REVIEWS

The Genevan Réveil in International Perspective. Edited by Jean D. Decorver, Tim Grass, and Kenneth J. Stewart. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2023. ISBN: 978-1-7252-5654-5. xxi + 544pp. £53.00.

The *Réveil* ('awakening') was a movement of evangelical revival on the European Continent in the early nineteenth century, commencing in the Swiss city of Geneva. The collection successfully establishes that the movement was larger in origin than the famous Bible study through Romans led by the Scottish preacher Robert Haldane at his Genevan lodgings in 1816. In fact, the early traces of the movement were evident from around 1810, and its significance went far beyond the small but impressive group of students who gathered around Haldane and were immediately shaped by his exegesis. Essays in this collection trace the influence of the *Réveil* extending throughout the francophone sphere, even as far as the migrants of Canada and the mission field of Lesotho, into the Low Countries, and into the German- and English-speaking worlds also. Prominent individual writers from the movement, such as Louis Gaussen and J. H. Merle d'Aubigné, have left a permanent mark in evangelical literature, and institutions, both denominational and educational, established as products of the movement, endure.

This work is therefore a treasure trove of research and insight into the global spread of evangelicalism during the nineteenth century. The editors have done a sterling job of assembling specialist scholars representative of the different countries and languages in which the *Réveil* was influential, and the resulting collection is diverse in expertise and approach, but impressive in consistency of calibre.

The contributors recognise a diversity of factors behind the movement. It was, of course, a movement permitted politically by the new liberty, both civic and religious, enjoyed by the city of Geneva in the post-Napoleonic settlement of Europe. Intellectually, it followed the Enlightenment and could not but be influenced by that movement. But it was also inspired by Geneva's heritage as a centre of Reformed theology and ecclesiology in the sixteenth century under the ministry of Calvin, though Decorver notes that 'the revivalists addressed themselves primarily to the individual and not to society as Calvin did…[,] an ideological anchoring in the "psychology of the individual" proper to modernity' (p. 17). Olaf Blaschke similarly sees the period as a time of rediscovery, calling the early nineteenth century 'a second confessional age', 'a time of strong renewal of Protestant and Catholic communal identity' (summarised by Sarah Scholl, p. 496). His reference is to Germany, but the parallels with the *Réveil* in Switzer-

land, and with concurrent movements elsewhere, such as the resurgence of Scottish evangelicalism under Thomas Chalmers, are apparent.

The *Réveil* was, of course, far from welcome to the established institutions of Continental Protestantism, which were dominated by a rather moralistic Enlightenment liberalism. The Genevan Company of Pastors' clumsy attempt to restrict the doctrines which preachers could discuss in the pulpit made separation inevitable. The result, in the development of independent churches such as Cesar Malan's Chapelle du Témoignage, and eventually of wider denominational structures such as the Église Libre, brought a welcome diversity in religious provision to Geneva, and later to France itself. Fascinatingly, Malan's ongoing ministerial status was provided by a Scottish denomination, the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church (pp. 16–17). Another intriguing institutional connection is with the establishment of the Red Cross in Geneva in 1863, at the instigation of the Calvinist author Henri Dunant, a son and convert of the *Réveil*, who would later receive the first Nobel Peace Prize in honour of his work (pp.447–53).

It may seem invidious to highlight individual contributions in reviewing such a fine collection but readers will particularly appreciate Kenneth J. Stewart's discussion of the influence of the *Réveil* in the English-speaking world. This, as he shows, went far beyond Malan's preaching tours and the popularity of Merle d'Aubigné's *History of the Reformation*, both of which helped to stimulate the concurrent evangelical revival in Scotland. The Monods and Neff were celebrated in America, and the churches of the *Réveil* helped to found the Evangelical Alliance and the World Presbyterian Alliance (pp. 162–75).

Unquestionably one of the most valuable contributions is a closing chapter of reflection on the movement by French systematic theologian Henri Blocher, a self-described 'heir of the so-called Genevan Réveil' (p. 501). He considers that divisions weakened the *Réveil*, especially the movements associated with Irving and Darby, preventing it from fulfilling its full potential. Nonetheless, it was a movement deeply interested in history, shaped by fresh scholarship rediscovering Continental Europe's Protestant heritage, and considering itself therefore, even in its very name, as an awakening from a slumber of inactivity to fresh ardour in piety in emulation of these forebears (pp. 501–9). He concludes thoughtfully: 'The God of the *Réveil* is the God of men and women, such as those whom this book brings to life, who *allow themselves to be awakened*' (p. 509, italics in original).

It is, of course, no deficiency in this collection that it provokes further questions to explore for the future. To what extent was the early-nineteenth-century revival of evangelicalism a rejection of the values of the

Enlightenment? What relationship did it bear to the wider cultural movement of Romanticism? One vital question is offered by Decorver himself, quoting Savart: 'To what extent was the *Réveil* an innovative movement' (p. 24)? To what extent is the more liberal and ecumenical evangelicalism that predominates today a legitimate child of the *Réveil*? Perhaps above all, why did the francophone world overall remain so stubbornly wedded to Roman Catholicism, despite the vitality of the *Réveil*? Such questions invite further study and discussion. This work is highly recommended to all with an interest in nineteenth-century church history, and especially in the development of evangelical Protestantism. The editors and contributors are to be congratulated on a fine and lasting scholarly achievement.

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Introduction to Theological French. By Damon Di Mauro. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2025. ISBN: 978-1-60899-074-0. v + 536pp. £42.00.

For much of the last century, theological scholarship in English-speaking academies has prioritised German as the essential modern theological language, to be studied after the the primary biblical languages and Latin. This focus is understandable, owing to the towering influence of figures such as Martin Luther, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth, and Rudolf Bultmann. However, this the prevalence of German has led to a curious neglect of Europe's other great theological language: French. This oversight is particularly striking given the historical importance of writers like Jean Calvin, Théodore de Bèze, Henri de Lubac, and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. To suggest that the French language deserves greater support and appreciation is not to diminish the importance of German. Rather, it is to recognise that the scarcity of resources for French reflects a lack of attention, not a lack of significance. Damon Di Mauro's *Introduction to Theological French* offers one step in the right direction to redress this situation.

Prior to this publication, the most significant manual for learning French for students of theology was K. Janet Ritch's Reading French for Students of Religion and Theology (Clements, 2006). While a useful introduction, it was primarily concerned with the single skill noted in the title: reading. Ritch's book, useful as it was, is also limited by its stated focus on the Canadian context and its prohibitive price tag of nearly £200. Moreover, there have been significant advances in second-language acquisition and applied linguistics in the past two decades, which have reshaped the pedagogy of language learning. Di Mauro's new book has ably filled this gap, offering a more integrated, holistic approach to theological French that engages skills beyond mere translation.

After a succinct preface that sets out the method and scope, Di Mauro leads his readers through French prosody. He then builds lessons around mastering key verbs (e.g., *être, avoir, aller, faire*), integrating other aspects of grammar such as nouns, adjectives, and prepositions into chapters organised around these verbs. As expected for a language manual, the book builds on the vocabulary learned in previous chapters, and Di Mauro assumes that the student will have mastered the concepts in each chapter before moving to the next. In a world of language-learning apps engineered to deliver dopamine hits for maintaining a 'streak' or earning digital gems of no actual value, Di Mauro offers a more traditional approach, insisting there is no substitute for the hard work of steadily learning vocabulary and mastering grammatical concepts. Furthermore, despite the difficulty of French prosody and pronunciation for English speakers, Di Mauro reminds the reader that 'the good news... is that two-fifths of their vocabulary comes directly from French' (p. x). Di Mauro is adept at helping English speakers to make connections to cognates through contextual learning, which makes acquiring vocabulary intuitive.

The book's traditional approach is anything but dry. Di Mauro's clear enthusiasm for the subject is evident in the book's integrative pedagogy: from chapter three onwards, contrived exercises give way to authentic theological texts that illustrate the grammar being taught (sometimes lightly edited). This allows learners to engage with the source material early in their learning journey. The selection of these examples aptly demonstrates the breadth of theological French, using texts from Catholic (e.g., the Ave Maria and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet) and Protestant (e.g., Jean Calvin and *La Confession de la Rochelle*) traditions, as well as devotional texts and songs (e.g., *Il est né, le divin enfant*). Accompanied by historical notes, these readings do more than illustrate grammar; they showcase the variety and beauty of French theological expression, offering the reader ample motivation to persevere with the hard graft of language learning.

The book would make a good foundation for a college course in theological French, but is also well suited to individual study. Broken into 21 chapters, the book provides a comprehensive introduction to French that will provide a competence for further forays into French theological texts. The chapters are dense, and at two chapters a week, they could form the basis of an accelerated semester course, though but the books is, possibly, better suited to being spread over a year.

For those using the book for independent study, Di Mauro explains pronunciation using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). This, of course, is no substitute for the aural experience of the language. To this end, Di Mauro has provided links to recordings on the book's accom-

panying Google Site. The recordings are not overly professional, but are clear and spoken naturally. Unlike some language apps where voices are standardised and smoothed by AI, all the recordings feature a native speaker. The inclusion of these recordings will be of great benefit to those learning individually but would also reinforce what is taught in a classroom setting. The interface the of Google Site is a somewhat fiddly (with each audio file loading in a separate window or tab) but this is a minor issue. The recordings are clearly organised and easy to pair with the relevant sections of the book. While such resources cannot replace face-to-face interaction with a teacher, they provide an invaluable aid for the independent learner.

The first two chapters on pronunciation and prosody are dense and inevitably slow-going. Here, the recordings are especially helpful, because the instructions on how to hold one's mouth and tongue can be difficult to follow; a visual guide might have been helpful. That said, one of the biggest sticking points for English speakers is the French 'r', which he ingeniously introduces by way of the easier-to-pronounce 'g', then transitioning to the French 'r' (p. 8).

Di Mauro is to be thanked for providing an excellent introduction to theological French. This, of course, will be of great interest to students of historical theology, but the book also provides a window into an exciting world of contemporary Francophone theology and biblical studies, where key scholars such as Jean-Daniel Macchi, Christophe Pichon, Anne-Marie Pelletier, Simon Butticaz, and Daniel Marguerat remain only sporadically translated into English. Moreover, another great benefit of French is that, like English, it is an international language, and learning it can provide access to global theologies, especially from African scholars, past and present, such as Jean-Marc Ela, Oscar Bimwenyi-Kweshi, Sœur Josée Ngalula, and Hélène Yinda (to name but a few), whose work often remains untranslated. Ultimately, Introduction to Theological French is a fantastic resource that not only facilitates the acquisition of French, but more importantly, it offers readers an invaluable entry point into the rich world of Francophone theological expression, past and present.

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Paul and Secular Singleness in 1 Corinthians 7. By Barry N. Danylak. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-009-37388-3. xviii + 344pp. £100.00.

The dominant consensus for the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7 has been that Paul responded to a form of sexual asceticism (p.1-2). Barry

Danylak argues that the main issue in 1 Corinthians 7 was an Epicurean form of libertine promiscuity among the Corinthians in their desire to remain unmarried. The common approach, i.e., through 'a strictly Stoic-Cynic caricature,' Danylak argues, does not account for the nuances of Paul's discussion (p.2-3, 270). His analysis shows Epicurean influence in the Corinthian church and demonstrates Epicurean elements in 1 Corinthians 7. The main point at issue is 7:1b that 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman,' whether or not Paul was quoting the Corinthians (p.1). Danylak shows that the question of marriage was based on three factors: availability, feasibility, and desirability (p.38-9). He discusses the cultural context in the first two chapters, examining the ratio of men to women (availability), and mid-first century economic struggles (feasibility), and various experiences of pressure to remain single or marry (desirability). He applies his analysis to 1 Corinthians 7 in its historical, social, and textual context. From these points Danylak argues that the Corinthians were heavily influenced by Epicurean ideas to reject marriage and to utilise the local brothels for their sexual urges. Thus, Paul responded by supporting singleness (in agreement with Epicureanism), and commanding sexual chastity (in contrast to Epicureanism).

Danylak sketches the demographic context of first-century Corinth, showing that it was disproportionately dominated by single men (p.41-2). He synthesises three sources of data: epigraphic inscriptions in cemeteries, skeletal remains, and the Egyptian census returns from 'a body of about 300 census declarations, dating from 12 CE to 259 CE' (p.47). From these sources Danylak confirms that Roman urban settings were male dominated. Thus, the target demographic target of the prostitution industry was high for the prostitution industry was high (p.84-5), and divorced or widowed women were pressured to remarry (p.83). With such a social context, it follows that the availability factor, at least for men, favoured remaining single.

Danylak then discusses the desirability factor of marriage, i.e., 'whether a man was better off with or without a wife' (p.88). Beginning with the earliest textual examples, Danylak demonstrates the near unanimous preference for singleness, while still valuing marriage. The Stoics generally held that marriage was a good thing, but only for those who rationally determined a benefit from a care-giving companion (p.100, 102). Peripatetics and Cynics held that a family caused a distraction from studying philosophy, but the wealthy could benefit (p.102, 109). Danylak notes that available evidence suggests that the Cynic rejection of marriage was drawn from Epicurean thinking (p.109, 119). Danylak thus argues that Epicureanism, uniquely among the philosophical schools, prioritised singleness over marriage and developed a systematic philosophy around

such teachings. Philodemus argued that wives rarely 'provide a net benefit' for the man and would complicate achieving happiness (p.124-7; cf. Oec. 2.21-35). Lucretius showcased the dangers of erotic attachment that consumes a man (p.129-33). Thus, the notion of rejecting marriage was primarily an Epicurean idea. Danylak then shows the significant evidence that Epicureanism was prominent in first-century Corinth (p.135-40). Thus, it follows that the Corinthian Christians, desiring to remain single, were influenced by Epicureanism.

The remainder of the book connects the above analysis to 1 Corinthians 7. The purpose of chapter four is to look at the two topical phrases, διὰ τὰς πορνείας (7:2) and διὰ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην (7:26) in context with the whole epistle. Danylak questions whether 7:1b ('it is good for a man not to touch a woman') is Paul's statement, or a quote from the Corinthian correspondence. Through analysing Greek epistolary literature and Paul's other quotations of the Corinthians (e.g. 6:12; 8:1, 4; 10:23; 15:12), Danylak argues that this statement was Paul's statement (p.190-1). The immorality of 7:2 and the 'crisis' of 7:26 are important factors for the Epicurean views on marriage in Corinth. For single men, there were few marriage options, and rampant prostitution (p.169-74). The 'crisis' of 7:26 is likely one of the many Corinthian famines (p.185-9). Thus, for many Corinthian men, marriage was neither available, feasible, nor desirable. This explains why Paul focused on the problems of utilizing prostitutes in 6:12-20, right before his statement about not touching women.

Danylak then analyses the four 'it is good' statements (7:1, 8, 26, 40) that shape Paul's rhetoric. He says the statement in 7:26 is the 'direct quotation from the Corinthian letter' whereas the others are Paul's adaptations (p.196, 203). Paul critiqued the Epicurean freedom for extra-marital sexual release, while affirming the Epicurean idea that happiness can be found 'apart from the conventional paths of family, rank, and status in the Roman world' (p.205). Thus, Paul is able both to agree and disagree with the Corinthian Epicureanism; it is good to remain single, but also sexually chaste (p.210). In addition, the adaptation of the quote in 7:40 applies the same 'good' to women (p.267). Thus, Paul empowers women to reject the pressure to marry.

Chapter six demonstrates how the above analyses work together in the passage. Danylak shows Paul's creative engagement with the Corinthians' Epicureanism. Paul sometimes condemns it (6:12-20) and other times affirms it (7:1, 26; p.216). Danylak shows that the Epicurean notion that marriage and erotic attachment lead to problems (cf. DRN 4.1063-67) as well as 'domestic anxieties' (cf. Luke 10:41) is another point that Paul affirms (p.255). This affirmation comes with a utilitarian caveat, i.e., this freedom is for serving the Lord (7:32-4). 'Thus, while Paul corrects

[the Corinthians'] Epicurean assumptions regarding appropriate sexual behaviour among the unmarried early in his response (7:1-7) . . . Paul resonates with an Epicurean perspective on marriage' (p.281).

Danylak thoroughly analyses and meticulously argues his case. He engages with these questions, showing that the Epicurean context solves problems with general scholarly consensus. He critically develops Norman DeWitt's thesis, i.e., that Paul's corpus is saturated with Epicureanism. Danylak rightly pushes back on the problematic extent to which DeWitt argued for this, but shows that there is legitimacy to recognising Epicureanism in Paul's writings. Thus, Danylak's study is an excellent contribution to scholarship both of New Testament studies and early Christian engagement with Epicureanism.

The scholarly neglect of Epicurean presence and influence among the early Christian communities is an unfortunate reality that Danylak's study aims to rectify. It promotes new areas of research for a better understanding of early Christianity and Paul's teachings on marriage and singleness.

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The Kingdom of God Is Among You: Lectures to My Students on New Testament Theology. By Gordon D. Fee and Cherith Fee Nordling. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2025. ISBN: 978-1-6667-3292-4. xviii + 376pp. £34.00.

Gordon D. Fee was a renowned New Testament scholar whose works, including handbooks on biblical interpretation, commentaries, and monographs, are widely popular among evangelical circles and beyond. He excelled at making New Testament theology accessible to scholars, leaders, and laypeople who seek to engage with scholarly works from a faith-based perspective.

This latest book, *The Kingdom of God Is Among You: Lectures to My Students on New Testament Theology*, is a posthumous work based on Fee's lectures on New Testament theology at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada. The lectures are organised and edited by Fee's daughter, Cherith Fee Nordling, a distinguished theologian. The editorial work is appreciated for shaping the lectures into a coherent narrative. Cherith notes that Fee's lectures invite readers to experience the love of the Triune God and to be transformed as a community of co-heirs with Jesus of Nazareth.

The book is a brilliant compendium of New Testament theology and contributes to New Testament studies by offering a nuanced exploration of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments through the lens of inaugurated eschatology. It brings out the significance of the Holy

Spirit and Christ's resurrection in fulfilling the new covenant, providing a framework that integrates theological concepts within a lived, 'already and not yet' experience of God's kingdom. The book enriches our understanding of an inaugurated eschatology, being in the radical middle, and ecclesiology and ethics, offering a profound and pastoral perspective that engages readers with the practical and transformative aspects of Scripture.

The book is divided into five segments, each beginning with a prayer. In Chapter 1, Fee addresses the relationship between the Old and New Testaments in the context of New Testament theology, focusing on the questions of continuity and discontinuity between them and other challenges. The book seeks to discover a theological method that maintains the distinct contributions of each testament, a crucial task in doing biblical theology. Theologically, Fee puts this unity and diversity of the New Testament books, with God the Holy Spirit as the ultimate source, a subject he has profoundly built upon previous works like *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (1994).

Chapters 2 and 3 explore New Testament theology through the concept of the new covenant as fulfilled by the role of Christ and the Spirit's work. This is central to understanding the continuity between the Testaments, an intertextual moment. The promise of the new covenant anticipated in the Old Testament, is exemplified in the lives of early Christians through Paul's writings and Luke's gospel. The new covenant realised in Christ Jesus now presents an inaugurated eschatology, meaning we have already experienced the end's beginning and now await its completion. This theology sees all things consummated in the risen Christ and the Spirit, determining our present existence. With this, Fee suggests that every theological concern in the New Testament be understood within this eschatological framework.

In chapter 4, Fee outlines the eschatological framework by emphasising the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit. Christian existence is lived in the 'already and not yet' of the kingdom of God, inaugurated through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but not fully consummated. This concept is central to Paul and New Testament theology, which Fee describes as 'Living by the Spirit in the radical middle.' This Pauline theology influences the rest of the New Testament writings. In Christ, the eschatological kingdom is fulfilled yet not fully realised, and this fulfilment is experienced as salvation.

Chapters 5 to 9 unpack how the eschatological kingdom of God shapes our experience of salvation in Christ as eternal life with God, empowered by the Spirit. Fee addresses the human predicament that necessitates salvation in Christ, emphasising it as a cornerstone of New Testament theol-

ogy, understood only through awareness of our sinful state. Salvation in Christ is presented as eschatological: new life from the Father, effected by Christ, and appropriated by the Holy Spirit. This salvation is communal, as God saves individuals to join them to Jesus and his body, connecting them as a people.

Chapters 10 to 12 focus on Christology, examining the image of Jesus with an emphasis on the resurrection as key to revealing his identity. This section develops its argument by examining perspectives from Paul, John, and Hebrews.

From Chapters 13 to 16, Fee discusses God's eschatological people, the church, from the perspective of Jesus and Paul. For Jesus, the inception of God's people lies in his proclamation of the kingdom of God as good news, initiated through his ministry yet not fully realised. This eschatological framework of a beginning yet to be completed reflects Jesus' vision, where God's people are disciples who continue to disciple others, allowing everyone to receive the kingdom's blessings. Paul's understanding of God's people is communal and holy, with discipleship demonstrated in ethical admonitions, suggesting that the ethics of God's kingdom are both a gift and a directive.

With his Pentecostal background and remarkable scholarship, Fee's lectures, edited by Cherith, present a relevant work on New Testament theology. While the editorial contributions add depth, they also provide an additional layer for readers to consider. Furthermore, the book's extensive coverage leads to scattered details and overlapping ideas, reflecting the complexity of New Testament writings and historical realities, which can make it challenging to build a unified framework for readers to follow. Nonetheless, the book serves as a valuable theological meditation: charismatic, pastoral, and reflective of Fee's teaching, preaching, and life. It is a stimulating and enjoyable read, and I recommend it for those seeking a theology that engages deeply with Scripture in real life and encourages readers to recognise Scripture's powerful and radical message that the Kingdom of God conveys.

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Scripture and Literature: A David Jasper Anthology. By David Jasper. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2023. ISBN: 978-1-4813-1958-4. xi + 256pp. $49.99.

As it says on the back cover, 'With Scripture and Literature, David Jasper has compiled forty years of his writings on the relationship between the Bible, literature, and art. These writings are interdisciplinary in nature

and are not the work of a specialist.' This is quite an odd disclaimer, as one might assume that being a specialist in all three things is pretty much impossible. In any case Chapters 2 to 6 are preoccupied with or specialise in the Gospel of Mark (essays from 1982, 2005, 2006, 1990 and 2012). Inspired by Frank Kermode's The Genesis of Secrecy and behind that the ahistorical and literary approach of Austin Farrer, he proffers a store of quotes in a continuation of this tradition. Realism may record, but 'life goes faster than realism, but Romanticism is always in front of life' (Oscar Wilde). If one must talk of the text's having a referent, then it is the Barthian-Kierkegaardian 'present' Jesus. As with all great literature Mark's Gospel is timeless. It is also harsh as in Mk4:12: 'in order that they might not turn', which Matthew softened to 'Because they will not turn'. (C.F.D. Moule refused to countenance that Jesus subscribed to God hardening hearts, he tells us.) Jasper seems unwilling to consider that the hardening of hearts is a topos of the Exodus, long before the Evangelist picked it up. For Jasper, Mark's Gospel is thus 'funny and tragic, infinitely complex and elusive – like life itself' (42). Frei and Tillich join forces in promoting 'imaginative readings' that such an imaginative text deserves, rather than 'worrying away at the facts'.

The fourth essay 'Down through all Christian Minstrelsy' argues for the text finding its own resurrection through having its afterlife in its effect on its readers. This is probably the best essay of the lot. Joyce's Finnegans Wake is postmodern in its love of uniting binaries, which Joyce shared with Blake. But what Jasper claims Joyce shares with the Bible is intriguing. Neither text is to be understood but one is called to participate in (new) being. 'We read Scripture in order to ingest and digest the Word. If that is so, then Joyce is the most deeply biblical of our writers.' (70) His language is that of making things new.

Yet, in contrast to Joyce, Scripture is not above hefty evaluative criticism: 'The Gospel of Mark in which, it seems, tends towards an absolute claim to truth without evidence and without recourse to logical argument.' (77). Yet in the previous chapter Jasper seems to have favoured the idea he associates with Aristotle, that (contra Plato) rhetoric should not be subject to dialectic (logical argument). So which is it? The main example he gives from Mark is the lack of the enthymeme that Matthew used: 'repent for the kingdom of God is at hand'. Possibly because he was writing for Alexandrian Christians, who were already well converted, Mark doesn't argue from the presence of the kingdom to the command to repent. Instead, we are told, Mark just adds a number of other statements: 'the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent, believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15)'. But if one may quibble, first of all, Matthew's use of 'for' is hardly an enthymeme of classical logic, and second, Mark

by giving a sequence offers the reader if not a chain of logical deduction, at least a sequence of conditions and consequences. Part of the problem is that Jasper is often so much in a rush to make yet another interesting point that he doesn't take the time to show his working. He also finds it oppressive that Jesus spoke with authority (Mk 1:27). 'Here is no Pauline kenosis but a demonic parody of it.' (83) Actually, it is no such thing. Jasper even claims that Jesus was out to humble his precursors thereby displaying unpleasant arrogance and that Mark by failing to put any ironic distance between Jesus and the Truth was out to create a climate of fear as well as darkness and repression: 'which suggests a community founded by a rhetoric of power that both alienates and dictates' (85). If Joseph Conrad described and probed the Heart of Darkness, this Evangelist blocked out the light. M.A. Tolbert has observed the frequency of κατά in Mk, and Jasper takes this to mean 'down' most of the time such that the Gospel reports a gradual descent into hell. On the psychiatrist couch, 'he [Mark] seems pretty obsessive if not mad', in part because he could not face his gospel having a shorter ending, having a 'concern to protect the church from overexposure to harsh reality' (109).

Following these 'Mark as/in literature' essays, there is a chapter on a novel by Jim Crace called Quarantine (1997), which gives him an occasion to puzzle over whether a human being really could last in the desert without sustenance for forty days; Lawrence of Arabia and the Desert Fathers provide intertext. Only four pages are given to this particular work before jumping to other parts of Crace's oeuvre. At p. 126 there is: 'Theology, of all enterprises of the human mind, is the one most likely to become flat and predictable because of its incorrigible addiction to religious orthodoxy and correctness.' (Novelists have more freedom.) By now one is tempted to comment: 'How predictable.' The next essay on Turner's later, darker art is interesting, and that on Holman Hunt's 'The Scapegoat' a little less so. Finally, Jasper laments that not much has appeared since his and S. Prickett's The Bible and Literature: A Reader from 1999 (politely disparaging that by Jo Carruthers et al from 2014). Chinese literature might offer a new future. In the Afterword, Coleridge is mentioned as (on the one hand) as the first (and long before Jowett) to tell us to read the Bible as any other book ('nothing special'), and on the other to write: 'the Bible finds me' (special, inspired). 'From the beginning of the Christian era wise people have known that its value as Christian Scripture is in direct proportion to its dynamic power as literature' (190). This of course is nonsense. Matthew Arnold might have thought so, that the Bible was 'Super-literature', but he was hardly at the beginning of the Christian era, when most Christian interpreters admitted the Bible was far from literary. A couple of times, including in the final essay, 'Teaching the Bible and

Literature' (2014) Jasper mentions T.S. Eliot's saying that the Bible had its effect on literature, not because it was literary but because it was sacred. However, he draws from this the idea that the Bible's having a kerygma implies a plurality of meanings for writers to work with, which is rather to twist Eliot's point (178). 'God' has become a literary term; not even 'God' is 'outside the text'.

Much learning, but also the gnawing sound of the branch on which one is sitting being sawn almost completely through.

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Fully Alive: Tending to the Soul in Turbulent Times. By Elizabeth Oldfield. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-3998-1076-0. 261pp. £18.99.

Former director and now senior fellow of think tank Theos, Oldfield's debut book examines the ways in which a 'spiritual core strength' can build resilience in the contemporary age, characterised by instability and change. The book aims to address the question 'What does it mean to live a good, whole and fulfilling life?' Her relatable style will appeal to people both within and without the Christian faith, and at varying levels of theological literacy and education. Oldfield is a skilled communicator, as her podcast *The Sacred* testifies, in which she purposefully, and respectfully, converses with guests with whose views diverge from her own, the aim of the conversation being listening to understand the perspective of the other. Despite this skilled level of communication, the book has a few choice swear words, which could have been omitted and the point to be made would still have been adequately addressed.

Each chapter focuses on a specific sin: wrath, avarice, acedia, envy, gluttony, lust and pride and considers the ways in which that sin is manifested in the modern era. For example, the sin of wrath is considered within the context of polarisation or 'othering' of those with whom we disagree. She suggests that the counteraction to polarisation is peacemaking, seeking to see the humanity in one another and understanding their perspective and reasons for it. The definition of each sin is considered, including its historical interpretation, before the author reflects on how that sin is manifest in her own life. Using concrete examples from her own life, firmly situated within contemporary culture, the reflections bring into stark illumination the ways in which sin may be present in the reader's life also. Oldfield then moves on to examine spiritual practices which she employs to guard against such sin, again looking at the history of the practice and the ways in which it can be practised in relation to the sin's manifestation in modernity.

Interweaving ancient spiritual practices, drawn from the Christian tradition, such as prayer, examen, generosity and retreat, she uses candid examples from her own life and faith to illustrate how ancient spiritual practices can aid modern problems. She draws from fields including theology, history, and psychology, which is engaging and brings a modern interdisciplinary relevance to the book; thus when she delays focussing in on God until the last chapter she does so 'not because [God] is skittish, but because we are. We are easily spooked by the psychological depth charge of the possibility of unconditional love.' (p.226).

The book ends on an invitation to the reader, in particular the reader who has not yet surrendered to the Christian faith. Oldfield emphasises that the spiritual practices she has examined are worthwhile and have merit in their own right, practices which can enhance a person's spiritual wellbeing and psychological health. As she describes her own faith and the ways it helps her navigate the world, she ends with the invitation that spiritual practices 'open a door to a different kind of perception. And you may thereby find that there was something worth surrendering to all along.' (p.240). Because of this gentle, rounded consideration of sin, the relatable style of a skilled communicator and the very practical nature of the application, the book would make an excellent book for group study, in a house group or book group for example, possibly as a missional exercise.

The book could benefit from an opportunity between chapters to pause for reflection, perhaps prompt to consider alone or as part of a group. The book remains well referenced and achieves its aims of being relatable and conversational in style, whilst prompting reflection on the topic of sin. On the whole, the book is readable to a wide range of audiences, and multifactorial in its uses, from providing reflection material for personal study to a tool for starting conversations about the Christian faith and its relevance to modern life with those not yet familiar with it.

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Les Actes des apôtres (13–28). 2e édition actualisée et corrigée. By Daniel Marguerat. Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2024. ISBN: 978-2-8309-1836-6. 400pp. €45.00.

The work of the Swiss New Testament scholar Daniel Marguerat has signalled a paradigm shift in the study of Luke-Acts. His contribution comes not by rejecting the historical-critical method in which he was trained, but by recognising its limits and integrating narrative analysis. This approach was exemplified in his seminal work *Le Premier Historien du Christianisme: La composition des Actes des Apôtres* (Cerf, 1999), later

translated into English as *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'* (CUP, 2002).

Marguerat argues that evaluating Luke by modern historical standards is anachronistic. Rather, he is to be read within the ancient genres of biography (Luke) and historiography (Acts), which were less concerned with relaying 'facts' and more with forming the identity of primitive Christianity. Historical analysis situates Luke's narrative in its temporal and social context, while narrative study clarifies its literary and theological aims. The resulting portrait is of Luke as a mediator who stands at the intersection of Greek and Jewish historiography. This location also exemplifies Luke's theological approach: interested in Christianity's continuity with Judaism, whilst embracing Graeco-Roman universalistic horizons. For Marguerat, Luke is a bona fide centrist between the symbolic poles of Jerusalem and Rome. While not all have accepted his thesis, most scholars now place themselves on the continuum that Marguerat has identified. Furthermore, *Le Premier Historien du Christianisme* marks a wider trend in scholarship characterised by eclectic interdisciplinary approaches to the Lukan *Doppelwerk*.

While Marguerat had previously applied this approach mostly to select passages, leading some (notably, C.K. Barrett) to question its workability across the broader Lukan corpus, the publication of his two-volume commentary has answered that question definitively. Although Marguerat's interpretations may raise few surprises for those familiar with his work, his pioneering historical and narrative-critical approach is consistently applied throughout. His methodology is eclectic, drawing on Patristics, Paul Ricoeur, contemporary narratologists, and, unsurprisingly for a Protestant commentator, John Calvin's commentary on Acts. This second volume, originally published in 2014 (following the first volume on Acts 1–12 in 2011), is now updated with a 'refreshed bibliography' (p. 8) and minor corrections. The completion of this revised, two-volume work is a significant achievement and marks the first critical commentary in French in nearly a century, since Eugène Jacquier's *Les Actes des Apôtres* (Victor Lecoffre, 1926).

The commentary's structure is standard for the Commentaire du Nouveau Testament series. It begins with a translation of the text and a select bibliography. Marguerat then offers a 'bird's eye view' in the analysis section, followed by a detailed verse-by-verse explanation, and concluding with his 'theological perspectives' on the text. Marguerat states that he did not want to offer yet another 'bloated' commentary (p. 7; a comment he makes cognisant of the irony when publishing a two-volume work). Like Steve Walton's recent Acts 1–9:42 volume in the Word Biblical Commentary series (Zondervan, 2024), this is not a commentary on com-

mentaries but provides Marguerat's judicious interpretation of the text. He presents his own take on critical issues, using references to encourage the reader down their own hermeneutical path. This follows in a welcome trend that prioritises direct engagement with the text. One hopes that commentaries like these signal a shift in the genre toward a more text-focused approach. This is not to say that the history of interpretation is unimportant, but both Marguerat's and Walton's commentaries feel more dynamic because of their freedom to engage directly with the text, rather than becoming a mere catalogue of secondary literature. In a moment of scholarly honesty, Marguerat admits that most people do not read a commentary cover to cover, so he deliberately repeats some references fully in the footnotes. All of this combines to make the commentary a user-friendly resource.

Marguerat's treatment of the hermeneutical chestnut of the Jerusalem Council exemplifies his distinctive approach and contribution. He proposes Acts 15:1–21 and Galatians 2:1–10 describe the same event in different rhetorical modes. Rather than pitting Acts against Paul, he explains the differences by genre, noting they also share much in common. He argues that Luke 'telescoped' two distinct events: the original council (Gal. 2:1-10) which settled the theology of salvation, and the later Apostolic Decree, a practical measure for community life. Marguerat proposes that Luke, writing decades later with a compromising intent, combined these two social memories into one harmonious scene. This argument, however, hinges on the contested assumption that Luke lacked knowledge of Paul's writings (p. 90 But even if Paul's letters were not yet codified, this does not preclude Luke's knowledge of them. One wonders if the 'telescoping' argument is more persuasive if Luke did know Paul's letters. In this view, Luke becomes a more deliberate conciliator, intentionally reporting what he understood as both ends of a polemical conversation (partially preserved in Galatians) to show a final, Spirit-led resolution to the debate Paul described.

One area the commentary neglects is recent studies on Luke's relationship to Judaism. Gregory Sterling, Jason Moraff, and Joshua Paul Smith have all made significant arguments (published before this second volume was released) for Luke as a Jewish author or a proselyte in the Diaspora. Especially given Luke's positive (or, at the very least, ambivalent) attitude towards the temple and ritual (e.g., Acts 2:46; 16:3; 21:27–30), this perspective deserves consideration. If Luke is writing from within Judaism, the reading of Acts as an apologetic to Rome becomes secondary. The narrative's focus shifts inward, reframing the story as a chronicle of internal debates and compromises about ritual as the nascent movement grapples with Gentile inclusion. Placing Luke within Judaism is certainly

debated, but given the loosening of the former scholarly consensus of a Gentile Luke, the commentary's lack of engagement with this significant question is a curious omission.

While some evangelical readers may be uncomfortable with Marguerat's underlying critical assumptions (e.g., a late composition date and questioning of traditional authorship; all articulated succinctly in the first volume's introduction), the commentary's literary focus means that such issues are not foregrounded. The concluding 'Theological Perspectives' sections show that robust theological readings of scripture are not antithetical to critical scholarship. Of note is his missional conclusion on the interplay between divine guidance and human agency. Analysing Paul's Macedonian vision, Marguerat argues that 'God does not treat his people as puppets' (p. 123); instead, the Spirit's guidance involves and validates active human agency and creativity. Equally valuable is his framework for conflict resolution drawn from the Jerusalem Council, where Acts 15 provides an 'exemplary procedure' (p. 109) for church conflict. The goal is not to avoid crises, but to manage them through open debate, empathy, scriptural discernment, and compromise under the Spirit's guidance. There is much to commend and inspire in Marguerat's theological summaries.

The commentary has been translated into Italian, German, and Spanish, but sadly, not yet into English. An English translation would be welcome, making this important work of an often neglected (in Anglophone circles) Francophone scholar accessible to a broader audience. Until then, for those willing to engage with the French (which is clear and not overly complex), they will be rewarded with a commentary that is both a serious tool for scholars and a rich resource full of theological insights for preaching, pastoral work, and missional applications.

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Evangelism in an Age of Despair: Hope beyond the Failed Promise of Happiness. By Andrew Root. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2025. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6871-5. xiv + 289pp. £24.99.

In *Evangelism in an Age of Despair*, Andrew Root, in his characteristic style, guides the reader on a lengthy journey, examining contemporary evangelism by exploring the philosophical and cultural shifts that have shaped our post-modern Western imagination. This includes a brief overview of French Renaissance philosophy, recounting the story of Michel de Montaigne and emphasising his influence on our culture's obsession with the pursuit of happiness. Root admits in his introduction that this book is

not primarily about evangelism. Instead, it is a historical and theological examination of consolation, culminating in an analysis of the consolation experienced by the third-century Gregory of Nyssa and his companions. Along the way, Root integrates biographies of thinkers (sometimes with surprising digressions), creative thought experiments, and cultural critique.

At times these historical excursions feel more like rabbit holes than necessary detours, leading one to wonder whether some might have been better left as footnotes. However, the true treasure is in Root's sharp social commentary. He adeptly reveals the futility of our culture's relentless quest for self-fulfilment, reminding readers that for much of human history, life was lived with a keen awareness of mortality and finiteness. In this context, Root emphasises the urgent mental health crisis, describing the unprecedented levels of anxiety and depression in the West as symptoms of what he calls 'our inflation of self.' He argues that the modern belief that individuals must create their own meaning, purpose, and happiness leaves many not only exhausted but also disillusioned.

Root addresses contemporary aversions to the language of *sin*, noting its frequent replacement with the language of *sickness*. He writes, 'if all moral shortcomings are bound to sickness, as opposed to sin, then no one can judge' (p. 171). His perceptive line of thought suggests that if we can attribute our behaviour to something beyond our control, we relieve ourselves of the responsibility for it, and sadly, in the process, render forgiveness and therefore redemption, unnecessary. In our attempts to numb or excuse ourselves, we risk alienating ourselves from the very salvation that consoles.

For much of the book, the explicit links to evangelism remain thin, but about two-thirds in, Root begins to weave his threads together into his central claim that sorrow is the true site of evangelism. He argues that the church's calling is not to win arguments or grow attendance but to meet people in their sorrow, to minister consolation, and to embody the good news of Christ at the very place of suffering. Evangelism, in Root's vision, is not apologetics but consolation—a cross-centred witness. Drawing on Jean Gerson, he emphasises that it is the sorrowful who most need a word of salvation, and that it is in death that God delivers us to life. Root reframes a vision of life, not as the pursuit of happiness, but as a pilgrimage marked by goodbyes. Stating that it is precisely in these losses that God is found. Thus, Christians are called not to live as 'tourists' who merely watch from the sidelines, but as 'pilgrims' who enter into sorrow as fellow travellers toward God.

This is a demanding and specific vision for church ministry. Root's challenging call is to move away from programmatic busyness toward the

presence of real suffering. While his thought-experiment of a consoling church is stirring, the book would have benefited from concrete, contemporary examples of communities already embodying this practice. I was also left wondering: what does consolation look like for those who suffer without access to a consoling community?

Practical solutions are not the book's strong suit. But it does raise some significant theological and pastoral questions. Root's central argument, that the sorrowful are not cursed but the elect, met by God in consolation, is a timely reminder for the church. Rather than numbing ourselves against the pain of loss, Root urges us to lean into it as the very place where Christ meets us. He closes with a turn to Martin Luther, suggesting 'Protestants would do well to take a break from the heroic, polemical Luther and remember (even emulate) the Luther of pastoral consolation' (p. 273).

Ultimately, *Evangelism in an Age of Despair* is less a manual for evangelistic practice and more a provocative reimagining of evangelism as participation in the sorrow of others, shaped by a theology of the cross. Root offers little in terms of biblical exegesis or step-by-step methodology; instead, he draws on historical biography (particularly heavy on French Renaissance philosophy), on the tradition of consolation literature, and on the imagination through his thought experiment. The book succeeds in unsettling comfortable assumptions and inviting pastors, ministers, and laypeople alike to rethink evangelism, not as a call to happier thinking or church growth, but as a call to enter sorrow and discover the God who consoles.

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Jesus and the Law of Moses: The Gospels and the Restoration of Israel within First-Century Judaism. By Paul T. Sloan. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2025. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6638-4. £27.99.

In *Jesus and the Law of Moses: The Gospels and the Restoration of Israel within First-Century Judaism*, Paul Sloan brings the insights and arguments developed in several different studies on issues like ritual purity, sacrificial practices, and the function of Torah (particularly in the Pauline corpus), to bear on the Synoptic Gospels and their portrayal of Jesus's life and teaching. Sloan's writing is accessible and the argument does not require an extensive academic foundation to follow. Readers with knowledge of Greek and familiarity with other texts will find certain details of the argument clearer or easier to follow, but the central argument hinges

primarily on a familiarity with the narratives of the Synoptic Gospels and the key texts from the Pentateuch and prophets.

The brief introduction notes the minimal engagement with Jesus's positive statements regarding the Law in the Synoptic Gospels, like Matt 5:17–19. This section also addresses his methodological approach and its limitations and outlines the argument ahead. The work proceeds with two broad chapters regarding the Law of Moses and restoration eschatology in the first century before considering key texts from all three synoptic accounts where interpreters argue for Jesus's replacement of Jewish law.

Chapter 1 deconstructs the typical interpretations of Jesus's understanding of Torah in the Synoptics. Sloan describes these in the broad categories of other Jewish approaches to Torah as: 1) legalism, with Bultmann as the exemplar; 2) 'compassionless exclusivism' exemplified by Marcus Borg; and 3) nationalism, as articulated by N. T. Wright. Sloan provides detailed critiques of each of these perspectives, but, on a larger scale, points out that Jesus never critiques anyone for these three supposed errors. Sloan instead argues for a positive view of Torah within the Synoptic Gospels, with Jesus's discussions and debates as disputes of Torah interpretation, not replacement. Sloan points out that within Torah there are various issues that can supersede legislation. For example, priestly work in the Temple is done even on the Sabbath, but the priests are not considered to break Sabbath legislation.

Chapter 2 lays out what Sloan argues is the difference between Jesus and his interlocutors, namely the reality of the arrival of Israel's eschatological restoration, of which Jesus is the proclaimer in the vein of Isaiah 61. Sloan frames the exile as divine discipline, a consequence that sacrifice cannot resolve within the legal requirements of Torah itself, resulting in the prophetic comments about the insufficiency of sacrifice. The question of 'how shall we return?' comes along with the prophetic promises of Israel's restoration, and this question defines the disputes between Jesus and his interlocutors. Sloan uses the Lord's Prayer to demonstrate how the hopes of restoration eschatology shape and define Jesus's ministry in the Synoptics, while also looking beyond this passage with brief broad strokes. More detailed engagement comes in the following chapters.

The following chapters demonstrate in more detail Sloan's proposed frame of Jesus's teaching (Chapter 4: 'The Law on the Mount') and disputes (Chapter 5: 'Conflict and Controversy') as fundamentally debating, rather than superseding, Torah practice. The final two substantive chapters (Chapter 5: 'Eschatological Nomism' and Chapter 6: 'The Temple and the Cross') discuss Jesus's understanding of Torah within his own eschatological timing, particularly his commission as the harbinger of

God's eschatological restoration of Israel. It is this final piece that Jesus's opponents cannot agree on, and therefore it is this claim that leads to Jesus's crucifixion. In his crucifixion, Jesus takes on the Torah-ordained punishment of Israel, and those who follow him and likewise take up this punishment will be included in the restored people of God. The brief conclusion looks beyond the Synoptic Gospels with a particular emphasis on Acts, especially chapters 10 and 15. Sloan builds upon the work of Richard Bauckham, arguing that Acts presents the gentile mission as including them into the people of Israel, with the exceptions of Leviticus 17–18 providing the foundation for the requirements made of gentiles in Acts 15.

This book is an excellent contribution to the ongoing conversation around the Law and the New Testament. Sloan draws together several threads in recent study and applies them to the Synoptic Gospels in a way that has not been done to this point. Sloan's work draws together recent publications by Matthew Thiessen, Andrew Remington Rillera, Logan Williams, Jason Staples, and Matthew Novenson, as well as insights from David Moffit, Paula Fredriksen and others. If one wants to understand what a positive understanding of Torah in the Synoptic Gospels would look like, then this is the book. Sloan's bibliography points the interested reader to the appropriate sources for further study.

For those readers interested in particular passages that Sloan engages with directly and at length, this book will be invaluable. Chapters 4–6 involve several lengthy engagements with rabbinic and second temple literature that are dense reading, but provide helpful context for each of the considered passages, demonstrating Jesus's (and his opponents') place within the broader discussion of Torah in the first century and beyond. However, these denser sections are not foundational to the argument, though they provide valuable information for readers interested in the particular passage or those who desire further detailed supporting evidence.

Whether one agrees with Sloan or not, one must reckon with his critiques of some of the common approaches to Torah in the Synoptics (and the NT more broadly). Also, the description of restoration eschatology and the demonstration of its prevalence in the relevant primary texts is one of the best articulations in current literature. Anyone wanting to understand what scholars mean by 'restoration eschatology' and where it comes from should read Chapter 2. This book is a valuable addition to the shelf of anyone who works with the Synoptic Gospels, either in the classroom or from the pulpit.

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Jesus and the Abolitionists: How Anarchist Christianity Empowers the People. By Terry J. Stokes. Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2024. ISBN: 979-8-88983-081-8. ix + 173pp.

In this very readable book, Stokes constructs a system of Christian anarchism based on the ethical teachings of Jesus. In two parts and ten chapters, Stokes weaves together a systematic radical theology that does not seek to create a Christian version of anarchist philosophy but instead demonstrates that Christian theology naturally leads to an anarchist approach to the state. However, the Christian theology that Stokes draws upon is one step removed from standard Christian orthodoxy.

Stokes describes his process in this book as 'rudimentary, expressly non-academic, and light-hearted.' Whilst the book is written with humour and a light touch, Stokes does not shy away from difficult topics and finishes with practical suggestions for implementing his system of radical Christianity.

In Part One, Stokes provides the context for his understanding of anarchism as a political philosophy and its relation to his Christianity. In Chapters One and Two, Stokes gives the context for his development and radicalisation into Christian anarchism, offering examples from his family history, his experience with progressive theology at seminary, and how the events of 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement exposed him to revolutionary thinking. He then defines his approach to anarchist philosophy as 'Black, pacifist, utopian and municipalist.' His approach to anarchism is rooted in an ethnic, cultural, and social context that is characterised by 'a condition of ontological ungovernability and anti-state orientation.' Anarchism in this mode is a dialectic of interdependence and autonomy.

In Part Two, Stokes explores the relationship between Christian theology and anarchism. Chapter Three brings together Trinitarian theology with anarchist philosophy. For Stokes, many Christians too easily assign human ideas of coercive power to God's lordship. Instead, we should know God's lordship through self-sacrificial love and the community of the Trinity. In Chapter Four, 'Anarchy in Humanity', Stokes argues that we need to move away from sin as a cosmic legal system and courtroom and instead move towards ideas of harm. Harm comes from the desire for autonomy, supremacy, and rulership, which is the corruption of the desire for safety, freedom, and security. Salvation becomes the restoration and healing of those corrupted desires and the harm that has been caused.

In Chapter Five, Stokes turns to anarchy in Revelation. For Stokes, the process by which scripture is the speech-act of God being given to us in this moment and in this place is always dynamic. The contextual and

historical reality in which we live means that theology can only be done in our lived reality. Stokes argues that revelation is always anarchic because it occurs freely and in the solidarity of the community.

In Chapter Six, Stokes employs biblical texts commonly used within Christian anarchism, such as 1 Samuel 8 and the first four chapters of the Book of Acts. However, he also draws on Esther for its anti-imperialist narrative, and Ezra-Nehemiah as an example of anarchist communities that come together to achieve a goal. Stokes emphasises the non-violent ethics of the New Testament and the collective decision-making shown by the early Church in Acts 15.

In Chapter Seven, 'Anarchy in the Church,' Stokes argues that the early Church operated through community assemblies and mutual aid groups. Stokes revisits old arguments that the Constantinian settlement corrupted the Church, that the Reformation attempted to challenge this, but ultimately rooted the Church more firmly in the power of the state. In modern times, Christian anarchism is found in communities that embrace deconstruction and theologies of liberation.

In Chapter Eight, Stokes suggests that Christian anarchism is rooted in virtue ethics, within the framework of the Sabbath being made for humanity, not humanity being made for the Sabbath. The beatitudes are unsurprisingly central to this argument, with the Lord's Prayer being seen as a vow of covenantal obedience to Christ. The voluntary nature of a covenant is emphasised, as is the role of the community.

In Chapter Nine, Stokes argues that Christian eschatology is essentially anarchist because it is the ethical union of all people under the loving care of God. God will reconcile all things and all people to Himself through Jesus, while maintaining a place for those who willingly reject Him, to ensure that God is not coercive. Here, Stokes grounds his Christian anarchism in the moral exemplar theory of the atonement. He argues that Jesus did not need to die and did not need to take our place for salvation to be effective. The incarnation and Christ's moral behaviour were sufficient to draw us to him.

In Chapter Ten, Stokes brings the book to a conclusion by highlighting several examples of how anarchist communities, particularly Christian anarchist communities, have successfully functioned in practice. He argues that any attempt to live out Christian anarchism must begin at the local level, be grounded in a radical sense of unity with creation, and make a distinction between good works that render the state obsolete and those that prop up the state. There also needs to be a shift from charity towards mutual aid.

Stokes makes a clear and engaging argument for Christian theology naturally leading to an anarchist philosophy. He draws on well-made

arguments from classical Christian anarchism but does so within his own modern context. However, in doing so, Stokes moves away from orthodox Christian theology in matters of sin and salvation, which I do not think is necessary to make the argument for Christian anarchism. The final chapter makes a strong and practical offering to the Church today by providing examples of how it can fulfil its task to love our neighbour as Christ loved us through community organising and mutual aid in the same way the early Church functioned.

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The Final Triumph of God: Jesus, the Eyewitnesses, and the Resurrection of the Body in 1 Corinthians 15. By James P. Ware. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2025. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7947-9. 510pp. £49.99.

The material nature of the resurrection body in Paul has in recent years been hotly debated in Biblical Studies, and the publication of two major books on 1 Corinthians 15 in 2025 only illustrates this further. This book by James P. Ware is one of these two books. Yet, unlike *The Enspirited body in 1 Corinthians 15* by John Granger Cook, Ware's book is unique by being a detailed verse-by-verse commentary on the entirety of 1 Corinthians 15, which '…aims to provide the most complete and exhaustive scholarly treatment of this chapter in any modern language…' (p.2). With its 411 pages this aim has arguably been achieved. Yet, its detailed nature does not make it boring since it often offers stimulating considerations of the text with refreshing perspectives and insights on old debates.

The book is structured with an introduction, 15 chapters, and four excursuses slotted in after chapters 3, 5, 7, and 11. The chapters, apart from the first which considers the letter structure, contain a detailed verse-by-verse commentary. The four excursuses deal with broader topics on the world in which Paul wrote this chapter and the historical and theological implications of Paul's message about Jesus' resurrection.

Contrary to much modern exegesis, the overall thesis of the book argues that when Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 15 is tracked in its historical context using careful exegesis, it becomes clear that the final triumph of God over sin, death, and the cosmic powers is realised because Jesus rose from the grave in the same body that died yet as a transformed and glorified body composed of immortal flesh and bones, which believers also will receive at their own resurrection when Jesus returns.

While the book offers many intriguing and surprising takes on debated texts in the chapter, the overall argument hinges mainly on the following four points:

Firstly, it is argued from a linguistic and historical perspective that the apostolic formula with its list of eyewitnesses (vv.3-11) has to refer to actual sightings of the resurrected Jesus in the flesh. There are three main reasons for this: (1) It is argued that the formula is pre-Pauline and dates within a few years of Jesus' resurrection. (2) A linguistic analysis of the usage of ἐγείρω (*egeirō*) is used to demonstrate that it is less flexible semantically than the English 'to rise', and thus always refers to a physical movement upwards mostly from sleep in classical usage. This means that when it is used in contexts of resurrection it refers to the movement of the fleshly body from lying dead to standing up alive, which shows that the tomb must be empty and that an elevation or ascension into heaven is an impossible interpretation of the formula. (3) The language of ὤφθη (*ōphthē*) 'appeared' in this context cannot refer to spiritual visions because the usage of ἐγείρω (*egeirō*) demands these appearances to be of the bodily resurrected Jesus in the flesh.

Secondly, it is argued that Paul in vv.12-19 uses the apostolic formula and its list of eyewitnesses grounding in history (vv.3-11) to make an argument *reductio ad absurdum* that proves wrong the deniers of the resurrection in Corinth. It is also argued that Paul does this by employing Aristotelian and Stoic logic at a density rarely seen in ancient literature.

Thirdly, on vv.20-28 it is argued against the majority view with great precision that the triumph of God over death, Satan, and the powers is an insight into Pauline Christology that illustrates a logic that can only be described accurately with the later developed trinitarian language. This is because it would be inappropriate that the Son gives the kingdom to the Father unless he is fully God himself. Additionally, it is also argued that the Son does not stop reigning when he gives the kingdom to the Father, but that they will be co-reigning in eternity.

Finally, on vv.35-58, the part of the chapter that is essential to the discussion of the resurrection body's material nature, Ware argues for a body of immortal glorified flesh in some unexpected ways. A few are worth highlighting. (1) He underscores the allusions to the Genesis creation account in vv.36-41 and uses them to argue that this connection makes the list of flesh in v.39 depict flesh positively rather than negatively. (2) He argues that the resurrection body will be like the heavenly bodies but in glory rather than materially. Yet, the heavenly glory given to the resurrection body will not be that of the stars but rather God's own heavenly glory. (3) It is argued that the σῶμα πνευματικόν (*sōma pneumatikon*) means that the body itself partakes in the gift of the Holy Spirit, which means that the Holy Spirit will not only indwell the soul of the believer but also the body in the resurrection—securing incorruptible life. (4) It is argued that bearing the image of the man of heaven (vv.47-49) is not

to be understood as locative but as incarnational so that it is the characteristics of the immortal fleshly body of Son of God which will be shared with the believer in the resurrection. (5) It is argued more detailed than anywhere else in scholarship that 'flesh and blood' does not mean flesh per se but flesh in its mortal state. (6) It is argued that the use of 'clothing' language (vv.53-55), which describes how believers will become immortal, indicates that it is not a shedding of flesh but a transformation of the flesh into immortal flesh.

This book is a must-read for anyone interested in resurrection in Paul. It puts forward one of the strongest expositions of 1 Corinthians 15 in modern scholarship arguing that Paul believed the resurrection body to be a body of transformed glorified immortalised flesh, which all who engage with resurrection in Paul must reckon with. The contributions referenced above are for the most part done so well that they in many ways demonstrate that it is unlikely that Paul could have understood resurrection as a body composed of spirit in 1 Corinthians 15. I am personally most impressed with the exposition of the apostolic formula in light of the linguistic investigation of ἐγείρω (*egeirō*), the exposition of vv.20-28 and its rich Christology, and the explanation that the heavenly man in vv.46-49 is Christological and therefore refers to how the characteristics of Christ are transferred to the believer rather than materiality and location.

This being said, I also have some points of critique. A minor point on style, which I at times found unnecessarily forceful despite a strong argument. I would, also, need more persuasion that the resurrection body will be like the heavenly bodies (vv.39-41). My biggest issue with the book is that Ware dismisses the idea that people in the early Roman Empire should have believed that a select few individuals were resurrected to immortal fleshly embodied life. I concur that the sources have conflicting information and lack uniformity, but Ware's conclusion is only possible because he reads the sources of Greek mythology through the lens of Greek philosophy rather than on their own terms. This is problematic because the Olympian gods were believed to possess immortal flesh in popular belief (e.g. Homer *Il.* 5.335-345; *Od.* 5.192-213; see e.g. Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, p.27-49). The immortal Achilles brutalises a slave girl (Philostratus, *Heroicus* 56.6-10). Also, Plutarch critiques and complains about the populace believing these things (*Romulus* 28.4-9). I do, however, agree with Ware that Jesus' resurrection is the only uniform and historically reliable resurrection story, which brought a hope to the masses that no resurrection story within Greek beliefs ever could. None-

theless, this book is overall an impressive piece of work, which argues a strong and persuasive case.

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The Fruits of Listening. By Colleen C. B. Weaver. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-6667-8854-4. 212pp. £24.00.

Colleen Weaver, professor of spiritual formation and inductive Bible study at Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary in Estonia, formerly served in theological education in various countries with One Mission Society. For Weaver, a study of contextual theological education from a qualitative research approach is akin to harvesting the ripe fruit of emerging designs and practices through listening and sharing the seeds for future growth. Survey data and case study interviews form the primary voices to which the author listens.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter introduces her research, aim, hypothesis, and positionality. Weaver's research traces the development and importance of effective practices and characterisations of contextual theological education in Spain's Protestant evangelical community. A guiding thread throughout the book connects readers to the benefits, limitations, expectations, and desired competencies for the theological and spiritual education of church leaders who thrive in their local communities. Given the lack of locally and contextually trained ministry leaders by Spanish scholars and theologians, this information is needed to ensure leaders are culturally astute and relationally capable to accompany faith communities.

Tracing a Eurocentric history of theological education in chapter two, Weaver summarises major epochs, extends Roony's historical models of theological education (catechism, monasteries, scholasticism, and the seminary), and proposes 'eclectic' as a fifth model (i.e., various options and numerous design configurations) (p. 23). David Goodbourn's original three continua tool for congregational adult Christian education analysis is adapted by adding a fourth continuum to map theological education's design and practices.

Weaver guides readers through the complicated history of Protestantism in Spain in chapter three. Describing the challenges faced by Spain's Protestant community: from the Spanish Inquisition's vast persecution, through the arrival of nineteenth-century foreign missionaries and Franco's repression, to eventual religious freedoms under democracy and the impact of immigration on the religious landscape, Weaver points to statistical data to underscore the community's ongoing deficiencies. In the overall population of Spain, faith and worship participation are declining.

However, there is an increase in the number of Protestant believers and churches, translating to an increased need for trained pastors and ministry leaders to shepherd congregations struggling with 'marginalization, limited resources, and identity issues' in the 'context of spiritual decline' (p. 49).

Chapter four lifts up the voices of the laity from local faith communities in the province of Madrid, sharing the results of a perception study. Weaver's mixed-methods survey included qualitative questions and quantitative Likert scale responses to understand their expectations of theological education. Four themes and five perspectives indicate the expectations that theological education should be accessible to everyone and equip leaders for ministry with relational and spiritual development skills in addition to appropriate knowledge for contextualising theological reflection.

The fifth chapter connects the book title to the research through the dialogue and careful listening to three Madrid-province Protestant evangelical seminaries in case study interviews. Six emerging, comparative themes were explored with each institution, including: 'context, mission and identity, contextualization of the curriculum, accreditation, church relations, and societal engagement' (p. 73). Weaver concludes this comparative chapter by mapping the characteristics of each seminary with her modified Goodbourn's Continua to represent core formational priorities.

In chapter six, Weaver shares the findings from her conversations with faculty, students, and church attenders and points out the deficiencies of the four-discipline model (Bible, theology, church history, and pastoral ministry) for the effective formation of ministry leaders. Findings from the analysis of case studies (contextualisation through indigenous faculty and curricular content control) as well as the emerging fruits from collected data (critical remembering, keeping pace with society, accreditation as contextual engagement, contextual wisdom of the church, and theological discernment and cultural parables) indicate the importance of ongoing adaption and interdependence of the institution, church, and society.

The seventh chapter concludes the work by sharing the seeds from listening to local faith communities and institutions express their desire for accessible and contextual theological education that forms relational leaders who can accompany the church forward. Weaver generously shares her data collection tools and does an impressive job of describing her research process and clearly reporting the results from the multiple reflections.

However, more rationale for and details on Grounded Theory could benefit readers unfamiliar with the method. Additionally, including

voices from trained clergy, whose vocations intersect the church, institution, and society, could strengthen Weaver's argument on what is needed to equip ministry leaders to navigate increasingly complex societies.

While the research context was Spain's Protestant evangelical community of Madrid, the methodology and observations yield 'transformative resonance' (p. 152) for theological educators in various global contexts. In short, this book is the fruit of Weaver's dissertation journey, ripe with insights into the importance of historical contexts and their impacts on diverse aspects of ministry formation. Weaver's models, especially her modified Goodbourn's Continua, the practice of critical remembering, and mixed-method surveys, offer theological institutions promising analytical tools to contextualise their designs and practices as they respond to the ever-changing needs of the church and society.

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Tales of Fire and Flood: Divine Destruction Stories in the Pentateuch. By J. Schneider-Woods. Leuven: Peeters, 2025. ISBN: 978-90-429-5496-0. vi + 195pp. €65.00.

From a cosmic deluge to the skewering of a couple caught in an illicit union, *Tales of Fire and Flood: Divine Destruction Stories in the Pentateuch* analyses eight narratives featuring the divine destruction of various groups. In this volume Jonathan Schneider-Woods argues, 'when read as a sequence of mutually dependent stories, one observes a progression from the simplest case to the most complex, from a story of destruction targeting a thoroughly corrupt community to a destruction story in which a mixed cast of Yhwh's own people is under threat' (p. 4). Tracing this progression, Woods aims to understand 'the theological development' reflected in these stories (p. 6).

Following scholars who champion intertextual hermeneutics (e.g., Zakovitch, Fishbane, Tooman, Nihan), Woods argues these texts were continuously revised during the Second Temple period in order to coordinate intertextual links between similar stories (pp. 6-7). These links are signalled primarily through 'the use of shared lexemes and the use of shared plot elements' (pp. 9-10). Once these links are identified, Woods 'investigates the effect of this complex compositional process on the final form of the text' (p. 8; emphasis original).

Chapter two surveys various destruction stories from the ancient Near East, which serve as a cultural backdrop for the biblical stories. Woods finds that the rationale for divine destruction includes humanity's loud noise (p. 38), human rebellion (p. 38), and 'divine Intrigue' (p. 39). Fur-

thermore, with the exception of an Egyptian text, humanity's role in these stories is either non-existent or rote obedience to the god(s).

In chapter three, Woods begins his examination of biblical texts, first with the Flood, then with Sodom. The Flood narrative presents characters and events in a generally 'straightforward' way (p. 52): the flood generation is wicked (p. 43) and Noah alone is righteous (p. 44). That Noah is saved from destruction 'clarifies that Yhwh does not seek humanity's extinction but rather seeks to purge the wicked from humanity' (p. 44). Yet, the grounds for Noah's family's salvation are ambiguous, introducing the question of the transfer of merit/ demerit. This ambiguity is developed in the Sodom story.

Sodom follows a similar pattern, but with notable variation. Abraham is like Noah (pp. 52-54). Yet, while Noah made no intercession for his generation, Abraham indirectly intercedes for Sodom. Their conversation 'establishes the principle that it is more unjust for Yhwh to kill the righteous with the wicked than to spare the wicked from destruction' (p. 59). Ultimately, Sodom is destroyed and Lot is rescued on Abraham's merit, 'affirm[ing] the principle that the wicked can be saved from Yhwh's judgment through association with the righteous' (p. 75).

Chapter four increases the complexity. In the Exodus, the group of people threatened by judgment consists of both righteous and wicked Egyptians and Israelites (p. 82). The result is an increasingly precise judgment. In order to spare righteous Egyptians, 'Yhwh separates Pharaoh and his followers from the rest of Egypt' before drowning them in the sea (p. 108). Nevertheless, a transfer of (de)merit is at work: righteous Egyptians suffering for Pharaoh's wickedness and wicked Israelites saved because of the Patriarchs. The notion of intercession is also developed. While Abraham bases his argument on justice and only indirectly intercedes for Sodom, 'Moses explicitly prays for the wicked' (p. 108).

Chapter five considers the Golden Calf, 'the crescendo of this quartet of divine destruction stories' (p. 109). In it, Moses displays a 'rhetorically powerful' intercession packed with allusion to God's prior deliverance (p. 122). This intercession develops the role of the intercessor from what we find in Genesis 18 and offers specific principles from which to petition God (pp. 138-9). Additionally, Woods notes that while 'the righteous are presented with ways of pacifying Yhwh's anger' there is a trend toward God using the righteous as his instruments of judgment (p. 140).

Chapter six examines four stories in Numbers 'that activate the Exodus and Golden Calf narratives as primary intertexts' (p. 141). Numbers 14 further develops the role of the intercessor, presenting appeal to Yhwh's character as an effective tool (pp. 145-6). Additionally, Numbers 16 reverses the principle discussed in Genesis 18. While Abraham insisted

it is unjust to kill the wicked when the righteous are among them, 'Moses asks if the presence of one wicked person among the people is enough to condemn the nation to destruction'(p. 165). Furthermore, Numbers 17 reinforces 'the efficacy of the presence of the righteous to save the wicked' (p. 165), while Numbers 25 features the righteous as instruments of God's judgment (pp. 159-64).

There is much to commend in this volume. The degree to which Woods demonstrates intertextual connections between destruction stories and traces their thematic developments is thorough. This is especially the case when observing the effect of the righteous' presence when among the wicked, and the isolation of the wicked during destruction. Furthermore, his attention to characterisation through analogy is compelling. Two noteworthy cases are his treatment of Lot in Genesis 19 (pp. 60-71), and Aaron in Exodus 32 (pp. 124-7).

While his treatment is thorough, some of Woods' evidence for allusion is less convincing. Occasionally he identifies links between two stories that employ stock phrases. For instance, at a couple points he argues for allusion between Noah, Abraham, and Moses based on similar covenantal language (pp. 53, 83). While this may be intentional, the presence of covenantal language in covenant stories would be expected (see also his remarks on rising 'early in the morning' [p. 88]). Similarly, Woods sometimes asserts that one moment alludes to another when they have no shared vocabulary and minimal plot similarity. Such is the case when comparing Exodus 32:1 with Numbers 14:4 (p. 149).

Overall, *Tales of Fire and Flood* convincingly demonstrates that these eight destruction stories are connected. Woods shows how they not only speak to similar themes, but intentionally interact with one through intertextual links in order to develop a theology of God's judgment and the righteous intercessor.

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