Divine Generosity: The Scope of Salvation in Reformed Theology. By Richard J. Mouw. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2024. ISBN 978-0-8028-8390-2, ix + 133 pp. £14.99

I have long admired Richard Mouw's irenic spirit and concern for contemporary issues, coupled with a respect for the Reformed tradition and a desire to remain biblically faithful. These qualities are evident in his latest book, *Divine Generosity*. However, this reviewer at least wonders if on this occasion he has not pushed the limits of orthodoxy a little far.

Mouw begins by asserting that not only is he not a universalist, but he has no desire to be one. He believes that 'the idea of universal salvation fails to capture some important elements in the Bible's teaching on the importance of divine justice' (p. 1). But, writing as a neo-Calvinist, influenced by the writings of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, Mouw develops the concept of common grace which teaches 'that there are manifestations of a positive, but nonsaving, attitude of God to the nonelect' that 'takes seriously working for the well-being of the larger human condition' (p. 13). Although this perspective has not gone unchallenged in the Reformed community – Mouw mentions Cornelius Van Til in passing and Herman Hoeksema in more detail – this is largely an inhouse debate. Common grace is not a particularly controversial concept in Reformed theology generally and can be traced back at least to John Calvin (p. 15).[1]

Mouw moves from here to a slightly more controversial position, for which he is able to cite the impeccably Reformed 'Old Princeton' theologians, particularly Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, and Geerhardus Vos, as well as their Union Theological Seminary (New York) contemporary, W. G. T. Shedd. These theologians were involved in a debate that took place among Presbyterians in the United States about the perceived need for revisions to the Westminster Confession of Faith, particularly on the salvific status of children who die in infancy. The third section of the Confession's tenth chapter, 'Of Effectual Calling', states that 'Elect infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.' Some took this to mean that elect infants are to be distinguished from non-elect infants;

[1] Mouw references John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20 and 21 (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1960), 2/3.3, p. 293.

others that elect infants dying in infancy are to be distinguished from those who survive to adulthood and are saved by the Word and Spirit. The Princeton theologians, although they disagreed with other proposed revisions, did agree 'with those pushing for a confessional revision that makes it clear that God saves *all* children who die before they are capable of understanding the claims of the gospel' (p. 35). Shedd also agreed. Again, this was and is more or less an in-house debate.

Where Mouw takes the argument further is in his interpretation of 'all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.' This surely includes those who are mentally incapable of understanding gospel preaching, but Mouw speculates that it may also include those who have never heard the gospel at all. Here, he develops an argument he first heard from his predecessor as president of Fuller Theological Seminary, David Hubbard.

In speaking of the paralytic whose friends lowered him on a mat through the roof of the building where Jesus was, Hubbard noted that it was when Jesus saw 'their faith' that he said to the man, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you' (Luke 5:20 NRSV). From this, Mouw develops the idea that 'God honors our efforts to have faith *on behalf of others*' (emphasis Mouw's). This is then applied to various circumstances: a grieving mother's prayers for her deceased son who had been killed in the act of committing a robbery, but who had previously expressed a desire to change his ways; a young alcoholic woman who had been abused by her father, regarded as a saint in the Christian community. She consequently found it impossible to pray to God as 'Father', but understood her need to reach out to a 'Higher Power' and had made resultant changes in her life; praying for deceased Buddhist ancestors in an Asian context where respect for ancestors is paramount; 'Christian rituals of ancestral veneration', where the focus is on 'evangelizing of and communion with the dead' in a manner that involves 'an important representational task' (which sounds suspiciously like Mormon baptism for the dead). Then there are numerous examples of those whose actual faith is better than their theology, such as certain liberal theologians (e.g. Schleiermacher whom Charles Hodge regarded as a devout worshipper of Christ); some 19th century Unitarians who gave evidence of a vital faith in Christ, something Shedd apparently recognized; Mormons with whom Mouw has had extensive conversations over a period of years, and even Muslims who love Jesus.

Mouw takes the idea of representation from Suzanne McDonald's *Re-imagining Election: Divine Election as Representing God to Others and Others to God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), which rather curiously is based on the teachings of both the Puritan John Owen and the neo-orthodox Karl Barth. He appears to be on surer ground when he

returns to Warfield and Shedd. Warfield's essay 'Are There Few That be Saved?' argued that 'the salvation of a vast number of human beings is not unthinkable from a Calvinist perspective' (p. 104).[2] Shedd went further, as paraphrased by Mouw: 'A person in an unevangelized region experiences a deep sorrow for his corrupt deeds and thoughts and senses the need to rely for forgiveness and correction on something beyond himself. He pleads for mercy in his heart and begins to lead a life marked by gratitude for the spiritual resources that have entered his life.' Mouw opines that '[o]n Shedd's characterization of this case, the man is showing the fruits of election, which means the Spirit has planted the seed of redemption in his soul. The man does not know who his Savior is, but, says Shedd, the man would acknowledge Jesus as the guarantor of his salvation if he were to hear the gospel message. Nor does Shedd seem to think this kind of case is extremely rare' (p. 104).[3]

Warfield and his Princeton colleagues did not go as far as Shedd, but Warfield pointed out that his own view that the saving work of Christ 'shall embrace the immensely greater part of the human race' was shared by Charles Hodge and influential Southern Presbyterian pastor and theologian, latterly of Virginia's Union Theological Seminary (now Union Presbyterian Seminary), Robert L. Dabney. In Dabney's case, 'for instance', Mouw notes that he 'tossed in a postmillennial projection about a mass conversion in a time that is yet to come in human history'. Mouw considers this to be a 'questionable prediction' but believes that Dabney 'more than compensates for that…with his declaration that the number of the elect will be comprised of 'the vast majority of the whole mass of humanity, *including all generations*' (emphasis Mouw's). Despite the 'for instance' qualifier, it seems to me that Mouw does not take adequate account of the fact that Shedd and his Princeton heroes, except for Vos, were also postmillennialists and that this figured prominently in their thinking. Besides, their concern for the salvation of all children dying in infancy involved the fact that this was a frequent occurrence in human history up to their time. Mouw recognises this as a factor in the large number of the elect, but thinks it falls short of 'the vast majority of the whole mass of humanity,' without including 'huge numbers of adult human beings who have died without ever hearing the gospel proclaimed' (p. 123).

Returning to his own Dutch Reformed roots, Mouw notes that while Kuyper was 'convinced of the small number view' (a point Warfield dem-

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2 Mouw references Benjamin Warfield, *Are There Few That Be Saved?* (New York: Our Hope Publications, 1918).

3 See W. G. T. Shedd, *Calvinism Pure and Mixed: A Defense of the Westminster Standards* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1986), pp.10-11.

onstrates in his essay), his close colleague Bavinck was certainly given to an expansive understanding of the end time (p.123), and one would also have expected this of Kuyper. However, true as this may be, the exact quote Mouw provides from Bavinck says nothing about the salvation of those who have never heard the gospel and Bavinck is quoted earlier as saying, 'In light of Scripture, both with regard to the salvation of pagans and that of children who die in infancy, we cannot get beyond abstaining from a firm judgment, in either a positive or negative sense' (p. 76).[4]

As Bavinck indicates, what ultimately matters is not what any of these men might think, but what Scripture teaches. Of this, Spurgeon (quoted by Mouw on page 8) notes that while 'there is to be a multitude that no man can number in heaven,' he had not found anything in the Bible that says 'there is to be a multitude that no man can number in hell.'[5] Beyond this argument from silence, coupled with the clear teaching on Christ as the only way to the Father (John 14:6) and the consequent obligation to carry the gospel to all nations (Matt 28: 18-20), we are left with the assurance that the Judge of all the earth will do right (Gen 18:25) in the Day of Judgment, just as he did in the destruction of Sodom. However much we might hope that Mouw is right, we must accept (as he does at times) that much of what he develops based on some noted Reformed theologians is speculative, and it is questionable that all (or any) of them would have gone as far as he does.

J. Cameron Fraser, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Biblical Critical Theory. How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture. By Christopher Watkin. Zondervan 2022.

The late Tim Keller's Introduction offers encouragement: 'But the Bible has its own narratives, images, and patterns that enable us to analyze any culture at the deepest level and to both critique and appreciate it.' So the book has international support. It also plays tribute to a formative time in Cambridge in the late 1990s but also has an Australian flavour as in his referencing of John Dickson, *Bullies and Saints* (Zondervan 2021). The Zondervan brand perhaps puts one on notice that here is a book intended for a wide Christian readership. It will be academic but not resolutely so.

As early as his own preface (xix) the author declares that Augustine's *City of God* was his inspiration. Further, he insists that learning to ask the

[4] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) 726.

[5] Charles Spurgeon, Heavenly Worship, the Spurgeon Center, sermon on Rev. 14: 1-3, preached on December 28, 1856, https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/heavenly-worship/#flipbook/.

'so what?' question is crucial, not to forget to mention the consequences for life after the apologetics and doctrine. One might usually call this 'ethics' or moral theology, but that category is avoided, even though there is a good bit of use of Oliver O'Donovan's trilogy (*Self, World and Time*: Eerdmans, 2013-17). When it comes to reading the bible, Watkin is keen to emphasise that what needs to be found are 'figures' or patterns and rhythms from which one can better view the 'ground' around us in our culture, the better to see it as it is. He regularly namechecks Foucault (cf. his own *Michel Foucault,* P&R 2018 but also his *French Philosophy Today: New Figures of the Human in Badiou, Meillassoux, Malabou, Serres and Latour,* EUP, 2018). Every Foucauldian 'episteme' has characteristic patterns and rhythms that determine discourse for it to have meaning. So we need to listen to the language(s), ideas, and stories of the bible, e.g. 'covenant', or Jesus' 'first shall be last' meme.

In terms of real time and space the Bible affirms a scheme of promise and fulfilment, of God the Lord of the Universe, yet with the kingdom of God opposed to that of the world. Christianity was to begin with about a behaviour of meeting on Sundays to worship, and putting relationships to rights, and forming a unity under God's law, with due regard for what is tangible, whether objects like temple or routes that Paul took.

Watkin adds that he appreciates Charles Taylor's alternative term to 'worldview', viz. that of 'social imaginary', which can be defined as 'an implicit grasp of reality', but he settles for 'world' as his preferred term, as something more to do with life and not just ideas. This is the world as it is to 'me'; and yet it is not *Lebenswelt* in a subjective sense, not least since non-human ecosystems are included. The biblical text proposes an imaginary world for us to inhabit, but new situations also can configure our world, and these epistemes can function like texts themselves.

Before one get too carried away with all things postmodern, he calls us to replicate Augustine's subversive mimesis, whereby one takes a pagan 'figure' like spectacle (the circus or arena) so that liturgy becomes counter-/anti-spectacle. This is one rare place where Augustine's *City of God* is heard and used, as opposed to merely cited. He introduces, and will press throughout the idea of 'diagonalization', which means questioning our assumptions leading to a positive and valuable third way not a compromise, avoiding the opposite extremes. However, later he will say (with Spurgeon) that the truth is not to be located in the middle but in the extremes, which appears to contradict what he has just said about the third way. Perhaps the idea is the work of avoiding the absolutizing of the temporal, like a skier winding their way through a slalom course. So perhaps he means something dialectical: embracing extremes on either side. To be sure, he insists we should assume until proven otherwise that inter-

locutors are seeking the good as they understand it'. This sounds none too Augustinian, but perhaps it is the better for that. Later he describes what he calls 'umbilical thinking', whereby one aspect of reality has primacy over all others: this is to be avoided.

One author who gets mentioned but perhaps whose project is not quite given the attention it deserves is John Millbank, with his idea of 'Out-Narrating'. However Milbank has never been obviously 'biblical' as a thinker, and Watkin needs to insist that one large problem is that in the Enlightenment the bible got eclipsed from being the story that made sense of our other stories. The Christian story provided and he believes still (this side of he Enlightenment) provides a 'set of lenses' gathered from the whole storyline, serving not just to help analyse situations and discern between viewpoints, but also to provide a vision. Just as Augustine in the *City of God* 'explains Roman culture within the framework of the biblical story', Watkin's aim is not to explain the bible to our culture but explain our culture through the bible', and hence to arrive at Christian social theory.

So much for the introductory material. Yet before we launch into rehearing the biblical story as promised, we pause in Chapter 1 with the topic of *Trinity and Truth*: there is an eponymous book (I assume the one by Bruce Marshall), he admits he never read, as he recounts in a chatty, anecdotal chapter opening which is typical of the pattern of his chapters. 'The Trinity' is foundationally important because, first, the Absolute is also Personal and ultimate, and reality is personal and dynamic. The Trinity 'provides the blueprint and the mandate for the mediation between the one and the many' and the substratum for the ethics of sameness and alterity –or, one might call it 'love'. It is not that 'Love is God' (D. Bonhoeffer) for there is a need for faith and hope too, as O'Donovan reminds us. Too much fetishizing of 'the Other' in order to avoid totalising/classifying can unfortunately lead to a loss of relating (cf. D.B. Hart). He asserts (relying on Milbank) an ontology of peace (against Hobbes) and speaks of the right use of power as God does, to overpower powers and authorities, by which 'everything impersonal [can get] caught up in the personal'.

So much for a metaphysical prolegomena. Perhaps the bible can start being referenced when the next chapter takes up the topic of Creation? Well in fact the themes are immediately those of gratuitous universe, of transcendence & immanence: but if there is a biblical story to be harnessed this has not quite got going yet. The bible's picture of life as free gift, not the product of a market economy, and therefore the primacy of 'gift' might have been better informed by Milbank's discussion of 'can a gift be given?' (and indeed his scepticism about 'pure gift'), which is ignored here. Watkin asserts the need for form against chaos on our world, some

lines to be etched over against the 'grey' of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*. He thinks we want to avoid the Lacanian idea that language imposes itself on reality, but also the other extreme that language can parcel up reality. We should speak of enchanted materiality and embodied spirituality. Now, creativity without order is discriminatory and destructive, so there should be a balance of mimesis and poesis. Genesis 1 exposes the objectivist (cf. Liberalism) and the subjectivist (cf. Communitarianism) accounts of reality as being both reductionist, since it is God's interpretation that tells us that what is out there 'was very good.' In tandem with this, there is no absolute fact/value division, although the treatment of this is a bit too brief to convince.

These early chapters rather set the tone, in presenting broad themes, but wherein there is much skipping of the detail of the bible's witness (e.g. no John's gospel on the Trinity), a bit like a PhD student who likes a topic but not what the detail of data says about the topic. That is, he selects some ideas associated with the bible, which are then quickly brought into conversation with present-day thinking, Hence on Sabbath in Genesis, Walter Brueggemann is heard, that Sabbath means resistance: much more could be said about sabbath, but there is a tendency to take one aspect from a biblical theme and run with it. The topics are in the bible but just what the bible has to say about these is a bit in short supply not least because the story approach means that 'if it's Genesis 1, it's creation', rather than attend to *what is said about* creation *across the canon*.

The treatment of the 'Image of God' theme is hugely indebted to Jean-Luc Marion, and is handled with a pleasing amount of erudition. The idea of the 'fall of humanity' as a great leveller is explored with help from Rosenstoeck-Hussey and Alan Jacobs, yet there is very little on sin, and what it might mean for the biblical remedy for sin to be sacrifice. This seems rather a blind spot, as we shall see when we arrive at the chapters on the New Testament.

Exodus gets related to the question of justice, that is, a justice tempered in forgiveness. There was a choice for Israel between slavery (Egypt) and death in the desert, but what they were offered was the liberating experience of Slavery to God. In a section called 'Exodus and modern politics' the Exodus narrative is described as that of a 'history from below'. Much of our politics today is 'Exodus-shaped' and so the reader is encouraged to 'inhabit' Exodus. Divine Law was a gift to prevent vendetta. 'Crucially, the divine origin of the law also grounds the idea that the human being has rights not granted by the state and that can be appealed to against the state. The fact that the law comes from God relativises every human claim to absolute authority.' (277) Interesting but what might this mean in practice? How is that to be parsed? Also, he thinks that it helps to have

a law that is of otherworldly origin in order to balance community and individual rights. This last point seems like a *non sequitur*. Keller, Tom Holland (*Dominion*) and Bavinck are his referees at this point. Given the wealth of scholarship and thinking on natural law and natural rights, one feels he could do better. This is part of the problem with the approach of very short accounts of important topics, giving an impression, sometimes useful but rarely very grounded, then quickly moving on. The 'excuse' might be that this is a book written for non-specialists, yet in other places he is very much ready to show his working in the fields of theory and academic debate, so why not here?

As for Leviticus, well, Leviticus 25 is interpreted as the reordering/resetting of time, and there is a need to gather and re-order it today. At this point there is a bit of Charles Taylor (*A Secular Age*, p. 75) but in terms of OT scholarship, only Christopher Wright is mentioned. Chapter 13 introduces prophecy and cultural critique but seems impatient to get to answer the question: what forms does idolatry take now? For Watkin, too much ideology can result in idolatry, since everyone else is wrong, and this attitude leads to the slavery of disenchantment.

Moving forward to the Wisdom books,' Ecclesiastes is what Walter Brueggemann calls the Bible's counter-testimony critiquing the "core testimony" of Israel's central narrative of God's redemption and providence…' (321, referencing his *Theology of OT* (1997), 360-2. Ecclesiastes is to Proverbs like Kierkegaard or Shestov are to Hegel. What matters is that we don't make the bible in our own image (322). Job strikes the notes of both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (Hegel and Kierkegaard, again) and maintains within that one book the perspectival diversity that one finds in many parts of the bible. Wisdom is about holding the multiplicity of perspectives together, which he names 'transperspectival' (335, drawing attention to Dooyewaard's *A new Critique of Theoretical Thought* and his term 'perspectual'.)

Watkin takes the opportunity to alert us to the fact that up to a third of the bible is poetry and one must pay attention to its allusive and engaging style. Quite how this fits with reading the bible consecutively as a story is not mentioned. And as for the story, there are only a couple of pages on the exile and Israel (or Judah)'s? hope for the future (339-40).

In Chapter 18 he employs a geographical or topographical metaphor: 'Christ is the heart of the Bible, Paris, to which all biblical narratives lead, and the cross is the Châtelet at the heart of this heart.' The subversive cross (where weakness is not failure, *pace* Nietzsche) breaks open the whole transactional sacrificial arrangement. 'But in God's economy the cross is a delimiting sacrifice, an infinite offering that burst open every marker paradigm of n-shaped tit-for-tat relationships with the divine'.

(401) Following D.B. Hart he calls for a different order of sacrifice from that of the world of the market, of limits and finitude. (407) Grace breaks decisively with the whole performance narrative; grace puts the lines of performance 'under erasure'. For it is mercy, not performance that is required. Love is neither abstract nor loving because of qualities in the thing or person loved. We love the concrete neighbour because he is there, not for what he is.

Chapter 19 deals with the theme of the superabundance of love on the cross and with the asymmetry of divine love and human response. The cross today often gets rejected as the antithesis of human desire. Then, at Chapter 20:

> 'But to say that Jesus rose is to have said far too little. To appreciate the uniqueness and importance of the resurrection for the "so what?" question of Christianity, we need to understand the meaning given to this event in the Scriptures...The resurrection is not merely a historical event…the resurrection being a figure that rhythms and patterns the life and reality of Christians.' (435-6)

Chapter 20 is about the resurrection of Jesus interpreted through Phil 2:5-11, in conversation with O'Donovan , so as to highlight the meaningful life of obedient service as subverting the status quo of 'totality' (with D.B. Hart). One might just note a reservation about the idea which seems patent here, that the Cross was and is about God doing new things in order to transcend the old things which had become useless. Any idea of how Christ might be the end of the law' or what sacrifice might achieve, or how Christ undoes the knots of sin and how sanctification might be a possibility in the church -all this seems absent, which is unexpected in an evangelical and theologically 'orthodox' author.

Chapter 21 concerns the 'counter-story' for us now, and indeed Chapters 21-28 (cf. the chapter titles: 'the last days and…' ; 'Eschatology and… ' are all 'post-NT', as though the bible is behind us and we are in the realm of the present in the light of God's future. Perhaps this is a welcome imbalance in an account of 'the biblical' but imbalance it is.

To end this survey with his own conclusion. This asserts doxology as a way of inhabiting the world, a way of passionate praise, where de-centring and opening of the self is all important. Again D.B. Hart gets quoted before he sums up:

> I hope to have gathered together a collection of insights from the pages of Scripture and from two thousand years of Christian reflection in a somewhat fresh way, mapping them onto the Bible's storyline from Genesis to Revelation and thereby lending them a fresh sense if overall coherence and relation-

> ship to each other. Perhaps one welcome side effect of this task will be to make strange some Christian ideas with which our familiarity has bred contempt: a little exercise in theological *Verfremdung*.' (603)

Well perhaps. That might indeed be the strength of the book.

He admits there are things missing: there could be a lot more on the sacrificial system or the Holy Spirit he concedes. He invites email, but first (like a utilities company might put it: check his website: *thinkingthroughthebible.com*, where the strapline says: '*The Thinking Through the Bible series explores the repeated patterns of the Bible along with its overall narrative shape to generate a series of tools for cultural critique*.') Repeated patterns suggest typology or 'figural reading' and in the first chapter this seemed promising but in the substantive chapters it seemed missing in action. The same might be said for 'the bible's overall narrative shape'. In fact the bible as presented in these chapters seems a very baggy and lopsided one.

Of course this book does not claim to be a biblical theology, but more an exercise in reading the world through the bible. Well, has he managed to explain the culture through the Bible? Not really. He has illuminated the issues in contemporary culture with aplomb, and perhaps even explained them, but the bible feels like background rather than foreground. It is a useful and insightful work of Christian apologetics in the best sense of that term. In comparison with his erudition in the field of French secular thought, there is an ignorance of the theological tradition (the French included) and of biblical exegesis and theology.

Mark W. Elliott, Highland Theological College

The Conflict Between Faith and Experience and the Shape of Psalms 73–83. By Stephen J. Smith. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2024. Pp. 224. £28.99, paperback.

In 2007, Joel S. Burnett wrote that "Arguably the most significant development in Psalms scholarship in recent decades has been attention to the shape and shaping of the Psalter. Nevertheless, one feature of this biblical book's larger structure and meaning that continues to baffle is what scholars call the Elohistic Psalter," referring to Pss 42–83 (Joel S. Burnett, "A Plea for David and Zion: The Elohistic Psalter as Psalm Collection for the Temple's Restoration" in *Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Psalms in Real Time: Proceedings of the Baylor Symposium on the Book of Psalms* ed., Joel S. Burnett, W.H. Bellinger Jr, W. Dennis Tucker Jr., New York: T&T Clark, 2007, 95). Stephen J. Smith's new work, *The Conflict Between Faith and Experience and the Shape of Psalms 73–83*, the pub-

lished version of his doctoral dissertation under Duane A. Garrett, offers some clarity on the so-called Elohistic Psalter that straddles books 2 and 3 of the Psalter.

Inspired by Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), Smith, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies and Christian Ministries at Belhaven University, sees Psalms 73–83 as a collection that answers "a multidimensional collision between 'faith' (i.e., various core Israelite beliefs about God) and 'experience' (the individual/community's current experience of God" (2). Smith's thesis is that Psalms 73–83 are a distinct unit with a "singular theological message: God is *still* good to Israel—despite the conflicting evidence," that is, the Temple's destruction around 586 BCE (2, italics original).

Smith's work impresses in its rigor; from the start Smith reminds us that method determines results, and so lays out the particular way his study discerns editorial critical insights (2–3). For example, he notes that the shared "*Asaph*" superscriptions in both Codex Leningradensis (MS B19A) and the LXX bring Psalms 73–83 together "on a purely formal level," which provides a basis for looking for further literary unity (3). Anyone interested in venturing into editorial criticism of the Psalter should note Smith's methods, as he interacts with sceptics of editorial criticism, such as David Willgren, Eva Mroczek, and Alma Brodersen (4–8). Smith argues that his research satisfies their objections to editorial criticism, writing of the manuscript data on these psalms, "To borrow Willgren's terminology, we see both textual stability *and* paratextual stability" (12, italics original). Likewise, Smith's approach to editorial criticism, also called *Psalterexegese*, is synchronic; he views the collection as resulting "from a single creative act (not a diachronic process) in the wake of the Temple's destruction in 586/587 BCE" (13). Thus, at least one person was behind the "deliberate literary correspondence that exists" in Psalms 73–83 (16).

How does an editorial critic discern unity among psalms? Smith asserts that "'Psalms exegesis' is prior to, and an essential precondition for, *Psalterexegese*" (18). In other words, the individual parts that make up a psalm must be examined before asking questions about how each psalm relates to each other in the larger whole. This must be the case given that the Psalter is a collection of smaller units. The parts and the whole must be taken into account: "At least in principle, *Psalterexegese* and 'psalms exegesis' are not in competition; they are compatible" (18). The overall meaning of a psalms collection cannot "contradict or otherwise do 'violence' to the meaning of any one psalm in the sequence" (19). Here Smith's

careful attention to method disarms those who might dismiss his project simply because of other, less careful editorial critical studies (e.g., see 67).

Smith's introduction lays out more details of his method, such as an emphasis on parallelism (21–25). He builds on Michael Snearly's observation that parallelism can be observed not only on the level of a "line" but between psalms (22–23). Applied to his project, Smith notes echoes of Psalm 73 in the psalms that follow, an observation that others have made but not fully analysed (35). This leads to an "in stereo" effect, with Psalm 73 presenting the heading of the conflict of faith and experience, with the following psalms in the grouping taking up elements of Psalm 73 and discussing them from other angles (36).

Smith's next chapter outlines and interacts with the various views that editorial critics have taken regarding the psalms in question. Worth noting is the "tendency…to essentially collapse 'psalms exegesis' into *Psalterexegese*," which includes reading two discrete texts "as if they are virtually a single continuous psalm (69). Smith is wisely cautious of approaches that take one psalm's placement next to another as permission to overrule the content of that psalm (70).

Chapters 3-8 present Smith's argumentation related to Psalms 73–83. First, Smith discusses the conflict between faith and experience in Psalm 73, noting that "Whatever the catalyst at the temple," by the end, "the psalmist's confidence in God's goodness had been restored" (76). His findings agree that faith clings to God's self-revelation despite experiences that might suggest otherwise, per Ingvar Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 176 (80). Second, chapter 4 suggests that "Psalms 74–76 is the first of four psalm sequences/pairings that stand in a deliberate parallel relationship with" Ps. 73. In Smith's opinion, Ps. 74 wrestles with the seeming inaction of God (e.g., 74:10–11) related to enemies (83). Ps. 75, likewise, wrestles with the same question but maintains that God will intervene eventually (87). Smith has less to say about Ps. 76, but asserts "significant thematic correspondence" between these three, Pss. 74-76, and Psalm 73 (88–97). This means that Pss 74–76 are a distinct literary unit, and Psalm 73 "is thus something of a hermeneutical key that unlocks the interpretive significance" of their repetitions" (98–99). These psalms reinforce that despite conflicting evidence, God is not defeated or indifferent to his people (100).

Smith's fifth chapter examines Psalms 77–78, which he takes as a second unit in the collection. Despite these having different genres, lament and history, both allude to Ex. 34:6–7 and share an "analogous network of parallels" (109, 112). Ps. 77 mirrors Pss. 73 and 74, Smith argues, with a conflict between faith and experience (111). Likewise, "The transition

to Psalm 78 marks a radical shift in perspective that mirrors the inner-psalm progression to verses 18-28 in Psalm 73" (111). While some of the links Smith perceives between Pss. 73 and 77–78 seem subjective (e.g., "a reflective tone," 118), his evidence is substantial. These parallels are analysed in chapter six, where Smith challenges major scholars' viewpoints, such as both McCann's argument that "the sequence's arrangement points singers/readers *away* from Zion theology as a basis for hope," and Hossfeld and Zenger's emphasis on Ps. 78 as having a "central theological and/or literary position" (133–134, italics original).

"The final two chapters," Smith explains, "are a combined argument for the literary unity of Psalms 79–82" (143). Following the pattern of previous chapters, Smith suggests literary correspondence between Ps. 73 and Pss. 80–81; "Like the first two psalm groupings…this psalm sequence also mirrors the major literary progression of Psalm 73's two halves" (150). After presenting argumentation, Smith concludes chapter 7 by stating that the theological message of these two psalms, with Ps. 73 in view, is that "Faith clings to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence" (157). Lest we forget Ps. 79, Smith returns to it in chapter nine, wherein he agrees with Hossfeld and Zenger that "Psalm 79 engages with the destruction of the Temple and the fundamental crisis brought on in and by that event" (160). Ps. 79 is paired with Ps. 82 "though separated by two intervening psalms" (166). Smith views the intervening psalms 80–81 as the centre of an "editorial chiasmus" (171). The significance of this being that "the entire sequence of Psalms 74–82…is organized to engage and resolve a singular crisis," that is, God's perceived absence in the destruction of the Temple (176). Likewise, "God is *still* good to Israel" (179, italics original). Psalm 83, for Smith, "concludes the collection by embodying the resolution that each of its constituent groupings has promoted: trust in God's self-revelation" (183).

The Conflict Between Faith and Experience and the Shape of Psalms 73–83 should be read as a model of contemporary Psalms scholarship, combining both exegesis and editorial criticism. While it is less exegetical and more focused on the shared vocabulary and topics of the psalms considered, this work provides a very helpful explanation of the *Asaph* psalms. I do wonder if Smith avoids the very concern he is keen to avoid, namely, not reading too much from the collection back into each of its parts. On balance, it does not seem to say too much to conclude with Smith that "full appreciation of these psalms requires taking into account *both* levels of context" (187, italics original). I highly recommend this work.

Andrew J. Miller, Doctoral Researcher at Highlands Theological College