

# Book Reviews

## THE REFORMATION STUDY BIBLE: English Standard Version

R.C. Sproul and Keith Mathison (editors)

Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 2005 1948pp £29.99 hb ISBN: 978-0875526430

Sproul and Mathison have designed the Reformation Study Bible as a modern successor to the Geneva Bible. They have assembled an impressive list of contributors from several North American colleges, along with household names from Australian Anglicanism, and two Gordons representing the UK. Dozens of maps and charts in the text illustrate, e.g., the divided Kingdom, and the work of the Spirit. There is a reading plan for the Bible in one year, (OT and NT daily) and colour maps.

Each book has explanatory notes throughout, which are undistractedly Reformed, and yet the convictions of the General Editors have quite clearly not overruled the individual authors. Introductions to each book are less uniform. Psalms, for example, is supremely useful for helping to read the different kinds of Psalms and has notes on the value of the book for Christians, on Christ in the Psalms, and on the imprecations, along with expected notes on authorship, structure, and the potentially confusing superscriptions and selahs. Some of the other introductions supply less pastoral help.

In addition, we find short (two page) introductions to larger sections: Pentateuch, Historical Books, Hebrew Poetry, Wisdom Literature, Prophets, the Intertestamental Period, Gospels and Acts, and the Epistles.

The killer feature which all study Bibles should have is a set of some 100 “Theological Notes”. These are short (less than a page) essays in the text on important topics, anchored at a place where the Bible raises the issue: ‘The image of God’ at Gen 1:27, “The Three Purposes of the Law” at Deut 13:10, ‘Christ the Mediator’ at 1 Timothy 2:5. These quote helpfully from the Westminster Standards in places, and eschew technical terms in favour of English friends: faith involves ‘knowledge, agreement and trust’ instead of *notitia*, *assensus*, *fiducia*, in case these notes fall into the hands of the laity. Buy a stack and keep them by the font!

STEFFEN JENKINS  
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## **WHEN GRACE COMES HOME: How the doctrines of grace change your life**

**Terry L. Johnson**

**Christian Focus, Ross-shire, 2009 192pp £8.99pb ISBN 978-1-85792-539-5**

Sociologists tell us that whilst for the modernist the question was always, ‘is it true?’, for the postmodernist the question is always, ‘does it work?’. And yet the Bible always insists that the truth about God works. Although there is a comprehensiveness in the Reformed world-view that is found nowhere else, Reformed writers have usually been better at showing why the doctrines of grace are true, and rather less adept at showing us whether they work. Which is why *When Grace Comes Home* is such a helpful book. In it, Johnson explores the practical implications the gospel of grace should make to our everyday lives. After an initial chapter on theology, the areas Johnson explores are: worship, humility, adversity, outlook, witness, sanctification, assurance, law and liberty, prayer, guidance and a faith for living.

The chapters on adversity, outlook, sanctification and guidance are particularly good. Anyone who thinks that one’s theology makes little difference to one’s life would do well to read these chapters. The account of Dr Barnhouse’s response to the birth of a disabled child to a pastor friend of his is particularly powerful, and shows just how pastorally practical is the sovereignty of God. Above all, the doctrines of grace should make us a profoundly hopeful and optimistic people—not the ‘frozen chosen’!

Johnson’s book is highly readable and accessible, and I can see myself lending it to people widely. There were a few niggles: his over-use of rhetorical questions can be a little irritating; his chapter on law and liberty could have been clearer; and his view of prayer could come across as a little ‘worksy’. But all in all, as J.I. Packer says of this book, ‘Rarely can the vitamin content of sweet, strong, classic pastoral Calvinism have been made so plain and palatable as it is here.’ The truth works!

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## GEOGRAPHY AND THE ASCENSION NARRATIVE IN ACTS

Matthew Sleeman

Cambridge: CUP, 2009 300pp £55.00hb ISBN: 978-0-521-50962-6

This is a revised doctoral thesis which sees the author (from Oak Hill College) combine his academic expertise in both human geography and biblical studies. The book is divided up into two parts. 'Part I' consists of two chapters exploring and laying out the theoretical thrust behind the research. 'Part II', which makes up the majority of the work, consists of an exegesis of Acts 1:1–11:18, based on the previous theoretical foundation put forth in Part I.

In contrast to the usual 'temporal' readings of Acts, Sleeman instead conducts a 'spatial' reading which explores the creation of 'narrative spatiality' within the Acts narrative and, in turn, how this informs (and is informed by) the theology of the narrative. Key within this exploration is Christ's ascension into heaven. This initiates the creation of what Sleeman terms 'ascension geography', which is essential for the production of space—particularly 'believer-spaces'—within the Acts narrative.

Standing behind this exploration is the work of the human geographer Ed Soja and his distinctions between 'firstspace' ('the empirical'), 'secondspace' ('the theoretical'), and 'thirdspace' ('the creative') to describe human spatiality. In particular, Sleeman uses Soja's conceptualisation of thirdspace as 'open[ing] up new ways of seeing space, being in space and ordering space', as a vital lens through which to explore 'the impact of the ascended Christ upon earthly spaces within Acts' (that is, 'ascension geography').

This well-written work demonstrates the innovative benefits that may be reaped from inter-disciplinary study and research. Methodologically, Sleeman's research also demonstrates how the approach of narrative criticism may be combined with approaches from other fields of scholarship and put to use for new ends. Sleeman's study provides innovative readings both in terms of themes (e.g. the role of the Temple and the place of Jerusalem), as well as individual episodes (e.g. the interpretation and implication of Stephen's speech or the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) which remain popular topics for debate and discussion within contemporary Acts scholarship.

The various geographical theories and terms upon which Sleeman builds his research may prove demanding for those unfamiliar with the study of geography. However, persistence is justly rewarded through the innovative insights and exciting new readings which Sleeman's work brings.

HANNAH M. BROOKS  
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## **A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF PAUL: The Man, his Mission and his Message**

**Michael F. Bird**

Nottingham: IVP, 2008    192pp    £8.99pb    ISBN: 978-1-84474-255-4

I have to confess that when I saw a copy of *A Bird's-Eye view of Paul* by one Michael Bird in my pigeon-hole, my first reaction was to groan inwardly and wonder which bright spark at IVP would be better placed writing jokes for Christmas crackers. Reading the book beneath the title, however, has proved to be an altogether more positive experience.

The author's aim is to provide 'an introduction to the apostle Paul for laypersons and undergraduate students and...a refresher for pastors and ministers ... to get people excited about reading Paul's letters, preaching Paul's gospel and living the Christian life the way Paul thought it should be lived'. He begins with a biographical sketch of the Apostle's life and ministry, arguing for the centrality of Paul's encounter with the risen Jesus. He provides a helpful chronology of Paul's life, letters, and journeys that helps to set the picture for what follows. Chapter 5, on the Pauline understanding of the gospel, is particularly helpful. He argues that Paul's gospel is neither an endless set of theological propositions, nor a reductionist statement that 'Jesus is Lord'. Rather, 'there is no gospel without the heralding of the king, and there is no gospel without atonement and resurrection'. There then follows a lively explanation of the explosiveness of the gospel claim that Jesus is Lord in the cultural milieu of Roman imperial rule. Subsequent chapters on Paul's understanding of the cross, his eschatology, the divinity of Christ and Paul's ethics are each insightful and, occasionally, challenging.

Throughout, he maintains a simple and readable style that will keep this book well within the grasp of the Christian layperson. His illustrations are

illuminating, his headings often fun. However, his simplicity does not stop him interacting with a broad range of scholarship, or covering a surprising number of the controversies surrounding Pauline studies. In fact, it is in some of these short but clear theological asides that this book is, perhaps, at its best. I can imagine that his discussions on the idea of development in Paul's theology, and of penal substitution would each prove profoundly helpful to the theology undergraduate engaging with liberal theologians for the first time; chapter 8 on the divinity of Christ would give any of us confidence when faced with a Jehovah's Witness. The book is punctuated by little applicatory asides, such as his timely call that we focus our eschatological energies in praying for the persecuted church rather than speculating about who will be left behind.

As one would expect of any meaningful examination of Paul's theology, not all Bird's conclusions will please everyone. Certainly, not everyone will agree with his exposition of Romans 7, or his pre-millennial eschatology. Perhaps the biggest weakness of the book is that it does not focus on a more specific audience. If it were aimed solely at the Christian layperson, I would expect more by way of application. If it were aimed exclusively at the theology undergraduate I would look for a more direct interaction with the New Perspective on Paul. Whilst Dunn makes it into the footnotes, and N.T. Wright is referenced more than any other author, there is nothing approaching an explicit evaluation or critique of the New Perspective, and in the current academic climate it is perhaps here that the undergraduate student of theology is most likely to struggle.

GWILYM DAVIES

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**THE HEART OF FAITH: Following Christ in the Church of England**  
**Andrew Atherstone (editor)**

**Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2008 178pp £15pb ISBN: 978-0-7188-3072-4**

The main purpose of this excellent book edited by Andrew Atherstone is to show that within the Church of England there has always been a strong thread of classic, orthodox, 'mere Christianity', and that this has provided the Church with some of her brightest and best. While there may have been diversity of experience and doctrine on secondary issues, there was a common core of Protestant and we might say Evangelical theology amongst them. It is not a

collection of mini-biographies, but looks at ‘the heart of faith’ of each individual on issues such as the atonement, scripture, the Spirit, and mission to get a sense of where their hearts lay on these key issues.

The book begins, perhaps surprisingly, with a look at this theology in England prior to the Reformation, and Gerald Bray does a great job of tracing the roots of the kind of generously-defined Christian orthodoxy followed in the rest of the book. Roger Beckwith on Cranmer and Nigel Atkinson on Hooker give us the fruit of their researches, and it is a pleasure to read Baptist Mark Dever writing warmly and positively about Anglican puritan Richard Sibbes.

Atherstone has helpfully selected other individuals for attention alongside these perhaps more predictable paths. There is a fascinating chapter on Robert Boyle, the seventeenth century scientist, and illuminating looks at Wilberforce and Shaftesbury to demonstrate the biblically-motivated and politically-engaged activism of this tradition within the English church. Two women—Frances Ridley Havergal and Susanna Wesley—are vividly brought to life, the former by Atherstone himself in a typically well-documented and clear study. The big names of ‘mere evangelicalism’ are also included: Charles Simeon (Alan Munden), J.C. Ryle (David Bebbington), John Stott (David Wells), and David Watson (Graham Cray), as well as a solid chapter on C.S. Lewis. Lewis, we must not forget, was not an Evangelical. That being said, he was very clearly part of this central stream of orthodox churchmanship.

Although the book consists of separate chapters by this impressive array of scholars, it has been very well edited and sewn together both in terms of its narrative continuity and its overall message. It would make a great gift to any potential or current ordinand, to give them both an introduction to these men and women graciously used by God in the past, and a strong sense of solidarity with this grand orthodox coalition within Anglicanism. It demonstrates very effectively, to both liberal and Anglo-catholic revisionists, that the Anglican mainstream has always been located somewhere other than in their camps, and so takes the battle over Anglican identity to them.

In the eyes of many observers it is the very people who have formed the heart of Anglican faith over the centuries (like those highlighted in this book) who are under threat of marginalisation or even effective expulsion at present, as

the radical liberal agenda continues to dominate nationally and internationally. This volume could be extremely useful in an attempt to sway those who disagree with classic orthodoxy, over homosexuality or women's consecration perhaps, but are repulsed by the intolerance it currently faces from liberal extremists. If people such as those featured here were unable to 'follow Christ in the Church of England' and vitality and vigour such as theirs was to be excluded in future, the loss to the established church as a whole would be incalculable.

LEE GATISS

Peterhouse, Cambridge

## CLERGY ROBES AND MISSION PRIORITIES

**Andrew Atherstone**

Cambridge: Grove Books, 2008 28pp £3.50pb ISBN: 978-1-85174-700-9

Andrew Atherstone begins this short and useful guide to the issue of robes with a clear statement of the current position. He says, 'the law of the Church of England governing the wearing of robes by ordained clergy is absurd in the twenty-first century'. He is absolutely right. He does not, however, argue for the full abolition of robes, as many might wish him to do. In some cases, they are clearly still felt to be culturally appropriate, and it does not harm the ministry and mission of the church for clergy to wear them.

What is entirely inappropriate, however, is for such vestments to be made compulsory in every circumstance and for rules to be imposed by a blanket law made. 'In the twenty-first century', writes Atherstone, 'Anglican ministers must at last be given the freedom to decide their own clothing, in consultation with their congregations, based on their local setting.' This sort of 'localism' is popular in secular government at present, and it would be entirely right for it to be applied here. To enforce the law on cassocks and surplices, at a time when every doctrinal boundary can be flouted with impunity, is patently ridiculous.

This is not an irrelevant topic but remains an issue for clergy at every stage of their training and deployment. It is right for ordinands to gain an appreciation for real contemporary ministry (perhaps outside their cultural comfort zones) by trying on the robes they may have to wear regularly in their curacies. They need to appreciate what Anglican ministry truly is, not just what they would

like it to be with their own limited experience. It is also right for them to think through the issues concerning why certain clothing is inappropriate. Too many are still faced with an attempt by bishops (beyond their canonical authority) to compel them to wear stoles at ordination. Many face these issues only later when considering incumbencies in non-Evangelical parishes—where do they draw the line, and on what basis? Some feel unable to take up invitations to diocesan occasions or to officiate in other churches on an ad-hoc basis, because of the sartorial requirements imposed on them.

It is important to have a thought-through approach to the issue when it arises and not simply dismiss those who wear something different to us out of hand. Atherstone's booklet is a clear and insightful summary of the current legal position, and a telling expose of its absurdities and inadequacies. He gives Evangelicals some excellent material to use in arguing their case if needs be. Recent attempts in Synod to make the law even a little flexible have failed, leaving us with the stupendous situation that the one thing the Church of England has definitively decided to be utterly unyielding on is not the gospel, not who Christ is, not doctrine, not even morality, but what the minister wears. Yet there is no actual uniformity in practice and no two Anglican churches seem to look the same on any given Sunday. Until the law can be changed (it is simply 'not fit for purpose') it is important that we know our way around it. This is the kind of clear, sane, and informed booklet needed to help us do that, and to help persuade others of the idiocy of the current law.

LEE GATISS

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## **WESLEY AND METHODIST STUDIES, VOLUME 2**

**William Gibson (ed)**

**Manchester: Didsbury Press, 2010 £8pb 144pp**

This is an annual publication of the Manchester Wesley Research Centre, the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, and Oxford Brookes University. It contains five articles, one newly-transcribed historical document, and six book reviews on Wesleyan/Methodist themes. Two of the articles look especially at Charles Wesley, his anti-Catholicism and his contribution to the Methodist doctrine of Christian perfection. One gives a helpful look at Irish

Methodism, and is rich in statistical information. The newly-transcribed document is the text of a sermon given by Mary Fletcher (née Bosanquet), one of the first Methodist woman preachers, in the Vicarage at Madeley some years after her more famous husband John Fletcher had died. This is prefaced by an interesting discussion of why her many talks and other pious works have not been published before (some, it seems, did not wish to thereby affirm the practice of women preaching). The introduction is longer than the sermon itself, however, which takes up only two pages and is not especially edifying or inspiring. All in all this has more of the feel of a journal than a book, of course, though I am sure it will (and should) attract the attention of Methodist and Revival scholars in future years.

LEE GATISS  
Peterhouse, Cambridge

## **CROSSING THE DIVIDE: A CALL TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY**

Owen Hylton, Foreword by Joel Edwards

IVP: Nottingham 2009 182pp pb £7.99 ISBN 1844743837

Hylton describes this book as a the result of a journey, unfolding on ‘three levels’: the experiences of King’s Church in Catford, south London (part of Newfrontiers) where he was previously an elder (he is now a pastor elsewhere in south London); his observations on churches which he has visited over the years; and what he has been told by other church leaders and members.

Many of the examples and stories in the book come from King’s Church, which ran a short series on these issues in early 2008, using a book called *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion*, by an American pastor from Baltimore, Dr David Anderson.

Hylton references ‘gracism’ regularly throughout the book, which Dr Anderson defines as: “Gracism unlike racism does not focus on race for negative purposes, such as discrimination. Gracism focuses on race for the purpose of positive ministry and service. When the grace of God can be communicated through the beauty of race, then you have Gracism”.

The book is shaped around a series of questions, taking the reader through Hylton’s views on: why the issue of diversity is so important to the church today; why diversity matters; forms of diversity; issues of history/legacy; forgiveness,

repentance and reconciliation; how we can ‘cross the divide’ in relationships; the benefits of doing so; how those relationships can be developed; how people from different backgrounds can be integrated into church life; what a truly diverse church looks like; and how someone wanting to cross the race divide can start.

The book has a number of thought-provoking passages, and is occasionally uncomfortable reading—Hylton unpacks some of the potential issues underlying statements from friends such as “I don’t think of you as black, I think of you as Owen”, e.g. by not thinking of him as black, the friend may retain negative stereotypes about black people; or may deny him the opportunity to relate the reality of some of his experiences of being black to them because they don’t recognise that as part of who he is.

The book often reads as assertion, rather than argument, based on personal conviction, rather than biblical exegesis. There is plenty of biblical content in the book, but this is not always presented in the most helpful way. When stating that “God has a heart for diversity”, it would have been useful to make brief reference at that point to the passages in the Bible which have led to this view. Rather, explanations tend to follow later on in the chapter (and it is not clear that they are always provided). This would also help one who is reading ‘across the divide’ of different churchmanships. Hylton’s language reflects his background in (charismatic) Newfrontiers churches. As a conservative evangelical, it would have been helpful to have clearer ‘proof-texting’ of his statements, to enable me to consider whether I disagreed with a statement, or whether it was just a point of linguistic difference.

Despite the limitations, this would be useful reading, particularly for those serving in urban churches.

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## THE THEOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS

R. W. L. Moberly

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 296 pp £14.99 ISBN: 0521685389.

It should be stated at the outset that this is not a comprehensive theology of Genesis per se, but a discussion of select texts. Accordingly, Moberly focuses on specific texts (Gen 1; 2-3; 4; 6-9; 12:1-3; and the Joseph narrative, chs. 37-50) and enters into dialogue with various contemporary writers and scholars.

In chapter 1, Moberly explores what a “theology of Genesis” might look like. He begins by discussing the contributions of historical criticism and ideological criticism, and then goes on to propose his own reading strategy: a canonical and confessional approach that is situated in a contemporary community of faith. In chapter 2, he continues to advocate the canonical approach by briefly considering some of the difficult texts in Gen 1-11 from a canonical method whilst pointing out some of the short-comings of the historical-critical and literary approaches.

In chapter 3, Moberly addresses some of the challenges posed by Richard Dawkins in *River out of Eden: a Darwinian View of Life*. This is a fascinating chapter for anyone interested in the intersection of science and faith. Moberly challenges Dawkins’ assertion that the world is inherently amoral and instead argues that Genesis 1 is asserting the goodness of creation.

In chapters 4-6, Moberly tackles the difficult texts of Gen 2-3, 4-5, and 6-9 by interacting with James Barr, Regina M. Schwartz, and Richard Dawkins. Chapter 5 is an example of Moberly at his best; his critique of Schwartz’s modern reading of the Cain and Abel narrative is particularly scathing, but he follows it up with a convincing and lucid proposal that is based on a careful reading of the text. Moberly maintains that the story’s main concern is not about inequity or scarcity, as Schwartz contends, but how one should respond when apparently unfavoured.

Chapters 8 and 9 are perhaps the most interesting chapters insofar as Moberly questions the traditional view of Genesis 12:3 and, by extension, Paul’s interpretation of it in Galatians 3:6-9 — that Abraham and his descendants

are to be a blessing to the nations. Moberly argues that “the textual concern is to assure Abraham that he really will be a great nation, and the measure of that greatness is that he will be invoked on the lips of others as a model of desirability. The condition of other nations in their own right is not in view, beyond their having reason not to be hostile to Abraham” (155). He then goes on to dispute the Christian Zionist interpretation of Genesis 12:3, which argues for unconditional support for the state of Israel as the basis for receiving God’s blessing.

As with most of Moberly’s works, this is very well written and his arguments are cogently presented. The only criticism I have is the imbalance of texts in Genesis that Moberly discusses. More than two-thirds of the book is devoted to texts found in Genesis 1-12, and only a cursory treatment of the Jacob narratives is provided. It is otherwise an outstanding volume.

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**THE SERMONS OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD (2 Vols.) The  
Reformed Evangelical Anglican Library**

Lee Gatiss (editor)

Watford: Church Society, 2010 504/462pp £33h/b ISBN: 978-0-85190-84-1/978-0-85190-085-8

We live in an age when it is possible to hear any number of sermons from across the world, often within minutes of them being preached. If we can listen to such excellent biblical ministry on the go, is there a still a place for the printed word sermon—and that from 250 years’ ago? Such were this reviewer’s thoughts as he ploughed through the two volumes (and almost 1,000 pages) of sermons from George Whitefield.

Together there are 61 sermons, preached in the thirty or so years up to his death in 1770. They most certainly have the power to warm the heart and be good for the soul. He is always thoroughly clear, and methodical, as if prosecuting a case. Yet his sermons lasted an hour or more, with very few of the contemporary ‘illustrations’ that some of us have been encouraged to use. Yet these sermons so edifying. Throughout we see a number of concerns, which penetrate the

reader's heart and lift our eyes to Christ. The first is a clear passion for Christ. We have our preachers today who urge us in this, but Whitefield is never far from describing the 'the unspeakable happiness of enjoying God'.

A second is a call to repentance from sin which is, I fear, most unusual today. This is linked to the third theme—that of Justification by faith alone not works. Here's just a taste of what he says: "Before you can speak peace in your heart, you must not only be made sick of your original and actual sin, but you must be made sick of your righteousness, or all your duties and performances". Barely a sermon is given without Whitefield addressing those we might call 'sinners', the 'religious' and the 'faithful'. Whether he is addressing rich and poor, the proud and marginalized, professors and harlots (and it seems he typically addresses all these, and more, including children and 'negroes' in each sermon), he urges people to turn to Christ and receive him.

There's no shirking original sin, or its consequences. Godly Christian living is a further theme—once again, unlike anything we tend to hear today. How many Christmas sermons not only explain the truth of the incarnation, death, and ascension, but also in the light of this call the hearer to give up playing cards, dice, gaming, eating and drinking in excess (or their modern day equivalents)? And then direct that the 'money...to pamper your own bodies...[should] be used to feed the poor'?

No surprise, then, that there is no diluting the cost of following Christ: 'if we are married to Jesus Christ, we shall we willing to bear his cross, as well as to wear his crown'. George Whitefield preached a Christ-centred, grace-filled call to every sinner to live as 'altogether' not 'almost' (half-hearted) Christians.

His love and concern for the Church of England is equally apparent, whether it is in the frequent quoting of or illusion to the Articles, or comment on doctrinal error in others. However, Whitefield was clearly more concerned for the souls of the individuals who heard him than he was in doctrinal side-sweeps, unless necessary for the full and faithful teaching of his message. His comments on the importance of ministerial preparation are a reminder yet again that this battle is never finished. We may not be 'distracted' by the same things today, but the priority of the true gospel and the Bible surely remain (as does the desire to see all ministers converted).

These two volumes are the beginning of a new series, “The Reformed Evangelical Anglican Library”. The editing has a light, but learned, touch. There are some excellent footnotes to highlight historical relevance and context, and to explain the meaning of some of the more obscure words.

Don’t expect to read these as a ‘short cut’ for sermon preparation. Yet the minister or other hungry Christian seeking to feed their soul will find a rich treasure trove. By God’s grace, as our eyes are lifted to Christ and strengthened in him, our own humble and faltering efforts in preaching may be just as glorifying to our beloved Lord.

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## **THE NEARNESS OF GOD: His Presence with His People**

**Lanier Burns**

Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2009 254pp £13.99pb ISBN: 978-1-59638-056-1

God’s presence with his people is no minor theme in Scripture. Burns explores the motif sequentially, moving from the era of the Patriarchs through the period of Moses and the earthly sanctuary, to the prophetic hope and its fulfilment in the establishment of the New Covenant and its consummation in the New Jerusalem. However, before engaging in this thematic exploration, he provides an overview in an introductory chapter on ‘Incarnation as Presence’ focusing on John 1.

The author is senior research professor of theology at Dallas Theological Seminary and president of the Asian Christian Academy in Bangalore, India. He writes with clarity and theological profundity, showing careful attention to the meaning and significance of biblical texts, and regularly drawing attention to the application of his insights to contemporary believers. This volume is part of a series aimed at college students, thoughtful lay readers, seminarians, and pastors.

By way of example, I will comment on the chapter entitled ‘The New Covenant in the New Testament’. In the previous chapter, Burns discusses the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34 in relation to Jeremiah’s message as a whole and the

related expectations of exilic prophets. Explaining how the New Covenant is fulfilled in Christ, Burns turns first to John's Gospel to make the point that God is the provider of the New Covenant. John reveals how Father, Son, and Spirit successively bring the promised blessings. Forgiveness is the fundamental provision of the New Covenant. This is discussed in relation to the teaching of the Gospels and Hebrews 8-10. Finally, believers are portrayed as the people of the New Covenant, following the teaching of Romans 9-11 and 2 Corinthians 3.

In this combination of exegesis, theological reflection, and contemporary application there are some precious insights. However, given the scope of the study and the brevity of each chapter, a number of questions are left unanswered. Forgiveness is rightly presented as the foundational gift of the New Covenant and the key to the new knowledge of the Lord that is promised. However, the newness of this provision in relation to what went before is not adequately explored. The Holy Spirit is rightly identified as the means by which God puts his laws into the minds of his people and writes them on their heart, but the implications for Christian Ethics are not really examined. Furthermore, the promise that 'they shall not teach each one his neighbour and each one his brother' is not evaluated against New Testament injunctions to teach and exhort one another. Put another way, more could have been said about the way the New Covenant functions in relation to the inaugurated eschatology of the New Testament.

Despite these criticisms, I would agree with the reviewer who said 'readers will find their theology deepened, their hope rekindled, and their joy increased.'

DAVID PETERSON

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## **BLASPHEMY IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLD: A History**

**David Nash**

New York, Oxford University Press, 2007, pb edition 2010 xviii, 269pp

Nash, now Professor of History at Oxford Brookes University, and also the author of *Blasphemy in Modern Britain* (1999) is an important voice in contemporary public debate regarding blasphemy, not least in his giving evidence in 2003 to the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences where

he argued for the repeal of the common law of blasphemy. Nash is presently involved in advising those who are calling for the removal of blasphemy law in the Republic of Ireland too.

Nash believes that too many modern people in the liberal West, accepting the secularisation thesis, believe blasphemy to be an ‘anachronistic, oppressive, and inhumane’ concept that will soon disappear. He counters this by pointing to the recent dramatic resurgence of allegations that blasphemy has occurred by both Muslims and Christians. For the former, he addresses the *fatwah* against Salman Rushdie on account of the *Satanic Verses* affair, the murders of the politician Pim Fortuyn and the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands, and the publication of cartoons of Muhammad in a Danish newspaper. For the latter, he covers the prominent British examples of the protests against both Martin Scorsese’s film *The Last Temptation of Christ* and the BBC screening of *Jerry Springer: The Opera*. He makes reference to the work of organisations such as the Christian Institute which, he claims, have enabled those who perceive themselves to be the victims of blasphemy to be heard in public and to seek legal redress.

The scope of the book, although far reaching, is perhaps more narrow than the title might suggest. His focus is primarily upon blasphemy in the English speaking world and Europe since the medieval period. His central thesis is that, having travelled full circle, we are now witnessing a re-emergence of medieval ideas of blasphemy which challenge modern notions. For Nash, the Enlightenment ideas of toleration and the individual’s rights to free expression represent only an episodic, middle period in the history of blasphemy. He is particularly concerned with how this manifests itself in the artistic world (especially film), since he thinks the re-emergence of such fundamentalism threatens to rob Western culture of the use of ideas on which creativity itself depends.

By undertaking a survey of so wide-ranging, both chronologically and geographically, at times the book offers little more than a summary of secondary literature. Nevertheless he has provided a useful concise survey of the history of blasphemy in the West, but one with an agenda.

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## CONCISE REFORMED DOGMATICS

J. Van Genderen and W.H. Velema

Presbyterian and Reformed, 2008 922pp £44.99hb ISBN: 978-0-87552-577-8

At 922 pages, 6cm thick and weighing in at nearly 1.5 kg, one wonders what ‘concise’ is doing in the title of this book. John Frame’s comment on the cover is that anything Dutch less than three volumes is considered concise! The authors have been thorough in their scope, covering everything doctrinal one can think of, but concisely. Some sections do have more detailed exegesis with philosophical connections, whilst in other places an entire view that could justify a book is summarised in a sentence.

They define dogma as, ‘doctrine that the church, under appeal of the Word of God, holds forth as normative’. This is what the Church *should* believe. As such the book is more Church focused than other systematic tomes. The authors see the appeal of looking for one central connecting theme through Scripture but warn against this, as any error would skew the rest of our reading. Rather, they settle on the loci typically found in systematics, as being more open to the word of God speaking for itself. There are connections drawn between the different loci across the book.

The authors approach is rooted in the Reformed tradition, especially Calvin and Bavinck. They explore doctrinal positions as set out in the great Reformed confessions, particularly those significant to the Dutch setting, and show scripturally why these positions have been taken. Challenges are dealt with, especially from theologians who have emerged from the Reformed tradition but have departed from it. The big names here are Barth and Pannenberg. However, even here there are insights from such writers that are appreciatively drawn on.

It is worth knowing that the original Dutch edition was published in 1992. Although modern issues are dealt with, this is not the book to deal with the latest controversy; it does however have a classic feel to it. It will not go out of date quickly.

One distinctly Reformed feature of the book is its place for covenant theology. Even in Berkof’s *Systematic Theology* this is little more than a footnote. The place of the Covenant of Redemption (between members of the Trinity) is

clearly argued for and the relevant doctrines that flow from it. The covenant of grace is taken as one of the loci in and of itself. Predictably, they justify this from the Bible. What may surprise those who claim that covenant theology is an invention of English Puritanism and was developed into a complex system by Americans is that there is no reference to English speaking writers at all in these sections. From a Dutch perspective this does not even need defending. Covenant theology is biblical and is the approach of all the Continental Reformers and their confessions.

This is where *Concise Reformed Dogmatics* makes a refreshing read. It clearly is not from the English speaking world. There are very few references to English-speaking theologians. For example, in an excellent section on Justification and contemporary challenges to the Reformed view, there is not even a mention of N.T. Wright. Yet the material, including a small section on the *duplex gratia Dei*, is useful in countering and nuancing some New Perspective criticisms and caricatures of the Reformed view. At the same time, with hardly any reference to thinkers familiar to us and lots of names I had never heard of before (mostly Dutch, but other Europeans too) it was reassuring to see a Reformed consensus.

All in all, this is a good reference book that justifies being on the shelf as having a slightly different approach from our typical systematic texts, whilst being thoroughly orthodox and self-consciously Reformed.

DARREN MOORE

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### **SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE: The Theology of John Frame** **John J. Hughes (editor)**

Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009 1200pp £44.99hb ISBN: 978-1-59638-164-3

This volume is a festschrift honouring John Frame who teaches Systematic Theology and Philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. It is quite unlike the typical festschrift in three respects. Firstly, such volumes are usually a surprise for the honouree, but Frame was intimately involved in this project from the planning stage, suggesting contributors, providing some helpful introductory material on his life and influences on his

thought, and in responding to a selection of the essays. Secondly, this festschrift is unusual in the level of engagement with the work of the honouree. Frame's thought is very much the focus of the essays presented here. Finally, readers will be struck by its vast size.

After some personal tributes, thirty-nine essays are organised into eight sections: introduction, theology, apologetics, the church, worship, ethics, culture, and future relevance. The introductory essays orientate the reader to the distinctives of Frame's thought, especially his multi-perspectivalism, the idea that the object of knowledge may be approached from a number of different entry points. Subsequent contributors demonstrate the application of this to an array of subjects and its utility as a pedagogical device, whilst countering claims that it opens the way to an unfettered relativism.

If the task of theology is, as Frame insists, the application of Scripture to all areas of human life, then apologetics, a discipline to which he has contributed much, is the application of the word of God to human unbelief. Eight essays engage with Frame's presuppositional method. This is the most demanding part of the book. The essays by William Edgar and James Anderson are clearly written and deeply thought-provoking. Two essays which focus on the transcendental argument, one of them laden with formal logic, will stretch even the more advanced reader. All that follows after the apologetics section is, however, more accessible.

The book ranges through many subjects—from theological methodology, the problem of evil, the role of biblical theology, pastoral care, worship wars, the ethics of lying, medicine, the law. The contributions are somewhat uneven in quality, abbreviations abound, and puns on Frame's name grow tiresome after a few hundred pages.

Frame's level of involvement may appear incongruous, an attempt to exert control on the reception of his work. More charitably, one might take the view that his collaboration adds value to the book as he was able to provide clarification in certain areas through personal correspondence with contributors, and to respond to questions and criticism in the final chapter.

This is an enjoyable and stimulating collection of essays. It is not an ideal introduction to John Frame's work and would be better suited to those who

have already begun to grapple with his writings. It does, however, stand as a fitting tribute to a theologian of his stature.

RICHARD SNODDY  
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## **THE DELIVERANCE OF GOD: An Apocalyptic Re-reading of Justification in Paul**

**Douglas A. Campbell**

**Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 1218pp £40.99 ISBN: 987-0-8028-3126-2**

If one is looking to have one's articulation of justification in Paul put to the test, this is the book to read. Campbell surveys the battle between New Perspective advocates (and other revisionist readings of Paul) and recent advocates of the traditional conception of justification. He employs critiques from each side to cripple the other (also adding his own). Then, returning to Romans 1–4 (taking cues from K. Barth and J. Torrance), he identifies parts of Paul's argument as logically or theologically incoherent and restores coherence by (1) attributing these parts to an opposing 'Teacher', and then (2) viewing the rest of Rom. 1–4 (which is properly Paul's) as compact, muted counterstatements that anticipate the unabashedly apocalyptic content of chapters 5–8.

Why have these counterstatements been muted? Paul, having never visited Rome and uncertain if this Teacher had already arrived, must carefully win over the Romans. Thus he initially employs terminology/concepts *both* from earliest Christian 'tradition' *and* from the Teacher's own discourse; the former he subtly manipulates to conform to his own views; the latter he completely subverts. Campbell summarizes the Teacher's view as 'turn (to circumcision and the Jewish law) or burn; only circumcision of the body and heart will allow you to act righteously and so obtain a final verdict from God of rectitude that leads to salvation'.

Claiming to be truest to Luther, Campbell presents a justification that he says *actually* 'justifies—i.e., delivers—the ungodly'. Critically, he characterizes *all* traditional readings of justification as instantiations of a single comprehensive soteriological system, or 'Justification theory' (hereafter J-theory). This leaves Campbell perilously open to the charge of caricature, but his questions are

worth hearing. Does it make sense ‘to imagine that human wrongdoing is essentially economic in any sense with respect to God—that human sins are a violation of God’s rights to certain goods and services’? Hasn’t J-theory led to mass confusion in Protestant circles regarding ecclesiology, conversion, and sanctification? Campbell leaves no stone unturned, and those who hold to traditional readings of Paul would do well not to ignore his critiques.

Campbell’s exegesis of Rom. 1–4 is provocative and ingenious, but too demanding for the auditor/reader in both the first and twenty-first centuries. Its biggest challenges include: 1:16-17 and 1.18 are placed in opposition, with ‘the wrath of God’ apparently being a summary of the Teacher’s ‘gospel’. Astonishingly, in 2:1 he excises the Greek word *pas* (‘all/every’) *without any explanation*, attempting to particularize an otherwise indefinite opponent. He attributes the phrase ‘first for the Jew, then for the Gentile’ to the Teacher, yet it appears in 1:16 (which, for him, is Paul, excepting this phrase!). How could a reader know that the verb *dikaio* means ‘to justify’ in 3.20, yet in v. 24 it suddenly means ‘to deliver’? The meaning of *dikaio* in 4.5 does not change because of the word ‘ungodly’ any more than ‘criminal’ changes the meaning of ‘acquitted’ in the sentence, ‘The judge acquitted the criminal.’ In conclusion, Campbell’s lexical work is simply pre-Barr. He also gives the perception of incoherence in the apostle’s thought on a crucial issue—future divine judgment. So in sum, this book is helpful (if occasionally unfair) in its critiques but quite unpersuasive in its exegesis.

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### ‘ANGLO-CATHOLIC IN RELIGION’: T.S. Eliot and Christianity

Barry Spurr

Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2010 325pp £25pb ISBN: 9780718830731

In Anglo-Catholicism’s heyday, numerous literary figures were won to the ranks of the movement, such as Dorothy Sayers and C.S. Lewis. G.K. Chesterton went the whole hog and converted to Rome in 1922. The Nobel Prize winner, T.S. Eliot, was perhaps the greatest luminary in that distinguished crowd and soon became the most prominent Anglo-Catholic layman of his generation. Raised within a Unitarian family in Boston and schooled in humanistic philosophy at

Harvard, he immigrated to Oxford for doctoral studies and in 1927 joined the national church of his adopted country. He regarded the two steps of becoming an English citizen and a member of the Church of England as essentially one. Eliot was an ‘Anglo-papalist’ and fiercely hostile to liberal Christianity with its watered-down doctrines. He was devoted to the rosary, penance, requiems, fastings, incense, high mass, and various other Anglo-Catholic paraphernalia. Spurr’s analysis is evocative of a ‘vanished world’, before Anglo-Catholicism’s massive decline over the last generation—a lost era which we do not mourn.

Literary critics and biographers of Eliot have often ignored his religious outlook. These themes are barely touched upon, for example, in the *Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot* (1994) and other standard introductions. Yet Spurr argues convincingly that it is impossible to understand Eliot without appreciating his Anglo-Catholicism, which was ‘the central element, the still point, in the poet’s world picture’. It pervades his poems and plays, such as *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). Likewise the basic premise of *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), Eliot’s influential series of lectures delivered in Cambridge on the eve of the Second World War, is that it is the responsibility of the established church to apply catholic doctrine to the social, economic and moral questions of the day. This trend towards putting theology back at the heart of historical and literary analysis is a welcome development which has been gathering pace in recent years (see further, *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* edited by Chapman, Coffey, and Gregory). Spurr’s well researched and persuasively argued monograph is a welcome contribution to this growing corpus.

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## GOD INCARNATE: EXPLORATIONS IN CHRISTOLOGY

Oliver D. Crisp

London: T&T Clark, 2009 192pp £19.99 pb ISBN: 9780567033482

‘Analytic theology’ is the name that has recently been applied to the theological approach which deploys the techniques of modern analytical philosophy in approaching questions of Christian doctrine. As a method, it has been widely used for some time: Richard Swinburne is perhaps its best known practitioner.

But in a collection of essays published in 2009, Oliver Crisp from the University of Bristol and Michael Rea from the University of Notre Dame both explicitly embraced the name ‘analytic theology’, and commended it as a constructive new force in Christian theology. With *God Incarnate*, Crisp is pursuing this programme further, and seeking to demonstrate how analytic theology can enable us to explore dogmatic questions, specifically those concerned with the nature of Christ, in an intellectually critical and clear-sighted way.

As Crisp underlines, analytic theology does not so much provide theological solutions, as enable the disciplined pursuit of theological enquiry. In other words, except to the extent that it is confident in the use of philosophy within theology, it is a theologically neutral method, and is as capable of following well-travelled theological paths as it is of exploring novel opinions, and Crisp undoubtedly prefers the first option.

He begins by offering a helpful introduction to analytic theology in general, and then discusses the Christological method which he will pursue. He suggests that any Christology which aspires to be orthodox must take scripture as its foundation, and allow both the creedal definitions of the undivided Church and the confessional documents of the Christian community to which the theologian belongs the pre-eminence in theological discussion (though not such pre-eminence that the theologian may not, with sufficiently good reason, depart from them).

Crisp’s concern throughout his book is to clarify and defend the claims of Christian orthodoxy, and to explore what further conclusions might be drawn from them, rather than to entertain novel opinions. He pursues this agenda through a fascinating series of discussions about distinct Christological issues, some of which have been published before. All of these essays are thought-provoking, even if one does not agree with all he says. The methodical dissection of Robert Jenson on the pre-existence of Christ is a treat, as are Crisp’s arguments for the impeccability of Christ, and the possibility of embracing a materialist conception of human nature without falling into Apollinarianism. Crisp writes with great clarity and persuasiveness, though he evinces an analytic philosopher’s predilection for numbered sets of propositions and occasionally constructs his argument so tightly that he needs to be read very slowly indeed, if not more than once.

However, when much theological writing is either rhetorically pleasing but intellectually insubstantial or else so laden down with technical jargon as to verge on obscurantism, Crisp's work demonstrates that analytic discipline can restore both lucidity and precision to the theological endeavour.

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## **SHADOW GOSPEL: Rowan Williams and the Anglican Communion Crisis**

**Charles Raven**

The Latimer Trust: London, 2010 179pp £6.99pb ISBN: 9780946307784

In *Shadow Gospel* Charles Raven provides us with two things. In chapters 1-4 we have a fair and clear guide through the widening gyres of Rowan Williams's theology. Then in chapters 5-12 Raven shows how Williams's actions as Archbishop of Canterbury flow out of his theology. Raven has done the hard labour of trying to understand Williams, and he never makes personal attacks. Nor does blame Williams for everything; in his view the Archbishop is as much a symptom as a cause (and by undermining Lambeth 1.10 through a "spurious listening process" he has continued the policies of George Carey). Raven contends that William's offers a "shadow" Christology and gospel: the language of orthodoxy is used, but eviscerated of content.

Starting from the apophatic tradition, and rejecting the idea that scripture is itself revelation, Williams re-defines "orthodoxy" as not a matter of what we say but of the way we speak: for him, orthodoxy is a commitment to a process rather than faithfulness to a given body of truth. Williams draws on Ricoueur, Wittgenstein, and Hegel to develop an idea of theology as an endless conversation, a dialectic which resists final closure. To take part in this conversation requires "dispossession": the setting aside of personal commitments and claims to be in the right. Unfortunately for Williams this has proved impossible for anyone with firm convictions, conservative or liberal.

A theology that privileges process over confessional substance has then dovetailed with the "institutional pragmatism" inherent in the bureaucracy of the Anglican Communion, and the Church of England, to produce the present

mess. Before 2002 Williams was an outspoken advocate of the acceptance of homosexuality by the church. Since then he has declared his willingness to separate his private views from his public responsibility. Strangely, he did not do this as Archbishop of Wales. But as Raven shows, he has continued to contribute to the gay rights agenda by “creating a climate in which the orthodox become progressively desensitised to biblical morality”; by not repenting of his private views, he holds out the possibility that they may become the views of the majority. The Windsor Process and the Anglican Covenant are examples of the endless conversation required by Williams’s theology. But they cannot solve the “credibility crunch” that has emerged within a communion that lacks any firm beliefs, (its’ “confessional deficit”), and will not discipline TEC. The middle ground offered by Williams has proved to be an illusion: his leadership has degenerated into ad hoc political pragmatism.

Against this gloomy background, Raven sees a new dawn in GAFCON, which he believes is a return to the theological vision of the Reformers. Here I wasn’t quite convinced. GAFCON is certainly a step in the right direction. But, given the Jerusalem Declaration’s notorious omission of “alone” after “faith”, only time will tell if it is a new wineskin or another Anglican fudge.

Liberal blogs vilify Williams as autocratic and a traitor. Charles Raven has been proved right. In this tragedy, Rowan Williams emerges on to the storm-wracked Anglican heath as Lear, wandering, marginalized and having lost the respect of all around him, both conservatives and liberals. Anyone who wishes to understand both the Archbishop and the last decade (not to mention the impending collapse of the Church of England) would do well to read this excellent book.

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## **TEENAGERS—BIBLICAL WISDOM FOR PARENTS**

**Ann Benton**

Nottingham: IVP, 2009 192pp pb ISBN: 9781844743544

I remember as a teenager being disappointed by the book of Proverbs - I think I expected something more like Aesop’s fables, and not just the sort of thing

my father would come out with at breakfast about ants and sluggards. Now, as an adult and a parent, I can see its relevance, though I still think it is not an easy reference book to find your way around for paths to wisdom. *‘Teenagers’* offers a helpful way to take in the message of Proverbs—not that Proverbs was written exclusively for the parents of teenagers, but it is particularly relevant to the issues they face. Ann Benton’s book develops her arguments along a helpful structure, artfully entwining quotes from Proverbs at every turn, so that those who value the Bible as a guide can be reassured that these are not just the insights of an experienced parent (though such are also well represented), but truly ‘biblical wisdom’.

*‘Teenagers’* starts with the predictable target of survival, but delves into family life, areas of teenage vulnerability, and touches on coping when the dream turns into a nightmare. In between are sections full of practical advice, and analyses of the world with which we and our teenagers have to come to terms which are thought-provoking and challenging. Sometimes you get the feeling that this is a book you should have read when your kids were three rather than thirteen, and the prospect of introducing the suggested practices just doesn’t seem realistic. But there are certainly things worth considering, and the principles are spot on.

If I had to summarise the message of the book in a few words, I’d say, ‘Your teenager is a fool, but don’t panic’. And although I suppose most teenagers do turn out OK, there must be those who don’t. If that is you, read the section ‘Meet the parents’ which addresses positively the inevitable fear and guilt. This book is realistic both about the place we start from, and about our chances of making a perfect arrival at our desired destination. It is smattered with anecdotes and ‘case-studies’ which engage the reader and help illustrate the point. Certainly I want to re-read several sections, especially those on ‘Routes to Wisdom’ and ‘Key strategies’, to see what I can consider doing differently.

MARGARET HOBBS  
Latimer Trust, London

This attractively formatted study Bible adorns the English Standard Version with introductions, notes, and articles characterized by theological integrity and faithful scholarship. I am delighted to commend it.â€ Scott Swain. Reformed Theological Seminary Orlando.

â€œThe new Reformation Study Bible is perfectly balanced between "comprehensive" and "exhaustive".â€ Eric Rauch. Tolle Lege Press.

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