

Anyone who does not share his confidence in Aristotelian virtue or believes aspects of the current state of theological education are worth preserving may find this a rather unhelpful book. However, be that as it may, anyone willing to exercise a little charity when reading and who shares Oxenham's commitment to a form of theological education that prepares students to participate in God's mission in the world will surely find some common ground in its pages and perhaps even a few helpful suggestions.

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**Ben Pugh, *SCM Studyguide to Theology in the Contemporary World* (London: SCM Press, 2017), pp. xi + 207, ISBN 978-0334055747. £19.99**

Ben Pugh's *SCM Studyguide to Theology in the Contemporary World* serves as a sound introductory resource for students of theology who are seeking a general – albeit, somewhat selective – working ‘roadmap’ of the contemporary theological scene. Its eight main chapters primarily serve to descriptively touch upon a handful of important conversations that are of emerging and continuing relevance today – the most balanced chapter perhaps being the opening one on “The Quests for the Historical Jesus”, which helpfully extends the Historical Jesus conversation beyond the First and Second Quests (that are often covered in textbooks on nineteenth- and twentieth-century theology) to the Third Quest that is currently unfolding in the first half of the twenty-first century.

Aside from this first chapter, however, it is those who have a strong interest or connection to evangelicalism in general, and to the ecclesiological context of England in particular, who are likely to benefit most from Pugh's efforts at curation. This is because Pugh's own English (not Scottish) backdrop is very much on display throughout the overall work. At the same time, many of the study

guide's chapters are centred upon constructive impulses that have either (a) arisen from within evangelical circles on either side of the Atlantic, or (b) been heavily resourced by the biblical and theological work of such scholarly circles. Most evident in terms of both these latter counts are Chapter Two on "The Holy Spirit: Theologies of the Third Article and Third Article Theology", Chapter Three on "The Missional Church", Chapter Seven on "Postmodern Faith" and Chapter Eight on "Nonviolent Atonement". Pugh's own evangelical inclinations, along with his own Pentecostal leaning, are undoubtedly contributing factors to his selectiveness – a fact that regrettably remains tacit within the work rather than being made explicit. The effect of this is that students beginning theological study are not made aware that much of the study guide's content is informed by contemporary evangelical (and, to a more limited extent, Pentecostal) conversations rather than that of the broader theological landscape.

Along such lines, Pugh's chapter on the Holy Spirit clearly exudes a Pentecostal undercurrent while attempting to highlight the innovations of 'Third Article Theology' – an approach to theological construction spearheaded and, to date, dominated exclusively by evangelical authors. While his chapter on "Postmodern Faith" ends with a section on John Milbank and the Radical Orthodoxy movement, it begins with the proposals of the late evangelical theologian, Stanley J. Grenz (1950–2005), before moving on to the 'post-evangelical' thought of Brian McLaren (two authors who might not be as well-known to non-evangelicals). As for Pugh's chapter on "Nonviolent Atonement", a narrative sidebar highlights the publication of Steve Chalke and Alan Mann's *The Lost Message of Jesus* (2003) – a work that stirred significant controversy, particularly amongst evangelicals in Britain (cf. pp. 160, 164, and 177 note 20).

Meanwhile, though it is true that Chapter Four on "Liberation Theology", Chapter Five on "Feminist Theology", and Chapter Six on "Theology and Sexuality: LGBT Issues and Queer Approaches" are all theological themes that have originated from and been primarily resourced by the work of non-evangelicals, these three chapters fit well into the overall 'evangelical narrative outlook and framework' of the study guide (if we may so speak, even if Pugh does not) because

evangelicalism itself is currently experiencing an increasingly acute fragmentation between progressives that are sympathetic to such liberationist concerns and conservatives that are not. It is along such lines also, then, that the third chapter on the multi-dimensional nature of “The Missional Church” can be said to find its place.

Interestingly, Pugh’s discussion of the church here begins with the UK’s shift from Christendom to post-Christendom before ending with the coining of the Church of England’s ‘Fresh Expressions’ concept in 2004 (pp. 54–56, 67–68). In similar fashion, the chapter on “Liberation Theology” that follows specifically includes a section on “British Liberation” in a manner that is also centred upon Christianity in England (pp. 82–87). Some, like myself, may consider this (seemingly inadvertent) focus upon England as betraying what ought to be the volume’s more universal intent and scope. Nevertheless, though sometimes too casual in its language and tone, Pugh’s study guide succeeds in its aim of acquainting students with the key theological conversations that have been chosen for coverage. Despite its present focus upon England, students outside of England (e.g., in Scotland) will appreciate the conciseness of Pugh’s summary descriptions as well as his occasional promptings for further discussion and independent reflection.

That said, it is hoped that future editions of the study guide will broaden beyond evangelical concerns as well as beyond the ecclesiological context of England, and thus be more representative of ‘Theology in the Contemporary World’ as a whole. Summary overview chapters on recent movements, trends, and discussions in Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and Pentecostalism, respectively, would be helpful. In addition, the move towards ‘world Christianity’, constructive proposals for a Christian theology of religions, recent developments in the dialogue between science and religion, and the recent interest in analytic theology seem deserving of full chapters as well.

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