

These sermons make for poignant reading in the knowledge that the editor, Revd John Hughes, died in a road traffic accident the year after their publication. At thirty-five years old he was one of the outstanding British theologians of his generation, and served as the Dean of Chapel at Jesus College, Cambridge. His death constitutes another tragic loss to be reckoned with. Judging from Hughes's writings, however, and the trajectory of his life in the church, his own mortality is not something he would count against the God to whom he vowed a life of service.

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David Andrew Gilland, *Law and Gospel in Emil Brunner's Earlier Dialectical Theology* (T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology, v. 22; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. xiv + 285. £19.99

From time to time one comes across a published thesis that enthuses the reader in its attention to detail, quality of research data, and insightfulness of argument; in my view, Gilland's *Law and Gospel* is one such book. He offers an intensively examined treatise on the major, but oft overlooked, twentieth-century theologian, Emil Brunner. Early in the introduction Gilland avows, 'I discovered that understanding Brunner's own system of theology, motivations and concerns *on their own terms* and *in their systematic context* constituted a far more interesting project than once again belabouring the debate with Barth about natural theology' (p. xiii, my emphasis). This fresh focus is good news indeed for Brunner studies!

The book is an exegesis of the key theme of law and gospel in Brunner's early thought, focussing primarily on the period 1914–24, but also ranging up to the publication of *Nature and Grace* in 1934. Gilland does a meticulous job of outlining and evidencing the claim that the law-gospel juxtaposition is a lynchpin of Brunner's overall theology, present from the beginning of his work. The dialectic between law and gospel is not only reflective of Brunner's

commitment to a Reformed theology but also determines the direction of his interpretation of revelation and reason, philosophy and theology, justice and justification, general and special revelation, and nature and grace. Running throughout Gilland's study is the conviction that 'Brunner's early and sustained commitment to a dialectic of law and gospel [...] also characterizes his long-time engagement with Barth that comes to a head in their famous public debate over nature and grace in 1934' (p. 2).

After an introduction to Brunner and his context, helpful to any for whom the man remains in the shadows, Chapter One examines the possibility of a 'critically idealistic dialectical theology' (p. 19) in response to the predicament of modern theology as it comes into focus from 1914 to 1922. Gilland adeptly summarises Brunner's judgment that liberal theology and materialism patently failed to address the modern *Krisis*. In response, he identifies the significance of the law for both morality and practical affairs and argues for its place in theological epistemology. Schleiermacher and Barth both appear here as among Brunner's early and determinative dialogists.

Chapter Two surveys law and revelation as presented in texts from the early to mid-1920s. Gilland portrays Brunner's law-gospel paradigm as determining his understanding of the relationship between reason and revelation. He justifies this emphasis by stating that 'Brunner's entire line of thought is built on his understanding of the law as a necessary *a priori* for both human knowing and doing' (p. 122). Here the reader encounters as much Kantian critical idealism as Brunnerian dogmatics, which, while warranted by Gilland's overall venture, will prove nearly impossible to understand for a reader not steeped in nineteenth-century philosophical categories. That said, the chapter is rich with critical engagement with Brunner-Barth correspondence among other Brunner papers that will reward anyone interested in the broader matter of revelation.

"The Two Tasks of Theology" capture our attention in Chapter Three, while the dialectic of nature and grace, in the publication by that name, is expounded in the fourth and final chapter. Here we are on more familiar systematic ground with eristic and dogmatic theology, and nature and grace, as recognisable themes. Gilland's attention

remains on the consistency with which Brunner uses the law-gospel dialectic as pervading the entirety of his thought through to 1934.

As intimated, I appreciate the author's recognition that Brunner is worth studying in his own right and not just for his 'role' as one of Barth's interlocutors. Even though Gilland argues that much of Brunner's dialectical priorities take shape through his intellectual two-step with Barth, this text goes a very good distance in demonstrating Brunner as his own person. A corollary is simultaneously reiterated: no theologian's work takes shape in a vacuum, not even that of the monolithic Barth. Despite the fact that the book appears to be rather unrevised from its thesis state and reads as such in places, the strength of this means that the reader is privy to a host of detail that builds a carefully tested claim. Herein lies treasure to be mined. Certainly a great contribution of the text is the extensive original research that Gilland has undertaken in the Zürich *Staatsarchiv*, carefully scrutinizing letters, unpublished papers, and untranslated texts. The author is to be commended for his excellent work in this regard, which places the publication alongside McGrath's 2013 *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal* in its recent contribution to Anglophone scholarship on Brunner.

There are few weaknesses of substance to note as the book is clear in its claims, thoughtful in its crafting, and rigorous in its breadth and use of sources. Potential lacunae inevitably appear – for example, the lack of direct engagement with Kierkegaard (he is often mentioned in passing but no Kierkegaard source appears in the bibliography) – but sooner or later the author amply justifies his choices (e.g. pp. 265–66), leaving the reader content with the limits of the study. A methodological issue does dog the text, however, caused by unremitting direct quotation in a manner that requires the reader to pay as much attention to inverted commas as to the content of the discussion. I appreciate direct citations are essential for the viva; they are not, however, essential for the non-examining reader, even if the abridged references remain footnoted in the same fashion. Significantly more summarising would greatly enhance its readability and thus its breadth of audience. Still and all, for those for whom dialectical theology, twentieth-century theology, Barth, Brunner,

or the Brunner-Barth relationship are of interest, Gilland's work is unquestionably worthwhile, and I have little doubt that a re-read of Brunner himself will be requisite after engaging with it.

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Andrew Davison, *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), pp. xvii + 310. £25.00

The purpose of Andrew Davison's *The Love of Wisdom* is made plain in the subtitle: it is *An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians*. More precisely, it is an introduction to *Western* philosophy for *Christian* theologians, and it succeeds admirably on those terms, arguing for the inescapably philosophical nature of Christian thought, and questioning easy distinctions between the deliverances of faith and reason.

The case for taking philosophy seriously is made in the Introduction: 'The Christian theologian will want his or her [philosophical] framework to reflect a Christian vision of the world' (p. ix). For professional philosophers, the theological tail is wagging the philosophical dog with this approach – one scorned by Bertrand Russell in connection with the thought of Thomas Aquinas, who, not incidentally, is the hero of this book – but it is entirely consistent with the book's stated aims. As understood by Davison, there is a sense in which 'every last person is a philosopher, and every last person has a philosophy' (p. ix). The philosophical enterprise is defined broadly because it is rooted in the common life of language users: 'We cannot take ourselves outside of philosophical tradition, if for no other reason than that we cannot get outside of language' (p. x). Despite his 'open borders' policy regarding entry to philosophical discourse, Davison follows the canon quite closely, although the usual suspects are interspersed with welcome chapters on the Bible, literary theory and postmodernism. Taking a historical and chronological approach,