

B O O K R E V I E W S

THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH: Grace in the End**Christopher J.H. Wright**Nottingham: IVP, *The Bible Speaks Today*, 2014 444pp £12.99pb
ISBN: 9781783590322

Christopher Wright's volume, over twice as long as the Derek Kidner commentary it replaces, is an object lesson in how to write an expositional commentary. It is a pleasure to read, conversational in tone, non-technical; and it never stops trying to help preachers in their task, both by example and instruction.

After a general introduction addressing the history of the times, the emergence of the written text, and Jeremiah's theology (God's passion, word, sovereignty, mission, victory), Wright breaks Jeremiah's 52 chapters into 33 units, ranging from three verses to three chapters in length. Each unit is expounded in three parts. First, a brief introduction orients us to the original setting and, preacher-like, aims to bring it to life for the reader. This is followed by the main exposition, broken into units and sub-units. Wright's exposition is a work of the imagination in the best sense. He is admirably sensitive to the dynamics of the text. Not only does he pay careful attention to its rhetoric, imagery and shifting voices, but he is alert to the interplay of text and audience, whether that audience be the prophet's original listeners, the book's exilic and post-exilic readers, or the church today.

Wright freely speculates about details of the original occasion and Jeremiah's feelings at the time, but strives to let the text constrain these imaginative forays. He constantly listens for echoes from elsewhere in the OT, and constantly draws parallels between the text, the NT gospel and our own times, with a strong focus on mission. Not only does Wright treat Jeremiah as one episode of a story spanning creation to new creation, but – against much modern scholarship – he treats it as a coherently unfolding whole, whose narrative logic he tries to expose.

Each section of the commentary concludes with a 'theological and expository reflection' in which preaching advice shares space with theological and ethical application. Fairly early in the commentary Wright sets out a 'three horizon' hermeneutic (OT; Gospel; new creation), which he then uses to generate Christian interpretation, notably of Jeremiah's promissory texts (e.g. Jer. 31; 50). Wright's careful approach to Christian reading deserves appreciative but critical scrutiny, especially over questions of continuity and discontinuity. For example: to what extent may we equate the sins of Israel with the sins of the new covenant community, whether we conceive of that as the visible church or regenerate

believers? Or, to what extent is the prophet Jeremiah a model for today's 'prophetic' leaders?

I would have liked to have seen more close exegesis, such as the careful syntactical analysis of Jer. 4:1-4 on which Wright builds a fine study of repentance. Instead, he has chosen to use words for expository colour, breathing life into the spirit of the series title. This is the most engaging exposition of Jeremiah I have read, and by far the most overtly mission-focused. Wright is first and last a missionary writer, and though he may at times be more focused on mission than Jeremiah was, his comments are salient, and constitute perhaps his most original contribution to Jeremiah studies.

ANDREW G. SHEAD

Moore Theological College, Sydney

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND AFRICAN TRADITIONS

Matthew Michael

Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013 259pp £18.50pb ISBN: 9780718892944

In this volume Dr Matthew Michael (Academic Dean of ECWA Theological seminary in Jos, Nigeria) suggests that all theologising is undertaken in mutual dialogue with human tradition and therefore, in the light of the rapid 20th Century growth of the Christian church in Sub-Saharan Africa, seeks to continue that dialogue with African traditions. This is so that Christian theology might be reconstructed to engage with typically African issues, with the aim of establishing a more contextualised theology that will do more than 'merely scratch the surface of the African cultural consciousness' as he suggests is currently the case in seminaries and churches, but instead 'transform the African worldview in the light of Biblical revelation'.

To achieve this, after an introduction and context, Dr Michael proceeds through a standard systematic programme (beginning with the doctrines of revelation and scriptures, and ending with chapters on ecclesiology and eschatology) summarising how African traditions within the African church can not only shape typically-Western systematic thinking, but also be shaped itself in dialogue with it.

Dr Michael succeeds in keeping a steady focus on both imminent contextual realities in Africa and also transcendental biblical truth. In doing this, he helpfully employs an equal measure of both assertive pride as an African Christian within the global theological community, and genuine humility in recommending places where non-African theological traditions should transform errors in the African church.

As a Western seminary lecturer in systematic theology in an East-African context I am regularly faced with the contextual inadequacy of many Western systematic approaches to effectively answer the questions my students face day-to-day in pastoral ministry. I was therefore pleased to find in Dr Michael's work a balanced, thoughtful, and practical approach to just such a problem.

I would recommend this book to anyone engaging in ministry with Africans, either on the continent or within the diaspora. This is the case despite the regular spelling and grammatical errors and the lack of deeper engagement with African theologians working in this field. Furthermore, this book will also prove beneficial to those who listen to, engage with, and learn from other cultural perspectives on systematic theological issues.

CHRIS HOWLES

Uganda Martyrs Seminary Namugongo, Kampala

PAULINE PERSPECTIVES: Essays on Paul, 1978-2013

N.T. Wright

London: SPCK, 2013 620pp £45.00pb ISBN: 9780281063666

Tom Wright's book, *Pauline Perspectives*, is a sort of pendant to his big book, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. *Pauline Perspectives* is a substantial collection of Wright's essays on Paul since 1978. Anyone who has read Tom Wright on Paul, over the years, will be very familiar with Wright's perspectives on justification, salvation-history, Christology, and empire. You can find these topics in several essays in the book. Indeed most of the material will be found in Wright's big book.

I found the most interesting essays here to be Wright's book reviews. The reviews of Cranfield's and Käsemann's commentaries on Romans, and Boyrarin's book on Paul are fair, respectful, and shrewd (he reserves most of his irritation for evangelicals whom he believes have misunderstood him!). His essay on recent Pauline scholarship is also useful and very helpful for anyone who wants to grasp developments in Pauline scholarship. Wright's essay on 'Communion and Koinonia' is fine: he makes some good and clear points why we cannot just agree to disagree on the issue of same-sex relations. This book can be recommended for scholars who may want Wright's articles in one easy volume. Otherwise, you are better off buying Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.

ROHINTAN MODY

St Paul's, Throop, Bournemouth

HEARING THE CALL: Stories of Young Vocation**Jonathan Lawson and Gordon Mursell**

London: SPCK, 2014 128pp £9.99pb ISBN: 9780281070602

The premise of this book is excellent: for perhaps three decades the Church has failed to encourage young people to consider ordination. As a result, there are fewer young presbyters than would be healthy and helpful for her mission now and in the future. The Church now seeks to encourage more young people to discern a vocation to ordained ministry. This book, by a member of the Church of England's Young Vocations Strategy Group and sometime Bishops' Adviser, Jonathan Lawson, and the former Bishop of Stafford, Gordon Mursell, is a contribution to that endeavour. Ostensibly written to young people in the early stages of thinking about a vocation to priesthood, the authors seek to remove stumbling blocks to their taking further (formal) steps in the discernment process, and give them a challenging and realistic prospect of what such a call might mean for them. The book, then, has a noble intent.

But I could only recommend it to young evangelicals considering seeking ordination with serious caveats and for a very limited utility. My foremost concern is the book's handling of Scripture. While each chapter begins with a biblical text related to 'calling,' it is used – frequently in spite of context and authorial intent – only for reverse-theologising the anecdotes and advice meted out in the following pages. These Scriptures are invariably made to speak allegorically, invariably putting me in the story as the protagonist (e.g. “an exercise often recommended when reading this story from Jeremiah is to insert your own name into the passage and listen to what God says to you”).

But the biggest problem in a book on discerning vocation is its loud silence on the Bible's teaching about the character, conviction, and competency of a potential pastor-teacher. Not only does the book not quote the seminal texts on discernment from the Pastoral Epistles, but even indirectly undermines their teaching. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3 that an elder must be “above reproach, able to teach, not a drunkard...not quarrelsome...not a recent convert,” but we find Lawson and Mursell asserting that some with a vocation “may well not even be sure whether they believe in God or not”, and may not be church attenders! They quote approvingly an ordinand (now presbyter) who said, “I believed, and still do, that I am not the sort of person who should be a priest. I speak before I think, I am extremely liberal in my views, I drink, swear, and am very, very irreverent.”

A second major caveat is the book's strong endorsement of the so-called progressive agenda concerning sexuality. There's mention of a “very moving” sung Eucharist to celebrate a civil partnership, a comment that defrocking a Roman priest because of his homosexuality undermined

Christ's mission, and an extraordinary five-page invective against the traditional Christian understanding of sexual normativity – quite unrelated to anything to do with vocation – in the book's endnote.

In sum, then, this is not a book designed to help young evangelicals to think about a potential calling to ministry. The authors have identified a need, and have met it – but only according to the parameters of their own liberal catholic tradition.

And yet it might be worthwhile for young evangelical aspirants to read it. Despite its faults, it contains many important, wise counsels and valuable insights – both spiritual and practical – such as the need to involve others in discerning one's gifts; the value of setting up a placement; signposts to the central and diocesan resources for young vocations; the priority of prayer; honesty and humility before God; and the need to realise that a calling to ministry is a calling to service, suffering, and even failure.

Further, reading this book affords an insight into the mind and vocabulary of many of the Diocesan Directors of Ordinands (DDOs) and Bishops' Advisers (selectors) with whom they might deal in the course of the selection process. In conservative evangelical circles we don't say things like "discernment is like a dance: both parties participate and both are changed by the exchange," and we certainly don't ask potential ordinands "where they feel the sense of call in their bodies." Better to be aware, at least, of the way people from another traditions in the Church of England talk about a vocation to priesthood, and to know what DDOs and selectors see as their role in the selection process, than to come across these things for the first time at a selection conference.

TOM WOOLFORD

Oak Hill Theological College, London

CHRISTIANS IN AN AGE OF WEALTH: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship

Craig L. Blomberg

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013 271pp £15.99pb ISBN: 9780310318989

This is a biblically based and refreshingly practical look at a theology of wealth for the affluent Western church. It consists mostly of extended discussions of theology that draw on the entire range of biblical material on a variety of wealth-related topics. These sections allow Blomberg to refute a number of incorrect, extreme views of wealth in the church (asceticism, prosperity gospel, etc) and draw out a moderate doctrine of wealth that both encourages generosity and eschews legalism.

By far, the book's greatest strength is Blomberg's exhaustive treatment of biblical theology. Blomberg's engagement with biblical materials is as deep as it is wide, and is astonishingly comprehensive. He seems to leave no book or genre unturned in his search for a biblical theology of wealth. The book's other major strength is Blomberg's ability to debunk common misconceptions about generosity. For example, Blomberg refutes a number of misconceptions about God's love for a cheerful giver. This verse often seems to actually stymie generosity, since the verse is often preached as tacit permission for reluctant givers to hold back until their attitude improves. Of course, "just because some people are not in the mood does not exempt them" from the need to give – and Blomberg provides detailed exegesis to show why this is certainly not the case. Blomberg also takes down other incorrect sermon illustrations, such as the common use of the Temple construction narratives as an example for modern building campaigns and misunderstandings about the tithe. Pastors planning to preach on generosity in the near future would do well to consult this book first.

My only serious complaint about this book is its title. We actually do not live in an "age of wealth." We live in an age of stratification. People who read this book probably think of themselves as living in a wealthy age, but this speaks to the extent to which many wealthy Christians have isolated themselves from the poor. According to the BBC, a quarter of Londoners still live below the poverty line, and in Chicago (this reviewer's hometown) many neighborhoods have poverty rates as high as sixty percent. Perhaps a good follow-up book would incorporate a more missional approach, encouraging Christians to break down barriers of class segregation, engage with the poor in our communities, and reckon with the fact that many do not live in an age of wealth at all. Generosity to the poor is a great first goal for wealthy churches, but I would love to see more mainstream, Western writing encouraging wealthy churches to stand in solidarity with the poor as well.

LAURA ROBINSON
Wheaton College, Illinois

HERBERT HENSLEY HENSON: A Biography

John Peart-Binns

Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013 212pp £25.00pb
ISBN: 9780718893026

Hensley Henson (1863-1947) was the famously outspoken bishop of Durham through the inter-war period. His ministry spanned a significant period of rapid change within both society and church and he was a key

character in many events, mainly as a maverick who swam against the tide. He often isolated himself and registered a minority vote of one. He was never afraid of controversy and had a sharp tongue. He described the Evangelicals opposed to the broadening of liturgy through Prayer Book revision as 'an army of illiterates generalised by octogenarians'. That was mild, however, compared to his impassioned claim in his early ministry that Dissenters were 'emissaries of Satan'. Henson was a very complex person whose convictions often switched from one extreme to the other. Having been passionately opposed to dissenters he moved to become a champion of home reunion. Likewise, he shifted from identifying as an 'English Catholic' to identifying as a 'Reformation Protestant', and most profoundly, virtually overnight, he moved from being a bulwark of Establishment to fiercely advocating for Disestablishment. Henson's theological liberalism meant his preferment was generally a cause of controversy. He was a man who was both highly ambitious while at the same time did not chase popularity.

Peart-Binns describes himself as an episcopographer, with good reason, as this is his twentieth biography of an Anglican bishop. His research is heavily dependent on primary archival work which is demonstrated throughout. The writing style is readable and the chronology is easily followed. Another helpful aspect of this book is its introduction of the important historical events in this period before outlining Henson's involvement in them. As such, it is not a bad introduction to the whole era. There are, however, some negative features of this biography. Firstly, there is no referencing system at all. There is an extensive bibliography and it is obvious that points are made from sources, often using direct quotations, but without footnotes or any other reference system, it is difficult to tell what the particular sources are and where in the sources a quote may come from. Another area that I would have liked to see receive a little more attention was Henson's mature personal life. Peart-Binns provides an interesting account of Henson's childhood and family background, but the relation between husband and wife is only tantalisingly touched upon. There is mention of Isobella Henson's live-in 'companion', Fearn Bookers, who resided with them most of their married life, but the nature of these relationships is ignored.

This book may interest people wanting an introduction to the Church of England's history from the late Victorian era through to the end of World War II. It provides this introduction through the lens of one of the period's most prominent, albeit atypical, characters.

EDWARD LOANE

Moore Theological College, Sydney

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT: J. Gresham Machen's Correspondence from World War I

Barry Waugh (ed.)

Phillipsburg NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012 342pp c.£15pb
ISBN: 9781596384798

John Gresham Machen is best known as one of the prime instigators of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the United States during the 1920s. He was the author of the classic *Christianity and Liberalism*, and founder of both Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. What is less well-known is that before he entered the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to begin his great struggle there, he had been a humanitarian non-combatant volunteer serving with the YMCA during the First World War.

In a labour of love, Barry Waugh has transcribed, edited, and annotated Machen's correspondence from January 1918 to March 1919 (because, as Fowler in the film *Chicken Run* tells us, "The Yanks turn up late for every war"). He was stationed in France and saw five sectors of the front around Aisne, Lorraine, Argonne, Woëvre, and Belgium from the Germans' Michael Offensive until well after Armistice Day. There were no openings in the chaplaincy service when Machen offered his services there, and so rather than enlist with the ambulance corps (which may have led to him being reassigned to munitions transport, which he didn't want), he ended up serving with "the Y", despite some serious theological misgivings about their "generic Christianity." His role consisted mostly of selling hot chocolate, snacks, candles, tobacco, toiletries, and stationery in YMCA huts, of which there were about 1500 by the end of the war; places of rest, entertainment, and refreshment for war-weary troops, away from the horrors of the trenches.

It is at times a charming experience to read of this voyage of adventure, and at times a rather bizarre one. To picture Gresham Machen, for example, on a rocky sea-crossing lecturing YMCA men about the state of New Testament criticism is surreal, but "some of the men appeared to be interested" he tells us! "At any rate, I am glad of the opportunity." Later he describes chatting with an Italian count and brushing up on his French. Once in Paris, he tells his mother that it is far less terrifying than he had anticipated (despite the occasional air raid or bombardment) but the food is not so good. It is not the most harrowing of war diaries.

There is some excitement as a gas attack and the death of a man nearby bring the realities of war closer to home for the scholar. He would be forced to flee from the advancing Germans at the end of May 1918, and lose his personal belongings. He also faced a constant war against rats. But it is some of the religious elements in his story that stand out. At one point Machen tells his mother about a service led by the

regimental chaplain, who was Roman Catholic. The general service was “frankly supernatural” (rather than giving a naturalistic interpretation of the feeding of the 5000), and “the moral exhortations were good.” He concludes, “I was pleased with the service. It was far, far better than what we get from the Protestant liberals.” At another point he expresses his admiration for the nuns who cooked and cared for American soldiers.

There is some Bible teaching amongst “the men”, but not much. He complains, “there are lots of men, if only we could get at them, who would welcome not only Bible teaching but the kind of Bible teaching that I like myself.” But no-one is interested in bringing him into contact with such men. Indeed, Machen was later recalled to more of an office job, after HQ heard that his “addresses were above the heads of the men.” But he was clearly longing to get home by that point anyway, or to rummage around in the bookshops of Strassbourg for German books.

All in all, this is a fascinating experience if you have had previous encounters with Dr Machen in his titanic battles against liberalism and might enjoy discovering more about the earlier life of the fiery secessionist. But otherwise, for those to whom Machen is just another name from a far-off, long-forgotten theological tiff, this is not going to open your eyes in any massively significant way to the War, or give you an especially theological reflection on it. There are some touching vignettes, such as when he gave hot chocolate to an appreciative German, and saw a wounded American soldier give his coat to a wounded German soldier (“along with the hatred and bitterness incident to the war, there are some examples of the other thing which like fair lilies in swampy ground are all the more beautiful because of the contrast with the unlikely soil in which they grow”). It’s not Siegfried Sassoon or Robert Graves or Wilfred Owen. Machen did his bit. But if he did consider the bigger realities and perplexing agonies of the war in any deeper, more profound way, perhaps he just did not feel able to share his meditations on it with his anxious, distant mother?

LEE GATISS

Church Society, Cambridge

TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD: Why the Bible is Worth Knowing, Trusting and Loving

Kevin DeYoung

Nottingham: IVP, 2014 138pp £8.99pb ISBN: 9781783591220

“We cannot know the truth or know ourselves or know God’s ways or savingly know God himself unless God speaks to us. Every true Christian should feel deep in his bones an utter dependence on God’s self-revelation in the Scriptures.” (p.21). To know God, and to know us, we must look

to the Bible. *Taking God at His Word* by Kevin DeYoung is a brilliant book that helps the reader to love the Bible more. The book unpacks the following:

God's word is enough
 God's word is clear
 God's word is final
 God's word is necessary.

DeYoung writes that God has made himself known. He has done so in a clear way, not hidden behind mysterious 'interpretations' and 'mysteries'. It is a final word. It has the final say. No 'three legged stools' are to be found here.

DeYoung also gives a brilliant overview of Jesus' view of Scripture. He sees it as true, enough, clear, final and necessary. He sees the Bible as God's word. Therefore, DeYoung writes: "If you are a Christian, by definition you ought to believe what Jesus teaches", and "...we must conclude that whatever the perfect Son of God believed about the sacred writings, we should believe the same."

Finally, DeYoung ends the book urging the reader to stick with the scriptures. What the Bible says, God says. This is the charge to every Christian. So he says, "we can believe the Bible because we believe in the power and wisdom and goodness and truthfulness of the God whose authority and veracity cannot be separated from the Bible. We trust the Bible because it is God's Bible. And God being God, we have every reason to take him at his word."

This has been one of the best books I've read this year. It's a book every Christian needs to read, and be equipped by. May we all be people who take God at his word!

ALED SEAGO
 St John's Church, Over, Winsford

REVISITING THE SYNOD OF DORDT (1618-1619)

Aza Goudriaan and Fred van Lieburg (eds.)

Leiden: Brill, 2011 456pp £88hb ISBN : 9789004188631

Revisiting the Synod of Dordt is an expensive academic symposium of 16 chapters, covering the background to the Synod, the theology of Arminianism, the sources for our knowledge of the Synod's inner workings, the influence of key theologians upon it, and various aspects of the Canons of Dordt, their drafting, teaching, and pedagogy. It is an extremely useful, much needed book for scholars of the period and of this crucial event.

The highlights of the volume for me include a superb analysis of the “distorting mirror” of the Hales-Balcanquahall letters, by Anthony Milton. These letters form a contemporary English account of the inner workings of the Synod, but they must be handled with care because of the inherent biases within them and certain important omissions, as well as the anti-Calvinist agenda behind their original publication. Still, Milton does a great job of showing how these important documents can provide us with fascinating information about the angry exchanges on the floor of the Synod, about which the official accounts are unsurprisingly silent. The deep engagement of the British delegation at the Synod is also brought out nicely, and there is a chapter on James Ussher’s background influence.

There is also a brilliant exposition (alone worth the effort of getting the book out of a library) by Robert Godfrey on the mode of teaching adopted in the Canons of Dort, where he shows how they were deliberately written in a popular, accessible style rather than with a scholastic accent. One article within each of the Heads of Doctrine seems to have been written as a summary Reformed answer to the Arminians, but as a whole they tend to move from unexceptionable, “catholic” truth, by stages into a more thorough Reformed account of each doctrine, in a pastorally-sensitive way. “Reformed distinctives are the proper development of catholic theology,” was the impression this intended to make. Donald Sinnema also provides a magisterial study of how the Canons were drafted, though we eagerly await the full publication over the next few years of the definitive critical edition of all the documents and papers of the Synod. In the meantime, this volume is the essential go-to guide for all things Dortian.

LEE GATISS

Church Society, Cambridge

SIMPLY GOD: Recovering the Classical Trinity

Peter Sanlon

Nottingham: IVP, 2014 240pp £11.99pb ISBN: 9781783591046

‘Why should I buy thee? Let me count the ways...’ Dr Sanlon’s fine new book, *Simply God*, deserves a place on your bookshelf for a number of reasons.

Firstly, this is a clearly-written and accessible guide to the main contours of the classical doctrine of God: that understanding of God’s divine nature and character which runs like a golden thread through the orthodox Christian tradition, from Augustine, through Thomas Aquinas, to the greats of Reformed scholasticism. Sanlon is (as the title of the book suggests) especially keen to explain and commend the doctrine

of God's simplicity (i.e. God is, as our Article 1 puts it, 'without body, parts, or passions'). Divine simplicity, he says, is 'the engine in the car of a healthy theology'. Sanlon's defence of God's atemporality, omniscience, omnipotence, and impassibility is also much to be welcomed, at a time when those venerable doctrines are under attack from several quarters. This would make an ideal textbook for courses on the doctrine of God, especially at Anglican seminaries – not least as an antidote to Moltmann's nefarious influence.

Secondly, this is a pastorally-engaged book that never allows matters of the head to be divorced from matters of the heart. Each chapter ends with a meditation, addressed to God directly. These are winsome and well-written, in a style that puts one (not unhelpfully) in mind of St Augustine's *Confessions*. Sanlon's approach here also helps to hammer home the point that the study of the doctrine of God is not an end in itself, but should drive the reader to his knees in prayer and worship. Sanlon doesn't let us forget that the proper end of doctrine is doxology.

Thirdly, this is a glorious account of the perfect, eternal, dynamic love of God. Sanlon has grasped the bull by the horns here, since a perennial critique of classical theism (and the doctrine of divine simplicity in particular) is that it leaves us with a God who is insufficiently 'relational'. By exploring the perfect triune love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he shows that this critique is groundless, and does so with aplomb. The final chapter helpfully applies the fruits of these findings to the task of modern cultural engagement. Sanlon touches briefly upon how a classical doctrine of God might inform and enrich our church services – perhaps in a future edition he could say more on this important theme.

This is, in short, a splendid book, which delights the mind and warms the heart – may it lighten the wallet too!

MARK SMITH
All Saints, Little Shelford

THE PSALMS AS A CHRISTIAN LAMENT: A Historical Commentary

Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, Erika Moore.

Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2014 312pp £18.99pb ISBN: 9780802868091

As I write, Christians are being executed for their faith in Iraq, schools are being bombed in Gaza, police are shooting rubber bullets at unarmed citizens in the USA, and the news of Robin Williams' death by suicide has just been confirmed. The world is lamenting. But what of the believer? How ought Christians to express their grief and horror from the standpoint of faith? In the introduction to this, the second volume on the Psalms by this team of authors, a sharp and important contrast is drawn

between the lament of believers and unbelievers. They argue that a lament can be either an expression of faith or a rejection of God, that it can show either trustful humility or prideful defiance.

Despite the acknowledgement that over a third of the Psalter is lament, the authors choose to discuss just ten psalms in this volume (5, 6, 7, 32, 38, 39, 44, 102, 130, 143). The historical commentary aims to give both the 'voice of the church' and the 'voice of the psalmist.' This is accomplished by including sections on historical interpretation as well as translation and exegesis. The sections devoted to historical interpretation were a highlight of the book. A wide range of biblical interpreters from the early, medieval, and Reformation eras is showcased, with brief biographical notes effectively to set each within his contemporary context. In a few places, these sections were perhaps too general to be valuable, but in many cases they served to illuminate both the psalm in question and give insight into moments from church history.

In the commentary sections, it was pleasing to see appropriate weight given to the literary context of each psalm, which will be useful to anyone preaching through the Psalter. Doubtless the detailed exegetical sections will prove valuable for scholars and scholarly pastors. I was disappointed, however, that not all the psalms were summarised in a 'Message' section and felt that some of the concluding sections were too terse. The Christian interpretation of the psalms was largely explored by means of typology, with some psalms receiving much fuller treatments than others. I would have appreciated more on the appropriate use of each psalm as individual or corporate Christian lament, though honourable mention should be made of the defence of Psalm 6 as a funeral psalm for believers.

One minor frustration is the reference to the previous volume (*The Psalms as Christian Worship*) for several important sections (defence of imprecatory psalms, for example). I understand the desire to avoid repetition and redundancy, but these omissions inevitably render this volume less effective as a standalone.

ROS CLARKE
Castle Church, Stafford

**THE CHRIST-CENTRED PREACHING OF MARTYN LLOYD-JONES:
Classic Sermons for the Church Today**

E. Catherwood & C. Catherwood (eds.)

Nottingham: IVP, 2014 288pp £12.99pb ISBN: 9781783591022

Greatest hits compilations are a curiously unrewarding beast; removed from their original context the works included inevitably lose their power and potency. This volume of Lloyd-Jones contains 17 sermons

from various series stretching across his long career, each chosen and introduced by his daughter and grandson.

The aim of the book is to 'introduce both the Doctor and the truths for which he stood to the twenty-first century generation.' However this is somewhat misleading as becomes clear upon reading: rather it is to introduce the Doctor to an American audience. The American connection is keenly stressed throughout and the introductions, which add little to the sermons, began to grate as I realised I was not the intended audience. When 'England' has to be put in square brackets after 'this country' it became clear that my ear was not the one they were after. This is either lazy editing or cynical publishing. That a British book by a British preacher and marketed in Britain should be so focussed on selling to the American market is disappointing yet unsurprising.

What this volume reveals is that Lloyd-Jones' best work is his best-known work. The excerpts from the classics, *Preachers and Preaching* and *Studies on the Sermon on the Mount*, were as sublime as expected whereas his earlier, lesser-known, works were a mix of peculiar exegesis (are the wide and narrow gates really about being broad and narrow minded?) and the occasional flash of brilliance. The only exceptions to this were his sermons on the Old Testament which were an unexpected treat. However, often the sermons refer on to those later in the series or back to those earlier, understandable in a book of this kind but as ultimately frustrating and unfulfilling as a vegetarian tapas.

Is this a helpful introduction to the Doctor, then? Not especially. I would recommend reading a complete volume of one of his classic series rather than this.

ROBIN BARFIELD
Christ Church, Wharton

JOHN FRAME'S SELECTED SHORTER WRITINGS: Volume One

John M. Frame

Phillipsburg NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014 336pp £16.99pb
ISBN: 9781596387317

John Frame is a household name to contemporary devotees of Reformed theology. A volume or two of John Frame's *Theology of Lordship* series graces the shelves of many of the faculty and students here at Oak Hill. He is best known for his distinctive Christian epistemology, propagation of presuppositional apologetics, and treatment of ethics. Readers of this collection of 'short articles on various subjects' – mostly previously unpublished – will find Frame's characteristic 'triperspectivalism' and emphasis on the lordship of Christ permeating the volume as it treats of

theological method, various theological topics, apologetics, ethics, and worship.

It would be unfair to expect coherence and sustained argument in a miscellany such as this; indeed, the book could be said to serve three purposes (three perspectives?): (i) introducing theological tropes and topics, (ii) clarifying and defending the 'Framean' corpus, and (iii) making various critical comments on 'in-house' (Reformed theology and worship) matters.

I found the introductory-style chapters the most useful: highlights include the chapters 'Primer on Perspectivalism,' 'Introduction to the Reformed Faith,' 'Propositional Revelation,' and 'Simple Obedience' – an introduction, effectively, to the Christian life. The critical comments Frame makes about the theology, preaching and churchmanship of Reformed evangelicals are 'faithful wounds from a friend' (Prov. 27:6). Most of these critiques are an appeal for terminological precision – what do we mean when we appeal to 'context,' talk about 'the gospel,' exhort believers to 'focus on Christ,' describe a country as 'Christian' (or not), and even when we critique 'the prosperity gospel'? Frame's mission against lazy (tribal) thinking and speaking gets a thorough airing, and he begins to provide some of the biblical resources for rectifying these shortcomings.

There are some things I would change about this book. Frame confesses in his preface that 'there will sometimes be overlap,' but really there are three pairs of essays (out of the 38 chapters) that are so similar they surely should not have been effectively repeated. Other chapters are too brief to merit inclusion (little over a page on the role of the local church in cultural transformation is not worth having). Some chapters (particularly the two or three on politics) do not culturally translate from their American writer to this British reader.

Nevertheless, both the beginning student and the avid consumer of Frame's longer works have things to gain from this book, and should look forward to the promised second volume.

TOM WOOLFORD

Oak Hill Theological College, London

THE SCRIPTURES TESTIFY ABOUT ME: Jesus and the Gospel in the Old Testament

D.A. Carson (ed.)

Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press (UK) & Wheaton: Crossway (USA),
2013 187pp £10.99pb ISBN: 9781844746286

This book contains transcripts of addresses given at the 2011 Gospel Coalition National Conference. In the first main chapter, Albert Mohler

introduces the topic with reference to Jesus' words in John 5:31-47. There are then seven expositions by other prominent pastors giving examples of how we can preach Christian sermons from Old Testament passages: Exodus 14 (Tim Keller), Ruth (Alistair Begg), Psalm 25 (James MacDonald), Jeremiah 23:1-8 (Conrad Mbewe), Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8 (Matt Chandler), Zephaniah (Mike Bullmore), Psalm 110 (D. A. Carson). If I were preaching from any of those passages I would certainly turn to this book for ideas. The expositions are heart-warming and Christ-exalting, as well as showcasing a range of ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament.

Some parts of the exegesis are stronger than others. Keller and Carson are particular highlights, as well as Bullmore.

On the other hand, Mohler claims that Psalm 132:17 is "almost assuredly" the background to John 1:7-9 whereas the editor's commentary notes only a probable allusion, and that in John 5:35.

The body of MacDonald's sermon is a running commentary on Psalm 25:1-15 and we lose the structural emphases of the psalm through this approach. He also runs out of time to comment on vv. 16-22, but it is unclear why this could not be rectified in the printed version. The lack of attention to Jesus' resurrection means that David's confidence and trust in v. 3 are overlooked.

Mbewe's exposition of Jeremiah 23:1-8 pays more attention to Isaiah 9 and 53, so does not provide help in situating this oracle within Jeremiah.

Since the addresses were delivered at a ministers' conference, their length and assumption of biblical literacy means they would not be suitable as model sermons for many churches. But as a showcase of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament, this is rich food for the soul and full of ideas for expository preaching.

JOHN PERCIVAL
All Souls, Eastbourne

THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH: Assemble the people before me
Chris Green

Nottingham: IVP, 2013 330pp £12.99pb ISBN: 9781844748785

Writing from experience gained both in the classroom and at the coalface, Chris Green's long-awaited entry in the Bible Speaks Today series on the Church oozes with insight and fresh thinking. With a breadth and depth that is at times breath-taking, the book first surveys the story of the Church through the lens of the story of the Bible, moves to describing

what the Church ought to be doing, before concluding with what the Church ought to be like as it does these things.

Along the way, Green covers traditional ground but often from unexpected angles. His approach sits comfortably at the centre of classical evangelicalism with little that is denominationally distinctive or theologically controversial. On the sacraments (a term he avoids), he commends simplicity of practice against any over-developed theological or historical position. His material on spiritual gifts includes a useful discussion of issues around cessationism and prophecy. He holds a traditional position on the role of men and women but openly acknowledges a lack of space to explore or defend this in any depth. Church planting is given special attention.

I particularly appreciated how almost every aspect of the life of the Church receives scrutiny at some point, even if only in passing. There are comments on the normative and regulative principles, paedocommunion, Sabbatarianism, the question of tithes for Christians, the use of the word “priest”, the Homogeneous Unit Principle, denominations, bishops and even the counter-signing of cheques. Some of these comments are not as developed as they could be in a longer work; occasionally I still wondered what he really thinks.

There is impressive interaction with secondary literature from Calvin to Rick Warren, with plenty of leads to follow up on specific issues where appropriate. In a book that addresses the subject of the Church from the point of view of biblical theology I was surprised, however, that there was no mention at all of the work of either N.T. Wright or Oliver O’Donovan, even in a footnote. Serious interaction with these authors would be beyond the scope of the series, but mention of their work seems a notable omission in a book that in other ways is remarkably thorough.

I particularly recommend this book as a rich resource for teaching about the Church in a sermon series or other setting. It suffers from a lack of Scripture and subject indices; were it to be republished with these, I think I would buy another copy.

TOM WATTS
St Mary’s, Chesham

FROM BONDAGE TO LIBERTY: The Gospel According to Moses

Anthony T. Selvaggio

Phillipsburg NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014 170pp £9.99pb
ISBN: 9781596386402

Anthony Selvaggio explores the life and ministry of Moses in the book of Exodus in the latest volume in P&R’s series, ‘The Gospel According to

the Old Testament'. The series is designed to study the lives of major Old Testament characters, and in particular, to encourage a Christ-centred approach to reading the Old Testament. This is clearly Selvaggio's aim as he walks us through major events in Moses' life.

Each chapter focuses on one event in Moses' life, such as his birth and adoption by Pharaoh's daughter, his encounter with God in the burning bush, his role in the exodus from Egypt, and as mediator of the Law. Selvaggio unpacks the meaning and significance of each event, with an emphasis on how it formed Moses' character, and clearly demonstrates how at each point in Moses' life and ministry, we are pointed to Jesus Christ. Written from a distinctly Reformed perspective, readers sympathetic to that tradition will appreciate both the way in which Selvaggio clearly operates with a biblical theology influenced by thinkers such as Geerhardus Vos, and his covenantal approach.

That being said, if you are looking for a new or fresh reading of the events of Moses' life and how they point to Christ, you will not find it here. Neither will you be satisfied if you are interested in a more academic exploration of the theological significance of Moses. Selvaggio writes as a pastor – indeed, most of the chapters feel as if they could be sermons – and is concerned simply to help lay audiences understand the text more clearly, and to help pastors by providing a deeper understanding of Moses that focuses on how God used him to reveal and foreshadow the work of Jesus. Each chapter helpfully concludes with a number of discussion questions, making the book suitable for reading in groups as well.

For those who might find it a bit daunting to sit down and make sense of the book of Exodus and the life of Moses, *From Bondage to Liberty* is an accessible introduction that will open up the depths and riches of the Old Testament to help them clearly see the way in which Jesus and his redemptive work is revealed in history.

JAKE BELDER
Cranmer Hall, Durham

SELF, WORLD AND TIME: Ethics as Theology Volume 1

Oliver O'Donovan

Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2013 160pp £10.99pb ISBN: 9780802869210

Authority, O'Donovan argues, is not such that it transcends the normative demands of good moral thinking but rather drives humanity back into such demands with renewed vigour and clarity. In this brief and accessible volume, the first in a new trilogy entitled 'Ethics as Theology', O'Donovan explores, among other things, the place of the Scriptures in Christian moral reasoning, emphasising that interpretation is the task

which precedes and directs moral thinking, a train of reasoning for which there is no short-cut. In a cautionary word for theologians and moralists, he describes moral theology's distinct vocation to make journeys between the poles of dogmatic theology and practical action, 'between heaven and the circumstances'. He distinguishes good and bad attempts at this by opening up full-bore against what has passed for Christian moral reasoning, including corrupted notions of conscience cut loose from a sense of self and narrativism as a cover for bad faith justification of sin.

It is faith, hope, and love which organise the closing part of the book and will organise the ensuing works in the trilogy: faith making us aware of the self and pressing towards knowledge; love penetrating the heartlands of the world; and hope making deliberative action towards good works conceivable in the open present. Yet faith is antecedent, though not preminent. In strikingly Protestant vein, citing Tyndale and Luther, faith is trumpeted as the root of morality.

The style of writing will intrigue those who have read O'Donovan before. The text is more accessible, though no less terse and conceptually rich, than previous works. The immaculate prose is leavened with the occasional colloquialism and the more frequent pointed remark. One has the impression that this is O'Donovan letting loose, with precision, in directions on which he has thus far been somewhat silent. This is particularly evident in his remarks upon ecclesial life which reprovably pepper various chapters, most memorably his criticism of that forgetfulness of humanity's position vis-à-vis God's agency among those who pray 'resting complacently on the buttocks rather than pressing forward upon the knees.' The antidote is a liturgical discipline and a recognition that, since prayer is partnership with God, 'we had better come to the point, and quickly.'

Pastors and theologians who wish the people they serve to reason as Christians will do well to study this work and its sequels, considering the practical implications for the life of the church.

JOSHUA HORDERN

Harris Manchester College, Oxford

ONE WITH CHRIST: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation

Marcus Peter Johnson

Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013 256pp £13.49pb ISBN: 9781433531491

There has been a mini-glut of books on the union of the believer with Christ from Reformed writers in recent years, and this is one of the very best. Indeed, for a pastor or any theologically-aware Christian who knows they need some education on the theology of union, this would be

an ideal starting-point. Johnson begins by arguing a point that many (this reviewer included) would agree with: contemporary evangelicalism has hugely under-appreciated union with Christ, in contrast to much historic orthodox Christian theology, and that this has been to the detriment of its preaching, pastoring, and life.

He then walks us through some of the key topics in soteriology (incarnation, justification, adoption, preservation) making the case that each of them makes full biblical and theological sense only when seen as an aspect of union, which he describes as ‘the primary, central, and fundamental reality of salvation’. A key shift here, in contrast (say) with John Murray’s *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, is that union is treated not as one item in an ordo, but as the underlying reality of which each of the separate items is an aspect and out-working. Similarly, Wayne Grudem’s much-used *Systematic Theology* comes in for a bit of occasional stick in this regard in the footnotes, and I think fairly so. Readers whose thinking on the doctrine of salvation is largely shaped by such works will find much that challenges and provokes in this book.

One quibble: I found occasional questionable theological formulations (Christ ‘sinlessly assuming our sinful nature’, p.37; ‘our union with Christ is union with the triune God’, p.43), but this might just be Johnson getting a little carried away with his rhetoric at times. And one caveat: a reader who does not hold a strongly Calvinist doctrine of the Lord’s Supper might not be persuaded by Johnson’s argument that such a view properly follows from a correctly functioning doctrine of union.

But overall these are minor issues. This is a passionate, articulate, well-informed book that should help many readers towards a richer understanding and preaching of God’s great act of salvation in Christ.

TIM WARD

PT Cornhill Training Course, London

UNION WITH CHRIST: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church

J. Todd Billings

Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2011, 180pp £12.99
ISBN: 9780801039348

UNION WITH CHRIST: In Scripture, History, and Theology

Robert Letham

Phillipsburg NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011, 164pp £12.99
ISBN: 791596380639

Union with Christ is at the very heart of both the New Testament’s and the Reformed tradition’s doctrine of salvation. Yet it has been sadly

neglected in contemporary evangelicalism. These fine books retrieve the Reformed doctrine of union with Christ for us. Both are similar because both are works of historical theology about union with Christ within the Reformed tradition. Billings's book is brilliant and innovative. He keeps a close eye on implications for church and ministry today.

Billings's first chapter begins by exploring the implications of adoption which is at the heart of a Trinitarian theology of union with Christ. Billings contrasts the distant god of deism, operative in the theology of many Western Christians, with the Scriptural and Reformed doctrine of the close family relationship involved in being sons of God. Billings is right; I am concerned about the number of teenage church-members who talk about a distant "nice" God, rather than being closely related to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Chapter 2 Billings considers the negative corollary to union and communion with God: the Reformed doctrine of the bondage of the will. Again, Billings is spot on; you cannot have union unless we acknowledge our predicament — that we have fallen from Edenic communion and we are dead in sin. Union with Christ becomes all the more wonderful when we consider our plight.

In chapter 3, Billings cautions that union with Christ does not set aside the "otherness" of God. Union with Christ does not mean the modern idolatrous notion that we "date Jesus" with "flowers, love notes." Again, Billings's argument is on target; too many modern evangelicals do not consider the reality of the transcendent holiness of God.

Chapter 4 considers union with Christ and social justice. Billings argues that justice is defined by its location "in Christ." It is the love found in Christ that impels us to seek justice for others. Again, Billings is shrewd; projects for human justice will never usher in the Kingdom of God.

Finally, the book concludes with a chapter which considers how a theology of union with Christ offers a corrective to the popular model of "incarnational ministry." Billings rightly points out how these "incarnational ministry" models are based on sloppy thinking, and that it is through the Spirit's work of bearing witness, that Christ creates a new humanity.

Letham structures his book differently; he focuses on the traditional theological loci of creation, incarnation, Pentecost, representation, transformation, and death and resurrection. For Letham, we start with the unity of God and humanity, which is disrupted in the fall, and then restored by the incarnation of Christ, where the Lord unites himself with humanity. Letham then discusses the development of Christological thought in the patristic era. His discussion of these matters is clear and sane. He then argues that Calvin gets 1 Cor 15:57 wrong and betrays a Nestorian tendency here (Billings makes the same point in his book).

In the chapter on representation, Letham argues convincingly that the doctrine of election belongs under the rubric of union with Christ. We are chosen in Christ and he shows how election is seen “in Christ” in Reformed divines from Calvin to Thomas Goodwin. The next chapter on transformation is one where readers of *Churchman* may have most trouble. Letham argues that the Eastern Orthodox notion of theosis or deification does not involve absorption into the godhead. Letham believes that there is biblical and Reformed support for the notion of theosis. While he may be right that Athanasius’s and Cyril of Alexandria’s notions of theosis are biblical, the problem lies in the term “deification” itself and its use in some Eastern Orthodox thinking to avoid a focus on the penal nature of the atonement and forensic justification. (Though this is not what Letham is trying to do, of course!) Letham ends by rightly pointing us to the glorious future we have in an even closer union with Christ when he returns in glory.

Letham’s book is solid, but slightly disappointing when compared to his outstanding book on the Trinity. Buy both books, if you can, but if you want only one to help you in your ministry, buy Billings.

ROHINTAN MODY

St Paul’s, Throop, Bournemouth

PAUL AND UNION WITH CHRIST: An Exegetical and Theological Study

Constantine R. Campbell

Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2012 479 pp £40pb ISBN: 9780310329053

UNION WITH CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Grant Macaskill

Oxford: OUP, 2013 353 pp £75 hb ISBN: 9780199684298

Books on union with Christ, happily, continue to pour off the presses. Both these books emphasize how central union with Christ is, both in the Bible and in theology. Con Campbell is an Australian from Moore College, now at Trinity, Deerfield, while Grant Macaskill is a Scot who lectures in New Testament at St. Andrews.

Campbell’s book is an exegetical-theological approach to the subject. It starts with the academic tradition of surveying scholarly developments in the 20th century. Campbell then goes on to focus on exegesis by dealing with each prepositional phrase in the Pauline corpus: *en Christo*, *sun Christo*, *eis Christon*, and *dia Christou*. This section will prove immensely useful for anyone who wants to reference and check what Paul says about particular verses. Campbell’s work is sober and sensible (as one would expect from someone who has done work on verbal aspect theory.)

However, the comments on each verse are quite brief, and it might have been better if Campbell had taken each Pauline letter in turn so that the context and thrust of each prepositional phrase would have been clear.

Campbell then turns to consider Pauline metaphors in connection with union with Christ, like “body,” “temple,” “marriage,” and “new clothing,” which again will prove a useful reference point for further study.

Campbell then turns to theological synthesis: the relationship between union with Christ and Christ’s work, the Trinity, Christian living, and justification. The most interesting chapter is the one on justification. Campbell rightly argues that “justification occurs as an outworking of union with Christ,” that “justification is juridical and eschatological,” and, contra New Perspective views, that justification does “not denote covenant faithfulness or ethical transformation.”

Campbell concludes by defining union with Christ as: “union,” “participation,” “identification,” and “incorporation.” Initially, his definition left me puzzled: how can “union” be defined as “union?” However, Campbell explains that by “union” he means “faith-union,” “mutual indwelling,” “Trinitarian, and nuptial notions.” Campbell sees union with Christ in Paul, not as being “central,” but as the “webbing” that holds Paul’s theology together. For Paul, union is enormously widespread but not the main issue most of the time. It is never out of sight, and hence is the “webbing” of Paul’s thought, which quite nicely solves the issue of what is “central” to Paul. Campbell finishes by suggesting that directions for future study should consider the antecedents of Paul’s thought, and union with Christ in the rest of the New Testament.

Macaskill does exactly what Campbell suggests. Macaskill’s is a groundbreaking book. Macaskill’s approach can, broadly, be placed within the “theological interpretation of Scripture” movement. He begins, like Campbell, by surveying the work of others. Chapter 1 covers much of the same ground as Campbell in reviewing modern literature. But chapter 2 is given over to an examination of Greek patristic accounts of deification, beginning with Justin Martyr and continuing to the Cappadocian fathers, and then finishes by considering theosis in Modern Greek Orthodox theology. Then, Macaskill examines Reformed accounts of participation (but including both Luther and Barth.) He then considers the background to the New Testament presentation of participation, ranging from the Old Testament to various examples of early Jewish literature. Quite controversially, he argues that the concept of covenant plays a significant role since it frames the basic concept of divine presence, and the problem of sin, and the prophetic hopes of restoration are construed in terms of covenant. Macaskill does not find, contra James Dunn, an Adamic background to New Testament Christology or union with Christ.

Macaskill then moves on to study the New Testament itself. Like Campbell, he looks at “temple” and “body” imagery, but Macaskill argues

that the foundation (pun intended!) for temple imagery is Psalm 118, which is used as a key Messianic text in the New Testament. Further, the New Testament picture of the church being the new temple draws on the new covenant promises of Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36-37. Macaskill also argues that the sacraments operate within a covenantal framework, and that the presence of the Spirit ensures that the sacraments are understood as a true participation in Jesus Christ. Further, the New Testament develops the theme of sacramental participation by allusions to Isaiah 53.

The next three chapters, 9-11, are given over to narratives of participation in the Pauline and Johannine corpora and then the rest of the New Testament. Unlike Campbell, Macaskill thinks that there are limitations in seeking to develop an account of union with Christ based primarily on prepositions. Rather, he argues, once again, that covenant underlies the narratives of participation in the New Testament. He finds that, in Paul, union is eschatological, Trinitarian, pneumatological, and anchored by faith in Christ. In John, participation in the incarnate Christ means that the Christian community is transformed by the presence of God. In the rest of the New Testament Macaskill concludes that again there is covenant imagery with participatory significance, with a close connection between participation and illumination.

Like Campbell, Macaskill finishes off with theological synthesis. He concludes that "to be united to Jesus, to be in him, is to be in the covenant through his representative headship." Both legal and relational dimensions are factors in the covenant. Therefore, the atonement is penal and substitutionary, among other things. Further, "faith is the inescapable characteristic of the eternal covenant and the Spirit's presence." Macaskill also concludes that New Testament academic moves that play off salvation-history, Torah, and wisdom against apocalyptic, or philosophy against New Testament thought are false antitheses.

Macaskill's book is, quite frankly, brilliant, and repays very careful thought. I found it convincing, but it is a difficult read. It demands of the reader a good knowledge of Scripture, historical theology, New Testament scholarship, and systematics. Further, it is outrageously expensive at £75. But don't eat for a week, and get it. The payoff for the reader is enormous because, quite frankly, the whole of the New Testament's theology can be summed up as "union with Christ." It is that important for knowledge of God and salvation.

ROHINTAN MODY
St Paul's, Throop, Bournemouth

BISHOPS: The Changing Nature of the Anglican Episcopate in Mainland Britain**Michael Keulemans**

Dartford: Xlibris, 2012 305pp £13.99pb ISBN: 9781465353948

We are not blessed with a wealth of books about bishops, their function and role, or the history of the episcopate in the Church of England. We are however blessed with more bishops today than ever before. A few years ago *The Times* referred to it as “episcopal inflation”, noting that the more than fourfold growth in the number of bishops since 1850 had occurred at the same time as the average Sunday attendance has plummeted dramatically. They concluded that we had moved from one bishop per 115,000 people in the pews on Sunday to one bishop per 8,000. Moreover, debates about the qualifications for episcopacy have recently been somewhat controversial, we might say.

So this book, arising out of the author’s D.Min. research, is just what we need to take a step back and try to assess what is going on. Keulemans looks first at the historic development of the episcopate, from the early church, through the middle ages, up to “the creation of the classical Anglican bishop” at the Reformation. With a chapter on Victorian developments, he then surveys the changing nature of the English scene from 1905 to 2005. Additional chapters cover Wales and Scotland. He also did extensive research amongst bishops themselves, and gives us a flavour of his statistical survey and some of the bishops’ own views about the subject. There are several very helpful charts and illustrations.

Two thirds of Christians across the world are organised in episcopal fashion, so it is an institution which has endured. However, as Keulemans rightly notes, for many conservative evangelicals bishops have “become such a constant source of irritation that they would be content to manage entirely without them. It is not hard to see why younger men in particular have got into this negative frame of mind, since they find little evidence of Apostolic qualities in today’s episcopate and are often at the sharp end of its open as well as secret antagonism towards both their churches and theological colleges.” It is not entirely true that conservative evangelicals would as a whole be content without bishops, as recent enthusiastic commitment to GAFCON shows, as well as the initiatives of AMiE which has a role for bishops. Church Society has called again and again for more bishops loyal to conservative evangelicalism to represent and serve the Church, and General Synod promised many years ago to try and make that happen. Yet the fact that the Church of England has consecrated only one conservative evangelical bishop of “complementarian” views since 1997 (a suffragan, and he has now retired) is not especially encouraging. Keulemans has perhaps put his finger on one of the reasons why, if the Church really means this constituency to flourish within its bounds in

the future, it has a long way to go (beyond mere tokenism) to restore credibility and confidence on this score.

The book traces some of the more interesting changes in the episcopate over the twentieth century, such as social class, education, and age. By 2005, of those who replied to the author's survey, only a small minority had attended comprehensive schools, but the number of Oxbridge graduates on the bench had dropped significantly. None had been elevated directly from a parish. A large majority (71%) had been appointed in the 45-54 year old age bracket, a dramatic rise in that demographic since 1905. Keulemans also examines recent developments in the Crown Nominations Commission, its relationship to the Prime Minister, the new consecration liturgies of *Common Worship*, flying bishops, and the increase in the number of suffragans. The survey of bishops is quite fascinating, and a must-read to understand how the current bunch see themselves and their role ("focus of unity" being top of the pile of answers of course, with little sense of irony). Bishops seem very keen on attending national events and secular public events, but Keulemans startlingly reveals that the laity he surveyed were much less keen on the idea of bishops spending time on these things, especially the secular, civic occasions (their top priority was that bishops should teach and defend the faith). He also finds that more laity consider the parish as the basic building block of the church than bishops, who of course favour the diocese as the true church (and perhaps, as Vatican II puts it, value local congregations only as "lesser groupings of the faithful" which should revolve more around them in their cathedrals).

So a valuable volume in more ways than one, with a wealth of insights into the perception of and true nature of episcopacy today. However, although one may disagree with some of Keuleman's history or theological conclusions about bishops and their essential nature, his recommendation at the end deserves a wide hearing and a thorough discussion. We must abandon the large dioceses of the old Saxon kingdoms, he suggests, and transform deaneries into small dioceses. That is, let us not have fewer bishops, but even more, but with a more circumscribed remit and local focus (with many bishops remaining local parish ministers, on the same stipend but with additional admin support). This is Archbishop Ussher's Reduced Episcopacy idea from the seventeenth century, essentially, and should now be seriously re-considered as a matter of pastoral urgency and administrative good sense. A provocative and timely idea from a man who knows what he is talking about on the subject of bishops, but who must also realise that it is very difficult to persuade people with power and prestige to water it down or give it up, however compelling the reasons might be.

LEE GATISS
Church Society, Cambridge

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Alan Wilkinson

Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014 370pp £22.50pb
ISBN: 9780718893217

It will not have escaped anyone's notice that this year marks the 100th anniversary of the start of the optimistically named "war to end all wars", which we now know as The First World War. The history, the politics, the culture, the societal impact, and the personal tragedies are being dramatised and serialised in quite a number of TV and radio specials, and in countless commemorative books.

This book by the former Principal of Chichester Theological College is a reprint of a work which was first published in the 60th anniversary year of the end of the Great War, and subsequently in a second revised edition in 1996. This new issue is not a further revision or update, though there is a helpful page listing seven books on the subject which have appeared since the second edition, and a short new preface. Rather, it is a timely republication of an important work on a subject of topical relevance for the next few years, as we enter a quinquennium of remembrance.

Wilkinson examines the role of the national church during the terrible conflict of World War One by means of biographies, newspaper articles, magazines, letters, poetry and other sources which are lavishly referenced throughout. It was disappointing, however, to discover that he has not made use of *Churchman*, which (our archives reveal) continued to publish fascinating material monthly throughout the war, including topical articles on "The German Anti-Christ", "Patriotism and Piety", "The Spiritual Problems of the Great War", "War and the Other World", "Will the War Result in a Revival of Sacerdotalism?", "Lessons from Chaplaincy Work," and "What the Jews expect from this war". On the other hand, he makes great use of more liberal and Anglo-Catholic periodicals. Nevertheless, Wilkinson's was the first full-length study of the Church's role in relation to the hostilities to appear in England, and although there have since been some in-depth explorations of the role of military chaplains in particular, this remains the leading work in the field perennially referenced by all the others.

Wilkinson's study is predicated on the basic tenet that the church is a tragically compromised institution, so often powerless and ineffective. Clergy had presented previous wars as a solemn national duty or a well-deserved divine punishment, as righteous crusades or as human folly through which God could work to rouse us from selfishness and complacency. But, Wilkinson says, "The Christian tradition of interpreting specific events as revelations of divine providence received a fatal battering during the two world wars, and the Churches are now notably reluctant to venture in this field." Bereavement drove many people to despair or to

spiritualism or at the least to prayers for the dead, and Anglican chaplains and clergy were largely ineffective in sharing the gospel and leading people to real hope in Christ. He presents evangelicals at this period as apprehensive. The great Bishop Moule, he says, criticised some popular sentiment about war memorials and the fate of the dead — “But then his patriotism and tender heart came into conflict with his Evangelicalism,” and he preached that God cares for the brave sacrifice of our sons and is attentive to every tear. Other evangelicals are dismissed as naïve, lacking in theological insight or sophistication, and with a faith that “tripped too easily off the tongue to make much contact with men facing deep and agonizing perplexities.”

There is an Anglo-Catholic feel to the book itself. There is a stained glass image of a dying soldier touching the feet of Christ on the cover (featuring a text from Isaiah 53). And on the first page there is a picture of a priest celebrating a requiem mass for a throng of soldiers, and others going back even to the crusaders, pictured hovering above the altar (“The Place of Meeting” by T. Noyes Lewis). Roman Catholic theology of “last rites”, the reserved sacrament, and prayers for the dead did well out of the war, of course, and there were not enough “Woodbine Willies” to hold out the more solid truths of the gospel.

The pseudo-poetic final paragraph which ends in an actual poem by Eliot is ultimately deeply unsatisfying: “It is the greatness of Christianity at its best that it affords no easy answers,” he assures us. The war aroused such hate and malice that it was exceedingly hard to penetrate the anger and fog with the gospel’s message of love and peace. Yet without the great (easy?) certainties of our faith — human depravity, the gracious mercy of God in Christ, and the final judgment for all — it is impossible to make sense of the world at all, including its wars. It is the great tragedy of the last century that despite limitless proof of the first of these three simple truths (human depravity), so many failed to turn to God for the second (salvation in Christ). Are we fated then to further rounds of conflagration before the third and ultimate truth hits home? The current geopolitical instability is profoundly unsettling, so this study of how the Church of England met (and did not meet) the challenges of the First World War has within it a provocative summons for us to ponder our own readiness for battle in the coming centenary years.

LEE GATISS
Church Society, Cambridge