Reviews

An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks and Romans. By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8028-6797-8. xii + 310pp. £19.99.

He is one of the most influential and controversial figures in history so it is little wonder that there is a wide proliferation of material on the apostle Paul. In the midst of this milieu it can be difficult to pinpoint where to start in engaging with Pauline thought. *An Anomalous Jew* by Michael Bird is a collection of essays which will certainly help in this task. Three of these essays have been published previously (Chapters 1, 4 & 5) but they have been updated for this book to bring them into line with the main argument; Paul was a Jew, of sorts.

It begins with a detailed introduction, mapping out the direction that Bird wishes to take in exploring Paul's relationship with Judaism. He presents a variety of concepts which have been employed by scholars to describe this relationship such as Paul the former Jew, the transformed Jew, the faithful Jew, the radical Jew and the anomalous Jew. It is this final idea which Bird chooses as a lens for getting to grips with Paul's relationship to Judaism. He argues, 'the anomalous nature of Paul's thought consists of his apocalyptic interpretation of the Messiah's death and resurrection' (p. 28). For Bird, the revelation of Jesus Christ is the key factor in producing the anomaly which radically alters not only Paul's worldview but his understanding of the signs and symbols of Judaism in his day. This is the main thesis which is explored in a variety of ways throughout the remainder of this book.

The opening chapter reviews Paul's understanding of Jewish soteriology of the Second Temple period. After a survey of this debate Bird concludes that Paul's reason for differing with his Jewish contemporaries came down to the revelation of Christ taking a position above Torah observance. Chapter two is a wonderful overview of Paul's missionary journeys, investigating how he was perceived by others in the world around him as well as what he understood as his mission as an apostle of Christ. Bird rightly calls into question the popular perspective of Paul being the apostle to the Gentiles. This is something which has great practical implications when considering the role of the believer in a globalised world. We are not simply sent to a particular people or place; we are the ambassadors of the gospel of Christ wherever we are located, whatever the circumstances.

Moving on Bird, takes up the task of exploring different themes relating to the Book of Galatians. Chapter three deals with reading Galatians apocalyptically, yet remaining grounded in salvation history. With the coming of the kingdom of God in Christ there are a variety of tensions which rise to the surface regarding his relationship with Judaism which profoundly influence the early Christian communities which he helps shape. Taking this a step further in chapter four is a discussion of Paul's heated disagreement with Peter regarding Jew and Gentile relations in Christ's church. For Bird, this moment in Antioch is where Paulinism begins.

Rounding off this exploration of Paul's anomalous identity in the world of the first century is a study of his relationship with the Roman Empire with focus on the Book of Romans. Bird suggests that the book could have been a direct challenge to the Roman emperors' totalitarian claim for worship and devotion from all citizens. This continues the theme of Paul's anomalous identity for he neither advocates that Christ's followers should embrace this worship nor should they become a confrontational resistance movement.

Although this book does not venture into uncharted territory it is a great compilation of thought on Paul the man, his message and his mission. Michael Bird is to be commended for not only drawing these essays together but also for compiling a great bibliographic resource which will lead the reader into various avenues of further reading. He writes with a delightful style which makes it easy to read and follow with him. It would be a great tool for students engaging with Pauline thought and pastors seeking some background on the anomalous nature of the apostle Paul.

Martin Paterson, OMF International, Glasgow

Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice. By Marvin J. Newell. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-830-84473-9. 298pp. £15.47.

We all live and work cross-culturally, but like fish in water, we often can't see what's all around us. It turns out that some of the water is inside ourselves and our churches – and that a lot of what we need to navigate is right under our noses.

Here's how Newell puts it: 'People are immersed in [culture] but they don't think a lot about it. They live their lives feeling that things are the way they are because that's the way they ought to be. Every "ethnic group" or community of individuals possesses something in common that's invisible but manifests itself in a group culture we call culture' (p. 17).

With scripture as the point of reference, an amazing journey begins as Newell explores three dimensions. First, he shows how scripture *portrays cultures*, describing how beliefs, values and customs are lived out, often depicting cultures without commending them. Second, as a *sculptor of cultures*, scripture shapes life for the better. 'Where scripture is regarded as authoritative, many social evils embedded in the customs of communities have been either discontinued or adjusted to reflect standards of morality and social well-being God always intended for humans to enjoy' (p. 14). Finally, and most tellingly, scripture *appraises cultures*. 'Its supracultural values are meant to be the accepted moral standard for all cultures found everywhere through all time […]. The objective norms and standards of Scripture trump the subjective and selective opinions of humans' (p. 14).

Newell offers sixteen Old and eleven New Testament insights. From the Tower of Babel ('Your cross-cultural sojourn means you will never feel at home again in a monocultural environment' p. 29), to Sarah and Hagar (understanding honour and shame), Rahab (the informed prostitute, aka 'everyone's watching you'), Daniel the cross-cultural student, the contrasting worldviews of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, Paul engaging across the cultures in Athens, this book will equip you well for the journey.

Newell leaves us with Luke's 'Last Word' ringing in our ears. Acts 28:31 assures us that, whatever the traps, the gospel goes out 'unhindered.' No-one can stop what God is doing. From where I stand, working with an agency whose stated aim is to overcome barriers and present Christ's good news wherever we find ourselves, and with churches longing to make sense of what's going on around them and reach people who seem far away, this book should be part of everyone's training.

Mike Parker, Edinburgh

Preaching Christ from Psalms: Foundations for Expository Sermons in the Christian Year. By Sidney Greidanus. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7366-8. 595pp. £30.99.

This book is a gold mine for preachers who wish to expound the Book of Psalms. The potential of twenty-two of the one hundred and fifty psalms is closely and helpfully explored as key texts for preaching Christ in the 21st Century. The author, who is professor emeritus of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, draws upon his own extensive experience in preaching, as well as pressing into service many valuable insights culled from a range of contemporary Psalm scholars. Each of the twenty-two psalms has been selected in terms of its capacity to provide an appropriate biblical text for one season in the Christian Year. Additionally, the

author believes that preaching these psalms reinforces the foundational theological theme: Creation – Fall – Redemption – New Creation.

The heart of this large volume is found in the first forty-five pages which cover the key steps from text to sermon. These steps include both interpretation and preaching. Helpful pointers are offered to interpreting psalms from a literary, historical, theocentric and Christocentric perspective. On preaching the author offers very useful guidance on preaching poetry, selecting the preaching text, generating questions about the psalm in view, determining the psalm's theme and goal, formulating the sermon's theme, goal and need addressed, producing the sermon outline and applying the psalm. More broadly, there is also advice on reading the psalm in public worship, using verses from the psalm in the liturgy, and preaching series of sermons on psalms.

While the author strongly believes that each psalm ought to be expounded as whole, he is not against preaching through one psalm in consecutive sermons. But cherry picking is frowned on. Identifying and understanding the genre of a psalm is important, as also is recognising its poetic devices (such as imagery and parallelism), its rhetorical structures and its literary contexts. The theocentric revelation of each psalm is to be explored in the context of both the Book of Psalms and the Old Testament, while its Christocentric focus should be determined in the context of the New Testament. Greidanus contends that we can legitimately preach Christ from every psalm, but eisegesis is to be avoided. Rather, we are to be guided in general by the New Testament appropriation of the psalm. After all, the Book of Psalms is quoted or alluded to in the New Testament more than any other book. In particular we are to interpret the witness of the psalms to Christ in the light of the redemptive-historical progression of divine revelation, the promise-fulfilment motif, typology, analogy with the teaching of Christ, and longitudinal themes running through several biblical books.

Each of the twenty-two psalms under review in the book are helpfully engaged in some detail through this hermeneutical process, which is followed by a 'Sermon Exposition' expounding the text of the psalm verse by verse. The latter contains many valuable expositional insights, but is light on application, and is more a sermon resource than a sample sermon. On the other hand, the three sermons and the meditation in the appendix are good examples of preaching the text into the lived experience of hearers.

This is an excellent book. It would have been even better had the sermon expositions demonstrated how the theology of a psalm contributes to dogmatic theology. For example, the treatments of Psalms 130 and 22 could have been enriched by specifying, at least to some extent, their contribution to the development of the doctrine of sin, on the one

hand, and of the atonement on the other. This quibble apart, preachers will find this book to be an invaluable compendium containing multiple fascinating insights into the psalms which provide exciting grist for the interpretive-homiletical mill.

Fergus Macdonald, Edinburgh

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible. By E. Randolph Richards & Brandon J. O'Brien. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012. ISBN 978-0-83083-7823. 240pp. £11.99.

One of my colleagues says of Egypt, 'I live in a country that could wake up Christian on Tuesday.' He says it to explain to Western friends, so immersed in personal priorities and individual decision-making, what it means to live in a communal culture.

Richards & O'Brien are two Americans who have worked cross-culturally in Indonesia. *Misreading Scripture* is a brilliant introduction to the joys and perils of reading the Bible in different contexts. You'll chuckle and you'll wince in equal proportions, and you'll discover insights you never saw before.

Along the way you'll discover unexamined assumptions about race, language, shame, time, relationships, morality, and discerning God's will. You'll never read about David and Bathsheba or Jeremiah 29:11 the same again, nor think of Jesus' return in the same terms. You'll learn about you and *yous*. You'll rethink how you balance wisdom and timing, and review how you see rules and relationships.

Between West and East, North and South, and with my group's focus on the Middle East, we may feel we're somewhere in between the two extremes. Not so. The Middle East is definitely more East than West, as the sections about what people say and what they mean reveal. 'Several Eastern languages have no word for *privacy*' (p. 76). To be alone is a shame in the Middle East, and our friends do all they can to make sure it doesn't happen to you.

In their final chapter, the authors recognise that Westerners always want to finish with three quick keys to being a more culturally sensitive reader of Scripture. 'That's a sort of Western thing to want, isn't it?' (p. 211) asks their Syrian friend married to a Canadian brought up in Ecuador and who has worked cross-culturally in Africa. After enjoying the joke, Richards & O'Brien summarise what they're doing: 'We're trying to help you become […] the kind of reader who is increasingly aware of his or her cultural assumptions. And that takes time, self-reflection and hard work' (p. 212). They conclude by giving us five pieces of advice: embrace

complexity, beware of overcorrection, be teachable, don't be afraid of making mistakes, and above all read God's Word together. That's good advice, wherever we are, as we submit to the text of God's Word together.

Mike Parker, Edinburgh

Aquinas Among the Protestants. Edited by Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen. Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-119-26589-4. xii + 314pp. £60.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is perhaps the best-known theologian from the medieval period. His massive writing output remains an impressive feat in its breadth and depth. Roman Catholics appropriated his most comprehensive work, the *Summa Theologica*, in their response to the Reformation as a way to show they also had powerhouse theologians, and there is a seemingly endless amount of literature on Thomas and subsequent versions of 'Thomism.' Yet, almost all of that literature has focused on the legacy of Thomas in the Catholic tradition.

Past treatments of the relationship between Thomas, Thomism, and Protestantism essentially viewed Thomas as the villain that Protestants rejected. *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, however, has sought to revise that narrative of Protestant reception of Thomist thought. There have been a few recent studies that have noted the positive role Thomas had in the thought of some Protestant theologians, but the volume under review seems to be the first attempt to explore Thomas's Protestant legacy from multiple and more comprehensive angles.

The contributors to this work know that the thesis of this book is controversial. Many in the Protestant tradition – historians and theologians – will not be amiable to the claim that elements of Thomism were well received in the Protestant tradition. Their case, however, is not overstated, which is a great strength of each essay.

For an edited volume, there is remarkable consensus and agreement between the contributors, and each essay really does contribute to the same thesis that Protestantism has and still can positively draw on Thomas' theology. The argument, however, is not that Thomist thought was wholesale adopted by any Protestants. Instead, they argue that the reception of Thomas was eclectic, and selective.

Although some will not be happy even with this restrained thesis, historically it seems hard that it could (or now should be) otherwise. When the Reformers had to choose between various metaphysics, the options were essentially Bonaventure's equivocation, Scotus' univocity, or Thomas' view of analogy. The Reformed tradition in particular has leaned heavily on an analogical understanding of the Creator-creature distinction, and

its entailments for ontology and epistemology. This, among other doctrines, was adopted and modified in Protestant traditions.

The first part of the book comprises historical studies. Each essay examines the relationship between Thomas and various aspects or representative figures of Protestantism. All of these essays are helpful and thought provoking. Jordan Ballor's essay opens the discussion of the historical section by pointing out that the story of Aquinas among the Protestants cannot be reduced to Luther's or Calvin's reception of him. There were changing paradigms of thought as Reformation advanced in later generations, and there were new demands for answers from Protestantism in the apologetic task. Despite some early Reformers' stark rejection of Thomas, later Protestants were able to retrieve and appropriate aspects of his thought, even when they modified it.

Other essays of note in the first section are Stefan Lindholm's very insightful essay 'Jerome Zanchi's Use of Thomas Aquinas', which demonstrates that a fairly major Reformed theologian drew significantly from Thomist thought, and Torrance Kirby's provocative 'Richard Hooker and Thomas Aquinas on Defining Law', which draws connections between the Thomistic view of natural law and echoes of that view in the Reformed tradition. All of these historical essays will spark new discussion and reinvigorated investigation of Thomas and how his theology was received and used among Reformed, Anglican, and Lutheran thinkers.

The second part of the book collects essays on constructive theological engagement with Thomas' theology. Several of these essays are very strong, and provide helpful models for thinking through how to read Thomas, and make selective use of his thought while at the same time remaining true to Protestant distinctives.

There is an essay to demonstrate some interaction between Thomism and Protestant thought for nearly every major area of theology. Sebastian Rehnman writes on philosophy in conversation with a Thomistic theory of existence and human passion and action. This essay was the hardest to follow, and I thought least explicit about what Thomas said on the issues involved. It will be most difficult for those not familiar with Aquinas to understand in conjunction with the thesis of the book.

Paul Helm engages Thomas on the issue of nature and grace, and provides a very useful historical sketch of how Reformed thinkers interacted with Thomas on the issue of natural law, and the role of grace. One of the most helpful points drawn here is how, given the level at which Aquinas' thought circulated in the early modern period, Protestants need not have engaged him directly through his writings to have received and used aspects of his theology. There were reverberations of Thomas in some

Protestant theologians, even when it is not evident that they read him first hand.

J.V. Fesko interacts with Thomas' view of justification, and argues that although Protestants did not and cannot accept his doctrine of infused grace as it relates to justification, it does have fruitful potential in application to the Reformed understanding of sanctification. This essay in particular gives a useful example of how to identify doctrinal structures in Thomas's theology, and look for ways to re-appropriate them as part of the Protestant tradition.

These essays of theological engagement with Thomas are all thoughtful, and well-done efforts in constructive work and conversing with the past Christian tradition.

The only issue I have with this volume is not at all in what it argues, but what it does not include. Without wanting to question the editors' judgment and plan for this work, and granting that publishers often put strict length restraints on works like these, there were a few other essays that, if included, would have made a more roundly comprehensive introduction to Protestant Thomism.

It would have been helpful to have an introduction to various categories of what we mean by 'Thomism.' Having explanations of what Thomistic epistemology, ontology, soteriology, etc. look like would be highly useful for historians and theologians who do not have much experience with Aquinas or who want to have a set of categories for how to engage him historically or theologically moving forward.

Although the essays themselves, particularly in the historical section, provide case studies in the Protestant reception of Aquinas, it would have been useful to have also a taxonomy that surveyed various categories of Thomism and how they were appropriated in various Protestant traditions.

Lastly, although John Bolt's essay discussed the relationship between the Dutch Calvinist tradition and Thomism, this is perhaps the area that will cause the most controversy, in that Reformed readers who follow Cornelius Van Til's apologetic approach will want more answers concerning Van Til's critique of Thomas. Even though this is an issue that will be relevant only to a smaller portion of readers, the fact that it will most likely be the point for most debate seems to make it worth its own essay.

All that said, it is hardly a devastating criticism of a book to say I wish it had said more. The essays here will prove essential to everyone who wants to understand better the neglected relationship of Aquinas among the Protestants.

Harrison Perkins, London City Presbyterian Church

Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church. By Matthew J. Tuininga. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-107-17143-5. xiv + 386pp. £69.99.

The five hundredth anniversary of John Calvin's birth in 2009 resulted in a massive amount of secondary literature devoted to the Genevan reformer, so much so that it seemed unlikely that anything could still usefully produced regarding him. Matthew J. Tuininga has proved that wrong by writing a thorough and incisive examination of Calvin's political theology and how the church relates to the civic culture.

Tuininga's main goal is to provide sources for Christians to think carefully in the twenty-first century about how to associate the role of the church and the role of the civil magistrates. His argument is that a distinction obtains between the role of the church as the agency to promote the cause of Christ and exercise discipline for its members and the role of the government to promote civic order, justice, and fairness. Tuininga argues that Calvin taught foundational principles of this view and that Christians today should take them to their logical entailment and apply them to how church and state should be organized.

This works centres on Calvin's understanding of the two kingdoms. This doctrine says that God rules the church and society in two distinct ways and that each 'kingdom' holds its own unique purpose and integrity within God's plan. The church is the redemptive kingdom that is responsible to do the work of the gospel. The elders of the church rule this kingdom. The civil magistrate, on the other hand, governs the political sphere and is not to interfere with the work of the church. The spiritual kingdom is eschatological in nature and has eternal value, but the political kingdom is temporary and governs this world. Whereas God made the world with a consummative goal in view and the church incorporates believers into that kingdom, the political structures of this world are meant to maintain civic righteousness and order in the interim period until Christ's return.

Tuininga argues that scholarship has significantly overlooked Calvin's use of this distinction between spiritual and political spheres but that it must be recovered to understand Calvin's political theology.

Most of this book, after situating Calvin within the medieval and early-Reformation explanations of the two kingdoms, is taken up exploring Calvin's foundational principles for this distinction between kingdoms. Calvin's eschatology remains central throughout, but it is clear that he also outlined differing principles that govern the spiritual and political kingdoms.

The detailed analysis of each distinct kingdom within Calvin's corpus reveals that he definitely explained the principles that guide the separate

kingdoms according to their specific ends. Calvin thought the natural law holds an important role in governing the political kingdom. This political kingdom, although it is supposed to promote civil order and godliness, is not to take the job of the church onto itself.

Despite these clear distinctions, Calvin's teaching on the two kingdoms did contain tensions. He thought that there was such a thing as a Christian society and that the civil magistrate was to uphold both tables of the Decalogue. Both points are somewhat at odds with how Tuininga argues Calvin's view should be appropriated. Calvin was not a social liberal, specifically in the sense that he did not see space for pluralism within civic life. Tuininga thought Calvin's principles, however, can undergird pluralism in the political sphere and support a free society as we know it today.

This book is a masterful study of Calvin's thought. Tuininga avoids the pitfall common to Calvin studies of focusing primarily upon the *Institutes* and takes account of a full range of sources including commentaries, treatises, and letters. Despite this broad grasp of sources, it was not clear that the author engaged them in their original languages. He did engage a still untranslated treatise in chapter eight, but otherwise seems to cite standard translations. Given the slightly revisionist cast of this volume, it would seem to the author's benefit to outshine his competitors by displaying his ability to engage the primary sources in a deeper way.

There could also have been more critical explanation of the tensions that exist within Calvin's two kingdoms doctrine and the way that Calvin did closely tie the church and state in a Christian society. Nonetheless, this study is an incredibly insightful work that pushes Calvin studies in new directions. It focuses on the broader political value Calvin had in sixteenth century Geneva, recognizing that Calvin was merely one theologian in his period, and thereby avoids the common approach of pedantic analysis of Calvin's teaching about an isolated doctrine. This is a truly useful book that represents what Calvin studies are supposed to be and should have been for the last ten years.

Harrison Perkins, London City Presbyterian Church

Phoebe. By Paula Gooder. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2018. ISBN 978-1-444-79175-4. 320pp. £14.99.

When I was at school, they changed the biology syllabus. The year before, we were cutting up dead animals to see how they worked, which was not good for the squeamish. After the change, we went outside to see how the animals lived, and we watched them run.

Paula Gooder's passion is 'to ignite people's enthusiasm for reading the Bible today, by presenting the best of biblical scholarship in an accessible and interesting way' (back matter). In Phoebe's story, she's given us a fabulous book, and the letter to the Romans and the characters involved live and run before us.

Gooder starts with Romans 16:2, as it was Phoebe who brought Paul's letter to the Romans. The novel assumes that the one who carried it would have to be the one to explain it. the story explores the themes of the letter as it impacts both those who receive it and the one who delivers it. As the Word does its work on them, Gooder draws you in to engage with each of the familiar characters from the letters to crowded Rome and spacious, free-thinking Corinth. The book is cleverly arranged, with the story told and 'Notes' offered separately, distilling a mix of thorough research, historical detail and engagement with scholarly debate. You might want to read the notes before the story.

Three big themes struck me. First, the business of and the struggle to receive and express forgiveness. It is the astonishingly powerful instinctive witness of contemporary Egyptian Christians under pressure, yet it's hard to deal with the anger and rage and resentment that has built up over so many years. Phoebe herself finds it the hardest journey.

Second, community, another journey made – from the initial joy of discovering Christ to squaring up to the cost of baptism, to the painful business of learning to get on, to accusation, arrest and martyrdom. Strikingly, all this is played out not in a religious space or a church building, but in working households and business premises as the focus of Christian learning and exploration and witness.

Thirdly, apostolicity. It's the best introduction to Pauline Christianity I've read. What was for the Apostles at the start is for the whole church now. As Paul's desire to go via Rome to Spain is picked up and facilitated by the Christian community, the character and focus of the Apostle Paul is the only place where I wondered if Gooder over-reads the evidence. (Spoiler alert): she suggests Paul is so focussed on reaching those who haven't heard that he almost shuns his fellow-Christian contemporaries and colleagues. Read, and see what you think.

One of my five 'Desert Island' books is *The Art of Biblical Narrative* by Robert Alter. It opened my eyes many years ago to the Bible's extraordinary story-telling, the crafted, gripping writing that makes Scripture such compelling reading. Which is why friends in the Middle East often use a story approach to passing on the good news. Maybe Paula Gooder read it too. It's called 'convergence', when years of study, discussion, debate, con

sideration and pastoral experience come together to celebrate and explore the bigger picture.

Start buying it in time for Christmas!

Mike Parker, Edinburgh

The Mission of God – unlocking the Bible's grand narrative. By Christopher J. H. Wright. Leicester: IVP, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8308-5213-0. 581pp. £21.99.

This book is twelve years old now, and continues to stand the test of time as a 'framework' for thinking and shaping church life. In 2006, it came just in time for me as a new and rather punchdrunk mission leader. Since then people have scattered, churches are making mixed responses to the pressure they're under, conflicts have erupted and the Middle East region is a whole lot more complex than ever.

We continue to work a two-way street, expressing support for Middle East churches on the one hand, and telling their story and drawing on their experience on the other. My role is to help colleagues and churches think about what they're doing. But it's slippery stuff. Where are the rocks in the mud, the footholds in the cliff?

They're here in this majestic book, and it turns out they've been there in scripture all along. How did we not see them? I don't know; but one thing is clear, once you begin to notice them, you wonder how you ever missed them.

Chris Wright's point is this: we've had things the wrong way round for too long. For generations we've talked about mission as our response to God, what we do, most dangerously how we do his work. Now its time for what he calls 'the great reversal,' time to turn things round. 'The driving will of the one true living God is to be known throughout his whole creation for who he truly is.' He has done, is doing and will do all in his power to ensure this happens.

Wright reaches an inspirational conclusion, patiently and steadily established: 'In *this* story, God is about the business of transforming the world to fit the shape of the gospel.' (p. 532) Astonishingly, he involves us: the question is therefore not where God fits in to my life but 'where does my little life fit into this great story of God's mission'? (p. 534) It makes me smaller and him bigger; and leads us into wonder and celebration at being allowed – desired – to be co-workers with God. The question is not how God fits into our mission, but 'What kind of church God expects, […] what kind of me God wants for *his* mission.' (p. 534).

Make no mistake, you'll need to take your time with this. Page by thorough page, he brings together what we've held apart for far too long.

His twin interests of Old Testament and mission combine with his striking personal translations of texts throughout as he traces God's activity through the whole of Scripture.

If you grasp what he's saying, you will not be allowed to say 'We don't do politics' because to say 'Jesus is Lord' is the most highly charged political statement in history. You will never again confuse evangelism and social action because you will understand that both God's words and works address the whole of human life and experience. You will be delivered from the twin errors of individualism and apathy about the environment for ever.

Since we worked abroad and now regularly travel, a friend repeatedly asks me, 'How is the experience of mission changing you?' Chris Wright has written this because he has begun to understand how God's mission is changing him and how it should be changing his church, even here, even now.

Mike Parker, Edinburgh

The Letter to the Colossians. By Scot McKnight. (NICNT). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6798-8. lx + 442pp. £31.27.

Scot McKnight brings the valuable experience of many years work and a thorough grasp on Pauline research to his commentary on Colossians. This commentary, being within the NICNT series, does not require the reader to understand the Greek text. However, for those who do, there are helpful comments and footnotes which provide a closer interaction with the Greek. The commentary is moderately technical, but McKnight tries not to get bogged down in details that are tangential to the letter of Colossians itself. It will be of most value to those with some grasp on the field of biblical studies.

The introductory comments feature 72 pages of discussion which cover authorship, opponents and setting, date and imprisonment, Paul's theology in Colossians, and finally the structure of the letter. The introductory section sets out McKnight's position on the letter with thorough (for a commentary) discussions on each aspect, interacting with the literature, and providing extensive references for further reading.

McKnight maintains a Pauline authorship of Colossians. However, he presents this in a nuanced form. Working from what can be known of letter-writing at the time, he counters common assumptions in the authorship debates and argues Paul (and Timothy) were among a team that authored the letter to the Colossians. He argues that the opponents of the letter were a group of Jewish 'halakic mystics' who '*were operating with a Jewish set of ideas and practices*' (p. 29; italics original). In his

sketch of the theology of Paul in the letter he maintains that the letter begins with Christology and has a pastoral intent. He covers the conversion/call of Paul, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Ethics, Eschatology, and the suggestion that Colossians is Antiempire. On this last point he concludes that Colossians is not so much antiempire as supra-empire. His positions on these matters are informed by, and subsequently inform his interpretation of the letter.

At four points in the commentary he takes time for helpful excurses. In the first, the 'wisdom hymn', he discusses the likelihood that 1:15-20 may have formed an early Christian hymn. He also compares and contrasts its content to portions of the biblical and extra-biblical Jewish wisdom tradition. In the second, 'sharing in Christ's sufferings' (1:24), he discusses the often perplexing point of what it means for Paul to fill up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings. He reaches the conclusion that they 'benefit the church in its hearing of the gospel, the instruction in the faith, and in the way of life for the church' (p. 192). In the third, 'the powers as polluted structures' (1:16; 2:15), he discusses what Paul is referring to when he discusses the 'thrones or powers or authorities'. He argues for them being seen as 'supernatural *and* social structures then and can be so today' (p. 253). His final excursus concerns 'household regulations in search of order' (3:18-4:1), in which he discusses a variety of different suggestions concerning the household regulations of 3:18-4:1. He elaborates on his view that 'there is a new Pauline framing of ordinary relations on the basis of living under the lordship of King Jesus' (p. 340) in the commentary proper.

In our contemporary climate it may be of interest to note McKnight's discussion of verses 3:18-19 and husband-wife relations. McKnight refuses to be drawn in to a lengthy discussion of submission, preferring to emphasise instead how these commands differ from the prevailing social views of Paul's world. In essence, the submission is not because of the husband's status, but rather 'in the Lord'. The emphasis for the husband is to love sacrificially: 'Husbands who love like this, as 1 Cor 13 makes clear, do not make demands, do not overpower, and do not violate the integrity of a wife. Instead, the husband who loves like this encourages, empowers, and frees.' (p. 350).

I would recommend this commentary as providing an interpretation that demonstrates excellent interaction with the biblical text and a thorough knowledge of sources contemporary to Paul. In his interpretations McKnight works in insights from Paul's contemporary culture without letting them overwhelm his attention to biblical background. My only issue with this text was that it suffered for readability at times due to difficult sentences. Although McKnight did not come close to this in his

own words, he felt it helpful to quote a sentence-paragraph of Gorman's which was over 200 words. He did not go on to explain its content. For the majority of readers today, a sentence of such length is anything but clear and could do with some explanation. I end with McKnight's words 'My prayer is that you and I will read [Colossians] in order to love God and to love others more' (p. 75).

Philip D. Foster, University of Edinburgh

The Books of Haggai and Malachi. By Mignon R. Jacobs. (NICOT). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8028-2625-1. xlv + 377pp. £39.99.

Mignon R. Jacobs has compiled a thorough commentary on the two small post-exilic prophetic books of Haggai (126 pages) and Malachi (209 pages). In her commentary she makes an effort to address the kinds of questions that, from her experience, church ministers and ministers in training bring to the biblical texts.

As part of her approach, Jacobs set out to provide access to the different interpretive options academics have pursued at different points. This means there is little time spent arguing for one particular interpretation. Being part of the NICOT commentary series means the reader does not need to be able to read the Hebrew language. However, Jacobs does interact extensively with the Hebrew text (using transliteration). Therefore, at least a cursory knowledge of Hebrew would be beneficial to the reader. This commentary will be of most value to those with some knowledge of Hebrew who want a moderately technical commentary and wish to judge interpretations for themselves.

In the introductory comments for Haggai, Jacobs focuses on issues of the prophet and date, historical context, text, intertextual indicators, structural analysis, and message. For both books, the text is based on the Masoretic Text and is Jacobs's translation, including thorough translation notes.

Jacobs dates Haggai to within the restoration period in the sixth century (520-516 BCE) during the reign of Darius I. She highlights the extensive connections between Haggai and other OT books, particularly Ezra, Chronicles, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Leviticus. These provide a great depth of information to aid with understanding the book.

The message of the book centres around the need for obedience in building the temple. 'Fundamentally, the message of the book is one of hope that Yahweh is involved in the life of the community and has authority in the past, present, and future to safeguard the well-being of the community' (p. 29).

For Malachi, there is no discussion about the identity of the prophet because 'There is no biographical information about the prophet in the book and no consensus about whether the designation *mal'ākî* is the name of a person or a title' (p. 129). The dating of the book is also much more difficult because it lacks the date formulas present in other books. However, Jacobs argues for a dating between 515-458 BCE, that is, after Haggai and Zechariah, but before the times of Ezra and Nehemiah (p. 132).

For the intertextual links in Malachi, Jacobs discusses both OT links and NT links. OT links are clustered around the themes of: Priests and Levites; the tithe; marriage and divorce; and sacrifices. All of these issues 'point to issues of in/fidelity to the covenant and insist on acceptable behavior toward Yahweh' (p. 140).

The message of Malachi centres on the fractured relationship between God and the Israelites who have been involved in unacceptable behaviours. The major themes Jacobs highlights are: dishonouring God; stealing from God; divorce; and the Day of Yahweh (pp. 152-3).

There is great value to be found in Jacobs's presentation of the interpretive choices of different scholars. However, discussions of this kind come at a cost: it is easy to get bogged down in the broad range of possibilities and lose sight of the coherence of the message of the book. The value of this presentation may be even greater if either space was given for drawing out implications of interpretations for the coherence of Haggai and Malachi as a whole, or if a little more space was spent in demonstrating how the preferred interpretation maintained coherence. This would have been particularly helpful given the space spent in dealing with the Hebrew which also risks losing sight of the coherence of the message.

Overall I found the commentary on Haggai and Malachi to be well written and insightful. Jacobs's discussion of intertextual elements was helpful and she fulfilled her stated purpose well 'At various points in this book, I discuss intertextual variations on the various interpretive options and allow these options to coexist. Given the richness of the text, the juxtaposed options may invite discussion and further reflection or may jar readers who want a single decisive interpretation' (p. xiii). At different times both of these describe my experience with the commentary. It is, of course, best read when one is looking to consider the options.

Philip D. Foster, University of Edinburgh

Theology after Christendom: Forming Prophets for a Post-Christian World. By Joshua T. Searle. (After Christendom Series). Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-5326-1730-0. xxii + 211pp. £20.00.

Standing in the mould of the prophets of old, Joshua Searle seeks to open our eyes to the signs of the times: the global crises we are living through and the largely inept response of Christianity.

With rigour and perception, Searle describes how global trends have had a dehumanising effect upon society. Consumeristic materialism has replaced generosity and hospitality. The loss of ontological security has led to the rise of religious fundamentalism and nationalist politics. The 'post-truth' world of 'alternative facts' has arisen to buttress individual worldviews in a landscape of destabilising voices. Many, overwhelmed by the scale of the social issues we are surrounded with, have resorted to the numbing banality of reality television and the narcissism of social media. Searle describes the situation as a crisis of compassion and the moral fragmentation of our communities.

However, Searle's critique of the church's response to these crises is the fiercest of all. When faced by these challenges, he sees the church to have retreated into the 'stifling rationalism of systematic theology,' 'impoverished sacramentalism,' ecclesial bureaucracy, and the teaching of 'insipid curricula.' Searle sees the church trapped trying to maintain its own power and consequently it is increasingly deemed as irrelevant by society. Worst of all in Searle's eyes, the church is losing its connection with the victims of the dehumanising forces of the day; e.g. abuse sufferers, refugees, the homeless, the mentally ill, the lonely and elderly.

It is because of these shortcomings that Searle sees the arrival of Post-Christendom as an opportunity to be seized rather than a threat. He believes the age of Christian privilege to have fallen under the judgement of God. Now as society transitions into a new age, there is the opportunity for the radical change required to make the church once more fit for purpose. Searle seeks a church that can tackle the questions of the day with prophetic redress and integrity, but for this to happen, Searle knows theology is vital. Theology is the 'midwife bringing to birth a dynamic Christianity that is attuned to the signs of the times and orientated towards the kingdom of God' (p. xv).

After critiquing the delivery and content of theological education in both church and academy, Searle begins to elucidate the defining marks of the theology he believes is required. It is a theology of *compassion* that calls the 'crucified people' of God to stand in solidarity with the broken in the world. It is a theology of *creativity* that seeks the Spirit through the arts to communicate to a new generation. It is a theology of *freedom* that

defies dehumanisation wherever it finds it and seeks to liberate all. Searle pursues a kingdom theology focussed on transforming the world, rather than just building the church. A theology that destroys the gap between faith and life.

This call for a radical rethink was always going to be controversial, but there are areas of his argument so poignant they demand reflection. Searle calls for a shift away from viewing sacramentalism in terms of just the performance of the Eucharist, to seeing everyday life as a sacrament. If we expect to meet with God in the world, we will look for what the Spirit is already doing in his work and seek to join in. This leads to a concept of 'church without walls.' Searle calls for a shift away from doctrinal schemes solely labouring the substitutional propitiation of divine wrath, to focussing on the dynamic power of resurrection life. This will lead the church away from merely condemning the world to confidently seeking to transfigure it. Searle calls for a shift in how the church is perceived. It is no longer the destination but the vehicle. A school of pioneers and prophets. A training ground of *missionary professionals* rather than professional missionaries.

These shifts are something for all those interested in theology; ministers and academics, to reflect upon. Whether you end up agreeing or disagreeing with Searle, this book is essential reading. The weakness in the book is that there are few practical examples of what this new theology looks like in terms of local church life. The clearest illustration given is the new monasticism of the Northumbria Community of which Searle is a companion. But perhaps this omission is also a strength. Searle is calling his readers to discern what it means to be compassionate, creative, and a force for freedom in their own context. To stipulate, would be to constrict the potential. The Spirit must lead us, but at least after reading this book we will be aware of the challenge.

Andrew Burnham, Spurgeon's College and Bromley Baptist Church

Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition. By Michael Stroope. London: Apollos, 2017. ISBN 978-1-78359-552-5. 457pp. £24.99.

What constitutes mission within the life of the local church has gone through something of a renaissance over the last few years. Seeking to think about local and global spheres of ministry through the lens of mission has been helpful, but it has also brought some challenges. One example is this: just what do we mean when we talk about mission? This is the main thrust of what Stroope seeks to address in his provocative, yet well-reasoned assessment of the current situation in the discussion of mission.

The book follows a simple outline consisting of three main sections. Part one, 'Justifying Mission', sees Stroope tackling the inherent etymological challenges of the word itself. Mission does not find its origin in the Bible and it is arguably not a good piece of terminology to quantify the totality of what the Bible speaks about concerning God's work in the world. It is helpful to pause and consider why we use particular terminology and for this Stroope deserves our commendation.

From this platform Stroope then assesses how this language is employed by key exponents in the world of missiology. He identifies three groups; partisans, apologists and revisionists with each respective group using the mission language in different ways. As a result of this inconsistent usage, he argues that coherent thinking is often replaced with clouded miscommunication. Again, these are important things to consider as we seek to engage the people of God in the work of his growing kingdom.

Stroope shifts focus in the second section of the book, 'Innovating Mission,' to concentrate on how mission and missionary terminology became the language of common currency. To do this he highlights the spread of the Roman Catholic church across the world during the middle ages and suggests that it was with Ignatius Loyola that mission language began to rise to prominence. Previously common descriptors such as pilgrim and witness no longer existed on their own; they became subsumed into the rhetoric of Christendom's political and territorial advance.

In the book's final section, 'Revising Mission', Stroope argues that the Protestant mission movement simply adopts the language created in the Roman Catholic church and, along with it, similar structures. He rightly notes that this takes place at a much later time given the challenges which faced the reformers. Nonetheless, the language of mission is embraced, and in time is rejuvenated to provide a framework which would form the Protestant concept of global gospel proclamation during the period of colonialism.

As with many others, Stroope emphasises the importance of the 1910 Edinburgh World Mission Conference. He suggests that this is the place where we see most clearly the culmination of mission terminology in service to the structures and practices of the modern mission movement.

Drawing his thinking to a close, he suggests that change in our terminology needs to take place in order to better communicate what God is doing in the world and how the people of God participate in this divine initiative. Simply put, what we believe and the terms we employ to express those beliefs will mould our praxis. To that end he proposes recapturing the sense of being pilgrim witnesses of the kingdom of God.

There is much to commend in this book and Stroope has handled a difficult and emotive subject with great tact. One area which seems to

undermine the new way proposed by Stroope is his original argument. If mission is not to be used because it is being imposed on the biblical texts rather than flowing from them, then pilgrim language is not a solution as it also falls into this category. Alongside this, it is easy to caricature the masses during the modern mission movement with a broad brush. However, this does not do justice to those who strove to be contextually appropriate in their life and communication of the gospel in the midst of the colonial period.

Despite this flaw in the conclusion, *Transcending Mission* is an important book and will prove to make a lasting contribution to the discussion of mission practice and conceptualisation into the coming decades as the global church seeks to communicate the good news of Jesus in all its fullness.

Martin Paterson, OMF International, Glasgow

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity. Edited by Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond. (Wiley Blackwell Companions to Religion). Oxford: Wiley, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-4051-5376-8. xxiii + 758pp. £140.00 [ebook £29.99].

This large volume is a welcome addition to recent literature on World Christianity. This discipline is now well-established and it is important that due account of the current features of World Christianity is taken by teachers, students, and general readers. This volume helps greatly in meeting the needs of such readers for a recent, fairly comprehensive resource that is accessible to as wide a readership as possible.

The book is composed of fifty-three chapters arranged in four sections. The opening 'Historical Section' covers the period 50-2000CE in twenty essays. These are grouped into two parts: 50-1750CE and 1750-2000CE.

In the first part, essays include the following: John J. Collins discusses 'Jewish and Hellenic Worlds and Christian Origins', Scott W. Sunquist writes on 'Ancient Eastern Christianity: Syria, Persia, Central Asia, and India', and Filipe Fernandez-Armesto writes on 'Early Modern Missions and Maritime Expansion'.

In the second part, Philip Jenkins considers 'The Legacy of Christendom', J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu writes on 'Conversion, Converts, and National Identity', and Brian Stanley discusses ''Church and State Relations in the Colonial Period'.

The second main section is entitled 'Thematic Section'. Essays include 'Bible Translation, Culture, and Religion' by Lamin Sanneh, 'Music in the

Newer Churches' by Brian Schrag, and 'Changing Uses of Old and New Media in World Christianity' by Jolyon Mitchell and Jeremy Kidwell.

The third main section is entitled 'Christianity Since 1800: An Analysis by Regions and Traditions'. Within this section, there are, for example, essays on 'African Christianity: Historical and Thematic Horizons' by Lamin Sanneh, 'China' by Daniel H. Bays, 'Protestantism' by Alister McGrath, and 'Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity' by Allan H. Anderson.

The fourth section on 'Expansion and Secularization: A Demographic and Statistical Analysis' is much briefer than the others, being composed of only three essays by Andrew Walls, Todd M. Johnson, and David Martin.

Those who are at all familiar with the fields of Mission Studies and World Christianity will recognise that many of the contributors are recognised as experts in the particular areas they write on in this book. These relatively short chapters provide an introduction to topics that can be followed up in the more detailed works of many of the authors. Each essay concludes with a bibliography, offering further avenues for research.

The essays are well presented and are generally clearly-written. Theologically, there is no single confessional perspective, but quite a number of the contributors are known for evangelical convictions. It is good to see discussions of Christianity in parts of the world that may be less familiar to many readers.

This is an essential reference work for any theological college or mission organisation. Whether many individuals will wish to pay the hefty price of the handsome hardback edition is debatable. In fact, while the list price of the hardback volume is indeed rather daunting (I have, however, seen it selling for a more modest price), this one book offers manageable summaries of a vast amount of scholarly work and so might be considered reasonable value for money.

Christian pastors, students and church members must not remain unaware of the remarkable changes taking place in World Christianity. This book offers an excellent opportunity to grow in awareness and understanding.

Alistair I. Wilson, Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness. By Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier. Expanded edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018. £10.25.

Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness is a passionate, though brief, investigation into the theology of gentleness.

Set up as an alternating conversation between Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, and Stanley Hauerwas, Duke University, the theology of gentleness is examined from both a practical and academic perspective.

The message of the book is summarised by Vanier's conviction that we are all wounded people and that 'this wound is inherent in the human condition and that what we have to do is walk with it instead of fleeing from it. We cannot accept it until we discover that we are loved by God just as we are, and that the Holy Spirit, in a mysterious way, is living at the centre of the wound' (p. 80).

L'Arche was born out of the work of Vanier, but not as a refuge, compound or home for those with disabilities. Rather it was born to be a community. A community like any other, but one that purposefully included those with disabilities. In chapters one and three, Vanier anecdotally describes the work of L'Arche. 'All I wanted,' Vanier writes, 'was to live with a few people and help them to discover where liberty is, what freedom means. I wanted to help them know the joy of living together.'

Underneath the umbrella of L'Arche, individuals both with and without disabilities learn to live in community. They learn work past the fear of not being loved. The fear of not succeeding. The fear of being weak. For Vanier and L'Arche, the way of moving past this fear is the simply stated, though difficult: to abide by belief that 'Faith in Jesus is to trust that we are loved' as we are, with our wounds.

Stanley Hauerwas joins the conversation with Vanier by offering a more academic grounding for L'Arche. In chapter two, Hauerwas oddly mentions that 'L'Arche doesn't pretend to be a solution.' This may seem like an odd way to come to the aid of an organisation, especially given that the feeling in the book is that L'Arche needs support to continue doing its work. However, Hauerwas sees Vanier and L'Arche as living out an essential reality to the life of a Christian. He writes that our role is to be reminders of peace, hope and non-violence, not because these are the solutions to the problems of the world, but because they are the ideals of Jesus. 'I believe L'Arche,' Hauerwas writes, 'is the place where God has made it possible for Christians to learn to be hope in a world where there is no solution.'

In chapter four, Hauerwas returns to show the tension between the politics of gentleness and the current liberal political theory. This theory holds that an individual has the freedom to choose the life they desire as long as it does not impede freedom of their neighbour to do the same. For Hauerwas, it boils down to the fact that each person has the right to choose their own story (life decisions) and cannot, nor should they, be held responsible for a story (life decisions) that was given to them. However, this theory is just a wall that has been constructed to protect our

wounds, specifically the wound of loneliness. By diminishing the role others have in our lives we also lose the 'significance found in sharing one's life with another person.' It is at this point that Hauerwas returns to L'Arche as an example of how to live in a community where gentleness breaks down the walls that both the disabled and non-disabled construct to protect themselves. It is through the work of those such as Vanier and L'Arche that we are able to find the way to live gently in this violent world.

This book represents a wonderful defence of both the specific organisation of L'Arche and, more broadly, the type of community they represent. Even though there are times where it can feel too much like a specific defence of L'Arche, it does help to introduce an organisation which I previously did not know existed, especially with the added weight of Stanley Hauerwas as a conversation partner. It also serves as a reminder of the wisdom that is possessed in gentleness for those of us outside of L'Arche's communities. In a time when walls are politically and physically being constructed, gentleness may provide the clearest path over.

Andrew Sherrod, Moody Bible Institute, USA

Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions About Life and Sexuality. By Nancy R. Pearcey. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-80107-572-8. 336pp. £14.99.

Over the past decade the issue of identity has been given a defining voice in the prevailing narrative of our culture. Some recent publications have engaged the important topics of sexuality and gender with clarity and compassion. In *Love Thy Body*, Nancy Pearcey explains how the 'secular moral revolution' (p. 9, introduction) has shaped our culture's understanding of issues relating to the body, and offers a response. *Love Thy Body* stands apart because it seeks to uncover and engage the competing worldviews, along with their respective roots, assumptions and implications. As in previous works such as *Total Truth*, *Finding Truth* and *Saving Leonardo*, Pearcey is adept at both making difficult concepts accessible to the lay reader whilst vividly outworking their implications.

Pearcey's starting point in chapter 1 is to diagnose and unpack the core problem: a dualistic understanding of the human. This view underpins contemporary Western culture's view of the human person, which assumes we are made up of two parts: a subjectively-defined personhood and a 'lesser' physical body. In this scheme the physical body is very much subservient to the part of us that thinks, feels and experiences because this is where the real 'you' or 'me' resides. The physical body is only useful insofar as it serves the real you and me.

From here Pearcey shows, chapter by chapter, the outcomes of this dualistic divide. Euthanasia is seen as the terminating of the body in order to help the real person (chapter 2), and babies are seen as 'pre-persons' that can be adapted, harvested, sold or discarded according to the needs of 'real' persons (chapter 3). Additionally, sex is seen as a merely physical act that celebrates and expresses our true selves (chapter 4), sexuality is seen as deriving solely from our subjective feelings and has nothing to do with our bodies (chapter 5), and consequently embracing our felt gender will liberate our true selves from our bodies (chapter 6). Finally, as essentially autonomous, subjectively-driven, decision-making entities we should be relieved from the responsibilities our bodies traditionally brought, such as family or parenthood. Instead we should enter voluntarily into contracts independent of biological baggage (chapter 7).

All of this shows that, when the Biblical view of humanity as an integrated body and soul is put asunder, the consequences are that people do not flourish. Instead as we devalue our bodies we experience disintegration: an experience of life that is less than human. Indeed, it will lead us to treat some as 'lesser' and still others as disposable.

Following the conclusion Pearcey includes a study guide and endnotes. While I did not use the study guide personally, the questions Pearcey asks would be a good tool for consolidating and processing the key teaching points from the book. Using the guide as she recommends would take greater commitment. She suggests paragraph-long answers that engage with the endnotes of the book. Pearcey also suggests engaging in role-play dialogue. This has potential to bear great fruit in preparing the reader to formulate the ideas of the book in conversation with real people, which is precisely the aim of Pearcey's work.

Love Thy Body is a remarkable book which argues powerfully for a reappraisal of the human as an integrated whole: a person inseparable from their body. Along the way Pearcey not only explains core worldview problems with clarity, but also illustrates them with real, and often poignant, stories. Not only this, she shows where a culture that builds its ethics on a dualistic view of humanity will eventually head. Meanwhile all this is done with a refreshing boldness and cultural sensitivity. It is a book that genuinely equips one to understand and engage the issues with a truly Biblical worldview, rather than clumsy proof-texting.

Those looking for rigorous academic or scholarly engagement with the issues will be a little disappointed. But *Love Thy Body* is pitched perfectly for the layperson who wants to understand and engage the issues as they live and work in contemporary Western Culture.

Colin Gillies, Edinburgh

Faith & Fossils: The Bible, Creation, and Evolution. By Lester L. Grabbe. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6910-4. xiii + 182pp. £19.99.

Lester Grabbe's name will be familiar to anyone who has had much cause to read thoroughly in Old Testament scholarship, notably the history and historiography of ancient Israel, with a focus on the exile and early second temple period. Two examples of his prolific output are *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period* (Continuum/T&T Clark, 2004, 2008) and *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* (Continuum/T&T Clark, 2007).

Faith and Fossils therefore represents a branching-out into a side interest for Grabbe, rather than his core expertise. However, he determines to balance the scales in Bible and evolution discussions by approaching the topic with the backing of biblical scholarship in contrast to the scientific expertise that often motivates such writings (p. ix).

The book combines three primary themes, autobiography, biblical genre & backgrounds, and certain lines of scientific evidence into an argument for Christian openness to evolution as a practical reality about the world's origin that need not clash with the fundamentals of the faith or the relevant biblical texts when rightly understood. While the world does not lack books seeking to persuade the person in the pew for or against evolution, Grabbe's scholarly credentials and clarity win him a deserved place in the debate.

Grabbe's argument does not follow a linear progression, so let us use Part I, 'A Scholar's Story', as something of a case study. This title leads one to expect a primarily biographical tone in the four chapters contained therein. Yet this is only true of chapter 1, 'The Journey Begins', where Grabbe describes his early opposition to evolution, yet fascination with science. A parallel interest in the origins of the Bible itself prevailed and became his career direction.

Chapter 2, 'Creation in the Bible', begins therefore with an overview of Genesis 1, focusing on its genre as an ancient Near Eastern creation narrative. Acknowledging (correctly) that it consists of 'heightened prose' rather than actual poetry (p. 13), Grabbe sees in it an ancient, earth-centred cosmology that includes a solid, bowl-like 'firmament' that separates earthly and heavenly regions (pp. 9-10, 13). In contrast to the ANE analogues and to some of the Old Testament's more lyrical creation passages, 'God does not do battle with the forces of chaos' (p. 15), but instead 'we have an extended metaphor of God as a divine builder' who works week day by week day (p. 23). It is anachronistic to expect a scientific descrip-

tion of creation from a writer who could know nothing of such concerns (pp. 13, 16, 23-24).

A similar cosmology underlies 'The Flood Story' according to chapter 3, which narrates the disruption of a world where 'the earth [is] a disk […] floating on the primal waters' (p. 39).

Chapter 4 tackles the conservative interpretation of the phrase 'according to its/their kind' (Heb. *lĕmîn* + suffix) in Genesis 1:11-12, 21, 24-25 as implying fixity of species. Acknowledging that 'along with the creationists […] science agrees that creatures reproduce after their kind', Grabbe nevertheless insists, 'There is no comment on evolution as such in this scriptural language' (p. 48). He proceeds to sample proposed transitional forms between ancient land mammals and whales in the fossil record in an attempt to demonstrate that palaeontology bears witness to the transformation of species over time (pp. 56-66).

Part II, 'Evangelicals and Evolution', moves the discussion to a consideration of how creation-evolution issues play out in the evangelical Christian community, while Part III, 'Adam and Human Ancestry', justifiably proceeds to what is the virtual epicentre of more recent creation-evolution debates. Grabbe is thoroughly convinced of the primate ancestry of the human species and accepts the consensus that there can have been no single human pair that yielded the entire modern human population (pp. 122-27). Genesis 2-3 therefore relates a kind of 'morality tale' or 'allegory to illustrate the consequences of sin and the human condition' (pp. 133, 135), with Adam and Eve serving as 'archetypes' (p. 141).

Grabbe touches on many of the areas expected from a book on this topic, with a leaning toward biblical discussion, but maintaining an interest in theological and scientific questions. These areas are covered well but compactly, given the brevity of the book. It is clear that Grabbe, once stoutly opposed, supports evolution as beyond scientific debate but requiring further explanation for the evangelical Christian community.

The book's currency and clarity make it worthwhile reading, perhaps alongside a book making the counter-argument, for the Christian reader or leader seeking to make progress in his or her self-education on this endlessly troublesome, yet fascinating topic.

Andrew Brown, Melbourne School of Theology, Australia