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Book Reviews

ELIJAH, Man of Fire, Man of Faith
John Cheeseman
Day One: Leominster, 2011 117pp £6.00pb ISBN: 978-84625-270-9

This is a delightfully written little book of 117 pages, detailing the story of the prophet Elijah. There may be some who, reading about this work, are tempted to pass it by as they have A. W. Pink's earlier major work on the prophet. This would be a mistake. Both works are written on the basis of the authority of the Scriptures and both authors draw valuable lessons from the text. Elijah has a timeless relevance for the Church and particularly at this time where paganism in principle is seeking to cast away the spiritual lessons taught by the Scriptures and immorality and greed are rife.

One criticism that I feel bound to make concerns the writer's strictures on depression. It would appear that Elijah suffered from spiritual depression. There are other reasons for depression, and it always needs to be taken seriously.

John Cheeseman shows that he is an experienced preacher in the manner in which he draws out the lessons and applies them in sermon form without being sermonic. It is therefore helpful to the older Christian confirming and strengthening the reader in the Christian faith. For the younger Christian it begins to open the Old Testament Scriptures showing that both Testaments are God's revelation in Christ. For the Christian traveller it is a handy book to read while travelling by train or plane to redeem the time. For the preacher, there are seed thoughts here for sermons.

DAVID STREATER
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THE FAITH WE CONFESS: An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles
Gerald L. Bray
London: Latimer Trust, 2009 236 pp £9.99 pb ISBN: 9780946307845

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion found at the back of the Book of Common Prayer are the doctrinal standard of the Church of England. Along with the BCP itself and the Ordinal by which ministers are ordained, they gave the Church

of England its distinctively Reformed flavour in the sixteenth century, and have defined its identity. These formularies have played an immensely important role in defining what it means to be Anglican across the globe, and originally gave the Anglican Communion its common identity. The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GAFCON) has given the Articles prominence in its Jerusalem Statement, and hopefully this will help them to regain an importance in the church's life and witness which they have recently been in danger of losing.

One of the standard commentaries on the Articles has, for many years, been that of W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology*, which in 1977 was republished with an introduction by Jim Packer. This, however, is fairly dense and detailed, and too long to be anything but a work of reference for most people. And yet Anglican churchgoers, ordinands, and ministers still require some kind of exposition of the Articles which are nearly four and a half centuries old, in order to understand them and see their importance as an expression of the faith we confess today.

Into the breach steps Gerald Bray with this well-written, historically-aware, and faithful unwrapping of each Article. His introduction (available to read free online at www.latimertrust.org) looks at the origin, revision, and structure of the Articles and discusses their importance as a distillation of Anglican doctrine. He then works his way through each Article in turn. In his commentary he gives just enough historical background to put the Article into proper context before giving an explanation (with suitable illustrations and applications) of its teaching. He helps to bring alive much of the archaic language in the text and in his usual racy and engaging style is able to summarise the theology and practical consequences of what is set down.

Each chapter includes some questions for discussion, and a brief bibliography, for those who want to chew on things a bit further. This makes the book not just an exposition but a useful study guide for groups who want to work their way through the Articles (or just some of them) with help from an expert guide. The chapters are not too long, and can be read 'as literature' rather than 'as reference'—easy bedtime reading for a month or so perhaps, or for a Lent book group. They would be ideal for helping a minister see the relevance of each Article and give some ideas for writing a brief parish newsletter on them perhaps, as many have in the past, or even a short series of sermons.

Bray's general approach to the Articles is Protestant (not Catholic, as the Oxford Movement would have liked), and Reformed (not Arminian, as John Wesley and various Restoration churchmen attempted to make them). He is not slow in drawing attention to the Evangelical theology at the heart of the Articles, or afraid of pointing out difficult truths (such as the scriptural warrant for talking about reprobation, under Article 17). Given his previous work on the history of the Articles and in various areas of theology, it is not surprising that the author is able to give some solid and meaty teaching here, though he wears his scholarship lightly. There are also some glimpses of his linguistic talents as he explains various features of the Articles' vocabulary. As the only recent commentary on all the Articles, it is surely an indispensible book for ordinands and ministers (and those aspiring to be so), but could be read with great profit by any Anglican and will I hope play a part in helping to resource Anglican churches worldwide as they seek to rediscover their roots in the glorious Reformation truths enshrined in the Articles.

LEE GATISS
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LETTERS AND HOMILIES FOR JEWISH CHRISTIANS: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude
Ben Witherington III
Nottingham: Apollos, 2007 656pp £21.99hb ISBN: 978-1-84474-198-4

This is the second of three commentaries by Ben Witherington on the pastoral and general epistles, using his innovative socio-rhetorical analysis in an attempt to shed new light on the texts from the rhetorical milieu in which they were written. It is a weighty tome, not without many useful insights and an attempt to help the reader towards contemporary application, but somewhat light in terms of theology and lacking in interaction with traditions of interpretation outside the very ancient or the very modern.

According to Witherington, the purpose of Hebrews (which was not written by Paul, but maybe Apollos) is to prevent the Jewish Christian community in Rome defecting from the high Christology they have embraced. In the course of the exegesis, he makes use of several 'Closer look' boxes for some tangential explorations of theological or historical issues. These can be easily skipped if

one is looking for a main thread, but are often stimulating. Using his trademark analysis, the author makes a very useful point about a rhetorical technique Hebrews often uses, that of trying to persuade someone by showing how much better one thing is than another without actually denying the goodness of the other thing. He shows the parallels this has in Aristotle and Cicero, but it is most useful when looking at Hebrews because it very helpfully reminds us that when Hebrews contrasts Christ with Moses this does not mean that Moses (or the Law) was 'bad.' He also nicely shows how Jesus 'is the reality of which emperors are parodies and Old Testament figures are mere fore-shadowings', though without claiming the text makes a direct comparison with the emperor, which would have been seen as seditious.

It may well be contentious to claim that what Hebrews does with the Old Testament is sometimes 'creative homiletical use of a text, not exegesis', but even more controversial is the theological bias evident throughout. Witherington's theological presuppositions are evident in key passages. On Hebrews 2:9, for example, he tells us there is 'little doubt' that the writer of Hebrews, along with whoever wrote the Pastoral Epistles, wanted to stress that Jesus did not die just for the elect. Such a seemingly anachronistic claim ought not to go without comment, and surely requires substantial and careful proof. But there is no interaction here with interpreters who might be able to argue otherwise, and no convincing argumentation from the exegesis either (just an assertion that this is so, and a quote from Chrysostom). He makes no effort to harmonise this exegesis with the particularising language of the rest of Hebrews 2, let alone Hebrews 5:9 and other passages. Later on when trying to refute the Reformed interpretation of chapter 6, he claims John Owen (incorrectly listed as H. P. Owen in the index) thought Hebrews 2:9 referred to a mere 'light taste' of death, whereas in actual fact Owen says that Christ had indeed a 'thorough taste' of it (or a 'through taste' depending on which edition of his commentary one consults). An actual taste of actual Reformed exegesis of Hebrews might have strengthened Witherington's fragile assertions against it (or, one might hope, have caused him to reconsider).

On James, I found no really convincing answer here as to why James 5:12 comes like a bolt out of the blue in its context, which one might have expected in a rhetorical commentary. It was however stimulating to ponder his view that the warning to teachers in James 3:1 is actually more about those who are ethically

rather than doctrinally subversive, and refers to a divine and eschatological not a human and temporal review of their deeds. On Jude, Professor Witherington shows that these false teachers are 'in for the most severe sort of judgment on judgment day' as are those who follow them. More could have been said here about the modern, or even ancient, application of such teaching.

The distinctive rhetorical focus of the comments throughout the work brings occasional flashes of insight, and is most enlightening (if sometimes a little too speculative) when analysing Hebrews (which is basically a sermon). This will not be my first port of call for help in understanding or preaching these texts, but it is not without some redeeming and distinctive features.

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CROSSING OVER SEA AND LAND:
Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period
Michael F. Bird
Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2010 208pp £16.99pb ISBN: 9781598564341

This monograph is a fascinating and well-written discussion of Jewish mission in the first century. Michael F. Bird has previously published on early Christian mission (*Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission,* 2006) and in this book he turns to survey the Jewish background in order to assess continuity and discontinuity between Jewish and Christian missionary work. As a newcomer to the field of Jewish mission principles, I came away with a clear picture of both the agreed framework and the debated areas.

In his introduction, Bird outlines the history of scholarship on Jewish mission activity. Adolf von Harnack, early in the twentieth century, set the paradigm of an actively proselytising Judaism. However, this scholarly consensus has recently been challenged and overturned, particularly through the work of Scot McKnight and Martin Goodman. They have argued that there is only patchy evidence for proactive Jewish mission.

The second chapter defines mission and conversion within Second Temple Judaism. As the book unfolds, the importance of this foundational chapter

becomes clear. Bird highlights the difference between adherence to Judaism and full incorporation into Jewish identity. The end goal is important, determining whether 'mission' will be satisfied with creating a sympathetic pagan philosopher with an appreciation for Judaism, or instead demand a proselyte, fully incorporated into Jewish belief, practice, and identity. Central to this latter goal is the act of circumcision.

The next two chapters contain a survey of evidence for proselytism and conversions in Palestine and the Diaspora. Bird provides a helpful introduction to the Jewish religious world of the first century, which informs our understanding of the New Testament. The conclusion is that most conversions to Judaism came as a result of Gentile initiative and interest, rather than proactive missionary work. Along the way we are provided with examples of other Jewish activity defending or promoting their religion, while not having circumcision as the goal and therefore not counting as mission.

Finally, Bird turns to look at the New Testament evidence for Jewish mission, particularly in Galatians and Colossians. He demonstrates that the debates about the place of circumcision in the conversion to Christ (particularly Acts 15) are actually a reflection of intra-Jewish debates about mission. The circumcision party were seeking to 'complete' Paul's proselytising work by bringing Christian converts to full Jewish identity.

Bird's conclusion is that the evidence for Jewish missionary activity in the Second Temple Period is 'ambiguous, spasmodic and exceptional'. This flows from his definition of full conversion as including circumcision, rather than just adherence or sympathy towards Judaism. Within these strict definitions of conversion and mission, I found his argument convincing. Finally, Bird suggests that the differences between Jewish and Christian mission are rooted in Christology, eschatology and ecclesiology.

The book provides a fascinating and thorough introduction to first century Jewish attitudes to mission. Bird closes with an appendix containing many of the primary sources, as well as comprehensive indices. For the reader wanting an introduction to this field and an interaction with the key scholars, this would be an excellent book. However, for the busy pastor or student wanting to read about the growth of Christian mission from this Jewish background, perhaps

a better investment would be Andreas Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* (Leicester: Apollos, 2001).

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THE PRODIGAL SPIRIT: the Trinity, the Church and the Future of the World
Graham Tomlin
London: Alpha International, 2011 192pp £8.99 pb ISBN: 978 1 905887002

The author's job is Dean of St. Mellitus College and Principal of St. Paul's Theological Centre, which is based in Holy Trinity Brompton, London. It is tempting to see him as theologian-in-residence for the Alpha Course for in fascinating ways this stimulating book intersects with Alpha and the spiritual culture which often accompanies it.

This presents itself as a book about the Holy Spirit. Its thesis is that the church has generally forgotten the Holy Spirit, leaving the third person of the Holy Trinity out of its thinking and its experience. In their different ways, the Roman Catholics, the Eastern Church, Luther, Calvin, Barth, and Modern Theology have each stressed 'something vital about the Trinity and the Spirit, yet they are all incomplete on their own.'

The time is therefore ripe for a rediscovery of the work of the Spirit in seven crucial loci—Identity, Calling, Experience, Character, Evangelism, the World, and the Church. These form the chapters of the book.

The text is rich and the argument advanced by a torrent of splendid quotations, some of them from Scripture. Alvin Plantinga and Jonathan Edwards rub shoulders with all manner of saints and church fathers. This makes it academic in feel but the author's style is not dry and there are some thoughtful pastoral applications. The argument is for the most part biblical, classical, and reliable if, understandably, a little overstated at times.

There are some strange bits, such as the adoption of Barth's creative reading of the parable of the Prodigal Son as a story about Jesus. That rather troubled

me and is surely untenable. Then there are some parts where we are given a thoughtful apologia for charismatic experience and the evangelistic approach of Alpha. And why not? I found it rather encouraging to see Alpha being analysed and theologized in this thoughtful way. Tongue-speaking seems much less prominent than 30 years ago, but Tomlin provides a stimulating explanation of its place in biblical spirituality. His section on the invocation of the Spirit made me think hard about whether we quench the Spirit by not consciously opening ourselves to him like this, whether or not we use the 'Come, Holy Spirit' prayer as he recommends. In these and other areas not all will agree with him but it is deeply spiritually stimulating to be confronted by a well-thought out and theologically reasoned presentation for a different practice of spirituality.

As I stepped back from it I tried to analyze why in spite of various quibbles and disagreements, I had found the heart of the book so helpful. I think it is because it is not really a book about the Holy Spirit at all but one about the existential reality of God's presence to and in and through his people which the Holy Spirit brings to life. Sterile intellectualism and a purely propositional, cerebral faith are constant dangers for many Christians, not least sadly for those of us in the Reformed stream of church life. Tomlin shows a better and more biblical way and while we may not want to follow him in every respect, there is a welcome booster for the tired muscles of our spiritual hearts in reading him.

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OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM LITERATURE: A Theological Introduction
Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O'Dowd
Nottingham: Apollos, 2011 336pp £19.99hb 978184474537s1

In the last century, Old Testament wisdom, Bartholomew and O'Dowd argue, has been depicted as secular and naturalistic, divorced from the salvation history central to Old Testament faith, and cordoned off from the rest of the canon. Given these scholarly trends, some may expect a 'theological introduction' to Old Testament wisdom to be a very short book indeed. However, the authors aim to 'revive the wisdom tradition in the theology of the church today', and they have much of value to say. Their response is thoroughly integrative, as

they unite wisdom's 'secular' concern with everyday life with its theological underpinnings, combine creation with its Redeemer, and reconnect the wisdom books with wider canonical emphases in Israel's law, history, and prophecy.

This undertaking stretches across twelve chapters. The first three set the stage by introducing Old Testament Wisdom (ch. 1), its ancient Near Eastern context (ch. 2), and poetic expression (ch. 3). This leads into the heart of the book, in which each of the three major wisdom books, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, receive two chapters each, the first offering an overview of the text, proposing a theological interpretation, and recounting its history of reception, and a second focusing on a close exegetical and theological reading of a central poetic passage (Prov. 31, Job 28, and Eccl. 3:1-15). The final three chapters then 'move toward a full theology of wisdom for today', which advances from wisdom in the New Testament (ch. 10), to an Old Testament theology of wisdom (ch. 11), and, finally, to consideration of 'how we can embrace a comprehensive Christian theology of wisdom today' (ch. 12).

They draw on a wide range of scholarship, but do not shy away from challenging unwarranted academic assumptions. Instead of seeing Proverbs as a dogmatic presentation of a mechanical, automatic act-consequence relation, which is then challenged by Job and Ecclesiastes, they claim Proverbs is more complex, only presenting the way things generally are, and that Job and Ecclesiastes are exploring exceptions to these general rules. More than that, all three texts reach deeper, teaching that true wisdom extends beyond wise action to character transformation. The authors' close reading of the texts, particularly the poetic passages on which they focus, exudes a literary sensitivity that strengthens the theological conclusions they draw from them. Their integrative approach, which draws on links with texts across the canon (most prominently Gen. 1–3), further supports their theological insight. This insight often leads to direct application, such as their discussion of the pastoral value of Job's struggle with suffering.

The most prominent questions left lingering were ones that extend into the broader discussion of the issues they are addressing. First, they point out that 'Wisdom Literature' is a modern convention, which has distorted the interpretation of these books. Second, they do not provide a clear discussion of what exactly 'theological interpretation' is and what method enables them to move from text to theology, justifying their theological conclusions.

These types of questions, however, are precisely the type that have been sorely missing in the discussion of Old Testament 'Wisdom' for over a century, and this book has done a great service in raising them, even if it is unable to answer them completely. Bartholomew and O'Dowd have returned the fear of the Lord to its rightful central place in the discussion of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes with great exegetical, theological, literary, and pastoral insight. Their book would be an immense value in its stated purpose as a textbook for Old Testament Wisdom, but would also be beneficial to pastors preparing to preach these texts, which is a task too rarely undertaken.

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ANALYTICAL LEXICON TO THE SEPTUAGINT (expanded edn.)
Bernard A. Taylor
Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2009 £29.99 hdbk ISBN: 9781565635166

When reading the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), I sometimes come across forms that I do not immediately recognise. For the sake of an example, let's take the form *phage*. A search in the standard lexicon reveals no entries for a (hypothetical) verb *phago* or a noun *phagos*, and it is not uncommon for the reader to begin to feel frustrated and perhaps even panicked.

In such a situation, an analytical lexicon is indispensable. This reference tool lists each particular form encountered in a text along with data related to its parsing and dictionary form. So, when looking up *phage* in Bernard Taylor's *Analytical Lexicon of the Septuagint*, I find the following entry: 'φαγε vb ^{2}aor act impv 2nd pers sg…ἐσθιω' (p 561). This abbreiated entry tells the reader that *phage* is a verbal form: specifically, the (second) aorist active second person singular imperative of the (irregular) verb *esthio*. A quick glance at the entry for *esthio* then yields the following definition: 'ἐσθιω…to eat, to consume' (p 237). Thus, *phage* is the (aorist) command: 'Eat!'

Taylor's work contains every form found in the main text of the revised version of A. Rahlfs' edition of the Septuagint, *Septuaginta: Editio Altera* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006). The abbreviated definitions are taken from *The Greek English Lexicon of the Septuagint* compiled by J. Lust, E. Eynikel,

and K. Hauspie (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), a recent standard lexicon of the Septuagint.

The same sort of parsing information found in this book is also available in the various Bible software packages, but not every reader of the Septuagint has access to such software at all times. Therefore, a paper copy of this analytical lexicon is a valuable addition to the library of anyone who wishes to read or consult the Greek Old Testament.

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HEARING THE SPIRIT: Knowing the Father Through the Son
Christopher Ash
Proclamation Trust Media (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2011) 176pp £7.99pb
ISBN: 9781845507251

This is a book about the relation between the (work of God the Holy) Spirit and the (purpose and function of the) Bible. It frames this relation in terms of knowing the Father through the Son for two reasons: to emphasise (a) the Trinitarian and b) the pastoral implications of any answer. It addresses those who feel anxious at missing out, those who long for the quenching of spiritual thirst, those who have a frustrated zeal, wanting to see God act, and those who have experienced others' criticism at what their church is lacking. It is not, therefore, aimed at persuading those who have a different view.

The book consists of seven chapters that develop an argument, followed by significant conclusions. It is rooted in an exposition of the gospel of John, chosen because of its more explicitly Trinitarian articulation. Throughout, it emphasises and articulates vital connections: between the Father and the Son, the Son and the apostolic testimony, the apostolic testimony and the New Testament, Jesus and the Old Testament, and the Scriptures and the disciple/preacher. In each of these, the Spirit's role is explored and highlighted. The final chapter gives a lucid summary and three main implications: 1) because of the uniqueness and finality of the revelation of God in Christ, 'we will never expect the Spirit to work apart from the revelation of the Father through Jesus in the Spirit-given testimony to Jesus in the Bible'; therefore, 'we will never de-centre

the Bible'; (2) because of the clarity of the Scriptures, 'we will not expect the Spirit to give us some new and mystical meaning that the original text did not and could not have meant'; 3) because of the 'strange powerlessness' even of Jesus in his ministry before the giving of the Spirit, we will pray.

Particular strengths for this reader: characteristic clear writing, rooted in an exposition of John; a pastoral heart that is concerned that the thirsty drink from the right place; questions at the end of each chapter. Jesus' words are spirit and life. Where else should we go? A question: in the right desire to stress the intimate connection between the Spirit's voice and the Scriptures, is the Spirit's work narrowed beyond what the Scriptures themselves say (e.g. Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6; Acts 13:1-3; 1 Cor. 14:26)?

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LAMENTATIONS

Robin A. Parry

Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010 xii+260pp £14.99pb ISBN: 978-0-8028-2714-2

This book is a significant contribution to an important series, important because its theological approach to biblical interpretation makes a timely assault on the boundary between the disciplines of biblical studies and theology.

The introduction treats the prosody of Lamentations very succinctly, focusing on its acrostic patterns and their implications for structure. Parry suggests that intertextual links connect the suffering of the man in Lamentations 3 to that of Zion in chapters 1-2. He argues for a qualified move towards hope in chapters 3-5. A helpful review then summarises the approaches of nine scholars (five from the last decade), familiarizing readers with Parry's principal conversation partners.

Parry's translation stays close to the original lexically and in word order. It is clear, but sadly not beautiful, for like most it does not represent the prosody of the original beyond line and stanza divisions. The chapter-by-chapter exegesis is admirable. Initial discussions of structure and form take form criticism beyond taxonomy into an appreciation of the rhetorical impact of the poetry.

Parry has a strong instinct to find narrative arches in each chapter-long poem, and while this may not always convince every reader, it is an effective reading strategy. In 120 pages Parry can pay attention to each verse (quoted in Hebrew, transliterated and glossed) and make select reference both to biblical and extra-biblical context, as well as to scholarly debate. Yet he manages to tell the story of the poems engagingly, without sinking in detail. Occasional excurses examine a strophe in detail. Given limited space Parry has chosen these well, and his judgments are sound, in my opinion, although more attention to Hebrew verbal aspect was needed at times (e.g. in treating 3:55-57).

So far, a fine piece of work. But the final 77 theological pages—the second of the 'two horizons' in the series title—are of particular interest. After surveying Lamentations in Jewish and Christian liturgy, Parry looks at its use elsewhere in Scripture. From there he ranges across anti-semitism, political theology, Christology, divine anger, theodicy, Christian lament and ethics. There are valuable insights throughout, with the section on the value of lament for Christians being particularly fine. Parry's theological method, however, merits further examination.

The basic approach is sound: first to hear the text as a distinctive, pre-Christian voice; then to hear it again in the light of Christ. Yet Parry's Christian reading is more historical than canonical, and hermeneutically rather linear, seeking 'connections' to the Christ event rather than re-conceiving everything around it. Historically, Parry traces patterns of re-use from Lamentations to Isaiah 40–55 to the New Testament, so as to 'imagine canonical ways of connecting Christian reflection with Lamentations in a controlled way'. Surely, however, a 'canonical' approach would read Lamentations as one of the five scrolls, Israel's communal responses of faith in the light of God's entire (canonical) revelation to them. (Alternatively Lamentations could be read with Jeremiah, following the LXX, and Parry does this, but only as background, not for final meaning.) Hermeneutically, Parry adopts N.T. Wright's biblical-theological framework of successive 'reenactments': (1) the story of humanity reenacted in (2) Israel's story, reenacted in (3) Christ's story. Parry thus reads Lamentations in connection with (1) 'the tears of the world', (3) the sufferings of Christ and Christians, and (2) the sufferings of modern Jews. This lacks the shape implied by a biblical story that progresses to new covenant and new creation with the Christ the final subject and hermeneutical centre of it all (cf. Luke 24:44).

As a result, christological reading sometimes becomes one possibility rather than the lens through which other readings must pass. For example, does Lamentations connect every suffering person to Christ's sufferings and resurrection hope? Or again, accepting that Lamentations 4:13 establishes 'a general principle exemplified in Christ', is its impact 'best experienced today by retaining that generality of reference'? In this reviewer's opinion Lamentations should deepen our appreciation of the sufferings of the Christ; only through them and in him do these ancient words become words addressed to Christians and to the world. Finally, if Israel's godforsakenness is 'a picture of God's final judgment on a fallen world', does it follow that Israel's hope beyond judgment is also applicable to unbelievers subject to condemnation on the last day? A hermeneutically christocentric reading, in which Christ's 'descent to hell' is the one fulfillment apart from which Christians cannot see Lamentations as addressed to them, will make more of the fact that only those whose experience of divine wrath is a covenantal experience—as Parry points out—can hope that death will be for them the route to resurrection life.

More often than not, however, Parry's interpretation is hermeneutically sure-footed, and always it is insightful, scholarly, warm-hearted and profitable. Highly recommended.

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A TIME TO CARE – Loving your elderly parents
Emily Ackerman
Nottingham, IVP 2010 190pp £7.99pb ISBN:978-1-84474-487-9

This little book is a gem. I wish I had read it when I was in the situation of caring for my own elderly parents. It is bursting with practical wisdom, imaginative ways of approaching issues and biblical truth.

The author describes at the start her experience of meeting friends she had gone through many stages of life with—marriage, pregnancy, parenting and schooling issues—to arrive at the point when they were now at the stage of looking after their elderly parents and needing the sort of help and advice this book gives.

Her aim is to 'offer a strong scriptural foundation for the valuable ministry of parent-caring, adding on practical ideas, encouragements and inspiration to give you confidence to serve God effectively'. To use the well-worn phrase, this book does exactly what is says on the tin, and it does it with great compassion and sensitive humour.

Right at the start we meet several people who through the chapters share their experience of parent caring. They are a diverse group of people in age, gender and culture as well as their situations of caring, which helps a similar breadth of reader engage with the reality of their situations.

Each chapter deals with a different aspect of caring for elderly parents through the range of difficult situations and emotions parent-carers can feel and how to help ourselves as we care for others, through to dealing with the end of life.

The author draws on her experience of being a medical doctor, a parent carer herself, a counsellor and someone who now needs care herself. At the end of each chapter she asks penetrating questions to ponder, and gives scripture passages and other quotes to challenge, encourage, and cheer.

There were several highlights for me as I read through. Chapter 6 on working with difficult emotions, deals very honestly with the struggles we can feel in this situation: the embarrassment when the one we have looked up to and felt so proud of begins to behave inappropriately in public; the guilt of being less than patient with constant repetitions; and the worry of what do to and how to care. The writer acknowledges that we do feel this, and offers practical advise on what to do about it as well as where to turn in the Bible for help. Another highlight was the chapter on memory loss and dementia. From her medical knowledge the author gives the sort of information we may not get from our GPs and helpful resources to use.

The appendix at the end gives further help from both books and online resources, which is an invaluable resource to turn to when needed. If you are in this situation now, this book will be an easily read resource and encouragement to serve well as a parent-carer. If you're not, it would be worth getting a copy anyway for when you are.

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KEEPING GOD'S EARTH: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective
Noah Toly and Daniel Block (eds.)
Apollos: Nottingham, 2010 £16.99pb 300pp ISBN: 978-1-84474-450-3

Much has been written in recent years on the need for Christians to take seriously our mandate to care for the global environment. Surely there can be few who haven't made up their minds already as to what they think about the issue, and the underlying practical difficulties haven't changed. So what is left to say?

The back cover promises 'clear guidance' for action, and the introduction discusses hermeneutics at length. So the vision is good: wanting to bridge an often wide gap between biblical theology and praxis, and the plan of having pairs of experts, one each with biblical and scientific expertise, is a helpful plan for carrying it out, as is focussing on four specific issues: cities, biodiversity, water and climate change.

The problem is in the execution. Although the individual essays are generally excellent and provide a stimulating read, there is too often insufficient interaction between them. The two topics on which the theology speaks most directly to today work best: for instance Block provides a clear ethical backing for the issues raised in van Dyke's biodiversity paper which Block fills from theology. The water chapters don't explicitly refer to issues in each other, but here the practical imperative of the biblical teaching is relatively obvious. However the reader is left wondering whether a richer discourse is possible.

The compartmental approach has advantages in focussing issues, but falls into a trap when two authors define the same term differently, and also imposes some artificial boundaries. So where Toly treats a city mainly as a political and economic entity, Carroll sees it more as a wider social construct, making applications difficult to discern. The structure precludes a more valuable wider treatment considering issues like urban planning and transport, and their effects on the operation of society.

There's also little engagement with the way the debate has moved on, particularly since the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009. Despite considerable advocacy from secular and religious sources, we seem further from

positive action than ever, even where we know in broad terms what can and should be done. Why is this and what can evangelicals contribute to the debate?

Despite all this, the volume has value in providing some of the best argued biblical theology I've seen in this area, and clear expositions of many practical issues. The disappointment is that a book living up to the promised vision, definitely needed in the current climate, didn't materialise.

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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

J. Ramsey Michaels

Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010 £43.99hb ISBN: 978-0802823021

Though perhaps off-putting to some on the grounds of its sheer size, once one has embarked on reading, Michaels' commentary proves itself well-written and easy to follow. In contrast to his previous commentary on this Gospel, the present volume is clearly aimed at a more scholarly audience, with its numerous footnotes and 1094 page extent. Nevertheless references to academic discussion are almost entirely confined to footnotes, so that when placed alongside the biblical text, reading is most conducive to meditation on the word of God.

Michaels is notable for his balance, frequently giving the arguments both in favour of and against various positions on controversial issues, but in the final analysis shows himself unwilling to go beyond the evidence of the text and the tradition of the early church. This shows itself on such questions as authorship. Here he affirms the eyewitness testimony of the author, and appears favourable to authorship by the apostle John. However, he does not assert this as the only possibility, not least for the reason that the text itself leaves the author unnamed, if not unidentified. Nevertheless, he draws no distinction between theological and historical truth, asserting that, 'the modern notion that [the author's] account could be theologically "true" yet historically unreliable is as foreign to him as it is to those who in the end vouch for the truth of his testimony (21:24)'. As a result, he casts no doubt on the historicity of actual miracles, such as the feeding of the five thousand.

Michaels is reluctant to impose a theological superstructure on the narrative, preferring to deal with theological themes as they arise in the text. Nevertheless, in a short section of the introduction he identifies two primary theological contributions of the book. Firstly, for Michaels the Gospel presents Jesus as God's unique envoy or messenger. Secondly, and more controversially, it asserts that those who believe do so as a result of God's prior work in them. In this way the one who 'does the truth comes to the Light, so that his works will be revealed as works wrought of God' (3:21). Michaels then shows, in discussion of the relevant texts, how this works in practice, as, for instance, in his discussion of the incident with the man born blind (ch. 9).

Conspicuously absent from the commentary is any discussion of issues of verbal aspect, assuming, for example, pure state readings of perfect forms at 6:69. Although some discussion of how these interpretations are arrived at would be merited at least in the footnotes, this commentary shows how much can be achieved without engaging in often barren and illusory verbal aspect debates on particular passages.

In conclusion Michaels has produced a profound work of reflection and insight into the Gospel of John, and anyone with the inclination to study this book in depth would profit greatly from what it has to say.

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ALWAYS REFORMING: Explorations in Systematic Theology
A.T.B. McGowan
Apollos, 2006 £19.99pb 368pp

This collection contains ten very stimulating and meaty papers on some perennial issues for theology and the church and what the future holds for them. The Reformed church must continue to uphold the Reformation maxim, *Semper reformanda*—we are always in need of being reformed, and yet this must not be used as an excuse to drift either into a departure from received orthodoxy or into a rigid confessionalism. The authors of these papers therefore assess the state of scholarship in various areas of theology (more impressionistically than scientifically), scrutinise them afresh in the light of scripture, and suggest

areas where further development and clarification may be needed. They thus set an agenda for the future for the rest of us to ponder and work towards. Gerald Bray begins by looking at the doctrine of the Trinity and the explosion of interest here in the last few decades. He encourages future Trinitarians to work hard specifically at the biblical foundations of the doctrine, but to do so with an increased awareness of the ecumenical relations and potentials of Trinitarian theology. Beginning with some infamously dismissive comments about systematic theology from Charles Simeon (which he rightly criticises at points), Stephen Williams looks at the future of 'system' itself. McGowan looks at penal substitution, there is some provocative thinking from Henri Blocher on covenant theology and Dick Gaffin on union with Christ, and Derek Thomas examines ecclesiology. Other contributors include Kevin Vanhoozer, Robert Reymond, and Cornelius Venema. Stimulating surveys to kick-start further thought.

LEE GATISS
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ALTARS RESTORED: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547–c.1700
Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke
Oxford: OUP, 2007, 2010 £96 440 pp hdbk

This excellent book looks closely at the remodelling of English religious worship by Charles I and William Laud in the context of the English Reformation more widely. More specifically, it examines the changing face of church services under the Laudian regime and the reintroduction of altars after they had been stripped and removed under Edward VI. The seemingly trivial debates about positioning, orientation, fabric, and name of this piece of church furniture are shown to be of crucial importance in understanding the very different conceptions of religion which operated (and still do operate) within the Church of England. Neatly combining local stories (of cathedrals, colleges, and ordinary parishes) with the wider narrative of national church politics over a century and a half, Fincham and Tyacke provide both scale and colour in their account of the to and fro of the 'Long Reformation', and show where movements of ritualism and so-called 'beautification' led.

This is a major contribution to Reformation studies, and a fantastic way in to the everyday dramas of this formative period with its battles over the sanctity of church buildings and particular areas within them. It also helpfully illuminates the ambivalences of many church interiors today, which often contain both puritan and Laudian elements. It is, however, far too expensive to make the impact that it deserves to make and we hope that OUP will quickly see the need and potential for a more inexpensive paperback edition of what is sure to be a standard work on the subject for many years to come. Surprisingly, it is not a very lavishly illustrated book, and some of the pictures are far too dark and dingy, though perhaps this is an ironic complaint in a more puritan-leaning journal such as this!

LEE GATISS
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ALL FOR JESUS: A Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Covenant Theological Seminary
Robert A. Peterson (ed.)
Mentor/Christian Focus, 2006 £19.99 hb 416pp

Covenant Theological Seminary in St Louis, Missouri is the national seminary for the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), and one of the larger seminaries in the USA, with a reputation for Reformed and Evangelical theology and some very good free resources online in their 'Worldwide Classroom'. This celebration of a recent milestone in their history is something of a mixed bag, as such compilations often are, but is noteworthy for some unique and insightful chapters. It is split into five sections, looking at Christ-centred stories, gospel, disciplines, mission, and sermons, followed by two brief appendices. Those interested in the history and struggles of this well-known institution will find the chapter by David Calhoun, famous for his excellent two-volume history of Princeton Seminary, an enlightening read. Founders of the seminary were veterans of the 'fundamentalist-modernist controversy' in the early part of the Twentieth century along with men such as J. Gresham Machen, and they stood for fundamentals such as penal substitution and inerrancy. Their commitment to the original languages of Scripture can be seen in the early curriculum: the first catalogue listed courses not just in advanced Hebrew grammar but also in Syriac, Arabic, and Babylonian! How they have continued to hold to Reformed distinctives in a changing church and world is an encouraging story.

Bryan Chapell and Robert Peterson have good chapters on grace, Mark Dalbey has a stimulating discussion of the Regulative Principle in relation to churches in Ghana, Michael Williams has a solid exploration of systematic theology as a biblical discipline, and Philip Douglas looks at 'Grace-Centred Church Planting'. This is a worthy tribute to a faithful establishment.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Richard Bauckham *et al*

Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009 £23.99 456pp

This volume is the fruit of a conference at St Andrew's on "Scripture and Theology" which brought together leading biblical scholars with systematic theologians in an attempt to bridge the gap between these disciplines. The contributors explore a number of key theological themes in the letter to the Hebrews in (unusually) both ancient and modern contexts. There are some seriously heavyweight thinkers involved here, from Richard Bauckham himself who writes expertly on the divinity of Christ in Hebrews, to John Webster, John Polkinghorne, and Stephen Holmes. The biblical studies angle is provided by well-known commentators such as Harold Attridge (on *God in Hebrews*), Morna Hooker, and I. Howard Marshall. Others who are known more especially for their ability to reflect theologically on scripture are also represented, such as Daniel Treier and Walter Moberley. This represents just a few of the 25 chapters in this invigorating book, which will hopefully inspire further efforts to integrate theology and biblical studies in the academy. Just the mere existence of a symposium bringing together people from both these disciplines is an encouragement, though it would be good in future to see more theological commentaries and exegetical systematics in the Reformed tradition as a result of such meetings, and not just more mixed-bag edited volumes. That is not to criticise this very worthwhile book, only to encourage us to greater diligence in integrating and harmonising our theological frameworks and the Bible. If this book strengthens our commitment in this area, it will have done a valuable service to both the academy and the church.

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THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662
Brian Cummings (ed)
Oxford: OUP, 2011 £16.99 896pp hdbk

The year 2012 is, of course, the 350th anniversary of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Coming hot on the heels of the 400th anniversary of the King James version of the Bible in 2011 (and the planned distribution of this "cultural artefact" to all schools at the Government's expense), this catches the nation in a positively nostalgic mood. For those so inclined, therefore, this well-produced edition of the BCP in three different historical guises, enables us not only to hear the word as Shakespeare would have heard it in church on a Sunday, but pray along with him in the Reformation idiom of Cranmer's Prayer Book. Many will of course be familiar with the Prayer Book already, not as a dusty old document but as the living liturgy at use in their local parish church (at 8am Communion services, at least, but occasionally elsewhere too). They may not, however, be as familiar with the former incarnations of the 1662 text which were authorised for use by Edward VI and Elizabeth I. This volume therefore brings together Cranmer's first Prayer Book of 1549 with the Prayer Book of the Elizabethan Settlement (1559) and the Restoration Prayer Book of 1662. As the editor writes, this is "more than a book of devotion... this is a book to live, love, and die to." He helpfully points out the pre-history of phrases made famous by the BCP, such as "in sickness and in health" and "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." We may disagree with him that liturgical obscurity is moving or transcendent but still find much of interest in his useful commentary which seems abreast of both the history and modern discussion of it. An excellent textual basis for the numerous commentaries and encomiums which will surely be produced in 2012.

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