Reviews

Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians. By Kenneth E. Bailey. London: SPCK, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-281-06455-7. 560pp. £16.99.

Kenneth Bailey has lived and worked in the Middle East teaching New Testament in English and Arabic for forty years, and the fruits of his labours are reflected in this unique and helpful study. Bailey's work here has two key themes, an investigation and presentation of Paul's rhetorical style as being in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets and an examination of the theological purpose of Paul's metaphors. Bailey's work is informed by study of rare commentaries of 1 Corinthians in Arabic, Greek and Syriac from the past 1600 years.

Principally focusing upon the use of parallelism in classical Hebrew poetry Bailey offers a reading of 1 Corinthians which describes a highly structured piece of writing, in Bailey's term a series of five "essays". Bailey contends that 1 Corinthians was written to the whole Christian Church (1 Cor 1:2), and thus Paul sets the agenda taking up themes arising in Corinth and fitting them into his overall structure. Bailey finds it unimaginable that the issue arising in Corinth were not also arising in every Christian community. This reading of 1 Corinthians gives a great sense of unity and overall purpose to the letter than many other modern commentaries.

Bailey's reading of Paul's metaphors is very helpful. It is not good to consider these only to be illustrative stories or asides merely reinforcing an abstract theological point. Biblical metaphors do carry theological meaning and purpose. There are many passages where Bailey's insight into Paul's metaphors will prove helpful.

From Bailey's work in the Middle East and his engagement with a relatively unknown stream of Christian translation and interpretation of the New Testament Bailey is able to present fresh and insightful readings of 1 Corinthians which will clarify both academic study of the letter and aid preaching and teaching not only on 1 Corinthians but on other Pauline texts.

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Communion with the Triune God: The Trinitarian Soteriology of T. F. Torrance. By Dick O. Eugenio. Princeton Theological Monograph Series; Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-62564-036-9. xxii + 242 pp. £18.00.

In this volume, Dick O. Eugenio provides a survey of Thomas F. Torrance's soteriology, organised around the unified reconciling acts of the Triune God. Eugenio argues that this study is unique because 'it consciously presents Torrance's soteriological Trinity and Trinitarian soteriology at the same time' (p. xx). By 'soteriological Trinity' Eugenio means the unity of divine Act and Being for salvation, and by 'Trinitarian soteriology' Eugenio means these acts of salvation are both rooted in the communion of the Triune God and also oriented toward bringing the human race into participation in that communion. Thus, the Trinity is both the origin and *telos* of our salvation.

This book is distinctive in its exclusive focus on Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology, but the subject-matter itself has already been treated elsewhere, for example in Elmer Colyer's *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (InterVarsity, 2001) and in Paul Molnar's *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Ashgate, 2009). Eugenio acknowledges this, but provides only a fleeting comparison of his work with these prior studies. Further clarification would have been helpful. The prior studies mentioned are said to contain similar content, yet Eugenio's book is unique in that its organisation is reflective of the evangelical pattern of that content (pp. 23-24). This is true, but it is unclear whether this unique organisation yields substantially new observations or evaluations of the subject-matter.

After introducing this organisation and its *scientific*, *evangelical*, and *Trinitarian* character (chapter 1), Eugenio turns to the work of the incarnate Son (chapter 2). The Son is discussed first 'because reconciliation can only be properly understood when it is grounded upon the Person of the Reconciler,' who is the full self-revelation of God to man (p. 30). Torrance's particular view of incarnational atonement, in which Christ assumes our fallen human nature and transforms and heals it throughout his life, death, and resurrection, receives due attention here. The book next moves to an account of the Father and his loving act of election (chapter 3). Salvation accomplishes our adoption as children of the Father, and to this end the Father *sends* the Son and Spirit, the '*apostle-shaliachs*' who are *sent* (pp. 108-110). It is the Holy Spirit who actualises this accomplished salvation in our subjective experience and establishes communion between the Church and the Triune God (chapter 4). The book closes with a study of the nature of this communion or participation via various

Torrancean themes, such as mediation, *perichoresis*, onto-relationality, and *theosis* (chapter 5).

Eugenio is Wesleyan, but the soteriology of that tradition figures little in the discussion. He hopes to avoid a comparative study which might result in misrepresentation or in a lopsided account of Torrance's soteriology (p. 213). That motivation is admirable, but the book swings quite far in the other direction, with authorial voice often being swallowed up in a largely descriptive text. Eugenio seems aware of this 'weakness,' noting that the book is 'generally appreciative,' offering critiques which are 'only minor' (p. 213). More indications about *why* Torrance's soteriology is to be appreciated or critiqued would have been a welcome addition.

That said, the book clearly achieves its objective, the provision of a 'descriptive and analytical' survey of Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology and soteriological Trinitarianism (p. 213). In that function it is a helpful and informative resource for future studies on Torrance's thought.

Albert L. Shepherd V, University of Aberdeen

God without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness. By James E. Dolezal. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock. 2011. ISBN: 978-1-61097-658-9. xxi + 239pp. £19.00.

The doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS) is, most basically, the notion that God is *not* physically, logically, or metaphysically composite—he is not made up of parts (p. 31). It would be an understatement to suggest this doctrine has fallen on hard times in the current landscape of philosophical theology. *God without Parts*, one of very few book-length treatments of DDS specifically, responds to this theologically adverse climate with pronounced philosophical and theological acumen. James Dolezal's work not only manages to capture the wide-ranging significance of DDS, but also skillfully exposits the Christian tradition by leveraging the traditional DDS to profitably engage contemporary philosophical suspicions. Dolezal's aim in this treatment of DDS is to argue the importance of a *strong* Identity Account (IA) of DDS (i.e., one that upholds that God is identical to his perfections, and his perfections are identical to each other) for God's metaphysical absoluteness.

Dolezal's central argument is that 'simplicity is the ontologically sufficient condition for God's absoluteness,' (p. 2), such that God is 'the sufficient reason for his own existence, essence, and attributes' (p. 1). In more theologically familiar words, DDS is, in Dolezal's estimate, the pillar on which God's aseity, unity, infinity, immutability, and eternity stand (p. 67). His contribution to this topic is valuable in at least two ways: (1) it is a lucid presentation of the historical origins, the philosophical con-

tours, and the theological implications of DDS, thus offering the reader an unparalleled introduction to DDS; and (2) it is a thorough treatment of DDS that leverages careful historical, theological, and philosophical analysis in service of a substantive rejoinder to the objections contemporary philosophers and theologians have hurled at DDS in recent years. For these reasons and more, this book will serve as a wonderful addition both to the current discussion over DDS and similar discussions about the absoluteness of God, especially regarding the Creator-creature distinction.

In the first chapter, Dolezal provides a stark contrast between Christianity's traditional adherence to DDS and the widespread rejection found among contemporary philosophers and theologians. He first demonstrates the extent of subscription to DDS by canvasing the history of Christian orthodoxy, in its patristic, medieval, reformed, and modern renditions. From this canvas is drawn a strand of doctrines, which depend upon DDS: God's unity, necessity, immutability, self-sufficiency, independence, perfection, and infinity (p. 10). Whereas the traditional adherents to DDS understood the creature's relation to the Creator in analogical terms, the contemporary critics bolster a 'strong commitment to ontological univocism' such that God and his creatures are found within the same order of being and therefore differ only in 'degrees' (p. 29). Hence, one of Dolezal's primary contentions is that DDS is fundamentally a statement about the Creator-creature distinction, a distinction that has also fallen on hard times in contemporary philosophical theology.

In the second chapter, Dolezal elucidates the conceptual content of the claim that God is simple and therefore without parts. Primarily through the lens of act-potency metaphysics, especially as found in Aquinas, he clarifies what is meant by the 'composition,' which DDS intrinsically rejects. Composition in God 'would jettison God's independent self-sufficiency, his uncausedness, his fullness of being, and his absolute self-identity' (p. 33). This leads into the third chapter of the book, wherein Dolezal spells out how DDS is 'the theological rationale underlying each of these claims,' which are what contribute to 'the strongest accounts of the Creator-creature distinction' (p. 67). Dolezal argues in every instance—with respect to aseity, unity, infinity, immutability, and eternity—that DDS is necessary to uphold the absoluteness of the Creator-creature distinction under consideration.

Chapters four and five mark a shift from explication of DDS to the explication of particular questions arising from it. Chapter four is the central chapter of the book insofar as it demonstrates the impact that DDS has on the absoluteness of God's existence. More specifically, Dolezal shows the way in which DDS is necessary to understand (1) how

the being of God is fundamentally different than the being of creatures and (2) how it is that God is perfectly self-sufficient. Dolezal concludes that 'it is God's simplicity that enables us to maintain that God is identical with *that by which* he exists' (p. 123), a central notion motivating his commitment to the *strong* IA version of DDS. Chapter five explains how God is not dependent on anything but himself to be what he in fact is. The chapter proceeds in four steps in which Dolezal engages the critics of an IA version of DDS. Dolezal concludes that God does not exist by dint of properties coinhering within him, but by way of his Godhead as himself a *minimal* truthmaker.

Chapters six and seven offer explanation of how DDS affects our understanding of God's will, knowledge, and freedom. Chapter six explains how it is that (1) God knows many things through his one imitable divine nature and (2) God is identical with both his will and the object of his will, which is finally himself. Chapter seven responds to what is considered the paramount problem for DDS: the affirmation of DDS alongside divine freedom, such that, despite being incomprehensible, both are necessary for God to remain absolute. The concept of divine freedom arrived at is not passive counterfactual openness, which Dolezal expressly denies, but rather God's absolute independence from the creature.

Despite the wide-ranging nature of Dolezal's volume, a book of this size cannot cover everything. For example, it is often said that DDS is the doctrine that prevents Christianity from slipping into tritheism. Why then is there no mention of the doctrine of the Trinity? Another area that will be flagged as a deficiency is the lack of any extended consideration of biblical warrant for DDS. Although a holistic account of DDS ought to give attention to these concerns, the present volume is responding to a different set of questions. That is, this text is more philosophically responsive than dogmatically constructive, more driven by the occasion of DDS's philosophical detractors than by the question of whether it is biblical.

Paul Helm gets it right when he says in the foreword of the book, 'The result is the best full-length philosophical treatment of divine simplicity that I know' (p. xi). Anyone interested in bringing historically and philosophically informed consideration of DDS together with its contemporary critiques should read this book, for although it is written for the academically disposed, it has to be to provide a capable rejoinder to the legion of contemporary DDS skeptics.

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The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward a More Compassionate Christology. By Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4844-9. x + 112 pp. £12.99.

The aim of this short book is a humble response to what the authors describe as a global criticism of Western Christology. The criticism is that Western Christology heavily accents the *Christus victor* theme while remaining virtually silent on the *Christus dolor*. Mouw and Sweeney regard the criticism as fair, but they reject a further accusation often regarded as inevitable: chiefly, that 'violence, triumphalism, and denial of the suffering of God are essential to the Reformation traditions' (p. 7). In fact, the Calvinist Mouw and Lutheran Sweeney argue that Christians in the Reformation traditions find deep in their own storehouses all the resources needed for a compassionate Christology, - 'a profound conviction that the Son of God understands the deepest hopes and fears of the human condition' (p. 93). The theologies of John Williamson Nevin and Franz Pieper are discussed at length as the primary examples from the Reformation traditions where a compassionate Christology can be found most clearly. Separate chapters consider the contributions of these men who belong to the Calvinist and Lutheran traditions respectively.

While these theologians are highlighted, the book is no uncritical defense of Reformed Christology. In a chapter titled 'Reformed Theology and the Suffering of Christ', the authors critique what they consider to be a significant weaknesses in the Reformed tradition: a tendency to focus almost exclusively on Jesus' final - and unique - act of suffering, and to speak of the many years of his suffering life before his passion mostly in polemical terms aimed at Lutheran hypostatic speculations. Here, Charles Hodge and Louis Berkhof come under scrutiny. In American theology, the authors suggest the remoteness (for many) of oppression and suffering 'helps explain why divine suffering has been relegated to a place of secondary importance in our theology' (p. 62). They observe that for theologians in an American context, the suffering of Christ, whether more or less developed, seemed likely to remain a theological abstraction. Even in Nevin, for all his emphasis on union with Christ, the idea is not fully developed.

One place where *Christus dolor* does not remain a theological abstraction is in the African American experience, especially in early America. Mouw and Sweeney make the case that while African Americans spoke of Christ differently from Reformed theology, they were not speaking of a different Christ. 'The suffering Messiah that is latent in Lutheran and Reformed dogmatics comes boldly to life in the hymns, sermons, and

prayers of subjugated American slaves and their descendants' (p. 79). In the end, the authors encourage us toward embracing a Christ who suffers in solidarity with his people. But they also offer a warning: 'Indeed, American history shows us that we often fashion the kind of Christ we need - or think we need - whether we find ourselves in power or in weakness and despair' (p. 89).

Mouw and Sweeney have raised important considerations in this compact book. Theologians in a global context will find critique and encouragement as they seek a nuanced Christology. Perhaps most helpful for pastors and informed lay leaders, the authors deepen and enrich our vision of the suffering Jesus.

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Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart. By Christena Cleveland. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8308-4403-6. 220 pp. £11.99.

Reflections on the nature of the unity of the church and considerations of the challenges that unity faces began with the New Testament writings and have never gone out of fashion. From time to time, however, theological or ethical tremors put greater pressure on the fault lines and the cracks are easier to see. Christena Cleveland's suggestively titled *Disunity in Christ* comes at such a time, and makes a welcome contribution to the maintenance of healthy Christian community. Dr Cleveland writes as a social psychologist rather than theologian or ethicist, and this brings a sense of freshness and and practical engagement to her work. As is often the case, however, a strength brings an attendant weakness, and such is the case here. But first—how does Cleveland address her task?

The book comprises ten relatively brief chapters. The opening chapter sets out the basic problem: whereas Jesus connected with everybody, the tendency in today's church is towards cultural homogeneity—relating to the 'right' kind, remaining distant from the 'wrong' kind. Cleveland applies the insights of social psychology both to the diagnosis of this condition, and to the prescriptions for overcoming it. Chapters 2 through 4 explore the nature, origins, and outworking of social division. Ethnic, cultural, and theological homogeneity are the norm; ironically, proximity leads groups to accentuate difference in order to maintain boundaries. Such divisions often arise out of simple preference elevated to group identity markers. With categories of 'in' and 'out' groups formed, interpersonal relationships are 'polluted' by the operation of these alternate universes. Chapter 5 reflects pointedly on the interrelationship of self-

and group-identity, noting the ways in which self esteem can be bolstered or damaged by group interaction. Altering self-perception and expanding group identity can promote inclusion. This insight is worked out over the following chapters 6 through 9, extrapolating the theme of conflict through identity formation, cultural allegiances, and cultural threats. While Cleveland throughout keeps a steady eye on ways in which these tensions and conflicts may be addressed, the final two chapters provide a more focused and sustained engagement with the positive steps that might be taken to promote positive cross-cultural interaction, and to do this out of an identity rooted in Christ.

There is much to appreciate here. Cleveland writes deftly and wears her learning lightly. Social scientific prose can often be jargon laden, but Cleveland avoids this pitfall; the system adopted for references is unobtrusive and effective. From the anecdotes and illustrations, it is clear that the book is deeply contextualized in the life of the local church, for all that it is avowedly a work of social psychology. Even though some chapters seem to blur together (I think this is especially true of chs. 6-8, moving from 'identity wars' to 'culture wars' to 'cultural conflict'), Cleveland manages to maintain the book's momentum, in spite of the inevitable overlap that comes with attending to the multi-faceted processes of social division and their outcomes.

There are points at which Cleveland demonstrates (inadvertently?) just how difficult is the task she calls us to. Given the encouragement to move beyond simplistic categorizations it was unnerving to see the handling of 'Randy the Hymn Lover' (p. 139, 150) who becomes a casualty of the culture wars Cleveland is attempting to stop.

My lingering sense, however, is that there is a missing—or at least significantly under-represented—element in the analysis. Cleveland's firm and patient probes into the dynamics of social differentiation seldom stray from the social scientific realm. To be fair, the framework of social psychology is explicitly declared (p. 22) and the book's aims qualified (pp. 18-19). But it remains the case that the diagnostic tools used determine the prescriptions offered. Social causes invite social solutions. Should it be at all unsettling that in a book about Christian community, the problems and prospects should derive from and be wholly transferable to sports teams, friendship networks, book clubs, or just about any voluntary society? The sort of 'group think' that underlies the counsel that we need to change the way we see ourselves, and develop 'strategies' for doing so (pp. 98, 98-100, 184-5) relegates the necessity of the gospel's power to transform, and results in a 'self-help' scenario at home in any secular setting. The relationship, at any rate, seems inverted in Paul's confrontation with Peter in Galatians 2:14, where gospel claims take priority

over identity formation, and where diving deeper into the nature of salvation—as Paul goes on to do—is the vehicle for addressing the problem of communal fissures.

It is not that this sort of reflection is entirely absent from Cleveland's book: there is, for example, an effective example woven into chapter 6 (p. 114). But on the whole, I was reminded of the preface to Peter Berger's *A Rumour of Angels* (London: Allen Lane, 1969) in which he confessed his disquiet at the way his previous book on the sociology of religion 'read like a treatise on atheism, at least in parts'. Its appendix dealing with 'theological implications' struck him as unsatisfactory, and *A Rumour of Angels* was his attempt to provide a more appropriate place for explicitly Christian, theological reflection. Signs of this kind of methodological self-awareness are difficult to discern in Cleveland's work, although it is possible that, like Berger, she will will bring them to the fore in subsequent studies.

There is another point at which this tension emerges, one which is not easily resolved. The notion of 'self-esteem' has some importance in the central part of the book (in chapter 5 in particular), as in psychological terms, a healthy 'self-concept' contributes positively to healthy relationships more widely. As it happened, I was reading Timothy Dudley-Smith's biography of John Stott at the same time as reading *Disunity in Christ*. In this context, it was jarring to arrive at an account of some of the parallels between Stott and Charles Simeon. Dudley-Smith notes a telling use Stott made of a Simeon quote on the question of the 'principal mark of regeneration'. Simeon's reply: 'The very first and indispensable sign is self-loathing and abhorrence... Were I now addressing to you my dying words, I should say nothing else but what I have just said. Try to live in this spirit of self-abhorrence...' (T. Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry. The Later Years* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2001), p. 429). This is another point at which gospel inversion invites a different kind of reflection and prescription than one bounded so markedly by the social scientific.

These are again days in which the church in Scotland, as elsewhere, is facing pressures which could lead to the sort of splintering that damages its witness before a watching world. It is imperative that Christians not divide needlessly while seeking to live as faithful disciples of Jesus, who was willing to reject as well as connect, and in whom is found the power to transform lives and communities. Cleveland's book offers much to help in that task.

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Outreach and the Artist. By Constantine R. Campbell. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-310-49496-6. 128 pp. £10.99.

This book by Con Campbell, who lectures in theology and is an accomplished jazz musician, is immediately valuable for its rarity. It concerns the arts and outreach. Campbell explains why and how these relate to one another, and what pitfalls must be avoided. It is a subject seldom addressed, especially by someone qualified in both fields. Through theology, personal anecdotes and professional artists' profiles, he constructs a convincing edifice to support the arts as a valid, even essential means of outreach.

After opening with his own testimony, Campbell gets to the nuts and bolts of outreach through the arts by discussing his 'Jazz Testimonial' nights. He asks 'What does jazz have to do with Jesus?' (p. 30). It is always possible to find a connection between the arts and the gospel because art is about life. Jesus is the source of all life, therefore the arts must relate to Jesus. The real purpose of the arts is to 'give expression to the human condition' (p. 34). The connection does not need to be forced, it is already there.

There are plenty do's and don'ts, which he outlines. It is desirable to have good communication and good rapport between the church and the artists they are using for the outreach. While the message must not be dumbed down, neither, the artist might argue, should the quality of the art. Both must, above all, give God the glory.

He is very clear that you must always be honest with the audience. Nothing annoys people more than deception, offering a jazz concert with an unexpected evangelistic message about Jesus half way through. Also, Western societies are more secular than at the time of the Billy Graham crusades, making them a much harder audience than the previous generation. So Campbell tells us that he treats his Jazz Testimonial evenings more like a first date. 'What's the purpose of a first date?' he asks? 'To get a second date, of course'. He backs this up by recounting how a man came to Christ through just such a gradual introduction (p. 52).

At the heart of all artistic endeavours by Christians is the issue of what has predominance: the message or the medium? Campbell rightly points out there is room for two approaches. The first gives greater emphasis on art being used as a means to promote the gospel message, and is well documented by Campbell's own story.

In the second approach, while the art form may be informed by the truth of Christ, the message is not immediately explicit. It could be termed 'pre-evangelism' (p. 64). This slow burn style is essential in reaching the secular world with the ultimate truth of Christianity. Campbell is clear

that while applauding both approaches, the message and medium format is better and more direct for outreach.

Targeting the artistic community is difficult, because often these subcultures can be near impenetrable to the uninformed. Campbell concludes that 'the best evangelism occurs through relationships' (p. 76); either through artists who are Christians, or Christians who have a real appreciation of the arts. All the profiles of professional artists provided in the book clarify the difficulties both groups have in understanding each other. One hurdle to overcome is that for many artists, their art is their idol. He says 'art is a wonderful servant but a terrible master' (p. 103). Christ alone is worthy of our adoration. Another is the view, among many artists, that the church is 'characterized by conservatism, a degree of intellectual naiveté, self-absorption and moralizing' (p. 84).

This book reminds us that art was God's idea, follows from his nature, and must therefore be appropriate for use in glorifying him. Artists who are Christians have much to offer, both through art-inspired ministry and also when embedded within the artistic community. While a brief mention of the history of arts and the church would have been a useful addition, Con Campbell's book is a great encouragement for artists who are Christians, and a timely prompt for the church to support and utilise this underused, yet essential, asset.

Allan MacDonald, Inverness

Triple Jeopardy for the West: Aggressive Secularism, Radical Islam and Multiculturalism. By Michael Nazir-Ali. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-4411-1347-4. 196 pp. £10.99.

Bishop Nazir-Ali presents a pertinent thesis in an urgent style. His argument is that the foundation of British morality, stability and prosperity is Christianity. However this foundation is being undermined by extremist forms of secularism and Islam and a wrong approach to multiculturalism. So the country faces different kinds of crises.

British society still uses many ethical concepts based upon the biblical account of creation, such as equality, freedom and social welfare. However an aggressive secularist worldview is attacking practices which are beneficial for the nation. This includes the weakening of the family through absentee fathers and the lack of personal responsibility towards one's neighbour through a demand for rights.

Within this situation of change an alternative religious and political ideology – that of radical Islam – has established itself. This form of Islam which has produced atrocities, is distinct from the moderate type which can exist peacefully with the Christian worldview.

British politicians hope that society can be stabilized and developed through scientific progress and multicultural harmony. However, aims to achieve tolerance between ethnic communities has failed because of the promotion of the diversity of languages and cultures, and a lack of Christian hospitality in receiving the incomer. So rather than multicultural policies producing peace in society there has been an increase in tension and violence. Nazir-Ali's view of multiculturalism is different from that of Dewi Hughes who argues that diverse ethnicity and languages are God given (*Castrating Culture: A Christian Perspective on Ethnic Identity from the Margins* [Paternoster, 2001]).

The writer warns against the expectation that all religions are equally valid in producing a lifestyle beneficial to society. The only solution to the present situation is found in a recognition of the positive influence of biblical thought and a faith in the triune God whose nature is one of shared love and ordered relationships and who calls for responsible action.

Nazir-Ali's publication presents this thesis in four parts dealing with the roots of British society, the threat of radical Islam, scientific issues and political implications. The author is one of the most qualified Christians to write upon this theme, having dual Pakistani and British citizenship and experience of sitting in the House of Lords as well as that of a diocesan Bishop. He has an understanding of a wide range of ethical disciplines including embryo research and end-of-life issues and a thorough knowledge of Islam and its radical tendencies as seen in the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Sympathetic reviewers have found the book's main weakness to be that it is a compilation of previously published articles and broadcasts. So it fails to read as a composite publication, and contains an overlap of material and an imbalance of content.

Nevertheless, those who are interested in the subject of the Christian prophetic voice in society will be most appreciative of the author's work. It helpfully provides an insight into the changes and crises experienced in Britain and points to the extent that biblical influence is still evident. This publication is an encouragement to Christian pastors engaged in a multicultural society.

Shortly before its publication the author gave an hour long talk to Irish Roman Catholic priests and students summarising the book's arguments and also responding to questions. This is a more coherent presentation of his main thesis and is available online under the 'Talks' section of the Iona Institute website (www.ionainstitute.ir).

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Global Mission: Reflections and Case Studies in Contextualization for the Whole Church. Edited by Rose Dowsett. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-87808-532-3. xvii + 277 pp. £10.84.

The authentic contextualisation of the Gospel is one of the enduring challenges faced by all who engage in cross-cultural mission. As the church in the west faces the challenge of communicating the gospel to a post-Christian culture, it is, and will increasingly become a crucial issue for UK churches and Christians. A new book on contextualisation then holds the promise of being a welcome resource. Like the proverbial football match, this is very much a book of two halves. It is a book in two sections, with the first section entitled 'Reflections and Foundations' and consisting of a number of chapters aiming to give some biblical and theological foundations for contextualisation, and the second, entitled "Contextualisation at Work", consisting of a large number of cases studies and accounts of contextualisation in practice. Like many recent books produced by the World Evangelical Alliance, it is a multi-author work, with contributors coming from all five continents (though only eight of the thirty or so contributors are women). However, as it may be in the proverbial football game, the quality of the two sections is rather different.

The strengths of this book lie in the second section, which consists of case studies drawn from a wide range of contexts and areas of mission practice. It is in these situations that questions of contextualisation arise, and where the challenges of contextualising authentically become most acute. The various situations are presented by the authors, and then study questions are provided to encourage reflection. This makes the book a very helpful resource for all those who teach mission. The chapters which look at aspects of mission in Asia by Chua, Chew, Lee, Imamura and Maggay are all very good, as are the chapters looking at the fascinating question of 'Churchless Christianity' which arise from the Indian context. There is also, as would be expected, some stimulating chapters exploring contextualisation among Muslims, probably the area of sharpest contention in mission at present. Only one chapter, by Richard Tiplady, addresses issues of contextualisation in post-Christian Europe. It offers a helpful analysis of why Europe presents a missiological challenge, but does not have the space to look at the range of current responses. Its focus on emerging church means it is limited in its usefulness.

The first section of the book is, however, disappointing. None of the chapters offer the depth of investigation needed to provide an overall definition of contextualisation, let alone any real biblical or theological framework within which to consider it. There is insufficient attention paid to the pioneer writers in this field—Walls, Hiebert, Kraft and Hes-

selgrave—and no mention of Richard Niebuhr's work, which means there is little attention paid to the question of how we conceive of culture. Lidorio's opening chapter promises 'a biblical theology of contextualisation' but fails to deliver anything like that (in fairness, probably hampered by word restrictions). Cook's chapter on 'contextual exegesis' introduces the concept of producing an interpretive summary of a passage of Scripture as the essential work to precede both preaching and theological formulation, and here too a much longer treatment would have been welcome. Some of the writers seem to treat contextualisation as equivalent to communicating across cultures, but this is only one dimension of it, and the fuller question of how one expresses the gospel faithfully and authentically in a given cultural context is not really tackled. Brown, for example, refers to the Council of Jerusalem, which is in my view the biblical paradigm for authentic contextualisation, and refers also to Hiebert's 'Critical Contextualisation' but again there is nothing like the depth of content necessary. Since these foundations are not in place, no clear guidelines are given by which to assess the approaches taken to contextualisation by the practitioners who appear in the second section.

Overall then, this book it is not really one to recommend for those new to the subject, but it contains much that is helpful for teachers of mission to use with their students and also for practitioners to consider as they reflect on their own approach.

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The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity. By David Brakke. Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2010. xii + 164 pp. £24.95.

In this book, David Brakke positions his project within a larger scholarly fray that is acutely aware of the problematic nature of 'Gnosticism' as a descriptive historical category. Against several paradigms which have been tried and (rightly) found wanting, Brakke commends a study of the early Christian milieu that attends to the ways in which early Christians employed hybridity, rhetoric, and metaphors of ethnicity as means of constructing reality. Unlike typological accounts of Gnosticism, which seem to prioritise – perhaps arbitrarily – certain theological or mythic features, and unlike other proposals for dropping the label 'Gnosticism' altogether, Brakke's account seeks to identify social continuities through discerning shared mythologies and rituals.

This begins in Chapter 2 with an examination of the 'Gnostic' literature. For Brakke, the 'Gnostics'—despite the fact that the term also enjoys a broader, elastic use among the ancient heresiologists—were indeed

an identifiable community by the same name, otherwise known to us today as the 'Sethian Gnostics' (p. 31). Teasing out a shared mythological account, the author identifies texts which may be deemed Gnostic in the strict sense. In Chapter 3, following some discussion of specific features of the Gnostic myth, Brakke goes on to treat the distinctive Gnostic practices of baptism and theurgical ascent. Whereas Gnosticism has been broadly conceived as having originated in pre-Christian Judaism, Brakke demurs on this point, insisting that 'the Gnostic myth … represented a creative response to the life and message of Jesus of Nazareth' (p. 88). In Chapter 4, the author examines three key second-century figures: Marcion, Valentinus, and Justin Martyr. The longevity of both Marcion and Valentinus as members of good standing within the Roman church is a measure of the same church's institutional tolerance. By contrast, Justin 'developed his idea of heresy explicitly in response to [this] Christian diversity' (p. 109), even though he 'can hardly be distinguished from either Valentinus or Marcion as clearly as the label "proto-orthodox" implies' (p. 111). The book closes in Chapter 5 with some reflection on how all these figures employed similar strategies of legitimisation and self-differentiation, including appeals to apostolic succession, canons of authoritative texts, speculative allegorising, and withdrawal of communion. The upshot of all this is that the '"Church" did not reject "Gnosticism," nor did the Gnostics "lose" to "proto-orthodoxy." Rather, the Gnostic school of thought, small and limited as it was, played an important role in the process by which Christians, even today, continually reinvent themselves, their ideas, and their communities in light of their experience of Jesus Christ' (p. 137).

By all accounts, *The Gnostics* is a well-researched and exquisitely-written book. In a scholarly arena which to vacillate between, on the one side, heavy-handed etic categorizations and, on the other side, a radically (and thus heuristically useless) historicist approach, Brakke's volume strikes a very welcome middle ground. The author has done remarkable justice to the complexity of second-century Christianity, especially within the scope of such a short book. The book's major weakness – perhaps a function of its sociological interest – has to do with its occasional theological obtuseness. Without more nuanced attention to the flashpoints between the heresiologists and their opponents, I for one remain unpersuaded that ascriptions of heresy had more to do with certain isolated petulant voices than the trajectory to which these belonged.

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Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practices in Defense of Our Faith. By K. Scott Oliphint. Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4335-2817-0. 277 pp. £13.49.

Ministers in secular society are increasingly seeing a need for training congregations in apologetics, that they might be equipped to defend their Christian faith. Consequently the need has emerged for literature that provides the tools necessary for engaging in today's society from the pulpit and in personal conversation. But many have found apologetics a difficult subject that is concerned with philosophical matters and best studied by academics. Students, less comfortable with philosophical categories are often left asking the question, 'How does this teaching apply?' Oliphint's *Covenantal Apologetics* goes a long way in addressing this matter. He shows both the principles of apologetics and their application. It is an accessible, yet thorough study of the subject by an apologist who is also an ordained minister, well-acquainted with the needs of pastoral ministry. Accordingly, the reader will find relevant insights that are ready for application in evangelism. This text ought to be received well by all who are engaged in gospel ministry.

Some knowledge of philosophy will be helpful in reading this book, but Oliphint's grasp of the history of thought is such that he is able to spell out the significance of these matters in a way that will appeal to all readers. Accounts of philosophers such as Hume and Kant show the influence these figures have had upon contemporary thought (see pp. 66-71 especially for his analysis of Kant), as well as critiques on current influential figures such as Richard Dawkins.

At the heart of this volume are ten theses concerning human relationships to God. These are referred to throughout the course of the book and are particularly helpful in thinking through the often-neglected relationship in Christian theology of postlapsarian human nature 'in Adam' to God. Oliphint's view, consistent with the Westminster Confession of Faith, is that the human relationship between man and God is covenantal both before and after the fall. Oliphint is concerned with the outworking of this covenantal relationship. Given that the covenantal character of the prelapsarian human relationship to God is not in vogue among evangelical theologians today, perhaps more could be said to persuade readers of the prelapsarian covenant. But for those who are committed to a covenantal framework there will be much to gain from Oliphint's insights, as to what the covenantal relationship entails for all 'in Adam' and 'in Christ'. Some may find the covenantal approach off-putting if they have been unconvinced by arguments for the significance of covenant in the opening chapters of Scripture. But any who engage in evangelising

will find the analysis of how deeply embedded the rejection of God is both historically and doctrinally to be thought-provoking, if not convincing.

There is much here to encourage the reader in personal evangelism. The emphasis is upon the authority of Christ and his word. Knowledge of philosophy, religion and culture is desirable, but not necessary in evangelism. The greater concern is to introduce a person to the word of God, for here authority structures outside of Christ are exposed and the truth of Christ and his salvation is communicated to us. Examples of evangelistic debates and conversations are given and analysed to encourage the reader to think through their own personal conversations and apply the principles given in the book. Mention must also be made of the excellent introductory essay by William Edgar which provides background to the methodology of this volume.

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