



Reviews



Marc Cortez, Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, eds., *Being Saved: Explorations in Human Salvation* (London: SCM Press, 2018), pp. xxi + 361, ISBN 978-0334054955. £35.00

Being Saved is one of the latest collection of essays to come from the stable of the new discipline within theology, namely analytical theology. Analytic theology emerged out of a realisation that for a number of decades analytic philosophers and analytic philosophers of religion had been thinking and writing on matters of theism in general and more recently on issues of Christian doctrine. After decades of parallel literature being produced by theologians and philosophers writing on theology, theologians and analytic philosophers came together in the mid-2000s and created a new methodology for doing theology called analytic theology.

Essentially, analytic theology is a new approach to doing theology which utilises methodological tools taken from analytic philosophy. According to Professor Alan Torrance of the Logos Institute at the University of St Andrews, analytic theology seeks to approach the theological task by emulating the lucidity, transparency, accountability and tight logical form of analytic philosophy in order to address the ‘truth’ question. It also seeks to be genuinely inter-disciplinary by bringing systematic theologians, biblical scholars, biblical exegetes and Christian philosophers together for round-table discussion and engagement.

So, in this more recent addition to the ‘Explorations’ series by SCM Press, twenty-two theologians at different stages in their academic careers each offer an essay which collectively analyses, discusses and proffers new understandings of two loci of systematic theology, namely theological anthropology and soteriology. The essays are grouped into four sections, main topics that emerge out of the intersection of soteriology and theological anthropology.

Part 1 deals with “Sin, Evil and Salvation”. The five essays in this section cover a wide array of subject matter connected to the section title. Mullins looks specifically at the issue of personal identity throughout

time and how the defeat of evil and hope of resurrection effects our understanding of salvation. Trickett & Taber consider whether or not Christian idealism is true and if it is then it affords some unique and effective ways to respond to the challenges of divine hiddenness and the problem of evil. Furthermore, in brief, the three remaining essays by Rutledge, Houck, and Farris & Hamilton, respectively argue that the justification for punishment found in scripture is restorative, that Abelard was the first to defend original sin without invoking original guilt, and that a nuanced version of Anselm's theory of atonement known as 'reparative substitution' does more to redeem humanity and restore God's glory than traditional penal substitution.

The next five essays of Part 2 consider different aspects of the nature of salvation. Crisp, with typical lucidity and exactitude, analyses the popular concept of theosis and places it within a pneumatological framework by focussing on the work of the Holy Spirit, thereby rejecting the all-too-common definitions of theosis as losing oneself in the divine or becoming divine as God is divine. Two other essays continue this pneumatological emphasis. First, Vidu unpacks the missions of the Son and Spirit with specific reference to the Son's ascension and Spirit's Pentecost against the claims of Aquinas, Schillebeeckx and Tanner. He concludes that salvation is procured by the divine missions (the mission of the Son followed by the mission of the Spirit) through union with God by the indwelling of the divine persons. Second, Habets investigates pneumatology (now known as Third Article Theology) based upon the experience of salvation which is a theopoetic journey into the divine triune life. The other two essays in this section by Kirkpatrick and Arbour respectively consider Augustine's theology of salvation and whether or not he differentiated between monist and pluralist understandings of ontology and soteriology, and finally if Christian theology offers good foundations for intellectual humility and virtue epistemology.

Despite introductory claims that the second half of the book changes foci to concentrate on the use of different philosophical resources to engage various theological issues, it is difficult to see a change of direction; the essays in Parts 3 and 4 appear, to all intents and purposes, to be more theological analysis of soteriology and theological anthropology.

The third section of six essays examines the process of salvation from different perspectives. Loke's essay addresses the impact the doctrine of predestination has upon the theory of humans' souls. Fesko reinforces the need for justification to precede sanctification when considering the law's involvement in salvation, followed by Johnson's analysis of Barth's understanding of the atonement and the implications for identity, personhood and autonomy. Grace explores the implicit connection between soteriology and ecclesiology in the work of Bonhoeffer, while Arcadi uses the transignification idea of 'deemings' to redeem Christ's words 'this is my body' without having to rely on Aristotelean-based transubstantiation. Finally, as a fitting conclusion to this section, the prolific philosophical theologian Paul Helm approaches the idea of regeneration through new habits infused by the Holy Spirit, which he articulates by juxtaposing the scholastic approach of Charnock with the alternative way of Edwards.

In the final set of essays, we are arguably treated to the most salient set of essays for today's modern Western culture, perhaps even Scottish culture. In the midst of the medical-technological revolution in which we find ourselves, Mosser offers an insightful comparative study of secular and sacred visions of immortality and God-likeness. For all the merit of transhumanist visions, he concludes, only a vision of complete moral transformation of the human being will result in the utopia that the human race seeks. Madueme writes a theology of mental illness that spans the ever-increasing polar opposites between those who maximise sin and those who maximise mental illness. As Christian ministers face an epidemic of mental health issues and illness, deep theological thinking on the matter is most welcome. Finally, as film-makers and novelists continue to produce eschatological accounts of dystopian futures, the final two essays by Leidenhag and Cortez respectively examine soteriological realities of afterlife by sketching out a 'panpsychist' ontology which delineates the cosmic scope of the Holy Spirit's saving presence, and the fulfilment of the biblical promise of the *visio Dei* and whether or not this will take place in the intermediate state, and will it be a bodied or disembodied experience.

The recent emergence of analytical theology is not without its critics. Negative comments include that it is simply philosophy disguised as theology, it excludes the primary vehicle of God's

revelation to humanity, it takes Christian doctrine outside of the Bible world, that often all the work is done on an initial definition which is undefended, and that for twenty-first century theological education analytical theology is not necessarily needed for doctrine. Having read and digested these various essays by analytical theologians I have some sympathy with one or two of these contestations. Many of the essays presuppose a high level of training in philosophy and not a few of the essays make little reference to Scripture. With the exception of the final section, the reader is left with the nagging question of who is the intended audience of this collection of essays. Often the language is so specialised that the book does little to invite readers who are not part of this world into the conversation. As a church minister and aspiring systematic theologian I was, unfortunately, often left wanting and unsatisfied in my search for good theology that connects with the educated non-specialist sitting in a church pew.

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Andy Walsh, *Faith Across the Multiverse: Parables from Modern Science* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2018), pp. x + 292, ISBN 978-1683070764. £16.99

Faith Across the Multiverse is Walsh's attempt to bring the Christian Bible into dialogue with modern science. Unlike most attempts to bring these disciplines together, Walsh also brings science fiction (SF) into the discussion. Walsh believes that 'science has the possibility to offer a rich world of metaphors for those of us who want to know God better' (p. 11). Indeed, it is at the level of metaphor that science, the Bible and SF intersect for Walsh, who also claims that nerdiness is shared by all three because they each explore 'the world, not just as it is, but how it might be, could be, perhaps should be' (p. 12). Through examining similarities between the Bible and modern science, Walsh hopes to show that they share an author, who is the God described in the Bible. Walsh uses SF throughout the book to help readers wrap