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which Jesus speaks is also in conflict with the external world, particularly with respect to the demonic as a manifestation of the conflict between Jesus and the Galilean political structures (chapter 7). The book concludes with a synthetic chapter in which the kingdom of God is shown in fact to be the ‘household of God’ as an alternative to the regnant social and political structures.

There are many interesting moments in this book. Moxnes’s choice of ‘place’ over ‘time’ is itself a promising development. Likewise, Moxnes’s construal of Jesus’s kingdom language as creating an ‘imagined space’ is genuinely helpful (cf. N. Perrin’s ‘tensive symbol’?). Above all, this study challenges the reader to consider just how radical Jesus’s social vision may have been. Nevertheless, I have several misgivings with the primary argument and will here mention briefly a few of the more significant.

It is hard to avoid the impression that by discounting the eschatological altogether, the author has made a decision which both effectively sifts the relevant Jesus traditions and then circumscribes how the remainder might be understood. The complaint here is not that Moxnes appeals to evidence selectively – a matter of practical necessity; rather it is that so little acknowledgement is given to evidence that is potentially disconfirming of the primary contour of his arguments. Similarly, it is surprising that Moxnes does not explore analogous movements in which ‘discipleship’ or fictive kinship or itinerancy were characteristic. It would seem that certain of the author’s claims could be tested by comparing the rhetoric and practices of the Jesus movement to broadly analogous movements. Furthermore, there is no concerted attempt to see if the author’s construal of the Jesus movement itself is actually borne out in any of the available evidence.

In the end, it is probable, if regrettable, that responses to this book will have less to do with the author’s argument than with readers’ fundamental sympathy or antipathy towards a project that invokes ‘queer theory’ to understand the historical Jesus. That being said, it is not clear to this reader that the author’s appeal to ‘queer theory’ is altogether central to the argument, that, in fact, it is not rather more rhetorical than heuristic.

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Hans Frei’s influence on anglophone theology was widespread well before his sudden death in 1988, but it is only in the last few years that detailed studies of
his thought have been forthcoming. Mike Higton’s Christ, Providence and History is an extraordinarily thorough and compelling addition to this legacy. It is also arguably the first to venture a truly comprehensive analysis of Frei’s work, drawing on the full range of primary source material (including class lecture notes, letters and marginalia as well as Frei’s formal academic writing) to bring into relief the central insights of a thinker whose carefulness, subtlety and self-critical rigour defy easy categorisation.

Higton’s review of Frei’s thought is broadly chronological, but in the opening chapter he uses a late piece on David Friedrich Strauss to bring into relief the problem of historical consciousness, which Frei saw as theology’s central challenge in the modern period. How could one accept both the radical contingency of all events and single out a particular subset (viz., the life of Jesus) as possessing absolute value? Frei contended that most modern theologians had followed Schleiermacher’s lead in attempting to answer this question by distinguishing between the outer history of concrete events and an inner reality of human consciousness sufficiently insulated from it to serve as a secure repository for absolutes. Critics like Strauss found this kind of disjunction implausible, and Frei agreed; moreover, Higton argues, he worried that the sophisticated ontological and anthropological theories Schleiermacher and his epigones needed to anchor their accounts ultimately displaced the concrete reality of Jesus as the focus of theological interest.

Higton shows how already in his doctoral dissertation Frei saw in Karl Barth resources for a different kind of response to the challenge of historical consciousness, centring on the rejection of liberal attempts to root faith in some feature of human ontology rather than in God alone. At the same time, Frei found Barth (at least through the first two volumes of the Church Dogmatics) guilty of an ‘epistemological monophysitism’ that, while rightly insisting that the fact of the Word’s enfleshment was the sole basis for human knowledge of God, failed to give sufficient theological weight to the content of that fleshy existence to avoid rendering this affirmation of history abstract and formal. Higton identifies this perceived deficiency as the backdrop for Frei’s own christological proposals in The Identity of Jesus Christ. Three chapters are devoted to this crucial text, in which Frei argues that Jesus’ status as Saviour is strictly a function of his narrated identity in the gospels. Instead of seeing Jesus’ significance in terms of his exemplification of some principle (whether Schleiermacher’s perfect God-consciousness or the early Barth’s Word made flesh) logically independent of his particular history, Frei maintains that the biblical Jesus discloses God precisely in the contingent details of his life, death and resurrection.

This insight constitutes for Higton the core of Frei’s answer to Strauss: the tension between historical consciousness and Christian confession simply
dissolves where Jesus’s identity is seen as constituted by his historical particularity. From this starting-point the task of theology becomes that of interpreting the rest of history in its relation to Jesus rather than the other way round, and Higton argues that exploring the logic of this task lies at the heart of Frei’s most famous work, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. In this minutely detailed analysis of modern biblical interpretation, Frei argues that figuration, understood as the practice of seeing concrete events in their relation to the central story of Jesus, is the key to a specifically Christian reading of history as an irreducibly contingent yet providentially ordered series of events. While the bulk of the text is devoted to showing how this way of reading scripture was eclipsed in the modern period, Frei believed that the figural relationship between type and antitype in scripture continued to provide a viable framework for seeing all history as speaking of Christ.

Given Frei’s association with the strongly confessional, intratextual approach to theology of the so-called ‘Yale school’, perhaps the most provocative aspect of Higton’s analysis is his conclusion that Frei’s reclamation of figural reading provides the basis for a genuinely public theology. This public character has nothing to do with the typically modern hope that sufficient theoretical sophistication will show Christianity to be true or at least meaningful to all human beings. Rather, argues Higton, Frei’s theology is public because its figurative shape means that theology is rightly done in the language of everyday events and is thereby open to dialogue with the full range of other human discourse in a readily comprehensible (if thoroughly unsystematic) way. If for grand theories the devil is in the details, Frei was convinced that the details were precisely where God was to be found and, as Higton elegantly demonstrates, his work can be seen as a constantly renewed effort to clear away all theoretical constructs (including his own) that risked obscuring this point in order to draw attention back to the God who speaks in those contingencies of history, which, in ever new and unpredictable ways, find their centre in Christ.

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What happens to justification in contemporary theological systems when the theologian has a political, metaphysical, existential or ecumenical axe to grind? Mattes meticulously analyses the role of justification in the work of five major contemporary Protestant theologians, four of whom, he believes,