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Networks of Metaphors in the Hebrew Bible. Edited by Danilo Verde and
   Antje Labahn. (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanien-
   sium 309). Leuven: Peeters, 2020. ISBN: 978-90-429-4210-3. x + 395pp.
   €85.

Research units dedicated to biblical metaphor have been running at the
annual European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS) and Society of
Biblical Literature (SBL) conferences for the past two decades now. The
present volume, based in great part on the EABS meeting in Helskinki,
2018, is the third output of these units to be published in the BETS series
(following *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, 2005, and *Metaphors in the
Psalms*, 2010), and is dedicated to exploring 'the relationship and inter-
play between different metaphors in the texts of the Hebrew Bible' (p. 2).
The 21 papers are organized according to the tripartite division of the
Hebrew Scriptures, with a strong weighting in favour of the Writings, and
are prefaced with a helpful introduction by Danilo Verde which orients
the reader to the book. The volume, along with its predecessors, is an
excellent representation of the contemporary state of research on biblical
metaphor, illustrating the range of approaches current in the field.

   The contributions in this volume approach the theme of 'networks of
metaphors' from two different perspectives: some consider the complex
interplay of metaphors within a specific passage, such as the Song of the
Sea (Verde, pp. 13-30) or Psalm 51 (Van Wolde, pp. 193-214); while others
are oriented around the extended use of metaphors of a certain type, such
as nature imagery in Ezekiel (Rom-Shiloni, 93-110) or the varying sig-
nificance of bird metaphors in the Wisdom Literature (Dell, pp. 245-62).
Since it is not possible to comment here on each paper, the three selected
summaries below are intended as representative of the range of contribu-
tions on offer.

   Ryan P. Bonfiglio ('The Lord of Hosts Cares for His Flock', pp. 139-56)
takes up one of the best-known biblical metaphors, that of the shepherd,
considering the way in which Second Zechariah utilizes this single source
domain (shepherding) to describe both the wicked and righteous lead-
ers of Israel. Bonfiglio offers the valuable insight that by choosing not to
activate certain elements of a source domain, an author is able to signifi-
cantly affect the way the target domain (leadership) is understood – that
is, Zechariah can create a picture of an 'anti-shepherd' through selectively
utilising or altering certain common aspects of the source domain (a
broken staff, the scattering of the flock, and so forth), showing the defi-
ciency and failure of Israel's human leaders. By contrast, the metaphor of
YHWH as shepherd is richly combined with warrior-king imagery, some-
thing Bonfiglio considers not a mixed metaphor, but a 'meta-metaphor',

one which blends congruous source domains (king, warrior, shepherd) to create a multi-faceted picture of God's rule.

In 'Metaphors of Space and Time' (pp. 215-32), Susanne Gilmayr-Bucher considers the way in which the psalmists of the fourth book of the Psalter use spatial and temporal metaphors to draw a picture of the stability and superiority of God's own dwelling place and eternal reign. She subsequently argues that this engenders his ability to construct a stable, safe, and ordered environment for his people, both on earth and, beyond that, in the divine space which is God himself as his people's refuge. The author demonstrates compellingly how the multiplication of metaphors across numerous psalms serves to construct a 'Thirdspace' in which God's people can live as they are intended to, and in which they can rejoice.

Pierre Van Hecke ('A Play on Plants', pp. 299-312) investigates the metaphorical networks in Job 12-14, focussing particularly on metaphors from nature and the way their interaction expresses Job's view, in this speech, of the hopelessness of humanity. A particularly rich aspect of this paper is the demonstration of how Job's speech picks up on source domains (the concepts drawn on to create the metaphor) used elsewhere in the book of Job, but often in juxtaposing ways – in particular, certain metaphors, such as that of the withering flower or the uprooted tree, are employed by Job's friends to express the fate of the wicked, but by Job to describe the fate of all humankind, reflecting Job's argument about the suffering of the innocent.

This volume is a valuable resource for anyone wishing to explore the breadth of contemporary research on biblical metaphor and gain an introduction to this rapidly growing field. Individual contributions will also be sought out by those studying the particular passages discussed. Overall, the volume may be considered a worthy successor to *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* and *Metaphors in the Psalms*.

Marilyn Burton, Edinburgh

Clash of Visions: Populism and Elitism in New Testament Theology. By Robert Yarbrough. Fearn: Mentor, 2019. ISBN: 9781527103917. 128 pp. £11.99.

Clash of Visions examines the worldview conflict between confessional Christianity ('populism') and the non-believing theological academy ('elitism'). According to Yarbrough, the one group seeks to understand, benefit, spread, and defend the Bible; the other focuses on reinterpreting it through a sceptical lens (p. 40). This book would be helpful for the theology student or pastor seeking a concise perspective on the reasons

for and results of the vast conceptual gap between much of religious academia and traditional faith.

Chapters one to three provide the main argument and two appendices report testimonials of populist academics' personal faith. In chapter one, Yarbrough explores the tension between elitists and populists. While most Christians take Scripture as the true word of God, elitists reflect a common set of sceptical traits: anti-miracle, anti-resurrection, anti-atonement, a view of Jesus as ethical teacher, and the belief that church is not necessary for the Christian (p. 26). While elitists are influential in shaping theological education but serve a diminishing ecclesial constituency, populist Christians, ranging 'from illiterate to highly trained' represent a continually growing movement comprising hundreds of millions of people (p. 25). Furthermore, while elitists encourage a wide range of hermeneutical approaches to Scripture, yet, because their starting point is anti-confessional and anti-supernatural, the traditional reading of Scripture is the one hermeneutic they have deemed untenable (not on historical grounds but *a priori*). As a case study, Yarbrough discusses a written debate in the 2017 Swedish Exegetical Annual between an elitist and a confessional scholar. His analysis of their exchange is insightful: both scholars rely on what is essentially a revelatory authority. For the one, it is Scripture; for the other, 'certain truths of criticism' (p. 37).

Chapter two examines the reboot of the interpretive methods of F C Baur and Rudolf Bultmann in current scholarship. Though Baur's proposal that the idea of Christ, not the history, is all that matters, was rebutted by 19th century scholars, his work is receiving a fresh reading. Baur's heir, Bultmann, rejected historic Christianity and, says Yarbrough, had a huge effect on harming the faith of seminarians in Germany (p. 57). Bultmann, too, is receiving new attention, including a book favourably discussing his theology written by a Southern Baptist seminary dean. Yarbrough observes that, despite the fact that the writings of both Baur and Bultmann have been adequately critiqued, their ideas continue to have traction in academia.

In Chapter three, Yarbrough explains that the difference between elitists and populists is an issue because of the enormous educational and cultural influence elitist interpreters exert. However, the two camps are so far apart that rapprochement is not possible. Instead, he sees potential for the growing populist worldwide church to take back ground in shaping hermeneutics. He gives several reasons, including populists' 'continued and increasing scholarly engagement', and the 'tenacity of populist convictions even unto death', which shows that rapprochement is not even relevant: they are going to live for Jesus whatever the elitists say (pp. 65-72).

In *Clash of Visions*, Yarbrough helpfully lifts the bonnet of the elitist car and shows what's under it: an anti-confessional, anti-supernatural viewpoint mediated by an 'elitist guild consensus functioning like the papal magisterium' (p. 37). He demonstrates that this elitist position is not, as it purports to be, objective. Rather, it relies on presuppositions which are contradictory not only to Scripture's own terms of engagement, but also to the experience of millions of Christians, and which, arguably, do not do justice to the historical evidence for the Biblical narrative.

Yarbrough's assessment that there is no real space for agreement between these camps may be both controversial and depressing, but is, I think, realistic. However, along with this incisive analysis of the chasm separating these worlds, I would have liked to see something about the intellectual and spiritual journey of an elitist turned populist, such as Thomas Oden: what is it that can bring about that change? The appendices, while interesting, are not essential to the substance of the book. The first, while containing a heartfelt testimony, seems rather tangentially related to the book's theme; the second, an interview, repeats but does not significantly expand on the themes of the book.

For pastors and evangelists needing to explain to laypeople and unbelievers why some academic theologians differ so widely from confessing Christians, this book provides helpful summaries, bullet points, and examples. For theology students newly encountering Baur or Bultmann, this book clarifies that though they may be lauded, their work has been critically assessed and found wanting. For populist theological educators, this book gives a neat summary of the wider theological world students face and a reminder of how important it is that they model rigorous thinking alongside a vibrant faith as they train the next generation.

David Mitchell, Connect Church, Kirkcaldy

Evil in Genesis: A Contextual Analysis of Hebrew Lexemes for Evil in the Book of Genesis. By Ingrid Faro. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021. ISBN: 9781683594512. xxi + 279pp. £29.99.

In this book we find Ingrid Faro's doctoral work on evil in Genesis. From the outset – if the title did not give it away – this should indicate something of the complexity of the work. This work is a welcome sight, demonstrating how ongoing lexical work holds an important place in the work of exegesis and theological study. While the work is quite complex, Faro has done a remarkable job at making it accessible to people with less technical knowledge. Therefore, the book may be profitably read by a wider audience than may first seem apparent (although it may be difficult to approach without a fair knowledge of Biblical Hebrew).

Faro begins with her Introduction and then splits her analysis into three major sections. In the introduction, she outlines previous discussion on evil in Genesis, reviews related literature, and then outlines her methodological approach. As she outlines her methodology, we get a brief history of linguistic application to biblical studies and find that various methodological approaches fed into her work.

This leads us into Part I. This section is made up of Faro's lexical work. In this section, Faro first analyses occurrences of the word family רעע which includes a verb, noun, and adjective. (It is the adjective of this word family which is used in the phrase 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'.) This analysis looks at the distribution of the words in both narrative and direct discourse and their relation to speech acts. She structures her chapter by moving sequentially through the major sections (*toledot*) of Genesis. This chapter highlights the structure of the 'plot conflict of good and evil' (p. 62) which is found in Genesis. In the second chapter, Faro examines the semantic field and range of meaning of the word family. Essentially, this involves looking at words which co-occur with or seem to be similar in meaning to the word family she is studying. This leads to a fairly standard set of definitions for the terms and identification of a series of features related to its use. She highlights the relationships with *good* and *sight* for special attention.

Part II builds on this work to analyse relationships between *sight*, *good*, and *evil* in Genesis. Again, she does this sequentially, following the major sections of Genesis. This leads to a partially lexical (about the word) and partially conceptual/theological definition of *evil* as 'a hypernym, a major category word, under which everything bad is subsumed [lexical]. Most simply defined, evil is anything and everything that departs from God and his ways as established in creation [conceptual/theological]' (p. 131).

Finally, Part III, applies this work to develop conceptual and theological observations and implications. This follows the same sequential procedure as before, but looks at the concept of evil as it is seen in Genesis from a theological perspective. This leads to an interesting set of conclusions, one of which is that:

> In Genesis, evil is predominantly the result of God allowing the world of humans with evil intentions to continue and bring about the consequences due to the prevalence of human and nonhuman agents choosing evil, contrary to God and his ways. Creation with a broad swath of free reign has the legal right to decide against God, and therefore, to corrupt and twist what is intended for good into various shades of evil (p. 191).

Following her conclusion, Faro has three helpful excurses. These provide some short and intriguing developments on some themes noted in the body of the text. They may be adequately identified by their titles: 'Good versus evil desire in Genesis 2-3 and the tenth commandment'; 'When God takes human life: corruption, evil, and death'; and 'A word about theology, ideology, and the tree of knowledge: in defense of blending academia and faith'. The book then ends with an appendix listing 'All occurrences of evil רע, רעה, רעע in Genesis BHS MT compared with Rahlf's LXX and NASB English translation'.

I was pleased to see in this work a concerted effort to apply a study of words and their meanings to the task of theology in what seems to be a more appropriate way than has been done in the past. The major value of this work is, I believe, in that procedure being detailed and also in the more conceptual and theological portions. Unfortunately, due to the small sample of text, any conclusions of the meaning of words are rather general and unlikely to receive the nuance that may be seen in a more thorough study. Thankfully, (here I write as one who has studied the adjective and noun across the entire Ancient Hebrew literature for my doctoral dissertation) it does not appear to let down her development of themes in any critical way. Other than that, my only quibbles would be that Faro treats the word family as though it were one word (which thankfully turns out to not be a massive problem for these particular words), and a small amount of relevant literature on lexical work was missed.

I would recommend this book primarily for academics and people with academic training in biblical studies who are interested in the process of theology. It will be of particular interest to those wanting to know how the study of words can work its way through to theology.

Philip D. Foster, Edinburgh

Devoted to God's Church: Core Values for Christian Fellowship. By Sinclair B. Ferguson. Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-84871-976-7. xii + 187pp. £6.50.

One of the great privileges of being a believer is not only knowing and being *in Christ*, but also knowing and belonging *to God's people* (p. 187). This is the heart of Sinclair Ferguson and the impetus for this inspiring work that offers essential biblical doctrine related to the church. Ferguson outlines this doctrine with clarity, supplying principles and practices for all who belong to God's family. If you are searching for a new-members book or are thinking about church membership – this book will prove beneficial. The core values for disciples are universal regardless of church size, location or moment in history. Ferguson covers areas pertinent to

church life as a skilled theologian, a compassionate pastor, and a fellow church member.

Devoted to God's Church is not only *Ecclesiology 101* but is also highly personal in that it highlights the meaning of belonging to a local church, worshipping, serving and reaching the world. Chapter emphases include: 1) *What Is a Church*, 2) *Are You a Christian*, 3) *Being a Disciple*, 4) *What is a Member*, 5) *Worship*, 6) *The Bible*, 7) *Christian Baptism*, 8) *Prayer*, 9) *Christian Service*, 10) *Communion*, and 11) *Christian Witness and World Mission*. Eleven weighty chapters well worth the investment, and two of which I briefly highlight below.

While people seek to analyse and assess worship, Ferguson, in Chapter 5, rightly determines that God alone is capable and worthy to assess the quality of our worship. To prove this, he turns to the prophet's vision in Isaiah 6, where he examines 1) the glory of God, 2) the sovereignty of God, 3) the holiness of God, 4) sensing and tasting pardon, and 5) the sermon. He sees Isaiah's 'Woe is me! For I am lost … (Isa. 6:5)' as significant, in that it is the seventh of seven 'Woes' that covers an assortment of sins and sinners (5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22), Isaiah being the last offender. Ferguson's point for the church to grasp is that when our worship is genuine, we will never leave the service the same as we came, for the Lord will meet us, teach us, convict us, forgive us, and equip us.

As Ferguson explores the topic of Christian baptism (Chapter 7), he highlights that often believers place too little value on baptism and especially its long-term effects on their lives. Drawing from Luther's *Baptizatus sum* ('I am a baptized man!') Ferguson encourages us to 'live a baptized life' (p. 112). Luther was reminding himself of who *he was* in Christ and as such, every believer should view their baptism as a daily reminder of who *they are* in Christ. Failure to do so reveals an insufficient view of baptism. After setting forth baptism's importance there are discussions on 1) What baptism is, and 2) What baptism means. In the first section he finds that baptism is a naming ceremony – our baptism is into the *Name*. Like receiving a name at birth, baptism does not change anything *within us*, but baptism, like our name has a lifelong impact *on us* (p. 104). In the second section Ferguson explores what it means to truly be *in Christ* using Colossians 2:11-15 as his lens. He strikingly concludes that Jesus' baptism was also a naming ceremony for there, the Father publicly identified him as the Son of God (Luke 3:21-23; Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1).

Ferguson's work points to his deep love for the church. If our Lord loved and died for the church, Ferguson believes Jesus' disciples should love the church as well, and this should involve belonging to and actively serving in a local church. The work also points to Ferguson's prophetic

voice about the church, for he asserts that if one wants to be a member serving incognito, then they should rethink being a member (p. 13).

Ferguson's *devoted* ecclesiology is not like other 'church expert' books, touting their success, for he knows that a life that is God-centred, Christ-centred, and Spirit-centred must be a life that is also church-centred (p. 4). He wants believers to understand the gravity of being a church member and how each one finds their place within the body of Christ. *Devoted to God's Church* will fit nicely on the shelf of every conscientious believer; a good companion for Ferguson's *Devoted to God: Blueprints for Sanctification* (Banner of Truth, 2016). Ferguson is not interested in 'church machinery', his desire is to be faithful as Jesus *builds his church* (Matt. 16:18). This book is for the church, but it is also for you as a part of Christ's church, for he, like Paul, wants us to 'know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth' (1 Tim. 3:15).

Tony A. Rogers, Southside Baptist Church, Bowie, TX USA

Analog Church: why we need real people, places and things in the digital age. By Jay Y. Kim. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020. ISBN 978-0-8308-4158-5. 192pp. £11.99 (8.35 Kindle).

Jay Kim is Pastor of teaching and leadership at Vintage Faith church in Santa Cruz, and co-leads the ReGeneration Project, offering theology and church for new generations. *Analog Church* distils his concerns about the digital directions churches are moving in.

Critiquing the US church's 'red-hot pursuit of relevance' when people are longing for transcendence (p. 7), Kim presents his concerns in three sections as key to authentic, physical church life and mission: worship, community, and scripture.

He observes churches embracing a digital age that can make us impatient, shallow, and isolated. On our acts of 'worship', he sets out his key questions: 'When it comes to the singing life of our churches, we must ask… "Does this entertain or engage?"' On preaching, 'we must ask… "Are we asking people to watch or witness?"' (pp. 65-66). He explores the impact of darkened rooms and lighting, commending a nearby church which reverses the common practice: lights shine from behind the worship band, 'which generates a very particular mood and… communicates a very particular philosophy… that this experience isn't about the band up front but about us collectively encountering and responding to God together' (p. 63).

He notes a growing use of 'participatory liturgy' (p. 64) giving meaningful shape and direction to public worship and increasing involvement.

'Singing and creating music together has a strong positive effect on physical and emotional health… accelerating… relational connections. God made us to sing together' (p. 65).

He distinguishes between digital exchange of information, communicating, and exchanging presence, communing, which can only be achieved in analogue. Digital language is of commodity not community (p. 95). Yet he's alert to the subtleties, quoting Ed Stetzer: 'A church should be online, but I don't think it should be online church' (p. 97). Exploring ekklesia, 'What I am suggesting is that we understand and utilize online platforms for what they truly are – a helpful digital means to a greater incarnational end.'

On scripture, he compares the 'intermittent variable rewards' offered by digital's constant calls to check and see what's new; and the steady, complete, and in Larry Hurtado's words, 'bookish faith' Christianity offers. 'Until the last few hundred years, *reading the Bible* had primarily been a communal and extended act… these… long-format texts (were) meant to be heard either in their entirety or, at the very least, prolonged segments' (p. 138).

As he ends, his short and moving chapter on 'The Meal at the Center of History' touches on one of the most poignant dimensions of the pandemic. And he concludes with a final meditation on light, the light of the world.

Full of personal illustration and people's perspectives, Kim eloquently unpacks the reality of God in our physicality and our call to Christian community, demonstrating the overriding value of church 'in person.' Agreed; yet I have questions. The review copy came with a letter from IVP, their author interview, headed, 'How the Digital Age is Damaging the Church'. I wanted to check if this accurately reflected Kim's intention; cue a second interview, between me and Kim himself.

Kim's book critiques a US movement that has gone far further in distancing people from the 'real' than other settings have experienced. Published in 2020, it was written before the pandemic. We've been thinking that the pandemic changed everything, so I got in touch to ask what he would say differently at this stage.

Our brief exchange reflected different experiences in the US, the UK, and Middle East. While digital experience has its painful aspects, it has been *real* because it is built on analogue relationships and is expecting those to resume. We're not avatars on screen, but real people; we're not playing games but keeping in touch when not allowed to meet physically. As Professor Jason Leitch said early on, 'The church has played a blinder'. Our churches have refused to accept isolation and remade themselves to become accessible in every home. Some have made spectacular

gains during lockdowns, though now are having a tough time persuading people to come back to the premises.

Most of us accept that what we've learned this last two years has equipped us to continue to serve and meet in both analogue and digital fashion. We know the limitations keenly, yet we've learned to offer 'good enough' encounters. As we live with this bug, we've learned that church can morph and shape itself to encourage and equip one another and offer meaningful encounters with enquirers who also share our longing for physical encounter.

This is a great book, and I heartily recommend it. His next scheduled book is 'Analog Christian', due in 2022 (you'll get a flavour at https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/doubt-deconstruction-patient-faith/; some of his recent reflections are at https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/should-online-church-continue/ and on his blog https://jaykimthinks.com). I hope he's already writing another, 'Blended Church' perhaps.

Mike Parker, Edinburgh

Masada. By Jodi Magness. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-691-16710-7. x + 265pp. £25.00.

'The fall of Masada' in AD73/74, in which '967 Jewish men, women, and children reportedly took their own lives rather than suffer enslavement or death at the hands of the Roman army' (p. 1), is one of the most dramatic stories in ancient history. In this recent book, Jodi Magness of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, examines the account in its wider context from multiple angles. The result is a fascinating series of discussions on a range of topics which form threads in the rich tapestry that is the story of Masada.

The first chapter provides a brief account of the events as they are generally understood, drawing on the writings of Josephus. Magness moves quickly into a description of the archaeological work carried out by Yigael Yadin. Then she moves on to discuss the contribution of Josephus, providing a brief biography and subjecting his complex life history to scrutiny. She argues that Josephus's writings have survived when many ancient texts did not because Christians preserved them with apologetic motives.

The second chapter tells the gripping story of the various explorers who were involved in the identification of the site, including the many hazards they faced. In chapter three, Magness describes Masada's 'natural setting' in the Judean desert, near the Dead Sea, and its 'historical setting' in the 'late Second Temple period'.

Chapter four is devoted to Herod the Great's building projects, of which the palace at Masada was only one. Chapter five takes a wider historical perspective on 'Judea before Herod'. This is a valuable survey of the Jewish people from settlement in Canaan through to the appointment of Herod as 'king of the Jews', with most space being devoted to the Maccabees, the various Jewish 'sects', and the Hasmoneans.

In chapter six, Magness discusses Herod's reign and its aftermath while, in chapter seven, she describes the first Jewish revolt against Rome. This latter chapter is particularly fascinating and horrifying. It sets the scene for the description of the rebel occupation of Masada in chapter eight. In this chapter, Magness discusses who the rebels of Masada actually were.

The final main chapter, entitled, dramatically, '"Masada Shall Not Fall Again": Yigael Yadin, the Mass Suicide, and the Masada Myth' is a powerful conclusion to the whole narrative.

As an experienced archaeologist as well as an ancient historian, Magness provides careful descriptions of the topography of the region and the modern excavation sites, along with a fascinating account of the events based on ancient sources. In fact, Magness's association with Masada goes back, as she explains in the acknowledgements, to when she 'worked as a field guide and naturalist in the Ein Gedi Field School in 1977–80' (p. ix). The epilogue to the book is a description of Magness's favoured tour of the archaeological remains. There are several colour photos and numerous black and white photos.

The book is also available as an audiobook and works remarkably well in that format as a result of Magness's clear and engaging writing and the excellent narration.

This is a fascinating book and an excellent example of rigorous scholarship presented clearly and attractively for a wide readership. I highly recommend it.

Alistair I. Wilson, Edinburgh Theological Seminary, Edinburgh

Essentially One: Striving for the Unity God Loves. By Jonathan Lamb. London: IVP, 2020. ISBN 978-1-78359-911-0. 220pp. £12.99 (eBook £8.99).

Books are pouring out of Jonathan Lamb, and we're very much in his debt. A regular Keswick speaker, he writes among others for IVP and Langham. A statesman among us, he brings a lifetime's experience and biblical reflection on local church life, UK and international student ministry, and coaching and training preachers and teachers…

In a world of walls and firewalls and relentless media coverage of division, there's no room for naivety. 'By contrast, at the heart of the Christian gospel is the story of reconciliation: walls dismantled, alienations healed, relationships restored, a new internationalism and a new society' (p. xvi). This is unpacked in four parts, each of the 16 chapters expounding and applying key biblical passages about the unity God intends for his people to display.

'Joining God's Mission' takes us through Acts 10, 11, and 15 to show God accepts all, Jesus is Lord of all, and salvation is available to all. Our part in maintaining the unity God has provided is very hard work yet well worth the effort (Eph. 4:1-6). It needs us to focus on Jesus' heart for unity in John 17, which as John Goldingay mused is 'the most spectacularly unanswered prayer in world history' (p. 37).

Hence part 2, Lamb's exploration of 'Difference and Diversity'. Acts 15 reveals rapid growth and sharp dispute, needing Al Mohler's memorable 'Theological Triage' (p. 56). What first, second, and third-order doctrines are involved? How are they balanced and applied? How do they bring and demonstrate Christian maturity? Romans 14-15 gives principles of solidarity, accountability, harmony, humility, and priority, which in J C Ryle's words enable us to 'keep the walls of separation as low as possible, and shake hands over them as often as you can' (p. 70). In Chapter 7, Romans 12 describes 'Christians Incorporated', belonging to one another, united against individualism, tribal interests and pride to focus on energetic, generous and prayerful unity.

Part 3 mines a number of passages to help with 'Confronting Challenges' and managing conflict. What often proves 'the greatest challenge for missionaries, actually getting on with fellow Christians' (p. 91), involves a mix of intense work, exhaustion and spiritual battle, and conflicts over teaching and strategy which may prove necessary. We learn to agree in Philippians, overcome barriers in Philemon, defend the truth in Galatians, discover productive change in Acts 6, and exercise discipline in 2 Peter 2 where false teaching brings distortion, deception, depravity, and destruction. The section ends with insight for those of us in mixed denominations on balancing gentle instruction with necessary discipline.

'Changing our attitudes and behaviour' is the final and longest part. John Stott lamented 'our pathological tendency to fragment'. Responses to disagreement range from a Phillipino, 'That's easy. We start a new church'; to 'Where there are 2 Serbs, you will get 3 opinions' (pp. 127-8). Philippians 1-2, Acts 16 and James 3 mean Lamb remains hopeful: 'We… know that handling disagreement well can… have a truly redemptive effect. It can become the occasion for personal and corporate growth and, ultimately, for the bonds of fellowship to be strengthened' (p. 128).

Chapter 12, 'Mind your language', struck me forcibly. Words are crucial because God chose to communicate primarily through them and 'the ministry of the Word in all its dimensions is vital for the health of the church. Speech is a test case because our lips reflect what is going on inside, for good or evil. What we say and how we say it is of serious concern now and in the light of future judgement' (p. 141). 'Weaponized words' intimidate and humiliate; 'Tribal words' belittle; 'Negative words' are quarrelsome and critical. Instead, we aim for 'Attentive words', bringing Proverbs 18:13 to bear (including a useful guide to emailing). By God's grace the result can be 'Transformative words'.

Lamb's last 4 chapters take us from Acts 2:42 through Galatians 3:26-29 and Philippians 1 to the ultimate vision of Revelation 7:9-12, our one hope, the big story we are called to play our part in. God's family serve God's gospel and focus God's glory because of God's purposes, Christ's cross, one another and the world. Finally, 'Let there be no doubt: the unity which he has won is secure, for he has declared: "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"' (Matt. 16:18, p. 203).

This is a timely, bold book, the fruit of long reflection and biblical study. Individual readers, groups, and bible teachers will appreciate his thoughtful questions at the end of each chapter. Lamb's travels with networks like IFES, Lausanne, and Langham demonstrate and fuel his passion to help us deal with difference for unity's sake, to present and model the gospel. His sources and quotes mean this is primarily an in-house conversation among Evangelicals: a good place to start, addressing our fissiparous tendencies and endless differentiation, urging us to remain related especially when we move in different directions, appealing for common focus and purpose reflected in our variety and difference.

Mike Parker, Edinburgh

The State of New Testament Studies. Edited by Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9879-6. xiv + 496pp. £28.99.

McKnight and Gupta have gathered together a strong line-up of scholars to produce a volume of bibliographical essays which will serve teachers, students, and pastors well as they seek to keep abreast of recent developments in academic study of the New Testament.

As the editors indicate in their Introduction, this book is a successor to *The Face of New Testament Studies* (Baker, 2004). It is intended to perform the same function as the earlier work for a new generation. The basic structure of the two books is, thus, very similar (though not identical).

State has four main parts: Ancient Context; Interpretation; Jesus, Paul, and New Testament Theology; New Testament Texts.

Some essay titles are almost the same in both books and cover broadly the same topic. Other essays cover topics not addressed in the earlier volume, including Lynn Cohick's chapter on 'Women in the Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Early Christian World'.

Contributors were apparently permitted a measure of liberty in writing their respective chapters, so that the essays vary in approach, length, and the range of material covered. Given that the chapters are analytical bibliographical essays, they are not designed to offer ground-breaking research or theological illumination. However, they perform their intended task well: to provide a general orientation to the current state of research in the areas covered. Where there are contentious debates, the authors typically do not attempt to resolve the debates but simply provide details of works that represent the different positions. Many readers will probably dip into the book as required rather than read it from cover to cover.

The contributors reflect significantly greater diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity than the earlier volume, which is commendable, but the contributors all teach in 'Western' nations. I hope that a future revision might include more authors belonging to, and working in, the Majority World. Some authors point readers to scholarship produced by Majority World authors. It is hard to discern particular theological convictions in essays such as these. All authors treat the biblical texts with respect, but contributors seem to represent significantly different theological perspectives.

Of course, *State* was published only fifteen years after *Face*, so readers will still learn much from the older book. Theological libraries should have both volumes on their shelves, as should most teachers of New Testament studies. Theological students should certainly read through relevant chapters of this new book as they take courses on particular New Testament documents or as they construct bibliographies for assignments. Many preachers will find it a useful resource for keeping reasonably well-informed of current discussions and resources, although they will probably find that there is more detail than they usually need. One of the inevitable challenges that contributors to such a volume face is that their published work is outdated from the moment it is published. That does not diminish the value of such an important publication. Rather, it reminds teachers, students, and preachers of the need to be constantly working to retain currency, as far as possible, in their studies.

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Can we Trust the Gospels? By Peter J. Williams. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. ISBN 978-1-4335-5295-3. 153pp. £8.99.

This review was originally published online by Solas at https://www.solas-cpc.org/book-review-can-we-trust-the-gospelsby-peter-j-williams/. It is reproduced here with permission. Solas also conducted an interview with the author at https://www.solas-cpc.org/can-we-trust-the-gospels-in-conversation-with-peter-j-williams/.

In the preface to this short and accessible book, Pete Williams, warden of Tyndale House in Cambridge, states that his aim is to 'present a case for the reliability of the Gospels to those who are thinking about the subject for the first time'. Has he managed to do so? It would be a very short review simply to answer in the affirmative, but I want to do exactly that before saying a little more. I want to commend Williams' book and persuade you of its worth. Then I want to suggest who might be most helped by it.

The book proceeds through a number of arguments for the reliability of the Gospels, many of which will be familiar to anyone who has dipped their toe in these waters. The added value in this book is threefold. First, the issues are explained with a commendable clarity and simplicity. Secondly, it is obvious to any reader that there is a weight of scholarship behind every sentence in the book. Footnotes are kept to a minimum, but there are enough to give the reader confidence that Williams' arguments are based on careful (and lifelong) engagement with these issues at an academic level. Thirdly, there are a number of lines of evidence adduced in this book that will be new to many readers and reflect some more recent scholarly findings. For example, Williams draws upon Bauckham's work on the Gospels as eyewitness testimony and develops it further with his own work on naming conventions in 1st century Palestine and accuracy of geographical knowledge. For many, therefore, the chapter 'Did the Gospel writers know their stuff?' is on its own worth the cost of the book, containing much fascinating information and pointers towards further reading for those particularly interested.

The cumulative case presented is compelling. Williams is careful to point out that he is not trying to 'prove' the trustworthiness of the Gospels so much as trying to show that it is entirely rational to trust them as reliable accounts of Jesus' life and teaching. In this aim, I would certainly judge him successful. However, this leads to a last reflection on Williams' book. Who will benefit from it?

Is this the sort of book that could be given to an interested sceptic? Certainly – although I don't meet many interested sceptics who are asking the particular questions being answered by this book. Does that

mean that it's not a useful book? Far from it! It's just that we need to be clear that a book like this isn't designed to compel someone into the Kingdom by sheer force of logic and weight of evidence – Williams is careful to avoid such a modernist construal of faith. Rather, I suspect that this book is going to be most helpful in giving confidence to young Christians. It is essential reading for Christians who have (or are faced with) questions about the reliability and authority of the Gospels and need to know that their questions or doubts can be answered so that they can engage in conversation with their non-believing friends without the fear that somehow their faith will be shown to be in vain. It would be an excellent resource for, for example, undergraduate theology students.

In conclusion, then, this is a great little book and should form part of an armoury of resources that will give Christians greater confidence in the reasonableness of their faith. If it then causes those Christians both to live in line with the Gospels and to share more confidently and winsomely the Good News of their subject, then the job will be well done.

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British Gods: Religion in Modern Britain. By Steve Bruce. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-19-885411-1. V + 282pp. £22.50.

British Gods: Religion in Modern Britain, is essentially a tour guide's handbook on the condition and health of religion in the UK written by one of the leading international experts on religion and politics, Steve Bruce. Although Bruce considers the impact of the arrival of growing numbers Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims from the 1960s in chapter 7 'Worktown and Muslims,' what he terms 'Gods of the Common People: Folk Religion and Superstition' in chapter 8 and 'Spiritualism, Spirituality, and Social Class' in chapter 9, the central focus of this book is on the decline of Christianity in the UK, the dominate state religion, since the 1851 Census of Religious Worship. Bruce makes the observation that 'the typical Briton has gone from churchgoing Christian, to nominal Christian, to non-Christian who nonetheless thinks religion (in the abstract at least) is a good thing, to being someone who supposes that religion does more harm than good' (p. 270). *British Gods* could be presented as a depressing read, especially for those who hope for a revival and a reversal of the overall decline in interest in Christianity. It is, however, an important book for evangelicals to read. It is a review of the state of Christianity in the UK as perceived by a professional sociologist looking at the social setting that the church now finds itself in, from a relatively disinterested perspective. The book is a crash-course in understanding how things are

perceived from a secular standpoint. It makes for uncomfortable, if necessary, reading.

Chapters 1-3 sketch out from a sociological perspective the various reasons why the UK was an overwhelmingly Christian country, in terms of verifiable religious observance (Church attendance and rites of passage), until the clearly observable secularisation of UK society in the second half of the twentieth century, continuing into the twenty-first century. The focus of the chapter is contained in the title: chapter 1, 'The Big House: Elite Patronage of Religion'; chapter 2, 'Ties that Bind: Community Cohesion in Scotland and Wales'; and chapter 3, 'Social Roles of the Clergy: Cumbria and Devon.' In chapter 4, 'Old Rivals Merge; New Divisions Emerge' Bruce maintains that the declining popularity of Christianity was the main driver for mergers of Church congregations in many social settings. He contends that the theological distinctions between main Christian denominations, so important historically, are unknown by the majority of people in a town and largely even among members of local congregations. In chapter 4 Bruce explores in 'New Divisions: Women Clergy, Worship, and Sexuality' how, in his opinion, the Church has taken the losing side on important social matters on each occasion, which in turn had the effect of furthering its loss of influence and popularity within society.

In chapter 5 'Modernizing the Faith: The Charismatic Movement' Bruce argues that instead of reversing secularization 'it actually facilitated decline by providing young members of conservative Christian families with a stepping stone on the road to religious indifference and by reducing the visible presence of Christianity' (p. 120). From a sociological perspective, the sources of initial growth were those who were already Christian. One historian, according to Bruce, estimated that 90 per cent of members were 'defectors from other churches' (p. 117). In chapter 6 'Migrant Christians and Pentecostalism in London' Bruce notes that London has seen a significant increase in church attendance. This increase, he maintains, is entirely due to the migrant background of newcomers into London who have arrived from more religious countries (p. 141).

In chapter 11, Bruce asks the question 'Can the Decline be Reversed?' While Bruce does not contend that a reversal of the secularization trend in the UK is impossible, he does explore the likely constraints to any revival. The first is the 'Declining Stock of Religious Knowledge' or simply ignorance of the basic elements of the Christian faith. Among the other constrains, according to Bruce, are: 'State Neutrality and the Loss of Ambient Religion'; 'The Public Reputation of Religion'; 'Social Influence in Religious Conversion'; 'Religion is now Alien'; and 'The Odds of Meeting a Believer'.

In conclusion, *British Gods* is a difficult but useful read for the pastor or minister interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the state of religion in the UK, at least from the perspective of a secular sociologist. Whilst bleak, one cannot begin to cure the patient if one does not first understand what ails them; so it is with the decline in religious participation and ambivalent attitudes of a largely secular society in the UK. Bruce's various confrontational statements are not easy to read but his study is an important reference point for evangelicals to consider.

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The Meaning of Protestant Theology: Luther, Augustine, and the Gospel That Gives Us Christ. By Phillip Cary. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. ISBN: 9-78-080103945-4. 384pp. £22.99.

An engaging volume encompassing 12 substantial chapters, Cary explains that his motivation for writing comes in part from the growing number of Protestants who, enamoured with the sacramental richness of Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy, increasingly see little reason to remain part of their tradition. While this 'is a question', he writes, 'that often arises for Protestants having their first robust encounter with the Great Tradition of the church' (p. 1), the author contends that Protestantism does indeed boast a unique contribution to Christian theology that makes it worth holding to: The conviction, as per Martin Luther, that the gospel is ultimately a sacramental word, God's giving of himself to us in the person of Christ.

Cary's work is divided into 3 parts. The first deals with Augustine's spirituality, which Luther's theology was initially shaped by yet eventually departed from. In addition to a sustained engagement with the patristic doctrine of God, Augustine's renowned Christian Platonism occupies an indispensable role in this portion of the volume. Cary, a philosopher by training, evaluates its strengths and weaknesses, contending its fatal flaw 'is that it moves in a different direction from the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, which is a descent into flesh rather than an ascent of the Spirit' (p. 37). Cary is concerned, in other words, that the Church Father's understanding of the gospel 'makes Christ's humanity our way to God rather than God's way to us' (p. 75); rather than an external word apprehended by faith, it becomes a journey sustained by love.

This discussion lays the groundwork for Part II, which deals with the development of Luther's understanding of the gospel as the 'gracious word of God that gives us Christ' (p. 7). The young Luther, terrified by knowledge of his sin, resorted to what Cary calls spiritual masochism, even suggesting we should wish ourselves condemned. Far from loving

God as we should, Luther understood from 'Augustine's counterfactual test…that our supposed love of God is actually fear of punishment' (p. 125). Cary credits this realization for Luther's later insistence on separating law and gospel; his mature insistence on the gospel as an external word is 'thus', he suggests, 'a great comfort to those who know what it is like to be weak in faith' (p. 158). The answer for such a condition is not looking inward to see that one loves as they should, but trusting in the promise of God. Ironically, Cary points out that only this knowledge, that one is justified by faith alone, not by love, is the only way one can be free to truly love at all. 'In that way the Gospel', he writes, 'frees me to live in love, concerned for the good of my neighbour rather than wrapped up in my spiritual anxieties' (p. 204). Although Cary acknowledges that 'Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone amounts in the end to a doctrine of *salvation* by faith alone' (p. 113), many evangelicals might be surprised by Cary's assertion that, even for the mature Luther, justification remained a process rather than an instantaneous declaration, contrary to the understanding of later Lutherans. While some readers may contest this, the author's raising this issue is a caution to students of historical theology who might mistakenly conflate Reformation theology *per se* with later expressions of Protestantism.

The third part of Cary's volume reflects on the consequences of Luther's thought within the Protestant tradition, his sobering recognition of the reformer's inexcusable anti-Semitism demonstrating that Cary is not uncritical in his appraisal. He also cautions Protestants against demanding the kind of scientific certainty about their theology that gave rise to the historical-critical method within German academia. His insistence that 'Christian theology has the obligation before God to do its own exegesis of Scripture, in service of the church rather than the academy' (p. 224) should encourage pastors and scholars to prize theological interpretation and Christian tradition while avoiding the harsh polemics that characterized Luther at his worst. Proceeding to discuss soteriology as it developed in later evangelicalism, he chides both the Calvinist and Wesleyan traditions for encouraging a kind of 'reflective faith' (p. 266), an inward speculation of whether one has true faith, rather than simply encouraging 'faith in the sacramental promise of the Gospel as conceived by Luther' (p. 240). Even those who differ with Luther's high sacramental theology, outlined in the 11th chapter, could sympathize with the pastoral concerns Cary raises.

Many readers without rigorous training in philosophy and/or theology might find Cary's volume challenging; however, for such a rich topic, this might be unavoidable. Those who struggle with Protestantism's distinctive contribution to the Great Tradition, desire a serious engagement

with Luther's theology, or are fascinated by the historical antecedents and descendants of Reformation thought will find this book both thorough and enjoyable.

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