vision requires a serious look at the ways in which a narrow view of the church diminishes our vision of God. Understanding ourselves as creatures means taking seriously context and culture and being open to the ways they impact on our understanding of the traditions we have inherited. For our understanding to develop and change according to time and place is a natural way of being in the world that God made.

This ordinary time ecclesiology impacts on the understanding of the church's mission. We are to proclaim our faith in the living God, yet not to try and build up a club of likeminded people. The church is to be engaged in a genuine 'joining of hands' working for the good of all of God's creation. Pentecost calls us to join hands across the boundaries that alienate. This she rightly suggests means 'unlearning the habits and assumptions that isolate and alienate' (p. 152). We may need the wisdom of Qoheleth from Ecclesiastes to understand when the church is not shaped by the success we long for. We may need the humility of Job to accept that God is engaged in the world in a more complex and visionary way than we can begin to understand.

This is a book to be read and then reread. It is both challenging and comforting. Her 'ordinary time ecclesiology' teaches us to enlarge our understanding of God's involvement with all of creation and see the church as part of that. It reminds us that we are called to live out our lives in the bodily reality of an earthly existence. This is where church is located, and thus it is a fallible community, learning how to be Christ's body in the places it is called to be, inspired by the Spirit yet always knowing that the Spirit is at work beyond the boundaries that we set.

Emma Percy
Trinity College, Oxford OX1 3BH
emma.percy@trinity.ox.ac.uk

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Murray A. Rae, *Architecture and Theology: The Art of Place* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017), pp. xi+288. $49.95

In this contribution to the steadily increasing stream of writing on theology and the built environment, Murray Rae seeks a mutual illumination between theology and architecture, essentially through a series of analogies. The book is marked by a becoming modesty, a chastened awareness of the ever present problem of evil, and a sensitivity to theological hubris.

After the introduction, two chapters draw on Vitruvius taking up his theme (originally Pythagorean, and the impulse behind Greek classicism) that architecture is a means by which humanity both discovers and

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testifies to the order and intelligibility of the world. This has a theological dimension. Altars, Rae argues, mark out the place of encounter between God and God's people and testify to a coherent pattern of divine agency in the world. They are sacramental – pointing to the presence of God in all places (though as Rae recognises, they may also be idolatrous – one of the key problematics of the Hebrew Bible). Vitruvius also sets out rules for building, but, Rae demonstrates, these rules served to enable freedom, not to stifle it, and in this way architectural practice offers an analogy to the relation of law and gospel in our lives, something the Enlightenment failed to understand. On the basis of this analogy Rae argues that adherence to tradition together with inventive responses to our context 'serve to preserve the integrity of the gospel'.

In the following two chapters Rae explores the way in which the past – pre-Christian and indeed often anti-Christian – is taken up and used in a Christian context, taking Rome as a paradigm. Though the use of *spolia* (the built remains of a pre-Christian past) is morally ambiguous, nevertheless it can be an example of the way in which many (though not all) forms of human culture can be pressed into the service of the divine economy. For example, stones from the Colosseum were used for churches. The partially dismantled Colosseum reminds us, Rae argues, 'of progress made toward redemption, and of the mercy through which the world's trespasses are not counted against it.' This is paradigmatically argued in Edwin Muir's poem 'The Debtor', though we have to note the way in which an imperial and military past has a way of rising up and inverting the gospel, turning it inside out (I would say this was true of St Paul's, London, for example). Again using Rome, but also other Italian cities like Siena, as an example, Rae argues that the way Medieval and Renaissance communities shaped their cities functioned as a pointer to what the heavenly city might be like. The urban representation of the Christian narrative in, for example, a threefold street pattern, 'presents Christian discipleship as a form of life to be lived in the public realm'.

Rae then turns to the ways in which architecture can either accentuate the feeling that humankind is thrown into a hostile universe, or, on the other hand, make us feel at home. He gives examples of Japanese and New Zealand churches which do this, but I would argue that we learn it fundamentally in vernacular architecture of all kinds and in the work of Christopher Alexander, in my view a towering figure in architectural thought and practice. Following on from this Rae explores the theme of the presence and absence of God, the tension between the present and the promised end, which he very properly faces head on through Martin Buber. Rae explores the way in which architects, both in churches and in domestic space, can

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point to and signify a sacred order established in the universe. Whether Loos ever created a 'hospitable and joyous place for living a human life' must, in my view, be questionable, but, once again, Alexander showed this was possible, and possible even in poor Mexican communities.

Taking up a theme of Richard Sennett's, Rae explores the way in which architecture helps us think about time and helps us to see the past before our eyes. Through the process of construction and in the way buildings themselves endure, architecture offers a different way of conceiving time. By way of illustration Rae gives us a spirited account of Gaudi's La Sagrada Familia (this could engender a lively conversation about architectural kitsch and whether kitsch is, as Kundera maintained, culturally destructive).

The book concludes with moving discussions of both the Holocaust museum in Berlin and of the process of doing something with the Twin Towers site as a way of expressing the possibility of redemption through memory and hope. All in all, a stimulating contribution to the discussion which will repay study by anyone interested in this theme.

Tim Gorringe
University of Exeter, Exeter EX4 4SB
T.J.Gorringe@exeter.ac.uk

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Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), pp. xiii + 209. £16.99.

This is a vigorously written and important contribution to the 'Perplexed' series. Beginning from Genesis 1–3 and the tradition of its interpretation, Oliver moves to a consideration of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, and the use of the doctrine by Augustine and Aquinas. After providing a grounding in Thomist thought, Oliver turns to consider contemporary scientific cosmology of origins and concludes that it poses no competition to classical theology and metaphysics. Chapter 3 takes us deeper into Aquinas – into a dense account of participation, analogical thinking and the double-agency account of causation. Oliver then returns to science, but this time to the history of the rise of science, showing how the notion of 'the book of nature' emerged and developed after the Reformation, but also how mechanistic philosophy evacuated the created world of the sense of intrinsic teleology Aquinas had derived from Aristotle. Oliver deplores this trend and wonders if 'There may be aspects of the world that we do not see because we do not first and foremost, before all else, see the world as created' (p. 131).

I was delighted to see that the last chapter was to be devoted to environmental issues, and here Oliver's argument is that creation *ex nihilo*

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