

told the General Synod at the beginning of Justin Welby's tenure as Archbishop of Canterbury that the Church of England was facing 'an existential crisis' (p. 294). He tells us that this brings him back to his reason for writing the book which is encapsulated in the question 'What does it mean to be Anglican as times change?'

He suggests a number of factors which constitute influential motivators for significant change, including a perceived lack of spiritual vitality, recognition of missionary change and opportunity, fluctuations in clergy numbers, popular culture, the presence of other religions and finally, unplanned developments, the most significant of which he identifies as the charismatic movement. Having identified these drivers, he goes on to ask what authority should be appealed to when there is pressure for change.

He identifies a list of twelve possible candidates as 'ingredients'. If that seems rather a lot, the succeeding 'Framework for Being Anglican', which he develops in the final chapter, is an exhausting list of no fewer than 22. He follows this, and concludes, with 'Ten Challenges for Anglicans'.

I can cope with Ten Commandments but, writing as someone who finds five marks of mission and even three quinquennial goals to be quite sufficient to be going on with, I find this recipe somewhat indigestible. What the author reinforces to me through the excellent first chapters of this book is that Anglicanism is best engaged with through narrative. Anglicans have generally insisted that nothing other than the scriptures and the creeds is necessary to define their faith.

Most countries have a written constitution, the British do not: it develops. The French seek to define and order their language through the 'Academie Française' while the English simply observe theirs evolve. Though global, Anglicanism remains a very British or even English phenomenon in character. It developed as a pragmatic response to particular historical circumstances and has grown organically since. A German friend of mine, a philosopher, tells me that he does not understand the British, who use the term 'as a matter of principle' in a pejorative sense, often in combination with the words 'just as', whereas for Germans, he adds, principle is everything.

In short, I find the narrative of this book engaging and insightful but the prescription at its conclusion less helpful: I should have been happy to stick with what the title promises: 'A Church Observed'. Having said which, I thoroughly recommend it to anyone who holds the Anglican tradition dear, as the author clearly does, and as do I. Maybe if we just continue to love God within it and through it, God will do the rest.

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Darren Sarisky, *Reading the Bible Theologically* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 424. ISBN: 9781108497480. RRP £90 or \$125.

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In his book *Reading the Bible Theologically*, Darren Sarisky offers the first book-length treatment of theological interpretation that takes account of the current

debate around the same. He argues that reading theologically has ‘substantial hermeneutical implications’ (p. xi). He summarizes his argument by suggesting that because the reader responds to the text of Scripture as a ‘mediation of divine self-disclosure in faith,’ and because the Bible is a series of signs pointing to ‘God who opens of the eyes of the interpreting subject,’ therefore, the Bible should be read with reference to God (p. xii).

This is Sarisky’s second foray into theological interpretation and he notes it serves as a sequel to his first monograph, *Scriptural Interpretation: A Theological Exploration* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

In his quite lengthy (72 pages) introduction, Sarisky points out that theological interpretation presumes that ‘God actually matters’ (p. 2). His work, in turn, assumes certain theological truths such as the Trinity and God’s communication. He argues, too, that theological interpretation is not a ‘movement’ but rather a ‘debate’ or ‘discussion’ because of the many voices and approaches it includes (p. 6). Sarisky then goes on to offer a comprehensive survey of the current literature on theological interpretation. Because of this, the introduction gives the ‘lay of the land’ for anyone interested in delving more deeply into one source or another.

In the introduction, Sarisky also sketches four ways that theology and scriptural interpretation relate. First, theology is passive, and it only enters the picture as it emerges from the specific text that will be interpreted. Second, theology is active in motivating the reader’s questions and interests. Third, theology is active in providing an ecclesial vantage point that shapes how particular texts are read. Fourth and finally, theology describes both the reader and the text she is reading in light of God. This fourth relationship between theology and interpretation is the foundation on which Sarisky builds his constructive proposal in later sections.

Because Augustine ‘situates his reflections on method within a theological framework, thereby demonstrating the function of theology, and providing a resource for thinking about what a contemporary theological reading might be,’ Sarisky spends considerable time thinking with Augustine before making his constructive proposal (p. 66). Sarisky launches into Augustine’s writing to discover who the reader of Scripture is, theologically speaking, noting that she is an ‘embodied soul who has distorted affections’ but that these can be reformed by focusing on Christ, the one point of clarity and transparency to divinity (p. 103). This is followed by a discussion on Augustine’s application of semiotics to the text of Scripture to illustrate that Scripture is formed of *signa* that each point to *res* beyond themselves.

The discussion on Augustine continues in the second chapter, which is essentially an extended meditation on *On Christian Teaching* and the hermeneutical tools that are presented therein. This sets the stage for the transition to Sarisky’s constructive proposal, which aims to think ‘with and beyond Augustine’ (p. 147).

Chapter 3 situates theological readings of Scripture alongside other readings, such as historical readings and literary readings. To bring his proposal into greater focus, Sarisky spends considerable ink outlining Spinoza’s naturalistic approach to text and reader because it is a ‘clear and historically important example’ of this kind of reading (p. 157). Sarisky suggests that Spinoza’s naturalistic assumptions lead to procedural notions of rationality that continue to have currency in today’s theological scene.

Chapter 4 provides an account of the situatedness of the readers of Scripture. While Sarisky argued earlier for a theological account of the reader, he does not

want to dismiss the importance of their ecclesial, social, historical, and geographical embeddedness. All of these factors are significant influences on the reader and need to be balanced with a theological account of the reader.

The transition to Chapter 5 involves a shift from a theological account of the reader to a theological view of the text of Scripture. Sarisky follows Augustine's lead with a scriptural ontology wherein Scripture is a set of signs. This allows for one to explore its contingent origin without falling into ahistorical dualisms. This chapter is particularly helpful in its thorough treatment of recent theological readings of Scripture, including the popular *Brazos* commentary series.

Chapter 6 brings together the text and reader for an account of theological interpretation, the goal of which 'follows from the views of the reader and text that themselves make reference to God, and the aim that this procedure leads to is that interpreters ought to strive to engage more and more fully with the triune God via a practice of reading that unfolds and bears fruit over time' (p. 289). From here, Sarisky sets out a structure for theological reading following the concepts of *explicatio*, *meditatio*, and finally, *applicatio*.

As a concluding chapter, Sarisky offers a brief summary of his project, followed by some answers to one of the apparent challenges to the project of theological interpretation, eisegesis.

Throughout the text, Sarisky shows a masterful command of vast swaths of material. While it's true Augustine and Spinoza are his two primary dialogue partners, Kelsey, Marion, Barr, and Barth pop up frequently as well. Add to this the broad consultation of the more recent contributions to theological interpretation, and one gets a very good survey of the existing literature that is deep when it needs to be, but also quite comprehensive. While Sarisky's argument is advanced clearly in the body of the text, there are quite a few footnotes that span two pages, providing further depth to issues that are secondary to the book's overall aims.

This book is essential reading for all those interested in theological interpretation of Scripture, not only because it is a contribution to the discussion in its own right, but more importantly because it is *the* vital map of the theological interpretation scene. In this latter sense, it brings the entire enterprise of theological interpretation, with its variegated forms, into focus before critically engaging it. Augustinian scholars will find part 1 (pp. 73-139) useful for understanding Augustine's interpretation of Scripture, drawn mostly from *On Christian Teaching*. Further, while Spinoza is used as a foil to the theologically richer account of Scripture presented by Augustine, Sarisky's treatment of him is charitable and sensitive. Scholars interested in Spinoza may find this section worth reading. Because Sarisky is so thorough and covers complicated issues in scriptural interpretation, his writing is very technical, and this introduction is unlikely to gain much traction amongst divinity students, for instance, but is definitely a work of deeper scholarship. That, coupled with the steep price, mean that Sarisky's book will likely serve primarily as a library reference book with private purchase being left to specialists.

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