# Reviews

*Hermeneutics: An Introduction.* By Anthony C. Thiselton. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. ISBN978-08028-6410-9. xiv + 409 pp. £19.99

Anthony Thiselton is well known for his major studies in hermeneutics and his many fine contributions to hermeneutical discussions in theology. Hence, an introductory book from his pen promises to offer a great instrument for teaching hermeneutics alongside a number of similar books on the market today. In his preface, Thiselton tells the reader that these other books are not really adequate.

In seventeen chapters the reader of this book is introduced to the nature and development of hermeneutics. Thiselton encourages the newcomer to hermeneutics to be prepared for fresh insights not only with regard to the theory and practice of text interpretation, but also with regard to the reader's own interpretative perspectives and horizons. Hermeneutics, he writes, seeks to establish bridges between opposing viewpoints. It is a process inspired by the to and fro movement between text and reader/reading community, a process that demands from the reader a subjective engagement which in the first place allows the text to disclose its objective communication. Thiselton illustrates well the inter- or multidisciplinary nature of hermeneutics: biblical studies, philosophy, theology, literary criticism, rhetoric, critical theory, historiography, social sciences and other disciplines all can offer valuable insights into understanding how the hermeneutical process works. Moreover, he traces the development of hermeneutics from antiquity to modern and postmodern times and introduces major figures and periods in philosophy, theology and church history. At times, however, these presentations tend to be chatty, generalising and even distorting. His treatment of the Enlightenment, for instance, lacks both focus and depth and is mostly dependent on one source of secondary literature. Unfortunately, in spite of some good passages and observations, Thiselton's overall presentation of the development of hermeneutics cannot be said to be attractive. A newcomer to hermeneutics would not be able to know how to navigate between what is careless and what is thorough in this introduction.

Thiselton is clearly at his best when discussing the major influences in contemporary hermeneutics, such as Schleiermacher, Bultmann, Barth, Gadamer, Ricoeur, structuralism, and post-structuralism, although some of his presentations again are massively dependent on secondary literature and not all details (names, dates of publication, editions etc.) are correct – a more thorough editing and proofreading would have been necessary to make this introductory volume live up to its promise.

Thiselton deserves credit for paying particular attention to some newer developments in the discussion of biblical and theological hermeneutics, including liberation theology, post-colonial, feminist and womanist, more recent literary theories (reader-response and reception theories), and significant contemporary French thinkers. Yet, many of these sections still read like raw lecture notes—not fully worked through, not carefully edited, and with no explicit justification provided for the particular choice of primary and secondary sources.

Although this book assembles a great mass of important information on hermeneutics and its significance for theology, and opens a number of promising alleys in terms of recognition of plurality in actual interpretation and methodology, it cannot really fulfil the function of an introduction. It remains too uneven and confusing for the newcomer and sadly unreadable for the expert.

*Werner G. Jeanrond, University of Glasgow*

*New Testament Theology: Extending the Table.* By Jon M. Isaak. Eugene: Cascade, 2011. ISBN 13-978-1-55635-293-5. xix + 381 pp. £29.00.

Here is yet another exposition of New Testament theology. Its closest relative (and its inspiration) is G.B. Caird's conference model, in which he imagined the various New Testament writers expressing their thoughts in turn around a table on main themes identified from their own writings rather than on a set of dogmatic topics created by later systematic theologians.

The book begins like Caird's with the voices of the New Testament theologians, but whereas Caird presented their views on each individual topic, Isaak lets each of them summarise his own theology as a whole in a centre or vision statement. As in Caird's volume we hear each speaker present his theme in a sort of position paper, but no attempt is made to allow the participants to enter into dialogue with one another. The speakers appear in the order: Paul, the Synoptic Evangelists, the Johannine traditions, and the remaining canonical witnesses. The treatments are quite brief and a fair amount of space is devoted to questions of setting and authorship. This part of the book is the *descriptive* part of the task.

But now Isaak goes beyond Caird. Instead of comparing the theologians with Jesus himself, there is a brief intermission outside the conference room in the corridor which produces a very brief united conference statement. But the task is still not over. There must also be a *constructive* stage at which the speakers speak with one another about topics that they themselves raise. Rather than jumping over directly to systematic theologians to work the materials into a tight theological system, justice must be

done to the variety of voices that have been heard as they share together on major issues. There will be different aspects and understandings that must be allowed to remain side by side; and this will produce an interplay that is the setting for God's people now to do their biblical theology in the *theological space* provided for them. Their task is to resonate with the biblical voices: 'it is precisely the interplay between the points of tension in the biblical witness that creates the theological space within which successive faith communities are authorized to do their theological reflection and appropriation. The confession God's people have made from the start is that authentic life is only really discovered by resonating with the way God's people have always heard, experienced and participated in the life of God' (p. 229).

Seven topics are considered: christology, revelation, theology, anthropology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and eschatology. But we do not in fact hear the voices of the New Testament writers individually in these chapters; it sounds more like scholars concerned with analysing the differing ideas put forward. (So the statement that 'now we listen in to their deliberations' [p. 238] is not very apt.) The chapter on revelation quickly becomes a discussion of the varied hermeneutical methods for working out what we are to do if we follow Scripture (literal obedience; principlizing; transcendentalizing [which seems to be the redemptive-historical approach of W. J. Webb]; and analogical extension). The discussion of theology seeks to get beyond the traditional antitheses (determinism and freewill). The church chapter lists helpfully the many terms used to describe or refer to the church. 'The church is *not* like the soap that cleans a sink full of soiled dishes, but more like the orange-coloured tomato ring that remains after washing a load of spaghetti-stained dishes—the dregs give evidence of grime absorption, the mark of the church' (p. 319). At the end of each chapter there are detailed suggestions for 'Exercises' to carry the instruction and the discussion further.

The book is the work of a Mennonite theologian teaching in Fresno and expresses the insights that can be gained from his context. It does not go into great detail on the individual NT writings, and indeed some (e.g. Hebrews) get less attention than they deserve. But the author is outstanding in producing clear characterisations of the New Testament writers and in condensing sets of ideas into tables and diagrams. He follows Caird frequently but also L.T. Johnson and the Mennonite theologian C.N. Kraus. He devotes more space than might be thought necessary to matters of text and canon and Synoptic relationships. He regards the catholic epistles as works whose authenticity or otherwise cannot be established or else as works, originally of unknown authorship, which took a long time to get canonical recognition until they had been assigned to various lead-

ing early church figures. The Gospels are regarded as originally anonymous works to which the church gave apostolic titles or associations in the second century. For my part, I cannot imagine for one moment that when Theophilus received a codex that does not name its author in the text he said, 'I just cannot imagine who has sent me this present'. Isaak is good at presenting different approaches to problems very fairly and leaving room for his readers to ponder where they would situate themselves, and his book differs from any other on the subject by his determination to make his readers think about how the New Testament should be used and applied in their own theologizing. This, then, is an eye-opening book that may be better suited for use as a textbook than any of the others that are around, although it may need supplementation for fuller detail. Whether or not the author has achieved his aim of getting the New Testament writers around a conference table rather than a group of different modern interpreters, we can applaud what he has actually done, which is to bring New Testament theology in all its variety and unity to life and to impart some excitement into its study.

*I. Howard Marshall, University of Aberdeen*

*Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship.* Edited by Daniel Treier and David Lauber. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009. ISBN 978-18447-4380-3. 262 pp. £14.99.

The Trinity was forgotten for a period of 'centuries of doctrinal tragedy', until suddenly in the middle of the twentieth century, theologians rediscovered it. Several decades after that ecumenical rediscovery, evangelical theologians are finally catching up. 'So goes the standard story', say the editors of *Trinitarian Theology for the Church*, but they are keen to encourage some revision.

This excellent book is composed of 11 of the papers delivered at the 2008 Wheaton Theology Conference on the practical, ecclesial implications of trinitarianism. The volume's crisp editing reflects the way Treier and Lauber coordinated the conference itself, careful to include a wide range of contributors without losing the common focus. Some of the authors in this book still stay fairly close to the standard narrative, while others are sharply opposed to it. In their introduction, the editors warn of 'the sloppiness of much enthusiasm regarding a trinitarian renaissance', but are not willing to dismiss the trinitarian revival as all hype. The torrent of books and articles on Trinity in recent decades, after all, 'may be a bit like the stock market: even if there are strong elements of hype, the perception itself comes to influence reality'.

There are no weak entries in this line-up, but the first three chapters win the 'worth the price of admission by themselves' award. Chapters one and two are actually both by Kevin Vanhoozer, forming a sustained, sixty-page account entitled 'Triune Discourse'. Vanhoozer starts out with the somewhat puckish question of whether the doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Theological Society is incoherent, since it specifies exactly two points: that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, and that God is a Trinity. By the time he is done interrogating this 'extraordinary pairing', Vanhoozer has articulated an inner unity between triunity and revelation, between the identity of God and the communicated, inscripturated knowledge of that God, which rises to the level of what he has called 'first theology'. He concludes that the doctrine of Scripture is only truly 'at home' when located in the Triune God's economy of self-communication, and that the framers and revisers of the ETS doctrinal statement, perhaps despite their own intentions, have implied a great truth: 'The Trinity is our scripture principle.' Readers seeking a very brief introduction to the influential Vanhoozer way of doing theology may find this the best place to start. The other show-piece of the volume is Edith M. Humphreys' wide-ranging biblical-theological essay, 'The Gift of the Father: Looking at Salvation History Upside Down'. We tend to think of salvation history as starting with God the Father in the old covenant and then moving to the revelation and giving of the Son and then the Spirit in the new. Humphrey's suggests inverting that order. It is only in the revelation of the Son, after all, that God is known to us as Father. Humphreys succeeds in shaking up some settled expectations about precisely how the Trinity is the content of biblical revelation.

There are many other solid performances in the book: Mark Husbands versus John Franke on the status of social trinitarianism, Philip Butin and Leanne Van Dyk on proclamation, and Robert Lang on missions. The final word goes to John D. Witvliet, whose concluding chapter asks, 'What to Do with our Renewed Trinitarian Enthusiasm', which is certainly a live question whether the theological renewal has been overhyped or not. Witvliet's own answer, aligning with many other voices in this collection, is that in a variety of ways the church should be about 'Forming Trinitarian Piety and Imagination Through Worship and Catechesis'. *Trinitarian Theology for the Church* is a fine resource to be used toward that very end.

*Fred Sanders, Biola University, LaMirada, CA USA*

*Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham.* By Russell L. Friedman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-05211-1714-2. viii + 198 pp. £53.00.

Professor Friedman's treatment of Trinitarian thought in the 'Latin West' in the period 1250–1350 is a welcome addition to academic discourse exploring medieval theologians' understanding of this primary Christian doctrine. His style is clear and concise when dealing with complex ideas and intricate arguments concerning the formulation of the doctrine by different schools of thought. In particular he elucidates the distinctive approaches of the Dominicans and Franciscans, and helpfully the book includes an appendix detailing the crucial areas of divergence between the two approaches. The four chapters explore the construal of the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to four delineated areas which also to some extent overlap and provide the reader with a developing line of argument: the four areas are: The Trinity and (a) Aristotelian categories; (b) human psychology; (c) metaphysics; (d) divine simplicity and fideism. The book delivers a detailed exposition of the different ways the two schools of thought approach the construction of the doctrine of the Trinity and the roles which 'the psychological model', 'opposed relation' and the interplay of faith and reason have in the development of these constructions. In this way the reader is provided with a detailed analysis of these different 'takes' on Trinitarian doctrine.

Friedman has produced an exploration of medieval thought largely on its own terms, it is only in the fourth and final chapter that he engages with twentieth century writers in order to evaluate the medieval thinkers he examines, in terms of their reception today. In the final chapter his main focus for providing access to such an evaluation of the medieval thinks is on 'the Gilsonian paradigm'. He introduces Étienne Gilson's take on 'demonstrative knowledge' (e.g. see p. 136) in order to assess the difference of approach to epistemology pursued by Aquinas and Ockham, who disagreed about the possibility of whether the immortality of the soul (for example) could be proven or not. Gilson's take on fourteenth century theologians such as Ockham is to characterise their construction of epistemology as fideist. Friedman reveals only in the final pages of the book that in his view Gilson's take does not do justice to what he calls 'the immense vitality and creativity of later-medieval theologians' (p. 170).

Friedman provides his readers with a sympathetic and thorough enquiry into his chosen subjects. The nature of that enquiry is more concerned with the philosophical implications of Trinitarian theology, than with systematic theology broadly understood. For a reader seeking the implications of this enquiry in relation to systematic theology he or she

will need to take these findings and relate them to other discourses, such as seen in the writers of the Radical Orthodoxy stable, or perhaps in the writings of a philosopher such as John Caputo. This is not to question the value of Friedman's contribution to the examination of medieval Trinitarian thought per se, but it is to say that further work is required on the part of those seeking to bring that thought into the field of a systematic study of the doctrine of the Trinity today.

*Paul M. Collins, University of Chichester*

*God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology.* By Oliver D. Crisp. London: T&T Clark, 2009. ISBN 978-0-567-03348-2. viii + 192 pp. £19.99

This is a scintillating book written by one of the world's leading theologians (recently of the University of Bristol, now at Fuller Theological Seminary). This volume seeks to revisit some of the controversial topics within the theological tradition, with a clearly defined method labelled 'analytic theology'.

In the Introduction Crisp sets out some of the assumptions of this analytic theological method. Crucially, philosophical analysis is taken to clarify rather than fill in the content of any particular doctrine; philosophy thus very much performs an ancillary role. The first chapter proper, also concerned with prolegomena, sets out among other things the sources for christology. Scripture is defined in conventional Christian terms as the *norma normans*, and Crisp then gives an interesting account of the authority of the creeds: he defines them as having been produced by the fathers 'under the guidance of the Holy Spirit' (p. 12) and as a result of the 'oversight of the Spirit' are free of substantive error (p. 14); they are nevertheless *norma normata*. It would be interesting to see more detailed exposition of how the work of the Spirit is construed. The doctors of the church and experience are given a place as well; we have already seen the role which Crisp ascribes to reason/philosophy. The chapters in the main body of the book, which are all case studies in the analytic method, cover the following topics: the election of Christ; pre-existence; virgin birth; the implications of the incarnation for the nature and personhood of the human embryo; the *non posse peccari* question; materialist christology, and the possibility of multiple incarnations.

This review will inevitably be selective. On election, Crisp helpfully identifies a variety of opinions among post-reformation theologians, and produces his own synthesis according to which 'Christ's election must be intimately linked with the divine decree to elect' (p. 51). One outstanding question perhaps remains: in what sense is it meaningful to use the same dogmatic terminology of election of both God's people and the Son, when

election in the former case is taken to be election unto eternal life (p. 42) but in the latter case is something more like election to be mediator? It might also be asked whether it would make a difference is election were defined, as in Romans 8, as predestination to be conformed to the image of Christ. The three chapters on pre-existence and the virgin birth are elegantly executed: the first covers some of the inadequacies in Robert Jenson's account of the doctrine, and Crisp highlights how key aspects of Jenson's work are simply incomprehensible. Chapter 6, on whether Christ was impeccable (incapable of sinning) or merely in fact sinless, does an excellent job of explaining how on the impeccabilist view an account can still be given of Christ really feeling the 'pull' of temptation, while also exposing the cost of the alternative non-impeccabilist position, namely the implication that it is bound to say that Christ was capable of sinning both qua man and *qua* God. After a penultimate chapter making the case that there is more to be said for a materialist christology than has conventionally been thought, Crisp mounts a compelling argument (leading this reviewer to recant!) for the possibility of multiple incarnations; Aquinas's emphasis on the infinity of the Son and the impossibility of his limitation is revived in dialogue with the criticisms made by Brian Hebblethwaite.

As I hope is evident from this very short review, this is a remarkably wide-ranging book which has proceeded from an extraordinarily fertile mind. Crisp's skills both in the taxonomy of historical views and in doctrinal exposition are evident throughout, as in particular is the disciplined use of philosophy in the service of clarification and in the construction of productive 'thought experiments'.

*Simon Gathercole, University of Cambridge*

*The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology.* Edited by Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-19-928920-2. xii + 609 pp. £85.00.

Editors Thomas Flint and Michael Rea have gathered together twenty-six chapters ranging across a wide array of theological issues. The chapters are divided topically into five parts appearing in the following order: Theological Prolegomena; Divine Attributes; God and Creation; Topics in Christian Philosophical Theology; and Non-Christian Philosophical Theology. As one might expect in any multi-author volume the essays vary in quality and depth of insight, though most are penetrating and well-written. Each contributor demonstrates a keen awareness of the contemporary literature and issues touching his or her particular topic and most attempt to advance the discussion with an original thesis or a twist

on an older established perspective. Also, each chapter includes an excellent bibliography that should well facilitate further research.

Flint and Rea explain in their introduction that the resurgence of philosophical theology in the last fifty years has occurred primarily within the analytic tradition and not within the Continental. For this reason the volume is largely oriented in the analytic direction. In the last twenty years, the editors observe, philosophical theology has begun to expand its inquiry beyond the epistemological concerns of the 'nature, rationality, and meaningfulness of theistic beliefs' (p. 4) and to focus more attention on theological doctrines such as divine attributes, triunity, incarnation, and the atonement. Thus, the handbook incorporates these lines of inquiry as well. The editors have also included chapters that venture into points of Christian dogma that have hitherto been unexplored by analytic philosophers, including: intercessory prayer, original sin, the nature of heaven and hell, and the Eucharist.

Given the breadth of issues and perspectives represented in this volume it is beyond the scope of this review to offer a detailed assessment of each; but a few highlights and lowlights must be noted. It is interesting the editors choose to begin the tome with chapters on *theological* prolegomena and not *philosophical* prolegomena. The role of Scripture and tradition are emphasized and the chapters by Stephen T. Davis and William J. Wainwright are particularly excellent. Davis argues for the Calvinistic view that *all* revelation is accommodated to our human capacity. In this way he challenges the univocism that tends to mark the theologizing of many in the analytic tradition (including many of the other contributors in this volume). Wainwright also offers a corrective to analytic over-confidence by insisting that divine mystery, understood as God's incomprehensibility, be a centrepiece of any theological enterprise. Some contributors heed this advice while others do not.

In the section treating the divine attributes the outstanding chapter is that by Jeffrey Brower in which he defends the traditional doctrines of God's aseity and simplicity. He appeals to certain features of 'truthmaker' theory in which the final explanation of God's existence and attributes is God himself. This chapter is one of the most devastating arguments in print against the soft Platonism that infects so many modern accounts of the divine attributes. Also, Laura Garcia's argument for the Thomistic understanding of God's goodness is compelling. Some chapters disappoint. Edward Wierenga's article on divine omniscience is too much a survey, and William Lane Craig's on divine temporality is under-nuanced in its treatment of opposing viewpoints.

Part three treats us to three chapters touching the problem of evil as well as articles on providence, prayer, morality, and evolution. Flint's

argument for a Molinist view of providence is especially well-written even if one does not agree with his position. Davison's chapter on petitionary prayer is of one of the weakest in the volume, both theologically and philosophically. In part four Michael Rea makes an intelligent and orthodox case for a 'constitutional' view of the Trinity, refuting modalism and social trinitarianism along the way, and Oliver Crisp defends penal substitutionary atonement by stressing the metaphysical union and solidarity of the elect with Christ. It is not clear, though, why he assumes this metaphysical union must displace the older view of forensic imputation. Trenton Merricks makes a case for bodily resurrection though he treats it too mechanistically and fails to incorporate any redemptive-historical explanation of what the resurrection *means* theologically. In the final section of the volume three chapters explain the role of philosophical theology in modern Judaism, Islamic philosophy, and Confucianism. The conclusion seems to be that Islamic dogma is most agreeable to the aims and methods of philosophical theology while Judaism and Confucianism are generally non-dogmatic systems of morality and religiosity for which philosophical theology is an awkward fit.

Though the essays are not written at the introductory level neither are they written for the specialist. Most readers with basic systematic theology training and a smattering of philosophy should find these articles to be accessible, and in some cases, exceptional.

*James E. Dolezal, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA USA*

*Darwin's Pious Idea: Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get It Wrong.* By Conor Cunningham. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8028-4838-3. xx + 543 pp. £22.99.

In this work Conor Cunningham has written an immensely erudite apology for a middle way between ultra-fundamentalisms of the right and the left. Both the Christian creationists and atheistic defenders of a Darwinianism that turns a biological theory into a totalizing metaphysic are the objects of his ire. Intelligent design fares no better as 'unintelligent theology' that is scientistic without realizing it (pp. 275-79). His aim is to help both the 'thinking Christian' as well as the 'thinking atheist' to 'move beyond the silly impasse brought about by fundamentalism' (p. xi). He is often witty, often scornful. Everywhere he writes with great verve. He has little time for Richard Dawkins and his 'vulgar-brand of atheism' (p. xvii), which Cunningham regards as a 'farce' (p. xvii). His arguments betray a thoughtful engagement with a plethora of academic disciplines that range from biology to philosophy. His own training is in theology, philosophy

and law. He draws extensively on the Fathers, the medieval theologians as well as more recent Roman, Orthodox and even Evangelical writers.

In his first chapter Cunningham aims to dismantle the idea that Darwin's theory of evolution represents an upheaval in thought. In chapters 2 to 4 he shows that Darwinianism is no monolith but highly variegated. It has its denominations. Chapter 5 tackles the story of how Darwinianism became social Darwinianism expressed in eugenics, sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. For Cunningham when the theory of evolution, which incidentally he affirms, is made into a totalizing discourse it becomes a 'universal acid' that dissolves all meaning. Chapter six addresses materialism and naturalism. This chapter is an incisive critique of reductionism. His last chapter endeavours to show that orthodox Christianity makes the best sense 'of life, death, existence itself and the phenomenon of the person' in ways that naturalism and eliminative materialism cannot (p. 376). The prose is extremely and unnecessarily dense. Furthermore, the constant parading of names can be off putting. For example, on page 76 he cites nine different writers with attendant endnotes for most of them. Turning from the citations and quotes to the endnotes and back interrupts the flow of argumentation. (There are almost a hundred pages of endnotes.) This is a pity. Cunningham has provocative ideas and writes with insight in many places but needed to write a book half this one's length. He provokes when he attacks the idea of an historic time-space Adamic fall as an event (pp. 384-92). (This author is not persuaded by him here.) He provides insight when in the very same chapter he points out how the rhythm of six days of work and one of rest in Genesis lifts 'Israel's sights above the ancient religions and their infatuation with the natural rhythms of time itself' (p. 386). He can also puzzle. What can it mean to claim that 'Christ himself is the two trees in the Garden of Eden' (p. 392, original emphasis)?

Even so, for the patient reader this work is a feast of quotes and arguments. It remains a great resource, even though Cunningham may not persuade at every point and his work constitutes a very demanding read.

*Graham A. Cole, Beason Divinity School*

*The Market, Happiness, and Solidarity: A Christian Perspective.* By Johan J. Graafland. London. Routledge. 2010. ISBN 978-04155-6127-3. xviii + 186 pp. £100.00.

*The Market, Happiness, and Solidarity* is a revised, edited, and translated version of Johan Graafland's 2007 Dutch book, *Hegoog van de naald. Over de markt, geluk en solidariteit.* Graafland is an economist who ventures into the realm of Reformed Christian Ethics. He does so with some con-

siderable skill. Anyone interested in the relationship between theology and economics should welcome his contribution. Graafland's argument is straightforward. He begins with the 2004 ACCRA statement on the economy by the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and subjects its criticisms of 'neoliberal globalization' to scrutiny based on empirical economic research within the context of Christian ethics. The structure of the book is likewise straightforward. After an introductory chapter delineating the method, Graafland correlates market analysis and three ethical approaches: utilitarianism, justice and virtue, which constitute chapters two through four. He neither chooses among these approaches, nor among three economic theories he quickly but succinctly sets forth: neoclassical, neo-Austrian and Keynesian. Although his own sympathies appear to lie with Keynesianism, he claims 'elements of all perspectives are relevant' (p. 38) and his subsequent analyses and conclusions draw on elements from each of these theories. Each chapter follows a similar pattern. It begins with a discussion of an ethical theory, followed by biblical teaching. The Bible generates normative principles that are then used to assess the market's relationship to wealth, justice and virtue. Before that evaluative work occurs, however, Graafland refers to empirical research. This is the contribution his work makes to Christian ethics and economics. He does not want a theoretical argument devoid of empirical facts. He quantifies, in so far as he can, the market's outcomes on each of the ethical approaches he deems fitting to the Christian life—wealth (utilitarianism), justice and virtue.

Chapter two begins with utilitarianism as the ethical theory most consistent with market claims for the 'creation of wealth and welfare' (p. 15). Graafland first explains utilitarianism and addresses its critics, and then assesses how Scripture affirms and rejects utilitarianism's understanding of wealth. He uses Scripture by translating biblical texts 'to a higher level of abstraction, the level of ethical principle' (p. 12). In each of his chapters, Graafland makes this translation. Sometimes his interpretation comes off rather wooden, as for instance when he states Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 approves of entrepreneurship (p. 22); that type of abstraction borders on rendering Scripture infinitely malleable if not unintelligible. However, Graafland's use of Scripture does not merely baptize current economic theories and practices, he draws upon it to generate norms by which to assess, positively and negatively, market outcomes. After generating metaphors or principles from Scripture, such as 'stewardship', he then discusses empirical research and how it contributes or detracts from the Christian understanding of wealth. His arguments are always temperate. Utilitarianism seeks continued economic growth. He questions if this leads to wealth as happiness and cites mixed results from empirical economic research

that quantifies happiness. He concludes by arguing for a growth economy against an economy of sufficiency (or sustainability), but tempers this by a 'Christian view' that could not affirm growth at any cost, but only a 'selective growth' that maintains a Christian emphasis on the 'reduction of poverty' (p. 51).

Chapter three follows the same pattern with respect to justice. Once again the key question asked is what kind of justice the market propagates and how it fits with a Christian concern to reduce poverty. Empirical research is more mixed here than it is with the production of wealth. Graafland addresses the market's relationship to virtue in chapter four following the same pattern, concluding that 'empirical knowledge' on the market's role in virtues is 'fragmentary,' but the theoretical findings and empirical findings do not corroborate each other (p. 128). To substantiate his claim he lists virtues and what economists and moralists think the market does to them (theoretical knowledge) coupled with what the empirical evidence suggests. Graafland concludes that an ideological bias exists because half of the theoretical knowledge finds the market supporting virtues, but the empirical results suggests otherwise. He writes, 'Only in one-third of the cases do we find support for a positive impact of the market on virtues; in the other two-thirds the impact is negative' (p. 132). Graafland brings his findings to a conclusion in chapter five by using a flat tax rate as a test case.

Graafland's book is an enjoyable, quick read that does fulfil its purpose; it makes an interesting contribution to Reformed Christian debates on the market economy. His economics is more persuasive than his ethics, but that is to be expected. He begins with assumptions about Christian ethics and its relationship to economics that are controversial and contested, without acknowledging them as such. Three stand out. First, he assumes that ethics is the bridge between Christianity and economics. But much recent literature has set forth theology and metaphysics as the key that makes possible a productive discussion between Christianity and economics. This literature is absent from Graafland's work. Second, he argues that Christian ethics is more about commands than virtues. This, however, overlooks a broad tradition from Augustine to Aquinas and Wesley where law has its purpose within the virtues and beatitudes. Third, he assumes a smooth fit between secular ethics and Christian ethics because the former is derived from the latter. That too is a controversial and contested claim that he assumes without argument. Perhaps it is ready at hand for Graafland because he works exclusively from a Reformed perspective. In fact, he works from within the Reformed tradition in such a way that he would prove Weber's thesis correct. For instance, in explaining the factors that make for economic growth he

includes 'Calvinistic frugality and industry' along with 'culture, the absence of destructive wars, the separation of church and state, the institutionalization of science and research, and military power' (p. 27). Perhaps that is correct, but here he offers no empirical evidence.

Graafland's constant appeal to empirical evidence raises questions. What do the numbers he cites actually measure? These measurements come to a crisis point in the chapter on virtue when he admits it is difficult to measure, but nonetheless seeks for empirical testing that can provide a measure of the market's outcomes on virtue. The temptation in the book is always to provide a table giving decisive empirical proof of the relationship between the market and ethics. He does this despite his recognition of Alasdair MacInytre's distinction between internal and external goods. Can this quantification of wealth, justice and virtue work? Where is a critical perspective on the ability to reduce existence to such commensurable measurements? Because he acknowledges that he, like nearly every other economist and econometric study, did not foresee the 2008 worldwide recession, a reader might expect more circumspection than is present as to what these empirical findings actually do. They did not have the ability to produce general laws with sufficient predictive power to avoid a near economic apocalypse. More than any other aspect of his work, his optimism about these measurements show how the economist gets the better of the Christian ethicist in his work. But it is precisely here that his work is also interesting. Surely we should expect Christian ethics to point to concrete, ethical material in everyday life that makes a difference.

Graafland rightly challenges Christian leaders, ethicists and theologians to make statements that at least show some relationship to the material reality of everyday life. To that end, his work is neither a rejection nor affirmation of the ACCRA statement. His work is a sober assessment of the claims made, and it deserves careful study.

*D. Stephen Long, Marquette University*

*Adam Smith as Theologian.* Edited by Paul Oslington. New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2011. ISBN 978-0-415-88071-8. ix + 146 pp. £85.00.

There is an obvious prescience in the instinct to return to theologically re-examine the legacy of the founder of modern economics in light of the current slow motion economic crash. This slim volume takes up this task on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the publication of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, collecting revised papers from a conference held in Edinburgh in 2009.

The book does not offer a fully digested account of how Smith's thought drew on theological precursors or reflected his contemporary religious climate, not least, as several authors remind us, because his own Christian faith was muted and ambiguous. Though he admired his friend Hume, he apparently had no compunction signing the Westminster Confession before the presbytery of Glasgow. This occasions a spirited and highly informative debate in the volume about how to read Smith's theology. The most substantial and detailed engagements with the book's main theme appear in the second part of the book rather than in the much more impressionistic first part, paradoxically entitled 'Smith in Context'. Though each of the chapters in the second part make a substantive contribution, the rival readings of Smith as theologian are most clearly on view in the chapters by Brendon Long and Adrian Pabst.

Taking him to be a consistent theist, Long argues that the moral mechanism holding Smith's system together is his account of the golden rule. The conscience is the locus through which the divine architect, by directing and shaping human sentimental attachment to others, leads society to just social and legal structures as well as the equitable distribution of goods. On this view excessive self-love is the root economic evil which makes us hate the poor who nevertheless remain God's concern (and who Smith invokes in the guise of the 'Impartial Spectator', which functions like an empirical version of the neo-Kantian 'veil of ignorance' now popularised by Rawls). If wayward self-love is restrained, then the natural desire to 'truck, barter, and exchange' is an expression of proper Christian self-love that can be counted on to incidentally and indirectly serve the distribution of the wealth of nations. 'The final cause of human happiness is effected by the efficient causality of human sentiments operating from the moral principles of sympathy and conscience...There are irregularities in our sentiments but they are overcome by the subtle Divine plan where we can admire the wisdom of God in the folly of men and women' (p. 101).

Theologically, however, there is a significant catch here, Long points out. A Stoic account of evil is imported in which there is no real radical evil, just partial evils which are in fact concealed goods. The delusions generated by false self-love and greed are not in the end threatening forces, only imperfections. Long astutely notes that what we have here is a question about the doctrine of God. If Smith thinks that the way God governs human affairs is through human sentimental attachments (through the locus of the conscience), and if he thinks that human evil is overwhelmed by the invisible hand of God which, in aggregate, brings net happiness for all out of mercantile activity, then this is an expression of faith in a God who is always directing human sentiments in a finally benevolent direc-

tion. Smith seems to rule out any hint that a majority in any given society could become trapped in the love of riches and grandeur fuelling a vicious cycle of predatory social and economic structures. Smith at this crucial point seems hopelessly optimistic. What is helpful in Smith, for Long, is that unlike the intentionally instrumentalist and value-free formulation of modern economic theories Smith does give morality and divine agency a place in economic theory. He has a place for evil in his economic theory, even if it is underdeveloped. Formally Smith is helpfully close to theology in distinction from modern economic theory even though materially his theology is underdeveloped at a decisive point.

A range of influential progressive and neo-conservative thinkers have been trying to recover Smith's theories in recent decades with the aim of showing how his account of the market is governed by non-commercial values like prudence and generosity rather than simply by profit seeking. In the most expansive and historically dense treatment of Smith in this volume, Adrian Pabst argues that any such reconstruction must overlook three dominant theological presuppositions of his work; his understanding of the nature and role of natural theology, his Jansenist Augustinianism, and the aforementioned Stoic understanding of evil (now substantiated by a detailed comparison with Leibniz). A close examination of these strands reveals that for Smith market exchange is the basic precondition for all human sociality, and furthermore, that he introduces an insurmountable split between private virtues and sympathies and the operative forces of commercial society. His marvellous location of Smith's presumptions about natural theology in relation to other early modern thinkers is itself worth the price of the book. His account of the Jansenist sources of Smith's Augustinianism are also important in substantiating the claim that Smith bifurcates private and public virtues as well as sharply separating the quest for happiness and the exercise of virtue in a manner more dualistic than Augustine himself would have allowed. But Pabst agrees with Long that a thicker and more theologically appropriate ontology of economic relations lies on the horizon of Smith's work, as hinted at in his comparison with the much more integrated position that was developing in the Italian Enlightenment. Pabst is especially prescient in noting the protological centrality of the market in Smith's anthropology and political theory, and it would have been nice to see some further discussion of what is entailed in the protological assumption that 'in the beginning was the market' as we see, for instance, in David Graber's recently *Debt: The First 5,000 Years.*

The core contributors to this volume are Roman Catholic, lending the volume as a whole (especially its second part) a refreshingly deep historical sensitivity to Smith's location in the theological tradition as well as

contemporary economic theory (a debt that is betrayed by the appalling text editing of the volume). It should perhaps not come as a surprise that the less penetrating contributions from the largely Protestant authors in the first part slant toward an ameliorist reading which seeks to recover Smith's legacy which, as Eric Gregory presents it, 'provides a prudent ethics for a society of strangers in a commercial society' (p. 40). Such an aim seems not only far removed from the debates of Long and Pabst, but from the realities of our economic present.

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*Doxologische Entzogenheit: Die fundamentaltheologische Bedeutung des Gebets bei Karl Barth.* By Christine Svinth-Værge Põder. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009. ISBN 978-31102-0972-3. 315 pp. £84.97.

In his 1922 Elgersburg lecture, 'The Word of God as the Task of Theology', Karl Barth famously captured his sense of the fundamental problematic of Christian theology in these terms: As theologians, we ought to speak of God; as humans, we cannot. The task is to recognise *both* our unconditional obligation *and* our constitutional incapacity—and precisely therein to render God alone the glory. The formula conceals a further question: How can one render God glory if one cannot speak of God? More formally put: How can religious language refer while denying its own referential capacity? In this stimulating essay, a lightly reworked version of her 2007 Aarhus PhD thesis, Christine Svinth-Værge Põder offers an account of Barth's mature theology of prayer as a response to the question raised in this early lecture.

Her central argument may be rephrased as a threefold proposal. First, following Dietrich Korsch, she urges us to read the theology of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* as an extended exercise in *Selbstrezeption*, one in which Barth's early interest in the dynamics of religious experience, dialectically and actualistically construed, continues to preside. Correspondingly, second, she encourages us to approach the 'objectivising terminology' of Barth's mature work not as signalling an essentialist drift in his thinking but as a complex rhetorical device designed to do justice to the deep elusiveness of religious experience precisely by directing attention away from it. By explicitly denying interest in the subjective appropriation of divine self-communication, Barth in fact attempts to say something about its essential quality—viz., that the reciprocal relationship between God and human persons remains radically gratuitous and so hidden, unavailable to us either as the basis of a positive theology of religious experience or as the object of religious self-criticism. In reading the Church Dogmatics, then, the interpretative task is not merely to restate the surface features

of Barth's texts (a complacency that Põder—too quickly—finds in the work of George Hunsinger) but to 'decipher' them so as to draw out their implicit portrayal of the implicit structures of religious perception. This 'functional-hermeneutical' reading of Barth's theology of prayer, third, offers a particularly fruitful point of entry into Barth's understanding of the distinctive quality of religious experience and theological language. Prayer, for Barth, is to be construed primarily as petition—the speech-act of one who knows herself to be in a genuinely reciprocal relationship with God, but one in which she is utterly dependent upon God. And in this way it sheds light on the condition of all theological talk of God. Again, in formal terms: '[t]he dialectical reciprocity of asking is ... equated with the dialectical reciprocity in fundamental theology' (p. 285).

That prayer is basic to Barth's conception of the theological task is beyond doubt; whether its significance should be understood along the lines suggested by Põder is a further question, one which bears careful consideration. Each component of her threefold developmental-hermeneutical-material thesis invites probing on the basis of further reading in Barth's own texts and in the secondary literature (on the evidence presented here, Põder appears a lively and engaging but highly selective reader of texts). Non-specialist readers of Barth should be especially alerted to the fact that this book intentionally is not a positive descriptive account of Barth's theology of prayer—for that, readers may consult the essays from the 2008 Leuenberg conference collected in *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 24.2.

*Donald Wood, University of Aberdeen*

*Eschatological Presence in Karl Barth's Göttingen Theology.* By Christopher Asprey. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-19-958470-3. xi + 284 pp. £58.00.

In this revision of his 2009 University of Aberdeen PhD thesis, Asprey examines the five-year transitional period in Karl Barth's theological development as a professor in Göttingen (and Münster). Asprey argues that Barth's work from this period is 'driven by an overriding conviction that God's presence is bestowed freely and actively, with the result that divine grace is never a stable reality in the world, but discontinuous with human history, a disruptive—'eschatological'—event whose effect is always to shake up, and hopefully to regenerate, the creatures with which it comes into contact' (p. 1).

After a judicious survey of the secondary literature on Barth's early theological development, Asprey compares the shared concern of Barth and Bultmann for the eschatological quality of revelation and Christian

existence, concluding that Barth escapes the exaggerated dualisms of Bultmann (ch. 1). In chapter 2, Asprey charts Barth's perennial concern that preaching never settle down into a comfortably stable state of possession, but should rather continually exist in the situation of being graciously addressed by God. The content of theology itself is less important than its awareness of being actively suspended in obedience before the call of God. Asprey argues in Chapter 3 that this overly contrastive conception of divine and human agency is partially assuaged by Barth's discovery of the concept of witness in his exegetical lectures on the Gospel of John, and further fleshed out by the substance of the Reformed tradition Barth worked through as a professor at Göttingen. Barth especially appreciated the Reformed concern that the Christian life was integral to its understanding of the gospel, and took the Christological and sacramental debates between the Reformed and Lutherans very seriously in their function as indicators of the necessity to talk about God in order to speak rightly about human existence: Calvin is the figure who combined the unbalanced concerns of Luther and Zwingli into a coherent dialectical position (ch. 4). Chapter 5 contains a detailed comparison between Barth's lectures on Philippians and the technical Christological sections of the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, carefully working through the details of Barth's rearrangement of the theological material he inherited from the Reformed tradition (largely via Heinrich Heppe's dogmatics manual). Chapter 6 is the longest section of the book, including Asprey's description of Barth's pneumatology, critique of religion (especially the liberal neo-Protestant understanding after Schleiermacher), conception of the Christian life and its foundation in sacramental theology. It is also the most critical; Asprey argues that while Barth's early theology avoids most of the criticisms levelled by various commentators, Barth is unable to secure the kind of dialectical stability of the Christian life (as promise) that he intends, despite the strong sacramental understanding articulated in Barth's 1927 *Christliche Dogmatik* (a position Barth abandoned fairly quickly). In his conclusion, Asprey suggests that Barth's insistence on the paradox of grace tends to push aside the reality of grace, and with it, most of the content of theology: grace is the centre, but it '*appears*...only as empty space' (p. 265, Asprey's emphasis). It is in this space that Jesus Christ will subsequently appear in much fuller form throughout Barth's later *Church Dogmatics*.

Asprey's work here is thorough and insightful; he has firmly grasped the heart of Barth's concerns in this transitional period. Much of this book is suited only for Barth specialists, presupposing a high degree of knowledge about Barth's theology and the secondary literature surround-

ing it. But Asprey's careful historical work is promising; it suggests that his future, more constructive theological efforts will be of equal value.

*Ben Rhodes, University of Aberdeen*

*The Early Church: History and Memory.* By Josef Lössl. London: T & T Clark, 2009. ISBN 978-0-56716-561-9. 256 pp. £19.99.

This book provides a very unusual and interesting look at the early church. It includes excellent chapters on topics that are rarely covered in a survey book: why we would want to study the early church (ch. 1), and the history of the study of the early church (ch. 2). These introductory chapters, coupled with an outstanding bibliography of modern patristic scholarship, would make the book worthwhile as a supplement to more traditional textbooks even if the bulk of the book had not been written. The key concept of Lössl's work—reflected in the subtitle—is his distinction between history and memory, a distinction he introduces on pages 9-10 and returns to throughout the book. (See especially p. 187, where he argues that the idea of Arianism as an arch-heresy is a product of the church's memory, not of history.) He argues that what has been most influential in shaping subsequent Christianity is not history, but the church's not-always-accurate memory of Jesus' life and of its own past.

While Lössl is exactly right that we need to consider the difference between what really happened and the way the past has been received and appropriated, the sharpness of his distinction between history and memory leads him to be a bit too sceptical about the accuracy of both the New Testament books and the orthodox church's own writings. For example, he regards the Gospels' statements that Jesus was born in Bethlehem but 'from Nazareth' to be contradictory (p. 59), he argues that aside from the seven genuine Pauline letters, no other books of the New Testament definitely date from the first century (p. 94), and he even suggests that the final version of Luke-Acts was written in response to Marcion in the mid-second century (p. 97). Similarly, Lössl casts doubt on the accuracy of Irenaeus's description of Gnosticism even though he admits that on one issue, recent discoveries have 'spectacularly confirmed' Irenaeus's accuracy (p. 107). In contrast, Lössl is a bit too uncritical in his attitude toward writings the church has deemed heretical. Most notably, Lössl regards Gnosticism in general and Marcionism in particular as perfectly legitimate versions of Christianity, widely adhered to in the second century, versions of the faith that simply happened not to win out in the end (see pp. 97-102). In fact, Lössl argues that the determining factor in the church's rejection of these views was the authority of the church hier-

archy, not any kind of consensus about truth arrived at on the basis of Scripture (see p. 158).

In all of these ways, Lössl is quite typical of contemporary scholars. But therein lies the primary problem with his work. He exaggerates the variety within the early church and, in my opinion, significantly understates the degree of consensus that was present. Moreover, he is far too non-committal about the *significance* of the different views present in the early church. It is certainly true that there were Gnostics, Marcionites, Arians, and others in the early church who did not hold to what we today call 'orthodox' theology, and it is likewise true that historians need to give these people a fair hearing. But at the same time, the church as a whole condemned these views because it believed that they fundamentally compromised the gospel. To the early church, it *mattered* whether Irenaeus or Valentinus was right, whether Tertullian or Marcion was right, whether Athanasius or Arius was right. Indeed, in the mind of the early church, the very possibility of human salvation hung on the question of where the truth lay.

This sense of the significance of theological variation is largely missing in Lössl's account of the early church, and for evangelicals his book thus turns out to be inadequate. It does serve as an important corrective to an excessively triumphal view of Christian history or to a view that minimizes the amount of variety that was present in the early centuries of the church, but it does not do what evangelicals believe we must do: judge various theological views in light of Scripture, with the help of the church's emerging consensus.

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*The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius*. By Craig D. Atwood. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-271-03532-1. xix + 457 pp. £71.50.

This unusually helpful book offers the best history available in English of the quasi-Protestant Unity of the Brethren (*Unitas Fratrum*), one of several different churches to descend from Jan Hus and the Czech Reformation. Its author has now become a major spokesman in America for the present-day Moravians, whom he serves as a minister and professor of divinity at the Moravian Seminary in Pennsylvania.

During the past 20 years, the English-speaking world has witnessed a renaissance of interest in the Hussites and their history. Fuelled by major scholarly books written in Britain by the likes of Reginald Ward and Colin Podmore, and in America by Atwood, Jon Sensbach, and the gadfly of the group, Aaron Fogleman, this renaissance has drawn renewed atten-

tion to the ways in which the Hussites have shaped modern evangelical missions, social reform, and ecclesiology. Long recognized as prophets of the Protestant Reformation, the Hussites also printed and sold the first Protestant hymnals, were the first to make the separation of church and state a matter of official church teaching, and modelled for many later dissenters a way of cultivating a gathered church that is also ecumenical.

The present book focuses on the Unity of the Brethren as distinguished from its better-known elder siblings (the Utraquists and Táborites). Though usually confused with the Moravian Church gathered by Nicholas Zinzendorf (in Germany the *Brüdergemeinde*, "Community of the Brethren"), the Unity of the Brethren actually had its own history. After the fall of the Táborites to the military forces of the Holy Roman Empire and the traitorous Utraquists (1434), young Gregory, a nephew of the Utraquist Bishop of Prague, began to yearn again for the purity of the church. Neither as radical as the Táborites nor as worldly as the Utraquists, Gregory and his followers formed a small Christian community in eastern Bohemia (1457-58). Then in 1467, they established their own priesthood and gathered new churches. They would divide amongst themselves over the zeal with which they should separate from the larger church and world. But by the end of the fifteenth century, their Major Party, led by its new leader, Luke of Prague, would win control, develop the doctrine of the Brethren and engage the broader culture.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Brethren movement dwindled, suffering persecution at home and living in exile in Poland. Decimated by the ravages of the Thirty Years War, they were excluded from the terms of the Peace of Westphalia. Their famous Bishop John Comenius would labour to keep them alive, promoting reform throughout Europe (especially in childhood education) and spreading the Brethren's doctrine and practice through his *Ratio disciplinae* (1660). But for all intents and purposes, the Unity of the Brethren per se would soon expire.

'The Brethren's theology was profoundly simple', Atwood writes with pride. For them, 'the essence of Christianity is faith, love, and hope. They turned away from elaborate ritual and metaphysical speculation and sought to return to the message of Christianity as given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount' (p. xi). They taught an ethically-driven doctrine best characterized for Atwood by its frequent (though inconstant) call to pacifistic witness and to practice the ethics of Jesus in community. They valued what Atwood labels 'orthopraxy' over 'orthodoxy.' And their biblicism yielded an approach to their confession that was 'flexible' and 'supple' (p. 16).

This is a hagiographic book meant to kindle admiration. It is based to large degree on the work of others (Atwood does not know Czech). But it

is an indispensable guide to an influential movement that will prove to be a blessing to English readers everywhere.

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*Between Truth and Fiction: A Reader in Literature and Christian Theology.* Edited by David Jasper and Allen Smith. London: SCM, 2010. ISBN 978-0-334-04192-4. 179 pp. £30.00.

'Most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy', Matthew Arnold prophesied in 1880, 'will be replaced by poetry.' 'More and more', Arnold continued, 'mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us.' This collection of readings in literary texts, though its authors would surely disclaim such an identity, is an Arnoldian exercise. Jasper and Allen work on the post-modern (i.e., the neo-Victorian) assumption that Christianity, insofar as it makes claims to finality, definitiveness, and unsurpassability, is hopelessly out-dated. Just as Arnold regarded the popular Christianity of his time as a religion of self-referential biblicism that should be replaced with a high-culture humanism, so do these latter day Arnoldians treat Christian Scripture and Tradition as having an oppressive power when they are not radically qualified by other confections of the literary imagination.

The alleged 'truth' revealed in Israel and Christ and the Church is itself an interpretive construction, a 'true fiction': 'the Bible is found to be a book that is not set apart but is, for many of us, a particular element in that complex literary and artistic enterprise which has for so long shaped the lives, hearts and minds of men and women in society' (p. 10). This means that, even at best, Christianity must be regarded as one fiction among others. '[W]e are dissolving the difference', the editors confess, 'between the "truths" of Scripture and the lesser claims of other "secular" literature' (p. 13). Neither can ever become conclusive for the other, since each puts the other under perennial interrogation. In this endless dialectic between 'truth' and 'fiction' lies the only possible 'finality'. Quotation marks thus become the trademark of such an *als ob* endeavour, an undertaking in the theology of 'as if'.

The post-Christian quality of this reader is made evident in its method no less than its substance. On the one hand, it makes forays into all of the major genres: fiction, autobiography, poetry, drama, essays, sermons, post-colonial literature, feminist literature, and the post-modern text. On the other hand, the critical apparatus is considerably larger than the primary works from which rather meagre extracts are taken. The ratio of theoretical commentary to primary texts is, at most, 2 to 1. It is 'as if' the reader must be primed to approach the text with a large dose of scepticism

so as not to be caught in naive Christian belief. 'Beware of easy answers' becomes the book's virtual refrain.

Even teachers subscribing to Jasper and Allen's post-Christian viewpoint would want, I suspect, for the ratio to be reversed—namely, a meaty chunk of the original text accompanied by a minimum of theory. Such proportionality is the only sure means of avoiding the superficiality that otherwise attends all survey-like anthologies. Nor do most teachers emphasize the speculative use that might be made of a text. We seek, instead, to incise the imaginations of our students with poems such as George Herbert's Love (III), just as we have ourselves been permanently marked by such seminal works. And insofar as Herbert's splendid metaphysical conceit devoted to the Eucharist does yield to theoretical considerations, we are not likely to ask, with Jasper and Allen, whether 'the different "levels" or "worlds" of this poem, the liturgical and the religious, the erotic, the homely [are] complementary or contradictory' (p. 66). Readers are more likely to find that Herbert's wondrously incarnational kneading of matter together with manner prompts their astonished reverence and devotion.

The fundamental premise undergirding *Between Truth and Fiction* is that Christian doctrines constitute fixed and oppressive certainties, until readers learn to challenge and subvert their so-called 'permanently valid truth' (p. 165). Allen and Jasper thus urge their readers to join the postlapsarian Adam and Eve in turning 'their new-found shame in self-awareness to the more creative business of building a world that required imagination, thought and an awareness of the self in the context of the other, whether that be other people, the earth around them, or, finally, God' (p. 162). The Edenic Paradise of our primal parents was presumably a dull and bovine place that required no self-consciously ethical encounter with the Serpent and the Forbidden Tree, indeed no thinking or creativity of any kind at all, certainly no stewardship of the earth, and (least of all) any human or divine communion.

It is altogether appropriate that this post-Christian book should finally call into question Christian theology itself as 'any longer possible or viable as a systematic or even dogmatic exercise ... inasmuch as the conditions for such an enterprise and the authenticity of its claims are clearly perpetually in doubt' (p. 166). It seems that Jasper and Allen are unacquainted with the narrative character of all creeds, the imaginative vitality of all doctrines, nor the radical development of dogma—all undertaken in the face of difficulty and doubt—that have constituted the thinking life of the Church for two millennia. What we thus need is an anthology that would serve as a counterpoint to this one. It would deal not only with the revisions of doctrine that 'clearly perpetually' make Christian faith and life truthful,

but also with the Job-like terror that imbues the work of every eminent Christian writer, from Augustine to Dante, from Donne to Milton, from Dryden to Johnson, from Dostoevsky to Hopkins, from Eliot to Auden, from Greene to Waugh, from Flannery O'Connor to Walker Percy. Only the first of these, alas, merits inclusion in this unsatisfying book. In the meantime, we are left with the desperate Dover-beachism of lonely lovers vowing to remain 'true to one another', while the Sea of Faith continues, 'Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar/ Retreating, to the breath/ Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear/ And naked shingles of the world.'

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*William Blake on Self and Soul.* By Laura Quinney. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-6740-3524-9. 216 pp. £29.95.

When Professor Laura Quinney engages in close textual analysis she helps me see some of Blake's most puzzling poetry in new ways; her insights about Blake's Four Zoas, for instance, are among the best I've ever encountered. Her ambitious book, *William Blake on Self and Soul*, contains many intellectual gems. Unfortunately, the theological framework in which Professor Quinney places those gems occasionally clouds their brilliance.

Quinney is concerned with the loneliness of the Self in Blake and his reaction against empiricism, and this leads her to read well. But her desire to cast Blake as a Gnostic Neoplatonic atheist undercuts that good reading.

I am not quite sure what Professor Quinney means by the words 'Self' and 'Soul.' 'Self' is not a positive term in Blake, and not until page 19 does Quinney tell us that 'Selfhood' can be problematic. William Blake gleaned the term 'Selfhood' from Jacob Boehme; and though Quinney briefly mentions Blake's 'Behmenism' (30 pages later) she does not expand upon how that relates to Blake's notions of Self and Soul, or how this may be a primary source for those things in Blake that seem 'Neoplatonic' or 'Gnostic'.

It would be helpful if Quinney had described what she means when she uses terms like 'Gnostic' or 'Neoplatonic.' She invokes the authority of Kathleen Raine, who erroneously discounts Blake's Christianity, overemphasising his Neoplatonic dimensions. When Blake does mention Plato he can be quite critical, proclaiming (in a poem called *Milton*) that Plato ought be condemned for he is one of the 'silly Greek & Latin slaves of the sword' who can prevent us from entering 'those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever in Jesus our Lord'. Blake says he wants to live

in 'Jesus our Lord'. One might argue that this statement occurs in a work of fiction, yet in personal letters to friends Blake says things like:

> 'as a Soldier of Christ . . . I am under the Direction of Messengers from Heaven, Daily & Nightly' (To Butts, 10 Jan 1802);
>
> 'Excuse this Effusion of the Spirit from one . . .whose Happiness is secure in Jesus our Lord . . . I throw myself & all that I have on our Saviour's Divine Providence' (To Hayley, 11 Dec 1805).

These are not the affirmations of an 'atheist'. Quinney is right to say that Blake is not an 'orthodox' Christian, but her work would be strengthened immeasurably if she could see that heterodoxy is not the same as atheism. How Neoplatonic thought may inform that heterodoxy would be an interesting thing to explore.

When Professor Quinney reads unencumbered by what she might call theoretical 'incrustations' her attention to detail reveals important aspects of some of Blake's most complex works. Reading *Jerusalem*, she writes perceptively about the character of Blake's Jesus and sees that it is he who redeems the self from alienation. She understands that Blake is now concerned with Love, 'a turning... toward the other.'

It would be interesting if Laura Quinney had started her book where she ended, verging on a thoughtful description of Blake's theological perspective and the centrality of love—when Selfhood is lost and each unique human form can emanate, or give forth spiritual light. In Blake's theology there are what can be called 'Gnostic' or 'Neoplatonic' elements, and those elements can help us understand aspects of his greater vision. It would be helpful to more carefully explore those elements in terms of what Blake himself professed and sought to promulgate.

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*Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship.* By Michael G. Brennan. London: Continuum, 2010. ISBN 978-1-8470-6339-7. 188 pp. £19.99.

Graham Greene did not like being called 'that detestable term'—a 'Catholic writer.' He was, he insisted, 'a writer who happens to be a Catholic.' Just so. Greene the man of letters was not an apologist for Catholicism, rather he used the faith heuristically, as a lens to examine, a framework to explore, the human condition. He lamented the loss of religious depth in the English novel since Henry James and Joseph Conrad (neither, of course, English), its lack of a grammar of sin and evil, redemption and perdition, its failure to be a site contested by the sacred and the secular.

Catholic dogma—and Catholic liturgy—provided Greene with a stock of ideas and images that, in trim and pellucid prose, he both deployed and disputed with a cinematic vividness and psychological depth, an ethical seriousness and comic incisiveness that fill the reader with sheer delight. (Woe to those who approach literature for utility rather than enjoyment!)

Greene was certainly not a 'good' Catholic, either morally or doctrinally. His 'sins of the flesh'—his fondness for the bottle and his several significant adulteries—are well known, and so empathically and engagingly embodied in his anti-heroes that Hans Urs von Balthasar condemned him for giving sin and seediness a mystique. Perhaps more seriously for contributors to *Communio* were Greene's intellectual sympathies with the ethos of *Consilium*, and with theologians like Teilhard de Chardin, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Hans Küng. Greene once said that 'Conservatism and Catholicism should be ... impossible bedfellows', and he did his cause in Rome no favours, notwithstanding his intellectual infatuation with Vatican darlings like Thérèse of Lisieux and John Henry Newman, by sleeping with the enemy, that is, the liberation theologians. His consuming liaison with atheism, however, could have disturbed no one more than himself. In both Greene's life and work, doubt shadowed faith, despair hope, and betrayal love like his fictional sleuths.

The sources for most, if not all, of this brief sketch of Greene's faith and fiction can be found in this book, in which Michael Brennan takes for his palette not only the novels, short stories, and plays, but also the poetry, journalism, travel books, and correspondence. The author approaches his subject chronologically and developmentally, so I guess you would call his study an intellectual biography. It is educative and sound. However, I put the book down—almost dropped it, so abruptly does it end—with a feeling of disappointment far greater than the expectation with which I took it up. It contains a surplus of information, but a deficit of analysis. With the fiction there is far too much time spent on plot summaries—it becomes (so un-Greenean) rather plodding—and far too little on literary criticism, so students of English will be disappointed. So too will readers looking for theological acumen and weight beyond the accurate iteration of influences and themes. Appreciably sharper and denser is Mark Bosco's outstanding enquiry *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination* (2005). In fact, Brennan's more astute observations are citations from Bosco's work.

Yet if my praise is faint, damnation is not the fate I would wish for this book, the critical sins of which are venial, not mortal. As Brennan observes, 'Greene was intrigued by the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory ... In a 1968 interview he noted that ... "Purgatory to me makes sense, while Hell doesn't", and that he could not believe in a Heaven which is just "passive bliss"' (p. 84). If the reader (shall we say?) grants an 'indulgence' to the

author's text, and if not inspired then at least informed by it and intrigued enough to revisit Greene's texts with an active imagination, then I am happy to hope that there is a place for *Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship* in the literary purposes of God.

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*Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction.* By Rowan Williams. Baylor: Baylor University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-6025-8145-6. 290 pp. £12.99.

Pulling together the important content of Rowan Williams's profound, masterful study of Dostoevsky inevitably distorts, since much of the book consists of sensitive readings of Dostoevskian texts. Williams begins with a text, analyzing a confession from an 1854 letter: 'if someone were to prove to me that Christ was outside the truth . . . then I should choose to stay with Christ rather than with the truth.' Does this declaration unveil unacknowledged Miltonic sympathy with the devil? Is he claiming that religion is a leap into darkness, an assertion of will? Is Dostoevsky staking ground on one side of Lessing's ditch? Does it reveal Dostoevsky as an irrationalist, an existentialist?

Each reading has defenders, and Dostoevsky has accordingly been hired on as a spokesman for all manner of trendy programmes. After examining related passages in the novels, Williams concludes that these readings do not work, and that the key is the meaning of 'truth.' If 'truth' is mere fact, then Christ reveals a Truth beyond truth. If 'truth' involves sanding smooth the jagged edges of human experience, Christ is outside truth. Against truth of this world, Dostoevsky confesses Christ as the gratuitous, uncontrollable epiphany of love and joy.

The 'truth' Dostoevsky opposes is diabolical. For Dostoevsky, the devil seeks closure, freezes humanity in a rational order, stops history, and any aesthetics or politics that promises an end to striving is demonic. Dostoevsky exorcises demons not to defend the individualistic freedom of self-assertion (which eventually paralyzes) but the freedom of rightly oriented desire. Behind this analysis of the diabolical stands Dostoevsky's famed 'dialogism'. Demonic 'truth' denies the other the freedom of his otherness, and also imprisons the self because each partner in dialogue finds his own voice and visibility in the vulnerability of speaking and giving others leave to speak. Freedom is freedom in language, hence freedom in communion. Dostoevsky's is an 'iconic' ethics that regards the other as a real presence of transcendent plenitude and as an occasion for 'exchanging crosses', for taking up responsibility of all for all. Eschatology

underwrites and unites Dostoevsky's convictions about desire, diabolism, language, and freedom because eschatology refuses every final word yet affirms that life has meaning to those who love while longing for Christ's future kingdom.

Far from being sceptical or indifferent toward religion, Dostoevsky's novels are rooted in 'a sort of theology' (p. 5), and that theology shapes his fictional craft. Dostoevsky allows his characters liberty to speak and constructs plots that dissolve happily-ever-afters. This is neither a secularising nor an apologeticizing of the novel, but an eschatologically organised Christian fiction.

If the theology that Williams finds in Dostoevsky seems suspiciously close to Williams' own, that is as likely the result of Dostoevsky's influence on Williams as Williams' unconscious monologism. Still, I have the same reservations about Williams as about Bakhtin, on whom he often relies. Dialogism granted, yet in Dostoevsky's own descriptions of his work, he frequently explains that he has a *point* to make. He bitched about censors removing the overtly Christian portions of *Notes from Underground*, and he viewed the Father Zossima section of *Brothers Karamazov* as a 'response' to Ivan—'non-Euclidian,' but still a response. Williams knows this, but he instinctively makes Dostoevsky's work less didactic than the author intended. Dialogism granted; yet it remains the case, as Williams knows, that there is an ultimate monologism, the One Word of the One God, who has not been silent.

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*Rowan's Rule: The Biography of the Archbishop.* By Rupert Shortt. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009. ISBN 978-03409-5433-1. 496 pp. £9.99

I write this review the week after Rowan Williams has announced that he is stepping down as Archbishop of Canterbury. I am sure that William's primacy will be remembered as one of the great moments in the history of Anglicanism, yet not without regrets. It has been Rowan's vocation to lead a church that appears to be in centrifuge, a church that strains the meaning of the word 'communion' in its tensions and debates.

With Williams' ascendancy many asked questions like: Can one of the greatest minds in the church also administer and lead through the muck and mire of the church? Can a person with the experience and the mind of Williams maintain the unity and witness of Anglicanism into the future? Is it possible for an episcopal church to be led to adapt to its contemporary global challenges? Throughout the church, even in non-Anglican communions like my own, there are many who view Rowan's well-deserved

exit from the episcopacy with sadness. If so great a churchman and fine a theologian can't save us from ourselves, wherein is our hope?

I find it difficult to imagine a much more adept, judicious, critical-but-fair, and continuously engaging biography of a cleric than the one written by Rupert Shortt. *Rowan's Rule* follows the young theologian through his formative years without overdoing the biographical background. Rowan comes across as a lively, bookish but never dull, activist and meditative, in short, a thoroughly warm and engaging person who is a credit to the church.

Williams' assumption of the post of Archbishop was greeted with widespread acclaim and also a bit of scepticism by some. Would the post be a waste for such a fine mind? Would he be able to make the transition from being an academic and sometime small parish pastor, to being the head of the far-flung, deeply conflicted, and glorious Anglican communion?

When the press asked if he had doubts about his new post, Williams' response was quoted in Rupert Shortt's *Rowan's Rule*: 'You'd be a maniac not to have doubts . . .. It's a job that inevitably carries huge expectations and projections . . . other people's fantasies . . . and to try and keep some degree of honesty, clarity and simplicity in the middle of that is going to be hard work--so that frightened me a lot.' Fear and trembling accompany the summons to the ministry of oversight, fear of God's demands, apprehension of the church's fantasies and expectations, dread of your own limits.

It didn't take long for Williams' doubts to be confirmed in his rocky dealings with the wild Americans, his failed attempts to offer a compromise for to angry Africans, and his ability to attract attacks in the press with dizzying frequency. At points I began to tire of Shortt's cataloguing of controversy. Sometimes Rowan comes across as a well-meaning, sincerely charitable, but often bungling egg-headed professor who shouldn't be in charge of anything so bafflingly out of control as Anglicanism.

Though Rowan is a master Christian communicator, sometimes his academically induced turgidity, combined with his attempts to restate controversial matters in ways that mollified the combatants, led to murky communication and conflicting messages that alienated all sides and pleased few. The unifier (bishops are historically charged with embodying and encouraging the unity and harmony of the church) always risks coming across as a mushy compromiser without principle.

By the end of Shortt's book, we wonder if Rowan William must be miserable. No one who reads Shortt's treatment of Rowan (in which time and again Shortt takes pains to be fair and not overly judgmental) is surprised by Rowan's early exit from the episcopacy. Noteworthy is Shortt's

attempt to set Rowan's rule in the context of his theology. How does Rowan's administration and leadership arise out of his theological commitments? I failed to see a close connection, but perhaps that is a function of the rather ambivalent, now rigid, then lax, bungled opportunities, badly managed meetings in his administration.

Would Williams now, after actually experiencing the empirical Body of Christ from this privileged perspective, revise his idealistic contention, early in his rule that, 'Just as we can trust God because he has no agenda that is not for our own good, so we can trust the Church because it is... a community of active peacemaking... where no one exists in isolation... everyone is working steadily to release the gifts of others.' (I wish that I and Rowan might have gotten to be bishops of *that* church!) But one might expect so great a theologian to praise the church for its divine nature rather than its human effects.

This is a fine book, one that raises the bar for all future attempts, through careful biography, to understand ecclesiastical leaders. Shortt accomplishes, in my opinion, that which we ought to expect of a faithful biographer—truthfulness linked with affection for the subject, candour joined with charity.

I've always thought that one of Rowan Williams's best aphorisms is, 'If we aren't self-created, we are answerable to a truth we don't produce.' Let us give thanks to God for producing one so gifted and intelligent (and faithful!) as Rowan Williams. And let us thank Rowan Williams for helping us to be more attentive to that grand truth (the gospel of Jesus Christ) that we didn't produce.

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BOOK REVIEWS