

BOOK REVIEWS

Joseph K. Gordon, *Divine Scripture in Human Understanding: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), pp. 458. US\$86, £54. ISBN 9780268105174
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Divine Scripture in Human Understanding is Joseph K. Gordon's attempt to offer an account of Scripture that is both theologically compelling and also attentive to the nuances of human history. It is a constructive account 'of the nature and purpose of Christian Scripture that articulates the intelligibility of Scripture and locates it within the work of the Triune God in history and within human cultural history' (p. 8). Gordon's work is successful in what it sets out to do. It is technically precise, extensively researched, and gracious in tone.

Gordon's writing is technical and dense, though this is not inappropriate to the subject matter. He writes carefully, and, as the endnotes suggest, he has read widely. In fact, the central text of the book is covered in about 60 percent of its pages, with the remainder being reserved for various notes, a bibliography, and indexing. The scholarly apparatus is a tremendous resource for anyone wanting to use this text as a springboard into the distinct historical, textual, and theological foci that Gordon brings together with this book. Despite the extensive endnotes, Gordon does not write with a stale academic voice, but with calm self-awareness and with a keen eye to transcendent theological questions. Gordon's tone is humble, noting that his constructive contribution is not the only or final word on the subject, but one useful account of divine Scripture in human understanding; this humility is present throughout the text (p. 8).

The book is structured into six chapters followed by a short conclusion.

The first chapter outlines well the contemporary scene of scriptural interpretation, touching on three paths of approach to the biblical text, including the historical-critical, the contextual, and theological. It comments briefly on each (p. 2). This is followed by an introduction to the primary interlocutors of the text, Bernard Lonergan and Henri de Lubac, and finishes with a description of the book's approach, and a preview of its layout.

The second chapter offers a historical introduction to the uses of Scripture, touching on the New Testament authors, Irenaeus, Origen, and Augustine. From there, the third chapter addresses the place of Scripture in the work of redemption carried out by the Triune God. This is followed by a fourth chapter which addresses Scripture in view of a theological anthropology (heavily indebted to Lonergan) in which humans are longing for, and capable of, transcendence in the midst of their historical situatedness.

The fifth chapter provides an illuminating discussion on the material and historical reality of the books, language, and texts of Christian Scripture. The sixth chapter follows with an account of the inspiration and uses of Scripture in the life of Christians. The short conclusion is largely a summary of the book's central arguments.

While the description of the text suggests it will be drawing from the theology of Bernard Lonergan and Henri de Lubac, it may surprise the reader to find the extent to which the two theologians appear. Lonergan seems to be a particular favourite of Gordon. He does not only feature as a theological resource, but Lonergan's work really sustains the argument of this text in both implicit and explicit ways. For readers who are not interested in Lonergan, certain parts of the book may be a tedious read, despite its other merits.

There are, however, many merits worth pointing out.

One of these is the fifth chapter's compact and clear discussion on the historical formation of the texts of the Christian Bible, including their transmission, codification, and distribution. Thinking about the Bible as a static object, or even as a Platonic form does not leave room for the accidents of its historical development. Gordon suggests that 'Scripture's material reality has theological significance' (p. 169). This claim is illuminated by a thorough discussion of this material reality. While much of the book reads as if it were written for specialists in the theology of Scripture, this section would prove an extremely useful aid for seminary students who need an accurate and succinct account of the history of the Bible's formation.

Another merit of the book is the theological horizon Gordon is able to hold throughout the various discussion of the text. That is, Gordon is attuned to the providence of God, and seeks to understand Scripture's variegated history with this in view. Gordon does not shy away from the difficulties and complexities of Scripture but faces them squarely with the transcendent purpose of God in mind as well. His book models the way that the theologian can successfully integrate insights from history and historical-critical scholarship into a systematic theology.

While Gordon's text does not offer any distinctive insights to Anglican studies, it serves as a useful account of the theology and history of the Bible that will be handy at seminary libraries. The technical prose, the fascination with Lonergan, and the mid-ranged price of the text will likely keep its audience to a relatively small niche. It is a significant work of scholarship nonetheless and will provide an important interlocutor for theologians engaging with Scripture in years to come.

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Jane Shaw, *Pioneers of Modern Spirituality: The Neglected Anglican Innovators of a 'Spiritual but Not Religious' Age* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2018), pp. x + 126. ISBN 13: 978-0232532869.
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In this little book, which began as the Sarum lectures given in Salisbury, Jane Shaw, now Principal of Harris Manchester College, Oxford, presents character studies of