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REVIEWS

Exodus and Exile: A Concise Biblical Theology. Karel Deurloo. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. ISBN: 978-1-4813-2330-7; hb. xxxv + 103pp. $42.99.

Treatments of Old Testament theology have a reputation—well deserved—for being weighty tomes. The classic twentieth century treatments of von Rad and Eichrodt took two volumes each, as did that of Horst Dietrich Preuss. Significant statements by James Barr and Walter Brueggemann were over 700 pages each; Waltke needed more than 1,000 pages; Goldingay's three volumes each breached 900 pages. Others might be mentioned. But there were, at the same time, a number of valuable contributions which were much more constrained. Perhaps for that reason, their impact felt more sharp: one thinks of the modest but perceptive volumes by John Rogerson, Erhard Gerstenberger, or Walter Moberly, for example.

Karel Deurloo's subtitle, 'A Concise Biblical Theology', signals an even more rigorously minimalist approach. Published originally in Dutch in 2003, it was part of a short series by Kok entitled 'Kleine Bijbelse Theologie', other volumes attending to themes such as kingship, or creation (these are cited on p. xxix at n. 23). This is important context for this first volume of that series: while comprehensive in scope, it remains suggestive rather than exhaustive. It is just the first phase of a circumambulation around its object of interest, a theological appreciation of the Christian scriptures.

Context for this slender book is amply provided in the volume itself. It begins with a 35-page introduction from Colin Cornell and Joep Dubbink (who acknowledge also the important contribution of Mirjam Elbers in bringing this English translation into being). This not only provides an appreciation of the book's leading themes, but prefaces this with a worthwhile account of 'theological interpretation' and adjacent theological streams ('dialectic' and 'postsupersessionist' theology) which inform Deurloo's approach. They conclude with a brief biography (Deurloo died in 2019), which sets this study within the context of Deurloo's wider career (It is a sign both of the thoughtfulness of the introduction and the nature of the body of the study that the footnotes of the former vastly outnumber those of the latter).

As explained in the introduction, the English version of this slender book was many years in gestation. Was it worth it? The short answer is: yes, definitely. There is much to appreciate in this work. Deurloo's discussion invites the reader to participate in a vision of the nature and action of the Bible's God through its narrative and poetic structures that is coher-

ent and compelling, and benefits also from the brevity of the work as a whole.

The title clearly signals Deurloo's approach. The very fabric of Scripture, Deurloo argues, is rooted in the divine action of 'causing to go out' ('exodus') which bears witness to the revelation of God's Name, that is, his character. This takes place not only at the momentous constitution of the nation in the 'going up' and out from Egypt, but in the answering action of exile and restoration which frames the great narrative of Genesis to 2 Kings, and which then finds further echoes through Scripture. Embedded within this sweeping story is the giving of the Law ('torah') with its attendant expectations for obedience on the part of this God's covenant people. In part, too, this is bound up with what it is to be in right relationship with this King of kings, and which demonstrates what was wrong with languishing in Egypt. There is an inevitability of service in the creaturely condition, and servitude in Egypt was misplaced service to a false king, not the life-giving flourishing that comes in service of the Creator. Israel failed in this, however, and exile was the result. The prophets, and Jeremiah in particular, speak to the possibility of restoration which finds a precise counterpart in exodus, and this hope and its realisation find a response in the Writings of the Jewish Bible: notably Lamentations, but also in two sets of psalms: the Egyptian Hallel (Pss 113–118) and the Songs of Ascents (Pss 120–134). Along the way, Deurloo is alert to the ways in which New Testament writers also participate in this great account of God's ways with God's people, with the exception of the last element, the 'response' of the Writings.

In brief compass, then, Deurloo provides an impressionist portrait of the life of God and his people which is pan-biblical in scope. Like the greatest impressionist portraits, there is a vibrancy and vitality conveyed in the bold strokes of colour and contrast deployed to such striking effect. Readers will be enriched by the perceptiveness of the vision which Deurloo puts on display.

Of course, detail often goes missing in the impressionist approach, and something like this also appears to be the case here. Deurloo is keen to bring biblical vocabulary to bear on God's character, for example, but his handling of *hesed*, *hanûn*, and *rahûm* for example (traditionally 'steadfast love'—for which Deurloo prefers 'solidarity'—'grace', and 'mercy') shows some confusion. I also wondered whether his claims for 'liberation' in the story of the exodus is over-played. There is language of 'freedom' or liberation in Exodus (*hopšî*), but it is never used for exodus or restoration, but rather with labour relations and debt servitude—and Deurloo himself comments at one point: 'the exodus is never described as liberation'

(p. 37). (Jon D. Levenson's 'The Exodus and Biblical Theology', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25.4 (1995): 152–60 makes this point powerfully.)

I was also nervous about Deurloo's translation of *wĕhiglêtî* as 'I will lead you into exile' (pp. 51ff.) which seems tendentious in context. Whether this arises more in the English version than the Dutch original I am unable to say. And it is also the case that some lexica will offer a gloss of 'lead into exile' for the *hiphil* of the root *glh*. Still, translations ancient and modern lack this nuance. Rather, the sense is that of deportation or being sent into exile. This is not fatal for Deurloo's discussion in Chapter 5, but rather reinforces the sense of an 'impressionist' handling when a bit more fidelity to the source would, I believe, have served the argument equally well.

Readers of *SBET* may also want to be aware of Deurloo's stance regarding God's actions in history. My characterisation of his historical commitments sees them as 'post-critical': that is, a reading worked out in awareness of and in agreement with 'critical' conclusions, but working beyond those to the meaning of those events in which the critical stance is relativised. Some will not find this orientation satisfactory, although it empowers a certain freedom for Deurloo to make constructive theological connections across the canon.

In sum, Deurloo's pithy and accessible study will inform and enrich readers keen to engage the broad contours of Scripture. It is the work of a scholar, but makes a valuable contribution to the life of faith.

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New Perspectives on Old Princeton, *1812-1929*. Kevin De Young, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and David P. Smith (eds.). London: Routledge. ISBN: 9781032316963; hb. viii + 264pp. £116.00.

On both sides of the Atlantic (and beyond) the contribution of Princeton Theological Seminary (founded 1812) continues to fascinate a range of Christians. For theological progressives, the seminary—from its founding until its reorganisation in 1929—represents a paradigm of original good intentions leading to unforeseen disappointing results. On the other hand, for theological conservatives, this seminary –certainly from its founding until 1929—represents the ideal of fidelity.

At the outset, a question worth asking is, 'Is there any other theological institution in the world, with its peak influence exerted in the 19th century, still generating such lively debate about its past?' There is something highly unique about the ongoing debate over the abiding value of early Princeton Seminary. This *New Perspectives* volume is continuing an ongoing discussion; lines are already drawn.

It is worth noting that no contributor to this symposium is an alumnus of Princeton. None are connected to the denomination which this seminary exists to serve. The common factor uniting the contributors is a shared concern to maintain Princeton's foundational role in the heritage of American evangelical Protestantism in the period to 1929. Many (but not all) of the contributed chapters take issue with historians (notably the late Sydney Ahlstrom, d. 1984) who challenged the legacy of this seminary by claiming that early Princeton—in trying to repel unwholesome Enlightenment influences —became beholden to another philosophy (Scottish Common Sense) and, in so doing, drifted towards rationalism.

In many instances, the contributors are drawing on their own earlier doctoral research. The range is from John Witherspoon (1723-1794) to Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921). The reader initially encounters the assertion by Paul Kjoss Helseth (chap. 1) that early Princeton professor Samuel Miller largely kept himself free of Enlightenment influences that were so prevalent in the age of the early Republic. The same is the case in the argument made by Kevin DeYoung that early Princeton stood solidly in line with older Reformed theology on the question of what may and may not be known of God who is manifested in the natural world (chap. 2). A strong chapter (3) by Michael Plato examines founding professor Archibald Alexander's very measured utilisation of the Common Sense philosophy.

This reader was pleasantly surprised to find a distinctive chapter (Robert W. Caldwell III, 4), on old Princeton's appraisal of the theology of Jonathan Edwards; this asserted that the nineteenth century Princetonians were mistaken in their appraisals of Edwards (though not necessarily so regarding his disciples). This candour was refreshing, appearing in a collection of essays almost entirely devoted to upholding old Princeton's probity. Similarly, Gary L. Steward's chapter (5), which explores Princeton Seminary's stance on political questions confronting pre-Civil War America, found that the dominant Princeton view was one of careful non-alignment. Several of the early faculty members (including Miller and Alexander) even declined to exercise their right to vote.

A further chapter (J. V. Fesko, 6) offers a careful comparison and analysis of the views of Charles Hodge with those of Francis Turretin, whose theological textbook, the *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* (3 vols. 1679-1685), Hodge used as a text until the publication of his own lectures. The writer found the two to be in agreement about the scope of divine revelation in the natural world; still, it was acknowledged that allowances must be made for changes of word-usage over time. Each theologian was faithful to the Reformed confessions maintained in their churches.

A succeeding chapter (Annette G. Aubert, 7) is devoted to the exposure of Charles Hodge to German theological rationalism during his extended period of European study (1826-1828). This shows that Hodge reached his definite conclusions about the dangers posed by rationalism as this was displayed by the German theologians whose lectures he attended. We find also an interesting chapter (Alan D. Strange, 8) probing the history of the idea of the spirituality of the church, i.e. the question of what mandate the church has in society to address civil and social questions. Theologians Charles Hodge and James H. Thornwell are customarily represented as occupying opposite poles on the question, though it is shown that less distance separated them than is usually supposed.

A following chapter (Jeffrey A. Stivason, 9) takes up the theme of theology's task and the question of whether we may speak of progress in doctrinal theology. Given Princeton Seminary's association with the idea of an unchanging orthodoxy, it is illuminating to learn that B.B. Warfield articulated ideas about the ways in which systematic theology could and should advance. Andover Seminary (Massachusetts) was identified by Warfield as an example of a claimed progress in theology which was, in fact, regressive. Given this chronological setting of the late nineteenth century, the author of this chapter *might* have drawn comparisons between Warfield's concept of progress in theology and the contemporary efforts of Kuyper and Bavinck in the Netherlands to re-state the Christian faith in an orthodox but contemporary manner.

A subsequent chapter by David P. Smith (10), also focusing on Warfield, draws attention to his conviction that theology must take into account both God's revelation in the natural world as well as His revelation given in words by human spokesmen and His incarnate Son. By both, God 'gives knowledge of Himself'.

Against the stereotypical view that 19th century Princeton was impervious to change, the follow-on chapter by Bradley J. Gundlach (11) highlights the openness exhibited by various faculty members (most obviously Warfield) to divinely-guided evolutionary processes. The Princeton faculty were far-seeing enough to admit the case for such providentially-guided development without granting the appeals of contemporary theologians that the Christian faith is itself subject to evolutionary change and stands in need of modification. The chapters conclude with a fine survey by Donald Fortson III (12) of Presbyterian and Princetonian thinking about the removal of slavery in the half-century prior to the Civil War. The advocacy of gradual emancipation favoured by the seminary faculty appears, in hindsight, to have been time-serving. The African colonisation schemes, also attractive to faculty members, seem in hindsight to have represented an opposition to a multi-racial society.

The chapters are followed by a response from the respected Mark Noll, who, by his own admission, had earlier joined in the critique of 19th century Princeton led by Sydney Ahlstrom. Noll grants that *some* warranted correction of the Ahlstrom viewpoint has been achieved by the authors; but he is not entirely won over. He reminds contributors that the critique of Princeton's alleged rationalism extends back into the first half of the 19th century; it did not wait for Ahlstrom.

This reviewer returns to the question posed initially: why does the vindicating of 19th century Princeton so motivate the authors of these chapters? While there is, admittedly, a question of historical interpretation warranting investigation, is this sufficient to warrant such a collection of essays? The reviewer does not find this explanation convincing. What undergirds this collection is the veneration of 19th century Princeton so firmly espoused by conservative evangelicalism. Even for those who have never set foot on the turf at Princeton, this school's first century exerts a powerful ideological grip. Reprints of these professors' works circulate very widely. Let us all ensure that our ongoing assessments of early Princeton include voices that march to additional drumbeats.

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Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament. Sandra L. Glahn. Downers Grove: IVP Academic. ISBN: 9781514005927; pb. 200pp. $25.99.

I enjoyed this book even though it turned out to be a study very different from what I anticipated. As a student of Acts, the subtitle 'Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament' caught my eye. I picked it up hoping to find a detailed and enlightening (con)textual discussion of 'The Demetrius Episode' in Acts 19, which is the source of the phrase 'Artemis of the Ephesians', and the only place within the New Testament where the goddess is named. Turns out, the foundational scripture passage upon which this study is built comes instead from the pastoral epistles: 1 Timothy 2:8-3:1. The link is found in 1 Timothy 1:3, where (pseudo) Paul (My designation. Glahn never openly questions Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy or entertains interpretive possibilities that reading 1 Timothy as a reception of Paul opens up.) states he asked Timothy to remain behind in Ephesus to straighten out the erroneous teachings and disruptive behaviour of certain men within the *ekklesia*.

Nobody's Mother is the fruit of many years of study and reflection, the type of book Glahn wishes she had had access to in her younger life (p. 14). The book unfolds in two phases. The second flows directly out of

the first but the two parts are distinct. The introduction, the first phase, is more than the prelude found in most books. It is a memoir of Glahn's journey growing up and coming to faith as a woman within American evangelicalism. From her earliest childhood, the contours of her life and the expectations placed upon her were shaped by a patriarchal social and theological framework. With succinct clarity and deep humanity, Glahn chronicles her journey through infertility to seminary then on to an academic teaching career. All the while she strives to honour her faith even as her educational and life experiences push against the centripetal forces exerted by the conventions and prescriptions of that faith tradition.

Chief among the questions that needled away at both her intellect and her soul: what does (pseudo)Paul mean when he writes that 'a woman/wife should learn in silence, have no authority over a man/husband but keep silent in full submission, and that she will be saved through childbearing' (2:11-15)? And what does all this mean for women like her who cannot conceive, or women who do not conceive for a variety of reasons and circumstances? These questions form the slip road to the second phase: her detailed and systematic study of Artemis, whose outsized influence on the city of Ephesus, Glahn suggests, can provide valuable insight into understanding (pseudo)Paul's perspective in 1 Timothy, if we can thoroughly and accurately understand her cult.

What follows is the scholarly heart and strength of *Nobody's Mother*: four chapters engaging with previous scholarship on Artemis, reviewing what the New Testament contains (here we get a short discussion of Acts 19), and the assembling of a detailed survey of the extant primary evidence (in English translation). for the cult of Artemis in Ephesus: literary, epigraphic, artistic, and architectural. What Glahn has compiled here is a gift to any student within any discipline who wants to understand how Artemis of the Ephesians was conceptualised and worshipped in Ephesus and beyond.

The final chapter circles back around to revisit the questions from phase one in light of the evidence gathered and assessed in phase two. Many will find her conclusions overly speculative and unsatisfactory in their indeterminacy. In my view, her circumspect analysis testifies to her academic integrity in not making decisive assertions where the evidence does not allow for it. At the same time, Glahn is still operating within a 'high view of scripture' scaffolded by the very theological framework she is attempting to loosen and enlarge but not fully dismantle. In fact, she states openly that those who share her scriptural perspective are her intended audience (p. 14). Others who read with a different hermeneutic may wonder if at times she pulls up short when she could push further.

Nevertheless, I would commend *Nobody's Mother* to everyone. It is an academic work but written in a mostly non-academic style that should make it accessible to lay readers as well as scholars, pastors, and divinity students. The study can offer insights to those reading the Bible on different levels and for a variety of purposes. Beyond the content itself, *Nobody's Mother* exemplifies why reading scripture in the biblical languages is vital to earnest and honest interpretation. As Glahn points out, how we translate (pseudo)Paul's statements in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 directly impacts how we understand and wrestle with their meaning (p. 11, in detail pp. 128-146).

I would specifically recommend this book to men, and especially men within the conservative evangelical world. Men need to hear the story of Glahn's journey. Men need to see the intentionality with which she attempted to live faithfully according to the specific and often conflicting expectations placed upon her as a woman. Men need to hear the pain and the confusion that resulted when circumstances beyond her control prevented her from fulfilling those expectations. All with ears to hear need to hear the honest and observant questions she asks about the 1 Timothy text, about its widely accepted meaning within certain theological and hermeneutical frameworks, and then allow the cogency with which she presents her argument speak for itself.

1 Timothy is, of course, not the only, or even the primary, thing the Bible has to say about women (pp. 15-6). The appeal of (pseudo)Paul's admonition for women to remain silent holds for men in positions of authority is obvious. It is a hermeneutic of convenience that simplifies leadership by sanctioning their superior status and muting a multitude of voices. For those quick to privilege this teaching in 1 Timothy over and above other aspects of the biblical witness concerning women, chapter 1 provides a concise and helpful primer on women's active leadership in the early centuries of the Christian movement and reasons why that changed (pp. 21-5). Most importantly, *Nobody's Mother* is yet another in a long line of examples that demonstrate why women *need* to speak and be heard within the church. Our understandings of God, scripture, life, and so much more are all greatly enriched by the insightful observations and probing and problematising questions scholars such as Glahn bring to the table.

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Jesus and Other Sons of God: Luke's Christology and Mediterranean Myth. Daniel B. Glover. Waco: Baylor University Press. ISBN: 978-1-4813-2208-0; hb. xiii + 300pp. £64.99.

The uniqueness of Christ is embedded not only in the creedal affirmations of the church, but confessed in worship; as Reginald Heber's trinitarian hymn professes of Jesus: 'Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee.' Thus, the title of Daniel B. Glover's new book *Jesus and Other Sons of God* is bound to raise some eyebrows. As Glover states, 'We religious-theological types usually want the objects of our veneration to be unique' (p. 223), but Graeco-Roman (henceforth GR) literature is replete with examples of deification; Jesus is not the only figure to be described as a 'son of God'. Glover admits that he is possibly 'wading into dangerous territory' (p. 3) with this bold comparative piece of scholarship, but this is for the purpose of understanding 'the ways that Luke weaves together several different concepts of divinity through his use of discrete deification motifs in his portrait of Jesus' (p. 13), which Glover argues shows Luke communicating something fresh about Jesus in his context. Noting the validity of deification parallels in GR literature might seem to run against the grain of much Lukan scholarship and popular theology, Glover is not an innovator in this regard. The early apologies of Justin Martyr and Origen took these for granted. Those who have read the author's earlier *Patterns of Deification in the Acts of the Apostles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022) will find themselves in similar scholarly territory, though each volume advances a distinct argument.

The introduction situates Luke within his cultural milieu. Engaging the history of scholarship on early Christology—especially the work of Larry Hurtado and Richard Bauckham—Glover argues that, while placing Luke within a Jewish context has been fruitful, it has also insulated him from his GR environment. Glover also proposes that Luke's audience consisted of a literary exchange of 'literate peers' (p. 19), with discourse on deification operating according to shared conventions.

The first chapter explores the multifaceted nature of divinity in the ancient Mediterranean world, arguing that 'ascribing divinity to a human was a transgressive act that relocated the one ascribed in a distinct ontological sphere, rather than higher along a linear spectrum' (p. 27), and provides a useful taxonomy of deification; Glover is to be thanked for doing the hard graft of collation and categorisation of the primary sources. This chapter will be an essential resource for scholars. The next three chapters undertake comparative work. Chapter two places Luke's infancy narrative alongside those of Greek and Roman demigods; figures such as Heracles and Dionysius were 'begotten', and Luke deliberately

participates in this discourse. Chapter three shows the transfiguration and Christophanies to be epiphanic narratives. This is not to the exclusion of the obvious Mosaic intertexts, but he shows how these are comprehensible within the GR *milieu*. Chapter four examines 'lord' (κύριος) and 'saviour' (σωτήρ) language. Similar to Teresa Morgan's methodology concerning the language of faith/trust (πίστις), Glover shows how Luke's deification images function within a wider Mediterranean 'language game' of deification. Chapter five compares the resurrection and ascension with traditions about ancient heroes (e.g., Cleomedes of Astypalaea, Heracles). Against N.T. Wright's claim that bodily resurrection is a uniquely Jewish concept, Glover argues otherwise, stating that 'Luke would have known how his account of Jesus's bodily resurrection, disappearance, and heavenly assumption would evoke the familiar literary topoi' (p. 199). Heroisation, he suggests, allows Luke to present Jesus's life as exemplary in his Gospel, which is subsequently ratified by the actions of his followers in the Book of Acts.

The conclusion draws these strands together, presenting Luke's Christology as an intensification of multiple deification motifs: 'no individual category is capacious enough to capture Jesus and his divinity' (p. 221). The cumulative effect of these motifs is not merely additive but amplificatory, producing a portrait in which familiar categories of divine status are stretched to their limits. Glover briefly gestures toward the theological implications of this reading, drawing on Colin Cornell in conversation with Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig, and suggests that such patterns may bear meaning beyond the intentions of the Evangelists or their earliest audiences. An appendix further strengthens the volume's contribution with a careful defence of the longer reading of Luke 24:51, handling its textual complexities with commendable clarity.

The detail and care with which Glover marshals the primary sources is exemplary. The argument that Luke participates in ancient Mediterranean discourse on deification is convincing; Glover allows the sources to speak for themselves. Just as deification parallels were recognised by patristic writers, we do not need to shirk from them today (or leave them to be misconstrued by 'Jesus Mythicists'). The clustering of deification motifs strengthens the case (contra Jacob Jervell) that Luke depicts a divine Jesus. Beyond its central thesis, the book also challenges the tendency to insulate 'the text and its influences from its so-called pagan environs' (p. 60). Such insulation risks producing an essentialised view of early Judaism or imposing anachronistic understandings of monotheism. Glover instead adopts an integrative approach, recognising both Jewish and GR influences; his reading of the transfiguration as drawing on both Mosaic and epiphanic traditions is a good example. He also makes a sig-

nificant shot across the bow for New Testament scholars more generally concerning appeals to the Septuagint. Glover reminds those in the guild that our tidily bounded Rahlfs' edition is a composite text that reflects later Christian editorial revision; the use of κύριος for YHWH is absent from all undisputedly Jewish Old Greek manuscripts. It is an important reminder against a one-dimensional handling of the Septuagint.

An important feature of Glover's argument is his fresh proposal to reconsider the audience of the Luke's *Doppelwerk*: he argues that the ideal readers 'would have been the initial circle of literate peers' (p. 18), and Luke himself should be understood as 'an elite, literate cultural producer' (p. 14). This is a compelling argument while we are focused on Luke's deification imagery, but perhaps less obvious beyond that thematic dataset. For example, when taken in isolation, Acts 6:1-6 could suggest an ideal audience divided over ethnic, linguistic issues; Luke 24:53, Acts 2:46, 3:1-10, 21:26, 22:17, 24:1-18, and 25:8 might suggest that the ideal audience had a preoccupation with the legitimacy of Jewish ritual for Jesus followers. Moreover, ample epigraphic, numismatic (coinage with *Divus Augustus*), and monumental artwork (the Arch of Titus, the Sebasteion reliefs at Aphrodisias, the Temple of Hathor at Dendera) suggests that deification motifs had popular traction beyond exclusive literary circles. The hybridity of deification imagery, as Glover demonstrates with regard to the transfiguration, might equally have been intelligible to an urban Diaspora audience (as proposed by Gregory Sterling, uncited in this volume). None of this undermines Glover's proposal, but the ideal audience he identifies appears less obvious across the whole of Luke-Acts. This raised additional questions for this reader: in what way is Luke's sustained attention to ethics, wealth, and community life (e.g., Luke 4:16-30; 6:20-49; Acts 2:42-47) relevant, or even of interest, to this primary circle of elite literary peers? Does Luke write for more than one audience, and if so, how do we determine which one was primary?

While a book cannot be criticised for not addressing questions beyond its scope, the conclusion is tantalisingly open in its proposition that 'God could "mean" something by the ancient patterns of deification beyond what the Evangelists or their earliest audiences could have understood' (p. 228), and that in this 'lies the path to the creeds and orthodox confession of Christ' (pp. 228–9). The question of how this 'path' might be navigated (or found) is intriguing and I found myself wanting more on this point. Perhaps prompting further reflection by biblical scholars on how their research relates to theology is enough, as it is so often bracketed out of the conversation entirely.

This is an exciting piece of new scholarship that shows there is much to be gained from considering wider GR sources as we read Luke (and the

rest of the New Testament) within its broader socio-historical and literary context. Some readers might find the title provocative, but Glover demonstrates that there is nothing to fear and much to be gained by appreciating how Luke engages with his world, drawing on existing tropes to communicate something novel about the divinity of Jesus. For many, the analysis might make Luke feel 'strange' (here I am reminded of Matthew Novenson's aim to 'make Paul weird again'), but it ultimately offers a richer appreciation for the extraordinary intensity of Luke's presentation of Jesus as the divine Son of God.

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Trauma and Recovery in Early North African Christianity. Scott Harrower. Boston, MA: De Gruyter. ISBN: 9781501518904; hb. xii + 220pp. $115.99.

In the wake of traumatic experiences people require recovery of what was lost, and the ancient Christian martyrdom accounts can speak into current psychological research in this recovery process. Scott Harrower aims to bring contemporary psychological research on trauma recovery and early Christian theological reasoning together. In other words, Harrow's cross-disciplinary book aims to interpret early Christian martyr accounts through the lens of contemporary trauma psychology and to bring early Christian martyrologies to the table of modern psychological research on trauma recovery. He focuses on three texts: *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (hereafter *PPerp*), *The Life of Cyprian of Carthage* (hereafter *VCypr*), and *The Account of Montanus, Lucius, and Their Companions* (hereafter *PMon*). Harrower begins by explaining and defending his methodology, i.e., in which he assuages the concerns raised by David Wilhite regarding the dangers of anachronistically psychoanalysing these ancient texts (p. 1). He then shows how the four parts of trauma recovery (i.e., self, safety, story, and community), as per contemporary psychological understanding, are depicted in these texts. The book argues that 'these documents promoted attachment to God and his transformative power as the basis for recovering a sense of safety in the midst and aftermath of trauma; a sense of safety that anchored reparative perspectives on the believer's sense of self, story, and community' (p. 196).

The first two chapters focus on defining trauma, particularly religious struggles, and connecting martyr texts to the framework of trauma recovery narratives. The central purpose is to show how the ancient martyr texts 'promote religious witness and coping after violent trauma' (p. 22). He overcomes the anachronism problem (i.e., of forcing modern psychologi-

cal analysis on ancient texts), by arguing for a universal nature of trauma, which is what Harrower seeks to focus on with regard to expositing *PPerp*, *VCypr*, and *PMon*. The universal nature is that through trauma, the survivor has now lost a sense of safety, selfhood, community, and the trauma event is the focal point of their life's story (pp. 22-30). Harrower notes the particular aspect of religious adherents' loss due to trauma, wherein the divine power/person on which they depended has now become impotent. 'Attachment to God and beliefs about God may undergo profound change in the aftermath of trauma, and for some this results in a distressed relationship with God and poor mental health' (p. 35). In other words, God should have prevented this disaster, but he did not, therefore he is not trustworthy. The recovery process is where the narratives come into play. Harrower suggests there is an affinity between ancient martyrdom texts and contemporary superhero narratives, in that, both depict someone supernaturally enduring trauma in ways that invite the reader to suffer and recover vicariously with the figure(s) in the story (pp. 44-52). Harrower shows that these texts come from intense trauma and he then takes the next five chapters to show how they convey aspects of the four points of trauma recovery, namely, safety, self, story, and community.

Because the concept of recovering safety and self are a significant part of trauma recovery, Harrower dedicates three chapters to them. He first focuses on the notion of attachment to God wherein the trauma survivor is able to reestablish their sense of self in the safety of God's promises. Harrower presents examples of the protagonists, and their Christian community, receiving God's providential care and thus cementing their sense of attachment to God. Such as when the soldiers attempted to inspire terror in the prisoners by leading them through dark passages, 'instead the believers found their surrounds illuminated by the light from the Spirit' (p. 80; *PMon* 4.2-3). This attachment to God supports the believer's allegiance to God, based on Matthew Bates's 'allegiance model of faith' (p. 89), which promotes religious autonomy and thus a recovered sense of self as belonging to God. Harrower shows how this plays out in Perpetua resisting Satan's attacks through her father urging her to deny Christ, even to the point of using her infant son as leverage (pp. 92-5; *PPerp* 3.3; 5.1-6; 6.2-8; 9.2-3). Finally, having developed the notions of attachment and allegiance to God, Harrower explains how the protagonists are empowered by God in trauma. One example is how God granted Cyprian's request to delay his martyrdom 'so that he could get the affairs of the church in order' (p.116; *VCypr* 12.6-8).

After demonstrating the recovery of the sense of safety and self, Harrower then turns to the concepts of story and community. Much of the problem with trauma is the loss of a sense of control, and a recovered

story reframes the person's perspective to be able to recognize God's sovereignty and goodness. Ultimately, the recovered story necessitates prioritizing a different element, in that a trauma survivor naturally views everything through the lens of the trauma. In order to recover a sense of story, as per Harrower's analysis of these martyrdoms, requires placing God's gifts (e.g., eternal happiness) as the focal point through which all life is seen, including the trauma (pp.159-60). In other words, instead of viewing life through the trauma, the recovered story involves viewing the trauma through eternal joys. In so doing, for *PPerp*, *VCypr*, and *PMon*, the terror of being executed became a source of joy and seen as a divine gift. In the context of a renewed story, Harrower then shows how these accounts depict a sense of community. He notes Perpetua's seemingly callus rejection of her earthly family, only to find support and connection in her new Christian family (pp.163-4; *PPerp* 5.2). Even Cyprian's exile 'community' of two (i.e., himself and Pontius: *VCypr* 12.3; 19.3-4) was enough for this aspect of trauma recovery (pp. 169-70). This recovered community is showcased as involving more than those immediately present, i.e., it also includes the local, distant, and dead Christian groups, such as Cyprian's visit to Flavianus to support those about to be martyred (p. 192; *PMon* 11.1-3; 13.1). Harrower shows how the four elements of trauma recovery (safety, self, story, community) function in these ancient accounts, and that they can, and should, be recognized as a voice in contemporary psychology on trauma and recovery.

Harrower does an excellent job of walking his reader through his argument and presentation of the evidence. He addresses Wilhite's anachronism concerns well and presents textual evidence from these works in the framework of universal trauma concepts. He even suggests points for further research (pp. 199-200), namely applying this analysis to medieval hagiographies, taking this multidisciplinary model further into other psychological research, i.e., with ancient hagiographic writings. A central point is that his work emphasizes the contemporary value of these ancient texts. For Harrower, this value applies specifically to the martyr accounts; although, his model can apply to many ancient textual genres. This point speaks to the limits of Harrower's book, namely, his aim is primarily to show that this type of cross-discipline analysis is possible (pp. 195, 201), not necessarily to present results or positive examples of such analysis applied in current psychological research. Thus, hopefully there will be more work building on Harrower's monograph, highlighting the importance of listening to these ancient voices.

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Understanding the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Forms, Features and Functions by Douglas F. Huffman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024. 978-1-5409-6640-7. 268pp. £24.99

Like this reviewer, the reader may be excused for thinking, when given a book on how the NT uses the OT, 'Another one!' However, this would be a mistake, as Huffman's book stands out in the glut of works published over the last thirty years, balancing detail with accessibility to provide one of the best introductions today on this subject and a new approach to it.

The relationship of the NT to the OT is one of the oldest questions in Christian theology, stretching back to Jesus Himself and His conversation with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). However, identifying quotations and allusions in the NT is more difficult than it first appears, with little agreement at either the precise number or what counts as a quotation or allusion. Other auxiliary questions include what exegetical methods the first Christians used, whether they were influenced by Jewish hermeneutics and, more controversially, whether these methods are illegitimate (certainly when compared to modern historical-grammatical criticism). Behind these questions lie more metaphysical issues like the extent and role of the canon, prophecy and divine authorship, which, since the Enlightenment, have been heavily contested. Huffman's primary aim is to bring clarity by proposing several taxonomies to 1. Identify more precisely when the NT quotes or alludes to the OT, 2. Describe how that quotation or allusion is used, and, most importantly, 3. Analyse why the NT writers are using that quotation or allusion. Or, in Huffman's words, 'Form, Framing', and 'Function'.

In chapter one, Huffman introduces the subject of the NT use of the OT, providing a brief historical overview, summarising the main issues and setting out where he believes there is still work to be done. In chapter two, Huffman categorises the various forms that the OT takes in the NT. What is distinctive in his approach is that instead of arranging the forms linearly, Huffman uses a two-dimensional grid to group the eight forms, according to whether the references are introduced (or explicit and implicit) and whether the wording is the same, similar or different. In chapter three, Huffman proposes the criteria to classify each reference according to the forms set out in chapter two. In chapter four, he describes how the NT writers use the OT, for example, if they are midrashic, allegory, or typology, and compares and contrasts them with Jewish exegetical practices. In chapter six, Huffman analyses the various ways the NT uses the OT, utilising another taxonomy of ten functions arranged under five headings. Finally, in chapter six, Huffman tests his taxonomic approach by applying it to Luke-Acts. He also includes two

appendices, the first of which discusses fourteen citations that appear to have no apparent OT reference, and the second is a select bibliography of key works on this subject published since the 1950s.

The word 'taxonomy' may raise reservations in the minds of some readers about whether Huffman's methodology will be too restrictive and rigid, forcing complex phenomena into a predetermined theory. This reviewer found Huffman's methodology to be the precise opposite, as he balances a sensitivity for how the NT appropriates the OT with methodological rigour. Huffman repeatedly states that although his taxonomies capture most of the quotations and allusions, he also acknowledges that the boundaries are fuzzy, with some examples, for example, paraphrase and typology, overlapping with form, framing, and function (p. 74). This reviewer found Huffman's analysis of the ten functions especially helpful as he arranged them under five broader headings, which overlapped, allowing the reader to follow his argument without getting lost in the detail.

Other helpful features of Huffman's analysis are his interaction with the work of other scholars in the field, including Hays, Carson and Beale, Goldingay, and Marshall, where Huffman maps his approach over theirs, enabling the reader who is familiar with those scholars' work to see where Huffman's methodology follows or differs from theirs. Numerous diagrams and tables set out the taxonomies visually to enable the reader to see clearly what Huffman is describing. There are several sidebars where Huffman discusses related issues such as intertextuality, multiple referents and *sensus plenior*. This reviewer found the clarity that Huffman brings to a complex topic particularly refreshing, for example, taking time to define terms such as midrash, pesher, and allegory.

In conclusion, Huffman's work is an excellent example of how to summarise an existing field and take it forward. The most significant benefit from his classification is that the reader has a greater appreciation for the varied ways that the NT writers used the OT and the reasons why. Huffman also does a good job of clearing up a lot of confusion and common myths surrounding Christian hermeneutical practices, such as their use of allegory and how indebted they were to Jewish hermeneutical practices. If the proof is in the pudding, chapter six ably demonstrates how functional Huffman's taxonomic approach is to illuminating the text, for exegetes, teachers and preachers. Alongside Greg Beale's *Handbook on the NT Use of the OT: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Baker Academic, 2012), Huffman's book will become the standard introductory text for many years.

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The Prophet's Anthem: The Song of Deborah and Barak in the Narrative of Judges. Michelle Knight. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. ISBN: 9781481321600; pb. 182pp. $39.99.

Michelle Knight, Associate Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at TEDS (joining the faculty of Wheaton College as Associate Professor of Old Testament in Autumn 2026), shines as a writer and professor, modelling her scholarship of the Former Prophets in both technical evaluation (via semantic/lexical analysis and narrative criticism) and in practical and theological application. Her work is well-suited for those diving deeper into biblical narrative and seeking to comprehend how poetry intersects with biblical narrative.

The Prophet's Anthem is a solid specimen that commendably demonstrates how the poetry of Judges five intersects with the whole narrative corpus within Judges and thus amplifies its prophetic message. Utilising narrative criticism, Knight focuses on the song's position, effect and function as a unified narrative (with Judges four) and then explicates how its themes extend into the messages and characterisation within the book of Judges. Knight provides language, supported by notable sections of analysis, that effectively relays the paradigmatic quality and relevance of the song.

Knight posits how 'the prophetic song provides a unique opportunity for a character in the microplot to reflect on issues related to the macroplot...' (p. 76). As the work addresses aspects of the song in the narrative cycle, and how it plays a role in narrative characterisations of the following chapters, Knight demonstrates the way it is: 'transitional between the first three narrative cycles and those to follow, introducing the evaluative scheme that dominates the remainder of the book ... and that the song is a lynchpin in the characterisation of Israel, complicating its otherwise monolithic portrayal and highlighting the budding trend of hesitancy in battle and irreverence for its Sovereign's battle cry.' (p. 87) It is both revelatory and evaluative, cataloguing Israel's downward trajectory (p. 138). When this is placed alongside later encounters with Israel's oppressors, 'the song solidifies and capitalises on the narrative pattern offering opportunities to reflect on the theological significance of Israel's victory over an oppressor.' (p. 104) The unit that reveals where the structure and plot of the song are situated (pp. 124-5) serves as an excellent example of this. Knight constructs a solid foundation and infrastructure to evidence and demonstrate the multi-faceted points that accentuate the song.

After laying the introductory foundations in Chapter One—outlining Knight's synchronic approach, her formal analysis of Judges 5, and her interpretive framework—she goes on to elaborate on the song as an

embedded genre, 'that discern[s] its function as a genre distinct from its prose surroundings and embedded in this precise narrative context, including its implied authorship and setting.' (p. 23) This point propels a reader to follow the narrative markers (characterisation, plot, thematic sequences) accentuated by Knight within chapter one. In these, she unveils her technical acumen and research in several areas, which bolster consideration for the next chapters.

Chapters two and three become the crux of the proposition, evaluating the unified narrative of Judges four and five in its narrative cycle. Being espoused as a more prophetic rendering, the areas of plot, characterisation and theme focus the song's content onto key theological concerns. Knight's most substantial focus is her analysis of how each character in Judges four and five (Israel, Deity, Jabin, Sisera, Deborah, Barak, Jael) is characterised. This is bridged with the characterisation of Israel, the Judges, the Oppressors and YHWH in the following chapters and provides an excellent series of textual correlations. Despite the wealth of content that could be elaborated in this chapter, Knight's succinct summary identifies the continuity and discontinuity within the stories (and the mixed responses of most characters in the narratives). Knight expresses the effect of the characterisations in Judges four and five, that the song explicitly interprets the theological significance of the event and challenges God's people to renewed covenant faithfulness in the events ahead. The line, 'Perhaps because the song is not primarily a retelling but instead a pedagogically motivated reflection, the song's focus on Israel is limited to assessing its people's response...' (p. 79) soundly notes the implications for a reading of the cycles of Judges.

Chapters four and five explore the cycles of Judges 3:7-16:31 and track how the song and its characterisations are simulated (or averted) in the Plot and Themes. This places Deborah's song alongside the other declarations of YHWH present in Judges (2:1-5, 20-2; 6:10-12; 10:11-14). The song of Deborah finds its space among a shift in God's divine activity and the people's refusal to heed the truth of YHWH's saving power (pp. 128-9) and makes important contributions to the themes of forgetting YHWH, the test of YHWH and generational degradation (pp. 130-7). A short and focused conclusion encapsulates the whole of the work and asserts Knight's emphasis: that Judges 5 is the culmination of God's revelatory activity in the early cycles (p. 142), offered with an opportunity to correct this theological deficit and embrace God afresh.

Knight's work in *The Prophet's Anthem* supplies an integration of relevant research (see, for example, her assessment of Frolov and Wong, pp. 23-5), a strong sense of intertextual and inter-biblical connections, and thorough lexical work (a strong example on pp. 67-73). The percep-

tive observations of the song challenge readers to consider what may be missed (e.g., Deborah's gender causing one to miss other important underdeveloped dynamics, p. 50) or how to see the echoes and expansions of characters like Deborah in the other cycles of Judges. The argument is smoothly presented and rhetorically builds towards a well-defined validation of the song's effect.

Even with these notable strengths, several minor critiques may be noted. First, Knight's structural overview of the content of Judges, while functional for a dissertation, could be moderated or placed in the appendix like the text-critical analysis notes. Sufficient space within the work engaged the book's structure. I was torn as it was appreciated but perhaps superfluous. Secondly, it would have served Knight to provide a brief section with clear markers on how she identified characterisation in the text. This could be a short list of what techniques and tools were used in the observation and how they were consciously applied. Like other examples in works on Old Testament narratology, the tendency is to just explain the application or observations without sharing how one can understand their construction. It would be of great value to glean from her insights on characterisation as she displays her acumen, and this provision would amplify the work. Lastly, when Knight shifts the angles in chapter three to Saviour-oppressor-deity, the points become repetitious. Like many explorations, there is always the question of 'how many examples are sufficient to make the point?' Again, this is a point of personal ambivalence, as I would equally desire to show the examples of this throughout the whole of the narrative cycle.

For any student of the Former Prophets and biblical narrative, *The Prophet's Anthem* is a resource definitely worth engaging, as it exhibits the fruit of distinctive and informed analysis. I find myself inspired to reengage biblical narrative with the same attentiveness.

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Heaven, Hell, and Hope: A Biblical and Theological Exploration of Universal Salvation. Chris Kugler. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. ISBN: 9781540965158; pb. 144pp. $22.99.

In 1897, the Scots theologian, James Orr, gave lectures later published as *The Progress of Dogma* (1901). He maintained that various Christian doctrines have received their definitive articulated form in different epochs of the history of the church, with some doctrines waiting longer than others to receive careful statement. So, for example, in the age of the Reformation the doctrine of salvation through Christ, appropriated in faith

under the influence of the Holy Spirit, received overdue careful statement. Looking ahead, Orr predicted that it would be questions of eschatology that were next in line to receive definitive statement.

If anything, the new century proved Orr wrong. Blundered pronouncements about the day of the Lord's return; efforts to equate menacing world leaders with sinister biblical figures; then more recently, a spate of books urging readers to consider the likelihood of universal salvation. No one will call this dogmatic progress.

Chris Kugler has seen some of these misfires for himself. His response to what many Christians acknowledge *is* a problem is to maintain that we have expected too much clarity in the realm of 'personal eschatology', i.e. the question of the destiny and conditions of existence of humans, after death. He does not believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments intend to offer us the level of clarity we have been assuming they provided. This is not the kind of clarification we would have hoped for! How does he build this argument?

He does so initially in an 18-page preface. He draws from the true fact that God has accommodated Himself when communicating His mind and will to finite and fallen humans, the questionable inference that any revelation given will necessarily be constrained by the thought forms and vocabulary of the culture which is dominant at the time. As this pertains to eschatology, Kugler means that the biblical writers who received divine revelation bearing on the future of the world and of the individual construed what was entrusted to them in the dominant Greek and Jewish fashion of their day. This way of putting things is interesting; but one must ask: 'Does this adequately recognize the divine initiative in providing revelation and the level of divine superintendence provided by the Spirit of God to those who conveyed the dreams, oracles and teachings entrusted to them?' Kugler lacks clarity here. And he seems to veer dangerously near to the old 'history of religions' approach to biblical interpretation, by which Christian biblical interpretation was to be carried out in reliance on the sacred writings of then-contemporary religions. Both Jews and Greeks had eschatological ideas of their own.

The upshot of such an approach is that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are implied to have much less to tell us about 'last things' (and other matters) than we had been led to expect. These writings may indeed constitute a *kind* of record of revelation, but they offer precious few details on the subject of any future division of humanity, of what is the criterion to be met for entering the future kingdom of God, or whether the destiny of the wicked will be one of enduring torment or extinction. Recorded revelation is, on this understanding, low-yield. The central rev-

elation of the Christian era is the Christ-event; the NT Scriptures only constitute revelation secondarily.

Such a low-expectation approach must face the test posed by well-known New Testament writings, which—on the face of them—contain numerous direct statements bearing on personal eschatology. To this task Kugler turns in the second and major portion of this book. It is one thing to grant that a Scripture such as Matthew 24.30 employs apocalyptic language and that it may not require literal interpretation. But the general approach taken by Kugler is to suggest that the Synoptic Gospels (John is significantly passed over) and the balance of the New Testament mainly recycle ideas common in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish cultures of the time. The biblical evidence is judged not to support unambiguously the customary options of eternal damnation, annihilation or universal salvation. The statements and parables of Jesus are 'not directly translatable into a doctrine about the eternal destiny of distinct individuals' (p.41). A further rapid survey of the Epistles and of Revelation is carried out which purports to confirm this indeterminacy. The reader will likely not be satisfied that these writings have been adequately handled.

Paul's writings (including letters the author believes were penned by his associates) receive five pages. Kugler is intent on showing that passages such as 2 Thess. 1.5-10 (which make reference to the return of Christ and a consequent division of humanity) are much less direct in their teaching than most readers will suppose. Passages such as Gal. 5.19-23 and 1 Cor. 6.9-10 which describe human choices and conduct that will, if persisted in, exclude a human from God's kingdom, are taken by Kugler as general descriptions of the traits avoided by those who *will* inhabit the coming kingdom.

To come to the point, one is relieved to find, by the end of the work, that Kugler—as much as he is attracted to universalism—does not find this unambiguously taught in the majority of relevant Scriptures (p. 82). But this is small consolation. This author's efforts have worked towards a negating objective, i.e. convincing the reader that the Scriptures are much less definite than we have supposed in what they say about the afterlife, the world to come, and any impending division of humanity. This glass is always half-empty. Clarity could have been introduced by a fuller attention to what the New Testament positively reports: such as the sayings of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel (5.24-30; 11.25) and the recorded proclamation of the Apostles (e.g. Acts 17.31; 24.25) all of whom were eyewitnesses (Acts 1.21; Gal. 1.12; 2 Peter 1.18; 1 John 1.1-2). The claim of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ has 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel' (2 Tim. 2.10). This is not a

mere recirculation of concepts already in circulation in the Graeco-Jewish world.

James Orr evidently got it wrong in predicting the imminent arrival of eschatological clarity. Has Kugler in any way advanced clarity? Perhaps it could be said that he has attempted to achieve this by subtraction, but the positive result is minor.

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Reformed Covenant Theology: A Systematic Introduction. Harrison Perkins. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic. ISBN: 9781683597339; hb. 520pp. $49.99.

There was a time in Scotland, and indeed the wider Reformed world, when Covenant Theology was the keystone subject of spiritual conversations and theological libraries. As the doctrines of grace were cherished and explored by the Reformers and the generations who followed them, the framework of covenant became the great unifying principle of Systematic Theology. But history never stands still, and what was cherished in the 17th and 18th Centuries became increasingly overlooked in the 19th and, by the 20th century, Covenant Theology was no longer the keystone of systematics; to many, it had become a troublesome millstone of outdated dogmatism that needed to be cast aside. Thankfully, the later 20th and early 21st centuries have seen a renewal of respect for, and a revival of interest in, Covenant Theology. Much of this has emerged hand in hand with a greater appreciation for Biblical Theology. As theologians explore the unfolding of Redemptive History, the place of covenant in that redemptive narrative is undeniable. The result has been many valuable works that explore Covenant Theology using a methodology that broadly follows God's historical covenantal dealings with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, all culminating the New Covenant inaugurated and consummated through Christ. But what has hitherto been missing is a fresh examination of Covenant Theology according to the traditional categories of Systematic Theology. It is to this gap that Harrison Perkins' *Reformed Covenant Theology* makes a welcome, and wonderful, contribution.

Perkins structures his book around the historic three-part framework of the Covenant of Works, of Redemption and of Grace. His order is deliberate; while the Covenant of Redemption has its origins in eternity, it is the Covenant of Works that places humanity in need of redemption. Thus, the book sequentially sets out the condemning plight of humanity, the redemptive plan of God, and the gracious provision of Christ.

Part One, the Covenant of Works, looks at God's covenant with Adam and explores its legal character, its implicit reward, and its implications both for establishing humanity's guilt and for explaining what Christ must accomplish for our justification. Here Perkins effectively demonstrates that starting with systematic categories does not mean jettisoning Biblical Theology. On the contrary, what is learned about Adam in Genesis 1 and 2 is integrated superbly with the rest of Scripture, both Old Testament and New.

Part Two examines the Covenant of Redemption, which remarkably could today be classified as a somewhat neglected subject. Perkins carefully leads the reader deeper into the counsels of eternity. In doing so, he makes clarifying connections with Trinitarian theology, yet at the same time respects the inescapable need for the theologian to be content with mystery. Again, the categories of systematician are the companion of the biblical theologian and Perkins repeatedly draws stimulating connections to the New Testament revelation of Christ as the Last Adam.

The Covenant of Grace is the subject of Parts Three and Four. The former explores the substance of the Covenant of Grace and presents a compelling argument for the unity of that covenant across its various administrations. Christ is either anticipated in the Old, or apprehended in the New; thus, the Covenant of Grace is *united*. But furthermore, the Covenant of Grace is *unifying*, and Perkins effectively shows how Covenant Theology connects, and indeed elucidates, key aspects of the *ordo salutis*. Part Four then discusses the administration of the Covenant of Grace. Here the reader is taken from Adam to Moses and from Moses to Christ. Significant attention is given to the Mosaic Covenant and Perkins offers a balanced and thorough articulation of the view that the covenant at Sinai, in a typological sense for the nation of Israel, is a republication of the Covenant of Works.

Part Five then considers living in God's Covenant of Grace. Here there is a rich and stimulating discussion of the church as a covenant community, and the role of preaching and the sacraments within her.

Finally, the book closes with a short summary offering six theses on Covenant Theology. These have the potential to be five of the most helpful pages on Covenant Theology that have been written, and without doubt, they will be shared and discussed in seminaries all across the Reformed world.

Throughout the book, Perkins writes as a first-rate theologian and a pastor. Each chapter ends with reflections on the pastoral relevance of the subject under discussion. Moreover, his tone throughout the whole book is exemplary; here is the work of an author who desires to honour God but who has no wish to denigrate a brother. The book also offers fre-

quent exegesis of key biblical passages, thorough explanation of doctrinal categories and terminology, and sprinkled throughout the book are many memorable and helpful illustrations (most of which involve ice cream!).

One word that describes the approach of the whole book would be *precision*. Throughout each chapter, you read the work of a meticulous theologian who has provided the church with an articulation of Covenant Theology that sits securely within the boundaries of the Reformed Confessions and which stands on the shoulders of the giants of historic Covenant Theology. On occasions, that precision may come at an unavoidable cost; a minor constructive comment might be that one or two chapters may be said to prioritise technical detail over literary ease. Moreover, another key strength of the book is that it is rooted in both exegesis of Scripture and in interaction with the riches of historical theology. Indeed, Perkins is undoubtedly one of the world's leading experts in the great works of the covenant theologians and this book leaves the reader well acquainted with some of the most important theologians of the last five hundred years. Such a historical grounding is a key strength of the book, but that has perhaps left little space for interaction with recent works. Perkins is clearly well acquainted with these, but he avoids much direct analysis of recent authors. Some readers will greatly appreciate this avoidance of potentially niche polemics, but other readers may have hoped that more was said about how Perkins' more classical methodology compares to recent works of a more biblical theological emphasis. Furthermore, from a Scottish perspective, it would have been fascinating to have seen how Perkins would have tackled the writings of the Torrance brothers (perhaps the arch-critics of many aspects of historic Scottish Covenant Theology).

The above comments are very minor and they run the risk of expecting Perkins' book to do everything, which of course is an unrealistic expectation of any book. Overall, *Reformed Covenant Theology* offers a superb introduction to Covenant Theology from the standpoint of the systematic theologian. This book would be of great value to all readers, and it is surely essential reading for students at a seminary. It is impossible to read this book without learning and, more importantly, it is impossible to read it without marvelling at the astonishing grace and goodness of God, revealed through his majestic covenants.

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Under the Olive Tree: Palestinian Christian Theology from the 1980s to the Present. Maayan Karen Raveh. Waco: Baylor University Press. ISBN: 9781481323710; pb. 240pp. $39.99.

After an introduction that outlines the author's premise, methodological approach, and the study's limitations, including its all-male clerical authorship, the volume is organised into four substantive sections. The first explores the political context within which the author argues has led to the development of Palestinian Christian theology and how this shapes national and religious identity. The second section has a detailed and well-referenced discussion of post-Holocaust and post-colonial theology which explores significant theological figures internationally plus several methodological structures and tools. This is then applied in section three where the purported friction between these theological approaches is outlined when applied to the Palestinian populace. In the final section, the author seeks to explore the formation of the Palestinian Christian narrative through the lens of 'witness' applied from theological and historical standpoints.

The author seeks to explore the context and theoretical frameworks that define and describe Palestinian Christian theology with her focus only on those who identify as Palestinian, have acquired official clerical accreditation, and who operate and publish within the Holy Land. Her main argument is Palestinian Christian theology defines Christian national identity and guides their understanding of both their connection to Christ and to the physical Holy Land.

This is a well-researched and clearly structured book exploring an important and relevant topic. The careful referencing and historical sweep make this a useful publication alongside a description and discussion of differing frameworks and tools used to develop theological perspectives. Many of the arguments made are clear and helpful for us to understand the development of theology and, in particular, Palestinian Christian theology. This is also a rapidly developing area, in part due to the huge political upheavals that have led to terrible conflict and finally to what is accepted by most international bodies as a genocide in Gaza.

However, the author moves from theological exploration and discussion to making critical judgements that are at best unhelpful. There is a concerning tendency to conflate the strong arguments of Palestinian Christian theologians which highlight injustice and oppression against a political ideology, namely Zionism, into a fight with Judaism and even with Jews. Suggesting Jews are the enemy of Palestinians is completely counter to the writing of the theologians quoted. Indeed, many Jewish writers are also anti-Zionist, including the New Historians such as Avi

Shlaim and Ilan Pappé. Writing since the Nakba in 1948, they strongly support the argument that Zionism is a settler-colonial project which is political in nature and not religious. Edward Said in *The Question of Palestine* (Vintage, 1978) argues the principal characteristic of Palestinian history is the 'traumatic national encounter with Zionism'. Post-colonial theological principles and developments reflect a significant challenge to the Western-centric view of the world which has in turn influenced biblical understanding. It is therefore entirely appropriate that a post-colonial approach is a significant part of Palestinian Christian theological writing, especially in English.

It is also well acknowledged that the lived experience of oppression and injustice drives a rethinking of theology. In turn, it is not surprising that Arabic-language Palestinian Christian theological writing emphasises other issues given the differing worldviews and experience rather than any attempt to confuse the message. These further challenges the premise of the author that Palestinian Christian theology is primarily written to counter Western-centric views but rather it offers its own unique perspective that has global relevance. The author posits a tension between post-colonial and post-Holocaust approaches, but presents no evidence for it. As framed, the claim risks introducing a contrived dichotomy absent from Palestinian Christian theological discourse. The texts quoted, instead, outline the facts which support the indigeneity of Palestinians and their historical roots in the Holy Land which reach back to the time of Christ and the early church. These roots include both Jews and Gentiles who came together in the early church as Followers of the Way; later to be called Christians. It affirms the Christ-centric emphasis of Palestinian Christian theology and their deep concern and assertion that Christian Zionism abandons this centrality. Rather than a tension, Palestinian Christian theologians present this as a source of strength and depth in the perspective they elucidate, together with an invitation to attend to the witness and resilience of the 'living stones' of the Holy Land, which they understand as bringing hope and calling forth deeper faith and radical love. A recent statement, 'Kairos 2: Faith in a Time of Genocide' (Nov 2025), part of the Global Kairos for Justice movement, describes itself as a cry against genocide, ethnic cleansing, and forced displacement, and rejects all forms of Zionism, whether originating in Judaism, Christianity, or Islam.

Other recent publications are exploring the imperative presented by Palestinian Christian theology and indeed calling for a seminal moment in theological thinking and understanding post-Gaza in a similar way to post-Holocaust theological reflection. *Theology after Gaza: A Global Anthology* (Cascade, 2025) brings in authors from across faiths and across

settings and has grown out of the work of the Council for World Mission. Newer publications such as *The Cross and the Olive Tree: Cultivating Palestinian Theology Amid Gaza* (Orbis, 2025) include definitions of theology that are rooted in community, and which also challenge gender assumptions and norms.

Perhaps this focus on lived theology, of faith, resilience and resistance will further encourage a wider perspective for theological definitions which may be more rooted in Eastern, Global South and collectivist societies and in those who have faced oppression and injustice.

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The Conflict Between Faith and Experience and the Shape of Psalms 73-83. Stephen J. Smith. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark. ISBN: 9780567702760; pb. 224pp. £28.99.

In 2007, Joel S. Burnett wrote that 'Arguably the most significant development in Psalms scholarship in recent decades has been attention to the shape and shaping of the Psalter. Nevertheless, one feature of this biblical book's larger structure and meaning that continues to baffle is what scholars call the Elohistic Psalter,' referring to Pss 42–83 (Joel S. Burnett, 'A Plea for David and Zion: The Elohistic Psalter as Psalm Collection for the Temple's Restoration', in Joel S. Burnett, W. H. Bellinger Jr., and W. Dennis Tucker Jr. [eds.], Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Psalms in Real Time: Proceedings of the Baylor Symposium on the Book of Psalms [New York: T&T Clark, 2007], p. 95). Stephen J. Smith's new work, *The Conflict Between Faith and Experience and the Shape of Psalms 73–83*, the published version of his doctoral dissertation under Duane A. Garrett, offers some clarity on the so-called Elohistic Psalter that straddles books 2 and 3 of the Psalter.

Inspired by Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), Smith, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies and Christian Ministries at Belhaven University, sees Psalms 73–83 as a collection that answers 'a multidimensional collision between "faith" (i.e., various core Israelite beliefs about God) and "experience" (the individual/community's current experience of God' (p. 2). Smith's thesis is that Psalms 73–83 are a distinct unit with a 'singular theological message: God is *still* good to Israel—despite the conflicting evidence,' that is, the Temple's destruction around 586 BCE (p. 2, italics original).

Smith's work impresses in its rigour; from the start Smith reminds us that method determines results, and so lays out the particular way his study discerns editorial critical insights (pp. 2-3). For example, he notes that the shared '*Asaph*' superscriptions in both Codex Leningradensis (MS B19^{A}) and the LXX bring Psalms 73–83 together 'on a purely formal level,' which provides a basis for looking for further literary unity (p. 3). Anyone interested in venturing into editorial criticism of the Psalter should note Smith's methods, as he interacts with sceptics of editorial criticism, such as David Willgren, Eva Mroczek, and Alma Brodersen (pp. 4–8). Smith argues that his research satisfies their objections to editorial criticism, writing of the manuscript data on these psalms, 'To borrow Willgren's terminology, we see both textual stability *and* paratextual stability' (p. 12, italics original). Likewise, Smith's approach to editorial criticism, also called *Psalterexegese*, is synchronic; he views the collection as resulting 'from a single creative act (not a diachronic process) in the wake of the Temple's destruction in 586/587 BCE' (p. 13). Thus, at least one person was behind the 'deliberate literary correspondence that exists' in Psalms 73–83 (p. 16).

How does an editorial critic discern unity among psalms? Smith asserts that '"Psalms exegesis" is prior to, and an essential precondition for, *Psalterexegese*' (p. 18). In other words, the individual parts that make up a psalm must be examined before asking questions about how each psalm relates to each other in the larger whole. This must be the case given that the Psalter is a collection of smaller units. The parts and the whole must be taken into account: 'At least in principle, *Psalterexegese* and "psalms exegesis" are not in competition; they are compatible' (p. 18). The overall meaning of a psalms collection cannot 'contradict or otherwise do "violence" to the meaning of any one psalm in the sequence' (p. 19). Here Smith's careful attention to method disarms those who might dismiss his project simply because of other, less careful editorial critical studies (e.g., see p. 67).

Smith's introduction lays out more details of his method, such as an emphasis on parallelism (pp. 21–5). He builds on Michael Snearly's observation that parallelism can be observed not only on the level of a 'line' but between psalms (pp. 22–3). Applied to his project, Smith notes echoes of Psalm 73 in the psalms that follow, an observation that others have made but not fully analysed (p. 35). This leads to an 'in stereo' effect, with Psalm 73 presenting the heading of the conflict of faith and experience, with the following psalms in the grouping taking up elements of Psalm 73 and discussing them from other angles (p. 36).

Smith's next chapter outlines and interacts with the various views that editorial critics have taken regarding the psalms in question. Worth

noting is the 'tendency…to essentially collapse "psalms exegesis" into *Psalterexegese*,' which includes reading two discrete texts 'as if they are virtually a single continuous psalm' (p. 69). Smith is wisely cautious of approaches that take one psalm's placement next to another as permission to overrule the content of that psalm (p. 70).

Chapters 3-8 present Smith's argumentation related to Psalms 73–83. First, Smith discusses the conflict between faith and experience in Psalm 73, noting that 'Whatever the catalyst at the temple,' by the end, 'the psalmist's confidence in God's goodness had been restored' (p. 76). His findings agree that faith clings to God's self-revelation despite experiences that might suggest otherwise, per Ingvar Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 176 (p. 80). Second, chapter 4 suggests that 'Psalms 74–76 is the first of four psalm sequences/pairings that stand in a deliberate parallel relationship with' Ps. 73. In Smith's opinion, Ps. 74 wrestles with the seeming inaction of God (e.g., 74:10–11) related to enemies (p. 83). Ps. 75, likewise, wrestles with the same question but maintains that God will intervene eventually (p. 87). Smith has less to say about Ps. 76, but asserts 'significant thematic correspondence' between these three, Pss. 74-76, and Psalm 73 (pp. 88–97). This means that Pss 74–76 are a distinct literary unit, and Psalm 73 'is thus something of a hermeneutical key that unlocks the interpretive significance of their repetitions' (pp. 98–9). These psalms reinforce that despite conflicting evidence, God is not defeated or indifferent to his people (p. 100).

Smith's fifth chapter examines Psalms 77–78, which he takes as a second unit in the collection. Despite these having different genres, lament and history, both allude to Ex. 34:6–7 and share an 'analogous network of parallels' (pp. 109, 112). Ps. 77 mirrors Pss. 73 and 74, Smith argues, with a conflict between faith and experience (p. 111). Likewise, 'The transition to Psalm 78 marks a radical shift in perspective that mirrors the inner-psalm progression to verses 18-28 in Psalm 73' (p/111). While some of the links Smith perceives between Pss. 73 and 77–78 seem subjective (e.g., 'a reflective tone,' p. 118), his evidence is substantial. These parallels are analysed in chapter six, where Smith challenges major scholars' viewpoints, such as both McCann's argument that 'the sequence's arrangement points singers/readers away from Zion theology as a basis for hope,' and Hossfeld and Zenger's emphasis on Ps. 78 as having a 'central theological and/or literary position' (pp. 133–4, italics original).

The final two chapters,' Smith explains, 'are a combined argument for the literary unity of Psalms 79–82' (p. 143). Following the pattern of previous chapters, Smith suggests literary correspondence between Ps. 73 and Pss. 80–81; 'Like the first two psalm groupings… this psalm sequence

also mirrors the major literary progression of Psalm 73's two halves' (150). After presenting argumentation, Smith concludes chapter 7 by stating that the theological message of these two psalms, with Ps. 73 in view, is that 'Faith clings to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence' (p. 157). Lest we forget Ps. 79, Smith returns to it in chapter nine, wherein he agrees with Hossfeld and Zenger that 'Psalm 79 engages with the destruction of the Temple and the fundamental crisis brought on in and by that event' (p. 160). Ps. 79 is paired with Ps. 82 'though separated by two intervening psalms' (p. 166). Smith views the intervening psalms 80–81 as the centre of an 'editorial chiasmus' (p. 171). The significance of this being that 'the entire sequence of Psalms 74–82… is organised to engage and resolve a singular crisis,' that is, God's perceived absence in the destruction of the Temple (p. 176). Likewise, 'God is *still* good to Israel' (179, italics original). Psalm 83, for Smith, 'concludes the collection by embodying the resolution that each of its constituent groupings has promoted: trust in God's self-revelation' (p. 183).

The Conflict Between Faith and Experience and the Shape of Psalms 73–83 should be read as a model of contemporary Psalms scholarship, combining both exegesis and editorial criticism. While it is less exegetical and more focused on the shared vocabulary and topics of the psalms considered, this work provides a very helpful explanation of the *Asaph* psalms. I do wonder if Smith avoids the very concern he is keen to avoid, namely, not reading too much from the collection back into each of its parts. On balance, it does not seem to say too much to conclude with Smith that 'full appreciation of these psalms requires taking into account *both* levels of context' (p. 187, italics original). I highly recommend this work.

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A Heavy Yoke: Theology, Power, and Abuse in the Church. Selina Stone. London: SCM Press. ISBN: 9780334066699; pb. vii + 192pp. £16.99.

This is an important book—a book that needed to be written and needs to be read. It is a book that some (perhaps more than some) Christians, especially within conservative evangelicalism, whether they sit in the pews, stand behind pulpits, or hold academic chairs, may be reluctant to read. I would contend the more resistant you are to the idea of reading *A Heavy Yoke*, the more important it is that you do so.

The source of such resistance is not simply the book's subject matter but its methodology: probing evangelical theologies for understandings of power that, while they do not cause abuse directly, create conditions conducive for abuse to occur. A detached, non-invasive academic mon-

ograph on abuse within evangelical Christian churches would be much more palatable but far less impactful.

Theologies, of course, are things we hold dear. For many Christians, theology is more or less equivalent to faith itself. To question one is to challenge the other and even to jeopardise one's salvation. Many of us are taught that ascribing to the 'right' theology, the correct doctrine, is essential. And yet, as Dr Stone observes, 'it is telling that what so many abusers of power in the Christian world have in common is… a particular notion of orthodoxy' (p. 8).

That insight is what makes this book threatening but also so potentially liberating. Dr Stone does not frame theology as solely problematic. She both prescribes and models healthy theological work as a fundamental part of the solution. Thus, in *A Heavy Yoke*, Selina Stone offers us so much more than a report documenting the evidence for and raising awareness of the alarming rate of a particular malignancy within evangelical bodies of Christ. She presents us with the theological equivalent of a bone marrow biopsy: an investigation into the generative source of the malignancy, a quest to understand its permutations, and an invitation to collaborate in developing effective treatments.

This compact but richly edifying book unfolds across seven chapters, each chapter 'dealing with a particular theme and theological problem which relates to power' (p. 12). Chapter one considers power as breath given by God and how that understanding can help us define abuse within churches. Chapter two explores the power of words within charismatic traditions, with special attention given to the concepts of 'calling' and 'gifting' as markers of authority and how manipulative preachers can use words from the pulpit to aid, abet, and excuse abuse. Chapter three looks at the concept of God as omnipotent and the dynamics of how authority figures within the church, especially preachers, either project for themselves or have projected onto themselves similar conceptions of power. Chapter four addresses the concept of 'principalities and powers' and how the hard line that is so often drawn between 'the church' (holy, good, trustworthy) and 'the world' (ungodly, defiling, dangerous) impedes the ability of those inside the church to think critically and honestly about the church. Chapter five investigates how theologies of suffering and sacrifice can be (and are) used to sanctify violence. Chapter six considers how two developments, the rise of vulnerability as a virtue and the promulgation of 'servant leadership' as an ideal, have combined to create an environment abusers exploit. Finally, chapter seven puts forward discernment, applied to the material covered in the preceding chapters, as an intentional practice to help identify 'green flags' as well as 'red flags' in

various aspects of church life, including congregational dynamics of worship, culture, and governance.

In certain chapters, Dr Stone employs lessons and examples from Jesus's parables that invite the reader to rethink / reimagine the problematic power dynamic under review. For example, in chapter three, she uses the story of 'The Widow's Mite' as a foil for the capitalistic impulses, assumptions, and trappings that underpin various flavours of the prosperity gospel and ground a particular charismatic understanding of God's almightiness (the wordplay between 'mite' and 'might' is intentional and effective). In others, she weaves case studies into her discussions of power, such as John Smyth's spree of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse at the Iwerne Camps, detailed in chapter five. These 'high profile' cases are not included for sensational effect but because the attention they have attracted has generated multiple interviews, reports, court filings, and other materials to examine (p. 10). They effectively illustrate particular and painful ways certain theologies coupled with problematic power structures lead to abuses of authority that result in the abuse of people. Especially when combined with anecdotes from her own faith journey, these examples provide a meaningfully enfleshed dimension to Dr Stone's theological work.

My one critique of *A Heavy Yoke* is the somewhat inconsistent structure of the seven chapters. Some contain case studies, some contain specific scriptural counterpoints, some contain both. I would have loved a few more of the 'Widow's Mite/Might' type explorations. That said, all seven chapters are substantive and engaging as they stand. There is no shortage of insights to be gleaned from this bold theological study. Dr Stone acquits herself as a first-rate theologian and a skilled writer capable of communicating nuanced theological ideas without the jargon or overwrought prose that all too often confines serious theological discussion to academic circles. This book is accessible to lay persons as well as clergy, divinity students, and professional theologians. It deserves to be read and discussed widely.

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Discovering Christianity: A Guide for the Curious. Rowan Williams. London: SPCK. ISBN: 9780281090631; pb. 128pp. £10.99.

Rowan Williams has long had the rare gift of making the reader feel that the most searching theological questions are, in the end, questions about reality: what is there, what is given, what is not negotiable, and what sort of speech is truthful in its presence. *Discovering Christianity* is a small book that carries that characteristic weight lightly. Its aim is disarmingly

direct—to speak to anyone, whatever their beliefs, who wants to get to the heart of Christianity—and it largely succeeds by refusing both defensiveness and oversimplification. Three chapters rework material from Williams's earlier SPCK book (*What Is Christianity? A Little Book of Guidance*, 2015), but the material lives afresh within a new structure and with a sharper focus.

The book unfolds in eight compact chapters—What is faith? What is Christianity? What is theology? Why church? Why Scripture? Why tradition? Why reason? Why does it matter? —each followed by questions for discussion or reflection. These are not an afterthought but a second mode of expression, often distilling a chapter's burden into a memorable phrase. Particularly telling is the definition offered alongside chapter three: theology is 'the process of "making Christian sense"' (p. 91). Characteristically Williams-like—economical and quietly profound—it names theology as responsible attention, and hints that Christian sense-making can become nonsense when it shrinks the world or shrinks away from it.

The opening chapter sets the tone by distinguishing 'toxic' from 'healthy' religion with a bracing litmus test: 'The test of true faith is how much more it lets you see, and how much it stops you from denying, resisting or ignoring aspects of what is real' (p. 3). Faith is often cast as private preference or defiance of evidence; so Williams's counter-definition is quietly subversive. True faith enlarges the world, making one more available to reality, not less. The point is not merely apologetic: faith is tested not by intensity of feeling but by increased receptivity—by loosened denial.

That theme deepens in Williams's Johannine gloss on 'glory': glory as 'radiance', as 'utter unselfishness at the heart of everything', even as 'a divine letting go' (p. 12). This captures what Christian tradition means by glory when stripped of its triumphalism. Glory is not God's need to be noticed but the self-diffusive generosity of divine life. Here, in miniature, is the Williams found across his work: a theology of divine self-giving, close to prayer, committed to truthful speech, and wary of religious (or any) ego.

The chapter on Christianity itself—revised from a talk for a non-European Muslim audience—offers a practical route into trinitarian faith. The Trinity appears not as puzzle to be solved but as the grammar of prayer: 'Probably the most important Christian belief is that people are given the right to speak to God in exactly the same way that Jesus did … because the life, the power, the Spirit that filled Jesus is given to us also' (p. 16). Doctrine here names a lived possibility: praying 'with Jesus' voice' because his Spirit is shared.

Chapter three is anchored in Paul as a canonical character and the pressure Christian thought feels in relating Jesus and the Spirit. As Williams puts it, theology's initial impetus lies 'in the pressure to think more deeply about how and why Jesus and the Spirit are connected', yielding 'a radically fresh understanding of who and what human beings are' (p. 37). Theology is work demanded by the gospel's claim on human identity. Williams shows why doctrine matters by showing what it does.

The chapters on church, Scripture, tradition, and reason model compression without distortion. The church chapter is anchored in the dominical sacraments (Baptism and Eucharist), and Williams's account of the latter is both direct and broadly resonant: it is 'how we are present in heaven while still being on earth—because we are at our closest to Jesus, praying with his voice, receiving his life' (p. 46). Rather than settling eucharistic debates, this reveals why they matter: the church's life is re-situated in Christ's.

On Scripture, Williams says just enough. Scripture 'records a process of God taking time with human beings, in a cumulative story of breakthroughs, setbacks, continuity and discontinuity… regularly being reworked and reimagined as the sheer scale of what is being shown about the nature of the limitless God becomes clearer' (p. 51). This honours the densely-textured nature of the Bible without turning it into either wax nose or rigid code. Revelation appears as movement: God 'taking time', resisting fantasies of instant mastery.

The chapter on tradition is gentle and wise. Williams defines heresy as 'saying less about God than the God who had acted in Jesus and the Spirit deserved' (p. 60) —a memorable, pastorally shrewd take. Orthodoxy becomes not boundary-policing for its own sake but refusal to impoverish divine generosity. His nuance on the Reformation is equally measured: vernacular Scripture mattered so people could read it together (p. 64). Tradition is corporate practice, not private inspiration. 'Traditionalism', by contrast, is tradition detached from its living context: 'the ongoing process of reading Scripture' (p. 66).

Chapter seven prefers 'reasoning' to 'reason', wary of an abstract universal faculty, and presents it as conversation between Christ, church, and world (p. 73). Christian rationality is located within discipleship: reasoning as participation, the church learning to speak truthfully in the world God loves.

The final chapter traces the human consequences of such faith: 'realism and perspective', 'a way of valuing what's around us', and a 'natural' life of giving and receiving intimacy (pp. 80-81). The book's beginning and end thus clasp: glory as divine self-giving, and human flourishing as participation in that exchange.

A mild reservation concerns the book's genre. Those seeking a detailed map of contested doctrinal terrain will not find it here; nor should they. This is a guide for the curious, trusting that curiosity grows through truthful, spacious description rather than exhaustive argument. What it offers instead is a compelling vision of Christianity as a school of attention to reality, a participation in the divine 'letting go' at the heart of all things.

It is a vision I find convincing and would gladly claim. For readers curious, hesitant, wounded by 'toxic' religion, or simply hungry for a Christianity that is neither evasive nor aggressive, Williams provides light and life. The discussion questions make the book especially suited to reading groups and settings where Christian speech must be both honest and hospitable. For theologians, it offers something academic work sometimes forgets: a reminder that making Christian sense is, finally, about learning to see.

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