

study such as history and literary narrative theory, but not the social sciences, which have contributed so much to recent biblical study. There are occasional inaccuracies. For example, Bultmann's seminal works on the history of the synoptic tradition and the historical Jesus were published in the early 1920s well before the Nazi era (against what is implied on p. 54). Ultimately, there is no easy answer to the question of how to interpret Scripture theologically. The interests of those involved are too varied and, in any case, the Bible has a resistance to being systematized as well as an ability to suggest answers to problems that never occurred to earlier generations. Lamb's own preference is that interpreters should 'take the mark of *apostolicity* seriously' and be 'willing to pay attention to the faith which animated this apostolic testimony' (p. 167). This is a very Anglican-type conclusion and none the worse for that, although if a Lutheran seminary teacher had been writing the book he or she might have reached a different conclusion. How far non-specialists will be able to cope with the density of discussion and presentation contained in this book is hard to say. It ought to be welcomed by the theological college sector, however, and used by teachers and students alike.

J. W. Rogerson

Sheffield

W. Travis McMaken, *The Sign of the Gospel: Toward an Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism after Karl Barth*, Fortress Press: Minneapolis, Minn., 2013; 352 pp.: 9780800699994, £46.99/\$69.00 (pbk)

In *The Sign of the Gospel* Travis McMaken assumes a weighty responsibility. At issue is whether Karl Barth, in the spirit of *semper reformanda*, rightly carries forward the unfinished task of the Reformation with his *Nein* to infant baptism; or whether there remains a future for the doctrine after the Swiss theologian's forceful refutation. McMaken's approach raises the stakes: agreeing with Barth that the traditional arguments for infant baptism are largely invalid, he tacitly relies on the success of his own (or other, future) constructive proposals for its continuing legitimacy.

McMaken's is, however, a substantial and carefully constructed endeavour. After an introductory history of the doctrine (Chapter 1), the author examines Barth's response to what McMaken calls the *sacramental* argument, which runs from Augustine through Roman Catholic and, with modifications, Lutheran doctrine (Chapter 2). He turns next (Chapter 3) to Barth's refutation of the *covenantal* argument, developed by Zwingli and Calvin and continuing among Reformed churches today. Having conceded the force of Barth's negation of both arguments, McMaken then outlines (Chapter 4) the doctrine as Barth advanced it in *Church Dogmatics* IV/4 under the dual rubric of Spirit baptism (the awakening of faith by the Holy Spirit), followed by water baptism (the obedient and faithful response of those awakened). Few of Barth's critics, McMaken argues, have dealt cogently with either Barth's critique or his positive *ethical* doctrine of responsible baptism, which McMaken demonstrates is internally consistent with Barth's broader mature theology.

Barth's conclusions, however, are not the only possible outworkings of his theology, McMaken argues; on this basis, he constructs a *missional* doctrine of baptism, arguing from Matthew 28 that baptism is part of the Church's proclamatory witness to Jesus Christ, in whom reconciliation with God has been objectively wrought; water baptism attests this gracious reconciliation in teleological anticipation of the subjective awakening of faith. This general move enables McMaken to posit the legitimacy, at the Church's missional and contextual discretion, of infant baptism alongside responsible baptism.

Throughout, McMaken provides an astute and appreciative analysis of Barth's major loci; indeed, for this reason alone, *The Sign of the Gospel* offers a lucid primer on Barth's theological commitments. Whether or not McMaken's constructive proposition regarding infant baptism is successful, however, remains for individual readers to determine. Particularly in question are whether McMaken's account, which follows the magisterial Reformation sequence of baptism anticipating faith, holds theological water (so to speak) against the biblical witness, which he readily admits does not clearly attest to (nor, admittedly, prohibit) infant baptism. More materially, it could be asked whether McMaken overcomes, or remains subject to, an incipient sacramentalism which could be suggested as lingering in diluted form in Reformed formulations: that is, whether infant baptism privileges baptized children in some way over unbaptized children (in McMaken's case, by 'embedding' a witness to the saving history of Jesus Christ in the individual's own history); if so, how is this not ultimately some form of special grace of one order or another?

Nevertheless McMaken's is a stimulating discussion marked by calm, clarity and acuity in an otherwise polemically charged debate; nor is it without force in places. If unsuccessful, however, his argument risks leaving the Church, sixteen centuries after Augustine, with a practice still in need of a (compelling) doctrine, raising the prospect that Barth was justified in moving forward the unfinished reformation of ecclesial theology and praxis regarding infant baptism.

D. J. Konz

University of Aberdeen

Stephen J. Plant, ***Taking Stock of Bonhoeffer: Studies in Biblical Interpretation and Ethics***, Ashgate: Farnham, 2014; 182 pp.: 9781409441052, £60.00 (hbk), 9781409441069, £19.99 (pbk)

The 'Bonhoeffer industry', as cynics were terming it even three decades ago, far from going into recession is very much alive and well, both in the UK and internationally. This collection of essays by the Cambridge theologian Stephen Plant, who has himself done so much to reinvigorate the research and development side of the industry, shows why this is so. Although he was rooted so firmly in his particular context, the ways in which Bonhoeffer responded to the challenges of his