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REVIEWS

Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation. By Collin Hansen. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2023. ISBN 978-0310128687. 272pp & indices. £18.99.

Writing the biography of a still-living person brings with it great challenges. For one, how does a writer assay the overall influence of a life which is still characterized by industry and creativity? For another, how does one establish the needed critical distance which is required if the biography is to go beyond narration to appraisal?

It is to biographer Collin Hansen's great credit that he demonstrates that he has reflected especially on the first of these challenges. He has wisely made his aim that of providing to readers an understanding of the influences which have contributed significantly to Keller's still-ongoing ministry. And what a story *that* is! This review will return to the second issue, that of the need for appraisal, in due course.

For the moment, plaudits are in order to the biographer for his very skillful depiction of the manner in which Keller proceeded from a broadly-Christian family and congregation to Bucknell University, Pennsylvania as a young man quite unprepared for the anti-supernaturalist atmosphere he would encounter. There, in the early 1970s, his chosen field was Religious Studies and Philosophy. In the midst of what can only be viewed as a period of disorientation, Keller's life and convictions were oriented anew. He was introduced to the on-campus and beyond-campus evangelism and leadership training ministry of Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship (in the UK, UCCF). It was in this Inter Varsity setting that Keller's hitherto inchoate faith in Christ was clarified and solidified; he soon moved from campus waverer to campus witness. Involvement in Inter Varsity brought him into contact for the first time with Edmund Clowney, the Westminster Seminary president who so often spoke on university campuses in that decade.

Keller also read C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien voraciously. He came under the wing of a winsome mainline Presbyterian minister, Dick Merritt (a Princeton Seminary graduate), and the (then) up-and-coming apologist R.C. Sproul. The reader becomes aware that in these respects, Tim Keller was moving on a trajectory also characteristic of thousands of other baby-boomer evangelical students; they were learning to anchor their existing eclectic evangelical loyalties in older, broadly Reformed theology. That trajectory drew Keller, his future wife Kathy, and scores of their Pennsylvania student friends towards the newly-established Ligonier Valley Study Center at Stahlstown, Pennsylvania, where R.C. Sproul

was holding forth. Soon, a sizeable contingent of 125 from that region enrolled at one time at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts.

Keller, while in these seminary studies, was simultaneously working at nearby campuses for the same Inter Varsity student ministry which had been so very influential in his own life. The reader could easily anticipate that Keller's ministry path, now being enhanced by seminary education, lay just there: in future decades of campus evangelism.

But there were further providential developments in store. Of no particular theological orientation prior to his seminary study, Keller now came under the weighty influence of theologian Roger Nicole, who helped to ground him in Reformed theology. There was also the church historian, Richard Lovelace, who oriented Keller to Jonathan Edwards and the history of revival. Not yet particularly oriented to pulpit ministry, Keller was enthralled by a series of guest lectures on preaching at Gordon-Conwell by Edmund Clowney, who demonstrated what it is to preach Christ in all of Scripture. And while not previously a party to the emerging evangelical debate about gender roles, Keller — with his now-spouse Kathy — was won over to Elizabeth Elliott Leitch's traditional views on this subject.

Yet the Kellers, who graduated with an excellent academic preparation, had 'only middling' ministry prospects; they were preparing to work for the U. S. Post Office. And then — as from the blue — an opportunity was offered to Tim to serve a congregation of the then-fledgling Presbyterian Church in America. Never a Presbyterian previously, Keller 'earned his spurs' by learning to pastor effectively in a small Virginia industrial city. For nine years, he preached twice each Sunday, he counselled, they entertained, and the church grew steadily. The reader will ask 'has Keller now found the niche which that earlier campus ministry could equally have been?'

Seeking to enhance his pastoral effectiveness during that extended pastorate, Keller enrolled for continuing education in pastoral studies at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, only to be recruited to teach homiletics and pastoral theology. Would it be academia that would provide his niche? He was drawn into participating in a study of the need for church planting in America's metropolises and when no one came forward to accept the daunting challenge of going to Manhattan, agreed to relocate there himself — uprooting his wife and sons to settle on Roosevelt Island, New York, in 1989. The sizeable achievement of Hanson's biography of Keller is that it so effectively tells how this Christian leader was steadily learning ministry skills and learning to trust God in increasingly demanding circumstances *before* Redeemer Church, New York City was ever attempted, before the Gospel Coalition was conceived and before the

international church planting network launched from Redeemer, New York, was ever contemplated.

In sum, we see Tim Keller as the broadly evangelical, wisely eclectic, winsomely Reformed apologist, preacher and church-planting strategist that he is; we also better grasp how that wide usefulness came as the fruit of what can only be called long apprenticeships which filled the two previous decades. This is a deeply inspiring story and makes us admire this Christian leader all the more, for reading it.

Biographies ought also to provide appraisal; appraisal is admittedly difficult when the life and ministry being explored is still ongoing. As this review is written, the 'retired' Keller is still writing a book a year. Nevertheless, the question still arises as to whether this biography might have offered more appraisal. The only shortcoming noted in the biography is that — while blessed with a wide array of ministry gifts — Keller's lack of managerial skills eventually became a problem as Redeemer Church, New York, experienced rapid expansion. The only criticism of Keller mentioned in this biography is the 'brouhaha' which erupted at Princeton Seminary in 2017; under pressure from the politically correct, that seminary reneged on its announced plan to award Keller the Abraham Kuyper prize.

With these items acknowledged, one could not detect from reading this biography that Redeemer, New York and its ministry to urban professionals is actually a source of concern for some American evangelicals who live outside large urban areas. We need to look elsewhere to learn that at least one book has been written challenging aspects of Keller's theology. Currently, some evangelicals of a generation younger than Keller question whether Keller's apologetic of 'niceness' represents a whistling in the dark as secular society grows more hostile towards evangelical Christianity. Finally, a thoughtful reader may wonder whether the biographer, an accomplished journalist who is also editorial director at Gospel Coalition, is writing this Zondervan biography in part as a publicist (yet note his comments on p. 269). The final page of this biography proclaims in large font the launch of the new 'Keller Center for Cultural Apologetics'.

Here is a biography that needed to be written. It reflects an impressive use of documents, published literature and interviews. I, for one, am wiser for having read it.

Kenneth J. Stewart, Covenant College, USA

Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings. Edited by Todd A. Scacewater. Fontes Press, Dallas, 2020. ISBN: 9781948048439 (paperback). xxiii + 747pp. £37.99.

Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings is ambitious, collaborative and the first of its kind: a one-volume text presenting discourse analysis (DA) of each New Testament book. It assumes readers competent in NT Greek, but, while technical, does not require prior knowledge of DA. Editor and contributor Todd A. Scacewater assembles twenty-two scholars (twenty men and two women; mostly in America, but six in other nations) who each contribute on particular NT books. His goal is 'to demonstrate the usefulness of DA when applied to written documents, particularly the NT writings, and to motivate biblical students and scholars to study DA and linguistics in general' (p. 1).

The introductory chapter surveys the definition, history, development, topics and vocabulary of DA. There Scacewater gives three pages to carefully defining DA; nevertheless, in his chapter on Galatians, Stephen Levinsohn's succinct description is apt. It 'takes into account factors that are not treated in Greek grammars (questions of morphology or syntax). In particular, it concerns features of the larger context than the individual sentence. It may simply focus on how the contents of the previous sentence affects the way the current sentence is structured. However, it also looks for ways in which the author's *purpose* influences the way the information in each sentence is presented' (p. 298).

Due to limitations of space, and to provide some degree of detail, I will comment on three chapters, each of which discusses a single NT book.

Robert Longacre writes on the gospel of Mark. He is notable in the field of DA, being cited heavily by other contributors in the book. He is transparent about his assumptions and thought process. Recognizing Mark as narrative discourse, Longacre discusses the elements of a story, then provides five guidelines to apply DA to the text, including finding seams in the story and watching for peak-marking. While this chapter contains some errors of punctuation and, more problematic, structure labelling (pp. 77-78), it is clear and useful, as emphasised in the concluding section which discusses several specific ways his DA provides exegetical and theological insight.

Jenny Read-Heimerdinger discusses the book of Acts. She writes as an established DA scholar and an expert on the Codex Bezae NT manuscript. She makes the unique argument, convincingly, that DA is best applied to a single complete manuscript rather than an eclectic text. This is because, she says, the distinctive language of a given manuscript is not reducible to scribal style, error, or embellishment; rather, it involves the

scribe adapting the text to a particular audience. This can affect the way the discourse is marked, especially at the microstructural level. She thus bases her DA on Codex Bezae (B03), using Codex Vaticanus (D05) as a foil. Discussion of two discourse features, connectives between sentences and word order, set the stage for her DA of Acts. She succinctly describes the halves and related parts of Acts, but narrows the bulk of her DA to discussing the microstructure in Acts 12 in B03 (contrasted with D05). The chapter would be stronger if it spent more time analysing Acts as a whole, as most of the contributors do for the books they treat. However, the chapter makes up for that significantly by its stimulating, original thinking.

Stephen Levinsohn, well known for his previous work on DA, contributes a chapter on Galatians. He walks clearly and methodically through his process of analysing the book. He takes a functional perspective to DA: a writer's word choice in not simply stylistic; 'choice implies meaning' (p. 298). Each contributor's methods have overlap and differences; Levinsohn's involves six steps: assessing in turn the nature of discourse, the genre of letter, areas of consensus and disagreement about divisions of the text, surface features marking boundaries, implications of inter-sentential conjunctions, and prominence-giving devices. He applies the methodology lucidly, for example, using flow charts to outline how conjunctions link and delineate sections of Galatians. He draws his analysis together in a conclusion centring on the key point of Galatians and its pastoral application.

Each of the other chapters provides broadly comparable engagement with the remaining NT books.

For the scholar, student or pastor doing work on the structure of NT books, this text will be a useful reference, both for its book-by-book discussion and for the abundant resources listed in the footnotes and bibliography. While it is understandable that a project of this scope can be done more easily by a team than an individual, and it is fair that Scaewater gives each contributor freedom to apply his/her own approach to DA, I wish the chapters were more evenly balanced in terms of how much they deal with the actual text. For example, in the chapters on the gospels, the text of Luke receives twice as many pages of discussion than that of John (26 pages versus 13). Additionally, while overall this highly technical book is very clearly presented, it is unfortunate that a few content errors occurred, requiring the reader to reinterpret coded language that was meant to clarify (mentioned above). These concerns aside, I recommend *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings* as a valuable and practical tool to understanding how to use DA to expose the structure, themes, and central ideas of the NT books.

David Mitchell, Connect Church, Kirkcaldy

The Pastor and the Modern World: Reformed Ministry and Secular Culture. By William Edgar, R. Kent Hughes, and Alfred Poirier. Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-955859-04-2. xvi + 114pp. £12.65.

This book is a compilation of the first three chair-holders' of the John Boyer Lectures on Evangelism and Culture at Westminster Seminary. The original intent was to publish each lecture separately, but providentially the lectures provided a cohesive and sequential theme that would prove beneficial to the church and the minister:

William Edgar's brilliant modern cultural analysis should be paired with R. Kent Hughes's loupe-like study of the timeless essentials of pastoral ministry, and that the conclusion should be a vision for ministry that Alfred Poirier mined from the ancient life of Gregory of Nazianzus (p. xv).

Each is a pastor-theologian; Edgar is professor of apologetics, Hughes was professor of practical theology, and Poirier is professor of pastoral theology. *The Pastor and The Modern World* provides a picture of the pastor-theologian, one who interacts with his culture while at the same time having a vibrant preaching and pastoral ministry.

Chapter One (Edgar) *Are We Really Secular?* — combines theology and culture. Secularization casts an ominous shadow, attempting to replace trust in God with trust in self, emphasizing subjective over objective truth. Hence revelation is marginalized at best and discarded at worst (pp. 11, 12, 16). Against religion, secularization seeks to insert the values of intellectualization, rationalization, and disenchantment (p. 18). Edgar illustrates this aptly by devoting several pages to the arts where he explains that 'there is no real dependence on revealed truth, either general or special' (p. 47). Further, he reminds the reader that 'a truly biblical worldview is not vaguely spiritual but highly definite: beginning with the ontological Trinity, centred in the Incarnation, anchored in the verbal revelation of Scripture' (p. 47). Edgar provides a two-fold emphasis to battle secularization: 1) the certainty of judgment to come (i.e., Acts 17:22-34) and 2) our message must be the gospel — as secularization permeates every area, every institution, every artistic vision, so the gospel applies to every area of life (p. 53).

The next chapter (Hughes) *The Heart of the Pastor and the Pulpit* is a homiletic intensive. Hughes probes the preaching task by looking through the lens of Jonathan Edwards' religious affections and his use of 'heart' — one's inclinations and will (pp. 64, 69). As Hughes begins with the *Affec-*

tions and Preaching, ultimately providing us with a twofold focus. First, there is *Affectionate Preparation*, what Hughes calls twenty sacred hours:

Sermon preparation is twenty hours of humble, holy, rigorous, critical thinking (in the presence of God!) about the text in its context [...] I say all of this because getting the text right is serious business, because our theology and religious affections are determined by it. Precision in exegesis and homiletics is of cosmic importance (p. 71).

The preacher must let the 'light' of God's Word elevate the heat of the religious affections (pp. 71, 72), thereby enlightening his imagination to raise the 'Fahrenheit of [his hearers'] affections' (p. 72). Second, *Affectionate Proclamation* is essential in reaching the heart (p. 75). The effective proclaimer will be a man of prayer (pp. 75-76) and the Spirit (p. 80), authentic (p. 76), and genuinely passionate, 'Where there is no passion, there is no preaching' (p. 78). The conclusion of all preaching is to exalt Christ (pp. 82-83).

Chapter Three *Gregory of Nazianzus: The Pastor as a Physician of Souls* (Poirier) is a master class in pastoralia. Poirier provides a sketch of Gregory's life, who saw the church move from persecuted, to tolerated, to being the official state church (p. 92). Poirier gives keen insight into Gregory's *Second Oration, In Defense of His Flight to Pontus*, a document that stands as the first pastoral theology of the church (pp. 98). So, why did Gregory flee the ministry? He longed for solitude with God rather than to be 'thrust into the midst of a life of turmoil' — a fitting description of pastoral ministry (p. 101). Gregory contrasts the physician of the body with the physician of the soul. They differ in terms of:

1. Subject matter: One is concerned with the physical, the other with the soul,
2. The ends for which they labour: One deals with prolonging human life, the other with matters of eternal destiny; and
3. The power of the science each employs: One appeals to medical science while the other ponders the mysteries of God and the gospel of his Son (p. 104).

In the end, Gregory believed that no one was fit to be a pastor, yet someone must care for God's flock (p. 113).

This book is for the church, but especially the minister and is highly recommended. Hughes is worth the price of the book. The faculty of Westminster expands each of these through panel discussions at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16rixJqJQY8&list=PLktunQkWQghX1s8NmEOUGuBB68nayoM0>.

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Face to Face with God: A Biblical Theology of Christ as Priest and Mediator. By T. Desmond Alexander. Essential Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove: IVP, 2022. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4295-7. xiii + 156pp. £18.99.

The recent increase of interest in biblical theology has opened up a renewed appreciation for the sophistication and significance of the overarching story of the Bible. That renewal has fostered a good deal of important and signal contributions. However, the variety of different studies and the increasing complexity and ingenuity of those studies can be dizzying to new students seeking a lay of land and non-scholarly audiences seeking understanding of the importance of a biblical-theological approach for core Christian doctrines. Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (ESBT), edited by Benjamin L. Gladd, bridges an important gap between the academy and the church. In this volume in the ESBT series, T. Desmond Alexander considers the centrepiece of Christian life: the high priesthood of Christ.

The scope of this book is focused and to the point. He writes in the preface that he is concerned with ‘how the Bible presents the theme of priesthood as it relates to Jesus Christ’ (p. 6). Rather than tracing the development of priesthood, Alexander builds a theological description based on pertinent Old Testament texts in the Pentateuch, paralleling and contrasting that description with how Hebrews portrays Christ as the great high priest.

Readers looking for a scholarly contribution to the subject of either priesthood or Christ will be disappointed. While Alexander does interact with the current scholarship, the aim of the book is much more modest, and in some ways all the more impressive. The recent explosion of interest in atonement and priesthood in the Old Testament, building on Jacob Milgrom’s body of work, and in Hebrews, following David Moffitt, Madison Pierce, and R. B. Jamieson makes the concept of Christ’s priesthood rather unwieldy. And while Alexander does engage with some of the recent claims of scholarship (e.g., whether the tabernacle and temple represent the cosmos (p. 32), or if the high priest is primarily a mediator or a steward of God’s house (pp. 61–62), or what it means for Israel to be a ‘kingdom of priests’, (p. 127)), he admirably summarizes the best and most salient points of the conversation. He is also obviously indebted to the legacy of Geerhardus Vos and Richard Gaffin. Alexander gleans the best insights from important contributors to these questions, notably G. K. Beale, Mary Douglas, Margaret Barker, alongside those listed above, and presents a pithy biblical theology in outline.

Running through the entire work is the concern to show how the author of Hebrews draws on the imagery and language of the priests in the old covenant to illuminate and flesh out Christ's ministry as the mediator of a new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15). This new covenant that Christ mediates replaces and perfects the old covenant, the condition of which the Old Testament people of God were unable to fulfill. It is difficult to summarize the book's core argument, as Alexander's aim is more descriptive, simply paying close attention to the contours of the text, that is, he fleshes out the question, 'what does it mean to speak of Jesus as our high priest?' (p. 2). His answer proves traditional: 'As high priest, Jesus Christ sanctifies and perfects, achieving all that is necessary for us to come into God's holy presence' (p. 136).

There is little in here that an informed reader will find new. But that is not necessarily a weakness. While he summarizes and expounds on things that for some are well-trodden trails, he provides plenty of meat on which most can ruminate. Given the space limitations of the series and the significance of the subject, the biblical-theological scope of priesthood felt curtailed at times. But that is to be expected. For a helpful and traditional exposition of what Christ's intercession means for us, both in terms our plight and our Christian life, one should turn here.

J. Brittain Brewer, Calvin Theological Seminary, USA

More Things in Heaven and Earth: Shakespeare, Theology and the Interplay of Texts. By Paul S. Fiddes. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-0-8139-4652-8. xii + 373pp. £39.95.

The publication of this monograph marks the end of a very prolific academic year (21-22) for the baptist theologian Paul S. Fiddes, Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Oxford. Following closely the publication of two other monographs (Paul S. Fiddes, *Charles Williams And C.S. Lewis: Friends In Co-Inherence* (Oxford University Press, 2021); Paul S. Fiddes, *Iris Murdoch And The Others: A Writer In Dialogue With Theology* (T&T Clark/Bloomsbury, 2022)) this third monograph to be published in 12 months is the culmination of a lifetime of academic research in two out of the three areas of Fiddes' scholarship — systematic theology and the relationship between theology & literature.

The book title, taken from the famous line in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, succinctly reveals the thesis of the book: that all humanity is part of a larger drama and so we should seek to examine and understand our place within the current act from which we will discover 'more things' in the surrounding spiritual and physical realms. This can be done, avers Fiddes, by theologising what is 'in front of the text', whether that text be

scripture or other writings that point to Christ since, as the apostle John anticipated, other texts will be written that will extend his own account of the works and words of Christ (p. 295 cf. John 21:25).

Anyone who is familiar with Fiddes' theological *oeuvre* will know that his articulated panentheistic doctrine of God, which is undergirded by a strong participation in God account and somewhat unique 'persons as relations' definition of the triune God, has led Fiddes to develop an understanding that literature not only illustrates theological themes but can actually *construct* theology in ways outside the historical and traditional boundaries of the theological project.

The chosen literature for this text are eight plays of Shakespeare. Before engaging with each play, Fiddes spends the first three chapters justifying the methodology used to analyse and construct theology from the plays. He defines the 'more things' in terms of the religious context at the time the play was written, the general spirituality imbibed in each of the plays, and the 'presentist' theology that can be constructed in front of the text by the theologian.

Most of the justification of the methodological approach comes from the theological doctrines that Fiddes has developed over his fifty-plus year academic career and are central to his theological corpus. For instance, his well established participatory doctrine of God as persons-as-relations is applied to Shakespeare and elucidated in order to conclude that when someone is participating in a Shakespearean play (whether as actor, audience observer, or reader) they are *inter alia* participating in the Triune God.

Therefore, when Fiddes analyses and critiques the chosen eight plays, he traces the religious context and spirituality of each play before constructing theology 'in front of' the text of the play. His main claim regarding the society's religious and spiritual background when Shakespeare was penning these plays is that the bard of Avon was acutely aware of the multi-confessional social and religious scene of the times but he resisted any dogmatic stance one way or another. Instead he used the blurring of doctrinal boundaries which happened during these tumultuous years of protestant-catholic back and forth to develop a general Christian spirituality that transcended the doctrinal and ecclesial conflict of the time.

Subsequently, Fiddes then generates theology in front of the text, specifically systematic theology that is typical for him: broad, commodious, connectational and more modern than traditional. To illustrate, his theologising from *The Merchant of Venice* postulates an inclusive definition of covenant drawn from Fiddes' panentheistic doctrine of God and the Noahic covenant of Genesis 9 which could aid inter-faith dialogue and is in keeping with the spirit of mercy and love within *The Merchant* text

(pp. 114-121). Another example is a delineation of a theology of forgiveness and memory; a journey of forgiveness and reconciliation that is a 'voyage of anguish' and based upon an Abelardian atonement of transformation and the right remembering of painful memory. It is a theology that builds upon the themes found within one of Shakespeare's final plays, *The Winter's Tale* (pp. 226-263).

More Things in Heaven and Earth is the latest contribution to an ever-growing theological literature on Shakespeare and religion. For some readers I suspect a number of Fiddes' underlying theological presuppositions, such as his radical understanding of the triune God and the panentheistic reality of a passible God, will be regarded as too unorthodox. However, for any reader who can get past these modern theological sensibilities and has an intricate knowledge of Shakespeare's plays, this text will prove an insightful work of general revelation and an expression of what it means for all of creation to live and move and have being in Him.

Alistair Cuthbert, University of St Andrews

Flourishing in Tensions: Embracing Radical Discipleship. By Michael Bräutigam. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-6667-3529-1. xv + 242pp. £28.00.

Flourishing in Tensions is a book on discipleship. It recognises, and addresses, many of the challenges that are faced by those who are following Jesus today. This is achieved through an excellent balance of rigorous scholarship and practical application related to discipleship, all of which is presented in language that is accessible, engaging and clear. That combination of rich theology and day-to-day relevance makes the book a worthwhile read for every disciple, whether you are an experienced scholar, an eager student, a working pastor, or a struggling pilgrim.

The book opens with a chapter highlighting the need to embrace tensions on the path of discipleship. The call to follow Jesus comes from the one who transcends the boundaries of our knowledge, whose plans are higher than ours, and before whom we will inevitably face the tension of not being able to comprehend the depths of God's being and purposes. But rather than despairing at such tensions, Bräutigam instead calls his reader to embrace them, and in fact to delight in them. The author rightly laments a domestication of God and a diminished view of the seriousness of sin and instead invites his readers to pursue a path of radical discipleship. It is only with a reverent awe of the magnitude and mystery of God and his ways that the disciple will flourish. The framework for the main body of the book is then structured around Jesus's words to his disciples that if anyone desires to come after him, 'let him deny himself, take up his

cross and follow me' (Matt 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23). Each of these are expanded in Parts One, Two and Three of the book.

In exploring Jesus' command to deny self, Bräutigam offers penetrating diagnoses of our frequent self-centredness. Such tendencies are to be treated by embracing the newness that faith in Jesus brings, while at the same time remaining aware of the provisional nature of our current stage as pilgrims on a path of discipleship. An analysis of the actual practice of self-denial then identifies pitfalls on the path of discipleship and encourages a quiet self-awareness that places confidence in the reality of all that Christ has done, and promises to do, for his disciples.

On the subject of taking up our cross, the author offers moving reflections on Christ's sufferings, before presenting a convincing argument that the path of discipleship will involve our own trials as we share in the sufferings of Christ. There is also a courageous and persuasive explanation of what, precisely, is involved in filling up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings (Colossians 1:24), and a bold acknowledgement that the path of discipleship may involve times when we feel forsaken by God. There follows an immensely helpful discussion of the value of our sufferings as they bring fellowship and transformation into the experience of the disciple.

Finally, under the heading 'Follow Me', the book discusses both personal following, and the collective following of the church community together. The latter offers a superb defence of the importance of the church community, which stands in welcome contrast to the individualism that can so easily shape teaching on discipleship today. This section, and the whole book, culminates in a moving discussion around seeking the face of Jesus as the disciple's friend, a topic that is both beautifully simple yet immensely profound.

This book makes a specific and valuable contribution to the subject of discipleship in several ways. Much of the teaching is simple but striking, such as Brautigam's perceptive reminder that discipleship is not about leadership, but about *followership*. Moreover, the book incorporates wisdom from some of the great continental theologians of history, such as Luther, Schlatter and, especially, Bonhoeffer. And equally interesting and helpful is the inclusion of insights from psychology, accompanied by pertinent, and at times startling, statistics from the present day.

This book will be very useful for pastors because it is both rigorous and thorough, yet immensely practical and deeply moving. It is a book for the head, the hands and the heart, and it is a wonderful reminder that academic rigour and practical usefulness for the church can be woven together in the same book. It is perhaps appropriate to acknowledge that there is always a risk that employing a term like 'radical disciple' could leave some readers feeling as though this is a superior category among

whom they have no place. However, Bräutigam's work is sensitive and winsome towards those readers who may be prone to such feelings.

A final comment must highlight the books dedication. It is dedicated to Donald Macleod, under whose tuition Bräutigam once sat. Macleod is a theologian whose genius lies in his ability to explain the deep truths of Christian theology in a way that is clear and understandable and which never forgets the real-life needs and struggles of disciples battling onwards in their journey of faith. In writing this volume, Bräutigam has offered a superb book worthy of the example set by his mentor.

Thomas Davis, Carloway Free Church, Scotland

Mission in Contemporary Scotland. By Liam Jerrold Fraser. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-80083-020-02. xvii + 262pp. £24.99.

This missiological interpretation of today's Scotland by the minister of St Michael's Church, Linlithgow, and former Campus Minister to Edinburgh University, deserves to be read and prayerfully pondered by every Christian leader in Scotland. The author borrows from secular research, utilising a wealth of sociological insights, to offer a penetrating analysis of Scottish culture and Scottish churches. The need for mission is undeniable. Although called to be 'the sign, instrument and foretaste of the new creation' (p. xx), most churches have declined dramatically in numbers and influence in face of growing secularisation — a sea-change to which, according to the author, churches themselves have contributed to in part by welcoming liberal biblical criticism, and too often opting for secession and schism. The book's contents are divided into three parts: background, context, and practice. It concludes by offering a contextual missiology for Scotland.

This volume offers Scottish church leaders a key missiological resource in at least three ways.

First, it will help Scottish churches to interpret contemporary Scottish society. To be effective churches need to explore a popular mood where individuals feel they must be faithful to themselves and their needs and desires, rather than to God or to others. Many are obsessed by identity and feel constantly obliged to renegotiate self-identities 'that privilege authenticity and personal freedom over community and traditional morality' (p. 57). At the same time there is frustration as greater affluence, social mobility and the power of mass-media advertising seem to bring perfection within reach, but never close enough to grasp.

Second, Liam Fraser's analysis challenges churches to look inward as well as outward. Are they contextualising the service they offer and the

message they proclaim, in the lived experience of those they wish to serve? To what extent are they able to empathise with people caught up in the existential exasperation of postmodern Scotland? Contextualising and empathising will involve listening carefully to others. Part of the listening will mean researching our culture through local histories, questionnaires and interviews. Listening will enable the Gospel to be presented in terms and actions which demonstrate its relevance to the needs and aspirations of today's Scots. In their critique of contemporary culture, churches are urged to affirm what is good and reject what is false. By promoting 'a politics of grace' in the public square, the churches can help heal current disunity over Brexit, Scottish independence, race and issues of gender and sexuality, and raise the level of social media discourse.

Third, this volume has the potential to become a catalyst that will facilitate renewal of the missional strategy of Scottish churches. Fraser wants churches to incorporate into their strategy three critical elements: plausibility, worship, and missional discipleship. Congregations must work imaginatively to create in and around them a culture which will illustrate the *plausibility* of Christian belief and Christian practice in secularised Scotland. Church *worship* services, motivated by wonder at the majesty of God's glory, will be critical in fostering ecclesial communities where belief is nurtured and built. And congregations can reinforce impact by equipping members to be *missional disciples*, willing to carry the gospel out into society as they share with others the *raison d'être* of their faith.

The book's theological framework has a strong focus on Christology, and takes a high view of the missiological significance of the church worship service. It recognises the important prophetic role of the church in speaking truth to power, and stresses the objectivity of truth. The Venerable Bede is reputed to have said, 'No one is suddenly made perfect' — an observation that perhaps might in a kindly way be applied to this otherwise excellent book, for its theological architecture is somewhat under constructed. The work of the Spirit scarcely features, and prayer has a remarkably low profile. Apart from passing references to Wesley, Whitefield, and the Haldanes, there is no allusion to the capacity of religious awakenings to renew the church. The assertion that mission is absent from the traditional marks of the Scottish Church is surely debatable, and there is little on the role of preaching to fulfil and further mission. Such lacunae notwithstanding, we should be genuinely grateful to Liam Jerrold Fraser for making this invaluable resource available for all active servants of the *Missio Dei* in Scotland.

Fergus Macdonald, Edinburgh

In the Fullness of Time: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of Acts and Paul. By Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-4335-6334-8. 448pp. £14.99.

This work is the published version of the lecture notes for the course Gaffin taught on Acts and Paul at Westminster Theological Seminary for most of his tenure. The book, however, is not a standard introduction. There are no matters of authorship, dating, provenance, historical reliability, or any of the standard matters often covered in the various introductions available. Instead, *In the Fullness of Time* is concerned specifically with the biblical theology of Acts and Paul. ‘Biblical Theology’ is used here in the sense of the discipline inaugurated by Geerhardus Vos; Gaffin’s concern is the place of Acts and Paul in the historical and organic development of Scripture as God’s revelation centred around Jesus Christ. Pastors and students interested in the theological unity of Acts and Paul will find much of value in this book.

For an introduction to writings as complicated as Acts and the Pauline epistles (Gaffin assumes the authenticity of all thirteen canonical letters), the volume is remarkably focused. As he goes through Acts, Gaffin directs most of his attention to Pentecost and the role it plays in the larger narrative of Acts. Gaffin’s ‘central and overall thesis’ concerns the ‘place of Pentecost not only in Acts but also in the Lucan double work, in Luke-Acts seen as a unit, or in other words, the central place of Pentecost in the entire history that Luke is seeking to relate to Theophilus’ (p. 60). Following G. W. H. Lampe, Gaffin seeks to show how ‘Pentecost is the great turning-point, the hinge, as it were, of the two-volume narrative’ (p. 60). One of Gaffin’s important and convincing arguments in favour of this thesis is reading Pentecost as a Christological, rather than a pneumatological, event: Pentecost, in the book of Acts, serves to accentuate Christ’s judgment over the earth, and in its statements of Christ it summarizes and establishes the kingdom focus of Acts (see Acts 1:6; 8:12; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

As Gaffin moves on to Paul, he identifies the same concerns that he found in Acts, namely, ‘the *basileia*—the eschatological rule and realm of God, present and future’ (pp. 238, 241). Although other centres have been proposed, Gaffin follows Herman Ridderbos and Geerhardus Vos. For these two Dutchmen, the eschatological aspect of Christ’s work should be placed as the centrepiece of Paul’s theology. Those familiar with Gaffin’s previous writing and research will find nothing new here. In many ways, Gaffin is developing and simplifying the insights in his dissertation, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*. Save from an introductory chapter surveying various interpretations up through the New Perspective

on Paul, the entire section on Paul, which is over half of the 450-page book, concerns Paul's eschatological structure and the resurrection in the thought of Paul. Gaffin's careful and thorough exegesis of texts presents a convincing account of how one should construe Paul's eschatological and resurrection-centred theology.

For those already inclined towards Gaffin's hermeneutic, this book will not disappoint. However, others less convinced of the Vossian model will have a difficult time agreeing with all its conclusions. While the volume is rewarding, four critiques are worth mentioning. The first two are circumstantial and the other two material. Circumstantially, *In the Fullness of Time* sometimes feels out of place. Because the book is simply a reproduction of his lectures, one gets the sense of something missing, as though this were a small part of a broader curriculum. Which, of course, is exactly what the book offers. While it makes sense given the origins of the book, I wish the 'incompleteness' had been supplemented or at least mitigated. A second and related issue is the lack of current scholarship. Most of Gaffin's work concerns the text of Acts and Paul (a commendable feature in a discipline that can often be waylaid by dealing with secondary literature), but when Gaffin does cite other scholarship, it is rather antiquated. The two most recent monographs that Gaffin notes are N.T. Wright's *The Resurrection and the Son of God*, published in 2003, and Simon Gathercole's *Where is Boasting?*, published in 2002. Although understandable, given Gaffin's retirement from scholarship and the nature of the book, a fuller interaction with scholarship would have been valuable, even if it simply situated Gaffin's work with current discussions.

The material critiques are twofold. First, Gaffin's emphasis on redemptive history and eschatology, following the maxim of Geerhardus Vos that 'soteriology is eschatology', is not always convincing. At times, what is truly an illuminating and crucial piece of Paul's theology becomes the whole thing. Gaffin never says that Paul is only concerned with eschatology or the resurrection, but the level of emphasis can be overextended to the detriment of other important aspects of Paul's thought. This is seen clearly in the conspicuous *lacunae* in Gaffin's treatment of Paul, which is the second material critique. It is incorrect to fault someone for not writing the book they did not intend to write, and Paul's theology is far too vast to cover in a volume this size. However, significant areas of Paul's thought are left practically untouched or mentioned only in passing, two examples being justification (surprising, given Gaffin's confessional Reformed commitments), and the nature of sin in Paul.

None of the critiques mentioned above take away from the value that lies in what Gaffin offers. Those of us unable to sit under his teaching now have a rich deposit left by one of the greatest Reformed exegetes of the

twentieth century. Gaffin spent his entire career listening closely to Paul and attending to the major motifs that informed his preaching. We would do well to pay close attention to what he says.

J. Brittain Brewer, Calvin Theological Seminary, USA

God is God and You are You: Finding Confidence for Sharing Our Faith. By Thomas Davis. Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2023. ISBN: 9781527109384. 144pp. £9.99.

This book contains excellent practical theology encouraging evangelism. It does not seek to break new ground so much as to support those struggling with key theological truths artfully applied to our lives. The target audience for this book is any Christian from a reformed tradition struggling with knowing they need to evangelize, wanting to evangelize, but feeling overwhelmed and insufficient for the task. The language is highly accessible as would be expected given the target audience.

Following a short introduction that gives a brief overview of what the book contains, the book is split into two major parts: God is God; and, You are You. Part one provides a number of truths about God's role in evangelism relating to: who God is; what the truth is; what the good news is; what grace is; and what eternity is. Likewise, part two provides a number of truths about our role in witnessing relating to: what, who, and when we are; what witnessing is; what evil is; what people are; and what the church family is. Finally, he ends with a short postscript pointing out the significance of the fact that 'God is not You and You are not God'.

Each chapter is simply laid out, easily followed and logically ordered. For example, in chapter one, 'God is God', Davis introduces the chapter then lays out the central theological point being made: God is God. This entails the uniqueness and attributes of God. He then takes this point on to demonstrate how it counters fears like when we might 'think that God is weak', 'that God is distant' or 'that God is a bit irrelevant' (pp. 14-15). In each of these cases he outlines a number of related thoughts to those central ideas that will strike home for many of us. In so doing he demonstrates how theological truth about God counters false beliefs. He then provides an example from scripture demonstrating the truth in action. After this, he summarises four truths about God: 'God is sovereign', 'God takes the initiative', 'God is powerful' and 'God is compassionate' (pp. 16-17). He then demonstrates how these four truths are not just abstract truths, but are highly relevant and helpful for sharing our faith. Then, on the next few pages, Davis demonstrates that these practical truths should give us confidence, a sense of dependence, motivation to obedience and act as a reminder never to give up. Finally, at the end of each chapter there is a

set of study questions to help the reader think through the content of the chapter and apply it to their own lives.

This book is excellent and attentive to the frequent doubts of many Christians including Davis himself (demonstrating to those that might think otherwise, that just having studied does not render us immune to false thoughts). Davis's pastoral heart can be clearly seen on every page of this book. Take, for example, the last paragraph to page 22:

When it comes to sharing your faith, it is normal to feel weak, it's OK to feel daunted, and it's very likely that you'll feel inadequate. But in the midst of all that, never, ever forget that God is God. We can be so easily discouraged by thinking that the nation is too dark, the church is too weak, the challenge is too great, people's hearts are too hard, the situation is too bleak, and we are too useless. But none of that is true. In fact, all of that is complete nonsense, because God is God!

I would highly recommend this book. Its accessibility means it can be recommended for wide reading in the church. Furthermore, because those of us who have studied are not immune to these fears and thoughts, Davis's gentle dealing and correction will help us to refocus on the author and perfecter of our faith and help us too as we seek to live out what we believe.

Philip D. Foster

Why God Makes Sense in a World that Doesn't. By Gavin Ortlund. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021. ISBN: 9781540964090. xiv + 225pp. £15.99.

The Preface to this fascinating book declares that addressing the basic conflict between Christianity and naturalism today calls for an apologetic which will ask: 'What kind of story does each tell us about our world? Which is the most satisfying to mind and heart?' Gavin Ortlund's use of three criteria — Beauty, Story, and Probability — to address these questions provides a very useful and well written resource for readers struggling with the science versus God quandary. For Ortlund, beauty and truth are joined at the hip, and he passionately believes that an appeal to beauty, the power of narrative, and abductive argument, can better persuade the disenchanted, the distracted, and the infuriated of the plausibility and probability of God.

In chapters 1-3 Ortlund explores ways in which his three criteria enhance the cosmological, the teleological, and the moral arguments for theism. Substantive responses are offered to claims of atheists, past and present, from Nietzsche to Dawkins.

Chapter 1 is entitled: 'The Cause of the World: Why Something is More Plausible (and Much More Interesting) Than Nothing.' Here the two basic current scientific theories of origins are evaluated — Big Bang and Multiverse — the one compatible with creation *ex nihilo*, the other incompatible because it assumes a self-starting universe or universes. The importance of distinguishing between a 'first cause' and an ontologically distinct *uncaused* first cause is stressed. The present state of debate prompts Ortlund to assert: *It seems more likely than not that our physical world (universe / multiverse) has a cause, and therefore it seems a distinct possibility that our physical world is not all that exists (since whatever caused it would exist independently of it, as its cause)* (p. 43). The chapter concludes alluding to C. S. Lewis and Tolkien's view of human existence as participating in a very great story, and by citing Einstein's metaphor of the external world as a library.

Chapter 2 interprets the remarkable fine-tuning of creation, focussing on evidence of design in mathematics, music, and love. He avers that the permanence, beauty and usefulness of mathematics indicate that mathematical truth reveals a profound mathematical substructure, creating a genuine point of contact with something beyond nature. The doctrine of the Trinity entails numbers being eternal in a special way, not only in the mind of God, but also, in some sense, in the very being of God. Music also is a source of transcendence, providing a window into the heart of reality. And the human experience of love, in Ortlund's view, enjoys a similar status to the enjoyment of music. He asks: How can natural selection be the source of human love when its driving force is death? In contrast, Trinitarian theism's affirmation of love originating in the Godhead (1 John 4:8, 16) is both more rational and more comforting. Our experience of love, like that of maths and music, makes better sense if there is some ultimate meaning undergirding the world.

Chapter 3 explores the fundamental moral conflict lurking within humanity. The author identifies two aspects of our moral experience: conscience and the hope of justice. Conscience he defines as 'our intuitive sense of the objective reality of moral values and obligations' (p. 113). Our perception of moral justice prompts us to hope instinctively for good to triumph ultimately over evil. Movies almost always have happy endings! A theistic worldview provides a more plausible and more meaningful explanatory framework for conscience and justice, contrasting markedly with the illusory and arbitrary morality of naturalism.

Chapter 4 focuses on Christian hope. It assesses positively the reliability of the four Gospels, the credibility of the unique claims of Jesus, and the historical evidence for his resurrection which is 'as significant a turning point in the course of created reality as the initial moment

of creation itself' (p. 202). To believe in a divine, rather than a strictly human, account of Jesus of Nazareth is wonderful as well as plausible, for it anticipates eternal life. In his Conclusion ('Moving Forward with Probabilities'), Ortlund declares that the Christian story is more plausible, more interesting, more elegant, more dignifying, and more hopeful than its naturalistic counterpart. His last word to readers is to urge them to move beyond probabilities. 'We must make the best decision we can in the light of the information that we do have' (p. 214).

Fergus Macdonald, Edinburgh

The Plot of Salvation, Divine Presence, Human Vocation and Cosmic Redemption. By Bernardo Cho. Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-83973-627-8. 204pp. £14.99.

Before reviewing *The Plot of Salvation*, it is important to provide a brief background on the author, Bernardo Cho. Bernardo is a pastor and theologian. He currently leads a church in Sao Paulo, Brazil — Igreja Presbiteriano do Caminho. He is also head of the DMin programme at Seminario Teologico Servo de Cristo, Sao Paulo. He studied for a MDiv in Seminario Teologico (2006-2008), an MA in New Testament at Regent College, Canada (2009-2012) and a PhD at New College, Edinburgh University (2012-2016).

Bernardo has a rich and diverse background. He is Brazilian by birth but ethnically Korean. There was a major migration of Koreans to Brazil following the Korean War of the 1950s. He speaks fluent Portuguese, Korean, and English, and is proficient in Spanish.

Bernardo Cho is an example of a growing number of gifted pastor-theologians from the Majority World. These are voices not often heard in the west but thankfully, due to the work of Langham Publishing, they are being given a voice. They bring refreshing insights to the biblical text from their own contexts. Now to *The Plot of Salvation*.

When we fail to understand the overarching plot of the Bible, we can easily reduce the gospel to something smaller than it is — and at the same time compromise the scope of God's calling on our lives.

In this adapted collection of twenty interrelated sermons, Bernardo Cho lays out the history of salvation as it is revealed through the entirety of Scripture, from creation to new creation, from Genesis to Revelation. He demonstrates the cohesive nature of the biblical narrative, while expanding our awareness of Christ's redemption, our identities as people of God, and our role in the world and in God's story of reconciliation.

He has the ability to write as a theologian and at the same time communicate in the language of a Pastor — this is a unique gift. The book

provides readers with a framework for examining biblical passages in light of the overarching plot of salvation and serves as an excellent model for teaching the Bible as a unified whole.

Bernardo Cho does not adopt a common evangelical approach to the plan of salvation. Often, in our evangelical tradition, we go from Genesis 1-3 to Genesis 12:1-3 and from there to Matthew 1:23 and the angel of the Lord's message to Joseph of the coming Messiah — 'Immanuel — which means God with us'. As a New Testament Scholar, Cho devotes nearly 100 pages of the book to the Old Testament to help us grapple with all that God was seeking to accomplish through, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets and the Children of Israel and their place in this plot.

Following the Introduction, the book is divided into 4 parts with five chapters under each heading.

- I. Creation to Israel (pp. 9-50)
- II. From Sinai to the Exile (pp. 51-94)
- III. From the Birth to the Resurrection of Jesus (pp. 95-138)
- IV. From the Empty Tomb to the New Jerusalem (pp. 139-76)

Conclusion: *The Story Goes On* (pp. 177-181)

Throughout the book, Bernardo Cho constantly takes us back to Genesis 3 and the roots of our alienation from God — 'the fall was Adam and Eve's attempt at ascending to God's position, which led them to forfeit their fundamental vocation and to dig their own grave' (p. 22). This led them to be exiled from the Garden. The exile theme continues to be explored throughout the book: the exile of God's people in Egypt, the exile in the desert, in Babylon and ultimately, we, the Church, living as exiles in the present age. In the conclusion, he examines the Christian's engagement with this current age. He discusses the temptations of the 'permissive' stance and the 'sectarian' stance (p. 178) and challenges us to resist moving in either of these directions. He invites us to live with a stance of 'engagement'. His description of our roles as *ambassadors* is insightful and very helpful (p. 179).

The book is filled with wonderful theological gems; for example, his understanding and reflections on the momentous occasion when God passes by Moses on Mount Sinai and answers Moses' request to show him his glory (Exod. 32-34, especially Exod. 34:5-8; pp. 56-58). In pages 173-75 his observations on the completeness of creation in the Garden of Eden and the anticipation of the 'new heaven and earth', reflected now in a city, the New Jerusalem, shows 'the redemption even of that which was originally a human idealization'; that is, the city. His guidance in the conclu-

sion on how to conquer the sacred–secular divide leaves the reader with much to consider (pp. 179-80).

The book culminates with the truth that ‘Genesis 3 is not the final word. The plot of salvation informs us instead that the same God who created the heavens and the earth, and called the cosmos “very good”, remains committed to rescuing his creation and restoring his image bearers [...] What has the final word on our future, then, is not the chaos following Genesis 3 but the empty tomb following Jesus’ crucifixion’ (p. 170).

I am delighted *The Plot of Salvation* it is now available in English, having been first published in Portuguese. It is an exciting and accessible portrayal for the twenty-first century of God’s heart and passion to redeem his creation. I have no hesitation in giving *The Plot of Salvation* my full recommendation for readers wishing to understand God’s great plan of redemption.

Malcolm L. McGregor, Langham Scholars Associate Director for Scholar Care (Seconded from SIM Serving In Mission), Edinburgh