



Reviews

Robin Attfield, *Wonder, Value and God* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 196 pp., £38.99 pbk.

Although public discourse abounds with the term ‘value’, its place in philosophy and ethics is controversial. In this book, philosopher Robin Attfield seeks to build a solid case for value as a concept rich with metaphysical, ethical and religious significance. The opening chapters carefully develop this argument through engagement with a number of (mostly contemporary) philosophers who have doubts about the utility of ‘value’ or who want to understand it rather differently from Attfield. This gives non-specialists (like this reviewer) a rare and insightful glimpse into the world of professional philosophers, but it has the disadvantage that technical philosophical details sometimes obscure the main thrust of the argument.

As the title suggests, Attfield wants to root his understanding of value in the human response to the wonder of the created universe and the wonder of human ingenuity and creativity. Value can be understood as aesthetic (a beautiful sunset; a Beethoven sonata), systemic (the mutual value of interlocking members of an ecosystem or society) and intrinsic (having value irrespective of the appreciation of others). Attfield successfully argues that values can indeed have an intrinsic reality that goes beyond the response of human beings – or indeed of other creatures. While he is careful not to use wonder and value as proof of the existence of God, he challenges those who would discount God’s existence, developing a tentative ‘argument from value’ that, he believes, points to a creator as the best explanation of a universe that inspires wonder and in which we discern value. He is aware of the challenging counterarguments from ‘disvalue’ and discusses these as part of the traditional problem of evil. Again, he is careful not to overstep the mark with his claims, but is robust in resisting those who believe the world as it is must be incompatible with the existence of a loving creator.

So here is a philosopher who is willing to take on the dominant non-theistic approach of much recent philosophy and science. But what kind of God emerges from his emphasis on value? Attfield’s preference is for the panentheism of Arthur Peacocke in which God is immanent within the world (and so the sources of its value) but is not (as in pantheism) confined to the world.

From here we move to a series of chapters in which Attfield explores the relevance of this value-based philosophy for ethics (especially our relationship with nature), for the understanding of human creativity and for purposeful human existence. It is in this final chapter that Attfield develops his particular approach to Christian theology. It turns out to be unitarian, with no place for the traditional doctrine of the incarnation, though it does draw on the theology of Maximus the Confessor, with its vision of humanity as the intermediary between God and creation and its understanding that even in *theosis* we remain creatures.

With its technical philosophy, this book is not always an easy read, but it does take the reader into many areas of current thought and introduces us to concepts, arguments and figures that are important as background to much contemporary theology. I was grateful to have read it but would want to place it alongside other recent work, such as that of Richard Harries¹, which is both more accessibly written and more recognisably Christian.

Richard Clutterbuck

¹ *The Beauty and the Horror: Searching for God in a Suffering World*, Richard Harries (London: SPCK, 2016).

Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017) £24-99 pbk.

There are over five pages of enthusiastic commendations in this paperback edition of a book first published in 2015. Its author, an Episcopalian priest in the United States, devoted the first 20 years of her retirement to writing it. She resolved 'to write a book that would help preachers' since, in her view, both preaching the cross and the letters of Paul are increasingly neglected. If we neglect the epistles, she says, we are endangering the theological foundations of the church.

This is a book too deep, wide-ranging and biblical to have a misleading label such as 'liberal' or 'evangelical' pinned to it. In many ways, she begins from her own experience, although she writes not only as a preacher but also as a scholar, teacher and priest.

The four chapters of Part One, 'The Crucifixion', clear the ground and set the scene. Rutledge's starting point is the primacy of the cross – but not a cross stripped of its godlessness and shame. We cannot adequately understand (and so effectively preach) the cross, Rutledge argues, unless we interpret it with reference to God's wrath, judgement and justice. The trouble is that we often misunderstand, and therefore reject or misrepresent, these important biblical themes.

Crucial here is Rutledge's interpretation of God's 'righteousness' – a word central to the Old Testament's understanding of God and St. Paul's understanding of the cross. Archaic though the word 'righteousness' is in the more traditional English translations of the Hebrew and Greek words, other renderings – 'justice', 'saving goodness' etc. – are one-sided and misleading. Rutledge defines this crucial biblical concept as *the power of God to make right what is wrong* (p. 134).

Later references to forgiveness help to unpack this crucial definition: 'forgiveness must be understood in its relationship to justice if the Christian gospel is to be allowed its full scope', (p. 115). Here the author draws powerfully on Archbishop Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

So the cross reveals and enacts God's *restorative* justice. But that means there is judgement, even punishment, as well as justice at the cross. Sin cannot go unpunished, yet the 'punishment of sin is sin itself' (pp. 153-4).

Part Two of the book is devoted to expounding the biblical motifs which interpret the crucifixion: the Passover and the Exodus, Ransom and Redemption, for example. Two chapters are outstanding. In 'The Descent into Hell', which took more than two years to write (p. xix), the author supports Calvin's view that Christ's descent into hell took place on the cross. Jesus prepared himself in Gethsemane for that descent: 'what shook Jesus was the coming concealment of the lordship of God under the lordship of evil...'.

The longest chapter of the book is devoted to 'the Substitution'. The penal substitution model of the cross needs 'a thorough overhaul'. But rethinking the substitution motif does not mean eliminating it; 'there is something deep in the human psyche that responds to the idea of substitution – someone who dies in my place so that I might live – and the loss of it from the preaching and teaching of the church would be grievous' (p. 466).

This is a book which powerfully expounds the gospel. Preachers will find it an invaluable resource. Its length – some 600 pages – may seem daunting. Yet the writing – and the depth and passion in it – makes it easier to read than its length might suggest.

Neil Richardson

Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World* (London: Apollos, 2017), 368 pp., £24.99 pbk.

This American first-year class book is, in its way, a systematic theology. The reader's total lack of theological or philosophical learning is assumed (despite its being essential). Authorities most quoted are James Sire (unknown to this reviewer) and C. S. Lewis. The list of classical and contemporary authors cited is formidable. There is virtually no critical engagement.

Each section is separately authored.

(i) Anderson: A 'worldview' is that set of opinions, beliefs and assumptions through which one's life and world are understood. Though we might suppose ourselves to be habitually rational and fair-minded, the reality (it is suggested) is that we tend unreflectively to dismiss what does not match our worldview and to embrace what does. So far, then, a helpful, if light, presentation.

A 'true' worldview is one that is coherent and that corresponds to the facts about the world. Worldview, Anderson claims, obliges one to decide about God. That 'God exists' is, he says, either true or false. One *must* choose (p. 71). Such Dawkins-like preying on the theological and philosophical naiveté of the reader is typical of the book. (On any secular understanding of 'exists', one cannot put a truth label on 'God exists'. It isn't a proposition.) Anderson urges the reader to bring their worldview to full consciousness. The more conscious of it they are, the more easily defended it is, and therefore the more secure, happy and fulfilled they will be.

A converse emerges: if the worldview here presented is true, then, necessarily, all that it proclaims is coherent, in correspondence with reality, and true. *The ultimate foundation of Christian truth, then, is the truth of the worldview which sponsors it.* The converse is here pressed home: change your worldview one iota, and risk losing all.

(ii) Clark: The full programme of the book here emerges. The Bible (66 canonical books) is 'a complete source of truth' (p. 112). It is historically correct, albeit incomplete. Genesis 1-3 receives prolonged attention. God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and freedom are uncritically proclaimed. The Athanasian Creed adumbrates the full Trinitarian truth about God (p. 144). The occurrence of miracles is defended. The story of salvation is rehearsed.

(iii) Naugle: This is the 'philosophical' section. In 40 pages of simple argument, Naugle attempts to lay bare the inadequacy of every secular post-Enlightenment philosophical alternative to Clark's worldview. Like Anderson, he relies largely on his reader's naiveté. His dismissal of Postmodernism rests on his (correct) observation that without a metanarrative, the kind of worldview Clark advocates is impossible (p. 258). Of the mighty twenty-first-century challenge, 'How is the Christian to proclaim eternal truth to a world with no metanarrative?' there is not a word.

Finally, some attention is afforded to Hindu and Islamic worldviews. (Judaism does not feature.) This reviewer, knowing something of Christian theology but naive about Hinduism and Islam, was alarmed to discover how plausibly memorable he found Naugle's contemptuous summaries – see (i) above.

This book is indeed an education. It is a frightening example of what happens to critical thinking when one adopts such a worldview.

Michael Wilson

David N. Field, *Bid our Jarring Conflicts Cease: A Wesleyan Theology and Praxis of Church Unity* (Nashville: Foundry Books, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the United Methodist Church, 2017), 179 pp., £30.30 pbk.

This book seems increasingly important. It explores a way of being and behaving which, if we can rediscover and practise it in each Methodist Church, in the worldwide family of Wesleyan and Methodist Churches, and in relationships with other churches and traditions, we will have something much needed to offer to the wider social and political world of which we are part. It is about how we can walk, talk, work and live faithfully together as disciples of Christ in the work of God's kingdom. It is about how we can do that despite our contradictory convictions and practices or even, as the book hints, perhaps because of them. The book is full of suggestions which send you off on a trail of thought of your own.

David Field looks at John Wesley's practice and theology in these matters with fresh eyes. His own pilgrimage has brought him, amongst other things, through conservative Calvinism and the Reformed Tradition to Methodism. He is a lay member of the Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche in Switzerland, which is part of the United Methodist Church. He is a theological researcher and teacher and the Academic Coordinator for the Methodist e-Academy. He has come to the conclusion that Methodists have not appreciated or explored the full depths of Wesley's legacy.

Field argues that Wesley is very relevant to us today, but only if we ask what we should say and do now in the light of what Wesley said and did in his circumstances. Chapter 3 explores some key elements of Wesley's historical and political context; of the context of the Methodist movement within the Church of England; and of Wesley's critique of other traditions. In the light of that, Chapters 4 and 5 explore two of his sermons, 'Catholic Spirit' and 'A Caution against Bigotry'. Chapter 6 and 7 look at the anthropology and epistemology underlying those sermons. Chapter 8 examines Wesley's understanding of the identity of the church and how it should deal with schism. Based on all of this, Chapter 9 sketches out a 'Wesleyan' way of seeking unity in the midst of diversity through sanctified conversation, conferring and 'conferencing'. An Afterword starts to apply this to our churches today as they struggle with issues of sexuality.

Field's main insight is that Wesley thought that propositions and practices were important and worth contending about and that he would ask those who would not keep his rules to leave his movement, but he would not 'unchurch' opponents or cease to reach out to them. He placed emphasis not on the propositions of faith, but on whether the heart is right with God, and whether people are loving God with all they have and are, and their neighbours as themselves (whatever their doctrines, opinions and practices). At the root of everything, therefore, is the dynamic of holiness. This is a fascinating idea which Field deals with in Chapters 1 and 2. I would have preferred those topics be covered towards the end of the book.

Ken Howcroft

Sister Wendy Beckett, *The Art of Lent: A Painting a Day from Ash Wednesday to Easter* (London: SPCK, 2017) 98 pp., £8.99 pbk.

Primarily a resource for personal devotion, this attractive pocket-sized book features 41 full-page reproductions of paintings ranging from Leonardo da Vinci to twenty-first-century artist Mark Cazalet. The reader is invited to recognise spiritual truths through the contemplation of portraits, landscapes and abstract paintings. The book, which begins with Ash Wednesday and concludes with Easter Day, is organised into six main themes: silence, contemplation, peace, joy, confidence and love. Refreshingly few of the images are explicitly religious – Ash Wednesday, for example, invites reflection on Katsushika Hokusai's *The Great Wave*.

Not many women artists or artists from outside the European tradition are represented, but it is nonetheless a good resource that might inspire preachers and worship leaders as well as those seeking a personal companion through Lent.

Jane Leach

Joshua N. Moon, *Hosea: Apollos Old Testament Commentary*, (London: Apollos / IVP Academic, 2018), xiv+253 pp., \$40.00 hbk.

'Hosea and Holiness' would be an apt subtitle for this latest commentary in the Apollos series. It certainly fulfils the series aim of combining rigorous scholarship on the ancient text with reflection on its Christian theological value. These twin aspects are highlighted in the introduction. As well as covering standard historical issues of the background, provenance and date of Hosea, it also stresses that this is primarily a theological commentary written 'in the light of the person and work of God in Christ' (p. 28). It contains a discussion of the covenant, for the author the dominant theological motif in Hosea. In the commentary proper, for each passage, the author's own translation is followed by detailed textual notes and discussion of the passage's form and structure, followed by exegetical commentary leading to final thoughts about the text's reception history and theological themes. The meaning of Hosea for today's church is the primary focus.

Expounding Hosea's covenant preaching through the lens of the New Covenant means the reader will find many themes dear to Wesleyan theology. God, the holy God of grace, has graciously called Israel into a special relationship. As a result, he expects covenantal living, a true knowledge of God among his people: Israel is saved *for* works, not *by* works. Her inbred sin and sickness mar not only her life but the whole of creation. Hosea's preaching is aimed at healing and wholeness through return to God and amendment of life. However, Israel's long history of failure means that judgement is inevitable. Moon sees judgement as an aspect of God's sovereign love, granting Israel the dignity of allowing her true freedom of choice with all its consequences. Yet beyond judgement lies hope of renewal: Israel and creation will be restored to God's original intention. One is reminded of Runyon's assessment of Wesley's theology under the title *New Creation*². Such hope is grounded solely in God's grace, the one who is 'God and no mortal' (Hos. 11:9, NRSV). An interesting reflection is that knowledge of God – a key concept in Hosea – is not far removed from the *visio dei* of later Christian theology.

Lucidly written, this book will be better appreciated by those with some acquaintance of issues in Hosea studies. The author argues cogently for his position on various debated matters (e.g. the language of Hosea, the sphere of his ministry and the notion of a Judean redaction of his work). Granted the aim of the commentary, there is little engagement with the current variety of hermeneutical approaches to scripture. This is especially notable with regard to feminist critique and the charge of misogyny often levelled at Hosea. Nor is there discussion of Hosea's marriage in terms of whether it is fact or literary fiction. Some summary of the major themes and theology brought out in the comments would have been helpful. But for those concerned for the relevance of the Old Testament to Christian life, this is an important read.

David Wood

² *The New Creation* Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998)

Eve Poole, *Buying God: Consumerism & Theology*, (London: SCM Press 2018). 174 pp., £16.99 pbk.

Eve Poole deals with a vitally important area of the church's life and mission, namely the commonality (for good and ill) between the Christian's 'selling' of God and the secular marketplace. She brings to this densely written and highly stimulating book a lifetime's study of Christian theology and a career in church and business leadership. She offers it as an enterprise shared between the writer's thoughts and readers' differing approaches and interpretations. If her readers are in any sense consumers, they are not in this case subjected to hard selling. They are, however, asked to engage in some hard thinking – in the hope of 'help[ing] us all to feel braver about accounting for the hope that is in us'. (p. xii)

After an introduction that addresses theories of change with breath-taking speed, the main content of the book falls into two almost equal sections – 'How to do Theology' and 'God and Consumerism'. In the first, 'Worldview Theology' brings together so-called 'Worldview' theologians offering different accounts of reality and of the relationship between God and the world. The chapter 'Etiquette Theology' focuses on theological method and particularly its relationship to non-theological language and discourse in the public arena. Each writer is introduced by a 'cheat sheet': a highly condensed, simplified but remarkably effective summary of the theological ideas required to understand what follows. The chapter 'Good Theology' operates from a different perspective, and argues that consumerism and Christianity can indeed join hands to find the possibility of faith.

The second section, 'God and Consumerism', offers a thorough critique of capitalism from both a structural and a theological perspective and explores its relationship to consumerism. It then deploys a wide array of theological and secular thinkers in a chapter entitled 'What does God Think About It?' and goes on to link theology's language of 'trust, belief and covenant' (p. 94) to capitalism's use of 'branding' to create a sense of community for its consumers. 'To work, consumerism requires desire. So does faith.' (p. 94) 'What Should We Do About It?' argues that both faith and consumerism seek to address the universal human hunger for self-identity: 'It is time to reclaim our basic theology of desire' (p. 99) by the development of appropriate habits.

The chapter 'The Consumption Audit' offers a framework and a series of questions to enable readers to do just what the title says, from both a material and a faith perspective. And the final chapter, 'Resources', offers prayer, a month's calendar for the practice of Christian virtues, useful websites, a brief selection of Biblical texts referring to money, and a Bible-based 'Six-Week Reflection Course'.

This is a book that succeeds in compressing a great deal of theological material (necessitating eight pages of bibliography) and linking it to the demands of mission in a world dominated by consumerism. Readers who do not have at least an outline familiarity with theological method will have difficulty with the first part, 'How to do Theology' but will find the second, 'God and Consumerism', more accessible, while the final chapter, 'Resources', is widely applicable across many settings. This reviewer does not profess to be an academic theologian but nevertheless found both challenge and inspiration here.

Margaret Jones

Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church; 2018).

[Professor Lieu's review article was written before the 2019 Special General Conference of the UMC, but is included as a contribution to the continuing discussions that are taking place within and between churches.]

Although nothing on the cover nor in the Foreword states this – perhaps because it would be self-evident to the intended readers or perhaps to avoid any claim to authority – this collection of essays is in conscious response to the proposal by the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church (UMC) to the General Conference of 2016 to form 'a "Commission on a Way Forward" to examine and possibly revise every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality' in preparation for a special General Conference in February 2019. [<http://www.umc.org/topics/topic-human-sexuality-homosexuality>, accessed on 25/10/2018; the website also provides updates on the progress of this process and links to other information cited in this paragraph.] Behind this lies the express statement by some constituent parts of the UMC that they could no longer adhere to (or, indeed the open fact that some were no longer adhering to) the provisions that 'The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church' (§304.3) and that 'Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches' (§341.6). Likewise, there were those who demanded that the church reiterate its existing position and cease turning a blind eye to those who were ignoring it. The proposal was intended to hold off what looked like an imminent and irretrievable split at the Conference. What is at stake, as the differential font-size on the cover makes evident, is the continuing 'Unity of the [United Methodist] Church', which was formed in 1968, and which has been discussing the issues surrounding human sexuality – as have most denominations – ever since.

The 24 papers in this collection represent the contributions of participants from the major official seminaries of the UMC (and some other members), all bar two from the United States, at a Colloquy on the subject sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) and the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools held in March 2017. External readers may approach these articles as exercises in an explicit Methodist or Wesleyan Theology and, in particular, ecclesiology, rather than for anything they might say about the human sexuality debate, on which most papers in practice assume the existing well-established polarities. This is not surprising – there is no shortage of research, reports and advocacy regarding human sexuality and little indication of forthcoming new insights that might win consensus.

While the shared focus of the papers is 'the Unity of the Church', some are inclined to the constitutional practical or legislative demands of the current situation, whether advocating processes of separation or mechanics for continuing co-existence, and others are more conceptually focussed on the nature of and criteria for 'unity'. They also differ in their theological method: a number, to some extent the majority, appeal to the history of Methodism in North America and of the constituent forbears of the UMC, tracing both the endemic fissiparity of the Methodist and analogous movements and the various efforts, whether or not successful, at union. Here, particularly salutary are accounts of the compromises and priorities that accompanied these efforts, whether setting structural imperatives against doctrinal anxieties or choosing silence on incompatible but culturally and geographically specific positions. Among these, the question of slavery and the acceptability of being a slave owner must offer a sobering example, if not precedent (although notably the question of war is only discussed in one paper). The absence of a broader or earlier church historical perspective is also notable. Other articles start with John Wesley himself, both his practice and his sermons, among which that on the 'Catholic Spirit' plays a significant role, or with other luminaries of the tradition more familiar to North American students. The personal voice is only occasionally heard, although most participants reveal their own stance, sometimes, but not always, working through a theological justification, and there is little extensive attention to a broader ecumenical theology or theology of ecumenism. It would also appear that this is not a topic which attracts post-colonial or gendered theological analysis, but that may be because particular theological methods have become identified with particular stances towards the presenting issues.

For some, unity is the *sine qua non* for mission; for others, separation is the only course of a fidelity that might

yet have something to offer a fractured nation. For some, a mutually agreed-upon separation would be compatible with a respectful co-operation of unity in action without union; for others, it would be a clarion call to faithfulness by the few. For some, the criteria for unity are beyond question, including understandings of the divine and creation intention of sexuality; for others, the criteria should be concentrated on the essentials of Christian faith (amongst which sexuality would not feature). For some, the UMC is an achievement to be protected however possible; for others, it represents a temporary and perhaps failed experiment. For some there is a higher imperative in Jesus's call for unity and the humility engendered by our utter dependency on God's grace and embracing love; for others, such emotive calls have only produced endless prevarication with no sign of resolution. And so this review might continue. The chapters are described as forming the 'conversations' that took place at the Colloquy, but it is unclear whether they are opening statements or have been revised in the light of the event. Certainly, there is no conversation, no interaction or cross-referencing, between them, and there is an inevitable high degree of repetition of material as well as of difference of emphasis or interpretation. The chapters are organised in alphabetical order of authors, perhaps to avoid any hint of priority or preference, but the effect is to heighten the sense of disconnect. Understandably, there is no index, but the reader has little guidance for finding a way through the chapters, and a sequential reading is not notably stimulating.

Obviously, the primary intended audience must be those involved in reflection on the painful process in which the UMC is engaged, and perhaps some will encounter positions that are unfamiliar or not immediately agreeable. For an external reader such as this reviewer, as one who is not a 'Wesleyan Theologian' but a Methodist engaged in discussions about church unity as well as human sexuality, the volume makes for sobering reading. The serious engagement with the nature and cost of, or limits to, unity is welcome. Together with the historical dimension, this scrutiny offers a useful provocation to those who speak too glibly of how straightforward the issue should be for Christians. Although the situation in the Methodist and sister churches in the United Kingdom is very different, questions as to how disagreement over human sexuality challenges the unity of the church, however that is understood, are no less real. For that reason, I missed any searching analysis of 'why sexuality', and of whether and why sexuality should be a 'first-order' or 'second-order' matter – these concerns are just briefly mentioned, although the references noted earlier to slavery and to war invite such. No doubt decisions within the UMC over the next months or years will decide whether this volume will be assigned to the archives, prove to contain prophetic voices or stimulate more creative conversations than have emerged in its production. In the meantime, the UMC needs our prayers in our shared unity in the Body of Christ.

Judith M. Lieu

Emma Salgård Cunha, *John Wesley, Practical Divinity and the Defence of Literature*, (London and New York: Routledge Methodist Studies, 2018) 199 pp., £105 hbk.

This most informative volume, the product of extensive research by the author, an Oxford lecturer in eighteenth-century religion and literature, offers a very wide-ranging picture, not only of John Wesley's literary output during his preaching ministry in the Methodist movement within the Church of England, but also of the numerous literary and spiritual influences from preceding centuries as well as from an entire range of contemporary religious figures and movements. Salgård Cunha demonstrates well how Wesley's writings interact with the objections of Calvinists and the Church of England authorities. She is generous in her acknowledgement of the input of many scholars, as evidenced by the ten pages of references to scholars and critics and the copious and thorough endnotes for each of the six chapters and the introduction.

While most Methodists are aware of John Wesley's bands of preachers, his Aldersgate experience and Charles' hymns, Salgård Cunha opens up to us Wesley's immense contribution to the creation and dissemination of an entire corpus of religious literature, including poetry, life writing, hagiography and conversion testimony and his editorial work on the production of his brother Charles's hymns. Wesley's abridgement and simplification of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is covered tantalisingly in her lengthy introduction but rather strangely is left somewhat undeveloped subsequently. On another matter of the arrangement of her excellent material, the circumstances of Wesley's Aldersgate experience and the question of 'instantaneous conversion' are not treated until the last chapter whereas it would have perhaps been more felicitous to use these fundamental aspects of his experience as an entrée to the successive details of the development of his *Practical Divinity* and his later output. The author's approach is largely thematic, which means that the narrative jumps about chronologically, but the detail is nonetheless highly interesting and reveals an aspect of Wesley's impact that is less familiar to all, church members and scholars alike.

The author focuses primarily on how Wesley attempts to marry his commitment to evangelism with his project of *Practical Divinity*, his intention to present his vision to his followers in ways that will further the practical, daily needs of worshippers, inevitably requiring simplicity of expression but also recognising literary values. In this context, her section on Wesley's relations with Samuel Furlong in the chapter on Wesley's Poetics is particularly effective. The author does not feel that Wesley resolves the dilemma completely. However, her honest approach would commend itself to those who see the need to present spiritual, evangelical truth and Christian experience in attractive literary form without a dilution of the experience related.

The author's style is detailed and complex but free of obscurity, jargon and technical language. While the price might well be problematic, making it perhaps more suitable for institutions and libraries, I can recommend the book as it opens up a new, enlightening view of Methodist origins, demonstrating both critical distance and the author's complete absorption in her subject.

Gordon Leah

Reviewers

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Judith Lieu is Lady Margaret Professor Emerita and Fellow of Robinson College in the University of Cambridge. She is currently Frothingham Visiting Professor in New Testament and Early Christianity at Harvard Divinity School. She has written extensively on the New Testament and early Christianity. She is Chair of the Methodist Faith and Order Committee, a Trustee of Wesley House, and a local preacher in the Cambridge Circuit.

Neil Richardson is a Methodist minister who was for many years New Testament tutor and, later, principal of Wesley College, Bristol. He was President of the British Methodist Conference 2003-2004. His books include *Paul for Today* (Epworth/SCM, 2008), *John for Today* (Epworth/SCM, 2010), *Who on Earth Is God?* (Bloomsbury, 2014) and (forthcoming) *Love Answering Love. Praying Through the Bible*.

Michael Wilson is a retired Methodist minister. He has taught in various British universities, specialising in philosophical theology. He publishes in the broad area of body theology.

David Wood is a retired Methodist Minister. He studied at St. Andrews and Cambridge universities. He has spent part of his ministry in theological education, teaching biblical studies. His main love is the Old Testament. He is married to Kathleen Wood who is also in the Methodist ministry.