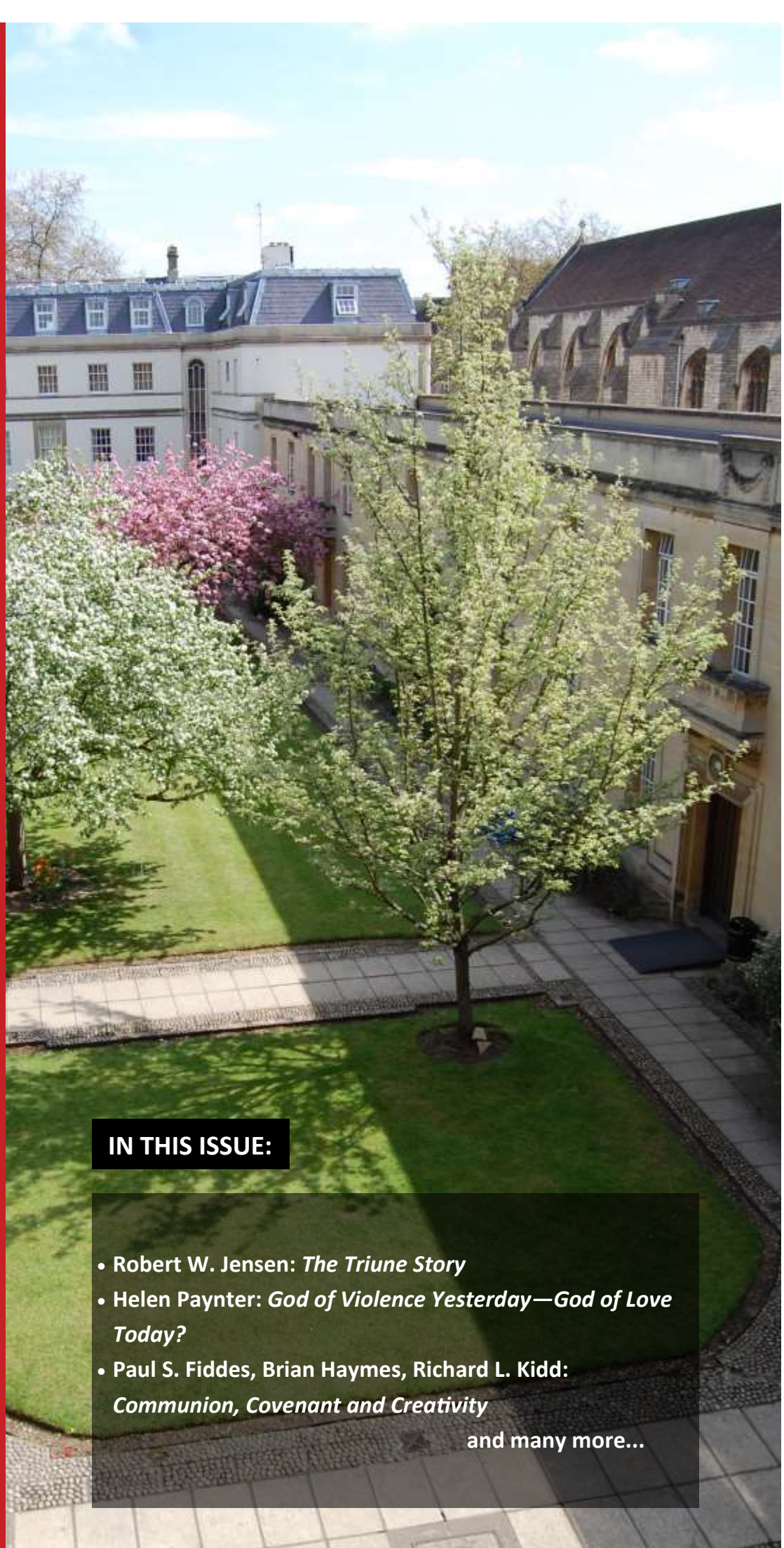


Reviews

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Editorial

Due to the interruption of lockdown, there was no *Regent's Reviews* in April. This October edition seeks to offer another collection of books covering scripture, doctrine, ethics, church history and practical theology.

Neil Messer, *Theological Neuroethics: Christian Ethics Meets the Science of the Human Brain* (T&T Clark, 2017)

Books on theology do not often address virgin territory but possibly this one does. Neil Messer explains in his introductory chapter that neuroethics itself is a new field with its genesis in the 21st century, and yet there has been little explicit theological interaction with the subject – surprisingly, given the type of questions raised by brain science studies. There has been ethical engagement with neuroscience, particularly in the discussion and evaluation of such complex questions as transhuman enhancements, free will, and vegetative states, but little of it has been rooted in the theological tradition. Messer wonders whether this is because of an embedded cultural priority of ‘scientific’ over theological knowledge and argues for a more compassionate and productive dialogue between the disciplines.

Initially the book offers a helpful ‘ground-clearing’ survey of scientific accounts of religion, identifying positions on a spectrum of scientific/theological engagement and choosing to work with a method that Messer describes thus: ‘both science and theology contribute, but theology is the dominant partner, shaping the understanding and critically appropriating insights from science’. This is an under-represented method in the contemporary discourse, but Messer makes a well-argued case throughout the book, drawing on substantial writings both in neuroscience and in the theological tradition.

Further chapters discuss a set of interesting questions. For example, how does the brain navigate moral decisions? Messer interacts with Harvard psychologist Joshua Greene’s thought experiments, known as trolley problems: scenarios in which choices are made between saving one or many lives. Messer offers a theological dimension to Greene’s conclusions, drawing on ethical ideas from Barth and Bonhoeffer. Next up is a chapter on free will and determinism, dialoguing this time primarily with Augustine on the theology of sin and grace; and then a chapter on consciousness – Messer indicates the problematic complexity behind the multiple understandings of the word ‘person’ and wonders if that is why ‘the concept of personhood is...ill-suited to settling contentious issues about the moral status of human beings at the margins of life’ (p130). Decisions about the care of those with brain damage are fraught with moral pitfalls and this is an example of a place where Messer feels that good theology could help. Instead of trying to draw a boundary between person and non-person, he suggests we find an analogy with the Good Samaritan story of Jesus: who *acted as* a neighbour to the man who was attacked, rather than focusing on who *is* my neighbour? This puts the emphasis on our neighbourly behaviour and decisions, not on categorising others into neighbour or non-neighbour groups. This seems to me to be very helpful.

A final chapter explores interventions in the brain – not just the healing of damage, but the possible enhancement of a brain - and Messer insists that we should be very aware of the ethical difference between therapy and enhancement (both pharmacological and neurotechnological). Enhancement could be cognitive but also it could possibly be moral (about making people more altruistic, sympathetic, or just) – and a kind of moral posthumanism can be envisaged, raising all manner of ethical and personhood questions. Even confining the discussion to therapeutic interventions, it is helpful to hear Messer’s argument that if we have an ultimate end (with God), as well as penultimate purposes (as creatures), the flourishing is about fulfilling these creaturely ends: health is thus a penultimate and not an ultimate good. Messer warns, however, that we need an

appropriate humility about thinking that we can understand the purposes of God for us and thus make such judgements about human wellbeing.

I found this book fascinating, rich in ideas and sources, and increasingly pertinent to current debates and future possibilities in technologically assisted human being. If you are interested in personhood or medical ethics then it is definitely for you – but probably not for a casual reader who has not explored a little in this area before.

Sally Nelson
St Hild College, Yorkshire

John Frederick and Eric Lewellen (eds.), *The HTML of Cruciform Love: Toward a Theology of the Internet* (Pickwick, 2019)

Sometimes one reads a book that is truly ‘of the hour’ – and this is such a volume. It isn’t about the 2020 pandemic of Covid-19 – it was published a year earlier – but it does address some of the theological questions that lie behind our brave new digital world, and does so in an accessible and readable manner.

This is an edited volume of short essays by multiple authors, but I was impressed by the fluidity of the read. The different perspectives come coherently together to offer a helpful landscape for those of us navigating digital church: struggling, for example, to work out what pastoral care on Zoom really means and whether communion on screen is really communion - not that these specific issues are spelled out for us, but there are some great foundational ideas here on which we can build. There has been an explosion of theological reflection on the impact of Covid-19, and digital community and communication cannot be separated from this exercise.

Like many others, I have had conversations about how virtual relationships compare with embodied relationships, and what this comparison says about personhood. In this book you will find a balanced and nuanced view of theological thinking to this point on what can and cannot be achieved through the internet. For example, the first chapter explores the classical spiritual discipline of ‘custody of the eyes’. The brutality of the gladiatorial public shows was condemned by such as Cyprian of Carthage and Chrysostom: why would Christians feed on this kind of public violence? What does it say about the desires of the heart, let alone the subtext of idolatrous worship? Our own age has a different context of course, but the authors of this chapter warn of the danger of viewing violent imagery in the private space of our homes, without censure, and the diminishing power of the violent image to shock and terrify us.

Another chapter deals with the way in which we access the digital world – which after all, is a complex set of zeros and ones. We contact it by the interfaces of our devices: touchscreens, a mouse, etc – and the interfaces arguably extend our bodies beyond the biological: the author calls this excarnation and wonders where the digital begins and the physical ends, noting that there is now a generation of ‘digital natives’ who have never NOT known how to use touchscreen technology, for example. Is this good or bad? How does the idea of the digitally augmented body compare with the concept of the body of Christ?

If this has not whetted your appetite then further chapters address the sense of the fragmented narrative self that exists online (this self being unstable, possibly multiple, and not part of a communal narrative); the temptation to ‘vainglory’ in the digital world; the way in which is no longer ourselves ‘gazing at’ the internet but the internet now ‘gazing back’ (our preferences and browsing history being stored); and ways in which the use of technology as changed Bible reading, church, and also the ethics and sociology of the workplace.

In short: it was just the book I needed at this point of time, to help me to take a longer and theologically evaluative view of what I cannot escape: life necessarily pursued (in the era of Covid-19) in a virtual reality. Try it and see!

Sally Nelson
St Hild College, Yorkshire

Ryan M. McGraw, *Reformed Scholasticism: Recovering the Tools of Reformed Theology* (T & T Clark, 2019), 213pp.

In this volume, McGraw introduces “the tools needed to study Reformed scholasticism,” contending that students must examine “the scholastic roots of the Reformed orthodox tradition to understand and to build a constructive Reformed theology” (3). McGraw approaches this task like “a teacher in a classroom leading students by hand” (7). He writes in an accessible tone, and he provides numerous anecdotes to demonstrate how research into Reformed scholasticism might benefit scholars and ministers.

McGraw’s book arrives as researchers are giving Protestant scholasticism fresh attention. Richard A. Muller has convincingly demonstrated that much of Protestant theology—and particularly Reformed theology—became codified as theologians made use of the scholastic method. The tools associated with the scholastic approach allowed thinkers to portray their commitments easily in confessional statements and to write with depth and precision.

Of course, defining the scholastic method can prove challenging. McGraw helpfully simplifies the conversation by explaining that “the scholastic method aimed to answer questions in an academic context.” This task of answering questions primarily centred around “disputes, declamations, and distinctions” (115). The works of Francis Turretin, Johannes Maccovius, and Johannes Heidegger exemplify this approach well.

McGraw’s text will benefit students who are approaching Protestant scholasticism for the first time. He offers helpful guidance, particularly in sections that detail how to conduct proper historical research. He introduces relevant theologians by locating them in their broader cultural and ecclesial context. Perhaps most significant, McGraw concludes with a lengthy section that outlines the value that Protestant scholastic writers offer to contemporary thinkers and ministers. This concluding section will interest beginning students as well as more seasoned readers.

David Mark Rathel
Gateway Seminary

Mark Scarlata, *The Abiding Presence: A Theological Commentary on Exodus* (SCM, 2018)

I first began to understand the theme of the presence of God in Exodus when reading Samuel Terrien some years ago. Since then, I have read and taught a good deal on the subject, which I consider to be one of the most exciting themes in the whole of the Hebrew Bible. This book by Mark Scarlata is the work I wish I had written on the topic. From the start Scarlata declares that the book is 'kerygmatic, in that it proclaims good news to the community of faith which is grounded in historical events of the past... providing a living voice that continues to speak to the reader today' (p.2). The book is an assuredly *Christian* commentary, and reading it is an inspiring as well as an educational experience.

Scarlata is well aware of the wider scholarship that has engaged with Exodus using many methodologies. He draws on this scholarship with care, but is not bound by an unhelpful historical-critical approach that loses itself in discussions of sources and origins. Nor does he press the historical claims of the book too heavily on the reader, seeking instead to understand what the events *mean*. 'We can be confident in the historical basis of the Exodus, but the goal of theological interpretation is to move beyond the historical and into the sacramental' (p.18).

As previously noted, Scarlata uses the theme of the Presence of God as his framework, and within this framework he skilfully reveals many of the key ideas that the text contains. His attention to detail while keeping a broad approach to the thematic developments is very helpful.

Each section (there are eight) deals with a substantial section of the text, showing the key theological ideas it is exploring, and addressing particular questions raised by the text. There is much a great value here; I particularly appreciated – for example – Scarlata's discussion of the theological significance of the 'wilderness' theme (pp.117-122). This theme is much used in modern missiological writing, and not always with sensitivity to the biblical meaning of the motif.

After the extended discussion on the text's theological meaning, Scarlata provides a summary; usually a couple of pages long. He then gives an extended discussion of how the themes and events that have been discussed are used and developed by the New Testament writers. This is extremely helpful in enabling the development of a good biblical-theological understanding of the deep biblical themes.

I recently found myself advising my second year preaching class that they should take care which commentaries they choose to use for sermon preparation. 'Because they aren't all good quality?' mused one student, which caused me to stop and think exactly what I meant. Certainly not all commentaries are of the same quality in terms of their scholarship. But, more than this, there are two other essential properties which I think a commentary should have if it is to be useful for preaching. It should be written by a confessional scholar whose deep worship of the God they are writing about glints in the text continually. And it should be a commentary that takes a sufficiently high-level approach to the biblical text that its theology emerges. In other words, although verse-by-verse commentaries have their use, it takes harder and more extended work for the reader to move from there to an overall understanding of the function and purpose of the broader text. A really useful commentary will take its reader there directly; able both to zoom in and pan out (think Google Maps) to uncover and set out the theology of the passage and its connection to the many deep themes of the Bible.

Mark Scarlata's commentary on Exodus ticks all three of these boxes in an exemplary fashion. I commend it to ministers, to preachers, to scholars; it could even be read for devotional purposes. It was certainly written with devotion to the God whose presence the book of Exodus attests to.

Helen Paynter,

Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence, Bristol Baptist College.

Sara M. Koenig, *Bathsheba Survives* (SCM, 2019)

This book is about Bathsheba's *afterlife*, that is, how her story has been read and told over the years – what is known as the text's reception history. The question that the study of reception history asks is not 'what did the author intend?', but rather 'how has the reader read?' The Bathsheba narratives prove to be highly fertile for creative interpretation, as they are highly 'gapped' accounts. This means that there are many places where the narrator simply does not tell us something that we want to know. It is an important technique of reading Hebrew narrative to identify those gaps and ponder what they might contain. More than this, however, they provide considerable interpretive flexibility, which generations of interpreters have been more than willing to take advantage of.

In chapter 1 Koenig sets out quite a few of these gaps. For example: What did Uriah know? Was Bathsheba a willing partner in David's adultery, or not? Koenig considers not just the adultery narrative but also the succession narrative at the start of Kings. Was Nathan manipulating Bathsheba? Had David really made her a promise about Solomon? In the second chapter Koenig begins her analysis of the reception history by looking at the early rabbinic discussions of Bathsheba in the midrash and the Talmud. I always enjoy reading rabbinic commentary as it is so very different from the way that I tend to interpret scripture, and sometimes – to this Christian reader – it feels quite extraordinary. Koenig gives us some such examples. For instance, in an attempt to exonerate David of adultery, Rabbi Samuel ben Nahmani writes that Bathsheba was not married to Uriah at the time of her sexual liaison with David, because soldiers routinely divorced their wives when they went to the battlefield (p.32). He evidences this by quoting 1 Samuel 17:18 where the young David is sent to his brothers on the field of battle and instructed to 'take their pledge'.

Chapter 3 explores the patristic interpretations of Bathsheba (though she is mainly portrayed as a 'bit character' in their expositions of David). Allegorical or typological interpretations are common in this period, and vary considerably. One example will suffice. Isidore of Seville does some etymological 'fancy footwork' with the LXX's name for the woman, Beersheba (= seven wells). From this he connects Bath/Beersheba with the Church, via the bride in Song of Songs, referred to as a well of living water (4:15), and Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit was given on the seventh day of the week. Likewise, he claims that Uriah (= my light is Yahweh) the Hittite (= cut off) reveals Uriah as a bearer of light that is cut off, hence is to be understood as Lucifer. Of this and other patristic readings, Koenig bluntly comments, 'If such interpretations of the biblical text seem – at best – counterintuitive, it is because they are' (p.51).

The medieval period (chapter 4) saw the rise of art depicting biblical narratives, termed by Koenig 'visual exegesis'. With the use of black and white reproductions of Bibles and Books of Hours, Koenig shows the range of ways in which Bathsheba is represented;

often with a particular focus upon her bathing, and often, though by no means always, with her represented as naked (which is a 'gap' in the narrative itself – was she?). Such representations were as disturbing to some medieval commentators as they might be for us today. Erasmus, for example, wrote, 'These subjects, it is true, are taken from Scripture, but when it comes to the depiction of females how much naughtiness is there admixed by the artists?' (quoted on p.75). Indeed, the centring of the sexual sin rather than the murder by the medieval artists leads a modern commentator to suggest that it foregrounds illicit sex and makes it representative of all sin. Such visual exegesis operated, Koenig suggests, in a hermeneutical circle, where the gap-filling by the artist (e.g. representing Bathsheba as naked) then becomes part of the cognitive frame within which future interpreters view her.

By the time of the Reformation (chapter 5), Bathsheba has been largely reduced to an object with which David sinned, though she is sometimes accused of hypocrisy for her apparent grief over Uriah's death. However, at this point we have the first recorded female commentary on the character. The Venetian nun Arcangela Tarabotti strongly refuted some of the masculine interpretations. She asks, 'What blame can possibly attribute to that innocent woman, overwhelmed by the splendour of the king's majesty?', and writes of 'David's savage nature, his overweening ambition' (quoted on p.87). With the advent of Higher Criticism (post-Reformation commentators are discussed in chapter 6, 'The Enlightenment'), the set of questions brought by interpreters to the text is broader, and different from previous generations, but the latent misogyny of many commentators is apparent. Matthew Henry praises Bathsheba for being a modest submissive wife like Sarah, in that 1 Kings shows her visiting the aged king while Abishag was ministering to him, and the queen was not offended by this (p.97). The more modern commentator Roger Whybray considered her 'rather stupid', an opinion shared by others (p.99). However, another female commentator Matilda Gage honours the queen rather more. 'The wife of whom no moral wrong is spoken, except her obedience to David in the affairs of her first husband, bowed with her face to the earth and did reverence to the king. This was entirely wrong: David should have arisen from his bed and done reverence to this woman, his wife' (quoted on p.98).

The final chapter considers the representation of Bathsheba in contemporary culture. Koenig takes us on a wide-ranging survey: from the conflicted romance between David and Bathsheba in Francene Rivers' *Unspoken*, via Sting's *Mad About You*, to the poorly-named *Bathsheba Syndrome*, a description of the ethical failures of prominent business people, published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* in 1993. I would have loved some more analysis in this chapter in particular; given the huge diversity of representations of Bathsheba, what trends can be identified, what ideologies are at play?

In her brief conclusion Koenig appeals to the Bakhtinian notion of 'unfinalizability'; the idea that certain stories and texts invite an unending engagement where no interpretation can claim the privilege of being the deciding word. The gaps in the Bathsheba narrative are the cause of this endless 'midrash', and the enormous range of interpretations she has shown us are the evidence.

I found this book an easy, fascinating read. Its short chapters and many examples provide a valuable insight into the reception history of the Bathsheba narratives. Do not buy it expecting help with sermon preparation or to understand the biblical account of Bathsheba better, but do buy it if you want to understand how biblical commentary – and theological thought – has developed over the years. And since blindness to our own

blindness is the fault of biblical interpreters in every generation, it provides a valuable lesson for us all.

Helen Paynter

Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence, Bristol Baptist College

Helen Paynter, *God of Violence Yesterday – God of Love Today? Wrestling Honestly with the Old Testament* (BRF, 2019)

The title of this book sums up how many Christians perceive the relationship between the Old and the New Testament, and it's a dichotomy that Paynter seeks to dispel. She is convinced that the Old Testament is an indispensable part of God's word to us, and she invites readers to interpret the varied genres of Scripture in the light of the teaching, life and death of Jesus.

The book presupposes minimal Bible knowledge, but at the same time the chapter on violence references a wide range of authors – Arendt, Girard and Kimball, to name but three. This suggests that the ideal reader is an intelligent person who has a somewhat elementary understanding of the Bible. There are vast numbers of people in the UK who come into that category, and it may well be that they will find Paynter's readiness to approach the Bible from the starting point of their perceptions and preconceptions refreshingly honest and helpful. On the other hand, Christians with a high view of Scripture, who may be used to uncritically accepting the Biblical account at face value, may be disconcerted and challenged by Paynter's use of hyperbole and myth to interpret the Biblical text. Yet it is one of the strengths of the book that it not only addresses the issue of violence, but also provides a valuable and much-needed basic grounding in hermeneutics.

Having laid a foundation for reading the Bible in the first section of the book, Paynter invites readers to wrestle with Scripture as she unpeels the layers of violence in the Bible, starting with texts that are less problematic and progressing towards those which become increasingly difficult. So we start with narrative descriptions of violence, where Paynter rightly points out that to describe violence is not to endorse it, but rather to indict it. Then she addresses texts which implore God to act in violent retribution against oppressors, texts which deal with violence against animals, texts which depict the violence of divine judgment, and lastly those texts where God appears to command the violent slaughter of the Canaanites. The book ends with a brief proposal of how the theme of peace can help us make sense of the biblical narrative in its entirety.

Throughout the book, Paynter is guided by the principle that God is good and God is love. At times it felt as she were prepared to do violence to the meaning of the text in order to exonerate God. In her exposition of the myth of Noah's ark, Paynter seems to compromise God's sovereignty over events when she talks about the flood in terms of God losing this particular battle with the forces of chaos that oppose him (95) or of how humankind almost destroyed God's creation, but God stepped in and saved it (96). Here it seems to me that Paynter's interpretation of the text departs too far from what the text actually says. On the other hand, I found her chapter on divine judgment and her discussion of the *lex talionis* and turning the other cheek insightful and helpful.

So – not everyone will agree with this book, but it is a refreshingly honest engagement with profound questions that are all too often sidelined. One of my home groups has

been discussing difficult Bible passages, and having read and reviewed this book, I am going to recommend it to them.

Tim Carter
Horsham Baptist Church

Helen Paynter, *The Bible Doesn't Tell Me So: Why you don't have to submit to domestic abuse and coercive control* (BRF, 2020)

As a pastor over three decades, I know exactly what Baptist theologian Helen Paynter is attempting to debunk. Too many times I have met Christian women in abusive situations who think that submission means that they have to put up with it – even that it is their cross to bear. Furthermore, they mistakenly believe that the obligation is upon them to continually forgive, without expecting change on the part of the one abusing or controlling. So, to have a book that tackles this head on, and by someone who is such a clear thinker, is a great gift to the church, and could indeed be a life saver to some – quite literally.

Helen quite rightly, and urgently in my opinion, exposes the hermeneutical issues around the word submission, demonstrating that Paul's usage of the word (and it is usually Paul who is under discussion in this respect) accords women with great dignity. He does this in two ways: first, by addressing his command directly to women; and second, by framing it within the context of sacrificial love on the part of her husband. I am grateful to Helen for pointing out these things out, because it is these precise texts, and their wielding of them by abusers, that has led to the perverse situation whereby Christians have legitimated wickedness on what they regard as scriptural grounds. Once you read *The Bible Doesn't Tell Me So*, you will realise that not in any context, not ever in fact, can a husband say to a wife 'you must submit to me.' As Helen argues, it is not addressed to the man. Instead, he would be far better to explore the implications of his own obligation which is to be like Christ.

If I have a criticism of the book it is the way Helen conflates her concerns about domestic abuse and coercive control with the debate around egalitarianism and complementarianism. I know why she does it. And she is right: the issues around this debate are not entirely unrelated to the topic under discussion, particularly those occasions, as noted above, when a theology of male authority becomes a pretext for authoritarianism and domination. On the other hand, the issues of domestic abuse are the issues of domestic abuse, and in my experience as a pastor they transcend theological commitments. I know men with a conservative theology who honour women in a most beautiful way; conversely, I know men who hold an egalitarian theology but know very little about how to empower women, less so dignify them. In other words, domestic abuse is no respecter of theology. And although I truly do believe Helen acknowledges this, and is at pains to avoid the crass synonymity of domestic abuse with conservative ideology, nevertheless I think the book would have been more powerful had she reserved her comments about complementarianism for another book. Goodness knows, she has the capacity for it. Helen is a prolific writer and a great thinker. Having shared a conference with her on one occasion, I have seen first-hand the way she unpacks scripture with enviable logic and passion. Her work on violence is very important work in my opinion, and I believe this book will prove to be a most important aspect of that project.

Ian Stackhouse
Guilford Baptist Church

Barry Harvey, *Baptists and the Catholic Tradition: Reimagining the Church's Witness in the Modern World* (2nd Ed.; Baker Academic, 2020), xi + 237.

The first edition of this work was published in 2008 by Brazos Press under the title *Can These Bones Live? A Catholic Baptist Engagement with Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics, and Social Theory*. The present text has been subject to modifications and amendments and two chapters from the first edition have been removed. The question here addressed and identified in the Introduction concerns how we, 'Protestants and Catholics together, go forward toward the unity that is Christ's mandate' (p. 3) and the premise (which some would challenge) is that the question 'cannot be resolved simply by identifying ourselves directly with those called by Jesus during his lifetime' (p. 46).

The present text consequently comprises seven chapters at least four of which could be considered an extended introduction, identifying the malaise and division of the church with its 'becoming entangled in the ways of the world', an echo of Israel's desire for a king 'like the nations': '[i]t is the shift to a monarchic regime, setting into motion the forces that ultimately led Israel into exile, and not its subsequent division along tribal lines, that offers the most instructive *typos* in the Old Testament for figuring the dismembered state of the body of Christ in this time...' (p. 97).

Harvey then exposes the various elements of the privatised religion of contemporary Christianity, tracing their roots not just to the Enlightenment (as is common), nor just to the Reformation, but also to the late Medieval separation of theological study from the spiritual disciplines of the religious life.

The final three chapters propose means by which the church might be renewed through 'sacramental sinews', 'spiritual formation' as a 'pilgrim people', and 'living in tension with the earthly city'.

The book is beautifully and engagingly written - there are several quotable quotes and memorable phrases - and the argument is worthily expressed though rarely innovative: these are well worn pathways and some (like the present reviewer) may find the frequently cited Cavanaugh more perceptive and compelling. But my chief problem with this second edition is its title (rather than its sub-title). For what possible reason might the author have been persuaded to introduce the title 'Baptists and the Catholic Tradition' and to signal (albeit briefly) the intention of addressing this theme (p. ix), when, its original title and the sub-titles to both editions more properly identify its content? With this present title the book simply doesn't 'do what's said on the tin' (unless I've missed something) and I continue to hope for a self-critical and persuasive discussion of Baptist commitments as they relate to a broad catholic tradition.

John E. Colwell
Budleigh Salterton, Devon.

Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune Story: Collected Essays on Scripture* edited by Brad East (Oxford University Press, 2019), xix + 354

So much academic work is occasional: a paper read at a conference or seminar, an article in a journal, a contribution to a *Festschrift* - all responses to specific questions, issues, or individuals and, given the (understandable) reluctance of publishers to risk investing in any collection of essays, such work generally is doomed to remain isolated and disconnected. OUP are therefore greatly to be thanked, together with Brad East who edited this volume, for bringing together more than thirty essays and extracts from the works of Robert Jenson on the general theme of Holy Scripture.

While the essays gathered here are grouped into three (unequal) sections they nonetheless (at least within those three sections) follow a chronological order, enabling the reader to track Jenson as he revisits themes and refines his thinking and responses. All of the chapters have been previously published in various places and their juxtaposition in this volume is enhanced (in my view) by extracts on this general theme from Jenson's major works. Inevitably in such a collection, alongside the traces of development, there is some repetition, not least of the commitments that determined that development: a colourful impatience with any supposed detached reading of Scripture and the corresponding positive affirmation of the Bible as the Church's book; a growing and deepening ecumenical identity and a consequent attentive listening to the tradition within which the Scriptures themselves were formed and within which they have been heard and heeded; a radical (some would say idiosyncratic) commitment to Nicaea and Chalcedon as the lens through which the Old Testament is read as much as the New; a moral conservatism that sometimes irritates but rightly unsettles. Different chapters will grab the attention of different readers (and some of these chapters I had encountered previously) but I was especially engaged by the very short piece on Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*, Jenson's reflections on the ascension, his revisiting of the notion of inspiration, and his reflections on whether ethical disagreements should divide the Church.

I've never found Jenson an easy read: maybe I'm rather slow witted but there were several paragraphs in his two volume *Systematic Theology* that I had to read more than once in order to grasp his argument. Maybe this is the reason Jenson's work is not as well known as that of Hauerwas or Moltmann, or even Pannenberg or Jüngel - and this is a very great shame since I would agree with the editor's assessment that Robert Jenson was 'the most significant American systematic theologian of the second half of the twentieth century' (xvi) except that I might (with slight qualification) be tempted to drop the limitation of 'American': Jenson was without question one of the three or four theological thinkers I have been privileged to know who has most profoundly influenced me, not least in our radical disagreements (he died just over two years ago). It is great folly only to read writers with whom you expect to agree and invariably I have found Jenson to be more provocatively stimulating even when I disagree with him than more easily accessible writers with whom I have expected to agree - he well rewards the effort and over the decades of engagement he has (at least in some respects) worn down my resistance. £25.99 for a hardcover book (the price at Amazon at the time of writing) seems pretty reasonable to me for a collection of essays that may occasionally make you angry but will unfailingly stimulate. Let me end as this volume ends:

'...we may find ourselves willy-nilly emulating the roles of Celtic Christianity or of the Benedictines during the "dark ages." If the Church survives in the West as a tiny and despised community, let her attend to the authenticity of her own life: Let her

cultivate Eucharist and its associated practices of mutual care, with the world viewing this strange body.’ (346).

John E. Colwell
Budleigh Salterton, Devon.

Michael Pasquarello III, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Theology of the Preaching Life*, (Baylor University Press, 2017), 288pp.

In the search for an adequate account of Bonhoeffer’s theology, a number of paths are well trodden. *Ethics, Discipleship, Life Together*, and *Letters and Papers from Prison*, and a number of more substantial pieces, as for example, the London lectures on Christology, have provided the primary sources for those seeking to reconstruct the theological mind of Bonhoeffer in order to have a clearer understanding of what that theology is and where it legitimately leads.

However apart from those several well-known works, most of the volumes in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* are made up of occasional writings, lecture notes, letters and papers, and sermons. So while secondary literature on Bonhoeffer is expanding like an economy in danger of overheating, Pasquarello’s volume examining Bonhoeffer the homiletician makes an essential contribution, and acts as an important corrective. I highly recommend it to all who preach and sometimes wonder if it’s worth it.

Pasquarello is convinced that Bonhoeffer is a ‘the homiletic theologian’ and that, alongside his other works and papers, a study of the sermons is an essential corrective. Bonhoeffer eventually lost interest in writing theology merely for the academy and increasingly gave himself to developing a theology for proclamation in the church. For much of his postgraduate life he served as both exemplar and teacher of preaching centred on the Word and located in the church community.

The book has 8 chapters, and sixty pages of valuable Endnotes, many of them adding further comment and information to enhance the argument, and point out additional material in the Bonhoeffer corpus. The volume is arranged chronologically. The subtitle, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Preaching Life*, prepares the reader for a different kind of biographical study. By exploring the sermons and the life situations in which they were preached, it becomes clear that Bonhoeffer’s preaching and theological development were inseparably entwined with the historical moment in which each sermon was preached.

For example in the chapter ‘The Discovery of the Black Jesus’, the context of Bonhoeffer’s engagement with the black church, and his witnessing of an entirely different form of preaching at Abyssinian Baptist Church, provided Bonhoeffer with critical tools that exposed the spiritual paucity and lack of impact of respectable and safe homilies, or carefully crafted social commentary passing as sermons.

So we follow Bonhoeffer from Berlin, to Barcelona, New York, Berlin, London, Finkenwalde, and then on the move with no permanent base for the last eight years of his life. In each chapter Pasquarello sees the dual development of preacher and theologian, and the interaction between theological insight and homiletical application, and both of these deeply founded in Bonhoeffer’s theology of the Word. This book is

neither biography, nor theological monograph, it is each of these and more. It is a persuasive argument that the sermons of Bonhoeffer, and his practice and teaching about preaching, are decisive forces in the formation of Bonhoeffer's theological mind, pastoral practice, and continuing significance in an age such as ours. It is a biography which integrates the life and theology with the sermons in a mutually informative conversation about what fired and fuelled Bonhoeffer from beginning to end, from young idealistic pastor to mature exponent of a cruciform life given without reserve to the witness of the Word.

Pasquarello has made a persuasive case for reassessing Bonhoeffer's major works, and indeed many biographical assumptions, in the light of his sermons, lectures on preaching and illumined further by his own homiletic practice and understanding of the preacher's role under God. Bonhoeffer's own words make the point plain:

“Preaching is an act of the whole community in whom scripture becomes a living word through which the Spirit confers the truth of the gospel as a social reality...Preaching is a divinely ordained activity *of the church for the church.*” (29)

On such a communal and vocational basis, Bonhoeffer the preacher wrote and preached sermons, lectured in theology, and wrote those works for which he is best known. What Pasquarello demonstrates in each chapter, is that some of the best theology and most enduring insights are embedded in his homiletic activity, as preacher and teacher. His is the theology of a preacher's life, and death.

Pasquarello has also shown that any biographical study of Bonhoeffer must always take account of his growth and maturation as a preacher. In the growth of his homiletic understanding and practice Bonhoeffer developed from pastoral and practical ministry in the local church, then from the early 1930's onwards, to finding voice for a preaching ethic of resistance, preaching as public confession of Christ, and inevitably to preaching as an act with political consequences. In his last years he was a preacher without a congregation other than those he encountered as an itinerant witness to the Word, and that within all the ambiguities of his own clandestine activities in the dangerous world of Germany at war.

From New York's Harlem to London, Berlin to Finkenwalde, and eventually to prison, Bonhoeffer's final loyalty to Christ was most fully expressed in his preaching and in the way he lived his life. To be formed in the image of Christ was the calling of the Christian community; the preacher's role in the proclamation of the Word was to be the willing instrument of that community formation as the sanctum communion, the Body of Christ, and that transformation starting with Bonhoeffer the preacher himself. It is that integration of personal commitment to Christ, and his best thinking theologically, that make Bonhoeffer's homiletic practice and surviving sermons an essential perspective in the portrayal of the life and thought of Bonhoeffer.

Preaching as a practice whose goal is the formation of the community after Christ, is perhaps best illustrated by Bonhoeffer's own searching words:

“Formation occurs only by being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ., by being conformed to the unique form of the one who became human, was crucified and is risen...as the form of Jesus Christ so works on us that it moulds us, conforming our form to Christ's own.” (185)

That Christological and ecclesial focus on formation generates the energy and persistence of the theology Bonhoeffer preached and lived. And in remaining faithful to his calling as

witness and martyr to that end, and to his end, perhaps Bonhoeffer's life was his best sermon.

Jim Gordon
Aberdeen

Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy* (Eerdmans, 2019), 522pp.

This is Luke Bretherton's second big book, at least in length. Bretherton is a British theologian who now teaches at Duke University and is one of the most interesting thinkers on church and politics. An earlier book, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* won the Michael Ramsey prize. The book that followed was *Resurrecting Democracy*, which was a study of community organizing, in which London Citizens was a key case study. This new book continues in the same of thought, reflecting further on democracy and politics. As so much of our life is dominated by politics and currently a populist politics Bretherton's work makes an important contribution.

Christ and the Common Life is in three parts. Part one is a number of case studies in political theology; part two looks at what sustains a common life; and part three, how a common life is formed. Bretherton's aim is offer a definition of politics and democracy that is theological and yet is focused on the common life of all, Christian and non-Christian. Bretherton's seeks to connect democracy and politics to neighbour love and that this has three questions trying to be answered — how do we respond to poverty, suffering and injustice? How can I keep faith with my distinctive commitments while also forming a common life with neighbours who have a different vision of life that I do? And what kind of power shapes the relationship between oneself and another and how is this power distributed? A look at the news in any given week and we can see these questions lurking.

Each chapter of the book can be read on its own and also as part of the whole, so there is an element that it works both as an introduction to issues and questions in political theology as well as particular argument about what political theology is. Each chapter might merit a review in itself, but I will just highlight a few bits before focusing on the key argument that underpins the book. The case studies in Part One are interesting for what they include — usual suspects Catholic Social Teaching and Anglicanism are there — but Bretherton begins with humanitarianism (the 20th Century attempts to reduce poverty) and Black Power (20th Century attempts to address racial injustice) and then moves to Pentecostalism and its emphasis on pneumatology, eschatology, and soteriology. (I was left wondering what a Baptist politics might contribute.) Part Two deals with class, secularity and toleration (the latter picks up on Bretherton's early work on hospitality, see *Hospitality as Holiness*). Part Three looks at big themes of Humanity, Economy, Sovereignty, People and Populism and ends with Democratic Politics, each chapter exploring something important for common life. It's the final chapter, especially pertinent at the moment, which I want to focus the rest of this review on.

Bretherton argues for democratic politics which he says should be 'understood as the negotiation of a common life between friends, strangers, enemies, and the friendless' (47). In other words democratic politics is not primarily about laws or elections, but a 'set of practices for generating nonviolent forms of relational power and cooperation' (445).

What becomes key to the kind of negotiation that Bretherton is suggesting is listening (for a similar argument from a baptist perspective see Andrew Ryan Newson, *Inhabiting the World*). This is to put ‘people before program’ and to acknowledge ‘biography and not just biology.’ He describes the ‘dance of politics’ as ‘a dance of both conflict and conciliation’, which requires listening, but also free speech, which sometimes must be ‘frank’, but more of the time must be ‘fitting’ (conscientious and measured) if it to seek a common life between friends and enemies. For Bretherton a democratic politics is not just what happens at the level of state, but at all levels in society and so ‘participation and contribution’ towards a common life and work is an on-going activity between persons who have multiply loyalties. Therefore he suggests loyalty and faithfulness found in the likes of covenantal forms of association become vital to this task. At the same time, there is more to common life than politics and economics and this is one contribution that churches provide in a vision of life that includes worship, rest, play and wonder. Bretherton claims that a democratic politics seeks practical wisdom, and as such practice comes before theory, it has to be a politics appropriate to the time and place that embraces finitude and frailty.

Christ and the Common Life is an astonishing achievement that has something to say to politics in the church as well as outside it. The ground that Bretherton covers is potentially overwhelming and the book is perhaps best read with others, modelling the argument for association, listening and speech. To process a book of this size is one that will take time, but time well spent, if Christians are to practice the politics of neighbour love.

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

Yvonne Sherwood (ed.), *The Bible and Feminism: Remapping the Field* (Oxford University Press, 2019)

This has been an amazing read! At first, a daunting prospect, with 36 chapters by different feminist and queer theologians on a wide range of different topics, but well worth the effort. This book exploring feminist Biblical studies is self-aware and seeks to critique the discipline itself. It acknowledges the tensions within feminism of both needing to let go of and move beyond, and yet also remain in dialogue with the Biblical text. If you are looking for a taster as to where cutting edge Biblical scholarship is at this is a good place to start.

Incorporating work by scholars from across the continents and from a wide range of disciplines including the sociology of religion, literature, history, anthropology, and archaeology and using a variety of theoretical frameworks and methodologies, this collection of essays explores the broad themes of memory and inheritance. Its aim is to disrupt the canon within the canon of feminist Biblical scholarship for example, to challenge the assumptions that feminist scholars are only interested in books with female protagonists or metaphors, or in focusing on the absence of women from the text. The book moves beyond a text-orientated model of reading and sets out to explore lived religion from intersectional (how different types of discrimination are connected and affect each other) perspectives.

To help orientate the reader the collection is set out in three sections. Part One explores the lost prophets of feminist Biblical scholarship and their contribution to the field. Part Two loosely follows a canonical order to look at specific narratives and texts, often from a queer perspective and Part Three aptly called “Offpage” focuses on “actualising and performing scripture” (p 8) using Derrida’s idea of inheritance as an active verb rather than something passively received.

I cannot possibly do this book justice within the confines of this review but hope to give a flavour of the themes covered with just a sentence or two on each contributor/chapter.

PART 1

Jorunn Økland “Death and the Maiden” triangulates the book of Revelation with the manifestos behind the 2011 killings in Norway. She explores both anti-feminism and anti-multiculturalism and calls for a de-authorising of texts that are used to authorise patriarchy.

Jane Shaw “Joanna Southcott and Mabel Barltrop” recovers the stories of two marginal, and heterodox women, their visions and their radically new interpretation of the fall whereby women have a central role in redemption.

Holly Morse “The First Woman Question” looks how the figure of Eve has been continually reframed by women throughout history in their pursuit of liberation.

Alison Jasper “Reflections on Reading the Bible” picks up Julia Kristeva’s idea of ‘female genius’ to explore how women are continuing to challenge male-normative readings.

Pamela Kirk Rapport “Another Esther” highlights the writings of Latin American nun, Sor Juana who like Esther, lived in a world that was ‘in between’ and speaks truth to power.

Jennifer Leader “Reading the Revelations...” examines Emily Dickenson’s dialogical relationship with the Biblical text as she also speaks truth to power.

Iana Pardes “Toni Morrison’s Shulamites” explores the role of Biblical texts and the affirmation of black beauty through Morrison’s novels on slavery and the Civil Rights movement.

Anna Frisk “Stood weeping...” honours themes of mourning and re-membering in feminist scholarship.

Elisabeth Scüssler Fiorenza “Feminist Remappings...” critiques neoliberalism/kyriarchy (interconnecting systems of domination) and its notion of intellectual property arguing instead for intersectional approaches to remap the field of feminist Biblical studies.

Alicia Ostriker “The Wandering Jewess”, a the scholar/poet wrestles with the text to midwife repressed femaleness and divinity, the Shekhinah.

PART 2

Deborah Kahn-Harris “The Inheritance of Gehinnom”, a feminist Jewish rabbi/scholar who sets out from a stance of curiosity to create her own midrash in conversation with the tradition, whilst subverting it.

Jennifer L. Koosed “Moses, Feminism and the Male Subject” focuses on shifting and fluid constructions of masculinity and femininity and how these intersect with race, sexuality, class etc.

Rachel Havrelock “Home at Last” uses feminist spatial theory to explore how marginal groups figure in the power dynamics of social space in relation to genealogies and their narrative maps.

Ken Stone “Judges 3” explores connections between queer and feminist hermeneutics in challenging rigid and binary distinctions between humans and between humans and animals.

Ann Jeffers “Forget it” uses ritual, memory and comparative studies along with postcolonial theory and art history to explore the stories of the Woman of Endor and the European Witch Trials which serve to construct women ritual practitioners and mediators of the divine as witches.

Erin Runions “Sexual Politics and Surveillance” explores Psalm 139’s use by both LGBT and pro-life groups as evidence of personhood arguing that surveillance can also be oppressive.

Mercedes L. García Bachmann “Foolish King...” looks at the counsel (*wisdom*) of Lemuel’s *mother* in the text of Proverbs 31: 1 – 9 contrasting with her words naming women (*whores*) as a potential distraction (*foolishness*) as two sides of the same coin.

Anne-Mareike Scol-Wetter in “My Mother Was...” looks to nomadic theory and the idea of “not belonging” as a key metaphor for understanding the Bible and contemporary crises and for deconstructing fixed identities.

Deborah F Sawyer “Queen Vashti’s ‘No’...” looks at what role the female body and ‘cunning women’ play in key moments of the Biblical text.

Ingenorg Löwisch “Miriam Ben Amram” explores how genealogies, by who they name and the gaps they leave, can be both inclusive and exclusive, in their legitimising of authority.

Wong Wai Ching Angela “The Politics of Remembrance” draws on Ricoeur’s conception of history and the production of memory to lay the Chronicler’s genealogical halls alongside contemporary memorials focusing on the duty of memory as a duty of justice for all.

Jennifer A. Glancy “Corporal Ignorance” uses the gospel story of the severing of the slave’s ear to show how the tradition deflects attention away from the damaged body of the slave.

Jennifer Knust “Can an Adulteress Save Jesus?” critiques 20th C feminist receptions of this story as a bid for liberation. Might the adulteress not just leave, and Jesus discover he was the one who needed to be rescued?

Joseph A. Marchal “Pinkwashing Paul, Excepting Jesus” exposes how positive claims about sexuality and gender are used to justify oppressive practices and highlights the importance of intersectionality in transformation.

Denise K. Buell “Embodied Temporalities” looks at germ theory alongside resources from the Christian tradition to challenge our ideal of an autonomous self and expand intersectionality both beyond the human and within time.

Fatima Tofoghi “Unveiling the European Woman” explores the idea that Biblical interpretation has a responsibility to those outside the Christian faith and how the veil has become an icon of the ‘other’.

PART 3

Francesca Stavrakopoulou “The Ancient Goddess” exposes how Biblical scholarship continues to be shaped by a confessional heritage which can often distort constructions of both gender and the religious past and highlights evidence suggesting that ancient West Asian constructs of the divine may have been “...more gender fluid and elastic than our Western assumptions allow”. p 506

Carol Meyers “Seeing Double” uses ethnoarchaeology to explore the gap between the perspective of the text and the actual lived reality of the culture suggesting that gendered power was more balanced than implied by the Biblical texts.

Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan’ a Mphahlele) “Limping...” explores how problematic understandings of masculinities collude with interpretations of the Biblical text and suggests Vashti as a model for women in saying “No” in the context of HIV/AIDs.

Janice Ewurama De-Whyte Sarfo “The Reproductive Rite” explores understandings of in(fertility) in the stories of Sarah and Rebekah alongside the matrilineal perspective of the Ashanti tribe of West Africa.

Dawn Llewellyn “But I Still Read the Bible” draws on qualitative research and discovers that Post-Christian women both reject/are critical of the Bible yet also use it as a spiritual resource.

Mieke Bal “Sneaky Snakes” explores how allusion and Biblical imagination can be used to critique, subvert and create alternative visions through analysis of three artists and their work.

Sara Moslener “Material World” exposes how evangelical purity culture constructs an idealised, heterosexual narrative about gender, bodies and behaviour and uses this to market a particular interpretation of the Biblical text as a means of evangelism.

Zayn Kassam “Muslim Liberative Approaches” calls for feminist re-readings of sacred texts to work alongside civil rights organisations to improve the rights of women under shari’a law.

Rosamond C. Rodman “Scripturalizing and the Second Amendment” explores the ‘American Frontier myth’ and its co-option by the gun lobby to re-interpret and then defend the Second Amendment as protecting American identity from the ‘other’.

Yvonne Sherwood “The Impossibility of Queering the Mother” looks at the experience of divorce and the lack of shared custody arrangements for children from the perspective of Fathers, critiquing feminism’s idealisation of the ‘holy mother’.

So, enjoy!

Clara Rushbrook (formerly Clare McBeath)
Northern Baptist College

Stefan Paas, *Pilgrims and Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society* (SCM, 2019)

It is not always easy for anyone brought up in a western evangelical Christian bubble to comprehend how very different life may appear when seen through the many cultural lenses of our modern, pluralistic, post-Christian society. Until recently, missional approaches within European cultures could employ biblical stories and concepts that would at least be known, if not shared, by the population at large. This tended to encourage a sense that convinced Christians were one segment of a broader majority that was culturally sympathetic to the Christian message, or at least familiar with it. However, today’s church is increasingly aware of its marginality in society, leading to the church adopting missional approaches intended to ensure its institutional survival for as long as possible in a potentially hostile environment. Some Christians are asking why this ‘survival’ approach seems such a poor fit with the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. It is with a sense of shock at the discovery of a very different world beyond his Reformed church background that Stefan Paas begins to analyse and critique his inherited concepts of mission, to see how they relate to this new world. He asks whether it remains defensible for the church to be at the centre of its appeal when the world no longer has an interest in becoming like the church. He also criticises the drive towards ‘relevant’ mission, which tends to mean constant adaptation of the message, along with every individual’s personal negotiation and interpretation of what it is to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

He takes a historical look at mission and asks whether the nature of Christian identity, belief and discipleship would be identical for Christians in the Roman Empire; a soldier in the 6th century Frankish kingdom; a convert of John Wesley or a modern day popular Christian writer. I found this a fascinating train of thought. He draws a distinction between intrinsic motivations for publicly following Christ (where there was a high degree of personal risk in so doing) to other situations when it was perhaps more socially advantageous to be labelled Christian. He goes on to question the appropriateness of aligning Christianity with a specific folk identity. This is a concept that has prevailed in the West until quite recently. It is only in the last few decades that the idea of Christian nations existing within a wider Christendom has largely been abandoned, even if remnants linger (for example in the reluctance of some to countenance a Muslim Turkey as a full member of the EU).

Paas responds with countercultural church – something that has taken many forms over the centuries and adapted according to the culture it wishes to counter. Early medieval monastic life in the Dark Ages, the 16th century Reformation, the 18th century arrival of Methodism and the 20th century emergence of Pentecostalism are cited as examples. The repeated eruption of countercultural Christian movements can be seen today in new-monasticism, in renewed interest in Anabaptism and in the emerging church/Fresh Expressions.

I particularly liked the way Paas urges readers not to confuse God's mission with our mission – 'ours' in the sense of something much more programmed, managerial and even domineering. Too often, he contends, Christians start out with a fixed vision of what a transformed society and soul should look like. He resists the temptation to construct the Kingdom of God as part of a big plan with the vision statements, Gantt charts and critical path analyses beloved of management consultants; indeed, not a few pastors are tired of this programmed approach. Paas prefers to see mission as a patchwork that may appear unfinished to human eyes which are unable to discern the patterns of God.

What kind of Christian mission does the author invite us to choose today? It is one that draws upon an authentic, lived experience of exile: living on the margins, away from power and control. From the Fall, through the exile to John living on Patmos, he reminds us that the bible draws heavily on experiences of loss, trauma, being uprooted and dispersed. It was in exile that Israel rediscovered that God is for all peoples, not just for themselves alone. At the same time, the people also took stock of how their identity was to be distinctive among the nations.

This is a book that achieves a good balance between theological reflection and practical insight regarding mission. It draws upon biblical, theological, historical and sociological concepts and handles these with deftness. The author is J.H. Bavinck Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Professor of Missiology at Theologische Universiteit Kampen. This English edition of the original Dutch makes a welcome contribution to current thinking on mission and the church. It carries sufficient theological heft to make it appropriate reading for missiologists and academics while also being accessible for Christians able to engage with serious thinking and who wish to understand the concepts of mission that have underpinned much of their experience, for good or otherwise. I commend it.

Ivan King
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Tom Wilson, *Hospitality, Service, Proclamation: Interfaith Engagement as Christian discipleship* (SCM, 2019)

One area which it seems to me has fallen out of favour in recent years is that of interfaith dialogue. At different points in the last 70 years, there has been great enthusiasm for at least an openness to, and appreciation of, insights that can be drawn from other faiths. Across the UK, councils of faiths / councils of Christians and Jews / faith forums / Christian-Muslim dialogue panels and others have all sprung up and enjoyed their time in the sun before returning to being of far more marginal concern for mainstream churches. Perhaps this a product of the ubiquity of Islam, Buddhism (including forms of yoga,

mindfulness meditation, etc), Tai chi and other religions - all at a time when the Christian Church in the West is diminishing both numerically and in the sense of having a coherent and compelling story to tell of living faith. Nowadays it is no longer possible for Christians to initiate debate with those of other faiths from a position of superior power, though I am not sure that it was ever desirable to engage in dialogue on the basis of condescension.

Tom Wilson, the author of this work, would tend to agree. This is not one of those closely argued works where one is left uncertain until the author's concluding remarks where his sympathies lie. He begins by stating that the central argument of the book is that interfaith activity is not simply a good thing to do but, more importantly, he asserts that it is a thoroughly Christian course of action. He continues that in his experience the one sure method to grow as a faithful disciple of Christ is to spend time talking with and learning from people who do not recognise Jesus as their Lord. I have some sympathy with this view. I have been fortunate to spend a large portion of my life living in a part of London which is now a majority Muslim area, making friends and experiencing something of their points of view. I have had a Muslim friend sit in my living room in Christmas week asking me the Christian significance of a decorated Christmas tree and finding myself struggling to find a convincing response! Yet it is rare to find Christians who would seriously question the trappings of Christmas and those who do are often dismissed.

Despite this, he notes the increasing divergence of society where people may tend to find it most comfortable to remain within the safe and known places of their own faith or values. This may be through a fear of contamination: that one might find in the course of dialogue gaps in one's own belief or a successful challenge by those who are able to debate more vigorously.

For those that come from deeply ingrained but very narrowly cultural Christian backgrounds there can be a real degree of fearfulness. I remember hearing Barbara Brown Taylor talk about the first occasions when her students from a rural area in the US state of Georgia were first encouraged to visit a synagogue and a mosque (as described in her book *Holy Envy*, which was reviewed for Regent's Reviews in autumn 2019). For others there is the sense of not wanting to intrude upon the deeply held beliefs of other people. Christians may hold that there is something truly unique about the person and message of Jesus Christ, yet this may be balanced by a respect for others' rights to hold religious views entirely different to ours.

Wilson goes on to consider some of the possible motivations for inter-faith dialogue. Firstly, there is an exclusivist standpoint. This would assert that it is only by explicitly acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord that one is saved. Within this framework all non-Christian religions are essentially idolatrous and antithetical to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The sole purpose of engaging in inter-faith dialogue would be with the explicit hope of persuading one's interlocutors to abandon their belief and instead to wholeheartedly embrace an exclusivist Christianity. Secondly, we have an inclusivist position. Within this understanding, non-Christian religions are valid in their own right, as a means by which the Holy Spirit can work as a preparation for people to receive Christ. Thirdly, we have a pluralist perspective, supported by so many different religious traditions in the world. This is seen as evidence of God's presence and persistent attempts to communicate with and relate to humanity. It offers opportunities to collaborate to address human poverty,

inequality and many other challenges of our age. The pluralist view says that religions must not compete but cooperate.

The next section of the book comprises a welcome review of what the Bible may say about interfaith dialogue. The author draws upon 10 bible passages, five from the Old Testament and five from the New. The 10 passages are: Abram's call and his hospitality of the visitors at Mamre; Ruth's acceptance into the people of God; Elijah's ministry, especially his care of the widow of Zarephath and his confrontation of the prophets of Baal; Elisha's healing and welcome of Naaman; Jonah's mission to Nineveh; Jesus and the centurion's servant; the parable of the Good Samaritan; Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman; John 14:6; and Paul, both in Athens and his argument in Romans 9-11. I found these passages helpful in framing my questions about interfaith dialogue within a biblical context. They provide a sufficiently broad basis for the concept to be given serious consideration.

The final two chapters of the book are concerned with practical approaches to interfaith dialogue: finding the right vehicle, timing and desired outcomes. The author helpfully includes an outline of favoured approaches with regard to specific religious communities - including paganism, which is one of those growing areas of religious expression which the church tends to relegate to a lower order than others, yet which is frequently encountered today in its various forms.

I found this a helpful book but I can understand how it may irritate some. The author helpfully and honestly sets out his position from the earliest pages. Yet this book will only really serve those who either adopt an inclusivist position or who recognise that we need to cooperate with other people of goodwill in order to address some of the social ills that we face as a human race. While the author has engaged in some robust scholarship, this is a highly readable book that would be suitable perhaps for Christian book groups, theological students or as a primer for pastors invited to engage in a faith forum.

Ivan King
Southend-on-Sea

Steven Walton Walton and Hannah Swithinbank (eds), *Poverty in the Early Church and Today: A Conversation* (T & T Clark, 2019).

We live at a time when the UK has officially entered a *recession* with the largest drop in gross domestic product since records began. Despite acclaimed economic intervention leading to the furloughing of millions of employees, unemployment is expected to rise in autumn 2020 to levels not seen for decades. This is taking place at a time when the poverty gap was already widening. Yet it is not easy to find people who accept they are wealthy. On 21 November 2019, an audience member of BBC Question Time vehemently rejected the idea that, with an annual salary of £80,000, he was in the top 5% income bracket, despite official statistics to the contrary. Issues of poverty are once again very much to the fore and the church will need to have a more consistent and public stance on the topic than it has since the publication of both *Faith in the City* and *Bias to the poor*.

The intention behind this book is to explore the complex ways in which early Christian ideas and practices relating to poverty relate to their modern equivalents. It comprises a series of essays and responses intended to promote critical reflection among individuals and agencies concerned with poverty and its alleviation. The idea for the book came from a 2015 conference at St Mary's University Twickenham: 'Engaging with poverty in the early church and today.'

The book is set out in two parts. The first and longer section is concerned with poverty then and now. The second part is a response and reflection. The work commences with a theological reflection on poverty, exploring several definitions, notably actual versus theoretical poverty and a contrast between individual /economic and relational poverty. There is an exploration of 'the poor' in Luke-Acts, which is taken to refer to those excluded by health, disability, economic or cultural status. Historical analysis offers evidence that the home regions familiar to Jesus in the first century would generally have enjoyed economic yields above the level necessary for subsistence. It is against the background to this excess, however modest, that we are encouraged to read the many teachings of Jesus about wealth.

The evidence brought forward for the practical response of the early church to poverty seems to fall into a pre- and post-Constantinian aspect, with the state increasingly adopting and displacing the original (and strikingly countercultural) welfare provision of the churches. This had been highly effective in its early mission.

There is a fascinating essay on patronage in the Roman world and how this may shed light on Paul's letter to the Philippians. It is suggested that Paul takes a norm of his day, relating to power and dependence within a patronage relationship, and subtly subverts this. Within the full Pauline canon, in place of patronage he promotes a reciprocity of generosity, with Christians encouraged to support their brothers and sisters from very different regions and cultural backgrounds. These are most often people who are unlike themselves and with whom they have had no direct meetings.

Further chapters touch on the dehumanising effects of poverty and biblical echoes of Ezekiel in Revelation. In many cases, the contributors of essays in paired topics are encouraged to offer rejoinders. The final essay in Part 1 is by Stephen Timms MP, reflecting on the concept of the deserving and undeserving poor. This explores assumptions about poverty that have underpinned recent UK public policy from the late 70s until now.

The list of contributors is impressive, drawing on expertise from the academic world in the UK, USA and beyond, practitioners in poverty relief and UK politics. It carries dual forewords by the Bishop of Kensington, Graham Tomlin, and Cardinal Vincent Nichols. This is a serious work, worthy of serious consideration. It is an innovative collection of authoritative essays which focus upon the significance of early Christianity in devising a modern response to poverty. With expert contributors bringing biblical, theological, sociological and historical insights, it offers a rigorous study of deprivation and its alleviation in theory and practice, both in earliest Christianity and today. It has been some decades since the mainstream UK churches were last collectively jolted into taking the sobering teachings of Jesus about wealth and possessions seriously. If the church's witness is to have any credibility in a rapidly changing post-Covid economy and with increasing poverty, we need to take seriously studies such as this.

Ivan King
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James R. Edwards, *Between the Swastika and the Sickel. The Life, Disappearance, and Execution of Ernst Lohmeyer* (Eerdmans, 2019)

As a young PhD student in 1974, James Edwards was consulting a commentary on the Gospel of Mark published in 1937, written by the German New Testament scholar, Ernst Lohmeyer. The Foreword to the 1951 second edition written by one of Lohmeyer's research assistants contained the intriguing comment that Lohmeyer had "been carried off by a higher power to a fate yet unresolved." This led Edwards to begin a decades long detective hunt, as he pursued the truth about what happened to Lohmeyer. Why had nothing been heard of him after his arrest by the Russian occupying forces in 1946?

In 1979, during a visit to East Germany to meet with Christians, Edwards tells of his embarrassment and shock at the reaction of those at the meeting when he asked about the fate of Ernst Lohmeyer. The meeting immediately closed down, the atmosphere became charged, and Edwards was taken for a long walk. It was explained that the very mention of Lohmeyer's name could incriminate and endanger those who were at the meeting, living as they did in a State controlled by a paranoid intelligence service, pervasive surveillance, and a web of unknown informers.

Over the years Edwards continued to visit East Germany to find answers to the unresolved fate of Lohmeyer. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, he was able to have many open conversations with Lohmeyer's daughter Gudrun, and others who knew Lohmeyer at Greifswald University. He also gained access to many previously secret files and a vast collection of Lohmeyer's correspondence with his wife (sometimes several per week over decades). Utilising all this primary material, and his full grasp of the range and depth of Lohmeyer's publications and academic contributions, Edwards has produced a quite remarkable book, and one which required to be written – for several reasons.

First, Ernst Lohmeyer was never other than an opponent of National Socialism and Nazi ideology. In preaching, academic scholarship, social and administrative responsibilities he called out the ideological scholarship in theology and biblical studies produced by highly respected scholars in the service of Nazi views. In particular it was Lohmeyer, almost alone in German New Testament academic scholarship who insisted that the Christian faith has deep, essential and natural rootedness in the Jewish faith. It is not possible to be a Christian and also be anti-semitic he argued.

One of the leading Nazi sympathisers was Gerhard Kittel, the editor of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. For decades this multi volume Dictionary was one of the most influential scholarly resources in New Testament study, its production was in process throughout the five middle decades of the 20th Century, and Kittel edited the first 5 volumes. Kittel's book, *The Jewish Question*, published in 1933 as Hitler came to power, is an unflinching attempt to justify antisemitism to German intellectual culture, including the Church. It represents blatant skewing of biblical studies and theology to support Nazi anti-Jewish ideology, and in its echoing of Nazi philosophy and social norms, it demonised Jews as decadent, dangerous and, as aliens, requiring a social

solution. It is a chilling piece of academic distortion in the interests of an aberrant political ideology. Alongside such anti-Semitic sentiments, and Kittel's unabashed approval of depriving Jews of human rights, property rights and residency rights, the very different and defiant words of Ernst Lohmeyer, written to Martin Buber are from a different theological and moral world: "The Christian faith is Christian only insofar as it bears the Jewish faith in its heart..." Edwards exposes this ideological conflict in a central chapter which well illustrates the looming shadows and encroaching darkness in 1930's Germany. The wise courage and intellectual clarity of Lohmeyer's position was morally charged and resourced from a mind resonant with values quite counter to the Nazi vision of a racially purified *volk*.

A second reason this book needed writing was to rehabilitate Lohmeyer as a man of integrity, courage, intelligence and high citizenship. There are tensions and ambiguities in a life lived in Germany before and during World War II. Lohmeyer had fought in World War 1, he then developed his academic career as a major NT scholar, was conscripted in his late 40's and served on the Russian front. He returned a broken man to Greifswald, and recovered a sense of purpose as President elect of the University in 1945. But in 1946 was arrested, imprisoned, and disappeared. No one knew definitively of his fate till after 1989 when various files became available following the fall of communist control of Eastern Europe.

The opportunity to right a great wrong opened up. Edwards worked with Lohmeyer's family to uncover the truth and to provide the evidence which eventually exonerated Lohmeyer and restored to him the honour and appreciation due to a man who stood against evil and defended truth against those who wanted to create their own truth and weaponise it. Edwards has written a clear, evidenced account of a man who made decisions on moral grounds, and whose humanity and compassion constituted some of the evidence against him. The book ends with the moving story of Lohmeyer's posthumous Inauguration as President of Greifswald University in 1996. This was a just recognition of an honour delayed by systemic injustice, and a public honouring of a man whose very existence a paranoid state tried to erase from history.

A third reason for this book is to do due honour to a scholar who, had he lived, could well have rivalled Bultmann in influence over NT studies (with whom he had serious arguments about the nature of the Gospels). Further, in ways requiring at least equal courage, integrity and spiritual maturity, Lohmeyer resisted Hitler, Nazi ideology and anti-Jewish policies, at least as much as Bonhoeffer. Reading Edwards account of Lohmeyer, it is clear that this was a man of immense moral stature and intellectual power, whose faithfulness to Christ led him into direct conflict with the powers that destroyed him. Bonhoeffer and Niemoller tend to be the celebrated examples of Christian resistance to Hitler – but the quiet integrity and theological faithfulness of Lohmeyer, in sermons and publications, ran like an eroding undercurrent against the ultimately transient foundations of Nazism.

My own interest in the history of New Testament interpretation means I was always going to read this book; and it is a fine book. It is hard to categorise it. Here is a biography, written by someone who has lived with the subject's academic corpus, voluminous correspondence, multiple conversation with family and near associates of Lohmeyer, and who is himself a noted American NT scholar. The result is a narrative that is persuasive, deeply informed, sympathetic but not uncritical, resulting in a portrait

of a man and the worlds he inhabited at home, in academy, in political upheaval and as one incapable of mere expediency in matters of the mind and soul.

Here also is history as judicial review. Edwards helped recover the honour of a good man, and his family; he has gone a long way to filling that troubling lacuna in the unresolved fate of a scholar whose disappearance and execution is one further tragic consequence of state power exercised in the interests of state security against its own people; it's called tyranny. The account of Nazi Germany pre-war, and the infiltration of universities and the subverting of moral intelligence are not irrelevant in a world where moral intelligence is again suspect and populism founded on making citizens afraid of those who are different is shouting its poison again.

This book is a salutary human story of perseverance in the seeking of justice and the rehabilitation of one who was judicially murdered for political reasons. The sections of the book detailing how the buried truth was uncovered are sobering in their descriptions of the lengths an oppressive state will go to eliminate those who think independently, and to silence those whose moral values have decisive and consistent purchase on their behaviour. In a brilliant comment Edwards notes, Lohmeyer lived out "what it means to be a moral human being in a world in which morality and humanity had almost ceased to exist." (259)

Amongst the treasured documents of the Lohmeyer archive is the last long letter he wrote to his wife Melie, from Cell 19. Its contents are profoundly moving as he reviews his life, his driven ambition and academic obsessiveness, his failures in his deepest relationship of love, and the moral ambiguities and defeats of being a Wehrmacht Officer with power of life and death in occupied zones. Edwards shows great sensitivity and insight as a biographer handling the fragile testimony of a man at his most vulnerable. This final chapter is wonderfully well written, and invites the reader to temper judgement with compassion for a man whose inner struggles were made the more anguished by his own conscience and the moral impossibilities of being a Christian in charge of a military unit facing its own obliteration. I have seldom read a more knowing exposition of how redemption arises from the gift of suffering, and how all true loves are regenerated when acknowledged failure encounters forgiving grace. Lohmeyer, then, was a man of granite intellectual and moral integrity. Not perfect, but good in the most meaningful ways that word can be used of a human being.

Here finally then, is a book that is both lucid and moving, composed by someone who cares about the subject, and provides an appreciative and critical account of a life lived as well as it could be. Lohmeyer lived in a world still not so far away that we should become complacent or unguarded about the consequences for peoples and communities, when unchecked populism is impatient with a moral commitment to the common good. As Edwards comments, "Lohmeyer refused to be infatuated with fashionable falsehoods that prey on all intellectual disciplines." The moral vigilance and ethical courage of Lohmeyer are important light switches in an overshadowed world.

Jim Gordon
Aberdeen

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Eerdmans, 2019), 684pp.

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen is proving to be a prolific author in the realms of ecumenical, and pluralistic, theology. He happens to be a friend (full disclosure) and fellow member of the WCC-Pentecostal Joint Consultative Group (JCG), both of us from its inception in 2000. He and I are on opposing teams — he Pentecostal, me WCC — which have for the past few years seemed to be simply one team. That this sense of unity within diversity is embodied by Veli-Matti himself is unsurprising. He is Finnish, and has long associations with the Finnish Lutherans (and indeed, now serves as a non-stipendiary Lutheran priest in California, where he is professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary), but he is also a Finnish Pentecostal, in which guise he joined the Pentecostal team in the JCG. He teaches ecumenics at the University of Helsinki, and systematics in the USA. That both his Pentecostal formation and tenure at Fuller point to his evangelical sensitivities is clear, but in this new global systematic theology the Christian tradition in its broadest ecumenical range enters into conversation with four world faiths: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Actually, this substantial volume is a distillation of the work in his magisterial five volume *Constructive Christian Theology for a Pluralistic World* (2013–17), and for those without the time or deep pockets to acquire them, this is an excellent alternative. Where historically most systematic or dogmatic summaries of the Christian faith largely ignored the two-thirds world, and were either European or American in focus, more recent Systematics have attempted to embrace theologies from Asia, Africa and Latin America. This volume by Kärkkäinen certainly does that. However, what is ground-breaking is the addition of conversation partners from the four living faiths to which over half of the world's population subscribe, and the insights from the natural sciences that now influence a large proportion of that population, religious or not. In other words, it places the Christian faith in dialogue with most of the remainder of the human population.

“this project seeks to challenge the hegemony of aging white European and North American men. It gives equal voice to contributions from female theologians of various agendas such as feminist, womanist, and mujerista; women from Africa, Asia and Latin America; other liberationists, including black theologians of the United States and sociopolitical theologians from South America, South Africa and Asia; and postcolonialists, as well as others.” (xii)

It is structured in similar fashion to other systematics: Revelation; Triune God; Creation; Humanity; Christology; Reconciliation; Holy Spirit; Salvation; Church; and Eschatology. To illustrate how the project unfolds, the early chapter on the Triune God (ch. 2) begins with a discussion of talk about God in the secular world, including the arguments of the modern atheists. This is followed by a brief look at the traces of God from creation (after Anselm), and the appeal of pantheism, before turning to the classic Theistic doctrine of the Trinity as the major section. The chapter closes with discussion of the Triune God among the other Deities in world religions (for instance, do Christians and Muslims believe in the same God? — answer, a qualified ‘yes.’) including Hindu and Buddhist religious views.

Each chapter follows similar patterns of engagement with world religions, drawing upon both traditional and Patristic sources, and the wider global community of the Christian faith. Where the reader is left wanting a deeper discussion, I can only assume that

academic libraries will carry the original five-volume set from which this is a distillation, but for the undergraduate student, wanting a systematic theology that engages with many of the concerns of the globalised world and its major faiths, this is an excellent place to start.

The bibliography runs to 52 pages, and there are all the expected footnotes and indexes, making this a usable tool in the student's library, priced at £50.00, but probably available for less.

Paul Goodliff
Churches Together in England

Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes and Richard L. Kidd, *Communion, Covenant, and Creativity: An Approach to the Communion of Saints Through the Arts* (Cascade Books, 2020).

Communion, Covenant and Creativity is the book collaboration involving three former Principals of Baptist ministerial training colleges in the UK. Unlike previous writing projects this new book ventures into the world of theology and literature, an area of theological exploration well-represented within Paul Fiddes' extensive corpus of work.

In this book the authors seek to build upon the argued thesis in their previous book *Baptists and the Communion of Saints*, that baptists should reconsider the absence of 'saints' in their theology and worship since, through concepts such as 'martyrdom' and 'being in Christ,' saints are a common theme in the New Testament and the history of the church. Having previously explored different aspects of sainthood within the panentheistic reality of God (e.g. saints, memory and the afterlife; current interconnections; saints and the cloud of witnesses; saints and covenantal expression; etc.), Fiddes, Haymes and Kidd inject creativity into the mix by looking for inklings of communion that the living has with the dead through the world of art & literature.

The book is split into two parts: indications *of*, and reflections *upon*, the communion of saints revealed in and through art & literature. In part one, regarding indications, the three authors produce five essays which both stand alone and progress the overall argument. Fiddes explores literary examples of communion with the departed in the poetry and short stories of Eliot, Joyce and Hardy. The theme of continuous afterlife continues in his second essay on 'journey and dwelling after death' in the music of Brahms and Elgar. Similarly, Haymes examines the moment of death from the perspective of Saint Therese of Lisieux, noting especially the contrast and inconsistencies between primary sources on Saint Therese and the operatic biography of her by Sir John Tavener. Slightly differently, Kidd focusses on the here and now, examining experienced phenomenological concepts such as connectedness, absence and presence, memory, strangeness and transcendence through the artwork of Nash and Rothko.

In all five essays the authors root their analysis in the works of art & literature, starting first with the temporal expressions of the artist from which they extrapolate various theological themes and concepts implicitly evident in the work of art & literature. This approach is no surprise given Fiddes' longstanding conviction that, unlike close-ended doctrine, art is open ended and therefore can be creatively used as a particular response to revelation, thereby aiding the theologian to *make* doctrine, instead of just illustrating it.

Theologically, this methodology is only coherent if undergirded by a panentheistic and participatory doctrine of God which, as any reader familiar with his oeuvre will know, is the warp and woof of Fiddes' theological project.

Conversely, however, this undergirding of panentheism produces one weakness of the book in that it assumes too much previous knowledge and offers substantive explanation too late in the text. To illustrate, the final chapter by Fiddes on 'participation' articulates theologically what the earlier chapters on 'indications' express. While the new reader would certainly have observed the commitment to panentheism by the authors in part one, given the various and nuanced definitions of panentheism that currently exist - especially in the theology and science dialogue - a student of this work would benefit from a participatory definition of panentheism before it is applied to analysis of literature and art.

In the three essays of part two, each author offers one essay in which he reflects theologically upon the communion of saints and offers some concluding thoughts on the theological objective of the book. Haymes, starting with a reflection on an Anglican funeral he once attended, articulates embodied existence in this world and the next by rejecting all forms of dualism and situating the church within our panentheistic God. The interrelationship of lived experience together with an awareness of memory means there is a one-world reality between this world and the next.

Kidd reflects upon divine hiddenness noting that within a participatory model of God's panentheistic nature there can be no divine absence, just hiddenness. This focus on hiddenness strongly lends itself to the overall aim of the book since it creates a greater freedom to interact with other types of Christians and engage with different forms of art where the divine element is intrinsic and hidden, only to be found by those with eyes to see. Finally, Fiddes closes the book with the aforementioned chapter on 'participation' in which he juxtaposes a number of common themes in his theology in order to differentiate the vertical and horizontal aspects of the communion of saints, root them all in the Genesis 9 covenant God has with the world, and intersect the mysterious communion we can have with the living and the dead, the hidden and the revealed, in this life and the life to come.

There is no doubt that this work is a bold, capacious and constructive project. However, some readers may well struggle with a few of the underlying theological commitments. First, the text is laced with a commitment to process theology and its emphasis on becoming over being. Not only is it discernable within the development of the argument but two of the three authors explicitly acknowledge in this work and elsewhere their debt to process thought in their theology. Second, the pre-eminence of the Noahic covenant over other covenants in this work is clear; a claim that is moot and open to challenge. Finally, the stated objective of greater ecumenical conversations between baptists and the Roman Catholic Church arguably results in too much concession of Baptist theology to Catholic theological ideas. For instance, drawing on the Catholic tradition of pilgrimage and the veneration of relics of the saints could be seen as going too far, an unnecessary capitulation to Catholic theology. This is particularly pertinent when it is well-known through the ecumenical work of Francis Clooney and others that a strong stance of denominational conviction can aid, not negate, good ecumenical dialogue so long as respect for humanity is maintained.

That said, this is certainly a text to read and engage with if looking for greater intersections between one's faith and cultural expression. The ubiquitous world of art & literature is central to many lives and so for those who have a Christian faith and want to investigate the relevance of their passion for art and literature to their faith, this book will aid their exploration.

Alistair J. Cuthbert
Falkirk Baptist Church

Catherine Pepinster, *The Keys and the Kingdom: The British and the Papacy from John Paul II to Francis* (T&T Clark, 2017), 245pp.

Unfortunately for Catherine Pepinster, at the time of writing I was also reading George Weigel. The latter, a preeminent American commentator on Vatican affairs, is probably best known for his magisterial biography of Pope John Paul II, *Witness to Hope* (Harper Collins, 1999), but he has also published a shorter work – *God's Choice: Pope Benedict and the Future of the Catholic Church* (Harper Collins, 2005) – which is a model of how analysis of modern Catholicism, its place within and relations with the world, ought to be done. The main difference between Pepinster and Weigel's approaches is that, even though both are members of the Church, only Weigel succeeds in the crucial requirement of placing temporalities within the compass of eternity; that is, insisting that the Church is eschatological as well as human. Arguably, this is especially true of the papacy, which Catholics believe came into being with the words of Christ himself, 'thou art Peter, etc' (Mt 16:18-19). These verses represent a thunderbolt from heaven, not a Blairite directive; and whilst it may be that Pepinster believes in the same Church as Weigel, her analysis lacks his theological sensitivity.

Let us begin with some specifics: the book is divided into two parts, each with six chapters, offering respectively chronological and thematic perspectives on the relationship between the Holy See and 'the British' (primarily, the state rather than the people) since the election of John Paul II in 1978. Chapter headings are quite long, but also intriguing: (1) 'The entirely trusted stealth minority: How Catholics became part of Britain today' (pp.9-23); (2) 'Relations restored: Diplomacy, part one' (pp.25-37); (3) 'From farce to Golden Age: Diplomacy, part two' (pp.39-50); (4) 'Faith and reason: Benedict XVI and the British' (pp.51-65); (5) 'The Franciscan age: A very British coup' (pp.67-77); (6) 'The British at the heart of Rome' (pp.79-96); (7) 'Every picture tells a story: Ecumenism' (pp.103-23); (8) "'The last Christian monarch': The queen and the papacy' (pp.125-40); (9) 'Northern Ireland: Emissaries and backchannels in search of peace and justice' (pp.141-65); (10) 'Tricolours, saltires and papal flags: The papacy and Scotland' (pp.167-86); (11) 'What makes for the "x" factor?: The pope as modern leader' (pp.187-98); (12) 'The grit in the oyster: Church, state and domestic politics' (pp.199-226). This sub-division of the contents can be advantageous: chapters are not too long and 'Part Two' allows the author to 'home in' on particular topics, such as Irish hunger strikes in the early 1980s (pp.143-53), resulting in some interesting sustained engagement. At the same time, its weakness is that attempting both chronological and thematic analyses of the same (relatively narrow) historical period (c. 1978-2016) results in some repetition: on Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster (1976-99), and the Church's approach to homosexuality (pp.84-85, 176); on whether Benedict XVI would address the Scottish Parliament during his state visit in 2010 (pp.56, 183); on Cardinal Thomas Winning supporting women through 'unwanted' pregnancies (pp.175, 217); etc.

Indeed, the entire book regularly circles back to the pastoral visit of John Paul II in 1982, though perhaps this could be justified on the basis of its immense significance as the first time a reigning pontiff had ever set foot in the United Kingdom.

Pepinster approaches events as a journalist, not an academic. She was for thirteen years (2004-17) editor of the international Catholic weekly, *The Tablet*, and the book, which draws heavily from one-to-one interviews, undoubtedly benefits from her personal network (see, 'Acknowledgements', pp.xi-xii). The tone is particularly journalistic, highly accessible and occasionally 'gossipy', as shown in accounts of the time Queen Elizabeth II was not allowed to invite John Paul II for lunch (p.34); when the same pontiff was – apparently, though it is hard to believe – afraid of being pelted with rotten eggs (p.35); and when Catholic ministers were placed at the bottom of the pecking order in the Privy Council (p.134). Similarly, whilst the book is not without scholarly engagement, much of that is of a 'popular' sort, such as Eliza Filby's *God and Mrs Thatcher* (Biteback, 2015) and Anthony Howard's fascinating biography of Basil Hume, *The Monk Cardinal* (Headline, 2005). Indeed, the key to understanding the tenor of Pepinster's analysis may lie in the fact of her editorship of *The Tablet*, which is considered to be on the liberal wing of Catholicism, and comfortable with the British and Anglican establishments. To begin with, despite years of experience as a Catholic commentator, Pepinster peddles some simplistic and inaccurate binaries: the Church before the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was a 'fortress' (p.2), whilst the Council changed everything, such that it is meaningful to refer (for example) to a 'Vatican II model of ecclesiology' (p.191); Catholic prelates can be divided into two rival camps, conservative/anti-Vatican II and liberal/pro-Vatican II, with Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor 'more of a Vatican II man than the Bavarian pope [Benedict]' (p.70). Readers of this book must be on their guard against such *Tablet*-esque ideology as a result of which, for instance, chapter eleven is held back by caricature of Benedict XVI's lack of charisma (p.189) and tin ear regarding homosexuality (pp.84-85), as well as some 'fangirling' around the potential of Pope Francis to change . . . well, everything (p.71).

Even more problematic is the book's inherent elitism: this is the story of 'establishment' Catholicism, and the way in which the Church and the (increasingly, secular) state have identified and acted in relation to shared interests. It is central to Pepinster's narrative, for instance, that Cardinals Hume and Murphy-O'Connor were 'at ease with the great and the good' (p.16), and that the Catholic Church became a more 'middle class' (read, 'socially acceptable') religion in their time (p.3). Similarly, amongst the laity, it is those Catholics who have 'reached the top in politics, business, the law, the arts and the media' (p.13) who have been particularly able to 'dissolve some of the traditional prejudices against Catholicism in general and the papacy in particular' (p.9). The narrative is bookended by slightly patronising references to 'the people in the pew' (p.3) and 'ordinary British Catholics' (p.223), but they feature barely at all as actors in the unfolding drama. For some reason – is she embarrassed, or is it simply inconvenient? – no account is given of 'grassroots' Catholicism, with its rosary rallies and Eucharistic processions. The cornerstone of Pepinster's thesis, that the Church in Britain is now more 'insider' than 'outsider' (p.204), is the achievements of those Catholics – both clerical and lay – in positions of influence.

I have already alluded to the major shortcoming of the book: it is a theological desert. Pepinster does not follow the precedent of Basil Hume, in seeking the '*spiritualità*' – or 'theological perspective' (p.205) – on events; the phrase 'Gospel values' is only introduced towards the end of the book and without any qualification or definition

(p.217). Apparently, the 'real power' of Catholicism is temporal (pp.4-5) and its value as an ally, or diplomatic partner, lies primarily in its size and 'soft power network' (p.62; defined, p.193). Whilst the latter does give rise to an interesting argument that the Church should, therefore, find common cause with the British Commonwealth (pp.62-63), it seems to miss an opportunity to draw out the true distinctiveness of Catholicism's global mission. It is instructive to compare Pepinster and George Weigel on the challenge of globalisation. For the former, power politics trumps all: 'the Church needs to rethink its relationship with [non-European] countries and figure out what the consequences are of being a religion with considerable, yet limited power in the West, whilst imagining a new axis of influence elsewhere' (p.2). For the latter, the issue is spiritual and cultural: 'the question of how the Church thinks about other world religions . . . has become an urgent one for Catholics. How do these ancient, culture-forming religious traditions, some of whose roots go deep into the subsoil of human history, fit into the Church's understanding of the unique saving role of Jesus Christ in history?' (Weigel, *God's Choice*, p.193). In the same vein, it is disappointing that whilst Pepinster makes a strange, unexplained reference to Catholics regarding images of their leaders 'almost as sacramental or as relics' (p.103), she does not analyse what is rightly identified as the 'sacral' character of the British coronation service, whereby Queen Elizabeth gained her initial prestige at the heart of Catholicism (p.128).

The book is more satisfactory as a work of modern political journalism. Pepinster explains, with clarity and good authority, how a thaw in diplomatic relations took place during the twentieth century, beginning in 1914 when the British government created a 'Special Mission to His Holiness the Pope' (p.26). In particular, it is impossible not to gain from the book a clearer understanding of the incremental nature of these developments owing to the significance of major events, such as the Falklands War between Britain and Argentina, seen as a Catholic power, on the eve of a proposed pastoral visit by John Paul II in 1982 (pp.30-35). Most interestingly, Pepinster highlights how, on occasion, it has simply been impossible to reconcile Vatican and British points of view. For instance, on the status of Irish hunger strikers: criminals according to the Thatcher government, but subjects of historic discrimination in the eyes of the Church (p.147). Similarly, regarding an exemption for Catholic agencies from legal changes in 2007, permitting adoption by homosexual couples: humanitarian in the eyes of the Church, but perpetuating discrimination according to advocates of the new regulations (p.214).

Most of all, Pepinster presents readers with a great cast of characters. Aside from the obvious – popes, monarch, and prime ministers – these include Lord Carrington, former British Foreign Secretary, whose wise advice to cabinet colleagues anticipated improving relations; Baroness Scotland, Catholic Secretary-General of the Commonwealth; British-born curial official, Paul Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, and Monsignor Philip Whitmore, Rector of the Venerable English College in Rome; British academics, Sister Helen Alford, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Pontifical University of St Thomas (the 'Angelicum'), and Margaret Archer, former President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences; and, perhaps surprisingly, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, British Muslim and Cabinet Office minister responsible for faith under Prime Minister, David Cameron (2010-16), who impressed Vatican officials with her speeches on the place of faith in society (p.60). Pepinster's narrative also has its heroes, including Basil Hume, and Francis Campbell, the first Catholic to be appointed British Ambassador to the Holy See (2005-11). The most sustained treatment of a single personality is given to Cardinal Thomas Winning, Archbishop of Glasgow (1974-2001), in an interesting chapter

dedicated to Scotland (pp.167-86). Winning is celebrated for his commitment to the poor – a consistent theme of Pepinster’s portrait of the Church in Britain – and ecumenism, his decisive role in securing the visit of John Paul II despite the Falklands crisis, his condemnation of homosexuality, and his opposition to abortion – which prompted a disagreement with Prime Minister, Tony Blair (1997-2007) (pp.175-76) – whilst also making ‘practical and financial’ provision for women facing ‘unwanted’ pregnancies (p.175).

In Pepinster’s analysis of the British state, individual politicians fare better than institutions; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, for example, is criticised several times for failing to understand the significance of the Holy See (pp.39-41, 43). Indeed, in general, developments within institutions are credited to personnel changes, such as the replacement of ‘conservatives’ with ‘liberals’ on the Vatican’s influential Congregation for Bishops, which oversees episcopal appointments (around two hundred each year); she notes the ascending star of Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster (since 2009), who was appointed to the Congregation in 2013 (pp.81-83). Likewise, progress in ecumenical affairs is attributed to ‘personal relations – between the two men at the top’ (p.113). Most interesting, perhaps, is Pepinster’s observation that each pontificate has been marked by a significant collaboration between the Holy See and the occupant of 10 Downing Street: debt relief under John Paul II (p.45), vaccinations and global health under Benedict XVI (p.47), and human trafficking under Francis (p.73). In light of these observations, then, it is disappointing that Pepinster does not use the benefit of her experience in attempting to frame the future of this relationship; here, again, she compares poorly to Weigel. She could have argued for the Church’s essential role in society, if bishops continue to use the venerable tradition of Catholic Social Teaching to challenge policy (p.203) and to speak with courage on issues of modern morality (p.204); or to reaffirm the Church’s role in education, which is presented throughout the book as an historic commitment (pp.13, 209-14). This is not, however, a prophetic book; nor does it set recent experience in the context of a learned or nuanced historical narrative (the post-Reformation era is briefly surveyed in just six pages (pp.9-14)). Yet, at the same time, it is a lucid and accessible chronicle, capturing (via Pepinster’s interviews) a range of first-hand perspectives for posterity, and undoubtedly providing both context and a point of entry for future scholarship on this most fascinating relationship.

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Charles Borromeo, *Selected Orations, Homilies and Writings*, ed. John R. Cihak, trans. Ansgar Santogrossi (T&T Clark, 2017), 216pp.

It may seem a strange thing to say about a collection of sixteenth-century discourses, at several removes from their original context (including English translations of Latin transcriptions of Italian speeches), but *this is a book for our times*. The claim is all the more surprising since, as John Cihak’s opening assertion has it: ‘Charles Borromeo (1538-84) should have been part of the problem.’ (p.1). He was a nobleman, made Cardinal by his uncle, Pope Pius IV (r. 1559-65), even before receiving Holy Orders: ‘A clearer example of ecclesiastical nepotism would have been difficult to find.’ (p.1). Borromeo could have been seduced by the corruptions of the sixteenth-century Church, especially prevalent amongst the episcopal class, which he joined as Archbishop of Milan from 1564: decadence, absenteeism, pluralism, lack of preaching, etc. Yet, as George Cardinal Pell’s

brief 'Foreword' (pp.ix-x) explains, he instead fell in love with the idea of reform; Borromeo was one of those outstanding products of the Counter-Reformation, who took the promotion of conversion back to Christ (i.e. renewal) – for souls, first, and then for the Church as a whole – as a personal *raison d'être*. He had a gift for friendship (p.4) and counted amongst his intimates other luminaries of the period, including (St) Philip Neri (1515-95); he also met (St) Aloysius Gonzaga (1568-91) and (St) Edmund Campion (1540-81) (p.15). At an institutional level, Borromeo had responsibility for the third session of the reforming Council of Trent (1562-63), and he was concerned for the implementation of its decrees (p.4). Yet, as Cihak explains, his reforming zeal was first directed inwards, towards the integrity of his own soul: 'he could move reform forward effectively . . . because he had already inculcated those reforms in himself' (p.9). The theme of interior conversion, as the prerequisite for a holy life and the renewal of Church and society, runs throughout the works translated in this volume.

Borromeo lived a relatively short but highly productive life; he died in 1584, aged just forty-six. This book presents a selection of his works, translated into English for the first time, from two original sources: J. A. Sax, ed., *Sancta Caroli Borromei Homiliae*, vols 1-5 (1747-48), and the *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis* (p.25); there is also a useful bibliography (pp.204-8). The collection comprises twenty-two separate texts, organised around four themes ('aspects of reform', p.23): bishops, the eucharist, priests, and the laity. In general, as the introductory material explains, the works are pastoral rather than theologically technical, yet they are also replete with references to the Church Fathers (of both East and West) and exegesis of the Old Testament; together, they give the impression that Borromeo's learning was profound, but that he wore it lightly for the benefit of the cure of souls. Bishops are exhorted to exercise 'paternal solicitude' (p.34), the eucharist is described as having the power to change hearts (p.59), priests are expected to be models of virtue (p.118), and the laity are encouraged to 'observe pious and praiseworthy customs' (p.193). The selection of works is particularly interesting, whether or not this was also intentional, since it suggests a deep interest on Borromeo's part in those on the threshold of milestones in their spiritual journey; he instructs *ordinands* on the nature of the priesthood, and *candidates for Confirmation* on the lay vocation. The texts also provide insights into the dynamics of religious life, including Catholic piety, in Borromeo's lifetime. For instance, a homily for the Mass of Corpus Christi (9 June 1583) is a reminder to historians of the importance of that medieval feast (instituted in 1264), with its vibrant processions through the streets, for the re-evangelisation of post-Reformation Europe, echoed – for instance – in the work of the Spanish Dominican, Bartolomé Carranza (1503-76), in Marian England (1553-58) (for Borromeo's homily, see pp.51-55).

The strongly contemporary quality of this volume begins with the language itself; the translator has achieved a clear and accessible rendering into 'contemporary English' (p.25), which is sympathetic to Borromeo's own desire to preach and teach with directness. At the same time, its present-day value goes much deeper. This can be demonstrated with three examples. First, institutionally, Borromeo's lifetime commitment to the realization of Tridentine reform, speaks to ongoing wrangling in contemporary Catholicism regarding the legacy and implementation of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65); indeed, Cihak highlights the influence of Borromeo upon both Vatican II popes, John XXIII (r. 1958-63) and Paul VI (r. 1963-78) (p.20). Furthermore, his insistence upon episcopal synodality (promoted by Vatican II) and financial reform also reflects the priorities of Pope Francis (2013-). Second, in the wake of recent revelations of sexual abuse, there are severe but important lessons for the

clergy in Borromeo's preaching to priests: 'shine with the external Christian and priestly virtues, be an example to others . . . woe shall it be to you, if through you comes scandal, and if on account of you the name of God is blasphemed' (p.118). In this way, Borromeo offers a 'blueprint' for the renewal of the priesthood.

Third, for the church in the era of COVID-19, Borromeo's sermon 'at the time of plague' (1576) (pp.92-95) sounds a call to hope and mercy, as well as expressing the challenges faced by parish priests in ministering to the sick whilst being perceived as carriers of disease; Borromeo himself ministered throughout the plague of 1576, 'which killed over 25,000 people in Milan' (p.12). The reader, recently coming to terms with closed churches and services on Zoom, may be equally challenged by Borromeo's insistence on the necessity of gathering in church for common prayer, which he regarded as a *natural* necessity, fundamental to human fruitfulness and the preservation of the faith. Thus: 'human beings are naturally constituted in such a way that religion is seen to have been born with them, we also see that at all times men gave worship to God with sacrifices and services, and built altars for that purpose' (p.74). Also: 'most of all is the charity and fervour of those praying increased when many come together to pray in churches, and by their devotion and religious example motivate each other as it were most vehemently to piety. This uniform and unanimous prayer can accomplish much with God . . . Do not say to yourself, O Christian, "If I do not go to vespers, I am not on that account guilty of sin." Certainly in this way a pernicious forgetfulness of divine things is imperceptibly brought in, and the heart of such people becomes a lamentable *land of forgetfulness* (Ps. 87:13).' (pp.194-95). Examples such as these begin to illustrate that this book presents Borromeo as a challenging and prophetic voice for the twenty-first century, as well as the sixteenth. It is a rich collection, making available to an English readership, for the first time, the teaching and model of a bishop in whom it may be possible to hope.

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Martinus C. de Boer, *Paul: Theologian of God's Apocalypse* (Cascade, 2020)

Do Paul's letters demonstrate a theological centre? This remains a pressing question of how we interpret scripture and continues to generate different responses. There is the long established reading that at the centre of Paul's thought is justification by faith. This still dominates in much preaching of Paul's letters. Then there is a salvation history view, of which N. T. Wright is one of the most prominent examples — Jesus as the *climax of the covenant*. In terms of preaching, you will find something of this in the sermons of Sam Wells. A third position is that the centre of Paul's theology is apocalyptic, emphasising the decisive revelation and action of God in Jesus Christ to deliver the cosmos from anti-God powers. This is the argument of de Boer, and others like Beverly Gaventa, Douglas Campbell, Susan Eastman and the late J. Louis Martyn, who was de Boer's doctoral supervisor. It was Martyn's commentary on Galatians that was landmark in reigniting apocalyptic readings of Paul.

In this collection of essays, de Boer adds to the increasing number of works which make the argument for Paul as an apocalyptic theologian — see for example Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*; Gaventa, *Mothering God*; and Campbell, *Pauline Dogmatics*. De Boer is perhaps less well known, but you will find consistently reference in the footnotes

of all the books just mentioned and others. As Martyn was writing his commentary on Galatians, and beginning to develop his apocalyptic reading of Paul's theology, de Boer was his student and was working in the same area. It is de Boer's work comparing Paul and Jewish apocalyptic eschatology that has been some of foundations for the apocalyptic school.

De Boer's most famous essay, reprinted in this new book, was for a festschrift for Martyn in 1989 entitled 'Paul and Jewish apocalyptic eschatology.' In this essay he argues that two tracks can be discerned in Jewish apocalyptic writings, which he calls forensic and cosmic. The cosmic track sees the world under the rule of evil angelic powers. The forensic track see the fall of humanity as a rejection of God, the future is not a cosmic war, but a courtroom. De Boer recognises both tracks in Paul's letter to the Romans, but in Galatians, like Martyn, he argues that Paul presents a cosmic apocalyptic eschatology in counter to his opponents' forensic eschatology. It is this essay (and the doctoral dissertation behind it, published as *The Defeat of Death*) that has been so important for apocalyptic readers of Paul and at the same time come under criticism from others, in particular, N. T. Wright (who dedicates a chapter to de Boer and Martyn in *Paul and his Recent Interpreters*). De Boer's includes a response to his critics.

Outside of this essay, there are chapters on sin and soteriology in Romans, cross and cosmos in Galatians, justification, salvation history, the relation of Christ and the Old Testament, and the use of scripture (Isaiah 54.1 in Galatians 4.27 and Psalm 142.2 in both Galatians and Romans). Some of these essays offer support or further reflection on de Boer's own commentary on *Galatians* (NTL, 2011). There is much for student, the reader and preacher of Paul to wrestle with in this collection.

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George Lings, *Seven Sacred Spaces* (BRF, 2020)

Seven Sacred Spaces was first published as a little booklet in 2009 as part of the Church Army's Encounters on the Edge series. It was reprinted in 2015. Over a 1,000 copies have been sold. George Lings has turned the booklet into a book.

Lings' proposal is to ask what would it mean for church life to rediscover the six sacred spaces that can be found historic monastic life — chapel, cloister, garden, refectory and scriptorium, cell and chapter. Each of these are vital argues Lings to community life in Christ. Where 'chapel' (gathered worship) can often dominate church life, Lings sets out to show why the other spaces cell (personal devotion), cloister (unplanned meetings), garden (work), refectory (eating together and hospitality), scriptorium (studying scripture) and chapter (making decisions) are all important. While in a monastery these spaces are physical, Lings encourages us to see them as 'spaces' in a broader sense, that is, he is not arguing for changing church buildings, but how community life might be lived out.

The little booklet was great, but really good to see this now a full length book with more opportunity to describe and explore each of the sacred spaces. The first half of the book gets into the detail of each of the spaces, and then the second half, reflects on what this might look like together in for church life, for church mission (challenging the view that this might all be a bit inward looking) and for discipleship. The final chapter encourages

church's to take their own journey and offers a helpful set of images for what this might mean — a diet, a shared language, a lens, a ring road and a portal. There is a lot here for churches to reflect on with regards how they shape their life together, especially in potentially re-balancing life away from Sunday mornings being everything. And each chapter offers some questions to help a congregation or a group look at their own context.

What is offered here is an opportunity to imagine church life differently, one that resonates with the past, but finds new expression in the present. Lings does not suggest the seven sacred spaces as a blueprint or a strategy, but as a stimulus for imagination. I highly recommend it.

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John Swinton, *Finding Jesus in the Storm: The Spiritual Lives of Christians with Mental Health Challenges* (SCM, 2020)

This is a third book from John Swinton that should become a primary text for the pastor seeking to understand and support those in their care and beyond. The previous two written on dementia (*Dementia*) and disability (*Becoming Friends of Time*), sought, like this new book, to re-describe persons. Swinton's project might be seen as theological anthropology that starts with the person with dementia, or a serious disability, or in this case with mental health challenges. He provides often with stories a way of seeing more than a label might suggest. Swinton's theological work is also one always engaged with the best scientific and social accounts, but wants to challenge a tendency towards reductionism.

In *Finding Jesus in the Storm* Swinton looks at depression, psychosis and bipolar disorder. The purpose of the book, he says, is to offer 'rich, deep, and thick descriptions of the spiritual experiences of Christians living with mental health challenges' (2). Immediately we find the language of 'challenges' rather than that of 'problems' or 'illnesses.' Swinton's argument is that those who live with mental health challenges 'can live well and live faithfully even in the most disconcerting storms' (3).

Swinton gives space to a number of people who he spent time with to articulate their mental health challenges. Each chapter is peppered with people narrating their experience, this is then brought into conversation with other approaches to mental health care and the resources of scripture and theology. This is what enables him to offer the 'thick description', which sees the whole person and not just a diagnosis. What emerges is the witness and possibility of a rich spirituality for those with mental health challenges. Its not about overcoming depression, psychosis or bipolar disorder but living with them and holding on to faith — finding Jesus in the storm.

The gift of Swinton's work, in evidence here again, is that ability to re-describe and to look at something from a different perspective. For example, he explores how taking medication might be seen as a spiritual practice. He writes:

'We need to stop seeing the practice of giving medication as a purely technical, biological, and therapeutically orientated task within which God is perceived as optional and healing deals simply with symptom alleviation. What is required is a

theological interpretation and a spiritual practice in which God becomes central and healing comes to be understood in terms that include the human desire to connect with God. In this way, the faithful giving and receiving of medication might be considered a spiritual practice designed to facilitate reconnection with self, God, and others.' (107)

This sees a place for medicine for persons with mental health challenges, but not just in terms of biology, but also spiritually.

Finding Jesus in the Storm is a call to pastors and churches to pause, listen and be with those who have depression, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. It will require us to overcome prejudice, perhaps fears, and what we think we know of these challenges and allow the person before us to narrate their story and feelings.

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