

common Christian heritage. I see this as a missed opportunity in this otherwise excellent book. What is hopeful is that it is titled ‘Essays in Ecumenical Theology I’. I am hopeful that Ivana Noble will bless us with Part II, and that it will also give attention to the contribution of the baptistic and pentecostal churches.

**Reviewed by Teun van der Leer — tutor at the Dutch Baptist Seminary,
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Alexandr Flek, *Parabible* (Prague: Biblion, 2018), 192 pages. ISBN: 978-8087282403.

The author (who completed his MTh at IBTS Prague) is a Czech evangelical pastor and translator. In 2009 he published *Bible 21*, a modern translation for twenty-first-century people. According to the author, the motivation for his latest book was a desire to address today’s ‘uninitiated outsiders’. Most Czechs today no longer understand biblical texts without first becoming ‘some kind of insiders, experts on the Bible’. Flek originally wrote the individual paraphrases as illustrations for his own sermons and published them on social networks. A positive response subsequently encouraged him to bring them together and publish it as a book.

Parabible is not a paraphrase of the whole Bible, but only of the sixty stories and parables from the life of Jesus described in the Gospels. The stories are abbreviated and mostly transferred to contemporary Czech scenery. Jesus grows up here in the small village of Nošovice in the east of the republic. He causes upheaval at the wedding, not in Cana of Galilee, but in Karvina, a small town on the Polish border. He chooses his disciples not from the fishermen, but from the ‘IT specialists’, who are enthusiastic about his ‘start-up’. Together they go ‘to build a network that has not been here before’. Another example comes from John 9, where Jesus heals a man who was born blind. In *Parabible*, the man has AIDS and is in a regional hospital.

The book is divided into five parts, which more or less cover gospel events. The individual parts are called Incarnations, Missions, Confrontations, Passions and Finals. From the graphic point of view the book looks very modern and the individual chapters are separated by almost meditative illustrations. The reader also has the opportunity to compare Flek’s paraphrase with the original (Czech) biblical text, which is printed in

smaller letters on the opposite page of each chapter. For readers who are experts, there is also a Greek original for each paraphrased portion. The possibility of comparing the paraphrase with the original is important, because most Czech readers are indeed almost biblically illiterate.

The individual stories in *Parabible* do not always follow each other; the reader understands that it is a selection of episodes. Some paraphrases contain a nice wit and have the potential to appeal to (not just young) people who would not read a normal Bible. For example, wedding bridesmaids are waiting for Justin Bieber instead of the groom, and when they run out of batteries on their mobile phones, those who have taken a power bank prove their foresight. Political analogies are fine, but probably understandable only to the Czech reader. For example, why the Prime Minister plays the role of Pilate, and is populistically afraid of the ‘voice of the people’ is quite clear, but why he is afraid of the Czech president is known only by the Czechs! The fact is that some biblical realities can be contextualised only with difficulty — the image of church leaders chasing Jesus together with police in a gardening colony below Prague Castle to arrest him is difficult to imagine. Also, the idea of having the country’s prime minister get rid of (execute) a potential presidential candidate does not fit.

Despite some weaknesses, Alexandr Flek’s *Parabible* represents a very successful and unprecedented attempt to bring the biblical message closer to the secular reader.

Reviewed by Dr Jan Hábl — Professor of Pedagogy at Hradec Králové University, Czech Republic.

Jim Purves, *Seeing it Real: Finding the Roots of Sensible Faith* (Independently published, July 2020), 83 pages. ISBN: 979-8665242040.

Jim Purves, *Finding it Real: Tracing the Roots of Faith* (Independently published, July 2020), 100 pages. ISBN: 979-8665266923.

Jim Purves, *Making it Real: Cultivating the Growth of Sensible Faith* (Independently published, July 2020), 70 pages. ISBN: 979-8669617080.

These three books (all available as paperback or Kindle editions) ‘explore a way of marrying authentic Christian experience to a theological