



**ANVIL**  
**BOOK REVIEWS**

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## 1. BIBLICAL STUDIES

### **Douglas A Campbell, *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014)**

Framing Paul follows on in Doug Campbell's seminal catalogue of work re-imagining our understanding and theological interpretation of the Apostle Paul and his writing. Having read *The Deliverance of God* and been impacted not only by Campbell's commitment to theological traditions, but also his willingness to adapt and be creative with his thinking, I was very expectant in reading *Framing Paul*. I was not disappointed.

*Framing Paul* seeks to fill in a simple but profound blank in the way we understand Paul's letters. While we often take our view of Paul and his theological frame from the content of his writing, what would happen if we first established a frame of understanding from his life, background and tradition, and then founded on our understanding on what Campbell refers to as his "epistolary backbone" – Romans and 1 & 2 Corinthians?

Campbell takes us on a journey which gently subverts our view of the terrain around Paul and his writing. How do we view the Acts timeline? What importance does biographical detail have on our understanding of Paul? His work on Romans and 1 & 2 Corinthians as a backbone for our understanding of Paul's theology then makes perfect sense – but is not the less imaginative in the lessons Campbell draws from it. Expect a focus on detail, a theological integrity in coming to conclusions and more of Campbell's imaginative ideas on justification which made *The Deliverance of God* so compelling.

One particular delight in reading this book though was Campbell's willingness to engage not just with the context of the time but also the context within which Paul's letters are being read and the impact that has on understanding. In the excellent extended preface, Campbell notes "where we read Paul – whether in a study, at a café, on a bus – directly affects what we see" (p. xxi.) He then begins to explore how reading "Paul in Prison" affects the eyes we have on the texts and of course he's right. So many of Paul's texts were prison letters yet we spend so little time imagining the impact of this. As in so many things context is key and Campbell embraces this fully.

Having established a core foundation for our view of Paul, Campbell then places all of Paul's other letters around this theological frame. He takes his time, first with the Thessalonian letters then with the smaller epistles and concluding with a great chapter on his letters to Titus and Timothy.

This last chapter tackles some thorny issues, not least whether we should even group these so-called Pastoral

Letters together. While at times I felt Campbell got bogged down in that particular question (as he admits he does with other technical points, p.404), I also felt these three letters highlighted how valuable Campbell's frame was. So many questions exist around authenticity, meaning and relationship in these letters, and Campbell concludes we need to keep holding these questions in the forefront of our stories. However, I left with a much clearer understanding of Paul's theological stance and crucially on how Paul was viewed by early readers. These are letters, and as such, how they were received is so crucial to our understanding.

*Framing Paul* presents a detailed, methodological and at times complex foundation to our reading of Paul. However, its work is so important in allowing us to speak with confidence about this man who wrote so much of the New Testament. In Campbell's words it gives us the basis to "pose further exciting questions to the apostle – and perhaps with more hope that we will hear his answers" (p. 411).

**Andy Freeman**, *Fresh Expressions*

### **James D G Dunn, *Christianity in the Making Volume 3 – Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015)**

This is the third and final volume in which James D G Dunn comes to the end of his attempt to sketch the first generations of Christianity. He takes us from the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, then through the second century when the second, third and fourth generations of believers firmed up the distinctive identity of the still new Jesus-movement. This identity, says Dunn, is shaped with Jesus as the "defining centre". The movement developed from an initial emphasis on the cross to a holistic view of incarnation and mission, with death, resurrection and ascension as the climax. Dunn describes it as a move from gospel to Gospel.

Dunn charts for us the development of Christian identity by taking us through the main characters and the impact of their writings, some of which eventually formed the New Testament canon. He checks out for us the sources and then explains how the Jesus story is retold by Mark, Matthew and Luke and re-shaped by John and Thomas. He emphasizes the importance of James (the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church), Peter, Paul and John.

Dunn ends with the familiar theme of unity and diversity, identifying key determinants: a (Jewish) model for living, table-fellowship and the rite of initiation, and how faith/trust in Christ crucified alone is fundamental. Paul ensured that the gospel of Jesus was for all who respond in faith.

Dunn's third volume is titled *A Contested Identity*, explaining the struggle between orthodoxy and heresy as the years ticked by. I found his examination of the characters and their writings particularly helpful. He highlights the contributions of each character and how the "great Church" began to settle on both the canon and the authority of eyewitness accounts, particularly the role of Peter as a bridge-builder. John and his writings paved the way for a new Christological depth and Paul explained both the Jewishness of Christ and the significance of "neither Jew nor Greek" – the gospel for all.

This third volume sits alongside the first two volumes and provides a rigorous and extensive resource for all levels of study: the student; the interested theologian and church historian; the preacher; and the teacher. I already use volumes one and two and heartily recommend volume three to complete the "trinity". They draw me back to Jesus as the "defining centre".

**John Day**, Adviser to the Archbishop of York and priest-in-charge of St Chad's, York

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### **Michael J Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & his Letters, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)**

My first thought on reading Gorman's sizeable (just over 700 pages) but very readable introduction to Paul's letters is that I wish that I had had this book thirty years ago when I did my undergraduate degree in Biblical Studies!

In six chapters, and just under 200 pages, Gorman provides an introduction to Paul's context, mission, theology and spirituality. Here we see the influence of writers such as Richard Hays, N T Wright, Richard Horsley and Morna Hooker on his interpretation of Paul's letters and theology. At the end of this section Gorman attempts to summarise Paul's theology in one sentence; surprisingly he succeeds, although the sentence is half a page long!

Gorman is particularly helpful in outlining the religio-political context in which the churches that Paul founded and wrote his letters to had to survive. In particular, he helps the reader to understand the implications of the active promotion of the imperial cult in the cities of the empire on the life and witness of the early church.

One of the key themes of Gorman's other writings, cruciformity (the idea that the cross of Jesus is not just the source of salvation but is also the shape of Christian life), is central to his discussion of Paul's thought and spirituality.

Some evangelical readers will take issue with Gorman's argument that theosis, a term more usually associated with Orthodoxy, is important in Paul's work; many more

will dispute his understanding of justification.

After the first six chapters come 13 chapters on the Pauline letters. He includes a discussion of the authorship of the disputed letters. In the earlier chapters there is a helpful section on exactly what we might mean when we judge that a letter was written by Paul, given his use of an amanuensis, and that most of the letters claim more than one author.

Gorman's 13 chapters on the Pauline letters discuss the authorship (if contested), occasion, and content of each of the letters and he goes on to provide a concise commentary for each of them.

The final chapter, "Paul our contemporary", is an all too brief attempt to help the reader to place Paul's thought in the ongoing mission of the church. Gorman challenges the church today to allow the cross of Jesus to shape our life and witness.

*Apostle of the Crucified Lord* is written from a position of deep and thoughtful faith in Christ. The more conservative reader will take issue with his stance on the authorship of some of the letters, and his interpretation of Paul on justification will be controversial in some quarters too.

All in all this is a valuable addition to my New Testament library, and one that I will return to. I enjoyed reading the book, at times being challenged by Gorman and at others disagreeing with him. The real gold in the text is the commentary that he provides on each of Paul's letters.

I would recommend it to anyone who is studying Paul's letters, either as an undergraduate or for their own profit and pleasure. It is particularly useful volume for anyone who regularly preaches on Paul to have close at hand.

**Tim Gill**

## **2. THEOLOGY**

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### **Kate Bruce, Jamie Harrison, Eds., *Wrestling with the Word: Preaching tricky texts* (London: SPCK, 2016)**

Do we really need another book on preaching and another collection of succinct sermons by people very competent at their craft? Yes – is my simple answer to this compilation. This book of 159 pages offers advice on shape and structure, and assistance in preaching a wide collection of tricky texts, including those that deal with transcendence (beyond human experience), violence, terror, strangeness and abrasion. Each group of sermons on a particular theme has a helpful section on homiletic strategies that may be adopted and aspects for the preacher to pay attention to. The book is divided into three main sections: part one, "Theological Foundations",

pages 3–22; part two, “Sermons on Tricky Texts”, pages 25–124, with 15 contributors; and part three, “Wrestling with the Word”, with three main contributors, including a stimulating article by David Day on the need for an “application emphasis”.

Most of the contributors work in the north east of England or Edinburgh and include Kate Bruce, James Dunn, Magdalen Smith, Justin Welby, Walter Moberley, John Bell and Roy Searle. I was going to read this book as my daily meditation each morning, but found myself drawn to it several times a day so I finished it quite quickly. Bruce’s chapters in section one “The call to preach” and “Wrestling with the theology of preaching” provide an appetising starter with some useful quotes to affirm both the act of preaching and the need for it to contain biblical substance that connects with culture. I loved the biblical insights, personal wisdom and the communication aspects that were shared on these texts. For example, Walter Moberley’s sermon on Mark 6:14–29: “the birthday party from hell.” Wrestling is for those who love reading the Bible, including its quirkiest passages. There is much to ponder here and also how to relate the tricky texts to everyday life.

For preachers and Bible readers this is a practical, interesting book that encourages us to embrace tricky texts rather than ignore them and deal with them in a mature corporate manner.

**Paul Thaxter, CMS**

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### **Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)**

Fleming Rutledge seems little known in Britain. She is an American Episcopalian who has published several volumes of highly regarded sermons. This magisterial book is the fruit of a lifetime’s experience as a preacher and teacher. Although not a professional scholar, Rutledge has read astonishingly widely and the result is a book broad in scope, wise in its judgments and, while conservative in tone, not afraid to criticize some of the more popular misconceptions in atonement theory.

The book is divided into two main parts. The shorter first part explores some broader issues surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus preceded by a lengthy introduction (37 pp.) dealing, among other things, with the necessity of interpretation: “The cross of Christ does not interpret itself by itself.”

Chapter one examines the primacy of the cross, insisting that in it the nature of God is revealed. She does not hesitate in saying that the crucifixion is the most important event that has ever happened. Chapter two

looks at the godlessness of the cross. The question is not “Why did Jesus have to die?”, but “Why was Jesus crucified?”. The manner of Jesus’ death is as important as the death itself. This is not a topic often studied and Rutledge has performed a valuable service in giving it close attention. Chapter three discusses the “Question of Justice” and looks in a preliminary way at righteousness language, pointing out that the “*dikaiois*” word group covers both “righteousness” and “justice” in English. Unsurprisingly, Rutledge agrees with Käsemann in seeing righteousness as a power word “because it refers to the power of God to make right what has been wrong” (italics hers). Her important contribution is thus to suggest that the usual English translation “justification” should be replaced by “rectification”. In what she calls a “bridge chapter”, Rutledge seeks to rehabilitate Anselm for our time. His book *Cur Deus Homo? (Why the God-man?)* has often been heavily criticised as propounding penal suffering and Rutledge is right to suggest that Anselm’s term “satisfaction” can easily be translated “rectification”. Finally, in this part, Rutledge examines the “gravity of sin”. Here her guiding principle is that “we cannot rejoice to think of ourselves as sinful... unless we are already claimed by the divine light of the gospel” (p. 169). In the economy of God, grace precedes guilt.

Part two explores in detail the biblical motifs. Rutledge’s overriding concern here is to show how the motifs and images often overlap and interpret one another. She settles for a two-part approach: atonement and deliverance. She elaborates the first as God’s definitive action in making vicarious atonement for sin. Within this category the cross is understood as sacrifice, sin offering, guilt offering, expiation and substitution. Related motifs are the scapegoat, the “lamb of God” and the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53. The second is elaborated as God’s decisive victory over the alien powers of sin and death. The cross is understood here as victory over the powers and deliverance from bondage, slavery and oppression. Related themes are the new exodus, the harrowing of hell and *Christus Victor*. This category is particularly linked to the kingdom of God and as such is strongly future-oriented.

It is impossible to comment in detail on the sheer range of material covered in this part of the book. It will, however, be helpful to focus on particular aspects of her treatment which will be of interest to conservative readers. First, she argues that justification/rectification is a larger category that includes reconciliation. Reconciliation is the result of God’s justifying/rectifying activity. This is a commonly accepted view, but Rutledge goes on to insist that whilst reconciliation is God’s completed work (2 Corinthians 5:19), it is also the result of struggle as 2 Corinthians makes abundantly clear. She makes the further point that the forensic imagery of the law court is subordinate in the NT to the theme of the apocalyptic victory in the cross and resurrection of Christ. Indeed, Rutledge devotes an

entire chapter to the theme of the “apocalyptic war” as originally expounded in Gustav Aulen’s epoch-making book *Christus Victor*. She cites the evangelical author Lesslie Newbigin as one who takes the Pauline imagery that is often called into the service of a forensic view of the atonement (“the wages of sin is death”) and lifts it into the cosmic realm of apocalyptic. The isolation of the forensic view of the atonement is rightly taken apart by Rutledge in a thrillingly convincing manner. When she does eventually come to examine the theme of substitution, it is no surprise that she rightly criticises the tendency in certain evangelical authors (e.g. J I Packer) to give precedence to forensic imagery over other imagery. “When this happens, the single individual with his solitary guilt looms over the conceptual landscape, leaving no space for the drama of the cosmic struggle” (p. 506). This chapter alone with its nuanced treatment of the substitutionary theme would make the book worth buying.

I hope that enough has been said to give the flavour of this remarkable book. It is sufficiently accessible for those with only minimal knowledge of the topic and it will also provide strong meat for those already familiar with atonement theology. I heartily commend it.

**Howard C Bigg**, Cambridge

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### **Anna-Claar Thomasson-Rosingh, Sigrid Coenradie and Bert Dicou, *Re-Imagining the Bible for Today*, (London: SCM, 2017)**

This book is written by a tutor at Sarum College and two ministers in the Netherlands. They all share a background with a Dutch denomination, the Remonstrants, which, according to their own words, “is really more philosophical and socio-culturally oriented than purely biblical-theological” (p 1). However, they all believe that it is important to read the Bible and to keep on reading it. They offer this book as a tool to offer various ways of reading the Bible and to bring the Bible to life for those who wish to engage critically. They claim that the two ways they use most are: imagination and conversation. I was hooked. I believe that we need more imagination in our lives and faith and that conversation is a great way to learn. The book does try to model this but sadly – for me anyway – it does not quite work. I will try to explain why.

The first chapter is the strongest chapter, in my opinion. It opens with an interview with each of the authors so immediately we get to know them a little and their views on the Bible. This is interesting and engaging. We are then introduced to six ways of reading the Bible: contextual Bible study from Brazil, feminist readings of the Bible, queer readings of the Bible, ecotheology, the Earth Bible Project (fascinating) and godly play. Each of these approaches could have been expanded on much more

fully. We are introduced to them so briefly that it was tantalising. I would love to have read more on each and to learn how I could apply these approaches to Bible reading – both individually and corporately.

The next four chapters address a range of important and current topics: sacrifice, vulnerability, the planet and economy. While I applaud the attempt to address these topics I do not think that the authors really followed their stated methodology of imagination and conversation. There was a short interview with a physicist on his views on creation but most of these chapters consisted of finding these themes in current novels and films. I love films and am a voracious reader of novels. I just did not resonate with the approach of fairly lengthy summaries of the novels and movies placed alongside biblical passages and themes. I have been trying to work out why. Let me give one example. *Silence* by Shusaku Endo is summarised and used as an example to reflect on a vulnerable God, as was another novel and two films, *Wit* and *Arrival*. I wonder if the comparisons are just too obvious? Or perhaps there was too much material – we are introduced to many novels, films, and some art also. All the literature cited (apart from *Silence*) was Western; it might have been challenging and informative to have some novels and movies from the majority world reflected upon.

I think the key issue is – who is this book for? The back cover states that it is for those “who aren’t too sure what to believe and how to exercise faith” – so perhaps I am not the right person to be reviewing this book.

I loved the first chapter and would have appreciated more on how these six different approaches can help us to read the Bible. The penultimate chapter is a play on the book of Ruth, which you could try in a small group context. There are a large number of sources in this book, a full bibliography and some interesting ideas but I am not convinced that the promised conversation really took place.

**Dr Cathy Ross**, CMS

### **3. MISSION**

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### **Michael Moynagh, *Church In Life: Innovation, Mission and Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 2017)**

Mike Moynagh takes a framework of innovation to explore the emergence of new ecclesial communities in mission. He draws on emergence and complexity theory to show how newness emerges and in doing so has come up with a very dynamic way of approaching contextual mission, which is able to be responsive, flexible and creative; to learn from what’s happening and adapt accordingly. The book is packed with examples and stories, theology,

missiology, ecclesiology and social theory. He describes six processes of innovation which overlap and feed into each other: dissatisfaction, exploration, sense making, amplification, edge of chaos and transformation. Transformation is the result of the other five processes working together in overlapping and interpenetrating ways.

I particularly like the way he names restlessness and dissatisfaction as a positive starting point. Lots of organisational cultures prefer to hide dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction starts you on the journey. You explore through trial and error alongside prayerful attention. Sense making turns your exploration into a story as you are reflecting on what's happening, piecing it together and making sense of it. Crucially this involves plenty of conversation and feedback – so rather than having a solution you land and develop, the important thing becomes listening and learning and adapting in the light of feedback. Mike suggests it's a move to “act and reflect” rather than “predict and plan”. I have come to think of this as “feeling your way”, which is common in pioneering in mission where there is always uncertainty.

A lot of formation and training for ministry assumes a fixed body of knowledge and practices that leaders will go and lead as they have been trained. By way of contrast (and perhaps more realistically), Mike imagines an environment where things are unpredictable, and unknown. The edge of chaos is a fascinating insight. Systems and organisations that are very fixed and stable don't tend to cultivate creativity and innovation – they dampen it or squash it. Newness is seen as a threat to order. Systems that are open to change and newness are nearly always less stable – inside the edge of chaos. Feeling uncertain, knowing things are unpredictable and not being sure what the future might look like whilst knowing the present can't continue as it is turns out to be a good place to be, perhaps ideal even.

There are some particularly creative sections. For example, in one chapter Mike looks at recontextualising, drawing on insider movements and Steve Bevans's models for contextual theology. He has an inspired overlay of those models with Jesus' ministry in the gospels. There has become something of a divide between those participating in mission through a “church planting” lens and a “contextual mission” lens in the UK. This book offers a framing that makes sense of both in integrating around innovation and speaks well to those approaching mission with either lens.

My one small gripe with the book is that innovation in mission has been limited to new ecclesial communities. If mission is joining in with the healing of all things then the framework for innovation that Mike introduces can be applied much more broadly. And I think the book is relevant to anyone training for leadership in today's church and world.

Mike has been a great reflector for the church in the UK on cultural change and mission and fresh expressions of church. In his previous book *Church for Every Context* he looked at the development of contextual churches in the early church and in the wave of fresh expressions in the last 30 years, laying out a theological rationale and the practice of developing and maturing such churches. This new work stands alone but also builds on the previous work. The book is over 400 pages long and offers a wealth of wisdom for those innovating in mission in the new landscape we find ourselves in. I wholeheartedly recommend it – Mike's thinking and writing gets better and better.

**Jonny Baker, CMS**

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**Todd Wilson, Gerald Hiestand Eds.,**  
***Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership***  
(Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016)

Karl Barth once quipped that “in the church of Jesus Christ there should be no non-theologians”. He'd be pleased with the book at hand. Wilson and Hiestand are concerned about the state of the pastoral vocation. Pastors, they say, increasingly “don't know who they are or what they're supposed to be doing” (p. 1). While a tad hyperbolic, this claim does bear some truth as pertains to the work of theology in everyday ecclesial settings. For centuries, the church had a “clear and compelling vision” of what a pastor is meant to do (p. 2). At the heart of this vision was the task of theology. Alas, in modernity, this vision has been fading. But the future need not be like the recent past: *Becoming a Pastor Theologian* intends to re-situate the “calling of the theologian back into the identity of the pastor” (p. 2). This is all part of the Centre for Pastoral Theology, which Wilson and Hiestand direct.

The volume is comprised of 15 contributions which probe and ponder what it means for pastors to be theologians. Three sections group the essays: one on identity, one on historical perspective and one on the Bible. The target audience is those who are either in or moving into regular church ministry. Theological educators would likewise benefit.

In reading these essays, certain irritants arose. Chapter seven, for instance, contains a snide and unnecessary dismissal of forms of preaching that are overly concerned with “meeting felt needs”, attunement to “popular culture”, and even laughter. As I see it, this list of so-called offences could, from another vantage, be judged a list of virtues for effective preaching in a postmodern context. The chapter by Vanhoozer – who I otherwise greatly admire – felt a bit packaged and stale at moments. And then there was Chapter 11, reflecting pastorate-theology

in conversation with the Pastoral Epistles. While not without profitable insights, it did have a moralistic tone at moments.

Notwithstanding the forgoing irritants – and a few others – *Becoming a Pastor Theologian* is a laudable project. Its purpose is important: issuing a clarion summons to quit conceiving of “theology” as an obscure academic discipline that often (and perplexingly!) hails from non-confessional contexts (chapter one, by Peter Leithart, chronicles the emergence of this baffling state of affairs). It is also worth noting that this project (see especially chapter 4) is careful to differentiate between the scholar-pastor and the pastor-theologian. The latter ethos should find space in every pastoral vocation. In contrast, only a few ministers will also be bone fide scholars, owing chiefly to the “demanding nature” of such work (p. 53).

Nearly every essay in this book offered something on which to chew. Several were written by high profile Christian thinkers (named on the cover). Even so, the pieces I found most stimulating came from the hands of several more modest contributors. I wish to briefly cite three.

Chapter six, by Scott Manetsch, profiled the nature and work of theology in Calvin’s Geneva. Aside from dispelling certain inaccurate stereotypes (Calvin was not a theological dictator but rather operated in a decidedly conciliar manner), Manetsch unearths certain “past practices” that hold promise for our own moment. Consider the “Company of Pastors”, a group of all pastors and theological educators in Geneva who met each Friday morning to study Scripture and theologically address social concerns. This fellowship was premised on the conviction “all ministers possess equal authority by virtue of their common vocation to proclaim God’s work and administer sacraments” (p. 83). Would not such associations – at the local, diocesan, or regional level – be of benefit to today’s pastors and churches? Should thoughtful engagement on tricky and sensitive spiritual, moral, and missional issues simply be outsourced to those in academic posts? Manetsch thinks not. I agree.

Chapter ten, written by Ed Klink, was an inspiring breath of fresh air. Klink’s discussion centres on the pastor’s handling of Scripture. What he spells out violates many of the carefully curated interpretive conventions of late modern, western theological colleges. Of course, Klink stresses the value of the historical-critical toolbox. He exhorts the conscientious use of commentaries. Yet there’s more, for the text carries “its own interpretive commands innate to its origin and nature” (p. 138). The pastor theologian is nowhere more true to her vocation than when she allows the words of the Bible to remain “subservient to the Word” (p. 139). Klink rightly stresses the significance of canon for truthful biblical interpretation. Along these lines, pastors are all called to be canons, namely women and men who ensure that

all exposition is framed “by the Alpha and the Omega” (p. 141). As Klink sums up, this posture ensures that the doctrines of the church do not get separated from the text of Scripture. In a reductionist era, where pastors are often malformed to provide biblical preaching which is sterile, 2D and vapid, Klink’s point is timely. It cuts right to the heart of what it means for pastors to be theologians – people who appreciate that exegesis must be governed by what the Bible is.

I would also be remiss to not mention Laurie Norris’s chapter. Norris is the only female contributor to this collection. She grapples with the overarching purpose of the book with attention to how “women fit within this model” (p. 163). Her prose exhorts heightened participation by women in the work of theology, appealing to NT precedent, as well as the legacies of Perpetua, Thecla, Macrina and others. At a practical level, Norris longs for more women to undertake formal theological training. She urges men to be more inviting of women, ensuring their place at forums, discussions, synods, etc., where contemporary theological reflection is undertaken. Of note, Norris’s suggestions do not stem from a feministic principle; instead, her motive is faithful stewardship (1 Corinthians 12). Why would the wider church wish to disregard or undervalue any member or the body that God has grafted in for the purpose of theologising?

*Becoming a Pastor Theologian* gave me space to reflect on issues directly connected to my own vocation as a priest. For this I am grateful. More consequentially, I am also hopeful – in a moment where theology is given short shrift, deemed irrelevant or both, this volume is a catalyst for turning such tides. May those in the pastorate take up this mantle!

**Rev Roger L Revell, Vancouver**

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### **Laura Sumner Truax, Amalya Campbell,** ***Love Let Go: Radical Generosity for the Real World*** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)

This is a gem of a book. It is a quick, easy and accessible read about what it says on the cover – love and generosity. It tells the story of LaSalle Street Church in Chicago, who received an unexpected windfall of \$1,600,000, and how they dealt with this gift. The story is told by the Senior Pastor, Laura Truax, and a colleague, Amalya Campbell, a marketing consultant and church member.

As you can imagine, deciding what to do with such a large amount of money was not easy! The first thing they decide to do is to tithe the money to each church member so each person receives a cheque for \$500. Much of the book narrates how various church members used their \$500 and there are some very moving stories of how this money helped people at just the right time. More interestingly

there are accounts of how many members gave away even more than the initial \$500 because this initial act of generosity unlocks more generosity. This is the underlying theme of the entire book – that generosity and a generous mindset resists scarcity and opens us up to further generosity.

Woven throughout the book are gentle meditations on various biblical characters and how they modelled or learned these principles of generosity and gratitude. Abraham, David, Miriam, Mary and Martha all feature. I particularly liked their framing of and lessons learned from Miriam being struck with leprosy and Mary and Martha serving Jesus. They surmise that Miriam's leprosy was a gift of grace – not a punishment – to remind her of her true identity. She was cast out so that she could be reminded of her true identity and to remember God's generosity to her. The Mary and Martha story is placed within the frame of mindfulness.

They also refer to various social science experiments (all American) to justify their claims that generosity and gratitude contribute to greater mental and emotional wellbeing. These are interesting, challenging and thought provoking. I particularly liked the experiment about money and fish! Participants sat in front of computers to complete their questionnaires. After six minutes a screensaver appeared on some of the computers. Some saw money floating underwater, some saw fish and some saw no screensaver at all. After they completed their questionnaires, the participants then were asked to set up two chairs for a conversation. Those who had seen the image of money placed their chairs further apart (by a foot!) than those who had not. Hmm... – just one experiment, I thought; but all nine experiments conducted proved that the money-primed participants acted more independently and distantly than the others. There is real food for thought here.

This is a book about money, generosity, gratitude and attentiveness. There are some drawbacks for a wider audience – it is entirely American in its focus and the emphasis is almost entirely on money with respect to generosity. However, there is acknowledgement of how we could be more generous with our time, talents, creativity and a challenge to reassess the resources we do already have. There is also an awareness of reciprocity – it is not just about North American do-goodism. I think this is a book for those who have enough money (which is probably most of us reading this review) but again, not entirely. There are a couple of moving stories (one from Tanzania) of the power of community to help sustain a family in crisis.

I highly recommend this book – its simple narrative and many stories will keep me pondering for a while. And you will need to read it to discover what the church did with the \$1,600,000!

**Dr Cathy Ross, CMS**

## Stephen Platten, Ed., *Oeness: The Dynamics of Monasticism* (London: SCM, 2017)

Monasticism, whatever its form, has always enjoyed a position of intrigue within the church. While not always appreciated in every age (the dissolution of the monasteries being an infamous example), the rich insights of communities devoted to prayer, work, and obedience still have a draw on the imagination of contemporary Christianity, mostly notably evidenced in the rise of the “new” monasticism and authors such as Shane Claiborne.

*Oeness* is a collection of essays dedicated to Brother Harold, the larger than life character who founded the hermitage of St Mary and St Cuthbert on a beautiful hillside in Northumbria, known as Shepherds Law. While celebrating what has been achieved at Shepherds Law, from its inspiration to its present form, the book also uses the hermitage as a case study to discuss and unpack various aspects of religious communities, such as music, architecture, and the life of discipleship lived out in prayer and obedience.

The collection boasts some excellent contributors, such as Andrew Louth, Emeritus Professor of Patristic and Byzantine Studies at Durham University, Sarah Foot, Regius Chair of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Oxford, George Guiver CR, Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, and the editor Stephen Platten, former Bishop of Wakefield.

It is divided into two parts, the first titled “Setting the Scene”, which contains chapters one through four, including an introduction by Platten. The second, “Unfolding the Mystery”, comprises chapters five through ten. The sections do precisely what the titles suggest: chapter one locates religious communities in the wider church and world; two sets out the history of monasticism and religious communities in Northumbria; three examines the 19th and 20th century legacy that has led up to Brother Harold's endeavour; and finally four looks at his story itself.

In section two: chapter five traces the history of the skete, the form of religious life that Brother Harold is attempting to cultivate, back to its origins in the Egyptian desert and through the (largely) Orthodox tradition; six addresses the particular Franciscan flavour which has fertilised Shepherds Law, looking at the Franciscan ideal of the hermitage; seven sketches out the shape of a monastic life, from meals to hospitality, worship to buildings, and unpacks the particular “sacrament” peculiar to religious communities; eight looks at the place of chant in the history of religious communities; nine assesses the form and functionality of monastic architecture and gives a description of the history, inspiration, and consideration



that went into the construction of the Shepherds Law site; and ten, the crown of the collection, sets out the gifts that monasticism has to give to Christian discipleship in the contemporary church, as they have down through the ages before.

Oneness also boasts the contribution of two archbishops for the foreword and afterword. Justin Welby's interest in the rich potential of religious communities is well known, having himself established the Community of St Anselm at Lambeth Palace in 2015, with the specific aim to encourage those between the ages of 18 and 30 to experience a monastic setting for a year, dedicated to prayer, study, and service to the poor. Rowan Williams's monastic credentials are already well known, having taught at the College of the Resurrection, and having previously written on the Desert Fathers and Mothers.

This accessible collection will be of benefit to numerous audiences. To the educated layman it gives an insight to the sometimes mysterious world of monastic life. To the ordinand and minister it offers rich fare for engaging with discipleship and the vocational shape this can take, particularly chapter ten. To the student it gives a useful overview of the monastic way through the lens of Shepherds Law and history of religious communities in Northumbria. I thoroughly appreciated this book and highly recommend it.

Isaac Frisby, CMS

## 4. OTHER

**Timothy Dudley-Smith, *A Functional Art: reflections of a hymn writer*** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

**Thomas Dekker and Robert Hudson (Ed.), *Four Birds of Noah's Ark: a prayer book from the time of Shakespeare***, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)

"The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact."

So says Duke Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act V, Scene I). And having established that madness, love and poetry occupy similar territory he goes on to describe the poet's art:

"The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name."

The art of poetry (and who but Shakespeare knew this better?) is indeed a matter of giving "a local habitation and a name" to "airy nothing". It's the business of making the conceptual concrete, and while that may perhaps at times have something in common with madness it is undoubtedly an act of love.

Both these two works, though written centuries apart, certainly have that in common. Both are acts of love, concerned with making the conceptual concrete. Timothy Dudley-Smith's new book is a sustained and consistently engaging reflection on the hymn-writer's "functional art": "functional" in that its fruit is designed above all to be used. He reflects on this art through the examination of a number of "marriages", such as "content and form", "meaning and language" and "rhyme and metre". The book is peppered through with anecdotes and the most apposite of quotes – as well, of course, as being full of quotations from the great English hymn tradition.

Dekker's book, with its engaging title, written in 1608 and newly edited by Robert Hudson, gathers together prayers under four headings: the Dove, the Eagle, the Pelican and the Phoenix. In the first he writes prayers for "all those who labour in the cities and the fields" such as a midwife, a miner and a serving-man. "The Eagle" includes prayers for those entrusted with authority, while the last two sections are focused on Christ. "The Pelican" reflects on the seven deadly sins, and on Christ as their conqueror. (The pelican was a traditional image of Jesus as the bird was believed to feed its young with its own blood.) Lastly "The Phoenix" reflects on the significance for the reader of the death, burial, resurrection, ascension and return of Christ – the phoenix image obviously lending itself to that purpose.

As we commemorate 500 years since the launch of the Reformation it's worth reflecting how very Protestant these works are – in the very best sense of the word. Both are deeply imbued with Scripture. Timothy Dudley-Smith's first (and perhaps best known) hymn "Tell out my soul" was inspired by the then recently published New English Bible. He points out how much of Charles Wesley's work is drawn straight from the Bible, and yet with such skill that the words become wholly his own. Dekker's work oozes a knowledge of the Bible even though it was written three years before the publication of the Authorised Version, demonstrating clearly the influence of Coverdale's Great Bible and the Geneva Bible.

Both works are also "Protestant" in the sense of rejoicing in the everyday. Dekker's most impressive prayers are those he puts in the mouths of ordinary people, expressed simply and directly with limited rhetorical flourish, powerful imagery and with a great deal of feeling ("prayer shall forever be the sails that shall carry up my heart"). We should note too his "democratic" conviction that to be noble was not necessarily to be good, and vice versa.

Dudley-Smith makes the point that hymn-singing was a very tangible expression of the Reformation conviction

about the priesthood of all believers, which explains in part why the Protestant hymn tradition is so rich. He quotes some moving words of John Jewel, written in 1560, describing how as the Reformation took hold people began simply to sing, more and more: “You may now sometimes see at Paul’s Cross, after the service, six thousand persons, young and old, all singing together and praising God”. Dudley-Smith also displays a refreshing breadth of influence: perhaps as a celebration of “common grace”, another concept dear to the Reformers. So Philip Larkin earns many more entries in the index than Graham Kendrick.

Both works are demonstrations of popular piety; the common tongue of prayer and praise: “functional arts” indeed.

Both too are works of their time. There is pathos and irony in some of Dekker’s prayers for the protection of those in authority and of the “commonwealth”. That such prayers should be made only three years after Gunpowder Plot is entirely understandable. But we pray for the Prince of Wales who was to die just three years after publication. And we pray against Civil War which of course did indeed break out with tragic consequences some 34 years later.

Moving to the present day Dudley-Smith is contentious is his appraisal of the contemporary worship song. He probably over-emphasises how bad (some) are, but under-estimates the extent to which in very many churches they have driven out the more traditional hymn. Were he to be aware of the extent to which that is true I’m sure he’d bewail it: and rightly so, for today’s Christians are surely being deprived of access to a rich, ancient and (still) living tradition which has given rise to some of the most beautiful and moving expressions of Christian faith in English or in any other language.

Both the hymns which Dudley-Smith cites and the prayers Dekker writes will do much to deepen and develop faith in the hearts and minds of those who use them, sing them and pray them.

**Philip Mounstephen**, CMS executive leader

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### **Emmanuel Katongole, *Born from Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)**

When I came across this book over the summer, I was very excited as I have found Katongole’s writings enormously helpful. He seems to struggle and wrestle with the same complex questions about Africa that I have. An earlier work, *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), helped me begin to make sense of Congo’s violent history and indeed how much of what happened in Congo is a kind of cipher for the rest of Africa. Katongole is Ugandan and a Roman Catholic priest, and is currently Associate Professor of Theology and Peace Studies at Notre Dame University in the USA. In *The Sacrifice of*

Africa, he tells some of his own personal story. Through ill health, he was not recruited to the Ugandan Army to fight against the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) as his brother was. Instead he was sent to a Roman Catholic boarding school and eventually ended up in a seminary in Belgium when the Rwandan genocide happened. He later read Adam Hochschild’s book on Congo, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998), which helped him to make sense of violent colonialism in Congo and all over in Africa.

I see this latest book on lament as a kind of sequel. He opens with the story of Angelina, whose daughter had been abducted by the LRA. Angelina became an advocate for the abducted girls and she came to live out a politics of forgiveness that represented an alternative form of politics. In *Born from Lament*, Katongole narrates her (and other) stories as a way of creating a “theopolitical imagination committed to the invention of a new future in Africa” (xii). In telling her and others’ stories, he noticed particularly their ability to embrace and transform their personal experience of tragedy and suffering into energy and advocacy for nonviolent alternatives. Through his research and meeting with people in Congo, he began to see that the key is lament. He concluded that “at the heart of their innovative and nonviolent civic engagement, and also somehow the reason for it, was a deep sense of grief, anguish and suffering” (xv). This book tells the stories of some of these activists (see Maggy Barankitse’s story in my article on lament in this issue of ANVIL) and explores lament not as an articulation of despair but rather as a multi-layered and complex performance through which suffering, mourning and hope are expressed.

The book is divided into five parts. The first part serves as an extended introduction to the theme and explains some of the background. The second and third parts explore the biblical material on lament and Katongole also interacts with theologians such as Moltmann and Gutierrez. The fourth part explores the prophetic laments of Jesus and Jeremiah and also offers a contemporary example from Congo with the story of Archbishop Christopher Muzihirwa of Bukavu, who was martyred two years into his ministry. Archbishop Christopher said, “There are things that can be seen only with eyes that have cried.” This is one of the most profound insights in the whole book, in my opinion. The fifth part is shaped around Rachel’s weeping at the slaughter of the innocents but with the hope that the Lord has created a new thing on earth. This is illustrated with contemporary examples from Congo.

This is an informative and significant book – one I wish to reread. Essentially the book is about hope and his concluding chapter presents a powerful apologia for the unlikely juxtaposition of lament and hope. In discussing and sharing insights from this book with students, I have found that it has much wider resonances than just for Africa.

**Dr Cathy Ross**, CMS

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## **Christine Mangla Frost, *The Human Icon: A Comparative Study of Hindu and Orthodox Christian Beliefs* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2017)**

Anyone who wants to reflect on the connections and differences between Hinduism and Christianity would do well to read this book. Scholarly but accessible, it is written by a knowledgeable and experienced author, and deserves wide attention. Christine Mangla Frost grew up as a Hindu, in a high caste Brahmin family, and became interested in Christianity as an adult, first joining the Anglican Church and then moving to become an Orthodox Christian. Although this is not an autobiography, it is full of her personal experience and knowledge of the two faiths she brings into dialogue with each other.

Chapter one is an excellent introduction to what it means to inhabit a Hindu world. Here we do not just learn of the author's own perspective, but are introduced to the range of perspectives that Hindus hold. The book is worth buying for this chapter alone, especially for use to introduce students with no previous experience of Hinduism to the fundamental categories of thought. Chapter two outlines the place of Orthodox Christianity in India, explaining the historical plausibility of links with the Apostle Thomas and how Christianity has become contextualized in India, part of the normal fabric of life.

The meat of the discussion comes in the next five chapters. Chapter three focuses on the "quest for the divine," comparing at *tvam asi* ("that you are") within Vedanta and theosis (deification) in Orthodox Christianity. The Hindu saying and the Orthodox concept are both critical, Frost argues, for believers to calibrate their spiritual sights in daily life. She examines how both aspire to the divine, and how those visions differ. Chapter four builds on this, through an examination of the *bhakti* (worship) tradition, examining Christian and Hindu conceptions of God as "the lover of mankind". Frost argues that the *bhakti* tradition of Hinduism is monotheistic, and evokes the passionate longing of the human heart for union with the divine, a longing echoed especially in the Song of Songs within Christian scripture, but also found elsewhere.

Chapter five examines a clear difference between Christianity and Hinduism by comparing how the two faiths tackle the issue of suffering and evil. The discussion centers on karma and the cross, noting that the Christian concept of a God who suffers and dies on a cross has no parallel within Hinduism. While some strands of Hinduism do have a concept of grace, especially linked to *bhakti* devotion, there is no understanding of expiation or propitiation or of a final judgement where believers are justified by faith in the death of the Son of God. This

distinction helps Frost explain how the Hindu concept of avatar, the descent of the divine, while superficially similar to the Christian notion of incarnation, is in fact a completely different conception.

Chapter six discusses yoga, a topic that is perhaps the most common Christian connection with Hinduism. Frost takes a nuanced position, noting the spiritual roots of the practice, and that it means far more than a keep-fit routine of light physical exercise. But at the same time, she recognises that it is possible to engage in some of the physical exercises devoid of spiritual content. She also discusses her own attempts at Christian yoga, explaining her decision to keep her prayers and her exercise routine separate.

Chapter seven tackles "signs and wonder," contrasting Orthodox spiritual elders with Hindu holy men. This chapter is particularly useful for those who engage regularly with Hindus and are looking for criteria to use in evaluating the many Hindu sages. Frost is critical without being cynical, robust without being extreme, noting the crucial difference of the humility of Orthodox elders compared to the Hindu holy man. Thus she states that the "self-deprecatory humour [of Orthodox spiritual elders] comes from humility. A parallel self-mocking is rare among Hindu sages: cultic gurus may be amusing, even witty, but very few would have much hesitation about presenting themselves as of superior spiritual status to lesser mortals" (p. 310). A further challenging comment in this chapter relates to the different conceptions of love within Hinduism and Christianity, an important reminder for interfaith dialogue. Just because we use the same word, does not mean we have the same understanding of it.

In summary, this book is an excellent resource for anyone engaged in Hindu Christian dialogue. What is particularly helpful is the author's positioning of herself within Christianity. A development might be for her to engage more clearly with particular strands of Hinduism. This does happen in different places within the book, but further projects could focus more clearly on, for example, just the Vaishnav school of thought, to deepen and strengthen the engagement. *The Human Icon* deserves to become a key text for any Christian engaged in conversation with their Hindu friends and neighbours.

**Tom Wilson**, Leicester

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