

Book Reviews

Lee B. Spitzer, *Sympathy, Solidarity, and Silence: Three European Baptist Responses to the Holocaust* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2022), 231 pages. ISBN: 9780817018351.

Reviewed by Brian Talbot

Revd Dr Brian R. Talbot is minister of Broughty Ferry Baptist Church, Dundee, Scotland, and a Senior Research Fellow at IBTS Amsterdam.
briantalbot2008@gmail.com

The Holocaust was one of the most horrifying events of the twentieth century. From the safe vantage point of a later generation, it is easy to assume that professing Christians and other people of good character would find such behaviour totally unacceptable. However, the record of history is much more mixed, with varied responses to these events in different countries. Dr Spitzer, through careful use of primary sources from the era, has set out to analyse the responses of Baptists in the United States and Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. His first book, *Baptists, Jews and the Holocaust: The Hand of Sincere Friendship*, covered the responses of Baptists in America. This second volume looks at the pattern of responses from Christian communities in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.

Part one of the book covers responses from the United Kingdom in relation to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland and the Baptist Union of Scotland. Led by their General Secretary, M. E. Aubrey, a clear steer came from the BUGBI to deplore the increasing antisemitic campaigns of the German government from 1933. Members of churches were urged to create 'Friends of Israel' committees and to do what they could to assist the Jewish people. Initial enthusiastic support from members of the churches included protests against antisemitism, welcoming Jewish refugees into their homes and even in one case welcoming a Jewish follower of Jesus as an interim pastor in 1942. Scottish Baptists displayed similar concern for the plight of the Jewish people. However, the author notes that these British Baptist Unions, like other Baptist Unions in Europe, appeared a little too eager

to restore tiers of fellowship with German and Italian Baptists, and insufficiently willing to provide practical aid for the Jewish survivors of the concentration camps.

Part two covers the response of French Baptists to the plight of the Jewish people. Thousands of Jewish people fled from Germany to France in the 1930s. French Baptists demonstrated solidarity with the Jews by organising what practical assistance they could provide to support them in these difficult years, in partnership with the American Board of Missions to the Jews (ABMJ), despite their government's reluctance to play its part in this humanitarian crisis. The dedicated support of French Baptists continued even after the Nazi occupation of their country. They demonstrated significant and sustained courage in maintaining this ministry in the face of a hostile regime between 1942 and 1944. By contrast, in part three, the silence of German Baptists concerning the plight of the Jews needed an explanation. With the rare exceptions of individuals who took Jews into their homes and the notable courage of Arnold Koster, pastor of Vienna Baptist Church, who preached and campaigned against the Nazis, far too many Baptist leaders and church members were complicit with the regime during these dreadful years. Unfortunately, in the post-war years, the desire to restore friendly relations with Baptist Unions that had been broken by the second war, was not accompanied by an equal desire to hold German Baptist leaders accountable for their support for Nazism and failure to support the Jewish people.

This is an excellent scholarly account of Baptist responses to the Holocaust. It is also very readable and the author demonstrates a clear moral vision throughout. In view of the alarming rise in the number of reported antisemitic incidents in recent years in the United Kingdom, the problem of antisemitism is just as clearly a major contemporary issue today. I would strongly urge all readers of *JEBS* to read this important book.

Paul S. Fiddes (ed.), *Loving the Planet: Interfaith Essays on Ecology, Love, and Theology* (Oxford: Firedint Publishing, 2022), 229 pages. ISBN: 9781999940744.

Reviewed by Alistair Cuthbert

Revd Dr Alistair J. Cuthbert is minister of Falkirk Baptist Church, Scotland and currently a St Leonard's College Postgraduate Associate at the University of St Andrews.

ajc35@st-andrews.ac.uk

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3723-1877>

Loving the Planet is the second edited volume to emerge from the 'Study of Love in Religion' project which started in 2012 and is based at Regent's Park College, Oxford under the tutelage of Paul S. Fiddes. This specific set of multi-faith essays on 'eco-love-theology' came from an online conference held in 2021 entitled 'Loving the Planet'. Following on from the edited essays of the first volume, *Love as Common Ground* (Lexington Books, 2021), the essays in this second volume continue the overall DNA and aim of the project: namely, to unearth a place of common ground where followers of the three Abrahamic faiths can explore and identify areas of convergence and divergence with regard to loving planet earth at this imminent time of ecological crisis.

The edited volume comprises eight essays: four authored by Christian scholars, two by Islamic writers, and two by Jewish theologians. The essays are as constructive as they are reiterative and investigative. The opening chapter by DeMoor compares the intersubjectivity of nature with that of human life and posits some new theological ideas such as 'interbeing', 'lovescapes', and 'edge-spaces'. These ideas overlap with Fiddes' previous work on 'inscapes' as well as the Celtic Christian concept of 'thin-places' where the imminent and transcendent meet. These concepts naturally align with the intersubjectivity of the webs of communal relationships which point towards a greater interconnection between humanity and nature. Differently, the other two essays by Christian thinkers, Drummond and Marcar, aim to re-capture past sage advice and

wisdom from the likes of St Cuthbert and Thomas Traherne and rework it in order to re-sacralise planet earth and establish human goodwill and action towards planet earth as an act of divine worship which will bring us closer to God.

Meanwhile, the chapters by Jewish thinkers are constructive but from a polemical and corrective angle, since both Raphael and Rothenberg acknowledge that there is no command to love the planet in Jewish literature and so, historically, the emphasis upon transcendence has maintained the boundary between God, humanity, and planet earth. Similarly, Islamic scholars Zekrgoo, Tajer, and Moqbel construct eco-love-theology by reimagining past Islamic poetry and moral economics within a new understanding of nature as an expression of divine love, thereby producing different ways to think of God and nature as more imminent and inter-related.

The final chapter is Fiddes' summary of the previous seven essays, in which themes are synthesised and then used constructively to create elements of an eco-love-theology, which address some of the pressing ecological issues currently facing the earth and humankind. As expected, Fiddes does a stellar job in eliciting certain themes from the other essays, interlacing them with some of the common theological ideas from his own academic *oeuvre*, and presenting a helpful eco-theology for the current *zeitgeist*. Overall, his account contains a greater sense of imminence due to an increased panentheistic presence of God, and so loving God equates more with loving planet earth, since it is *actually* in God.

For those invested in ecumenical dialogue about urgent moral issues that currently face the human race, this edited volume is a welcome contribution to be engaged with. For some, however, the fine line between panentheism and pantheism could be viewed as too blurred in the attempt by the authors to equate loving nature and planet earth with loving God.

Ian Randall, *Mission Not Impossible: Baptist Missionaries' Experiences and Reflections* (Didcot: The Baptist Historical Society and BMS World Mission, 2023), 188 pages. ISBN: 9780903166492.

Reviewed by Arthur Brown

Revd Dr Arthur Brown currently serves with BMS World Mission as the Director for Mission. Previously he served as a BMS mission worker in Lebanon for thirteen years. ahbrown@bmsworldmission.org

This book is a project of the Baptist Historical Society, the Centre for Baptist Studies at Regent's Park College, Oxford, and BMS World Mission. Ian Randall expertly draws together the memories and experiences of seventy former BMS mission workers. Randall connected with respondents who served with BMS in diverse contexts from the early 1950s onwards. Using prescribed questions, respondents were asked to reflect on their journey into world mission and the insights they gained from their time with BMS.

The book follows a helpful progression that relates to the lived experience of those respondents. After an introduction, the author carefully weaves anecdotal responses into a very readable narrative, bringing his own valuable insights along the way.

Respondents were asked, among other things, about how and when they experienced a call to mission and significant influences on that call; what was helpful or missing from the training they received; how decisions on where they would serve were made and how they felt about this; challenges faced on arrival in their new contexts; areas of work they were involved in and significant experiences and achievements; how they were changed as a result of their experiences; the legacy of BMS and wider mission activity; how they view world Christianity today and the differences compared to their time overseas.

This important contribution to mission history and thinking is not simply a reflection on former things. It is also far from an idealised or romantic notion of global mission activity. Faithful women and men are honest about the difficulties they faced. They, with the help of Randall, bring important insights and questions that warrant further thought for contemporary mission leaders, both within global and UK mission settings. Themes and insights are highlighted which are of significant relevance for the European church in the twenty-first

century. These include those relating to hospitality and welcome; the place of the local church in global mission; the outlook on the world with regard to injustice; a focus on materialism; and the realities of white privilege and power in mission. These are all important issues for the church to engage with, and such valuable insights can be drawn not only from the global church but from those who have served it interculturally.

This is an inspiring read. Great things were achieved by God, who used ordinary people who were willing to attempt great things for God. However, it is also true that things did not always work out in the ways people may have hoped for. This is the reality of mission and ministry. And yet, it is the faithfulness that shines through, both of God and of those seeking to follow God's calling on their lives. Former BMS General Director, mission worker, and respondent David Kerrigan rightly concludes, 'The role of BMS World Mission has always been changing, as it needs to in order to play its part — a changing part — in an ever-changing world.' This book will be a valuable resource for those in mission leadership within and beyond BMS as we continue to listen, learn, and develop our approach to global and local mission.

Ashley Cocksworth, Rachel Starr, and Stephen Burns (eds), with Nicola Slee, *From the Shores of Silence: Conversations in Feminist Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2023), 236 pages. ISBN: 9780334060963.

Reviewed by Lina Toth

Revd Dr Lina Toth is International Director for the Langham Scholars programme of Langham Partnership. She is a Senior Research Fellow at IBTS Amsterdam and Associate Lecturer in Practical Theology at the Scottish Baptist College.

Lina.Toth@langhampartnership.org

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0194-7573>

A few years ago (see *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 22, no.1), I had the pleasure of reviewing Nicola Slee's book, *Fragments for Fractured Times* (London: SCM, 2020). This time, it is a review of a volume written in honour of this poet-theologian, by as diverse a group of former students, colleagues, and friends as are Slee's literary and theological interests. Many of the authors, as expected, are based in academia, but some are clergy, creative writers, or leaders in different Christian

institutions or initiatives. Their contributions are roughly divided into four parts, or ‘four waves pulled by the energetic rhythms of Nicola Slee’s own writing’ (p. 11). Each of these parts opens up with one of Slee’s own poems.

The titles of the first two parts are self-explanatory: ‘Poetry’ and ‘Faith and Feminism’. The third is entitled ‘The Praying Body’ and explores aspects of practising one’s Christian faith and spirituality, informed by Slee’s feminist practical theology. The last part, ‘Moving Theology’, is the least defined, and consists of only two chapters which, although rich in what they have to offer individually, do not seem to share a common thread — at least not one I could trace.

Almost as an echo to Slee’s *Fragments for Fractured Times, From the Shores of Silence* displays fragments, tensions, and fault lines between different approaches to and expressions of faith, in and between its thirteen chapters. Some of this is no doubt due to the nature of the festschrift genre, but it also seems to be an intentional reflection of Slee’s own ways of crossing disciplinary and literary boundaries. What comes across very clearly in this choir of different voices is the importance of relationships — not only as an integral way of doing creative and theological work, but also as a testimony to Slee’s own work of connecting people and inviting them into collaborative projects and processes. One such network — the Research Symposium of the Faith Lives of Women and Girls — was born out of one of Slee’s most influential works, *Women’s Faith Development* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), providing space and connection to a generation of theologians in an emerging field.

Given Slee’s feminist commitments, unsurprisingly the collection includes some difficult-to-stomach reflections on violence against women and girls in Scripture, and the violence that is still perpetrated against them today. Women’s lived experience is explored in the contributors’ attention to the ‘ordinary’ aspects of life, including the significance — and the potential — of their bodily realities. Other themes come to the surface, too, such as worship and prayer, leadership, and race. As such, this book would be of interest to those following

Slee's work, those interested in practical theology and/or feminist theology, but also those drawn to the poetic and spiritual languages of faith.

Dennis C. Bustin and Barry H. Howson, *Zealous for the Lord: The Life and Thought of Seventeenth Century Baptist Hanserd Knollys* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 121 pages. ISBN: 9781532636288.

Reviewed by Brian Talbot

Revd Dr Brian R. Talbot is minister of Broughty Ferry Baptist Church, Dundee, Scotland, and a Senior Research Fellow at IBTS Amsterdam
briantalbot2008@gmail.com

Zealous for the Lord: The Life and Thought of Seventeenth Century Baptist Hanserd Knollys is a short, popular biography of a key seventeenth-century English Baptist pastor, written by two well-known Baptist historians who have written substantial earlier works on Knollys. Barry Howson wrote *“Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions”: The Question of Orthodoxy regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys (c 1599–1691)* in 2001 and Dennis Bustin penned *Paradox and Perseverance: Hanserd Knollys, Particular Baptist Pioneer in Seventeenth-Century England* (2006). In view of the rising cost of academic publications, this shorter study was produced for a more general audience, rather than for scholars specialising in seventeenth-century church history.

The authors were convinced of the importance of promoting early Baptist history, and in particular the life and work of this influential Baptist minister. The book is divided into eight short chapters covering Knollys' early years; the civil war and Christian liberty; the Commonwealth years that included controversies with Quakers; ‘Persecution, Ministry and Writing’; then two chapters covering his views on ‘Christian Life, Church and Ministry’ and ‘Knollys and His Eschatology’. The final chapter contains lessons we can learn from his life and ministry.

This book is warmly welcomed as an introductory study on the life of an influential seventeenth-century Baptist minister. At the start of the book is a helpful timeline of Knollys' extremely long life, giving the key dates of the most important events that took place. The book also

contains helpful footnotes that direct attention to other primary and secondary works for readers who wish to engage in further studies of Knollys' life and work or of Baptist history more generally in this time period.

Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven (ed.), *Baptists in Early North America Vol VII: 1st Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2021), 472 pages. ISBN: 9780881467864.

Reviewed by Lon Graham

Dr Lon Graham is the Vice President of New Mexico Baptist Children's Home in Portales, New Mexico, and a Research Fellow at IBTS Amsterdam.

panicbird@yahoo.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3079-908X>

Work in the archives lies at the heart of historical research. Finding the material, combing through the dry and dusty papers, transcribing the sometimes-near-illegible writing... this is a rite of passage for all burgeoning historians. The major limitation of this way of things is readily apparent: it is open only to those who have the ability, financial and otherwise, to journey to and spend time in the archives. Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven has brought archival research closer to all in making material relating to the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia available for a wider audience. The Baptist church in Philadelphia occupies an outsized role in the history of the Baptists in the United States, and the time-period covered in the work was vitally important for both the growing denomination and country.

Church records are the stuff of congregational life. Sermons may give insight into a church's history 'from above', from the point of view of a singular church leader, but records of congregational meetings give a much closer look into church life 'from below', where the people, ostensibly the centre of gravity for a Baptist church, have a voice. However, even that has limitations, which are seen in the records of the Philadelphia Baptist church. For example, the major theological issue raised during the period covered by the book (Calvinism vs universalism) is covered by the victors in that debate (the Calvinists), a group that, at one time, was the minority. The voice of the universalist contingent is largely silent.

Despite these limitations, church records are, in many ways, decidedly Baptist, as they give insight into the discernment processes of the congregation. They show the issues that faced the church, the personalities involved, and how the people moved forward in what often proved to be difficult times. The issues that faced the Baptist church in Philadelphia are largely unsurprising: financial problems and difficulties in finding and keeping a suitable pastor — two issues that were by no means mutually exclusive.

Van Broekhoven offers both summaries of the archival material as well as the very words of the record books. When the words of the records themselves are presented, Van Broekhoven has largely preserved them as they were written. This means the inclusion of abbreviations, archaic spellings found in the original, and even marked-out words. While those unfamiliar with the spectrum of eighteenth-century English spelling conventions may find this hard to read at first, it puts the reader as close as possible to the archives themselves. Van Broekhoven also offers helpful explanatory notes. For example, a ‘John Blackwell’ is mentioned as a possibility for supplying the pulpit, and she notes that ‘John’ was ‘written in later in pencil and in a different hand’. These are valuable additions, again putting the reader as close as possible to the archives themselves.

Van Broekhoven has done all those interested in Baptist and American history a favour in publishing these church records. Her work is highly recommended.

Corneliu Constantineanu and Peter Penner (eds), *Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Global Library, 2022), 1676 pages. ISBN: 9781783688227.

Reviewed by Toivo Pilli

Revd Dr Toivo Pilli is Director of Baptist Studies at IBTS Amsterdam, and Editor of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies*.
pilli@ibts.eu

This is a contextually informed, easy-to-read-and-apply commentary of the whole Bible. One may doubt if one-volume commentaries can say much about the biblical text. This volume does. It offers fresh insights,

especially because the editors and authors have made a conscious effort to interpret the books of the Bible from a geographically specific angle. They are using knowledge, images, and experience from their own Eastern and Central European framework, at the same time being informed by wider biblical scholarship. This is not the only volume of its kind. Langham Publishing has carried out other similar projects. Recently published are the *Africa Bible Commentary* in English and French, the *Slavic Bible Commentary* in Russian, and the *Arab Bible Commentary* in Arabic, to mention only a few titles.

As the interpretative context covers many former Communist countries, the comparisons and experiences emerging from the Communist past, illustrating interpretations of biblical texts on Christian life and calling, occur more than once on the pages of this volume. Perhaps it will take another couple of decades before the changes that occurred after the collapse of this political system will find their way convincingly into similar volumes. Post-Communist changes and what these actually mean need to settle more deeply into the cultural soil. However, the work done at this time is scholarly and offers fresh avenues into the understanding of Scriptures.

Certainly, there are other commentaries that set their goal to be strictly academic. These often assume biblical scholars to be their audience. This commentary is different: it is written by scholars to practitioners — pastors, students, preachers, and Bible study group leaders. It is a helpful tool also in Bible schools which do not pursue only scholarly details but are committed to help lay leaders in their ministry. This, no doubt, does not exclude academic credibility! As a person who preaches regularly, I have turned to this volume more than once. I have always found it helpful, a tool that opens my mind to inspiring explanations or offers helpful suggestions to probe more deeply into the meaning of the passage.

This book is an important tool for church workers and students in Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, I am convinced that its relevance is wider. I recommend my Western colleagues to consult this commentary in order to better understand the tradition from which it has emerged. For a long time, theologians and ministers in Central and Eastern Europe, many of them under totalitarian Communist regimes,

relied on Western sources in their preparation for preaching. Now, the Central and Eastern European Protestant scholars are contributing their interpretative work to their colleagues who live in other contexts, theologically and culturally. Biblical scholarship, tinted by the regional traditions and emphases in church life, is vigorous in Post-Communist Europe, and it has much to offer to the wider world, not only regionally, but also globally. This volume is proof of this.

James S. Currie, *The Church Beyond the Wall: Life and Ministry in the Former East Germany* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 91 pages. ISBN:9781532652219.

Reviewed by Ksenija Magda

Dr Ksenija Magda is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Zagreb's Centre for Protestant Theology 'Matthias Flacius Illyricus'. Her interests are in contextualising the New Testament for finding guidance in the burning questions of today.

ksenija.magda@tfmvi.hr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9824-063X>

This study by the American pastor, James S. Currie, is a spin-off from his doctoral thesis 'Christianity and Marxism: A Historical Perspective on the Role of Ideology in the Thought of Hanfried Müller', defended in 1997 at Rice University, Houston, Texas. Currie wanted 'to demonstrate the importance of one's starting point in articulating the gospel' (p. viii) by juxtaposing two Protestant theologians in East Germany (GDR): Hanfried Müller, professor at the Humboldt University in (East) Berlin, and the university pastor from Halle, Johannes Hamel. Both were influenced by Barth and Bonhoeffer but made different decisions about living as Christians in the GDR. This was because Müller's 'starting point' was Marxism, and Hamel's was the Bible, finds Currie.

The booklet is divided into five chapters. The first three are about German historical background, the East German leaders, and the theology of Barth and Bonhoeffer. The last two evaluate Müller and Hamel respectively.

Currie could have linked the occasion for this book to the thirtieth anniversary of the 1989 revolution. Reading the book with this

kind of expectation has, however, been disappointing. I read it as a biblical scholar who engages German historical criticism; as someone who lived in West Germany during the 1970s and who worked in Yugoslavian communism in the 1980s. I also read it as a seminary student whose American missiology teacher was deported from Yugoslavia as a US military spy.

Currie's book is inadequate in the face of the severe deconstruction of all segments of German life, thought, and society after World War Two. Refuting 'Christian socialism' portrayed by an alleged sold-out soul such as Müller's is not convincing. Currie notices that GDR communism happened on fully Protestant soil but fails to elaborate how that matters to GDR post-war history. There is also little talk about the complexity of 'Protestantism' in Germany in the early twentieth century. Currie does not notice that Hamel's Halle was both obliged to liberal historical criticism (with Schleiermacher, Salamo, and Semmler) and to the so-called 'Halle' pietism by August Hermann Franke. Both emphasised the Bible, but in different ways.

So, Currie's conclusion comes mostly from bias. In his doctoral thesis he insisted on the necessity of a critical approach to *all* socio-political systems. Here, he clearly favours capitalism and judges Müller for his voluntary exodus to GDR in 1952. Hamel's approach is termed 'biblical' because he engages the Bible in public speech. Currie does not distinguish between the different audiences. Müller converses with secular academia and Müller's language does not always align neatly with 'Western' conventions. Hamel lectures pietist students. Müller must develop a new language to engage Marxist academia. Hamel can retell Bible stories in a traditional way.

This book opens the door slightly but enough to make the reader curious. Then all these questions about history and the Bible, and about living in the world as a Christian, stomp out with new force. Is there more to Müller's unusual life decisions than a 'Western' theological mindset can box in its moulds?

Jameson E. Ross, *Bonhoeffer as Biblical Interpreter: Reading Scripture in 1930s Germany* (London: T&T Clark, 2023), 202 pages. ISBN: 9780567702241.

Reviewed by Scott Kohler

Scott Kohler is a former student at IBTS Amsterdam and Lead Pastor of Bedford Baptist Church in Nova Scotia, Canada.
scottkohler1977@gmail.com

In *Bonhoeffer as Biblical Interpreter*, Jameson Ross (Lecturer in NT and Early Church History at Trinity College Queensland) offers a helpful analysis of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's engagement with the Bible. He focuses especially on the 1930s, a pivotal decade that saw Bonhoeffer as an academic lecturer in Berlin, a pastor in London, and a leader in the Confessing Church in Germany, famously directing the seminary at Finkenwalde from 1935 to 1937. At each of these posts, the Bible occupied a place of prominence in Bonhoeffer's work. Ross argues that throughout these years Bonhoeffer was a true 'interpreter' of the Bible. He seeks to demonstrate not only Bonhoeffer's sensitivity and sophistication in reading the Bible, but also an underlying continuity in his approach, beginning with his student years in the mid-1920s.

We are presented with close readings of three pairs of texts: two selections from the Berlin lectures on Genesis 1–3 that were published as *Creation and Fall*; two sermons from his London pastorate; and two passages from his classic *Discipleship*. These three sets of close readings are illuminated by two theoretical works by Bonhoeffer. A 1925 student paper contrasting 'Historical and Pneumatological Interpretation of Scripture' serves as an introductory chapter to all the readings, whilst a 1935 Finkenwalde lecture on 'Contemporizing New Testament Texts' functions as an 'Interlude' chapter between the London sermons and the passages from *Discipleship*.

The volume has a very tidy structure, which makes it a good introduction to Bonhoeffer's use of the Bible. Ross gives each chapter a biographical introduction as well, a welcome feature in a book that could seem only of interest to specialists. And the close readings themselves offer a good and plausible account of Bonhoeffer's concerns. All of this makes it possible to recommend *Bonhoeffer as Biblical Interpreter* to any who are interested in Bonhoeffer's approach to the Bible.

Ross's contention that the 1925 student paper is seminal for Bonhoeffer's later work is less satisfying. Bonhoeffer himself seems to have noticed a significant change in his approach to the Bible in the mid-1930s. The 1935 lecture can be read more as a fresh new beginning than an elaboration of long-cherished themes.

In line with other recent Bonhoeffer interpreters, Ross also seeks to distinguish Bonhoeffer's theology of the word from evangelical approaches to the Bible *as* the Word of God. I am not so sure that Bonhoeffer is concerned to guard against an inappropriate 'confidence' (p. 126) in our use of the Bible; he seems rather to assume that the Bible, prayerfully approached, will unfailingly yield a Word from God. Bonhoeffer occasionally sounds amusingly, refreshingly, like a fundamentalist, albeit a post-liberal one who is sensitive to the layers of meaning in the text.

Even if Ross's arguments do not fully convince, his analysis is a welcome invitation to engage Bonhoeffer as an interpreter of Scripture, and the journey through a key decade is a trip worth taking.

Joseph C. L. Sawatzky, *Toward an Anabaptist-Pentecostal Vision: Exploring Ecclesial Identities in North American Mennonite Mission with Pentecostal-Type Churches in Southern Africa* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2023), 258 pages. ISBN: 9781666739114.

Reviewed by Ian Randall

Dr Ian Randall is a Senior Research Associate at the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide and a Senior Research Fellow at IBTS Amsterdam.
ian.m.randall@gmail.com

The publishers of this volume introduce it with the question: 'What does Pentecostalism, the fastest-growing Christian expression worldwide, have to do with Anabaptism?' and note that Anabaptism's Mennonite adherents have sometimes been called 'the quiet in the land'. However, the contrast brought out in this volume does not have to do with 'quietness' and 'noise'. It is more subtle: Joseph Sawatzky brings into juxtaposition what he terms the 'horizontal emphases' of Mennonite identity, as articulated in classical form in Harold Bender's *The Anabaptist*

Vision, and the ‘vertical dimension’, as evidenced in African Initiated and Pentecostal-type churches in southern Africa.

Sawatzky draws on his own experience and commitments, which have included serving in South Africa from 2006 to 2014 in Bethany Bible School, with a programme geared towards African Initiated Churches (AICs) in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. He is now part of the Mission Network with the Anabaptist-Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, USA, helping to develop the seminary’s Global Anabaptist Education initiative.

In looking at the work of a cross-cultural missionary, Sawatzky argues — following Ed and Irene Weaver, North American Mennonite missionaries — for a ‘give and receive’ model, also described as ‘learner-teacher’. This is crucial for the way he frames the book. The book seeks to explore, through on-the-ground research, often incorporating testimonies, what Mennonites in the West can learn from Pentecostal-type churches in the Global South. At the same time, the research shows that there is an awareness in South Africa of what Mennonites can bring, especially in the area of social ethics.

The book is both focused and wide-ranging. It combines biblical material with empirical evidence and with missiological discussion. Major themes are covered, such as Mennonite insights into commitments to following Jesus, community, and the way of peace, and how churches denoted as AICs think of the Spirit, worship, and leadership. Throughout, Sawatzky seeks to gain an understanding of the views of leaders and members of AICs and other Pentecostal-type churches, and the approach of Mennonite missionaries.

While there are clear areas of AIC-Mennonite divergence in priorities across the range of issues considered, Sawatzky sees possibilities for convergence. He refers to the contribution of James McClendon Jr’s ‘baptist vision’ in showing how vertical and horizontal can belong together. The final two chapters are on ‘biblical foundations’ and ‘theological pillars’ for an Anabaptist-Pentecostal vision.

With the growth of the churches of the Global South, including Anabaptist churches, this kind of study is of vital importance. Much of what is written about Anabaptism is still focused on experiences in Europe and North America. The 2012 publication, *Winds of the Spirit: A Profile of Anabaptist Churches in the Global South*, by Conrad Kanagy, Tilahun Beyene, and Richard Showalter, was ground-breaking in this respect, and it is surprising that Sawatzky does not cite it. However, what Sawatzky does is to make a powerful case for integration, with Mennonite ‘horizontal’ discipleship and Pentecostal ‘vertical’ spirituality coming together to point to what Sawatzky describes in his conclusion as ‘a robust and authentic witness to Jesus Christ, the One in whom the divine and human worlds fully meet in the power of the Spirit’.

Alexei Bodrov and Stephen M. Garret (eds), *Theology and the Political: Theopolitical Reflections on Contemporary Politics in Ecumenical Conversation* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 291 pages. ISBN: 9789004431744.

Reviewed by Tommaso Manzon

Dr Tommaso Manzon is a Research Fellow at IBTS Amsterdam.
tommaso@ibts.eu

The relationship between theology and politics is always going to be a hot, engaging, and virtually inexhaustible topic. *Theology and the Political* seeks to make a contribution to this discussion.

This is an edited volume whose composition has been supervised by Dr Alexei Bodrov, founder and rector of St. Andrew’s Biblical Theological Institute in Moscow and a researcher at the VU Amsterdam, and by Prof. Dr Stephen M. Garrett, who previously taught at Vilnius Academy of Arts and now works as Curriculum Vice-President for Global Scholars. All the essays gathered in this volume, except for two, were originally presented at a conference hosted in Belgrade in 2015 by St Andrew’s Biblical Theological Institute and the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization of Novi Sad. The book is divided into three sections bearing the titles ‘Theo-political Retrieval for Contemporary Political Practice’; ‘Theo-political Structural Analysis of

Secularity and Post-secularity'; 'Theo-political Engagement from Specific Christian Tradition'. The key to all contributions is the motif of political action as missional witness and therefore as a fundamental expression of the church's mandate to preach the gospel.

This volume's main point of strength lies in presenting a plurality of voices, methods, and perspectives, as well as a wide array of subjects. In this respect, it should be noted that this work is the product of the shared effort of scholars from different Christian backgrounds (Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic) and seeks to provide a multi-faceted perspective on issues connected to the intersection between the theological and the political. Moreover, a second point of strength lies in the interconnection proposed by virtually all the essays between 'high theory' and the ideas of big names such as Barth, Bonhoeffer, Berger, Segundo, and Moltmann (himself a contributor). Local insights are bound to specific political events and/or tradition-specific theo-political discussions (such as the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the concept of human rights or the responses of Canada's Protestant churches to the efforts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission). This approach keeps all the contributions practical, accessible, and yet thought-provoking also for those who do not belong to the specific context being treated.

The downsides of the book are the relatively small amounts of biblical exegesis involved, as well as comparatively little focus on the person of Jesus. Logically, this can be explained through the nature of the contributions which do not belong to the field of biblical studies and/or that of Christology. However, the volume would have benefited from a more integrated approach. Finally, sometimes there is a perceived lack of problematisation of the categories of modern politics. Especially with some contributions, the issue seems to be more that of fitting the proclamation of the gospel within the structures and ideas of secular liberalism, rather than that of proclaiming the gospel to the *polis*.

Jehu J. Hanciles (ed.), *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Vol. IV: The Twentieth Century: Traditions in a Global Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 449 pages. ISBN: 9780199684045.

Mark P. Hutchinson (ed.), *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Vol. V: The Twentieth Century: Themes and Variations in a Global Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 449 pages. ISBN: 9780198702252.

Ulinka Rublack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 823 pages. ISBN: 9780199646920.

Reviewed by Henk Bakker

Prof. Dr Henk Bakker holds the James Wm. McClendon Chair for Baptist and Evangelical Theologies at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and is a lecturer at the Dutch Baptist Seminary and IBTS Amsterdam.

h.a.bakker@vu.nl

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7313-1760>

The five-volume Oxford series on the history of Protestant dissenting traditions, with general editors Timothy Larson and Mark Noll, is a unique series, because in focusing on dissenting movements and traditions, in particular on religious migrations ‘out of England’, it clearly surpasses the traditional outlook of church history writing. The volumes follow these ecclesial historical developments, as they emerged from the English state church, distanced themselves from established religious doctrines and practices, and (oftentimes haphazardly) found new ground elsewhere, in other parts of the world. The series examines how these new traditions spread, organised themselves, and took on characteristic patterns of independent thinking, believing, and assembling. Every theological library should have this series on its shelves.

Volume IV, edited by Jehu Hanciles, presents eighteen highly specialised contributions of experts representing a wide variety of regional and local church histories, and covering somehow the geographical, viz. global, settings of the series. As such, its five parts consist of African, Asian and Middle Eastern, American and European, Latin American, and Pacific origins, each article opening with an introduction setting out to map the twentieth-century state of affairs, thereby also focusing on historical, social, economic, ecumenical, and

colonial issues. As a result, the volume, with explanatory notes and a select bibliography, certainly qualifies for a standard academic reference book.

In part three of the volume, Toivo Pilli and Ian Randall join efforts in expounding and explaining the complex history of 'free church traditions in twentieth-century Europe'. The article offers a critical appraisal of the free church tradition in Europe, as it discusses 'evangelistic witness', 'church and state', 'theology and spirituality', 'issues of identity', and 'social and global involvements'. Pilli and Randall observe that the story of European Free Churches, despite many weaknesses, nevertheless is 'a story of transformation and change', and is far from being a story of 'resignation and decline' (p. 289).

Challenging and revealing is the contribution of Sylvia Collins-Mayo, titled 'Dissent by Default: "Believing Without Belonging" in Twenty-First Century England' (chapter 13). Collins-Mayo convincingly diagnoses that the face of religion in England is changing dramatically, as institutional adherence is decreasing, as it is characterised by 'benign indifference', and since Christian engagement with the church becomes more and more nominal, patterned by the denominator 'believing without belonging' (p. 310). Moreover, very rewarding and distinct are the contributions by Laura Rominger Porter, 'Dissent as Mainline'; Bill Leonard, 'Southern Baptists and Evangelical Dissent'; David Daniels, 'The Twentieth-Century Black Church: A Dissenting Tradition in a Global Context'; Cecil Robeck, 'Pentecostals and Charismatics in America'.

Volume V of the series, the closing volume, edited by Mark Hutchinson, presents twelve contributions from a wide variety of scholars. The historical research is basically oriented to spatial, cultural, and identity changes European ecclesial traditions underwent when they globalised in previous ages. Consequently, the themes also changed, as one of its emphases is retained for postcolonial theology. Laura Rademaker's discourse about 'Gender, Race, and Twentieth-Century Dissenting Traditions' is an outstanding contribution (but why does her bibliography stop at 2012?), as she deservingly clarifies the 'shift to the global South', a global ecclesial turn commencing at the end of the twentieth century. With secularism flooding western Europe, the typical

global Christian is changing from a white, privileged male person, into a young black, African or South American woman. Already in the first half of the twentieth century, Christian women saw their possibilities and opportunities increase:

Women, a numerical majority in nonconformist churches throughout the twentieth century, claimed and expanded opportunities available to them in religious contexts and beyond. In many dissenting denominations they gained the right to full equality in leadership offices. (p. 416)

Because of the shift to the global South, the female input, and importance, simply became more obvious.

In addition, the contributions of K. K. Yeo, ‘Biblical Interpretation in the Majority World’, and Atola Longkumer, ‘Mission, Evangelism, and Translation: From the West to Elsewhere’ are also very informative. The editor Mark Hutchinson wrote extensively in the volume, with five contributions, altogether making up 30 percent of the content.

The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations, edited by Ulinka Rublack and published in 2017, marks the five-century celebration of the Reformation. The front cover of the volume shows the hand-coloured etching of the ‘True Likeness of Dr. Martin Luther on his Death bed, ca. 1556’. The 37 articles altogether cover a wide variety of dimensions and aspects of the Protestant Reformation and have been explored and explained by an impressive list of experts from different continents. Two names are connected to the Low Countries: Guido Marnef, from the University of Antwerp, and Herman Roodenburg, from the Free University of Amsterdam.

Part 1 opens with the ‘New Theology’, which is approached by discussing some of its major features, such as the new stances on the issues of evil and grace, ‘the nature of spiritual experience’, and political obedience.

Part 2 explores the ‘geographies and varieties of reformations’, among which the Bohemian, and the de radical, are a ‘Fundgrube’ of information (the ‘radical’ by C. Scott Dixon, Queen’s University Belfast). Of course, Lutheranism and Calvinism are extensively described, as are the English and Scottish Reformations, the Catholic

renewal, Pietism, Protestantism outside Europe, and Protestantism and non-Christian religions.

Part 3, quite uniquely so, investigates the means by which ideas, ideals, and renewal developed and were carried on: 'Communicating the Reformations'. In particular the chapters on the 'word', 'liturgy', and 'print workshops and markets' are full of insight. For example, Andrew Pettegree writes,

In the new Dutch Republic the market was never unconstrained; but rivalry between Amsterdam and the major cities, and between the House of Orange and the city regents, ensured that effective censorship was difficult to maintain. The new state would develop a market in religious publications of unrivalled richness and diversity, a mainstay of a vibrant commercial culture where the problems that had so afflicted print in the early years, poor communications, and a lack of capital, were largely absent. (p. 386)

Finally, Part 4 recounts the sites, the institutions, its societies, scholars, education, legal courts, and its nobilities. Part 5 develops a description of 'identities and cultural meanings of the respective Reformations', which is mirrored in involvements in commerce and consumption, music, the body, and its stance on sexual difference. Part 6 closes with a tentative assessment of the Reformations, the global perspective in hindsight, and a methodological discussion of complexities of history and memory.

I wholeheartedly recommend *The Oxford Series on Protestant Dissenting Traditions* and *The Oxford Handbook on Protestant Reformations* to the world of academicians, and to all interested in the fruit of sound historical research.