Book Reviews Part 2

3. Doctrine and Philosophy

Barrett, M. and Caneday, A. eds. (2013). *Four views on the Historical Adam*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

This instalment of the Four Views Series is impressive and helpful. Each outlook hails from a person who is deeply committed to God. Each perspective issues from a scholar who is serious and competent. The inclusion of formal rejoinders to each chapter by the other contributors enhances differentiation.

The project begins with the evolutionary creationist view of Dennis Lamoureux. He is trained at the doctoral level in both theology and evolutionary biology. His perspective rejects the Bible as a source of scientific fact. It maintains that early chapters of Genesis have an ‘ancient conception of biological origins.’ Accordingly, Lamoureux regards Adam as vital vessel for transporting essential spiritual truths. Adam need not, therefore, be regarded as historical; such a point is incidental to the purpose of the text. Lamoureux’s presentation has a lucid discussion on the interchange between modern science and the world of the Bible.

The second chapter introduces the archetypal creation view proffered by John Walton. He sees early Genesis as being more concerned with ‘archetypal figures who represent all of humanity’ than with historical events. The creation account does not address biological formation; it wishes, rather, to illuminate a series of theological truths that stand at the base of human existence. Adam and Eve are requisitioned by Genesis as archetypes of humanity so as to introduce truths about all people. That being said, Walton maintains the historicity of the first man and woman. This is not the key point of Genesis, but it is a conclusion supported elsewhere in Scripture. Walton’s discussion makes adept use of comparative ANE religious scholarship, situating Genesis in the context in which it was birthed.

A third perspective—the old earth creation view—is championed by John Collins. Collins sees Adam and Eve as historical beings that stand at the ‘headwaters of humankind.’ Even while maintaining their historicity, Collins suggests that other details of early Genesis need not be taken too straightforwardly. For example, the text does not compel belief in a young earth. In advocating the historicity of Adam and Eve, Collins appeals to the importance of this claim for the rest of the biblical story-line.

A final view is outlined by William Barrick, who affirms the historicity of Adam and Eve within a young-earth paradigm. Barrick reads Genesis as an ‘objective description of God’s creative activities in six consecutive literal days.’ Adam was created instantaneously; he is treated as a single individual rather than an archetype. Barrick’s insistence on this outlook stems from his conviction that there would be no need for the historical, redemptive work of Christ if

Adam was not historical. His interpretive ethos eschews conversation with comparative ANE study and evolutionary biology.

I am immensely thankful to have read this book. It effectively identifies and treats the most salient questions in the present contention and confusion surrounding the meaning of Genesis 1-3. This text is a must-read for any pastor wishing to teach on the biblical account of creation. The addendum at the end—which contemplates the pastoral implications of affirming or releasing Adam’s historicity—is an added benefit. This book is also expedient for inquisitive Christians concerned with the responsible interpretation (and weighty implications) of the first chapters of Genesis. It would be one of my first recommendations. However, given that the discourse is a bit technical at moments, this project may not be ideal for everyone in the pews. Let the pastor discern.

Roger L. Revell

St Peter’s Fireside Church, Vancouver

Chatterjee, P. (2014). *The Living Icon in Byzantium and Italy: The Vita Image, Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This is a complex academic text on a subject which will not endear itself to many readers of this journal, though it is worth noting the growing flirtation with, and interest in icons among evangelicals of a more contemplative or mystical inclination. The 30 page introduction brings together the theological principles and debates underlying the Orthodox icon, with the emergence and brief flourishing of the ‘Vita Icon’ in Byzantium and Italy in the 13th century. The term refers to the portrait of an Orthodox saint usually surrounded by scenes from his or her life, painted in order to ‘declaim it before others.’ When transferred to Catholic Italy, this religious artefact/art form was first and principally used by the early Franciscans to honour their founder as the alter Christus ‘painted’ with Christ’s own stigmata.

Technically, the icon is a ‘directed absence’ – “a representation that does not share in the substance of the prototype but leads the viewer towards it” (33). However, as Chatterjee makes clear, in the ongoing debates about the relationship between word and image, between relic and icon, between representation and substance, (2) the Vita icons took worshippers beyond the didactic into the realm of mystical encounter coming ‘face to face’ with the holiness of the represented saint. In this way, the icon comes to possess characteristics of the sanctity of the holy person. It would not have been painted (or more properly, written) if the subject were not first perceived as holy, and it communicates that holiness back to us. Gradually, it begins to bear the marks of that holiness itself, as evidenced by the trial of the icon of Symeon Eulabes in Constantinople in 1008!

Chapter 2 expands on the accompanying textual tradition, exploring the relationship between relic (the remains of the saint) and the icon (the image of the saint), the privileging of sight over hearing (which seems entirely contrary to the evangelical *sola scriptura*) and

esoteric discussion of the link between *morphe* (form), *charakter* (deep character) and *eikon* (image). There is clearly a strong link between the narrative of the life of Christ, depicted by a range of icons, and the lives of the saints. So the icon's central figure of the saint is surrounded by life events which parallel the liturgical depiction of the flow of Christ's incarnation, teaching, miracles, passion and death. This material is elaborated in the key – and very long – chapter on 'The Saint in the Image'.

The remainder of the book addresses the particular case of St Francis of Assisi. The thesis here is that Francis 'became the exemplar of a peculiarly affective mode of viewing whereby the object seen imprints its characteristics upon the one looking at it' (127). The imitation of Christ, in this model, is mimetic: through it, the saint becomes like Christ, or – and surely here we descend into Christological heresy – becomes him. From a hagiographical point of view, of course, there is a real tension between the need to show the stigmata while maintaining the deep mystery and enigmatic nature of the occurrence: 'the Franciscan vita panels are remarkable for deploying illusionism not as a literal mode of engagement but as a rhetorical tool that manipulates the viewer into conflicting positions by drawing him or her in with one hand and keeping her or her at a distance with the other' (206).

Lavishly illustrated, this is not an entry-level book into the somewhat arcane world of icon studies, whether the reader is primarily interested in spiritual theology or in the history of art. For that, one would have to look elsewhere, perhaps to Leonid Ouspensky's 2 volume *Theology of the Icon* or more simply to Rowan Williams, *The Dwelling of the Light*. It is, however, a fascinating insight into a small corner of spiritual art, and would repay careful study richly.

Adrian Chatfield
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Harvey, L. (2014). *A Brief Theology of Sport*. London: SCM.

During the last decade there has been a marked increase in academic publications and practical initiatives on sport and Christianity. *A National Consultation on Sport* (2014) commissioned by the Church of England and the birth of the Vatican 'Church Sport' Office in the Pontifical Council of the Laity (2004-), are further evidence that sport is on the agenda of the world church. These developments are long overdue given that sport is arguably the world's most popular pastime, surpassing other previously dominant cultural expressions, such as, the arts and music. The organisation of the *Inaugural Global Congress on Sports and Christianity* (IGCSC) at York St. John University, U.K. (August, 2016), is a reflection of this groundswell of interest, and, is perhaps going to be a defining moment in the sport-faith field. It is hoped that clergy, theologians, practitioners (such as sport chaplains and those in sports Ministry), sport scholars, physical educators, politicians and administrators, who will attend this event, will initiate a conversation to further move things forward.

The publication of Lincoln Harvey's book, *A Brief Theology of Sport* (2014), is timely. The book is organised into two sections. Part I: Historical Soundings and Part II: Analytical Soundings, comprising ten accessible and punchy chapters. Drawing on literature from both theology and the historical and social scientific study of sport, Harvey's analysis of how sport participation and spectatorship can be understood in light of key Christian doctrines, is incisive and clear. The primal human (and animal) instinct to 'play' is at the heart of this book, and more pointedly, the need for a resurgence of the play ethic in modern sports, which many argue have become too serious, utilitarian and plagued with moral and ethical issues. That said, Harvey does not, however, denigrate sport, or our passionate and emotional engagement in it (as some theologians have done historically), but as a fan and theologian; he provides a balanced and nuanced account of how sport can be educational, wholesome and a means of human flourishing.

Commendably, the book is written in a scholarly, and yet, accessible style (for an educated lay readership) and Harvey's integration and synthesis of catholic and protestant ideas is encouraging, as some past anthologies and monographs on the sport-faith relationship have lacked this depth and diversity. The cross-denominational focus of Harvey's work is also important as this field develops, as a major arm of the IGCS is to foster interdisciplinary and inter-denominational spirit and collaboration. The book also serves to further legitimise the study of sport within the discipline of theology, building on other recent works.

Toward the end of *A Brief Theology of Sport*, Harvey helpfully provides 'Seven Avenues for Further Thought', which in his opinion need addressing: rules, competition; idolatry; sport and war; professional sport; gender and sport; and good and bad sports. While some of these research topics have received little, if any, treatment in the sport-Christianity literature (such as gender and sport), others have been thoroughly examined by philosophers of sport, theologians and sport scholars. Thus, my only criticism of this fine book is a lack of acknowledgement (and integration) of some of this scholarship, and a lack of attention given to important topics, such as, athletes with physical and intellectual disabilities, or, how sport could be used as a vehicle to enliven the religious studies curriculum. That said, the book would not be a *brief theology* if the author had covered further topics and mined the literature a little more!

In summary, this is an excellent theological treatment of sport, which I hope is read widely by academics, practitioners, parents of athletes and administrators/managers. Sport is on the agenda of the Church, this book serves to further that important and timely agenda. Let us hope that the passionate engagement of the Church (especially the Church of England) in the sports realm in the Victorian era, in the guise of 'Muscular Christianity', can again grip leaders and parishioners in the modern era, so to advance the kingdom of God through a major 'cultural driver'.

Dr Nick J. Watson

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Ryken, P. (2013). *Kingdom Come: Looking Forward to Jesus' Return*. Downers Grove: IVP.

Scholar pastor turned head of college Phil Ryken has many salutary things to say about living in anticipation of Jesus' return. If you're trying to track down a thoughtful, biblically-attentive, and practical book on this subject, look no further. Ryken's reflections come in the form of eight stand-alone sermons, all connected by common reference to matters eschatological. These sermons were originally preached to the student body at Wheaton, where Ryken is president. They touch upon a variety of issues surrounding Christ's in-breaking kingdom, together with the church's longing for the consummation of new creation.

Setting the tone for the series, the first sermon, 'The Kingdom is Near,' quickly dispels preoccupations with predicting the 'day and hour' of Christ's return. With both sobriety and humour, Ryken advances this word of precaution in conversation with several contemporary 'end-times' prophets. Through a brief historical survey, he also locates this same troubling tendency in decades and centuries past. Ryken's admonishment does not champion the excessive historicization of the biblical testimony about the end times. Rather, it simply echoes Jesus' warnings against calculations and predictions of his Second Coming. It also suggests that Christians should live as though Jesus' return is imminent. This awareness should spur trust in Christ and faithful living, not apocalyptic speculation!

With an eye to the contemporary church, the subsequent sermons attend largely to the implications of both Christ's return and the present in-breaking of his kingdom. Along the way, Ryken provides accessible, compelling sketches of biblical theology. Speaking from a Reformed posture, he weaves the Bible's covenantal narrative into his ruminations on the present signs of God's kingdom. Further to this, he brings a series of timely, practical challenges. The coming of the Kingdom is not something that Christians 'accomplish.' It is first and foremost a divine gift and activity of God. The kingdom, moreover, is available only to those who acknowledge their neediness and sinfulness. And, despite the church's declaration that it yearns for the kingdom, all too often its actions betray other, stronger yearnings. As such, it is possible to miss the kingdom even while longing for it! As Ryken highlights, many Christians live as if theirs is the kingdom rather than submitting to the Lordship of Christ.

Ryken's sermons are replete with learned, effective illustrations and anecdotes that hail both from the North American and British context. Readers will be introduced to the work of artist Mary Tanner, the beautiful story of Bosnian cellist Vedran Smajlovic, the wisdom of Martin Lloyd-Jones and Charles Spurgeon, exponents of late-modern pluralism such as actor Chad Allen, and the eloquence of John Milton. The assorted stories in his sermons provide great fodder for the preacher who wishes to communicate with clarity and poignancy.

While the sermons were some of the most engaging I've recently read, I find two shortcomings in their execution. First, Ryken's exposition of the Parable of the Talents (Luke

19) reflects a line of interpretation that has been regarded as somewhat problematic in recent decades. Hints of interaction with revised readings of this parable would have been appreciated. Secondly, a bit more attention to the wider social implications of the kingdom as it is already partially present would make for a welcome supplement. These minor limitations are easily offset by the larger achievement of the book: ushering in a perspective on the kingdom which mitigates speculative impulses while accentuating a sober but radical and hopeful vision of kingdom life in the present age.

This book is ideal for preachers wanting to reflect on the promises of the kingdom and their present ramifications. It would also be suitable for small group devotions or a book study club. The writing style is accessible; the thought behind it is deep. A commendable balance between the two is achieved. Readers will be given something to digest which nourishes rather than overwhelms.

Roger Revell

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Watson N. J. and Parker, A. (2014). *Sport and the Christian Religion: A Systematic Review of Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Sport is a key component of contemporary culture. But what are Christians to make of it? Nick Watson and Andrew Parker have devoted their careers to answering this important question.

This book records Watson and Parker's intellectual travels in search of an answer. It painstakingly identifies all the literature that is currently available on the subject. It therefore allows its reader to discover at arm's length – in remarkably simple terms – the utter complexity of the topic in hand. There is sport and religion here, sport and spirituality, sport and ethics, sport and the Bible, competition, muscular Christians, the Olympics, chaplains, feminists, big business, young children, wider society *and* everything else. The entire discipline is charted here. There are over 1000 references. The bibliography is over 70 pages. This is a very impressive literature review.

But this book is more than just a review. It is also a preview. Watson and Parker finish each chapter by identifying areas for future research, pointing out where the odd gap exists. In doing so, they raise all sorts of interesting questions for researchers to pursue: about sport and reconciliation, psychological conditioning, the spiritual life, fandom, nationalism, humor, laughter, eating disorders and much more besides. Panoramic in scope, with a distant horizon, this book will stimulate academic research for many years to come.

Because it is a survey, Watson and Parker do not present us with their own thesis. That means that there is nothing for me, as a reviewer, to critique here. An index would certainly help make the book a bit more user friendly, and an electronic version would be more easily

searchable. And, yes, Karl Barth's name is spelt wrongly on at least three occasions (which perhaps indicates the way doctrine figures so little in this discipline). But this is minor. The book deserves nothing but applause, mainly because it amounts to an act of generosity, quite rare in the academy. Two leading academics have shared their hard-earned knowledge so that someone like me – a newcomer to the field – can join them in pursuit of an answer to the question of sport. We should be grateful. This is knowledge being made *public*, the opposite of Gnosticism, which is very appropriate given the subject matter.

Lincoln Harvey

St Mellitus College, London

4. Ethics and Pastoral

Billings, A. (2014). *The Dove, the Fig Leaf and the Sword: Why Christianity changes its mind about war*. London: SPCK.

Dr Alan Billings doesn't dodge the difficult questions in his exploration of the subtitle; in fact he wrestles with them in a refreshingly honest way. Two observations permeate the book. First, that much of human history is a history of war. Second, that in search for peaceful outcomes in a fallen world, Christianity has never given consistent guidance.

The book is rich with historic context, grounded in Scripture and well referenced. In it Dr Billings traces the developing relationship between Christianity and violence and the concurrent rise of Just War thinking from its inception through a comprehensive variety of historic periods and conflicts. He does so without bias, leaving the reader enough information and space to draw their own conclusions.

The fourfold structure of the book progresses logically and makes the book easy and enjoyable to digest.

Part 1 (*The Dove*) outlines scriptural and historic roots of the idea of non-resistance and a powerless church, drawing on early Greek, Roman and Jewish thought and that of the Early Church. It is in this section Dr Billings begins to grapple with the relationship between Christianity and Pacifism probing the question; did Jesus see himself as leading a pacifist movement?

Part 2 (*The Fig Leaf*) deals with the uncomfortable fact that the second coming has not yet occurred as expected by the Early Church and that Christianity is gaining power and influence in the world. These changes spark the developing idea of Just War and Billings doesn't skip over this lightly, drawing on Ambrose, Augustine and Aquinas to explore some thorny questions; should Christians use force? Can wars ever be just?

In Part 3 (*The Sword*) we continue the journey moving towards the more recent and familiar. The section concludes, aptly this year, with reflections on WWI. Here we are guided through challenging issues; what is a contemporary Christian response to huge destructive power? Should Christians commemorate war and in what spirit?

If this book was a DVD, then part 4 is the bonus feature. Having thoroughly addressed his three main sections from the title, Dr Billings then alludes to Christianity's most current thoughts on conflict, beginning with moral ambiguities of WWII and concluding with a challenging dozen pages on the societal and ethical implications of the more recent wars of intervention and evolving struggle against terrorism.

Throughout this book Dr Billings sensitively engages with some complex ideas. Did Jesus see himself as leading a pacifist movement? Did he commit his followers to non-violence? Can Clergy fight? What about blessed are the peacemakers?

This isn't just a book for Christians interested in war. This is a book for all Christians, be they lay or clergy, who want to seriously engage with and be involved in the real world as it stands today, warts and all. Unique, enlightening and often amusing, if you want one book on your shelf which you will not only enjoy reading but also use as reference material for Christian thought on war – this is the one to own.

Per Ardua

Rev (Sqn Ldr) Matt Stevens, RAF

Chester, T. (2014). *You Can Pray*. Downers Grove: IVP.

A paradox lurks beneath the surface of Tim Chester's latest book. He wants to affirm his belief that Christian faith is all about grace, which in the context of a discussion of prayer means he asserts his belief that God the Father loves to hear us pray, God the Son makes every prayer pleasing to God and God the Holy Spirit helps us as we pray. He wants us to think of prayer as a child asking her father for help, and to be confident that our prayers are good enough because Christ is always good enough. Prayer is not really about what we do, it is about what Jesus has done for us. So far, so good. The paradox comes with the fact that Chester is also dissatisfied with his prayer life. In discussing his quiet time routine, he describes how, having decided to set aside an hour a day to read his Bible and pray 'every day, there's a point between eight and nine o'clock when I decide my work is more urgent than God's, that my contribution is more important than his,' and he stops his quiet time and begins answering his emails or doing other work. So having told us that prayer should be all about grace, he now castigates himself for having broken his own (arbitrary) rule, for failing to meet a legalistic expectation that he had set himself. Having read *You Can Pray* right through, I really wanted to ask Tim Chester whether he recognised this paradox between grace and discipline, and if so, why he decided not to talk about it. He's written a good and helpful book on prayer that could have been an outstanding book on prayer if he

had spent more time honestly wrestling with this question, which lies at the heart of developing our prayer lives. We pray in response to God's grace, but grace does not excuse indiscipline. How should the two be reconciled? It is not that he does not touch on this issue, it is that he does not explicitly state that this is the core issue.

There are some fantastic insights in this book, and I will be incorporating some of Chester's ideas in my own prayer life and encouraging others to do so as well. His prayers modelled on Bible passages are good examples of a practice I have often encouraged. His suggestion that the Lord's Prayer is a prayer of a new exodus is one that repays careful and patient further study. His proposal that our priorities in prayer should be the glory of God, the mercy of God, and the promises of God, provides rich ground for developing our personal prayer lives. His emphasis on grace-shaped, grace-directed prayer lives is a vital perspective many lose sight of. His encouragement to pray Trinitarian prayers is essential for keeping our prayer lives genuinely Christian. Yet despite all these strengths, I found his arguments a little glib and over simplistic in places. To give one example, his analogy of the Prime Minister's children seeing him as representing how we as Christians can speak to our Heavenly Father is trite and untrue. It is highly unlikely that the Prime Minister's children can see him whenever they want to. Being his children may mean they have more access to him than I do, but they cannot see him whenever they want and they cannot (I hope) influence policy decisions for the government of the United Kingdom. Moreover, his discussion of why we pray seemed to conflate and confuse formal church services, formal (and informal) prayer meetings and times of personal prayer.

I think *You Can Pray* will be beneficial reading for those who are genuinely asking the question, 'Can I pray?' It provides much encouragement to think critically about our habits of prayer and provides some excellent models and ideas for enriching our prayers. But I'm going to have to look elsewhere for help in gracefully disciplining my prayer life.

Tom Wilson
Gloucester

**DeYoung, K. (2013). *Busy: A [Mercifully] Short Book About a [Really] Big Problem*.
Downers Grove: IVP .**

Kevin DeYoung writes as a person who struggles with busyness, but wants to grow, not as someone who has it together. He speaks from personal experience of various kinds of busyness at different stages of his life. He provides an overview of some of the issues and challenges of contemporary life, including the levels of complexity and choice that we have, while at the same time acknowledging appropriate busyness.

DeYoung says 'I want to understand what's going on in the world and in my heart to make me feel the way I do' (17) and how to change. For the most part he achieves this – he provides insight into specific discrete issues around busyness both within us as humans and

within our environment. The length of the book probably precluded him making further connections between the different issues he highlights.

DeYoung identifies three danger of busyness: 'busyness can ruin our joy' (26), 'busyness can rob our hearts' (28) and 'busyness can cover up the rot in our souls' (30). He then goes on to investigate seven diagnoses: our pride, our perception of God's calling, priorities, parenting, technology, rest and the place of suffering. In the first two, DeYoung focuses on our expectations and identity and God's call. He challenges readers to question what motivates our busyness and what God calls us as finite human beings to do: 'Am I trying to do good or to make myself look good?' (40).

In the section on technology he acknowledges that the growth of digital technology brings 'new capabilities *and* new dangers' (79). He seeks to help readers explore the impact of technology in their own lives, how they use it and what changes they might implement. In his final diagnosis, DeYoung suggests that one of the reasons that we struggle with busyness is that we do not expect to suffer. He argues that as Christians we have a task/ mission, we work, and we bear burdens; therefore it is natural and appropriate for us to be busy and tired at times.

In contrast, DeYoung finishes with a section reflecting on the need to place God first and prioritising time with God, because 'We won't say no to more craziness until we can say yes to more Jesus' (118). This book is a good starting place to think through busyness. It is easy and therefore quick to read (and has bite sized chunks that are easily read on their own). It acknowledges some of the ambiguities in making choices about busyness and has helpful suggestions to try out.

Fiona Gregson
Birmingham

Overdorf, D. (2013). *One Year to Better Preaching: 52 Exercises to Hone your Skills*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic.

Everyone from essayist Malcolm Gladwell, to Matthew Syed the former England Number One table tennis player, to the rapper Maclemore, to my children's maths teachers seem to be preaching the virtues of excellence through practice. And when preachers across the world are spending thousands of hours in their ministry careers both preparing and delivering sermons, it is always worth checking whether we are getting any better at it. I would love to be a better preacher and so when this new book from Daniel Overdorf was available for review I jumped at the opportunity.

The idea driving this book is that by implementing these 52 (and extra bonus) exercises preachers will improve their craft. Each short chapter provides a short rationale for the exercise, the exercise itself and then two or three people who have tried it commenting on

their experiences. It's a neat structure and I particularly appreciated the fact that the author had got people to try it out. I applaud all those who are committed to improving their preaching.

There were some helpful and innovative ideas in the book:

- Lots of preachers would benefit from having a 'Feed-Forward Group.'
- We should all definitely experiment with 'a different sermon form.'
- I'm a firm believer in encouraging 'texting during your sermon.'

I do however have a couple of reservations. Firstly the exercises are a mixed bunch. Some of them are interesting and engaging, others appear rather random and others are patronising. Rather than hammering down on certain key ideas and perfecting them over and over, or developing an on-going mechanism for continual improvement, the approach suggested in this book is more scattergun. I would have liked to see some tips for overarching development. Sadly some of the responses at the end of the chapters from people who have tried the exercise also seem a bit anaemic. 'I tried it. It worked.'

The cover design makes a lazy assumption that the preacher will be a middle aged male white man. I don't like to judge a book by its cover, but perhaps in this case it betrays a lack of due consideration that is missing throughout this disappointingly below par book.

Krish Kandiah

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Mathewson, S.D. (2013). *Preaching the Four Gospels with Confidence and Preaching the Hard Words of Jesus*. MA: Peabody.

These two volumes by the same author are in a series titled 'The Preacher's Toolbox' with the sub-title 'Communicating God's Word with Power'. As happens more frequently in the USA than in the UK, the author has held senior pastoral ministries alongside responsibility for various academic programmes on preaching. He writes from a fairly conservative evangelical position.

The first book is a thoughtful introduction to preaching from the gospels. Chapter 1 is about using lengthy passages, and how to introduce congregations to the plan of a whole gospel. Chapter 2 surprisingly discusses the relation between the gospels and Paul's epistles. Chapter 3 looks at the Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts. Chapter 4 is on alleged contradictions between parallel accounts, using redaction criticism. Chapter 5 discusses Jesus' confrontation with Satan and demons. This is well done, but I think a chapter on Christ's healing ministry would have been helpful before the deeper waters of "exorcism". The distinction between descriptive and prescriptive aspects is usefully introduced. Chapter 6 is about clarifying the author's objective in a given section, and the discipline of preparing a sermon that aligns with that. The issue of following the *example* of Jesus is helpfully

addressed. Chapter 7 discusses issues of the authority of the four canonical gospels in the face of both *Jesus Seminar* scepticism and recent appeals to newly discovered Gnostic-type “gospels”. Various helpful commentaries and other books are recommended throughout, so there is no bibliography. Neither are there indexes. The book grew on me as I worked through it. I commend it as a basic introduction, or a useful revision for maturer preachers.

The second book is also written with clarity and care. Chapter 1 introduces some of the apparently harsh and shocking words that came from Jesus. Chapter 2 is about the radical demands of discipleship and deals helpfully with hyperbole and metaphor. Chapter 3 concerns sex and marriage; chapter 4 is on hell and judgement. I was not convinced by the defence of eternal *conscious* punishment. Annihilation is eternal in consequence and punishment – and that, surely, is the thrust of gospel teaching. Chapter 5 on the end-times, chapter 6 concerning God’s sovereignty and human freedom, chapter 7 on the law of Moses and chapter 8 on prayer, faith and miracles are all judicious and helpful introductions to issues which can readily trip the young (and not-so-young) preacher. Chapter 9 is about what Jesus said to the Pharisees. So again, this is another good basic introduction and/or revision for the more experienced preacher.

Gordon Khurt
Aylesbury

Torrance, D. W. and Stein, J. eds. (2012). *Embracing Truth: Homosexuality and the Word of God*. St Andrews: Handsel Press.

A great deal has been written on the subject of homosexuality recently. It is of particular importance to evangelical Christians for a number of reasons. The correct interpretation of Scripture lies at the heart of this debate and this has a direct bearing on the question of homosexual practice. The issue is particularly pressing for Anglicans (I am one), since there are many clergy, including bishops who are openly in favour of allowing homosexual practice within its ranks. This book is an honest attempt to grapple with the whole question from an evangelical perspective. There are five chapters dealing with Christian belief, three on the specific question of The Bible and homosexual practice, and four under the general heading of Wisdom and Obedience.

On Christian belief, David Torrance contributes three chapters setting out the basic evangelical position. He writes as a minister in the Church of Scotland and he is concerned at the drift of that Church in a liberal direction. In a brief chapter on same sex relations: some theological pointers, he makes the valuable point that ‘far from elevating same sex relations to the status of marriage, it achieves ‘equivalence’ by demoting marriage and the marriage covenant to the level of partnership’. Since the publication of this book, the government decision to allow same sex marriage has passed into law and the first crop of ‘marriages’ has taken place. It is now clear that many (though not all) individuals in civil partnerships intend

to upgrade their relationship to one of 'marriage', even though in doing so, they acquire no additional rights.

In the section on the Bible and homosexual practice, there are two chapters written by Robert Gagnon whose book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* was published in 2001. These chapters offer a valuable overview of the exegesis of key biblical texts. In chapter 10 he addresses the question of accommodation and pastoral concern. It is frequently asserted that Scripture does not indict committed homosexual unions as opposed to casual or promiscuous ones. Thus, Paul's strong statements in Romans 1, so the argument runs, refer only to promiscuous relationships and not committed and faithful ones. It is also argued that neither Paul nor Jesus had knowledge of modern psychology and their view would have been different had they possessed such knowledge. Gagnon rightly dismisses this as dangerous and unprovable at best. In short Gagnon shows that certainly for Paul, pastoral sensitivity did not entail laxity towards same sex relationships in any form. From what we know from the Gospels, Jesus' view would not have been significantly different.

A most moving chapter by Calum MacKellar describes the journey of a Christian who has wrestled with his own homosexual orientation including some difficult attitudes to be found in the church, but also loving and accepting ones. MacKellar freely admits that he does not understand why he is a homosexual by inclination, but accepts the difficult path he must tread as a celibate supported by God's love and grace.

This helpful collection of essays would be a good place to start for any who are baffled or confused by this issue. It sets out fairly and clearly the biblical case for resisting the huge cultural pressures to accept the status quo even if leads to conflict, accusations of homophobia or worse. It seems certain too, that sooner or later, ordained ministers will have to take a stand if our churches capitulate to demands for same sex blessings and even 'marriages' in church.

Howard Bigg
Cambridge

Tripp P. D. (2013). *Sex and Money: empty pleasures, satisfying grace*. Downers Grove: IVP.

In this book Paul Tripp shows how we distort the good gifts that God gives us, we put them in the place of God as a source of satisfaction and pleasure. So often we believe what the world tells us about sex and money and seek in them what only God can give us. Tripp uses illustrations from people's lives and shares his own experiences to help us see how we fall in the trap of living with God not in the centre. The problem he makes clear from the beginning is not sex and money but us. As he writes 'Your life is not about you; it is about him (God) ... It's only when he is in his proper place in your heart, that is, at the centre, that everything else will be in its appropriate place and balance of life'. He asks probing questions throughout the book such as 'What does it look like for me to recognise the Creator's

ownership over this thing as I use it in my daily living?’ which help us see how we are living and what issues we need to deal with.

He takes us through the area of sex and money showing us how we can fall into the traps of buying into what the world teaches. He also helpfully shows how legalism can be another trap we can fall into. If we organise people’s lives and give them the right set of rules with some form of accountability we can help them live right lives. Yet we know that, that doesn’t work either – many of will have tried to live like that. Tripp has a great understanding of people and how they live as well as being very honest about his own struggles. This is not a man preaching at you but a wise Christian brother who wants to get alongside you and help you learn more about how God’s word and spirit can transform your life.

It is a book that is deeply challenging. Do not read it if you want a comfortable life! As Tripp helps us look at two major areas on our lives they shed light on how we seek to live as Christians and will throw up challenges for you whether you are married or single rich or poor you will struggle in each area. We all struggle with problems of self-worship and self-rule

As I began the book I did just wonder if I was just going to end up at the end of the book feeling very convicted but also rather guilty and hopeless, but I should have remembered other books that I have read by Tripp and had more confidence. This is a book that convicts but it is so much more. Tripp helps us see how ultimately it is only God’s grace that can free us from pursuing unfulfilling pursuits. This book contains great theology which is grounded in everyday living. There is a wealth of practical guidance which encourages us to seek satisfaction not horizontally but vertically, in our relationship with God. We do not have to fight our battles alone. Tripp shows how God and God’s community can help us in our struggles and how the power of God and his amazing grace can transform our lives. Since just finishing the book I have been recommending it to my friends and basically anyone who will listen to me! If we can grasp the basic principles that Tripp is teaching through this book it will help us on many areas of our lives.

Who should buy it? Well definitely ministers and for anyone who is involved in pastoral ministry but really everyone! Even if you think you don’t really have problems in the areas of sex and money I think that after reading it you will see that we all struggle to some extent in those areas because none of us are living perfect lives with God totally at the centre of our lives. We are still works in progress. God has not finished with us – thank goodness. This is a book which righty will challenge you but it is a book which will draw you closer to God as you hear more about his life-changing grace.

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