pastors, teachers, scholars, evangelists and prophets. Such is the book's accessibility and practical focus, that it can be read not only academically as an ethical textbook, but also devotionally as a resource for discipleship and spiritual formation. I hope that this book will find a prominent place on the shelves of British Baptists as we search for compassionate and biblically-grounded solutions to some of the most urgent and pressing moral issues of our time.

*Joshua Searle*  
*Spurgeon's Baptist College*

**John C. McDowell, Scott A. Kirkland, and Ashley John Moyse (eds.), *Kenotic Ecclesiology. Select Writings of Donald Mackinnon* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 245pp.**

Donald Mackinnon is one very good reason we should avoid the chronological snobbery of assuming all theological writing has a built in use by date. For much of the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mackinnon was an intellectual force to be reckoned with in British theological circles as a philosophical theologian who combined a relentless interrogative mood with an enduring and deep personal piety.

Most of Mackinnon's published output is in essay form, a number of slim occasional volumes, a steady stream of book reviews, and a long list of articles contributed to a wide range of academic Journals on an even wider range of subjects. The occasional and scattered nature of his work means much of it was so contextually dependent on time and circumstance that it could be fairly assumed it would have immediate relevance but a short shelf life. That's true of some of his writing, but such a concession by no means consigns Mackinnon to occasional footnotes in the history of Anglican theology, or ethico-political dilemmas of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, or long past and fading philosophical debates. Nor does it mean that Mackinnon's penetrating and at times anguished reflections on the nature of the Gospel have lost their relevance. The problems Mackinnon discerned in a church losing its way, losing its hold and in danger of losing its credibility as witness and embodiment of the Gospel, continue to trouble the Church two generations later. The nature of the church and its Gospel is for Mackinnon embedded in the action of God in Christ, and decisively shaped and sustained by the transformative grace of God. The Church for all its flawed, broken and compromised histories, lives and moves and has its being by the grace and mercy of that same Gospel.

The title of this volume distils Mackinnon's theology into concentrated form. *Kenotic Ecclesiology* gathers three of Mackinnon's more durable contributions to a theology vivified by ecclesial commitments and galvanised by an indomitable

faithfulness to that which is the given of Christian life, the revelation of God in Christ incarnate, crucified and risen. The given-ness of revelation as the decisive historic fact and truth of God incarnate, is for Mackinnon, the starting point of Christian theology, and a stumbling block to all attempts at intellectual control and metaphysical evasions. "We are not concerned to sit in judgment on that gospel. For he who is the burden of its message is himself our Judge." A paragraph later Mackinnon asserts the necessity for Christian theology of "acquisition of the theological virtue of supernatural faith." (46)

This collection of three of Mackinnon's books brings together some of his best theological reflection on the gospel and the church. There is a sharp and appreciative introduction to Mackinnon's thought by John McDowell which, along with the introduction to an earlier collection of Mackinnon's essays (see *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty. A Donald Mackinnon Reader*), provides the best brief account of this theologian's work and his contribution to 20<sup>th</sup> Century theology. McDowell is especially good on Mackinnon the theological interrogator, a restless intellect co-habiting with a spirit both pious and faithful to the gospel of Christ, in whom is the revelation of God.

*God the Living and the True*, and *The Church of God* were both published in 1940, their overall context that of the struggle and foreboding of a population still instinctively Christian, but facing a future fraught with destabilising realities. *God the Living and the True* is a powerful and impassioned exposition of the gospel according to the Gospels, and as refracted through Paul's most profound writing. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and trusting to us the ministry of reconciliation". Thus Paul's theological framing of the gospel narratives.

But Mackinnon's theology plunges further into the depths of human sinfulness and a creation ravaged by dark forces of uncreation, and finds already there a mercy and grace that defies all rational categories. For that reason he is known as a theologian of the tragic, one who has wrestled to near exhaustion with the unanswerable questions of the mystery of God's relentlessly redemptive love for a recalcitrant creation. The cost of that redemption is beyond calculation, defies comprehension and defeats human articulation. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." In a series of short chapters Mackinnon explores the New Testament gospel. 'The Scandal of Particularity' which attaches to the claim that one human event in time has ramifications for all people from all eternity and to all eternity; 'Man before God' is less an explication of anthropology than a full on theology of God focused on the Cross as the definitive window into the very nature of the Eternal before whom all human intelligence, will and affectivity are called in question by a love that baffles, commands and affects to the core of the soul. Mackinnon's book seeks to show the renewal of human understanding when confronted by the crucified; the cross is the negation of all self-sufficient and self-confident reasoning. Here is Mackinnon's conclusion at the end of what remains a persuasive and profoundly argued account of God's self-donation seen at its most scandalous in Christ crucified:

The work of the cross remains, and if we have eyes to see, we can comprehend its power amongst us at this hour. It is the weakness of the Crucified that lays low the kingdoms of men and brings the bewildered, through the admission that it alone is the place of God's revealing, to trust again their own intelligence (p.88).

The second book is *The Church of God*, a sixty five page ecclesiology by one who loves the Church too much to idolise it as an end in itself, or idealise it as the best of all possible institutions, or excuse its flaws, compromises and downright sins, or traduce it for the same. Instead Mackinnon explores the implications for the world, the gospel and the Church itself, of this divinely ordained and renewed people of God. The Church is variously described as a 'transcendent society', and as such is 'the bearer of an everlasting gospel', the community of which it is claimed 'he who heareth you heareth me', a people who 'are knit together into Christ.'

These and other convictions about the nature of the Church and its mission are given theological depth and breadth in an ecclesiology which is unabashedly Christocentric, founded on the faithfulness of God in Christ and in the faith once for all delivered. That faith finds its focus and its mission in the kenotic love of God in Christ. Consequently the church's witness is faithful insofar as it embodies and bears that same kenotic love to a God-loved world redeemable only at infinite cost and by God's eternal and purposive promises to redeem. This book too finishes with a slow walk to Calvary, as, redeemed in Christ, men and women know themselves children of God.

"The theology of the cross is the theology of glory. For the very horror of Calvary is rooted in the dignity of the sufferer as Son of God. It is his glory that is manifested in the terrible isolation of that act of obedience. That is the gospel of God – the Way, the Truth and the Life."

No surprise that those familiar with Mackinnon's thought consider him one of the most penetrating interpreters of John's theological masterpiece.

The final inclusion is *The Stripping of the Altars*. In the first essay 'Kenosis and Establishment' Mackinnon speaks as Anglican to the Church as Institution, as politically enmeshed, as a power player. Scott Kirkland's introductory essay is deeply instructive. "Mackinnon saw the church's situation in the 1960's as one in which it had so clothed itself in the vestments of power that it was unable to perform precisely the kind of morally serious protest that is at the heart of its very being." (p.161) The remaining essays in this short volume address various issues important in Mackinnon's oeuvre, including tragedy, authority and freedom, and ecumenism.

In the 'Foreword' Rowan Williams, whose own debt to Mackinnon he frequently acknowledges, sums up Mackinnon's approach to church, both his commitments and his complaints: "Mackinnon speaks as someone who cannot live with the church as it historically is, but cannot live outside the church as it theologically must be." That sentence sums up so much of what makes this a rich and

provocative collection from a theologian too important to forget. It is good that his work is being studied, republished with excellent introductions, and continuing to compel constructive criticism and vigorous theological examination of what the church is, and what it must be.

The price is around £40 from online suppliers, which may discourage potential readers from discovering Mackinnon for themselves. That would be a pity; that said, the book is beautifully produced. But a more affordable paperback would be welcome.

*Jim Gordon*  
*Aberdeen*

**Pauline Ashbridge, *Protestant Paths: A Story of Dissent* (London: Kershaw Publishing, 2016), 147pp.**

*Protestant Paths* narrates the experience of a select group of religious dissenters in England and South Africa. Ashbridge particularly focuses on the Somerton family. Partly through this family's various interactions with differing dissenting traditions, she examines the lives of Methodists, Baptists, and Quakers. A variety of historical events receive attention, including the Inclosure Acts and the British migration to South Africa.

The book is narrated at a crisp pace, but unfortunately it lacks direction. The author provides no discernable thesis at the beginning of the work, and at times the volume reads like a series of disconnected reflections on the lives of seemingly random nineteenth-century figures. Ashbridge has conducted substantial research—she impressively documents minute historical details from both England and South Africa—but she could serve her readers better by making more coherent connections between the characters she explores.

The work also suffers from problems related to formatting. Page ten begins, for example, in the middle of a paragraph that does not have its origins on the preceding pages. Several times extra spaces appear between sentences or words. On some occasions, the citations are not formatted properly.

Despite these difficulties, Ashbridge does provide an interesting examination of what it was like to live as a dissenter—either as a Quaker, Methodist, or Baptist—in the geographic regions she explores. This fact gives the book some value. Rather than offering a straight overview of important historical developments within these religious traditions, Ashbridge captures well the personal aspects that sometimes are neglected in academic literature. I would not recommend this book as an introduction to English non-conformity. I would not commend it as a necessary read in the field. I do believe, however, that those who do read it will encounter an interesting narrative about the personal experiences of members of the dissenting tradition.

*David Mark Rathel*

**Richard McLauchan, *Saturday's Silence: R. S. Thomas and Paschal Reading* (University of Wales Press, 2016)**

In the Easter Triduum silence is the in between time. The Friday cry "It is finished" is history, and the Sunday announcement "He is risen" is unspoken. A hiatus has opened with no promise of closure. For the first disciples, there was no guarantee there was anything, anything at all, after the finished work of burying Jesus and sealing the tomb. Holy Saturday is the time and place of waiting, silence, numbness, when thought falters, hope retreats, and words dare not break the silence for fear of confirming the worst fears.

R. S. Thomas's poetry has long been recognised as the poetics of divine presence and absence, of speaking and silence. God and the ways of God in the theopoetics of Thomas is a mystery which is inevitably elusive and even intentionally evasive of human grasp. This book approaches Thomas's poetry by way of a theology of Holy Saturday, a recognition that the work of the priest poet can be read as a way into, and beyond, the paschal mystery of Christ incarnate, crucified and risen. Throughout, McLauchlan brings Thomas into conversation with three theologians all of whom have thought deeply and long about Holy Saturday as an essential stopping place in the narrative of the Gospel. In that silence in which there is no guaranteed future, the stillness beyond agony finally exhausted in death, the utter self-giving of God resides in the patient waiting that precedes without anticipation or certainty, the next movement and the next word. Hans Urs von Balthasar argues powerfully throughout his book *Mysterium Paschale* of Saturday when "God falls silent in the hiatus...and takes away from every human logic the concept and the breath." *The Cross and Resurrection* by Alan Lewis is in its own right a remarkable journey of the mind and heart of a theologian writing of Holy Saturday from within his own paschal story of terminal illness. Easter Saturday is for Lewis a powerful metaphor of our society as "an Easter Saturday society, in the throes, wittingly or not, of its own demise." The third participant in McLauchlan's conversation is Rowan Williams, and especially Williams' fascination with, and insistence upon, the strangeness of God.

The chapter on 'Divine Silence and Theological Language' weaves an analysis of several of Thomas's poems into a discussion about the limits, necessity, moral seriousness and ultimate inadequacy to its Subject of all theological language. This chapter points the way through the book. McLauchlan quotes Janet Soskice in support of the limits of language to describe that which transcends description: "The apophatic is always present with the cataphatic, and we are in danger of theological travesty when we forget that this is so."

What Thomas's poems are determined to avoid, hence their portrayal of the elusiveness, even intentional evasiveness of God, is just this falling into 'theological travesty' as the outcome of prematurely claimed certainty. Poems such as 'Nuclear', 'Shadows' and 'The Gap' are explored in conversation with

modern theological voices equally diffident about the propensity of theological language to try to say the unsayable, as if God could be contained in human discourse without remainder. Easter Saturday rebukes what P T Forsyth called 'the lust for lucidity'; it is a bleak reminder of Saturday silence as a time and place stripped of all meaning. And when the silence following death by crucifixion intimates the silencing of the Logos, language itself is eclipsed by silence as the communicative mode of the Word by whom all things were made. As to whether the creative Word will once again be heard?

The whole book is written along similar veins, as the poems, and not only the individual poems, but the poems read together and interpreted inter-textually, are used to explore the dimensions and "resonances of history's most profound silence." Reading the poems, argues McLauchlan, is a spiritual discipline, an entering into the deepest mystery and farthest echoes of the Word made flesh, crucified and buried, and utterly alone on Easter Saturday. Such reading can be transformative, but involves a pilgrimage along the *via negativa*, a willingness to bear the abysmal silence that has no guarantee of resurrection or of creation made new. Thomas's poetry and its implied theology, is "resistant to our controlling tendencies, our desire for speedy resolution and instant meaning." The silence of Holy Saturday portrayed in the style, layout, blanks and words of Thomas's poems, becomes for McLauchlan the ultimate silence which gives meaning to all silences between words. Easter Saturday resonates throughout creation, and vibrates as unresolved mystery within all attempts at articulation, explanation and communication. The "sign in the space / on the page" provides a glimpse "of the repose of God". In the Concluding chapter the question is asked about whether the paschal dimension of silence can be represented in forms of art other than words. For example, Michaelangelo's *Pieta*, Bach's *Mass in C Minor*, a Rothko series, or the music of Messiaen. McLauchlan thinks it can be, and is, and such spiritual discipline through the arts challenges our preconceptions and refashions our vision. The last sentence of the book explains the author's burden in writing of Thomas as he does: "As all Christian renewal is forged through cross, grave and resurrection, that transformation through silence is a transformation achieved through the silent second day, through the silence of Holy Saturday" (p.129).

The book presupposes some familiarity with the concepts and concerns of contemporary theology, and assumes a willingness to read the selected poems in the company of a perceptive commentator, and to do so without interrupting the flow with questions which inevitably surface. This is a particular interpretation of Thomas, an experiment in listening stereophonically to the words and the silence between words. It is also an invitation to the spiritual discipline of reading this particular poet who is now content with divine absence, and now complains of it, for whom ambiguity is all but a theological principle given the limits of language and the constraints of human flesh.

Those familiar with Thomas's poetry will love this book, if they can afford its price. It is carefully argued, theologically attuned to contemporary angst and questionings, alert and fully engaged with modern theology, and it executes well the inter-disciplinary conversation between literary analysis and theological



understanding. It has a superb and wide ranging bibliography, an index, and rich endnotes some of them quite extensive with further comment.

*Jim Gordon*  
*Aberdeen*

**Paula Gooder, *Body: Biblical Spirituality for the Whole Person* (SPCK, 2016)**

**Paula Gooder, *Let Me Go There: The Spirit of Lent* (Canterbury, 2016), 128pp**

Paula Gooder is increasingly making a name for herself in a series of helpful books written for a wide audience. *Body*, follows her earlier book *Heaven*, by taking an everyday word and exploring it biblically. *Let Me Go There* finishes her series of books on the Christian year, having already published *The Meaning in the Waiting*; *The Risen Existence*; and *Everyday God*.

*Body*, like with *Heaven*, seeks to sort a lot of wrong-headed theology and provide a much better understanding of the Bible. It seeks to bridge the gap between academy and church. For this reason, it is most welcome. *Body* begins by noting three problems – a body problem, a spirit problem and a Paul problem. The first highlights the problem people have with the bodies – too many people not being happy with the body they have. The second draws attention to the fact that too many Christians have a dualistic view of body and spirit, physical and spiritual. The third suggests that the problem lies with Paul and how he has been read or misread. Having set out the problem, the rest of the book takes us through what Paul has to say the soul, the resurrection body, the Holy Spirit and identity and the body. For those who have read or studied in and around theology and Pauline studies, most of what is in *Body* will not appear new, but the point is too few are in that position, and so this book invites you in to those conversations and navigates you through, without leaving you lost to what is being said.

If your church has a library, and if not create one, *Body* would be good addition and should come with high recommendation. Hopefully Gooder will continue to add further volumes that offer helpful corrections to where too much Christian thinking has left behind, or at least distorted, biblical faith.

*Let Me Go There* is a different kind of book. It still provides lots of engagement with the Bible, but it is written to be a companion through Lent, as the previous titles, were companions in different seasons. Through 34 mini-biblical reflections Gooder invites us to reflect on what it means to be a disciple in terms of the themes of wilderness, temptation and following.

With this addition Gooder says the series is complete, but I wonder if she might be persuaded to write one more, that might combine Christmas and Epiphany, then a reader might be able to have a companion through the whole Christian year. (Although she might point out that she has written another book that explores Christmas *Journey to the Manger* and also one that explores Holy Week – *Journey to the Empty Tomb* which fill that gap).

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

**Michael Forster, *Being There: The Healing Power of Presence* (Stowmarket: Kevin Mayhew, 2015), 160pp.**

As the title suggests, this is a book about the pastoral significance of being with and alongside others. Its fundamental thesis is that this is to be understood as an active presence, not simply a passive one, but where being may be more significant than doing. Recognising that there is no terminology to express this relationship that is problem free, Forster opts to describe this kind of presence as 'pastoral companionship', rather than either care or counselling, involving a companion (the one offering pastoral care) and an 'other', whose otherness is to be respected and cherished in the relationship.

It is written with a particular view to those engaged in pastoral work in a Christian context, but the author hopes it will be both accessible and helpful to all those involved in caring in some way. This diversity of readership comes from the author's diverse background as a teacher, a minister in both Baptist and URC churches (having trained at Regent's Park College, Oxford in the 1980s) and as a whole-time mental health chaplain in the NHS.

The book draws on a number of resources, but the majority of the material comes from the background of either counselling or biblical studies, and it is holding these two types of resources together that makes the book the particular contribution that it is to those in pastoral work. So the first three chapters reflect on the nature and possibility of 'presence' with another, drawing on both more general counselling experience about the way a companion will hold themselves in relation to the other (in terms often described as 'active listening') and in particular on the person-centred approach to psychotherapy connected with Carl Rogers.

After a short discussion of the nature of spirituality, which shapes the particular kind of companionship the author is seeking to address, we turn to five chapters that explore biblical texts with a particular desire to read these texts from the position, interests and questions of a pastoral companion. The biblical texts are chosen to represent a broad sweep of 'salvation-history', with chapters on Creation and Fall in Genesis, the Exodus event, Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection. There is then one final chapter which brings the book back to practicalities, considering issues such as confidentiality, safeguarding, supervision and referring on to others.

Forster writes clearly and compellingly, and one gathers a sense of someone behind the book who is himself a sensitive and positive companion, bringing much experience of life and presence with others to his writing. Some of the material should be familiar to those who have some pastoral training, but could be helpful reminders; the chapter that draws on Carl Rogers explores one particular approach in more depth than some would know. But the particularly

distinct aspect of the book is, as mentioned above, the desire to bring the overview of the biblical story, through studying key texts, into conversation with approaches to care and companionship. This adds particular biblical and theological depth and is a conversation that is not often found in this way in the literature of pastoral care or biblical studies. The texts used are well chosen and are discussed with some theological rigour and offer very significant insight into how we might be actively present with others.

But Forster, of course, offers his own particular approach to and insights from the text, and it is here that some readers may struggle to journey with him. While wanting to reclaim Genesis 1-3 as full of truth, presented as myth (and he explains the meaning of the word), Forster suggests that perhaps the Fall was a necessary, even good thing, where we leave our 'gilded cage' - the example is given of wild animals kept as pets in cages - and 'must leave the garden and live in the great, wide, adventurous, dangerous world beyond it.' (p.76). There are some very helpful pastoral comments here about freedom, risk and failure even if some readers will want to read the story of the Fall in quite a different way.

Later, for example, Forster affirms the centrality of the Incarnation to the Biblical story and to Christian faith, in which there is much about hope and empowering others. He suggests that people 'became convinced that in [Jesus] they had encountered the very heart of God' (p.97) and that 'his death set the seal on his life as a new revelation of God' (p.98). Others would want to use language that affirms more strongly Jesus as God as well as revealing God and would look for a doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the power within the other who draws us into God. What God might be doing in the world through the Spirit seems to receive little, if any, attention, although there are significant ways in which the texts of Creation and Incarnation offer helpful resources. Asking more intentionally about God's activity in our being present with others would add to the book.

Readers are bound to read these texts in a variety of ways, and this reader would want to interpret some of the texts differently, but two things are of value. There are pastoral insights that Forster offers which are helpful and can be taken even if the texts are read differently. There are, of course, some readings of Genesis 1-3 that give little space for risk, and so would not be compatible with what Forster suggests, but there are other interpretations which can draw helpfully on Forster's work here. Secondly, this book offers a valuable model for the way that pastoral care - although the model can be applied to other aspects of ministry - and the Bible can inform each other in valuable ways.

This is the kind of book to offer to those at the beginning of a college course on ministry, or those developing a pastoral ministry in a church context who have not had any training before. I will certainly be suggesting that others in college read it.

*Anthony Clarke*  
*Regent's Park College, Oxford*

**Armand Léon Van Ommen, *Suffering in Worship: Anglican Liturgy in Relation to Stories of Suffering People* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 169pp.**

From within the hazy milieu of resources on worship today, Van Ommen's book is a unique contribution. Rather than developing another abstract volume which generalises about the phenomenon of suffering, leading to idealistic notions that may perpetuate the pain of sufferers, he has carried out some empirical research on the particular liturgy used in four Anglican churches in North West Europe. This may seem niche and irrelevant to anyone (including myself) who does not fit into ecclesial/geographical bracket. However, on the contrary, the selectiveness of his research is paramount. His attentiveness to the particularity of this context has enabled some profound findings which will prove fruitful for any self-reflective reader who is interested in exploring how their own corporate worship practices facilitate a theological and pastoral engagement with suffering.

Van Ommen orients the project with the claim that suffering should be acknowledged as a valid point of departure for theology. He relates this to liturgy as a ritual narrative hermeneutic. This is not to reduce suffering to the existential alone, but to suggest that story is a powerful form of theological formation. His research comprises four parts: analysis of the liturgical text in *Common Worship, Order One*; interviews with twenty-two people who have experienced major negative life events (including divorce, bereavement, illness, loss of job, sexual identity, attempted suicide and mental health); interviews with seven clergy and readers; and the observation of worship services. Some of his key findings will be discussed.

Firstly, there is a common sense from the interviews that people can connect their own story to the story of the liturgy. Whilst not all liturgy is interpreted the way it is perhaps intended, people find it helpful grafting their narrative onto the narrative of God and appropriate meaning that provides comfort or hope. Discussion about the liturgy and its meaning inevitably helps, particularly within the communal life of the worshipping community.

This leads to a second key point. There is a common thread throughout the book which relates a strong sense of community to a helpful engagement in one's own suffering. Conversely, when communal life is experienced negatively, so is the liturgy (138). This demonstrates the importance of what is referred to as 'after-liturgy,' which is the development of relationships outside the scope of the explicit worship act. This is perhaps a challenge for many ecclesial settings to consider how those who are suffering can be loved and supported in the midst of negative life events, in order to find the communal value they need in order to engage in worship. This is of course, complex, as, for example, sometimes the suffering person experiences pain that may have been caused by someone in the congregation. This further emphasises the relationship that liturgy has with the community outside of the worship act. Suffering in worship is more feasible when community life is healthy.

Thirdly, Van Ommen explores the significance of lament in worship as a language *par excellence* in addressing suffering (91). He highlights its dual purpose as a

faithful petition to God to act, but also something which moves the community to action (111). Lament can include silence and solidarity with a sufferer, but ultimately seeks to provide a mode for the pain of one's situation to be brought to God in the midst of the congregation. Without lament in worship, it is difficult for sufferers to explicitly bring their story to God. A lack of lament in much of our liturgy today could result in worship becoming a struggle for those who suffer.

Fourthly, whilst Van Ommen highlights the importance of lament, he also demonstrates through his research that some congregants feel that the liturgy enables them to engage with their suffering in other ways. Most significantly, those who had experienced major negative life events shared that it was in the Eucharist where they felt most able to find God in the midst of their pain. Whilst emphasising the distinctive nature of Christ's suffering (128), almost all participants in the interviews mention that the Lord's supper was important to them during those major life events (80). More than half also mention the Bible readings and sermons. This suggests that the Eucharist, whilst being an act of celebration and thankfulness, also functions as an opportunity to bring grief and pain to God. It could be more than *eucharista*, perhaps a form of concealed lament (92).

At a time where conflicting interests and preferences regarding worship 'style' appear to be as hot as ever, this book is a welcome part of the conversation. Van Ommen's sensitive work provides many helpful insights into the lived experience of suffering in worship, within the particularity of this context. The book affirms that the constitutive parts of the liturgical act are far more kaleidoscopic in their possible interpretive meaning than might be assumed. Furthermore, it seems clear that the traditions of Word and sacrament, prayer and singing, are useful formative practices which facilitate those who suffer in grafting their story onto the story of God. Nevertheless, there is plenty of content to provoke reflection on how congregations could do better.

Whilst the Anglican church is not my tradition, there are many thoughtful reflections in this book which have challenged me on the complex nature of suffering, as well as the multiple social and political dynamics operating within our worship practices. This resource is invaluable for anyone who wants to take seriously the reality of suffering and explore how to address it faithfully, honestly, and hopefully, within corporate worship.

*Tim Judson*  
*Bristol Baptist College*

**Ruth H. Perrin, *The Bible Reading of Young Evangelicals: An Exploration of the Ordinary Hermeneutics and Faith of Generation Y* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 243pp.**

There is a growing interest in how 'ordinary' church congregations, those without formal theological education, construct their faith and do theology. Earthed in empirical research, such studies allow these 'voices from the pews'

(or chairs) to reflect what congregations make of the exhortation and learning delivered by preachers and teachers. It deepens our understanding of how those to whom we minister process their faith, and how their own background and contexts influence what they believe – which may not be what the preacher intends or anticipates. In this careful and detailed analysis of the bible reading of ‘emerging adults’ in churches in diverse evangelical settings, aimed at academics and ministers, Ruth Perrin makes an important addition to this body of knowledge, opening a window on an age group missing from many churches. It is of particular interest to Baptists who identify with similar kinds of evangelicalism, or whose younger members come to us after formation in ‘non-mainstream’ evangelical churches.

From three communities representing different strands across the spectrum of evangelicalism – all independent of traditional denominational structures but linked with different umbrella networks - Perrin recruited three age-banded cohorts between 18 and 32 to investigate: biblical engagement and hermeneutic processes; conformity to the church’s doctrinal position; and the influence of gender on hermeneutics and faith. Age-banding enabled her also to critique and evaluate classic faith development theory as it applies in evangelicalism.

This empirical study was conducted as doctoral research, so Perrin’s opening chapters offer informative descriptive background, locating the evangelical communities demographically, theologically and spiritually, paying attention to hermeneutical norms against which she later evaluates her data. As a model for other qualitative researchers, she details minutely her methodology, although as a leading evangelical insider herself she is a little light throughout on her practice of reflexivity.

Choosing three biblical passages likely to be less well known to her participants and containing themes pertinent to her research goals (Abigail in 1 Samuel 25; the healing of Naaman in 2 Kings 5; Peter’s escape from prison in Acts 12), Perrin sets out and analyses the data garnered in Focus Groups, firstly exploring the young adults’ ‘ordinary hermeneutics’, then selecting three ‘evangelical distinctives’ inherent in the texts which she critiques to inform her research conclusions. Thus, as the groups ‘engage with the supernatural’ and ‘wrestle with the violence of God’, she enables us to observe the hermeneutic processes employed in their biblical study, and reflect on how far an individual church’s doctrinal position influences discussion. Then as each passage raises issues of gender, she assesses attitudes to equality in the churches which represent both egalitarian and complementarian standpoints.

Perrin unsurprisingly finds an orthodoxy of belief amongst emerging adults, contrasting with the spiritual eclecticism and decline in religious practice more typical of their generation. Theological boundaries are subtly reinforced within each group, and the diverse strategies she uncovers for negotiating these boundaries, biblical authority in particular, are of real interest. The choice of less familiar texts faced participants with raw and unmediated encounters with a God whose actions raised questions of justice and truth, especially around the

violence in each passage, and it is in the methods of handling these issues from within an evangelical standpoint that are truly enlightening to the reader.

By comparing the results from each focus group, divided by age and Christian experience, Perrin offers an informed contextual critique of traditional faith development models. Within this ecclesial and demographic 'monoculture' (largely tertiary educated and committed to the church), analysis of the group dynamics provides evidence that the older members, and those with more evangelical experience and knowledge, exert a restraining and conforming influence on those younger and less experienced, whose valid questioning of traditions and teaching, thinking 'outside the box', are gently discouraged and skilfully silenced. There is an intriguing glimpse here of an area ripe for more extensive research, to add further nuance to our understanding of faith development as it applies to younger evangelicals.

As an academic resource, there are some unhelpful aspects of the publication. A non-standard system of referencing and lack of an index render the text hard to navigate for research purposes, and many errors in proof reading are annoying.

Nonetheless, this is a text which well repays detailed study, and provides valuable insights into the ways young evangelical adults process faith through biblical engagement, also how social as well as ecclesial context play a significant part in maintaining loyalty and conformity.

*Anne Phillips*  
*Matlock, Derbyshire*

**Martin Camroux, *Ecumenism in Retreat: How the United Reformed Church Failed to Break the Mould* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 238pp.**

This is an astonishing honest account of the fortunes of the United Reformed Church (URC). Set in the context of a century of ecumenical advances, it tells the story of the creation of the United Reformed Church in 1972, what seemed like a huge ecumenical step forward, and then how the hope for further institutional ecumenism (organic unity) did not follow, and which has left the United Reformed Church in close to terminal decline.

I read it with interest to see how Baptists were seen. Camroux notes that Baptists might have been 'obvious ecumenical partners' for the Congregationalists, but suggests that this did not happen because Baptists had the most 'cautious attitude' towards ecumenism out of all Protestant denominations (p.64). This argues Camroux, is down to the more conservative turn taken by Baptists theologically in contrast to the more the liberal turn taken by the URC. Camroux records a fairly blunt view offered by David Thompson: 'The Baptists have not actually been interested in talking to anybody really but certainly not to the URC' (p.144). I think a fair number of Baptists would dispute this, see the report of the two conversations with the Church of England, but it is true that, outside of a few voices (e.g. John Howard Shakespeare), we have never been interested in organic

unity. One consequence, as the Camroux shows, is that decline of membership in Baptists churches has been much smaller in comparison to the URC and the number of church plants has been higher amongst Baptists.

The story Camroux tells is fascinating one and important one and many would benefit from reading it, whether they be a member of the URC or not. In reading I found myself asking in the ecumenical act of becoming one church, did both the Congregationalists and the Presbyterian Churches gain or lose? There is no serious attempt now at organic unity and is this a lesson learned from the URC? Where next for God's church?

*Andy Goodliff*

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

**David Hoyle, *The Pattern of our Calling: Ministry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (London: SCM Press, 2016), 192pp.**

David Hoyle's book begins with a chapter entitled "Beginning Badly", but with a great deal of irony, this is precisely the opposite — it is an endearing way to start, with personal history and experience, honesty and humility. This is absolutely *not* a bad place to begin. It points us immediately to the purpose of this book: what is ministry for, and with whom do we keep company when we exercise it? It also acknowledges that there has been a recent glut in books about ministry — especially Anglican ministry — and so there needs to be something different to say amongst the Percys, the Pritchards, to name but a couple of excellent contributors to this minor genre (to which, I admit, I have recently contributed.)

Hoyle acknowledges that ministry is changing, at least in the Church of England (as it most certainly is also amongst us Baptists) and traces the various reports and books that have sought to address the challenges of the social transformation that has seen clergy move most clearly to the margins of society, when once they were somewhere near its centre, at least in the rural parishes that comprise the majority of English Anglican communities. The *priest-like* task is to minister at the boundaries of the church and world and drawing upon Wesley Carr's *The Priest-like Task* (1985) agrees that ministry is about staying with people, rather than solving their problems too hastily, or retreating to a safer and more comfortable place. This is ministry seen through the lens of person-centred counselling, I suspect. Carr does not approve of vicars who concentrate too much upon the congregation and not enough upon the parish, and Hoyle too affirms that such ministry, stripped of many of the shelters that we employ to protect us from the storm, calls for nothing if not courage.

Ministry must be professional, in its keeping to appropriate boundaries, but is not exhausted by professionalism. In the thirteenth century we trained priests for confession, in the seventeenth to be preachers, and today we are enamoured with leadership, but "in asking for greater professionalism or outstanding leadership, we might settle for less than we really need" (p.34). While Christians



are a *particular* kind of people, responding to the distinctiveness of the Christian commitment, we then, Hoyle argues, proceed to make our selves peculiar, which is unhelpful — "Christians should have nothing peculiar about them" (p.37). I agree, but when Hoyle then asserts that they have no particular practice, I find I disagree. It is those practices of prayerful attention to God, love of neighbour, commitment to forgiveness and so on that form us as Christians, and ministry is about living those practices so as to enable others to do so. However, with Irenaeus, Ignatius and Cyprian, Hoyle engages with the Fathers to explore the limits of what we might say, and especially what we must say about salvation. Perhaps the rest should tend towards silence.

So, what is the place for clergy? It is "to summon the community of God's people from the settlements they have made into the Kingdom that is to come" (pp.84–4). While I also agree that our basic Christian identity is found through baptism, and not ordination (as if true Christian vocation — the *really* important kind, was ordained ministry), I disagree with Hoyle in his assertion that "The Church does not look to its priests for a glimpse of real Christian discipleship" (p. 82). No? Many will follow the example of their clergy, so if that is not authentic discipleship, then God help us. I think it is the particular calling of those who serve Christ's church as its ministers to precisely give a glimpse of what discipleship looks like, for they are called first — yes, with all others who name the name of Christ,—to just that: being disciples.

In chapter 6 Hoyle writes about that quintessential "country parson", George Herbert, and argues that while the *shape* of ministry (one might say the cultural context) has changed beyond all recognition, the *content* is the same. In chapter 7 his conversation partners include Henry Parry Liddon, from who he draws the warning that the temptations of ministry come from within, "the love of prominence, the love of influence, the love of popularity and of the praise of men" (p.109). Liddon knew that self-awareness was essential, and that the call is to be less like ourselves, and more like Christ. It also includes Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom, both of whom wrestled with their vocation in ways that illumine the struggle to serve Christ today.

There are nuggets of gold in the book, particularly where the conversation partners (and each chapter is really organised by way of a significant partner or two) are concerned and especially the great Michael Ramsey offers the insight that is essential — humility is an essential quality. "There is only one kind of person who makes God known and realized by other people, and that is the person who is humble because he or she knows God, and knows God because he or she is humble ... Ministry, then, can never be an achievement" (p.149). Priests need to be theologians, because they need to put the gospel into words, as Rowan Williams says, "There has to be in every priest just a bit of the poet and artist — enough to keep alive a distaste for nonsense, cheapness of words and ideas, stale and predictable reactions" (p.149).

From Ambrose, Gregory the Great and J. B. Lightfoot, Hoyle finds resources to keep ministerial balance, (chapter 9) but in the closing chapter, I suspect that Hoyle runs out of steam somewhat — I found it hard to fathom quite what was

the point he was making, other than ministry is permission to fail, each in our own unique way.

I must confess I liked this book, and found some parts of it stimulating, but also found some aspects confusing. His structure, in conversation with theologians from the Didache to the present day, was not the problem, but perhaps the points he wished to articulate from those partners. However, even with that reservation, I do commend this book, not least to those in the Anglican tradition from which it is drawn.

*Paul Goodliff*  
*Abingdon Baptist Church*

**Samuel Wells and Abigail Kocher, *Joining the Angels' Song: Eucharistic Prayers for Sundays and Holy Prayers, Year A, B & C* (Canterbury, 2016), 313pp.**

As Baptists we tend to use Eucharistic prayers in the same way as Anglicans, and so perhaps at first glance a book like this would not see much use of a Baptist ministers shelf. And yet I have found this book helpful in several ways.

First, it offers a Eucharistic prayer for every Sunday across the three years of the common lectionary cycle, plus a few for special occasions. This is a wealth of material, which follows the seasons of the year – Advent, Christmas Epiphany, Lent and Ordinary Time. For each Sunday the prayer engages with the lectionary texts for that day, so that the Lord's Supper is 'more of a piece with the Ministry of the Word that precedes it' (p.vii) – word and sacrament are linked.

Second, in this these prayers enable the gathering around the Word and gathering round the table to find places of connection and meaning. The Lord's Supper doesn't become a separate thought to the rest of the service. The skill of Wells and Kocher also mean that we see how the breath of the biblical story, for example, as they suggest in the introduction, 'instead of simply referring to 'the covenant', a variety of prayers can explore the various covenants with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses and with David' (p.xi).

Third, because of the reasons already mentioned, the Lord's Supper has the potential to become a more meaningful part of Baptist worship than it often tends too. Frequently, the Lord's Supper can feel bolted onto the rest of worship.

I have already used several of these prayers in celebrating Communion, although I have been selective and not always include every part, in part, because often the story telling has already been done, for as Baptists we separate it from the Eucharistic prayer itself. Also, because sometimes the prayer can feel too long for Baptist worship, it tries to include too much.

This is a worthwhile book to have and a church that celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly and follows the lectionary would find it very helpful, but even where this

is not the case, there is lots which can be used by a minister wanting to help a congregation connect with the place and importance of bread and wine.

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