Book Reviews

Jack R. REESE. ***At the Blue Hole: Elegy for a Church on the Edge.*** **Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. 242 pp. $21.99.**

This volume took me more time to read than most. Reese is a master storyteller and wove his words of encouragement and voice of concern with interesting stories that have shaped the Stone-Campbell Movement. I found myself running down intriguing rabbit holes as I read the current volume.

Little details Reese included made this volume even more enjoyable, although some of them made me uncomfortable. I spent a few days researching church leader, John T. Johnson's role in American politics, Garfield's speech at the American Christian Missionary Society in 1861, Walter Scott's mood swings, the role of Foy E. Wallace, Jr, in T.B. Larimore's funeral, the era of Baptists thinking they were the only ones going to heaven, and divisions over the ministry of Herald of Truth. I would not have scampered down these trails without the engaging style of Jack Reese.

Reese has a more significant motive than just sharing history. Reese wants to give a clarion call that Churches of Christ have to do something quickly or they will fade into history. His focus is primarily on acapella Churches of Christ and their rapid decline in the United States over the past few decades.

The author recalls that the early thinkers focused on their commonalities rather than their differences. He reasons that current church leaders will need to revisit the Blue Hole, the source of life-giving water, in order to find a way to thrive. Reese maintains Churches of Christ have much to give the broader Christian world, including its theology of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Those blessings cannot be shared if we live in isolation.

I overheard two people talking about this volume a few weeks ago. One of the men said, "Oh that's the book that says Churches of Christ have no future." My guess is the man speaking had not read it because his statement is not true. Reese does believe there can be a hopeful outlook.

An elegy is usually defined as a sorrowful poem for one that has died. Reese does reminisce about "the good ole days" and some of the days that were frightening. He does not conclude the movement is completely dead. As the title would suggest, it is an "Elegy for a Church on the Edge," not one that has lost all breath.

One of the keys to a bright future, according to Reese, is repentance. He vies that Church of Christ members should repent and seek "peace over division" and "mercy over judgment."

Some readers among Churches of Christ will not agree with Reese. Some may take exception because they hold a different hermeneutic and have honest disagreement about unity. Some will not agree because they have been born in division. At the same time, all church leaders will do well to read this volume. This volume is informative and thought provoking. It may even lead to more unity.

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Filipp NIKITIN. ***V. A Pashkov (1831–1902: Zhizn' i Sluzhenie [V. A.Pashkov (1831–1902): Life and Ministry].*** **Korntal-Münchingen: Licht im Osten, 2020. 223 pp. ₽350.00.**

In 1874, British evangelist Waldegrave Lord Radstock visited St. Petersburg, Russia, to share the gospel among the highest levels of Russian society. He had been invited by noblewomen he

had met abroad, and he preached a gospel of salvation by faith, apart from the Church. His meetings were held in the salons of the elite and his followers were known for their piety and generosity. Among them was the retired colonel and industrialist Vasily Pashkov, who assumed leadership after the Englishman's departure. The movement continued to grow even as it faced persecution under tsar Alexander III, expanding into the provinces and among all social classes. Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians today hail Pashkov as one of the fathers of their church. Historians of the Stone Campbell movement have emphasized commonalities between the Pashkovites and the American Restorationist tradition, such as a focus on Christian unity, preaching the Bible, and rejection of divisive ecclesiastical traditions.[1]

This short volume by Russian history student Filipp Nikitin represents the most well-researched and detailed scholarship on Pashkov and the movement to date, filling in gaps and correcting mistakes in even the most authoritative works. A student at St. Petersburg State University, one of the top universities in Russia, he conducted research in the National Library of Russia and major Russian historical archives. The author cultivated connections among secular and confessional historians of Russian religion. The growth of the internet and international collaboration made available sources published or archived abroad. A full 10% of the volume (23 pages) is bibliography! Nikitin attempts to synthesize disparate sources and perspectives to create a cohesive picture, bridging the gap between confessional histories and secular academia. He employs his academic training to help Russian believers understand their heritage while explaining the Russian Baptist or evangelical faith to secular scholars. Endorsements on the back cover are from a Russian professor, two Western academics, and a Russian protestant pastor.

While Nikitin refers to the volume as a biography, his primary focus is on Pashkov's beliefs and ministries, rather than the trajectory of his life. The first chapter, however, introduces Pashkov before his "conversion." (Nikitin explains briefly what conversion means in the Russian Evangelical or Baptist tradition.) In terms of information alone, this short chapter is a valuable contribution to Russian church history. Nikitin uses archival records to establish Pashkov's position in society, sometimes confirming and sometimes contradicting the anecdotal evidence most often cited. Pashkov attended the Page Corps—an elite military academy—and became a chamber page for Tsar Nikolai I. He received medals for his service in the Crimean War (1854–1855), retiring from the military a few years later age 27. While Pashkov was neither a nobleman nor a general—faulty assertions repeated in popular accounts—his wife was a countess and lady-in-waiting to the empress. Of particular interest is Nikitin's discovery that Pashkov was the fifth-largest landowner in Russia, with not only the four estates familiar to scholars of Pashkovism, but nine others as well. His great-grandmother's dowry included 19,000 serfs! In some ways, the chapter reads more like a list of facts than a story of Pashkov's life. The information, however, is invaluable for placing Pashkov and Pashkovism within Russian society.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on Pashkov's conversion and beliefs. He had lived "without Christ, without God's promises, and without hope," (49) Pashkov wrote to a Russian Orthodox adversary. His conversion happened suddenly and completely unexpectedly during an evangelistic meeting held by Radstock in Pashkov's own home. After Radstock's departure, Pashkov assumed leadership of the movement, preaching salvation by faith alone, that good works were the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The Church, he explained, was the body of Christ, made up of all believers—present, past, and future. It was not limited by creed or confession. Pashkov remained deliberately ambiguous on the question of sacraments. They could be meaningful to believers, he said, but were not essential to salvation. This was threatening to the Russian Orthodox Church, and Nikitin devotes an entire chapter to the Church's opposition to Pashkov's teaching and ministries. In 1884, Pashkov and his fellow leader, Count M. M. Korff, were banished from the Russian Empire.

The largest section of the volume—the fourth and fifth chapters—focuses on the social outreach of the Pashkovites, which included a soup kitchen, student ministry, literature distribution, serving the urban poor, work in prisons, in hospitals, and in the military. While this is not new to those familiar with the Pashkovites, Nikitin incorporates previously unknown external sources, rather than relying solely on the testimony of Pashkovites. The secular sources he uses provide a window into societal responses to Pashkov and Pashkovites. They were admired for their selflessness, but evangelism was at the heart of all they did. In some areas, the Orthodox Church tried to emulate them, and in other areas, to shut them down. Nikitin's description of ministries on Pashkov's provincial estates contains completely new information. Between his own research and an unpublished 2019 M.A. thesis from Moscow (Baptist) Theological Seminary, which Nikitin references liberally, he describes in detail the schools, hospitals, Bible reading and literature distribution among peasants on Pashkov's estates, and responses to them in their communities. Interestingly, however, he finds that some of the charitable institutions attributed to the Pashkovites had existed before Pashkov's conversion.

If locating sources is Nikitin's strength, interpreting and analyzing them is not. At times the author uses sources uncritically or with insufficient contextualization. For example, he provides long quotations to describe Pashkov's attitude toward religion before his conversion (49-50), rather than drawing conclusions from his own vast research. In other places, he cites scholars who are not authorities on the topic in question. Nikitin wrote this while still a student, and it is right that he acknowledges his predecessors. His own voice, however, is sometimes overshadowed by his attention to others. Increased attention to the historical context—modernization, the Great Reforms, the Russian Orthodox Church—may have allowed him to draw more nuanced conclusions.

For scholars of the Stone-Campbell tradition—whose work often focuses on the United States—this volume provides insight into a movement that emerged independently in a very different context but shared key characteristics. Familiarity with the Pashkovites in Russia in the late nineteenth century may inspire comparative work or even help shape the interpretive framework of analysis. Unfortunately for American scholars, the volume is only available in Russian. It is worth remembering, however, that translation apps and online translators are improving rapidly, and that the pdf version of the volume is free at https://www.lio.org/shop/autoren/nikitin-filipp/.

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Katherine CARTÉ. *Religion and the American Revolution: An Imperial History.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021. 416 pp. $49.95.

Discussions of "religion and the American Revolution" frequently turn on the question of the Founders' intentions. Popular works by commentators like the controversial David Barton compete for shelf space with more rigorous scholarly tomes like the historian John Fea's *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction* and the political scientist Mark David Hall's *Did America Have a Christian Founding? Separating Modern Myth from Historical Truth*. Whether a given author believes that the Founders sought to "establish a Christian nation

[1] Two books by Church of Christ scholars/ministers make these connections: Geoff Ellis and Wesley Jones, *The Other Revolution: Russian Evangelical Awakenings* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1996); Dennis Podryadchikov, *Russian Restorations: A Short History of the Churches of Christ in Russia* (self-published, 2014).

or to finally and righteously build a wall between church and state," (8) though, the underlying assumption is typically that "political action motivated by protestant faith, constitutionalism, and religious freedom [combined] in a mysterious alchemy destined to produce the distinctive American religious tradition." (7) Whatever spiritual landscape the revolutionary generation hoped to establish in the post-war world, then, it was to be something quite different from what the British had encouraged previously. Or so the stories go.

Yet as this insightful re-reading of the evidence suggests, modern-day culture warriors and the scholars who try to fact-check them often overlook the reality that protestants throughout the British Empire shared a general religious sensibility and an institutional framework that, far from serving as kindling for the fires of revolution, actually worked to foster imperial unity and slow down fracturing. Colonial protestants, like their homeland counterparts, conducted their lives in a "scaffolding" of imperial protestantism which gave a common expansionary cause to political and religious leaders and which gave the British imperial endeavor a generically protestant, "*as opposed to* Anglican, Presbyterian, or some other more specific," (10) sheen. British protestants on both sides of the pond, whatever their denominational persuasion, generally agreed that the work of the church could best be conducted within the embrace of the benevolent British Empire, and they sought to work together, or at least alongside each other, within that framework—at least until the American Revolution led some to question the benefits of staying within the imperial fold.

Carté's scholarship is highly attuned to chronological context, and her narrative, which unfolds over eight lengthy chapters, explores the transformative role played by the American Revolution as well as the contributions of the earlier imperial protestant "scaffolding" it disrupted. As Carté explains, while the colonies of British North America had notably different origin stories and varying relationships to institutional religion, their imperial governors eventually came to define their political projects in generically protestant terms, encouraging church leaders to see the British Empire and its colonial outposts as the best means of accomplishing their evangelistic goals. This alliance of church(es) and state survived the 1760s largely intact, despite the tendency of more recent scholars to home in on the relative few prominent religious voices who called for decisive political action at this early juncture: "searching for signs of revolution within the decade's religious conflicts," Carté notes, "gives a false weight to disputes that participants assumed would be overcome." (124) It was not until the more tumultuous years of 1773 and 1774 that the scaffolding even started to become "twisted and bent." (167) Still, religious leaders were generally not on the rhetorical front lines of the Revolution.

In fact, it was not until colonial political leaders directly encouraged the development of a distinctly American religious framework through fast days and calls to prayer that public religion came to serve as a point of division rather than of unification. American political leaders understood that "the public pulpit" could play an important role in articulating their newly national cause, and they succeeded in creating a public religion that "rhetorically united a nation without any of the legal and institutional structures that had characterized British imperial protestantism" (169) previously. Religious leaders, most of whom had been loath to call for political revolution (or harsh reprisal) in ways that would threaten their hard-won religious ties, were forced to choose sides and belatedly severed ties from one another, fracturing not only the Church of England but also the cross-denominational missions which had played a key role in evangelistic work throughout the eighteenth century. The American wartime alliance with France also illustrated that the "confessional" era of European politics, in which it was simply assumed that states and alliances were either protestant or Catholic in nature, was no more. At still another level, protestant denominations, in the absence of any national support of specific churches, rapidly proliferated throughout the United States in the post-revolutionary era.

Readers interested in Carté's work will do well to consider not just its title but also its subtitle. Though both phrases are present on the volume's front cover and its spine, the former, taken by itself, gives the impression that the work is a sweeping, comprehensive overview of all things "religion and the American Revolution," something akin to George C. Rable's *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the Civil War*. Although Carté has provided a thoroughly researched (and delightfully footnoted!) volume here, her scope is significantly narrower. As she notes in the introduction, the volume is "far less concerned with religion as belief . . . than is usual for histories of religion," and its emphasis is decidedly not on "'lived religion,' or the religious experience of individuals." (13) This is an institutional, imperial history which explores the effects of political developments on religious networks and networking, not a deep dive into the interior lives and nuanced theologies of its individual subjects.

Nevertheless, this volume is essential reading for anyone with more than a passing interest in the subject. Carté's imperial angle helpfully moves the conversation beyond tired questions regarding the Founders' personal motivations to a more interesting consideration of how religious institutions impacted, and were impacted by, the course of events in their own right. Her framework also sets the stage for scholars of the American Revolution to investigate the subjects of individual and collective belief and religious experience which Carté brackets and sets aside. And though this work does not directly connect with the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement or its forebears, readers of this particular journal who appreciated James L. Gorman's *Among the Early Evangelicals: The Transatlantic Origins of the Stone-Campbell Movement* may also find that the current volume clearly illustrates that same shared religious culture which American-centric recountings of our movement's emergence sometimes overlook.

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Anthea BUTLER. *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021. 176 pp. $24.00.

Fed up with both laments from a contingent of vocal evangelicals and puzzlement in the press about the wholesale support white evangelicals lent former President Donald Trump in the 2016 election (81%), the Geraldine R. Segal Professor of American Thought and Chair of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania announces in the current volume that there is nothing new or surprising about this development. It is merely a new expression of an old truth: that racism lies at the heart of evangelicalism and is imbedded in its denominational structures, theology, and political allegiances. She demonstrates, in line with scholars of American religion and politics such as Darren Dochuk and Matthew Avery Sutton, that the seeds for evangelicalism's alliance with the Republican Party were sown long before 2016. However, she goes further to argue that while this political reality finds its immediate roots around the middle of the twentieth century, evangelicalism's racist core is responsible for pushing the majority of white evangelicals into the arms of the far right, and it has a history that reaches back further into the past to the age of slavery. It is this painful truth and abiding legacy above all that evangelicals have yet to reckon with in a meaningful way.

This volume takes us through a whirlwind of American history in four brief but jam-packed chapters, beginning in the antebellum era and ending at the close of former President Barack Obama's second term. Butler manages to cover an enormous amount of historical terrain in such a short space and deftly explains the central participation of evangelicals within the familiar stuff of American history across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the institution of slavery, the

terrors of the Lost Cause, both Red Scares, massive resistance to civil rights gains and the antibusing movement, the rise of the New Right and its rabid defense of "family values," Christian nationalism, post-9/11 racially motivated violence, and fake news. Her analysis is clearly grounded in a robust knowledge of the scholarship related to evangelical denominational history, American religious history, and American history writ large.

Butler's main argument is that fundamentalist racial ideology with its roots in slaveholding evangelicalism has been a constant motivator for evangelical political action and organizing across American history, and that it explains the electoral allegiances of this group up to the present day. However, in seeking to reorient us towards the issue of race as the primary factor in evangelical history and being—which is important work—Butler occasionally dismisses other factors that are also at play in this history along with racism. For instance, in Chapter 3: "Whitewashing Racism and the Rise of the Religious Right," Butler argues that it was the issue of interracial dating on the campus of Bob Jones University in 1969 (which the Supreme Court ruled on in *Green v. Kennedy* in 1971) rather than the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, that galvanized evangelicals to politically organize and form the Moral Majority. In other words, it was racism rather than a commitment to a particular flavor of conservative family values that consolidated evangelicals into a solid and powerful voting bloc. While this is undoubtedly true and an event that rarely figures into historical accounts of the rise of the Moral Majority at the end of the seventies and should, because of the brevity of this volume it is difficult for Butler to fully account for the complex intersection of both gender and race at work in the creation of the politically powerful rhetoric of "family values." It seems to me that resistance to the civil rights gains of the 1960s along with the *Roe* ruling on abortion can both be the catalysts for the new kind of political organizing of evangelicals that Butler describes so well in these later chapters. This is one example of the limitations of a volume of this size and nature.

Nevertheless, effective brevity is a rare gift, and Butler has it in abundance. The abridged nature of this volume along with her clarity as a writer makes this volume wonderfully accessible for use both within and outside the classroom. However, Butler makes it clear that she views the primary audience of her volume to be questioning evangelicals dismayed with the present political state of their congregations and many of their co-believers. Her conclusion, titled "Whom Will You Serve?" differs from the rest of the volume because in it she begins writing in the second person: "Evangelicals, you have a problem" (137) the first sentence reads. For this reason, it makes sense that this volume began as an op-ed. Rather than seeking to answer a historical "problem," such as explaining evangelicalism's alliance with the far right—a task many historians of American religion have taken up—Butler's work is instead a historically grounded call to action for evangelicals to recognize the corporate sin of racism within their ranks and make meaningful steps to repent. It is a volume worth many re-reads for both believers and non-believers alike.

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Thomas Andrew NEWSON. *Cut in Stone: Confederate Monuments and Theological Disruption*. Baylor University Press: Waco, TX, 2020. 224 pp. $39.95.

Newson, Assistant Professor of Theology and Ethics at Campbell University, in this brief volume has provided a fascinating historical and theological look at a uniquely Southern phenomenon currently undergoing radical disruption. Seemingly innocent historical relics commemorating the war "of Northern Aggression," as it is tagged in much of the South, that stood harmlessly on public squares in the shadow of state and local government buildings for 100-150

years, are being uprooted and removed to less public space. Ever since June of 2015 when Dylann Roof slaughtered nine black men and women in a small mid-week prayer and Bible study meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, along with the removal of the Confederate flag on June 27th from the South Carolina state capital by Bree Newsome [who said he was doing so in the name of Jesus (xi)], these idols of Southern nostalgia now suddenly stick out to many in the South and elsewhere as inappropriate and out of place. Others attach their identity to them. Why? And what were/are they doing there in the first place?

This volume answers these questions, plus identifies the distortion of Christian theology they draw from. It also rehearses the historical context of the statues and their shift from innocuous remembrances of the fallen just after the War ended in the form obelisks placed in cemeteries to their heyday of construction as immense statues celebrating the nobility and honor of great and even lesser generals of the South placed in central and official spaces.

Newson observes that the first Confederate monument erected in 1867 in Romney, West Virginia, was followed by a flurry of monument activity during the next two decades. However, the period with the most monument dedications came between 1900 and 1912 when 193 were erected (22-23). This second wave of Confederate monuments shows a radical shift: portraying dignified generals displayed in major public spaces. In the forefront of these were the Stonewall Jackson monument dedicated in 1875, with 50,000 people attending (26), followed in 1890 by the Robert E. Lee statue, with 100,000 to 150,000 people attending (25), both in Richmond, Virginia. These two men were noted for their Christian faith. So the statues portray the ideal, Christian gentleman soldier, the kind of people that deserve to be revered and honored forever forward as the face of the noble and enduring Confederate cause.

The remembrance of the War was now shifting from its origins to protect the institution of slavery to the resurrection and triumph of the rewritten fundamental cause of the war. These statues became powerful symbols showing that the Southern way of life is risen triumphant from the War, epitomized by admirable generals like these. These statues show that Southern, white privilege to power [and keeping former slaves in their place (28)] has prevailed over the dishonor of being defeated in the War. Over 400 lynchings occurred between 1868 and 1871 (21), and they continued steadily through 1920 and the second wave of Confederate statue placements (29). Many of these, not surprisingly occurred on public spaces in the center of town. Black voting was and still is actively depressed lest the myth of white privilege and the Southern way of life be dethroned.

This has everything to do with the fateful riot that occurred when the statue of Robert E. Lee, at the center of Charlottesville, Virginia, was slated to be removed on August 12, 2017, by order of the city council (4-5). The emotional magnitude of the thousands who came to prevent the removal, Newson observes, "shows that Confederate symbols were far more ubiquitous and embedded within the structure of American society than previously imagined" (3). Now these symbols seemed everywhere in the South and removal seemed to be required as some kind of public gesture to the centuries of undeserved, abuse Black Americans had endured and were continuing to experience. However, it has turned out that "other people perceived the removal of Confederate imagery as a threat to their heritage and identity, much like the white nationalists in Charlottesville" (30).

As Newson demonstrates in his book in the primary chapters labelled, "Past," "Future," and "Present," these statues of generals in the middle of town squares can no longer be viewed as innocent symbols of historical remembrance. They have become central figures of a Southern culture war of who controls the narrative of the South. Preservationists see themselves in a pitched battle against the growing number of those in power—black, white, and brown—who are viewed as trying to destroy or at least marginalize the story of enduring honorable, white supremacy that is embodied in these statues as they gaze over their public spaces. Control of the Southern story

for the future, for others at least who are now in control of government, begins with removing these Confederate statues from public squares to more innocuous locations, like cemeteries where they belonged in the first place.

Newson addresses theological issues sprinkled through each chapter. Rather than hijacking identification with Jesus and his resurrection (humiliation from defeat and resurrection through white myth of victory) as the icons have done, theologically astute Christians should brand the statues for what they are: "idolatrous" and "idols to the god of whiteness" (97). Jesus identifies with the outcast and Christianity embraces a future that is "multiracial" (99), not White. The "wounds of Jesus" made plain by the marks in his hands examined by Thomas (121) show that Christians worship one who has suffered on behalf of all people (both sufferers and exploiters) because of their sin. But he also has ascended triumphant over sin on our behalf (121-125). Perhaps, then, just moving these idols is not enough (101); Newson's continuing theological remedies lead to the idea that people need to confess their sin of racial superiority and be raised triumphant as those who value "the other," the minorities around them over which they are so easily tempted to treat as "less than."

Removal and confession are both necessary. But what about publicly confronting the ill-treatment of Blacks over the centuries epitomized in the thousands of lynchings that have taken place? Newson lauds the creation of "the first museum of lynching in Montgomery, AL . . . that remembers victims of ritualized extrajudicial killing in the United States" (129). Prominent in the museum are a series of hanging markers recognizing every lynched victim known, including the location. These markers are ready to be relocated to that spot whenever local officials are ready and able to do so. As Newson recognizes, here is at least one creative way to deal effectively with the deep wounds of Blacks and even the deep-seated guilt many white Southerners carry.

This book covers so much critical, historical, and current information regarding the present turmoil over removal of statues honoring the Confederacy from central, public spaces, I find it hard to say much in constructive criticism. Perhaps, just one chapter or section putting all theological aspects together would be helpful rather than having them scattered around different chapters. Maybe even a theological summary in the Conclusion might do.

I encourage people to read this book. Those more academically inclined might find it more suitable. However, it is really short and most of the details are just efforts to show accuracy. So, most people in general should find it compelling reading too.

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Veli-Matti KÄRKKÄINEN. *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Historical, Global, and Inter-religious Perspectives.* Rev. ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 281 pp. $30.00.

The United States has had something of an arrogant possessiveness with religion, especially Protestant Christianity. However, Christianity has always been a global expression, taking shape from the cultural container into which the Spirit pours its witness. The immediate focus given to Islam in wake of the 9/11 tragedy brought about a global revision of the meaning of religion and how religion is practiced across the globe. Into that world the first edition of this volume was released, an exploration of religion, specifically Christianity, on a global scale. Twenty years later, Kärkkäinen, now a senior professor of theology at Fuller Theological Seminary and the University of Helsinki, offers a thoroughly revised and "unique primer on the doctrine of the church" (viii). The goal in this revised edition is to orient Christians to the various expressions of ecclesial theology found throughout the global Church. The old assumptions are falling away like moorings as the Church's ship sails boldly toward a new horizon of global expression.

The introduction explores the question of why one needs to belong to a community of faith while also confronting the colonizing effect of Global North scholarship on the rest of the world. Following Pannenberg, this volume argues for the global community of Christian fellowship mediated through local expressions of the gathered faithful. From here, the volume is divided into four sections, each one fronted with a preliminary introduction. The first section focuses on major ecclesial traditions and the theologians who gave shape to those traditions. Of note to this reviewer (and this journal) was the chapter on Free Church traditions. His treatment is thoughtful, but he comes from a more hierarchical tradition. Section two focused on contextual and global ecclesiologies—such as liberation theology in Latin America, ecclesiology as shared community in Asia and womanist theology in patriarchal cultures. Section three articulates a thoroughly missional concept of ecclesiology, emphasizing the shared practice of liturgy and ordinances as well as the quest for ecumenism. The final section places Christianity in comparative conversation with its major religious neighbors—Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Overall, this introduction remains a scholarly yet accessible introduction to ecclesiology. As noted above, this volume has skillfully navigated the complexity of Christianity's various ecclesial streams as well as the plurality of religion that has continued to emerge since the release of the first edition in the wake of 9/11. This is a volume that is clearly aware that Christianity is not an American institution only—and that religion is still an essential component of the human experience. Careful attention is taken with each ecclesial stream of the Christian tradition in Part One, while the same care is shown in how the non-Christian traditions are discussed in Part Four. Yet, here lies the concern that I have. In the effort to articulate a globally postmodern construct of comparative religion, does it run the risk of relativizing the Christian witness? Christians should hold an astute awareness of modern Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism (as well as other global religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Shintoism or the tribal religions of Africa). Also, the convictions for why Christian persons should engage in the global religious community are valid—reasons that I heartily agree with. Yet, as Amos Yong (the author's colleague at Fuller Seminary) has cautioned elsewhere, we embrace a glocal (global + local) theology of humanity through the lens of the sacred community, not the secular construct. That being said, this is an excellent introduction to the global—and beautiful—nature of Christianity from an ecclesial perspective.

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David McLACHLAN. *Accessible Atonement: Disability, Theology, and the Cross of Christ.* Studies in Religion, Theology, and Disability. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021. 208 pp. $39.99.

McLachlan, a Baptist minister and theologian, contends that a lacuna in theology of disability is an account of the atonement— "the cornerstone of the Christian faith" (2). Conversely, theologies of atonement have neglected the experiences of those with disabilities. McLachlan says that we should "ask how the whole field of atonement theology as currently debated and preached should be shaped by, and should shape, our theological approach to disability" (3).

McLachlan notes that theological treatments of disability tend to focus upon four main themes: theological anthropology, access, hermeneutics, and soteriology. He provides summaries of these four areas to not only orient readers to the field, but to help them consider how insights that arise from these four themes can impact our understanding of the cross.

McLachlan then turns to theologies of the atonement. He argues, "What atonement theology demonstrates is that although the cross was a single event, what happened there is multifaceted" (35). After a discussion of metaphors and models of the atonement, McLachlan settles upon his own typology of atonement models: sacrifice, justice, and victory. Alongside those three, he also engages moral influence, but he does not consider it a model in its own right, but as a way of "connecting actual lives with what God has achieved through the cross of Christ" (53).

He seeks to "bridge the gap" between these two theological subdisciplines (55), reassessing sacrifice, justice, and victory in light of his previous discussion of the theology of disability. He then turns to the work of Frances Young, a scholar of early Christianity who also has a son, Arthur, with significant mental and physical disabilities. While theodicies often seek to provide easy answers, Young argues that God, in Christ, makes an obedient sacrifice for our sin and "takes responsibility for the wide gone-wrongness of creation and makes some sort of reparation for it" (66). In this God not only deals with sin, but with all of human life, including suffering and the contingency of creation.

McLachlan attempts to build upon Young's work by providing an account of atonement as participation. He argues that this is not a model of the atonement, but rather a "'theological protocol' for approaching discussions of the atonement as a whole" (74). His treatment of participation involves not only a focus upon God's participation in all of creation and in Christ's atoning work on the cross, but also the ways in which we participate in the benefits of Christ's atoning work. Within this, McLachlan seeks to develop an understanding of the atonement that is fully inclusive of all of humanity, rather than by treating those with disabilities as outsiders or as a special case. He does this, first, by rejecting an intellectualized account of the atonement and emphasizing human knowledge as primarily phenomenological. Second, he rejects an individualized account of the atonement, though he recognizes both the universal and particular aspects of Christ's work. Third, he argues that Christ takes not only sin and that which is "negative and alienating in contingency (and in disability)" to himself, but that there are "aspects of contingency (and disability) that it is entirely legitimate to expect to be preserved through the resurrection" (92).

The final two chapters discuss how the account of atonement as participation could serve as a foundation for disability theology and positively contribute to the previously discussed atonement models. Herein, the volume also deals with other issues, such as how to properly understand biblical healing narratives.

This volume makes a few questionable moves: why, given his rejection of pantheism and acceptance *creatio ex nihilo*, does McLachlan contend that God needs to withdraw or make room for creation (77)? Does God's participation in creation necessitate a rejection of divine impassibility (79–80)? Despite this, McLachlan provides a novel approach to the theology of disability that would benefit those conversant in the field but could also serve as an introduction to theology of disability.

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Norman WIRZBA. *This Sacred Life: Humanity's Place in a Wounded World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 300 pp. $28.99.

The world is a wondrous place of goodness, beauty, and life. A place granted sacred status through God's creativity and love. But one needs to reflect only a moment to realize not all is well in the world. And such is the impetus for the current volume.

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Wirzba conjectures that where, how, and why are life's fundamental questions (xiii). Where are we? Where are we from? How did we get here? How might we move forward? Why do it this way? Why would it anyway? In a world endowed with goodness that has ever expanding societal and planetary troubles, humanity must engage these questions, if we are to seek a hopeful future for the planet we call home.

This volume begins by reviewing recent sociological and philosophical thinking on what the Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen termed the Anthropocene epoch. According to Crutzen and a growing number of thinkers, the Anthropocene is a new geological era in which humanity is the dominant planetary force (3). The proliferation of industrialism over the past 200 years has offered previously unknown comforts for some but it has also led to severe planetary degradation. this destructiveness is seen as driving escapist mentalities that find homes among many transhumanist movements (34-60).

In rejecting destructive human tendencies and the lure of escapism, this volume argues humanity is unrecognizable without a deep rootedness in the Earth's soil. It suggests humans are not self-sufficient but instead "communities of beings" housing trillions of microorganisms. These microorganisms perform countless bodily functions like digestion, which shares striking similarities with soil's biodegrading processes (74-75). Wirzba, noting the interconnections between all organic matter (humans included), thought-provokingly says of death: "The primary and essential feature that enables life to continue is not the survival of this or that individual organism but the regeneration of the network" (86).

The final part of this volume articulates a vision of a sacred world, one loved and cared for by God. He joins Charles Taylor in arguing that secularization has "fragmented" peoples' visions of the world, leaving even religious people with little sense of anything being sacred (125-132). Regaining a sense of the sacred is imperative given the Christian belief in a good world, created by God, coupled with the "catastrophic" predicament of the climate crisis (137). As with trans-humanism, Wirzba rejects "naturalistic" understandings of Earth that deny a transcendent creator. He follows dominant Christian theologies that posit a transcendent and immanent God who creates the world *ex nihilo,* but Wirzba also stresses *creatio ex amore* (167).

Building on his earlier claims, Wirzba describes humans as capable but limited and dependent creatures, a dependency that makes them "inextricably tethered to the earth" and to God (178). Wirzba suggests the need for a divine transcendent presence in the world to give life meaning and focus, a presence that also grants sacred status to *all creation* (189). This allows Wirzba to challenge Western notions of autonomy that inure Christians from recognizing and acting in accordance with their interconnectedness with all material things (195).

The final chapter explores humanity's participation in the divine and "unfathomable powers of creativity that found and fund the world" (215). Wirzba says work or one's profession is a natural location for creative expression, save one problem: few forms of work afford the possibility for creativity. As such, this volume offers three fundamental conditions (borrowed from William Morris) for the possibility of good, creative work: (1) hope of quality rest, (2) hope of a worthy product, and (3) hope of genuine pleasure in the work itself (220). In suggesting this, Wirzba pulls no punches in his critique of neoliberalism's advocacy of individualism and economic ideologies that care little for people and the land (238). In the end, this volume affirms many classic Christian teachings while casting a radical vision that affirms humanity's relationship with all creation and its ability to co-create, along with God, a new and more beautiful future on Earth.

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Makoto FUJIMURA. *Art and Faith: A Theology of Making*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021. 184 pp. $26.00.

In the current volume, Fujimura presents a poetically conceived and straightforwardly composed theology of making. Here, the abstract painter becomes full-force theologian, challenging readers to reconceive the ways they understand themselves, God, and their engagement in the world around them. One of the most important assertions Fujimura makes here is about identity. Who are we? We are makers. He writes, "I have come to believe that unless we are making something, we cannot know the depth of God's being and God's grace permeating our lives and God's Creation." (7) Not only does making constitute a central aspect of our theological anthropology, but it is also linked with our mission—and most importantly, with God's mission—in the world. Making constitutes our calling as God's creatures placed in the world to be his "co-creators" (22), and draws us into the patterns of New Creation.

Readers of this volume interested in the arts will most likely respond to Fujimura's ideas about making with a resounding, Yes! Of course, God institutes making as an activity central to our personhood and communion with Him! A broader audience may find those assertions a bit more challenging, though. As a culture defined by our participation in *consumption* rather than *production* or making, the theological claim may be a bit harder to hear, especially for those unaccustomed to artistic making on a regular basis. But this is what makes this volume such an important contribution to theology more broadly, not simply the sub-discipline of "theology and the arts." We must question the broader narrative of contemporary American culture which seeks to make our personhood and value one more thing to be commodified. We are, rather, as God's image-bearers, called into active and loving participation in the world. We are called to bring about beauty and to become a transformative and healing presence in the face of brokenness and suffering.

As to the question of brokenness, Fujimura makes his most distinctive contribution to the field of theology and the arts on this topic, and he provides a striking image for anyone evaluating their understanding of what it means that God "makes all things new." One of the central images he explores throughout the volume is kintsugi, a Japanese tradition of mending broken pottery with gold to "make new." The tradition seeks beauty not in a dismissal of brokenness, but in its loving care and mending. We are called to mend the world, Fujimura asserts, turning brokenness into something with more value added than before.

As to an overall assessment of this volume, it should be noted that most of the ideas in this volume are not entirely new to the discipline of theology and the arts. For instance, ideas such as co-creation, humans conceived centrally as makers, New Creation as a lens for understanding our mission and work in the world, the importance of the physical, and so on can be found in the earlier work of thinkers such as Jeremy Begbie and Trevor Hart. But readers who wish to approach the intersection of art and faith with fresh eyes and a joyful heart will welcome Fujimura's voice to the conversation. His greatest contribution lies in his exploration of the notion and practice of kintsugi to the ways we understand beauty, making, and New Creation. It is here that Fujimura really shines and where, indeed, he tills fertile ground for our understanding of the theological significance of the arts and making for years to come.

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Brad EAST. *The Doctrine of Scripture*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021. 210 pp. $28.00.

In the current volume, East sets out to illuminate the Christian confession that the Bible is sacred Scripture—that is, that this volume contains words that mediate God's Holy Word to God's

faithful people. East outlines this doctrine in six moves, alternately explicating Scripture's source, nature, attributes, ends, interpretation, and authority. The result is a decidedly high view of Scripture: as sourced in God but expressed humanly and historically; as arising explicitly out of and for the worshiping community; as drawing believers into sacramental relation with Christ and one another; and as a text that calls to be interpreted in keeping with each of the above principles.

When reading this volume with an eye to the Stone-Campbell traditions, one might put a metaphorical sword in East's hand and say that, among the Stone-Campbell traditions today, the sword cuts at least two ways. First, it swings against the modernist guild of Bible scholars with its ideological reductions and skeptical constrictions. These include:

- the extraction of the text from its ecclesial and liturgical setting—and from faith
- the naturalistic assumption that scriptural texts are simply texts "just like any other text"
- an implicit rejection of Scripture as sacrament and a strong tendency for deistic reading confident that the tools of higher criticism provide the true and proper way to read Scripture, which means that, since these tools were discovered only in modern times, the church across the centuries has been largely bereft of the true way to read God's Word.

East presses hard against these deeply entrenched assumptions, even as the higher critical ideology supporting such work remains a fixture in the academy.[2]

Jowett's Rule—that each text contains a single meaning and historical-critical methods are the best tools to find it—is a linchpin for the higher critical ideology. Disqualifying that rule, which East calls "bankrupt," and thus opening up a thicker world in Scripture, requires moves that go sharply against the modern grain. In one such move, East mounts an assured and ardent defense of the premodern practice of "figural reading," referring to the many ways that the OT (pre)figures Christ in details of his life and saving mission. East is confident in this retrieval because—noting that the canon of Scripture is a product of Christian tradition over the early centuries—he is convinced that Scripture must not be read "alone" but should be read with the Rule of Faith, the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, indeed with the aid of the church's long tradition. East is not hereby denigrating the historical richness of (a tamed) modern biblical scholarship but rather seeking to expand and enrich his audience's understanding of what Scripture is, as God's sanctified book—a book *unlike* any other book. Christians are inconsistent with their confessions, he would say, unless they proceed with confidence that the Holy Spirit has enabled human reception of the Christ-figure in history, in Scripture, and by way of its re-echoes in tradition.

If East's sword cuts a swath through the modernist guild of biblical studies, then it also swings in another direction among heirs of the Stone-Campbell traditions. The problem for the Stone-Campbell Movement, of course, is that its leaders flatly dismissed, indeed thought they could bypass, all tradition. Campbell's refrain was that all creedal "impositions" should be set aside in favor of the unadorned "facts" of Scripture. One could jettison as unnecessary the whole library of creeds, confessions, homilies, and commentaries spanning fifteen centuries, for all of it, Campbell could say, contained nothing that was not more plainly and precisely taught in Scripture [Campbell, "Letter to England—No. V," *Millennial Harbinger*, new series 1 (November 1837), 498]. East calls such a project "quixotic" when it comes to a doctrine of Scripture, arguing that "not only Scripture but also sacred tradition and the living teaching office of the church are necessary for the proper understanding and teaching of the apostolic faith across time" (74).

[2] To the degree that this approach to the Bible impacts churches, as Eugene Boring noted regarding the Disciples of Christ back in 1997, congregational life has become more and more biblically illiterate, while biblical studies in the academy have become more and more specialized and secular. *Disciples and the Bible* (1997) 408.

This feature of East's project raises several questions for continued conversation. If "the same level of authority . . . must characterize both the text interpreted and the interpretation itself" (166), how does this come about? East thinks it comes by way of embracing an authoritative ecclesial tradition, especially as it functioned before the Great Schism. But it is not clear how that might work, especially when we have to ask, "Whose tradition, and which magisterium?" Any Christian tradition of consequence—even an anti-tradition tradition—has its own magisterium, a lineage of authoritative voices, often self-appointed, that powerfully shapes the tradition. Among them, of course, are the Free Churches or Believers Churches, which have been sharp critics of the magisterial Great Tradition and tended toward restorationist biblicism. They have a heightened sense that the tradition made wrong turns and got seriously off course, and that "the present church, like the New Testament community of disciples, is often errant or fallen, often restored" [James McClendon, *Ethics* (1986), 32]. They charged that the Catholic traditions, under the claim of Jesus' lordship and sacred tradition, sanctioned empire, loss of a "free" church, church-approved violence of various sorts, and wars in the name of the Christian West. The Free Churches sought to correct such corruption or apostasy, calling for the restoration of the gospel of reconciliation and radical discipleship of the Prince of Peace. East's model does not account for how these traditions figure into "sacred tradition."

East does acknowledge that the church has misread Scripture "in every age" (133-134), but he does not expound upon this claim in relation to hermeneutic practice. The reader is given to wonder what our grounds are for questioning longstanding, catholic church practice—for instance, the role of women in ministry. What are we to make of the fact that, in prohibiting female ordination, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches appeal to long and rich doctrinal traditions concerning Mary and the apostles? Can we disagree with them on this account without thereby also disagreeing with East's conviction that the long-standing, catholic features of Christian tradition are divinely instituted?

Despite these unresolved issues we believe East has written an important volume, one that convincingly expounds a high view of Scripture and identifies the Bible as belonging to the worshiping community. We think it could be enormously useful for graduate students and armchair theologians alike, provided they have an expert handy for unpacking certain erudite terms and concepts. Granted, the chances of this rich and challenging volume convincing restoration biblicists of its high view of tradition may be as unlikely as its chances of convincing modernist higher critics to prioritize premodern ways of reading over their own. In any case, the demotion of modernist historical-critical ideology in biblical scholarship, it seems, is well underway. Richard Hays and N. T. Wright are prominent voices of this turn, and scholars like Michael Legaspi have been oiling the hinges and prying open the door to premodern hermeneutics. We fervently hope that this volume, with its clear, winsome, ecumenically wide and theologically rich case, will be a strong and signal force in this vital recovery.

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John J. COLLINS. *What Are Biblical Values? What the Bible Says on Key Ethical Issues.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 2019. 285 pp. $20.00.

Collins is Holmes Professor of Old Testament at Yale Divinity School. The key ethical issues addressed in this volume relate to the right to life, gender, family values, the environment, slavery and liberation, violence, and social justice. In the opening chapter he states his purpose, which "is to examine what the Bible actually says, what values the Bible actually affirms, on several key issues" (2).

Chapter 2 explores issues related to right to life, such as the death penalty and abortion. In looking at Scripture, an interpreter must understand that contemporary human rights are anthropocentric in focus: "Bible does not have a discourse of universal human rights" (43). The Bible is primarily concerned with the justice of God more than with human rights.

Chapter 3 broaches the gender issue. He concludes that humans were created male and female. However, there is nothing in Genesis about variations in between the two genders. "Androgynes and transgender people are presumably also created by God" (62). Collins finds the most striking feature on the subject of same-sex relations is "how little it has to say on the subject" (74). Collins believes the Bible does not take a clear stand either for or against homosexuality.

Chapter 4 addresses what the Bible says about marriage and family. Collins' objective is to assess "as dispassionately as possible, what may reasonably be inferred from the biblical text" regardless of whose agenda it serves (85). He believes when it comes to marriage and family, the pastoral epistles "are sharply in contrast with modern Western values, and arguably equally in conflict with the teachings of Jesus and even those of Paul" (106).

In chapter 5, Collins investigates what the Bible says about the environment. The Bible emphasizes that human behavior affects the earth (Isa 24:5; Gen 8:21). Concerns for the environment are implied and indirect. The way in which humans can protect the environment is to do away with sin. Renewal is God's work (123).

"Slavery and Liberation" is the title of chapter 6. The argument that slavery was different during biblical times than in 19th-century American south is fundamentally flawed. Slaves were often treated harshly in both testaments. Collins surmises, "we must look not to specific laws in the Bible, but to the general principles that inform it" (145).

"Violence and Zeal," is the ethical issue addressed in chapter 7. Biblical texts are found on both sides of the violence/pacifism spectrum. Collins concludes: "To derive guidance from the Bible on this subject, as on any other, it is necessary to see individual passages in perspective and to establish priorities, whether we do this on inner-biblical grounds or derive our criteria from elsewhere" (170).

Chapters 8 and 9 both delve into the realm of social justice. Chapter 8 explores social justice in the Hebrew Bible. And chapter 9 looks at social justice in the Apocalypse. In the Hebrew Bible, injustice is identified as the disproportionate gap between the rich and the poor. Justice involves a modest self-sufficiency, a vine and fig tree society (Mic 4:4). In Apocalyptic literature, with the end drawing near, the emphasis was more on detachment of worldly things. However, Peter and others still maintained possession of their houses (Acts 12:12; 2:46).

Collins lays out his interpretive framework in the opening and closing chapters. Collins maintains two constraints at work to keep interpreters in check. The first is the constraint of the community in which an interpreter belongs. One, however, cannot let the community serve as the sole constraint (8). The second is the biblical text itself. The constraints of language, grammar, and the original context of the text are an essential part of interpretation. As a result, Collins concludes one can achieve "a measure of objectivity" (8). Later he affirms this conclusion again, "I hold that a degree of objectivity is possible" (212).

Further, as one approaches ethical issues, a hierarchy of values must be established and recognized in the biblical texts themselves in order to keep perspective. Collins maintains that "no one can live by Scripture alone" (15). One must determine biblical values based on "the central values of love God and neighbor, affirmed in both Testaments but explicitly prioritized in the Gospels" (18). Along with that, one must bring into the dialogue modern values, which are the results of "advances in moral sensitivity on such issues as slavery, the use of violence, and the role of women in society" (18). So, two dimensions of the critique include inner-biblical priorities and

modern sensibilities which are generally compatible with one another. The bottom line for Collins is that "The Bible deserves a hearing" (18).

Collins concludes the volume by describing the Bible as more like "a proverbial curate's egg: good in spots," with the good spots being considerable (215). Biblical values must be sifted and evaluated (219). He identifies his approach as leaning toward a healthy kind of "cherry picking" (220). What is ironic about this statement, is that he accuses socially conservative commentators of cherry picking a particular text out of context in order to serve their purposes (209-210).

Collins emphasizes biblical principles as the interpretive guide. These trump smaller texts that counter those principles. Such texts, however, may help provide a corrective for a larger principle. One cannot just dismiss the smaller member of the biblical text. If that does happen, then the church ends up managing the text rather than being shaped by it.

What is admirable about Collins work, is that he brings more balance to these ethical issues that have often been overemphasized by one side or the other. He tries honestly to deal with the nuances of the biblical text and its ambiguities.

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Nancy Wang YUEN and Deshonna COLLIER-GOUBIL, eds. *Power Women: Stories of Motherhood, Faith & the Academy.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 248 pp. $28.00.

In June 2015, two days after my second son was born, I set up an office in his nursery. For the next several months, that was, in effect, my workspace, as I was called into meetings, wrote two book chapters and countless assessment reports, and advised graduate students, much of this while nursing the baby. If anyone on the line heard gentle coos or burps or less gentle screeches, they were polite enough to keep this to themselves. As this collection of essays shows, my experience was remarkably common and normal, as the rising number of women in academia has also resulted in the rising number of mothers juggling their roles as mothers and academics. But a particular gap that this volume aims to fill involves the examination of the unique joys and challenges of this juggle specifically for women of faith. How might women of faith juggle effectively and gracefully their roles as wives, mothers, and professors?

In answering this overall question, each essay in the volume provides a different perspective, based on each author's specific experiences. The overall tone is honest but encouraging, as every contributor identifies specific challenges that she has faced, but also provides practical solutions that she has found helpful. This is no gripe session in book form!

The thirteen essays are divided into four parts. In Part One (Navigating Academia), Maria Su Wang expertly analyzes the agonizing push-and-pull that working mothers feel between the demands of work and the commitment to their children. Our time, unlike God's time, she notes, is finite, and a precious resource to steward well. Stephanie Chan considers this same struggle from her own perspective as both a professor mother and the daughter of a professor mother. Academia's culture of constant criticism is psychologically difficult on everyone, she notes. She identifies her institution's family-friendly policies, such as a lack of a tenure clock, as key in achieving balance. Teri Clemons' practical essay then considers the inequities latent in maternity leave policies and (especially) the still common misperceptions of maternity leave by some as a quasi-vacation or sabbatical. She encourages all academic mothers to take maternity leave. Having foregone maternity leave altogether with my second child, and taken partial maternity leave with my third, I fully agree. Finally, Yiesha Thompson's essay concludes this section by providing an insider's view of an adjunct professor's life. Thompson shows the incredible burden that insti-

tutions place on adjunct professor mothers, who often feel that they simply cannot afford to take time off after the birth of a child.

In Part Two (Navigating Motherhood), Christina Lee Kim's chapter considers the cultural pressures and expectations that she has felt to be a "good mother." Ultimately, she argues, it is liberating to rest in God's goodness, rather than trying to live up to an impossible and ever-shifting standard of the "good mother." Contemplating the same question of expectations, Ji Y. Son presents the solution that she has found: in thinking of herself as a "female dad," she was able to not compare herself as intently to other mothers, who seemed to do more. In the process, she also grew in her appreciation of her husband's giftings and in her understanding of the grace that Christ gives to all parents. Finally, Jean Neely gives an overview of a struggle that at least 99.9% of academic women share: imposter syndrome. Exacerbated in her case by severe mental illness and the stress of academia, it taught Neely to view self-care as essential, rather than optional.

In Part Three (Navigating Multiple Callings), Jenny H. Pak discusses her juggling of roles as mother and professor with yet another challenging role: the wife of a Korean pastor at a church that places significant demands on the time and energy of the pastor's wife. Similarly, Jennifer Powell McNutt unpacks her own experience of balancing motherhood and academia with a role as an ordained pastor in the PCUSA. Her credential as an ordained pastor, she notes, has resulted in some attacks on her academic credibility. In one of the volume's most powerful statements, though, she concludes that "our vocations as mothers and academics are the outworking of our primary vocation to follow Christ, and following Christ means functioning as a member of his body, the church" (153). In the final essay in this section, Yvana Uranga-Hernandez turns to another topic near and dear to my own heart: balancing a successful academic career with homeschooling. Yes, she notes, it can be done, and finding a supportive community of fellow-homeschooling families is key.

In Part Four (Navigating Support), the volume co-editors provide a chapter on the crucial need to have a support network. Collier-Goubil speaks openly about being unexpectedly widowed when her children were still toddlers, and thus realizing just how crucial a support network of friends and family was for her survival. Joy Qualls tackles a different topic: the challenge of navigating biblical gender roles as the sole breadwinner in her home. Male leadership in the home, she argues, can take different forms in this day and age. Finally, Doretha O'Quinn provides a wise perspective of a senior academic, and an African-American woman to boot, on the importance of mentoring.

Overall, all of the essays combine personal stories with practical and theological reflections and applications. And yet, while the strength of the volume is indeed its encouraging tone, reading it as we pass the second anniversary of the beginning of the pandemic is sobering. So many of the essential structures that the authors highlight—groups for mothers of young children to gather together and pray for each other; relying on family and friends to pitch in sometimes with childcare; finding quiet time for prayer and reflection; meeting with mentors—have fallen by the wayside during the pandemic. The situation was certainly not rosy before, as so many universities, including Christian institutions, simply do not have adequate maternity leave policies. Furthermore, as Yiesha Thompson's chapter reminds us, adjunct professors never had access to such leaves or any other benefits anyway.

Still, as this volume reminds us, the belief in a brighter eternity is precisely what sets women of faith apart from other academic mothers. Each of the essays highlights the power of the gospel to do the impossible and the incredible in the lives of ordinary and very overwhelmed academic mothers. We cling to this hope.

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Chad R. ABBOTT and Teresa BLYTHE. *Incline Your Ear: Cultivating Spiritual Awakening in Congregations.* Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2021. 154 pp. $18.99.

It is a sad indictment of the church that so many walk away, leaving behind millennia of theology and practice, and opt for a "self-directed" spirituality. The primary work of the church has always been spiritual formation. That ex-church members can so comfortably claim to be "spiritual, but not religious" is a signal that the church has drifted from its missional moorings.

This volume offers a corrective approach that brings together the spiritual and religious in the life of the church. The stated assumption of the volume is that churches have lost so many members because the church has "failed to offer people a spiritual path. . . . We have sought to maintain a sacred institution rather than open doors and make pathways for church members to experience the Sacred itself" (5). As ordained ministers and licensed spiritual directors, Chad R. Abbott and Teresa Blythe are uniquely positioned to offer guidance to church leaders who seek to lead their congregations not only in a religious experience, but also in inviting their congregations to "listen for God with the ear of its heart" (4).

There is no shortage of books that teach the practice of spiritual disciplines. Despite this, this volume should not be lost in the stack. Unlike most every other book of its kind, this volume is written not with the individual, but the congregation in mind. Its focus is "the congregation (or body representing the congregation, such as a board or leadership team) and how it can listen to God with the ear of its heart" (4). The volume is designed to walk the entire congregation through the process of spiritual formation by exploring the "four movements of listening for God in classic spiritual direction," namely, 1) awareness of the Spirit, 2) reflection on that awareness, 3) discerning where God is leading, and 4) action (12). The volume's focus on contemplation that leads to action is an important response to the common criticism that "focusing on spiritual practices can result in spiritual navel gazing" (123).

Perhaps the greatest strength of the volume is the "Congregational Spiritual Road Map" which concludes each chapter. The "Road Map" dips deep into the well of Christian tradition and details practices which have for centuries cultivated spirituality in the life of the church. These practices, which come from a wide array of Christian traditions, are presented in the form of "exercises" which are used to guide the congregation in spiritual formation. This wealth of carefully crafted exercises is intended for use in group settings, though many could be used by individuals. The concluding section of each chapter offers a helpful rubric that assesses the effectiveness of the exercises in shaping the spiritual life of the congregation.

The "Congregational Spiritual Road Map" is a powerful tool for churches who wish to spiritually revitalize their congregation. The exercises provided are a healing balm to the soul of the church. My only critique is that the exercises are most often designed for small group settings. Given the unfortunate reality that most church-goers attend only during the Sunday morning worship experience, it would have been beneficial to include exercises that are better adapted to the preaching setting.

As we are reminded by the authors, "It is easy to fall asleep in the spiritual life" (138). This volume is a refreshing wake-up call for the church that belongs on the shelves of spiritual directors, ministry professors, and church leaders alike.

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Khalia J. WILLIAMS and Mark A. LAMPORT. *Theological Foundations of Worship: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical Perspectives.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 320 pp. $29.99.

In the introduction to this volume, Nicholas Wolterstorff reflects that Godward acknowledgement of God's distinct excellence requires an attitudinal stance to distinguish it as worship- a particular awe, reverence, and gratitude that marks Christian worship. This volume speaks to each of those characteristics from particular theological angles, creating a structure on which to build good worship practice and thought. This volume strives to fill a gap in the scholarly application of worship theology and offers a thorough collection of perspectives. Its chapters, from various points of view, compose a rich theology of worship. Not intending to serve as a how-to, each chapter starts with a biblical or theological base, then moves to an application section at the end. It is edited by Williams, Associate Dean of worship and music and Associate Professor of the Practice of Worship at Candler, and Lamport, series editor and professor at graduate programs in the US and in Europe. This volume is ecumenical, attempting to offer a wide interpretation of what worship can mean from a variety of spiritual places. This volume reflects on worship from both portions of the Christian scriptures, worship in theological topics, and worship in modern questions and challenges. With seventeen chapters and an epilogue, the many pages of this volume are well spent in diverse understandings of what worship is and means for Christian believers.

By starting with chapters on biblical theology, the volume acknowledges its overarching perspective: worship grows from the knowledge of God, grounded in the text. The first chapter, discussing the Hebrew Bible and worship, was more historically reflective than it was interpretive, which felt like a missed opportunity to develop in greater depth the elements of worship in the text. The next chapter on the NT was better integrated, clearly drawing elements out of the text but also allowing space to apply value for modern readers. Those who come from a more scripture-primary Christian tradition will find these two chapters helpful.

Under the umbrella of systematic and historical perspectives, a wide array of topics was covered, discussing the connection between worship and God, creation, humanity, eschatology, the church, Christ, the Spirit, sanctification, mystery, and mission. These chapters laid out various perspectives that offered lenses for readers to see the myriad of ways worship is understood theologically. The themes of embodiment, locality, and community shone as guiding lights in these chapters, even as their authors spoke from different places. The last few chapters were focused on cultural possibilities, thinking more constructively. These include a discussion of time and space in worship, the integration of creation as worshiping alongside believers, the individualism of current church communities, the secularization of worship in megachurches, and multi-faith worship considerations. The writer of the chapter on the sacred significance of time, Anne McGowen, reflected on time as one of God's first creations, and therefore a part of worship just as any other created element.

Though some might find the volume size intimidating, each chapter is short and each section is readable to any with an interest in worship, especially those who organize worship. It would also be a good starting point for those wishing to widen their perspectives and diversify their actions in worship. It would be especially helpful for shifting frameworks for leaderships or congregations who seek a larger perspective on worship. Any scholars who lack worship theology on their shelves would increase their scope by buying this volume. Those teaching or studying worship theology would find it an excellent beginning point to offer a background on which to build more particular theologies of worship.

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Andrew ROOT. *The Congregation in the Secular Age: Keeping Sacred Time against the Speed of Modern Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 288 pp. $26.99.

This volume is a distressing book. But it is also essential reading for all who serve in congregational ministry. As with the other volumes in his *Ministry in a Secular Age* trilogy, Root draws on the work of Charles Taylor, this time in conversation with Hartmut Rosa and other social theorists, to offer an incisive analysis of congregational life within this dizzying period of technological and social change. He diagnoses the disquiet many churches feel as they desperately try to keep up, and he offers a theologically grounded alternative rooted in the church's traditional calling to live within sacred time. The result is at least the beginning of a compass for navigating turbulent cultural waters.

Root begins Part One, "Depressed Congregations," by recounting his conversation with a pastor of a church that by all external standards seemed to be thriving but was instead mired in a paralyzing malaise. It was not apathy, the pastor said. Rather, it "feels like a church-wide depression. Like we're stuck in the mud or trapped under water, and we just don't have the energy to face it" (3). Root then seeks to place that congregational malaise within the larger cultural context of secularity, one hallmark of which, he argues is speed, ever-increasing change and complexity. Although as he notes in Part Two, rapid developments in technology are bound up with this, speed as a cultural hallmark of modernity's vision of the good life also grows out of what philosopher Charles Taylor called the culture of authenticity, where we live constantly with the demand to create and curate our own, unique, authentic self within an accelerating pace of change. We thus find ourselves in a culture where busyness is fullness, where "it is good to go fast, to do a lot, to not miss out, to know things and experience them, to be the kind of self who is full with commitments, interests, and opportunities" (35). This has led to what sociologist Alain Ehrenberg describes as *la fatigue d'être soi*—the fatigue of being yourself (7). We find ourselves unable to keep up and feel guilty that we are wasting time and are not producing the kind of authentic self that matches the apparent authentic selves we see on social media, all of which plunges us into what Ehrenberg identifies as late modernity's characteristic mental ailment, depression (and its close relation, anxiety), despondency, and a burnout "imposed by the inability to keep pace" (17).

In Part Two, "Examining Congregational Despondency; Our Issue Is Time," Root draws on Taylor and Rosa to explore this acceleration, identifying three interrelated factors that are creating this cultural moment. First is technological acceleration, the speeding up of processes of transport, communication, and production which, in turn, speed up our lives and create a moral conception where the good is tied to innovation, to honoring the new over the old. Ironically, innovation offered as the key to greater efficiency ends up overwhelming us with ever-increasing demands. As one notorious example, the advent of email in theory should have vastly reduced the amount of time we devoted to correspondence but instead, often feels like it has taken over our lives. Acceleration in technology leads to the second dimension, an acceleration of what Rosa calls the "decay rate" in our social norms and institutions. For example, think of how the cellphone has altered our capacity to be present to each other around the dinner table. Behaviors that would have represented the height of rudeness just a decade ago are now accepted social norms.

These changes fundamentally compress time, as Root emphasizes when he charts the shift from the pre-modern conception of marriage rooted sacred time to modernity's sense of marriage for "my lifetime," to the current sense in which marriage for a lifetime seems restricting and unnatural. We have gone from living within eternity to living with the obligation to experience "multiple lifetimes." Within such a social imaginary, the idea "looking back to *older* moral traditions for your own identity is questionable at best." The church, moreover, "seems not only antiquated but immoral in its slow practices of prayer, reading Scripture, and humble service, as

well as in its moral sources in sacred texts and traditions" (76). This acceleration of technological and social change, finally, leads to the third dimension of the present cultural moment, again, interrelated with the first two, which is the acceleration of our pace of life. We feel that life is constantly speeding up. Among the many implications of this acceleration is our incapacity to be attentive to transcendence, exacerbating what Taylor noted as his primary definition of secularity, a pervasive social imaginary in which it is easier *not* to believe in God. As Root puts it, "We're alienated from relating to a world that is alive. We can't access the possibility that there is a living God who is speaking to us. We're cut off from the reality that there is more than our individual identity projects and the race to harvest resources for some undefined dream" (167).

Unfortunately, Root argues, churches have responded to the present moment as if the problem were merely our inability to "reach people, to increase members," and so have sought to "make up ground against decline" by going faster, doing more, innovating the pace of our congregational life (144-145). Churches thus unwittingly embrace our culture's model of the good life and, not surprisingly, end up with the same outcome on a communal level. Having given up the work of "thinking deeply about what certain practices do to us, both in time and in eternity" (37), we have instead sought relevance by becoming busy churches—busy in our offerings and busy in our message. We have "hollowed out the substance of our moral pursuits for the sake of authenticity and speed. Who has time for long confessions, wordy liturgies, and exegetical sermons? We're looking to work on the self, to run fast, to harvest the experiences the self needs to be unique, happy, and satisfied" (39-40). Ministers, consultants, and denominational leaders tell churches to embrace change and innovation in a way that assumes churches are merely resource providers for people pursuing their personal vision of the good life. In short, churches attempt to run faster "for the sake of outracing decline," but their efforts produce the opposite—the kind of malaise and despondency reflected in the volume's opening scenario.

In the face of this cultural and congregational "thirst for acceleration," Root calls the church back to its primary, historic calling as the keeper of "sacred time," which he addresses in Part Three, "Moving from Relevance to Resonance." He first critiques the "slow church" movement, arguing that although "we could all use a downshift" (173) merely slowing down is not the answer, if for no other reason than that in the West, we find ourselves within social and economic structures in which institutional stability in the modern world *demands* constant growth: "Institutions are secure as long as the momentum continues to increase" (177). This is the church's double-bind: Institutions demand some level of constant growth in order to be stable, and yet the search for growth (especially numerical growth) produces the very alienation that is the source of congregational malaise. For this reason, "congregations that have sought to missionally slow down have either abandoned the pursuit, closed, or pivoted to a more innovative imagination" (179).

What is needed, instead, is a fundamental shift in focus from "relevance" to alienation's opposite, "resonance," that is, to a focus on concrete experiences of transcendence: "Reading that poem, watching that movie, looking over that mountain vista, laughing and playing with that four-year-old. Such experiences are full. You feel a resonance between yourself and the world, a felt relationship that reverberates at the frequency of the good" (195). Whereas modernity accelerates time and collapses the present, these moments represent the inbreaking of sacred time, moments when time is "full" (196). To explain these moments, Rosa's model emphasizes two fundamental dimensions of resonance, the phenomenological and efficacy dimensions. In moments of true resonance, we encounter something that comes to us from outside ourselves that stirs deep emotion, and yet we also experience a transformative calling to be or act in the world in new ways, even as we live with a sense of the elusive, almost miraculous sense of the experience. In the face

of cultural alienation, the church's calling is to nurture communal and personal attentiveness to these experiences of transformative resonance and to allow them to guide and give shape to what programs we do develop and pursue as congregations. As an example, Root describes what happened one Sunday as a small, aging church offered its usual Sunday request for prayers and heard from a parishioner, Henry, asking for prayer for his granddaughter born with a congenital heart defect. From that one moment came an entire ministry of prayer and support for other families facing similar situations, a ministry that included elements of organization and programming, but that was prompted by the inbreaking of the Holy Spirit in what would otherwise have been the church's mundane faithfulness to the practice of gathered prayer.

This leads him to focus for the rest of the volume on the ways that ministry to children—"carrying children" as he puts it—can uniquely turn churches away from an instrumental perspective on people as "resources" to lovingly honoring their personhood. For the beginnings of an ecclesiology that would make space for the kind of encounters with resonance that children can bring, Root draws on the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who likewise "asserted that children hold an important place in the Christian life and therefore in our practical ecclesiology" (218). He highlights Bonhoeffer's insistence that the Christian church is a community of persons in Christ, and so must hold two dimensions of personhood, individuality and community, in a both/and relationship. As Root sees it, churches facing late modernity's cultural changes easily come to see themselves as the resource provider for people's individual identity projects to the neglect of community or conversely, to treat congregants instrumentally as "resources" that assure institutional stability. A true theological conception of the church, by contrast, is a "community of persons" that invites the "resonance of shared personhood" (223), and, for Bonhoeffer as for Root, living as a congregation that surrounds and carries children uniquely helps keep the church true to its calling and opens itself to experiences of resonance, for "children gather time. By carrying them, we're moved deeply into the now. This is their gift to us" (227). In this sense, "children are a litmus test for the congregation" as it seeks to be faithful to its God-given calling as the keeper of sacred time (228).

As with Root's other work on ministry and ecclesiology, this volume is a welcome starting point for thinking carefully about congregational leadership and life. His capacity to bring together contemporary social critiques with rich biblical and theological wisdom in service of the church displays practical theology at its best. His call to honor sacred time (even to the point of expanding "intergenerational ministry" to include the communion of the saints) reflects a vital need at this moment.

As to critiques, they are few. The thread of his argument in the final chapters may be somewhat hard to follow for those not already familiar with Bonhoeffer's insistence that we need *both* community (our "openness" and sociability) *and* separateness (our "closedness," individuality, and otherness). What makes Root's account challenging is the way his shorthand appears to mix up these categories (for example, "open *and* closed, individual *and* relational, and will *and* spirit," 234). More substantively, although his caveats about the "slow church" movement are well-taken, he is more dismissive than he needs to be, for if acceleration is cutting us off from transcendence, learning to be attentive to the inbreaking of God will demand downshifting our pace of life. Developing a social imaginary rooted in the Christian story, with its sense of eternal time, will also demand slow practices of worship and prayer.

Finally, I would have welcomed a bit more explanation of other ways of inviting experiences of resonance besides ministry to children, as important as that is. Nevertheless, this volume offers an urgently needed perspective for pastors, church leaders, and future church leaders. While not pretending to give easy answers for navigating this precarious time, Root's insightful analysis can

help prevent our becoming unreflectively caught up in our culture's image of human flourishing and give us possibilities for planning congregational life with greater awareness and intentionality.

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Felicia Wu SONG. *Restless Devices: Recovering Personhood, Presence, and Place in the Digital Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 232 pp. $24.00.

The ubiquity of social media platforms and their power to shape life has been a consistent source of alarm in our society. But while this concern is widely shared, few resources offer constructive responses to our digital age. Fewer still that offer responses from an explicitly Christian-theological stance. This is where the current volume, provides a most welcome resource for those interested in both understanding our digital world and responding to it through the eyes of Christian faith.

Song seeks to address a chief problematic of our digital age, that "the way in which the technological and institutional structures of our contemporary digital lives are fundamentally shaping our imaginations and appetites about what it means to experience satisfaction, goodness, and wholeness as human beings" (13). At stake for Song in this problematic is nothing less than what it means to be human. For, as Song notes, "the digital" is not merely a particular social media platform or piece of technology, but "the entire digital realm that is technological, economic, social, and political" (31). That is, "the digital" is a total ecology that forms those enmeshed in it. "The digital" is a culture *reflecting* and culture *making* force; simultaneously reflecting what we cherish *and* perpetuating its own meaning system. It is because "the digital" operates in this way that we must become aware to its operation and resist it so that we might recover our humanity. This leads to another central aspect of the volume: its emphasis on counter-practices. The volume is filled with a series of "experiments" in practices designed to help us become aware of the digital age's shaping force and wrest ourselves free from its command, moving towards more life-giving rhythms of embodied human existence.

There is much about this volume to commend: its theological vision of embodiment as a central aspect of being human before God and the thorough survey of the digital landscape, among others. However, I most appreciated its pastoral tone and emphasis on the small. Because she spends a significant amount of time exploring the larger structural and systemic dimensions of "the digital," Song recognizes the need for more than personal determination. To try to "act against" our digital world is to quickly find oneself at odds with a cultural value system (as anyone who has tried to go a weekend without checking their email can attest). Thus, Song's work contains a pastoral disposition towards the problematic she engages; she conveys the depth of the challenge, but in a manner that is empathetic towards its difficulty. This leads to a second feature that I appreciated: the emphasis on the small, the experimental, and the value of little changes in formation. Song frames her constructive suggestions in terms of experimentation; small gestures one can incorporate that work formatively over time. As someone who often feels helpless in the face of the structural issues of our day, Song points towards the ways in which small changes and "experiments" in practice can make a significant difference in our movement towards a more embodied and flourishing life.

This is not to say I had no questions for the author. For example, in later chapters it felt as though to emphasize the importance of embodied practice the author goes too far and develops a false dichotomy between thinking and doing. Yet whatever issues I might have had reading the

volume were far outweighed by Song's descriptively powerful and constructively hopeful work on living out embodied human existence amid a digital age.

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Richard BRIGGS. *The Lord Is My Shepherd: Psalm 23 for the Life of the Church.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 224 pp. $24.99.

Richard Briggs offers a detailed analysis of Psalm 23. Initially, he assures readers that he will not deconstruct the cherished readings of this beloved psalm. At the same time, his goal is to integrate all the scholarly disciplines available in order to provide a fresh reading (3).

The volume is organized around Paul Ricoeur's philosophical scheme of the world behind the text, the world in the text, and the world in front of the text. Chapter 2 addresses the world behind the text. Briggs acknowledges the lack of historical information that lies behind the psalm including authorship, the nature of shepherding, and the speaking voice or persona in the psalm (a wanderer, a shepherd, a king, a priest). He appropriately maintains that one can easily engage in "overly historicized readings" of the psalm (45). Briggs concludes that this psalm possesses a "selfish gene" (63). That is, it easily replicates itself into renewable contexts. At the same time, it is malleable, it is also limited by proper exegesis.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the world in the text. By far the longest chapter in the volume, Briggs provides a detailed exegesis and assessment of the psalm's words, images, and phrases. To highlight only a few of his conclusions, he maintains that the shift to the "host" image in verse 5 does not stand in contrast with the shepherd image. The "table" is not a formal dining table, but an animal skin cloth laid out on the ground (104). Sustenance is the issue as this wayfarer travels along. "My enemies" is indeterminant, just as they are throughout the psalter! The enemies could be "the shadow of death" that hangs over and threatens the psalmist's entire life.

At the conclusion of his detailed exegesis, he provides an overview. Psalm 23 imagines a traveler as a sheep on a life journey, breaking along the way to enjoy God's blessings of green pastures and quiet waters. On the journey, the wayfarer travels through "the valley of the shadow of death" which remains a constant in life. Yet God sustains this journeyer with rest and food in the ever-constant presence of "my enemies." While enemies remain a constant threat, they do not deter this pilgrim's progress because of God's ever-present care. The psalmist experiences longer days of praise than days of toil and difficulty already experienced (124). Finally, the psalmist gains assurance that in the end the difficulties of the journey are transcended by dwelling in the presence of God.

Chapter 4 develops the world in front of the text. This is the ministry context for Psalm 23. Briggs explores four areas in the life and mission of the church. First, the psalm is about life-restoring sabbath rest; a rest that is about fullness not denial (Ps 23:2-3; 146). Weariness, however, is not overcome by focusing on rest but rather on God and enjoying God's provisions.

Second, the psalm's ministry context also addresses encouragement in the face of death. Psalm 23 is a secular icon; it is a part of civil religion. Briggs maintains that it works well in a context where grieving people want an acknowledgement of loss wrapped up in a low-key affirmation of hope (152). Psalm 23 enables a secular public without faith to publicly (for example, at funerals) affirm God who seems distant.

Third, Psalm 23 ministers to those facing life-threatening situations. Briggs maintains that "my enemies" is the most neglected phrase in the psalm (157). Enemies includes anything or

anyone that endanger one's life (illness, suffering, etc.). However, note the brevity of the mention of enemy (160). The focus is on the host!

Fourth, the psalm gives voice to hope; a hope that flows from God. The whole life pilgrimage of this psalmist is driven by hope.

Briggs makes some good observations about preaching this psalm. He rightly opposes the exegesis + application approach to preaching in general and in particular preaching this psalm (15-17). He maintains that all worthwhile interpretation already contains and includes application. He says exegesis + application has the idea that we separate the text out first before one interprets and applies. In response, he argues the opposite scenario. Interpreters take their contemporary world and immerse it into the world of the text.

What is ironic, however, is that several times Briggs strongly advises the preacher "to get out of the way and let the text speak" (171, 174). That advice seems to affirm the exegesis + application scenario he strongly opposes (15-17). For the preacher to get out of the way of the text once again creates that dichotomy.

Initially, I was quite suspicious of reading and reviewing this volume because I assumed it was another light devotional reading of Psalm 23. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find the in-depth analysis of the psalm that balanced serious scholarship with ministry to the church. Briggs accomplished his task of "remastering" Psalm 23 without losing its first joy.

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Sunggu A. YANG. ***Arts and Preaching: An Aesthetic Homiletic for the Twenty-First Century.*** **Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021. 234 pp. $28.00.**

Standing before a room full of preachers at the National Preaching Summit, I made the audacious statement that preachers are some of the most creative people in the world—they just do not realize it. On the most basic level, a preacher crafts 45-50 original presentations a year. Some craft twice as many due to preaching at two different services on Sunday. Add in multiple Bible studies, the bulletin article, social media posts—and let us not forget about the podcast or Instagram reel—and it quickly becomes apparent that creativity is absolutely essential to long-term Christian ministry. The problem is that creativity is often understood as something that is reserved only in quantities for directors like Christopher Nolan or Wes Anderson or musicians like Freddie Mercury or Lady Gaga. Preaching, however, is necessarily a creative activity because it is steeped in orality and yet must facilitate an encounter between the human and the divine. Multisensory is the name of the game and preaching must rise to the call, for we are created as multisensory beings.

To this challenge, Yang offers his newest volume. Yang, who teaches preaching at George Fox University and whose previous publications focused on the preaching of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and postcolonialism in preaching, charts new ground with the current volume. A passion project in the purest sense of the word, Yang wonders what preaching would look and sound like if it embraced a more aesthetic understanding of the craft of preaching—one in tune with the creative nature of the Divine. Yang considers this a "(re)discovery of the intersection between arts and preaching" (xvii), something that is deeply needed in our multisensory culture. The content chapters explore this intersection through the lens of painting, architecture, fashion, film, theatre and music, drawing from such trendsetters as Pablo Picasso, Coco Chanel, and Beyoncé.

Although unable to fully communicate it appropriately here, my response to this volume would be the GIF of actress Debby Ryan gesturing that her mind had been blown (with said explosion happening). This volume is nothing less than the generative art of an emerging maestro

standing on the precipice of scholarly illumination. As with the trendsetters mentioned in his discussion, Yang pushes the boundary marker of how the art and science of preaching is to be understood. Henry Mitchell challenged preachers to think of the sermon as a celebratory composition. David Buttrick challenged preachers to think of the sermon as a phenomenological experience. Lucy Atkinson Rose challenged preachers to think of the sermon as communal process. Yang has challenged preachers to think of the sermon as a theological aesthetic.

My only critique, as is often the case with cutting-edge homiletic works, is the lack of sermonic examples. Yang provides more sermon précis discussions than most. However, it would have been helpful to envision more of a cubist or fashionista sermon than a précis. Perhaps a worthwhile follow-up project would be to curate a reservoir of sermons designed from the various aesthetics presented. I, for one, would gladly volunteer as tribute. This critique aside, Yang ably provides enough starter material to point the reader in the correct direction. In addition, he provides a sample syllabus and curriculum map for the interested homiletics instructor, complete with numerous YouTube and TED Talk links. Additionally, this volume would provide a rich practical component to the more rhetorically theoretical *Graceful Speech* by Lucy Lind Hogan, *The Four Pages of the Sermon* by Paul Scott Wilson, or *The Beauty of Preaching* by Michael Pasquarello.

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Charles L. CAMPBELL. *The Scandal of the Gospel: Preaching and the Grotesque*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2021. 120 pp. $33.00.

Modern preachers would do well to be more offensive and grotesque. That sentiment causes the preaching professor to reach for their handkerchief to wipe the nervous sweat from their brow. In learning the craft, preaching students are taught how to imbed their sermons with a solid focus statement, how to avoid the use of contradictory and unsettling words, and how to arrive at a resolution. To be sure, there is nothing inherently wrong with this. Teaching the next generation to do these things will ensure that pulpits are filled with preachers; preachers who completely miss the mark of the message they are bringing and who communicate messages that are, to borrow a phrase from an elder I met many years ago, "a mile wide and an inch deep." Preachers should seek to be more offensive and grotesque. This is not to suggest that they must stand in the pulpit and slander people or use offensive language. Rather, preachers must communicate the true essence of the Gospel of Christ. This gospel is offensive. This gospel is grotesque. This gospel was born in violence and communicates the scandalous message of victory emerging from the ashes of death. In this brief volume, Campbell encourages preachers to flee from the temptation to preach a gospel that is clean and free from pain and instead preach the truth of what Christ endured so that humans may come to have new and eternal life.

Campbell does not speak on this topic from the viewpoint of one who is vexed by modernity and seeks to return to the "good old days." He also does not take the position of one who only preaches fire and brimstone, screaming at the congregation like a drill sergeant in basic training. Campbell admits that preaching a grotesque gospel is difficult. It creates a challenge for theology and preaching. He admits that many preachers try to force the gospel into their own doctrine of atonement, homiletical theories, and theological systems so as to gain the high ground over any contradictions. This is what Willie Jennings has come to call "academic theology." This is a theological system that seeks to avoid theology's often "fluid, adaptable and even morphable character" (11). The grotesque gospel, in fact, calls for a fluid, adaptable and even morphable character.

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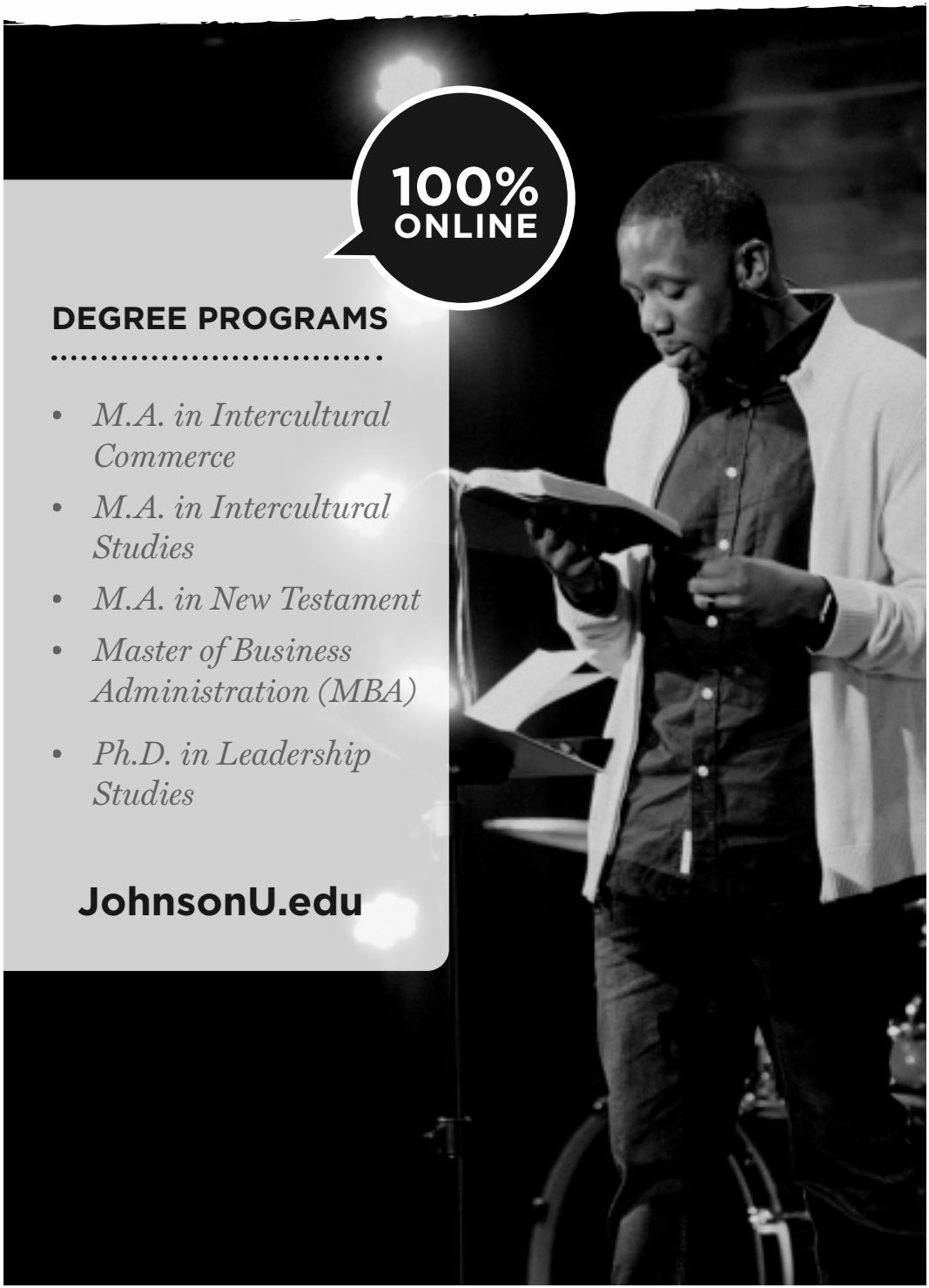

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- *M.A. in Intercultural Studies*
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The gospel is so incredible, so scandalous, so far beyond our comprehension that we feel it should be nice and clean and free from anything one might consider to be contradictory. However, in making the gospel seem nice and clean, we neglect to communicate the truth. The victory proclaimed by the gospel came through Christ dying the most horrible death the ancient world could imagine. Back torn open by the Roman scourge. Crown impaled by the crown of thorns. Hands and feet pierced by nails. All of this while being completely innocent and while standing in the place all humans should have stood. This is not a nice and clean message, but it is an accurate and biblical one. Campbell exhorts preachers not to fear proclaiming this message, but to stand firmly upon it. He pushes the preacher to be more honest and more alert. Speaking on the grotesque will bring preaching to its truest form: A truthful proclamation of the Word of God.

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Jack LEVISON. *A Boundless God: The Spirit according to the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020. 208 pp. $21.99.

Having previously published four books on the spirit with Eerdmans and Paraclete Press, Jack Levison added two books on the spirit with Baker in 2020, one on the spirit in the Gospels and another on the spirit in the OT. This review focuses on the latter. *A Boundless God* stands apart from Levison's other writings for bracketing what the NT says about the spirit and focusing exclusively on the OT. This follows from his conviction that the portrait of the spirit painted in the Hebrew Scriptures stands on its own and makes contributions that one otherwise misses when attempting to integrate both testaments into a single theology.

Levison's approach is neither systematic, chronological, nor comprehensive. Rather he organizes his material around eight actions that the OT frequently associates with the spirit: blowing/breathing, coming upon, resting upon, being passed on, being poured out, filling, cleansing, and standing/guiding. Levison devotes one chapter per action. In each chapter he offers a careful reading of multiple relevant passages, often focusing on a particular passage yielding interesting insights. This review samples from four chapters to illustrate the different sorts of contributions this volume makes to the study of the spirit.

A significant contribution of chapter 1 is Levison's analysis of *rûaḥ*, the Hebrew term for spirit. He laments that this term is sometimes translated flatly as breath, wind, or spirit. He does not deny that the term refers to these different things in different contexts. Rather he observes that when Scripture refers to the breath, wind, or spirit of God it does not refer to ordinary breath, wind, or spirit. It is a God-wind, a wind suffused with God's presence, or a God-breath, a breath suffused with the divine. English terms like "breath" and "wind" fail to capture the divine element inherent in *rûaḥ*.

In chapter 2, Levison offers a novel interpretation of the Samson narrative. Many readers are scandalized by the spirit's seeming complicity in Samson's gratuitous acts of violence. Levison argues the opposite. The function of *rûaḥ* early in Samson's life served to help him remain faithful to his vow, even when he ignored its promptings. Later violence should be read in the same light. Samson committed several egregious acts against the spirit's persistent leading to do otherwise.

In chapter 6, Levison refutes the notion that in the OT, unlike the NT, the spirit only comes upon people in sudden, short-term bursts. Yet the accounts of Joseph, Daniel, and the artisans who helped construct the tabernacle suggest that *rûaḥ* sometimes follows from lifelong discipline and

learning. It is often associated with human wisdom that may be acquired through ordinary teaching and may typify a person's life for several decades.

Levison addresses a significant faulty assumption about the spirit in chapter 8. Too often, Christians assume that *rûaḥ* is merely an impersonal force in the OT, as opposed to a personal being in the NT. His reading of Haggai 2 and Isaiah 63 suggests that the Jews already began attributing personhood to the spirit by the post-exilic period.

Levison does not conclude by offering a new systematic account of the Spirit in the OT. Rather, he confesses that after encountering *rûaḥ* in the OT, one is rendered speechless. God's spirit resists being confined to boxes and defies all attempts at tidy classification. God may not be bound in such ways, thus the volume's title.

Though some readers may be frustrated by Levison's inconclusive ending, the process of exploring this topic with him is well worth it. Content-wise, the only significant incongruence worth noting would be his association of the spirit with naturally acquired human wisdom in chapter 6 after insisting in chapter 1 that *rûaḥ* ought not be reduced to ordinary breath or wind. One would expect him to argue that spirit wisdom is more than just human wisdom, but a divine infusion of wisdom that rises above and beyond it—or at least to explain why this case differs from his observation in chapter 1. This volume is fairly easy to read and appropriate for any graduate or upper-level college class.

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Gilbert MEILAENDER. *Thy Will Be Done: The Ten Commandments and the Christian Life.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020. 144 pp. $24.00.

The subtitle states the purpose of the volume well. What do the Ten Commandments and the Christ life have to do with one another, if anything at all? What is the relationship between the Decalogue and the disciples of Jesus? Meilaender tackles the question head on.

The author's approach is quite helpful. Rather than simply walk through each commandment, chapter by chapter, Meilaender groups them as they relate to creating a godly community. He begins with a chapter devoted to the relationship of the Decalogue to the law of Christ, establishing the value for the church. The following five chapters examine groups of commandments as they relate to the Christian community. Each of these "bonds" establishes God's desire for those who follow Him: the marriage bond, family bond, life bond, possession bond, and speech bond. In the final chapter, the author circles back to the first commandment and examines how this overarching expectation frames the others.

Three strengths of the volume shine through. First, the author utilizes a biblical theology framework rather than systematic. In each chapter, he places the commandments in the metanarrative of Scripture by examining each bond through the intent of creation, the need of healing because of the fall, and the promised redemption with the final consummation of the kingdom. This approach allows the reader to understand both the positive aspects and challenges each command presents for Christ followers.

A second strength is the broad range of application. The author tackles specific issues within each bond. These applications give the work a very practical slant rather than getting lost in irrelevant generalities. The final strength is the connection he makes between the commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. This brings the context forward from the distant OT and sets the stage for relevant application.

The volume is not without weaknesses, however. First, no discussion of the Holy Spirit and His role in living for Christ is present. Yes, the Lord has expectations for Christian community on

this side of the cross, but can these really be attained apart from the work of the Spirit in the life of the church? Adding this discussion would have been very helpful.

A second weakness will be noticed by readers from the Stone-Campbell tradition. The author falls into a very predictable pattern of quoting only Catholic catechisms, Luther, or Calvin for commentary and background on how the church has historically understood the commands. A broader theological range of interpreters would have provided a richer reading experience.

In the final verdict, this volume is a very helpful treatment of the topic. It deserves a place on the preacher's and pastor's bookshelf alike.

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Konrad SCHMID. *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. 504 pp. $57.99.

In the current volume, Schmidt offers what he calls a Hebrew Bible/biblical theology of the Hebrew Bible. The volume is divided into nine units consisting of two to twelve chapters each. Unit A introduces the volume and outlines its goal of describing theology as found in the Hebrew Bible itself without merging that with its reception history. Schmid's proposal recognizes both the plurality of theologies in the Hebrew Bible as well as their literary mediation, thus his work examines both periods in Israel's history and the texts that arose out of them, as well as the later, textual response to earlier texts. His work is a historically descriptive "reconstruction of the thought world of the literature of the Hebrew Bible."

Unit B is, in large part, a survey of his previous book, *Is There Theology in the Hebrew Bible?* It surveys the way the term theology has been understood and used beginning in ancient Greece until the mid-20th century. The result of this survey ends with the conclusion that there is very little theology (as the term is commonly used today) in the Hebrew Bible, though its contents are connected or related to theology. Thus, Schmid adopts the terms implicit and explicit theology. Explicit theology is defined as reflection and interpretation of religious phenomena. In contrast, implicit theology refers to the understanding in the texts themselves that there is potential for reflection within them. While explicit theology can be found in later reflections that respond to earlier texts, most of the Hebrew Bible falls in the category of implicit theology.

Unit C deals with issues of canon and canonization as they contribute to a discussion of theology within the texts. Unit D begins by situating the theology of the Hebrew Bible among other approaches to the text, before presenting ten methodological postulates that are necessary for a "theological treatment of the Hebrew Bible to be both academic and theological." This chapter is one of the highlights of the volume for the way it compellingly argues for theological interpretation of scripture that is grounded in the historical-critical method and scholarly consensuses.

Units E and F survey canons and units of canons (Christian, Jewish, and Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim) for the way their contents and/or arrangements present theology. Unit G surveys seven key historical periods or events in Israel's past and how they contribute toward the theology found in texts produced in these periods.

Unit H is the largest section of the volume. Schmid begins by surveying genres and how they present and engage with theology before moving to eleven "theological topics." Those familiar with topical approaches to OT theology will be interested in this unit both for its unique selection of themes as well as Schmid's practical application of the methods and conclusions presented in previous units of the volume. Unit I concludes with a brief survey of the way Judaism and Christianity read this corpus theologically.

Schmid's methodological attention, nuanced definition of theology, and thorough presentation make his work essential for those working in any field of Hebrew Bible studies, not just OT theology. The writing is incredibly dense in places, and it assumes a large degree of familiarity with Hebrew Bible studies, thus it is best suited for graduate level students and above.

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Sung Jin PARK. *The Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents: Divisions and Exegetical Roles beyond Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 224 pp. $34.95.

This volume is a deep dive into the names, order, and functions of Hebrew accents. It is brief in length, but fairly technical in nature. The word "Fundamentals" in the title of the volume may be misleading. The word "Beyond" is more apropos.

The first six chapters include the names of the accents, their functions, and their order. Some major and minor rules concerning the accents are discussed. Chapter 7 deals with "prosodic" and "syntactic" approaches to the function of the Masoretic accents. Park presupposes a certain amount of linguistic savvy in this chapter.

Chapter 8 is the dessert at the end of a rather heavy (but nutritious) meal, dealing with the exegetical roles of the divisions signaled by the Hebrew accents. These roles include clarifying ambiguous meanings, emphasizing certain words or phrases, and/or creating dramatic effect in biblical narrative. I wonder if it might have been a better idea to lead off the volume with a few examples of ways in which attention to the Hebrew accents might enrich our understanding of the text. Perhaps giving the reader a taste of the dessert at the beginning of the meal might whet his or her appetite for more.

A brief and helpful summary ends each chapter. There are exercises at the end of the first six chapters. Helpful diagrams are sprinkled throughout the volume. Four appendices deal with the development of the Tiberian Hebrew accents, accentuation systems, the accents of "the three books" (Job, Psalms, and Proverbs), and the functions of *paseq* and *maqqef*. The volume concludes with a helpful bibliography and thorough subject and scriptural indices.

This volume's greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. It is a detailed work, which is not afraid to get into the weeds. This is wonderful—if you are a botanist. For the casual gardener, it may be a bit *too* detailed. The volume exposed many gaps in my own knowledge of Hebrew accents and of linguistics in general. If the purpose of reading and study is to inform, the volume certainly did that. However, if the purpose of reading and study is to humble the reader by acquainting him or her with his or her own ignorance, then the volume accomplished that for me as well.

One helpful thing that the author did was that he would occasionally give English examples of stress in various combinations of words. This was an excellent way of easing the reader into how the Hebrew functioned in some similar ways. I wish that Park had done this more.

At times, I found the author's style to be a bit opaque. Here is an example of a sentence that I had to read several times. "Put differently, the accentual divisions in shorter clauses and sentences are governed by syntactic and prosodic representations, whereas those in longer sentences are usually governed by prosodic representation."

Park acknowledged in his preface that "there are still unsearched areas" in the field of Masoretic accents. It may be that he has fallen into a common error for all of us specialists: assuming much more knowledge than the reader (at least, this reader) actually possesses. The author states, "This volume is designed to serve as a textbook for intermediate Hebrew students

and above." I suspect that intermediate students would find it a tough go. It should be helpful to advanced Hebrew students.

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Gary D. PRATICO and Miles V. VAN PELT. *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: 2nd Ed.* New York: HarperCollins, 2019. 320 pp. $24.99.

The current volume is a great resource for those developing their understanding of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic. The second edition is updated to contain three primary lists of all the vocabulary words. The first list is Hebrew arranged by frequency, which is helpful for learning important words. The second list is arranged by common root. The common root arrangement is great because it allows this volume to double as a quasi-lexicon. Next, the third list is Aramaic words by frequency, which is particularly nice while translating texts like Daniel. Additional lists, such as homonyms, are located in the appendix. The only disappointment in this volume is that there is not also a list of Aramaic words by common root.

Furthermore, this vocabulary guide pairs well with the grammar it was created to supplement. Personally, I was largely taught Biblical Hebrew with the Pratico and Van Pelt grammar and workbook (now in 3rd ed., HarperCollins, 2019). I did not have the vocabulary guide as an additional resource while initially learning but believe it would have made my educational experience both easier and more fruitful. The grammar and workbook are great resources in their own right, but adding this vocabulary guide rounds out the collection well. Additionally, using this vocabulary guide in unison with the grammar and workbook consolidates all necessary information for an introductory education in Biblical Hebrew into one convenient set.

Finally, the second edition implements a pleasant typeface. It has large, dark, and sharp print, which is good for prolonged study sessions. In the few months I have owned this volume, I have not spotted any glaring typos nor discovered any contradictions between this vocabulary guide and the grammar it supplements. Ultimately, I enjoy this resource and plan to continue using it regularly.

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Walter BRUEGGEMANN. *Delivered into Covenant: Pivotal Moments in the Book of Exodus (Part Two)*. Pivotal Moments in the Old Testament. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2021. 170 pp. $17.00.

Walter Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, is a well-known and prolific OT scholar who has produced in the current volume a popular-level exposition Exodus 16–40 for preachers and lay readers. For lay readers who might choose this work for a Bible discussion group, he has included four questions for discussion at the end of each chapter. He wrote a similar work on Exodus 1–15.

Brueggemann has already produced a more traditional commentary on Exodus in *The New Interpreter's Bible*. The Pivotal Moments in the Old Testament series seeks to highlight short, key texts—pivotal moments—as the basis for exposition and contemporary reflection. His goal is "to attempt to read through a liberationist hermeneutic that I believe is required both by the text and by our own demanding interpretative context" (Preface).

This methodology means the exposition is selective. For example, Brueggemann says hardly anything about the Decalogue (Exod 20:1-17) in the exposition—though he says more in the

Appendix (see below)—because the "pivotal moment" selected for the exposition is Exodus 20:20 "Do not be afraid; for God has only come to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin." The exposition reflects on the meaning of "fear of the LORD" and how within the covenant that concept serves as "a frame of reference for all knowledge and all action in the world," while ironically at the same time we are told not to fear, which is another common theme in Scripture. The proper fear of the LORD in covenantal terms, according to Brueggemann, is "a loyal, unreserved devotion" that ultimately means love and obedience, a perfect love that casts out fear in the sense of terror (citing 1 John 4:16-18).

As a popular level work, there is little discussion of critical issues or cruxes of interpretation within the expositions. Endnotes are limited to an average of 1-2 per chapter. Brueggemann does include an Appendix that mentions lightly critical complexities within Exodus and the possibility of different theological voices within the book along the lines of the "old 'documentary hypothesis'" that suggests the book of Exodus is a dynamic tradition with layers of interpretation. The Appendix also discusses how the Sinai pericope (Exod 19–24) is at the heart of the book, which allows Brueggemann to expound on the Decalogue and some of the laws of the book of the covenant, with emphasis on the Sabbath commandment and its relationship with narratives in Exodus and laws of the book of the covenant. He closes by observing parallels between America as a "predatory nation" where in 2008 the alliance of greed in the financial oligarchical class in collusion with the government led to financial breakdown, and between Pharaoh in the ancient biblical narrative whose greedy policies were predatory against the marginalized and economically vulnerable Hebrews and served only to exalt himself. In such environments "Sabbath emerges as a way in which the alternative God of covenant 'gets glory' against the glorification of wealth, power, control and virility that dominates our society" and that this is disrupted only when "the divine command is humanly uttered in the face of such predation, 'Let my people go.'"

Brueggemann is clearly a skilled speaker and teacher. Even those of us who differ with him theologically can learn from this work to communicate biblical themes better.

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Gregg DAVIDSON and Kenneth J. TURNER. *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 224 pp. $22.99.

Davidson and Turner offer this volume as an olive branch, hoping that Christians would let go of their "unhealthy squabbles" (12, 176) over Genesis's depiction of creation. Instead, they propose that more attention should be focused on appreciating its multivalent artistry. In order to foster such appreciation, they present seven distinct "layers of truth" (4) or interpretive frameworks for reading Genesis's creation story. Davidson and Turner argue that none of their layers are mutually exclusive, and that only by journeying down through each layer can one mine all the riches that this narrative has to offer.

After two introductory chapters in which the authors lay out their agenda and vouchsafe their allegiance to biblical inerrancy, Davidson and Turner begin their survey in earnest by exploring each layer in a successive chapter. Their first layer is "Song," which highlights the poetic aspects of Genesis 1, such as the parallel structures between days one through three (forming) and days four through six (filling) of creation. The next layer surveyed is "Analogy," in which the authors argue that God's creative work in Genesis 1 serves as a model for humanity's ideal life comprised of "work, creativity, reflection, rest, and worship" (44). "Polemic" marks the third layer, in which the authors place Genesis 1 alongside creation narratives from the ancient Near East (ANE) and

outline both the similarities and important distinctions between them. The fourth layer is "Covenant," where Davidson and Turner argue Genesis's descriptions of God creating imply the establishment of a specific covenant relationship with both humans and the rest of creation. Following this is the fifth layer, "Temple," which summarizes various functional and symbolic parallels between the biblical depiction of Eden and a temple in the ANE. "Calendar," the sixth layer, portrays Genesis 1 as a "microcosm of each agricultural year" (134) and anticipatory of Israel's yearly religious calendar. Finally, the seventh layer of "Land" sees Canaan as a typological representation of Eden, with a corresponding parallel between Adam/Eve and Israel. The authors round out their volume with a concluding chapter that summarizes the main points of each layer, followed by two appendices, a bibliography, and indexes (author, subject, and scripture).

This volume offers a helpful primer to those who are unfamiliar with the alternative ways that the OT represents its cosmogony. Davidson and Turner present accessible summaries of several prevailing interpretive frameworks for engaging Genesis 1–2, concluding each "layer" with their responses to potential objections and questions to prompt further discussion. This prompts what is perhaps the most immediate criticism of the work, however, which is its unfortunate titling. Some of the frameworks examined by Davidson and Turner (most notably, "Temple" and "Land") hardly even reference Genesis 1, instead focusing on the creation narrative in Genesis 2–3. That Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 alternatively portray creation using distinctive images (or "layers") should prompt questions of its own, yet the authors do not give any attention to this crucial issue.

Furthermore, while Davidson and Turner cite prominent scholars related to various layers throughout each chapter, providing suggestions for "further reading" at the end of each chapter would have further helped those who are inspired by one layer and skeptical of another. Indeed, readers will likely favor some layers over others; the present reader found the layers of "Covenant" and "Calendar" especially tenuous. The authors seem to have anticipated this, though, for on several occasions they note that readers are free to hold onto the frameworks they find helpful and to leave behind those they find unconvincing (173). That they endorse a noncommittal attitude about their own work makes one feel better about sharing it.

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L. Juliana CLAASENS and Irmtraud FISCHER, eds. *Prophecy and Gender in the Hebrew Bible*. The Bible and Women: An Encyclopaedia of Exegesis and Cultural History 1.2. Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2021. 408 pp. $78.00.

This volume is an installment in a project called "The Bible and Women," which is described as a sort of "Encyclopedia." I found very few errors in this volume, but "Encyclopedia" is spelled the English way on the front cover, while it is spelled the Latin way in the front of the volume. If this volume is any indication of how the project as a whole will turn out, it will be a very worthwhile undertaking: the quality of the essays collected here is consistently high.

The volume under review was edited by Claassens and Fischer, the latter being also an editor of The Bible and Women project. Claassens and Fischer have put together an outstanding collection of essays, which strikes a nice balance between data-intensive description and analysis. The scope of the topics covers somewhat more ground than the volume title might suggest. In addition to studies of the gendered aspects of Near Eastern prophecy, we also learn a great deal about the image of women in prophetic texts. The targeted reader seems to be the seasoned scholar, but I found the writing clear throughout. There is an occasional appeal to new trends, as

in Claassens's use of "trauma hermeneutics," but on the whole the authors take established methodologies and apply them in new directions.

After Fischer's overview of current questions, the volume is divided into three parts: (1) "Historical Background: Prophecy and Gender in the Ancient Near East" (4 essays), (2) "Female Literary Figures and Their Social-Historical Context in the Nevi im" (5 essays), and (3) "Gender and Metaphor in the Latter Prophets" (8 essays). All of the contributions remain centered within the Hebrew Bible. Hopefully future volumes in the project will extend the theme of this volume forward in time.

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Isabelle HAMLEY. *God of Justice and Mercy: A Theological Commentary on Judges*. London: SCM, 2021. 296 pp. £25.00.

Work on Judges continues to be an exciting time in biblical and theological studies. This theological commentary contributes a key voice in the field, bringing forth a much-needed theological engagement with a text that is often avoided due to its high degree of violence and dark stories. Many pastors find Judges challenging to deal with, and Hamley invites a closer look, helping to produce a generative reading that can connect to the modern reader. In a text that seems to be devoid of internal ethical commentary, Hamley sets forth a key question to drive her exposition: "How does Judges speak of God, humanity, and the relationship between them?" (vii). Hamley navigates central issues (e.g., historical-critical and literary concerns) and brings to the fore key themes that drive the narratives, to assist the reader in navigating important theological questions such as Israel's construction of identity, an identity "built as Yahweh's gift, rather than over and against the excluded 'other.'" (xvii).

This volume is divided into an introduction and nine chapters. The first chapter focuses on the book's prologue and the core focus of the book (Judg 1:1–3:6). This chapter sets forth the methodological aim of the project, the framework of Judges, and key aims that pertain to the entire story (e.g., key themes, war in the Hebrew Bible; covenant, gender, violence) and Judges' "fundamental theology" which "hold Justice and mercy closely together" (23). The final three chapters focus on the double epilogue (Judg 17–21). This section offers profound insights into three of the darkest and most difficult chapters in the entire OT.

Chapters 2–6 take to task a close reading of primary individuals: Othniel and Ehud (Judg 3:7–5:30); Gideon (Judg 6–8); Abimelech (Judg 9); Jephthah and the Minor Judges (10–12); and Samson (Judg 13–16). The spotlight on these individual judges features a dual lens character study: (1) the judge and the people, and (2) Israel as a main character. This focus on these particular stories of each judge (characterizations, actions, public and private activities, etc.) discloses how Israel's identity is constructed through the narratives. Throughout these chapters, Hamley offers insightful reflections that resist simple dichotomies and invites NT voices to shape and contribute to the Yahweh's relational care, even amidst the sometimes successful and often floundering moments of key leaders in the life of Israel.

A short clarification early in the volume would have been useful for readers with Hamley's terminology choice of describing the OT as the "Hebrew Bible" as it might confuse some readers not familiar with the field. She notes in her introduction that her perspective is reading Judges as part of the Christian canon in this theological commentary. This is evident as she has a rich Christocentric focus throughout the work. I would have also appreciated her chapter title to include Deborah's name, as a female judge who takes up most of chapter 2, "Othniel and Ehud (3.7–5.31)." Deborah is a key female voice in Judges. Noting Hamley's intentional focus on

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gender, violence, and the female voice, this could have proven a valuable title focus given the complex issues Hamley carefully attends to in her work. Nevertheless, Hamley's fruitful theological insights have much to offer in the academy. Her focus on a broad theological conversation is especially timely for communities that value Judges as a sacred text.

This commentary is a profitable and timely supplement to theological academic courses that work through the book of Judges and/or issues of violence in the OT. I highly recommend this resource for pastors who seek to dive into the robust theological dialogue that can easily be missed or dismissed within the book of Judges.

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James K. HOFFMEIER. *The Prophets of Israel: Walking in the Ancient Paths.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 400 pp. $44.99.

Hoffmeier's goal is to enhance our understanding of the Hebrew prophets by placing them in their larger social, cultural, historical, and archaeological contexts. Hoffmeier's training and experience help facilitate that goal. He earned his Ph.D. in Egyptology from Toronto and taught OT exegesis and Near Eastern archaeology for decades at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Hoffmeier begins with a survey of how the prophetic books appear in the Hebrew canon. This includes definitions of Hebrew terms as well as a brief survey of prophets and prophecy outside the Hebrew Bible. Discussions of the mechanics of prophetic activity and foretelling the future appear, especially as they were, or were not, manifest in ancient contemporary cultures. To that end, he discusses some of the means of prophetic activity noting the Egyptian "Dream Manual" from Egypt as well as other divination activities. There was, of course, a differentiation between biblical prophetic activity as contrasted with non-Israelite activity. Once he has laid out the important foundational data, he proceeds to discuss the prophets of the Hebrew Bible and even takes the discussion into the NT period! The first person in the Hebrew Bible to appear specifically as a prophet in any capacity is Abraham.

The non-literary prophets find an entire chapter devoted to them; among these Hoffmeier notes Miriam, Deborah, Samuel, Gad, Nathan, Jehu son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, and Huldah. In addition, he mentions the cryptic references to Eldad and Medad in the Israelite camp. As one might assume, very little information exists relative to some of these personalities.

From that general discussion, he proceeds through the Bible in a chronological survey of the literary prophetic collection dividing the chapters into "Eighth-Century Prophets of Israel," "Eighth-Century Prophets of Judah," "Seventh- and Sixth-Century Prophets of Judah," "Prophets of the Babylonian Exile," "Prophets of the Post-Exilic Period," and "Prophets and Prophecy in the New Testament." Sometimes the discussion is little more than a narration of the prophetic career and/or time; that said, there is often very limited data otherwise with which to work. For other prophets, particularly as the discussion moves into the era of the literary prophets, much more contextual data tends to appear, perhaps largely because the period of the Divided Monarchy is more extensively documented from extra-biblical and archaeological sources.

Hoffmeier approaches the text seriously as a conservative scholar. The discussion, however, is not contentious, but proceeds in a calm, studious, and respectful fashion. While recognizing the differences of interpretation of the text, he advocates for the unity of Isaiah, Daniel's authorship of Daniel, the historicity of the Jonah narrative, and the unity of Zechariah.

Numerous full-color photographs enhance the discussion, providing an almost on-site feel. In addition, each chapter ends with a series of suggested discussion questions. Regretfully, the volume

is riddled with typographic errors. Most of them are spelling and grammar issues. In at least one place, however, the sentence contradicts the premise offered in the previous sentence (205). In addition, at least one illustration reference is erroneous. While most of these might easily be overlooked, one should be careful in exactly how to navigate parts of the text.

Even with this editorial shortcoming, the volume serves its purpose well. It could serve well as a textbook for an undergraduate college or university course on the Hebrew Bible. Ministers and Bible teachers would find it useful to provide contextual data perhaps using it as a supplementary text in a serious congregational setting.

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John GOLDINGAY. *The Book of Jeremiah*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. 1063 pp. $75.00.

As those who know his work would expect, Goldingay has written an excellent commentary on Jeremiah. The commentary's 64-page introduction covers the usual topics: historical background, composition, authorship and date, canonicity, the text (MT and LXX), theology, themes, and general overview and analysis of Jeremiah's contents. Each subsection of the text includes Goldingay's translation with extensive footnotes, a presentation of the flow of the text, comments on the differences between the MT and LXX where relevant, and discussion of the meaning(s) of the text. The work concludes with indices for authors, subjects, and Scripture and other ancient texts.

Goldingay thinks the contents of Jeremiah go back to a historical Jeremiah, but he allows that "curators" arranged and adapted the material, and in some cases even imaginatively created stories or oracles under the guidance of the Spirit. He places the end of the curators' work no later than the 540s. He also draws a helpful analogy between the formation of the various NT Gospels and the variations among the recensions of Jeremiah that led to differences reflected in the MT and LXX.

Goldingay is an excellent guide through the book of Jeremiah. His outlines and summaries of the text at various levels (major parts, sections, subsection) help the reader keep in view the forest as he dives into the trees. He explains the texts in their literary and historical contexts as well as bringing them into conversation with the larger biblical context. He frequently points out the differences between Western modes of thinking and what is found in Jeremiah to prevent misunderstandings of Jeremiah, and he exhibits scholarly humility by frequently admitting what we cannot know. His translations at times are unique, compared to usual or traditional translations, but this has the effect of making the reader pause and think about the meaning of words and phrases they might otherwise rush past in familiarity. For example, he consistently translates *berit* as "pledge" rather than "covenant." He explains the translation by elaborating on the "deceptive freight" carried by the term covenant in our context and noting that pledge "has the advantage of not being a technical theological term" (315). His translations also help bring out the shock value of some of Jeremiah's imagery in ways that some translations obscure. For example, in reference to the spiritual adultery of Judah/Jerusalem he translates 2:20 as "you're bending over as a whore" and 3:2 as "where have you not been laid." Goldingay does well in weaving into his discussion of the text insights and explanations from a wide range of writers ancient and modern.

A couple of things, however, may limit the commentary's usefulness for some readers. First, Goldingay often does not weigh options—noting strengths and weakness—and sometimes does not present the significant options where the meaning of a text is debated. Second, the

commentary offers little in the way of guidance on hearing a word of God today through the text. Goldingay touches on it a little in his introduction with respect to the book as a whole, and he scatters brief statements on contemporary significance here and there. But there is no consistent reflection on meanings of individual texts or sections for today.

Scholars, pastors, and seminary students will certainly benefit from this commentary, particularly with respect to the meaning(s) of the text in its original and canonical contexts. Because it lacks much in the way of "application," laity looking for a reading companion as they study Jeremiah will probably find this commentary less useful.

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Stuart WEEKS. *Ecclesiastes 5–12: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*. International Critical Commentary. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2021. 752 pp. $100.00.

This volume constitutes the second installment of a two-part commentary on Ecclesiastes, updating the classic and still useful work by George Barton from 1908 in the ICC series. The first volume by Weeks, covering Eccl 1:1–5:6, contains bibliographic information and an introduction to both volumes that lays out Weeks' methodological approach to the commentary. Anyone engaging extensively with the commentary on Ecclesiastes 5–12 is advised to consult this introductory chapter in the first volume so as to get a flavor of the approach that Weeks takes. The method of the commentary continues with the focal points and strengths of the ICC series—textual criticism and grammar—with less attention given to ancient Near Eastern comparisons, historical contextualization, history of interpretation, and literary approaches.

In the introduction to the first volume, Weeks presents his commentary as a "commentary for commentators," (*Ecclesiastes 1–5*, xii), aiming to produce a form of the text that can be trusted, and an understanding of the ways in which the grammar can be read that will enable others who study the book to make the most informed decisions about the meaning of the text. In doing this work, Weeks sifts through hundreds of years of history of interpretation to eliminate interpretive trends that run roughshod over the possibilities of the Hebrew text; his work is thus a kind of "scholarly housekeeping" that sweeps away bad interpretations and highlights potentially constructive and grammatically and textually legitimate ways of thinking about the text. Weeks' overall assessment of the book of Ecclesiastes is that it is a thought-provoking and entertaining work, composed loosely in the form of a memoir that regularly undermines some of its own key assumptions (*Ecclesiastes 1–5*, xviii). Awareness of Weeks' overall interpretation of the book is helpful to keep in mind when analyzing discussions of particular texts, as the meaning of any given text from Ecclesiastes is tied to an interpretation of the whole.

The second volume begins with a paraphrase of the book of Ecclesiastes (xv-xxiii), from which one can get a taste of Weeks' understanding of the whole. One of the main challenges in interpreting Ecclesiastes is balancing the way that individual passages contribute to the meaning of the whole book, and how the developing context of meaning that Ecclesiastes is weaving also sets the context for the interpretation of individual passages. This is especially challenging, given the way that the book is structured in cycles that repeat and develop key themes and phraseology. Thus, Weeks' opening paraphrase serves as a helpful reference point for fitting individual passages into his developing understanding of the whole.

The commentary section itself begins from Ecclesiastes 5:7, and follows the pattern established in the first volume. An overview of the first section gives a glimpse of what can be expected: The section (5:7–6:9) begins with an English translation and introduction to the larger

block of text being discussed (1–5). This introductory section offers a helpful overarching interpretation of the pericope, tracing the argument and highlighting the main themes that will prepare the reader to interpret the individual verses in the section as part of the whole. Following the general introduction, the text is divided into smaller chunks (for example 5:7-11), beginning with a repetition of the English translation, followed by a brief commentary that provides an overview of the passage and verse-by-verse analysis (6-11). This is followed by a section entitled "Notes," which offers an exhaustively detailed grammatical and text-critical analysis of the text (12-31). The relative number of pages given to each part of the commentary reveal where the focus lies: in keeping with the emphases of the ICC series, the detailed discussion of grammar and text-critical data takes the focal point, though there are occasionally more in-depth evaluative forays into literary approaches, historical context, and the history of interpretation of various texts, which, though they may not be exhaustive, do offer the main positions that have been taken on interpreting the texts.

Weeks' approach can be illustrated by looking at the treatment of a few of the most difficult texts in Ecclesiastes. In his 98-page discussion of Eccl 7:23–8:1, which is widely regarded as the most challenging passage in the book, Weeks brings some clarity to questions of textual criticism and grammar that help eliminate some interpretive options. Weeks takes Qohelet's frustrated search for a "woman" not as a misogynistic rant, but as an allusion to woman wisdom and folly from the book of Proverbs, which motif is used here as a "literary conceit that exploits the established imagery by taking it literally" (229). In light of Qohelet's qualifications of the search for wisdom (7:15-18), the section of 7:23–8:1 should be taken as a disavowal of absolute commitments to the pursuit of either wisdom or folly. This pursuit, according to Weeks' reading of Ecclesiastes, is not something that has been ordained by God, but is a self-induced task that can complicate life in unnecessary ways. This interpretation falls in line with Weeks' reading of 12:9-14, which is crucial for interpreting the overall meaning of the book. Weeks takes the concluding statement as a kind of *parabasis* known from Greek comedy, whereby the author pauses the main flow of the storyline in order to address the reader/audience with a kind of commentary that in fact undermines the entirety of the preceding plot. Ecclesiastes does so by articulating that it has all been a literary artifice that the reader would have been better off not having encountered (663). For both of these difficult texts, the reader can get Weeks' main assessments by wading through the introductory sections, while those interested in more detail can dive into the textual notes and verse-by-verse commentary.

Weeks' introductory section sheds light on a few concerns that are repeated throughout the commentary: Weeks is cautious of suggesting a proposed historical context that the message of Qohelet can be lined up with; he is especially critical of the arguments placing the book in a Ptolemaic context due to the economic situation presupposed in the book. Weeks also highlights the multiplicity of the text, often reminding the reader that the book should not be reduced to conveying one single message, but can in fact, as a piece of complex literature, convey multiple and seemingly contradictory messages. As part of this caution, Weeks repeatedly reminds the reader not to take individual texts in isolation, but to read them as part of the immediate context and indeed the context of the entire book, lest texts be turned into saying whatever the reader wants them to say. The level of analysis in the notes section may be beyond readers who are not familiar with the original Hebrew or the intricacies of textual criticism—it is fair to say that this is indeed a commentary for commentators. Though the focus of the ICC series is on the details of textual criticism and grammatical analysis, Weeks' introductory material does a good job of helping the reader not lose sight of the forest due to the trees. Nevertheless, Weeks leaves much of the assessment of the forest up to the reader, as the focus on the trees serves well to define the range

of interpretive options, but ultimately, parts of Ecclesiastes may remain too unruly to yield a clear picture of what kind of forest we are looking at.

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Peter OAKES. *Empire, Economics, and the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. 237 pp. $57.99.

Even a cursory reading of Jesus' command to the Pharisees and Herodians to "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17 NASB) reveals that the task of interpreting the NT is inescapably intertwined with the realities of the Roman Empire and ancient economics. Indeed, any investigation into ancient economies isolated from political factors represents a "doomed" enterprise, insofar as "all ancient economies were 'embedded economies'" (67). Oakes has therefore in the current volume set out to elucidate these realities and their hermeneutical implications in this present volume which represents a curated republication of articles on the topics almost entirely in their original form with some stylistic adjustments (x-xii). The title of the work somewhat belies its order and content which falls into three main parts: "House Church" is considered in Part 1 (1-62), followed by "Economics" in Part 2 (63-132), and finally "Empire" (133-193) in Part 3. Throughout, Oakes's chapters draw from his self-proclaimed "fascination" for "how texts sounded to various types of ancient hearers" and especially for his "interest in models" with which to analyze the biblical texts (ix-x).

Lacking a formal introduction to the volume, Part 1 commences with the task of accounting for the diversity in the rhetoric on empire and economics in the NT. Oakes finds that this diversity is explained best not by positing that the NT authors held differing views (Klaus Wengst), or to macro-level models of diverse groups in the early Church (Gerd Theissen), or even to an appeal to "public" vs "hidden" transcripts (James C. Scott), but to the diversity that existed within an individual house-church in antiquity (3). Chapter 1 thus draws heavily from archeological evidence in Pompeii to develop a model for a house church of 40 people which would have included six groups from varied economic situations and would account for the diversity in the NT texts. Chapter 2 considers the question of "space" and how it bears on the interpretation of texts such as 1 Cor 11:17-34 which concerns the presence of divisions in church assemblies, a factor some have seen, for example, as relating to the division of guests between the *triclinium* and the *atrium* of a house (31). Oakes insists on considering not only the textual evidence, but also the archeological, and considers the specific example of the Insula of the Menander, a city block in Pompeii, to model nine different possible house church scenarios and the socio-economic implications of "space" latent therein (37).

Oakes turns his attention to Economics in Part 2, which he develops over four chapters. Chapter 3 assesses methodological issues in using economic evidence for interpretation and distinguishes between three types of relationship between economics and interpretation, namely, as an "analytic framework" for interpretation, as the "aim" of interpretation, and as a "resource" for interpretation (69). He further distinguishes between three types of economic evidence—archaeological, textual, and comparative— and surveys a variety of socioeconomic stratification models for the first century that have been proposed (82). In addition to offering working definitions to terms such as "economics" and "poverty," chapter 4 seeks to show how the three relationships articulated in chapter 3 may be applied to Romans 12. Oakes considers, for example, how the rhetoric in the chapter "poses considerable potential challenges for life within the house assembly's socioeconomic structure" (106). Chapter 5 examines how ancient patronage affected

not only the structure of houses, but also towns and cities, and thus considers how the layout of Ephesus, Corinth, Antioch, and Rome would have related to this reality. Reflecting his interesting in how different Christians would have heard NT texts, Oakes seeks in Chapter 6 to understand how two imaginary hearers in Philippi, "Jason" and "Penelope," one who has suffered greatly and one who has suffered little, would have heard Phil 1:1-11 differently, and thus how both "provide two angles from which to observe the text" (128).

The vexing question of how to interpret the NT in relation to the Roman Empire, the Roman Emperor, and the Roman imperial cult occupy the focus of Part 3 (135). Chapter 7 begins by presenting four frameworks for understanding Roman ideology and Christianity: 1. Rome and Christianity follow common models, 2. Christianity follows Rome, 3. Rome conflicts with Christianity, and 4. Christianity conflicts with Rome (136). Oakes then examines 1 Thessalonians and Philippians against these models concluding, for example, that "when Paul evokes Rome in these letters, Christianity does conflict with Rome," especially in regards to Christology and eschatology (154). However, Paul does not appear to desire Rome's overthrow, nor are the letters "anti-Roman polemic," nor is his focus specifically "preventing participation in the imperial cult" (154). Instead, Paul is "redrawing the map of the universe" in which he decenters Rome and places Jesus at the center (154). Chapter 8 examines early Christian attitudes toward Rome and, rather than bifurcating the question into "pro-Rome" or "anti-Rome," he helpfully taxonomizes six attitudes: "awe, appreciation, resentment, contempt, denial of ultimate authority, and expectation of overthrow" (163). This framework is carried into chapter 9 where Oakes considers various NT books in a "state of tension" concerning Rome and concludes that "there is a fundamental and persistent element of tension between positive and negative factors within Christian attitudes toward Rome" (179). Lastly, in chapter 10 Oakes examines the theme of "God's Sovereignty over Roman Authorities" in Philippians where again Paul remaps the universe and "Rome, the emperor, and even Jupiter are replaced in the positions of decisive authority by Christ" (193).

One of the strengths of Oakes's volume is that whether or not one agrees with his exegesis on a variety of texts, one may still benefit considerably by the methodological precision he has offered to the discussion of economics and empire. For example, much like John Barclay's *Paul and the Gift* has alerted scholars to the variegated notion of χάρις in antiquity and urged for greater precision in speaking about grace, so too has Oakes impressed upon the reader the need to move beyond vague descriptions of NT texts as "positive" or "negative" towards Rome (164). Instead, on this point and many others, Oakes has contributed a variety of useful models with which the NT textual, archeological, and comparative data may be sorted and assessed. Further, Oakes's work serves to urge readers to move beyond considering only text-centered approaches, and to consider how archeological data and spatial architectural features may bear upon the interpretation of key texts.

Oakes's writing is clear and direct, although the nature of the volume as a collection of essays naturally cuts against the overall flow and cohesion of the work. Anyone interested in these crucial topics will benefit from Oakes's insights, yet at $55.00 for 237 pages the volume is somewhat cost prohibitive to be recommended as an undergraduate textbook. Likewise, various discussions in the volume, such as the detailed and sometimes laborious archeological descriptions in ch. 2 and the untranslated Greek words and phrases that appear (129-132), commend the work to a slightly more intermediate audience. Overall, however, this volume has succeeded in providing a host of models and applications to assist in the interpretation of the NT and especially on the important, and intertwined, subjects of empire and economics.

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Nijay K. GUPTA and Scot McKNIGHT, eds. *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019. 512 pp. $44.00.

This excellent volume is written in the shadow of *The Faces of New Testament Studies* (2004), edited by Grant Osborne and Scot McKnight. Nijay Gupta cut his teeth on this earlier work in graduate school and proposed a completely new work to update NT studies 15 years later. The volume consists of 23 chapters in four parts introduced by the two editors. The work includes helpful author, subject, and scripture indices.

Part 1, Ancient Context, pulls two important subjects to the front: the Imperial context of the NT and the roles of women in Jewish, Greco-Roman, and early Christian contexts. Other background issues will come up naturally in other sections, but this overall setting of context is brief. This indicates the work is not an introductory text. Part 2, Interpretation, tackles hermeneutics and exegesis, the relationship between the OT and NT, the question of the genre of the Gospels, and interpretation as influenced by new methods/perspectives in the study of Greek. Part 3, Jesus, Paul, and NT Theology, divides evenly along the lines of the section title. Jesus traditions are evaluated for theories of tradition processing, including social memory; NT Christology is examined within Jewish and Greco-Roman backgrounds and primarily in reference to the synoptics. In two essays, Paul's affinity to Jewish, Greek, and Roman traditions is evaluated; The various "perspectives on Paul" in scholarly tradition (Old- to New- to Post-Perspective and beyond!) is traced splendidly. NT theology is based, for this exercise, around the variety of NT eschatologies and a review of recent attempts to define a NT ethic. Part 4, NT Texts, consists of 11 strong essays reflecting a diversity of voices who review previous scholarship and present new perspectives for NT books—namely, the Gospels and Acts, Paul's Letter to the Romans, Hebrews, Catholic Epistles, and Revelation. Space considerations, apparently, would account for engaging only Romans from the extended Pauline corpus of 13 total letters.

The strength of the volume comes from accomplishing key aims identified by the editors in the "Introduction": to provide a platform and voice for younger (in many cases), diverse, and global scholars, with attention to perspectives beyond first-world contributions—a welcoming stance to a changing generation of those who study and interpret the NT. In doing so, most contributors give a review of previous scholarship on their subject often in the key of reception history while pointing ahead to new vistas, generally outlined and supported with quality footnotes. Several contributors call into question growing scholarly constructs and push for a return to a fresh look at the texts even when the information is sparse. Another consideration is to give energy to more neglected books of the NT. That, of course, is a strength. What is lost is all Pauline letters except for Romans in the "NT Texts" section, so all NT texts (except Jude) are included with a large lacuna from 1 Corinthians to Philemon. Is the material in the "Jesus, Paul, and NT Theology" section adequate to make up for this rather large omission? No, but admittedly access to research on the full set of Pauline Letters is both sizable and accessible elsewhere.

This is an excellent volume with strong contributions. It would work well in a high-level college or seminary classroom to supplement a good NT Introduction. It certainly belongs on the scholar's bookshelf to follow the trajectories of the NT field and current trends within it. Highly recommended.

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Catherine CONYBEARE and Simon GOLDHILL, eds. *Classical Philology and Theology: Entanglement, Disavowal, and the Godlike Scholar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 282 pp. $32.99.

Conybeare is Leslie Clark Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Greek, Latin and Classical Studies at Bryn Mawr College. She has published *The Routledge Guidebook to Augustine's Confessions*, Routledge (2016) and *The Laughter of Sarah*, Palgrave MacMillan (2013). She has over seventy articles, many of them on Augustine or Tertullian, and is also on the editorial board of *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, and *Augustinian Studies*. Goldhill is Professor of Greek Literature and Culture in the Faculty of Classics at University of Cambridge and Fellow and Director of Studies in Classics at King's College. He has published *Sophocles and the Language of Tragedy*, Oxford University Press (2012), and *The Buried Life of Things: How Objects Made History in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Cambridge University Press (2014). He directed *The Bible and Antiquity in 19th-Century Culture* project and is currently director of the *Religious Diversity and the Secular University* project. His articles include topics such as God, Jewishness, Classics, reception of Classics, myths, and the arts.

The current volume is laid out in ten chapters. The first and last chapters serve as bookends, as their titles are "Philology's Shadow" and "Theology's Shadow" respectively. The first chapter sets forth the purpose of the volume and the main contributions of each chapter. A general bibliography and an index are included at the end. This volume addresses the fact that both philology and theology have existed from antiquity hand-in-hand, informing each other as both disciplines developed. Disciplines today tend to keep these separate rather than understanding their interrelatedness. The chapters in this volume explore some of the interrelatedness of both disciplines and detail their developmental history. This volume seeks to demonstrate the deep connections between philology and theology while at the same time showing how the development of the modern field of Classics saw it necessary to separate philology from theology to the extent that their connections are often not recognized (5-6).

The second essay (and second chapter), by Constanze Gütheke, points out that at times theologians and philologists are interacting with the same material while one is an "insider" for certain parts and an "outsider" for others, while the other person is an "insider" and "outsider" for opposite parts of the material. The best approach is to share information with each other in order to better shape both disciplines (31-32). The third essay, by Goldhill, analyzes two networks of friends, one leaning evangelical, the other liberal, who impacted the shape of the disciplines. The first network involves Benson, Westcott, and Lightfoot. For Westcott, grammar was the intellectual foundation of faith (38). For all three, the commitment to scripture made philology an essential component of understanding it (39) and supports conservative views of the text. The second network involves Hare, Thirlwall, and Grote, roughly a generation earlier in time. For this set, philology offered avenues to explore new ideas, and became the road to promote liberalism (42). Through both sets of friends one can see philology used almost in opposite ways. The rejection of theology by the generation following Benson and friends is due to emotional rejection of their words (59). The First World War and direction of anthropology also factor in the separation of theology from philology (59-60). The fourth essay, by Theodor Dunkelgrün, highlights the life of Frankel, who combined an education in Classics and Judaism to enable him to critique overly Protestant portrayals of early Jews and offer many corrections (71). Frankel was the first to put into rigorous practice the principles of Zunz (72). Frankel was able to argue that the LXX had an affinity to post-biblical Hebrew documents or Aramaic documents rather than the Masoretic Text (76-77). The fifth essay, by Irene Peirano Garrison, indicates the relationship of philology and theology in the development of textual criticism. Many elements of this science had significant contributions

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from the study of the NT (86, 87, 94). However, these developed from a principle that began in the Classics, *ars critica* (94). Lachmann saw himself as a philologist who was applying the principles of philology to theology as he produced a critical edition of the text of the NT (98). This work was overshadowed in value by the publication of *Sinaiticus* just a few years after. It was Lachmann's work on *Lucretius* that shows his ability to recover the original text rather than his NT (105).

The sixth essay, by Renaud Gagné, illustrates how both philology and theology utilize and shape the concept of "Hellenism" to further their disciplines. The seventh essay, by Susanna Elm, explores how Hellenism is shaped differently by Christians and Pagans during the Late Antique period. The eighth essay, by Mark Vessey, shows how Boethius' handling of the Latin tradition within Classics is hard to classify since his approach intertwines theology and philology. The ninth essay, by Conybeare, still analyzing the Latin tradition, realizes that the shape of the classical discipline was shaped by those who had an intricate relationship to theology. This essay compares the blindness of Macrobius to his theological heritage as he analyzes Latin texts to the blindness of modern philology in the Classics to their heritage within theology, resulting in similar blind spots. The final essay, by Erik Gunderson, shows that connecting theology with philology allows for a dethronement of the "godlike scholar" within Classics (201).

The set of essays contained in this volume are provocative and challenge both the theologian and the classical philologist to interact rigorously with each other's works in order to produce a holistic understanding of their respective disciplines first, and then the individual texts they both cherish second. This calls for greater cooperation between both disciplines and a greater sense of welcoming and hospitality between organization and conferences involving either one. This volume would be useful as supplemental reading for any course in theology that involves the study of language, but not likely its main textbook. It is also useful for courses in classics that survey both secular and religious texts. It is most useful for the scholars in both disciplines to apply the principles in this volume to their own perspectives, so that their own thinking is challenged regarding how both disciplines benefit from re-engagement and reflect on the losses that occur when both disciplines proceed blindly. A glossary of the more technical terms would enhance this volume for those not already initiated in the many sub-disciplines represented in the volume. This volume inspires scholars in each sub-discipline to become more reflective not only on how they select the content they interact with but the rationale for making such decisions.

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Klaas BENTEIN and Mark JANSE, eds. *Varieties of Postclassical and Byzantine Greek.* TILSM: 331. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021. 429 pp. $120.99.

The research that resulted in this collection of essays was supported by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO), de Gruyter Mouton, the Commission Scientific Research (CWO) of Ghent University, and the Diachronic & Diatropic Linguistics research group. The essays in this volume were presented at the 2016 conference that the title of this volume is named after at the Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature (KANTL). The editors both have expertise in historical linguistics and have a diachronic focus and particular dialects of Greek language as their primary interest. Bentein is more interested in sociolinguistics and semiotics, while Janse is more focused on variation and change within the Greek language and linguistic theory. They both deal with language change and dialects while focusing on particular grammatical items in their research. Bentein is the author of *Verbal Periphrasis in Ancient Greek: Have- and Be- Constructions*, Oxford University Press, 2016, reviewed in the *SCJ* earlier, and Janse is an editor for the *Encyclopedia of*

Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics, Brill, 2014. Both have edited *Variation and Change in Ancient Greek Tense, Aspect and Modality*, ASCP: 23, Brill, 2017.

This volume is laid out with an overview of the classification of language varieties and methodologies used to distinguish those varieties within a text corpus by both editors, followed by two sections, 1.) Varieties of Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek and 2.) Dimensions of Variation in Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek. Out of the two sections, the first focuses more on specific noteworthy varieties in literature, while the second focuses on particular linguistic items within a specific variety, such as tense, anteriority, phonology or syntax. The first section contains a number of chapters on Egyptian Greek and Turkish Greek from several centuries, most of which are useful for the biblical scholar. The second section has several chapters also useful for the biblical scholar, discussing epistolary dialogue, register, text type, and syntax.

The overview essay discusses the nature of varieties in Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek, including the homogenous nature of texts in both periods. It discusses the need to assess the data both qualitatively and quantitatively along with the need to analyze both low-register works and high-register works for varieties. The editors point out that the topic, "varieties of Greek language" is very broad, and only a few are discussed in the volume. Some of the essays in the volume are narrowly focused around a variety or a linguistic feature, but some are broadly focused instead.

In section one, the first essay, chapter 2, by Leiwo uses a broad approach to track down the varieties that can be categorized in Egyptian Greek. He discusses a number of varieties and registers, some of which are described in ethnic ways, some as individual, and others as belonging to specific types of documents. The second essay by Vierros deals with the idiolect (one of the "lects" mentioned by Leiwo) of two brothers, who wrote several letters to each other while managing an archive. She discusses the issues around identifying idiolect. This kind of study has bearing on NT studies where authorial issues might be determined through idiolect analysis. The third essay by Koroli deals with politeness strategies in Byzantine letters. Her contribution has impact on NT studies toward separating letter elements between idiolect and purpose. The fourth essay by Fendel studies certain features and recategorizes them from "Egyptian Greek" to either belonging to a larger category, such as "regional Greek," or much smaller category such as "colloquialism." Her work provides an important distinction to varieties in correctly labelling the extent of each variety. The fifth essay by Tovar focuses on issues toward developing a lexicon of Egyptian Greek. The sixth essay by Horrocks analyzes how Byzantine writers used Classical Greek. He finds that the writers were most often interrupted in their attempt by their own era's usage of syntax or semantics. As such, the Byzantine Greek represented by classicism should be its own variety distinct from Classical Greek. The seventh essay by Hinterberger deals with two works that have different register, but yet share some features, leading to some difficulties in defining and distinguishing varieties. The eighth essay in this section, by Janse, analyses two editions of a Cappadocian song, where archaisms were retained in the latter one while at the same time allowing new features in. His work helps to identify a new type of mixed variety.

In section two, the first essay by Bruno discusses the Present, Aorist, and Perfect tense variation within a Ptolemaic epistolary corpus. The changing focus between the author and reader within the letter accounts for why the "Present" shifts between the composition time and reading time. This shift also accounts for the different uses of the Present, Aorist, and Perfect. The second essay by Kavčič deals with tense again, but between Future and Perfect tenses in infinitive clauses. The use of the Future in these instances might be influenced by Classical Greek, but the frequency of the Perfect infinitive cannot be. The third essay by Stolk connects orthography to social location and discusses some of the difficulties in making that connection. The fourth essay by Crespo also

deals with orthography. He analyzes how to categorize these varieties between idiolect, register, dialect, or sociolect, and decides on sociolect. The fifth essay by Boeten analyzes colophons or epigrams. She concludes that connecting units of text in order was more important than having a certain number of syllables. The sixth essay in this section, by Wahlgren, analyzes the use of certain linguistic features in descriptive, narrative, and argumentative sections of a small corpus. The seventh essay and final one, by Bentein, takes the broader approach. He analyzes whether or not syntax varieties should be a distinct category. The volume does not contain a conclusion nor epilogue. It does contain three indices, namely of original sources, names, and keywords. No general bibliography is included, but sources are indicated at the end of each chapter.

As a collection of essays, this volume is useful for developing a better understanding of classification of varieties of Greek after the Classical Period, and although no essay directly addressed NT Greek itself, a number of the chapters address concerns related to NT Greek, and to NT studies at several junctures. The main reason NT Greek was not specifically addressed by the conference, nor by the volume, is that the stakeholders felt it had been addressed to a greater degree than had the varieties focused upon in the volume. Their attempt was to elevate the underrepresented varieties a bit. This volume is useful for those developing Greek grammars or working on projects where categorizing special uses of the Greek language is one of the goals in the study. This volume is mostly for researchers but might be used as supplemental reading in advanced Greek courses, Greek linguistics courses, or courses where the focus is on idiolect, dialect, or Atticization.

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Dorothy A. LEE. *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 240 pp. $24.99.

The current volume displays exemplary research and is especially well written. It has affirmed and expanded many of my views; it has also challenged me and sparked my thinking. I will return to her work repeatedly. I have, in fact, already added this volume to the required reading for an upcoming seminary course.

Lee is a NT professor and Anglican priest in Melbourne, Australia; it is therefore not surprising that her volume features both Bible interpretation and concern for congregational ministry. She states her thesis clearly: "This study argues from a New Testament perspective that women should have full access to the church's ministry" (11).

After a preface and introduction, the volume is in two parts. The first, and longer, section treats essentially all NT women and texts about women. It gives twice as much attention to the Gospels and Acts (80 pages in 4 chapters) as to Paul's letters (40 pages in 2 chapters). Though this inverts the more common ratio, it is neither imbalanced, since the Gospels and Acts are more than twice as long as Paul's thirteen letters, nor surprising, since Lee's published scholarship has largely been about the Gospels.

Lee works through the several NT texts in an integrative way—constantly tending to literary contexts, for example—and thus avoids falling prey to a criticism she makes in the volume's preface: "The biblical basis some claim for disqualifying women is a handful of texts, and in asserting this claim, these interpreters blithely ignore the weight of New Testament theology and the basic principles of the gospel" (xi). Lee also safeguards against her own critique by including the volume's second section, which brings history and theology to bear on her interpretation and application.

Chapter 1 addresses Matthew and Mark together, because of their similarities and because Lee accepts the dominant theory that Mark is Matthew's primary source. Though the similarities are extensive, Lee also gives helpful commentary on the differences, especially Matthew's genealogy and Mark's abrupt ending. In this chapter we encounter the expected women—Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Peter's mother-in-law, and Jairus's daughter. We also read about "antiheroes" and their narrative function, most notably Herodias and her daughter: "These figures contrast with the Syrophoenician/Canaanite woman, who displays a deep protective care of her daughter, as does Jairus with his daughter" (25). The chapter conclusion first reflects the volume title (*The Ministry of Women in the New Testament*): "When we take Mark and Matthew together, we are left with a profound impression of the strength and resilience of women's discipleship" (34). The conclusion then shifts and is reminiscent of the subtitle (*Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership*): "the women disciples . . . gained for other women a ministry that the church is still struggling to embrace" (35).

For at least three reasons, Lee treats the Gospel of Luke separately from Matthew and Mark: 1) Luke includes considerably more material about women than the other Synoptics; 2) it is best to consider Luke and Acts in tandem; 3) scholarship is not unanimous about whether Luke's writings, especially Acts, lift up or hold down women.

The discussion of Luke includes sections on women as prophets, suppliants, disciples, and models. Luke's famous pairings are noted—such as the prophetic words of Mary's Magnificat and Zechariah's Benedictus in Luke 1 and the suppliant centurion and the widow of Nain in Luke 7. Lee gives rather full treatment to the woman who wet Jesus' feet with tears and perfume/ointment (Luke 7), whom she considers distinct from the woman who anointed his head (Matt 26, Mark 14). Other women who receive significant attention are Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna (8:1-3); the hemorrhaging woman and Jairus's daughter (8:40-56); Mary and Martha (10:38-42, in my opinion the chapter's high point); and the women at the cross and tomb. Women who receive minimal attention include the widow who gave two small coins (21:1-4) and the woman who found her lost coin (15:8-10; Lee addresses this parable in the middle of her longer treatment of the anointing woman of Luke 7, thus creating her own intercalation).

Lee is to be commended for taking seriously the question of whether Acts is progressive or traditional in its presentation of women, rather than (as is all too common) simply assuming the truth of one assertion or the other. After surveying Acts, using categories much like those established earlier (prophets, suppliants, and antiheroes), she concludes that Luke's second volume continues, rather than reverses, his positive emphasis on women. She sees Luke and Acts recording a progressive trajectory that the church has not always, even in its early days, followed.

The chapter on John begins, "The Gospel of John is perhaps the most woman friendly of all the New Testament texts, and its female characters are among the most powerful and encouraging in the New Testament" (95). Lee's investigation of the women in John serves also as an insightful overview of the volume as a whole, for women are often key characters in this tightly woven Gospel. She chooses not to include the accused woman of 7:53–8:11 in her study (a footnote indicates this story is "not part of the Johannine text" [92]). Though this decision would meet with disagreement from some scholars, it demonstrates both her attentiveness to textual criticism (46, 52, 109, 138) and her commitment to investigating each Gospel as a literary whole. Lee concludes with a section on John's ubiquitous Father/Son language (93-95).

Lee treats Paul's letters in two chapters: "Historical and Thematic Issues" and "Key Texts." After a fair summary of arguments for and against pseudonymity, she establishes a foundation for understanding the controversial texts. She begins with the ten women of Romans 16, together with others in Paul's circle (Chloe, Euodia, Syntyche, Nympha, Apphia, Claudia, Lois, Eunice; see

the chart on 106) and then strengthens this foundation by unveiling both masculine language and female imagery.

Shifting to the key Pauline texts, Lee begins with Gal 3:26-29, which promotes "a fundamental solidarity between all who are in Christ" (115). She then addresses the several challenges of 1 Cor 11:2-16 (though without tackling the elusive "because of the angels" in 11:10b). Concerning "head" (*kephal*), she does not consider the meanings "source" and "authority" mutually exclusive. Lee's conclusion on this text includes affirming that, "Paul in the end is confirming a new order, which is already operative in the authority women have to pray and prophesy in the assembly" (118).

Moving forward in 1 Corinthians, Lee considers 14:34-36 to be from Paul, as opposed to a post-Pauline insertion or a quotation of someone else. Taking cues from the immediate context, she states, "it is not prophetic or prayerful talk that is discouraged . . . but rather conversation or questioning that disrupts the good order of the Spirit's utterances" (121).

For 1 Tim 2:11-12, Lee examines the key questions and offers this translation: "Let a woman learn in quietness with all submission. But I do not permit a woman to teach with the intention of dominating a man, but she is to go about in quietness" (125). Her conclusions regarding 2:15 again result in a proposed translation: "For Adam first was formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, came into transgression. But she [Eve] will be saved through the Child-bearing, if they [Christian women] abide in faith and love and holiness with wisdom" (128, brackets are original to Lee, as is the capital "C" on "Child-bearing," referring to the Christ child). She understands "one-woman man/men" in 1 Tim 3:2 and 3:12 as references to marital fidelity expressed in androcentric terms.

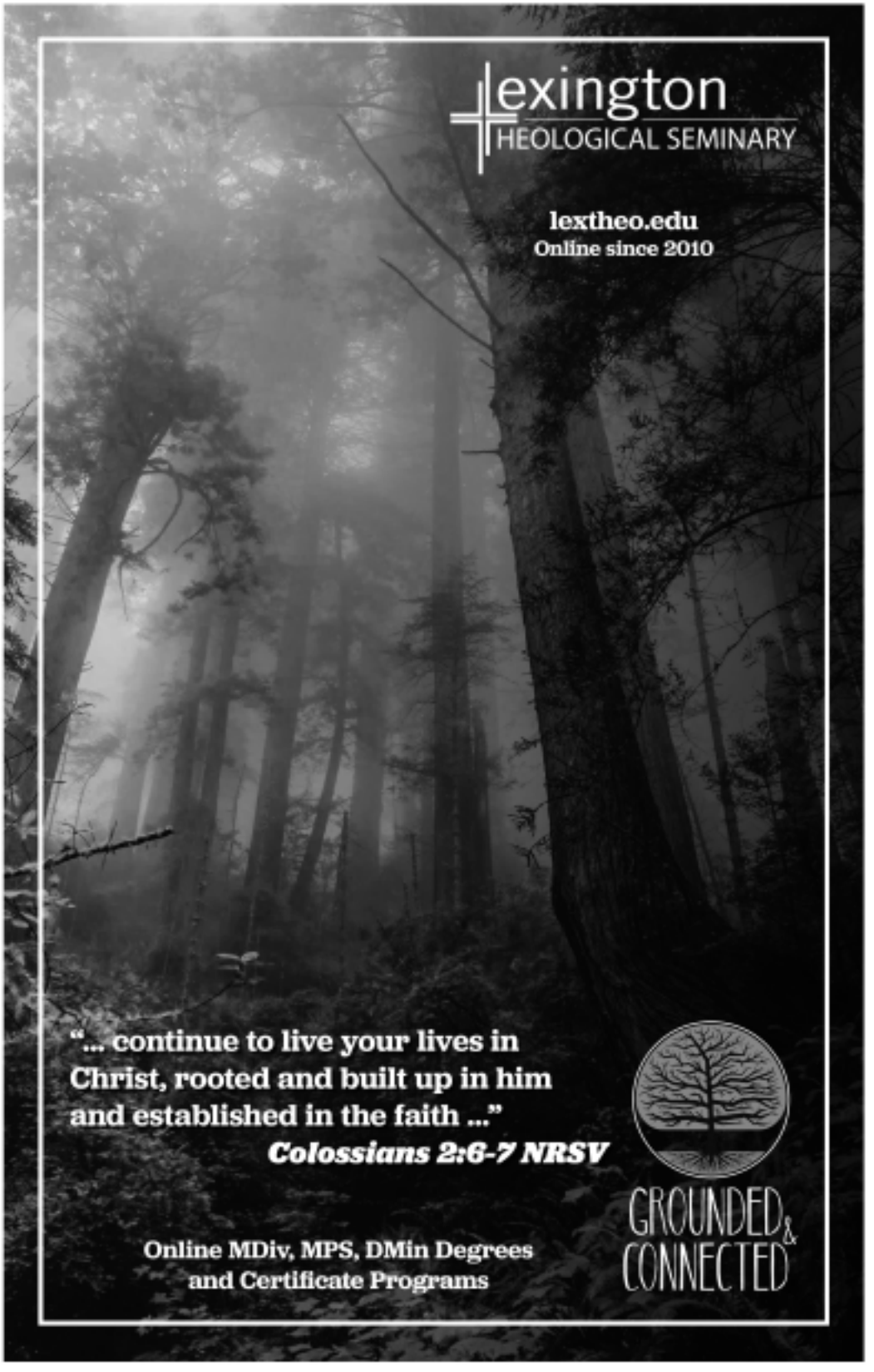
Lee ends this chapter on key Pauline texts with a broad-strokes assessment of the household codes in Colossians and Ephesians. She emphasizes that these codes are intended, not to obliterate the household, but to refocus it on Christ and the church. She states, "The submission of wives to husbands is one aspect of the submission enjoined on all Christians to one another (Eph 5:21)" (131).

Chapter 7 tends briefly to certain texts in several of the remaining NT documents. In Hebrews, Lee discusses Sarah, Rahab, and the unnamed women of ch 11. She considers Priscilla "a serious contender for the role of author" (140). In James, she argues for *adelphoi* in 3:1 to be translated "brothers and sisters," not merely "brothers"—hence, "Not many should become teachers, my brothers and sisters." She establishes a guiding context for 1 Peter's abbreviated household code: "First Peter is about the church living with a profoundly world-changing identity as a priestly people, while also respecting the current social mores in order to survive oppression and more effectively proclaim the gospel" (143).

Lee considers the "elect lady" of 2 John 1 (see also 5, 13) to be metaphorical, rather than an actual woman. She goes on to discuss the masculine language of the Johannine letters, arguing again for *adelphoi* to be translated, "brothers and sisters." She also highlights the feminine imagery in 1 John 3:9: "Everyone born of God [maternal] does not continue in sin, because God's seed [paternal] abides in them, and they are unable to sin because they are born of God [maternal]" (145, brackets original).

In Revelation, Lee discusses the "whore" of Babylon, the bride of the Lamb, Jezebel of Thyatira, the cosmic woman of ch. 12, and the 144,000 who have "not polluted themselves with women" (14:3-4). Her interpretation and application of these texts is guided by genre, context, and theology—as has been the case throughout.

Two chapters comprise the second, shorter section. The first expands the volume's historical perspective, uncovering early Christian women who have been marginalized—such as Thecla,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Colossians 2:6-7 NRSV
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Irene of Macedonia, Theodora, Perpetua of Carthage, Egeria, Empress Eudocia, Macrina the Younger, and various unnamed women in texts and in art. The final chapter overtly brings in theology. Lee critiques the notions that an all-male apostleship restricts women from leadership and that Jesus' own maleness makes women unable to represent him. She then expresses theologies of the virgin birth and of the Trinity. This volume ends with a conclusion and bibliography (which is extensive and worth browsing).

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Alicia D. MYERS. *An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. 228 pp. $99.00.

Although some works fitting into the genre of NT Introductions stretch the boundaries of the designation by the considerable length and the advanced nature of the work, Alicia D. Myers in *An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts* admirably captures the spirit of the task by presenting a clear, concise, and comprehensible onramp to the literature for the beginning student. Myers's investigation follows a more logical than canonical ordering, and proceeds across eight chapters: Introduction (ch 1), Mark (ch 2), Matthew (ch 3), Luke (ch 4), Acts (ch 5), John (ch 6), Apocryphal Gospels and Acts (ch 7), and Conclusion (ch 8). Each chapter follows a fourfold pattern, including first a section on "Contextualizing the Composition," followed by a "Literary Overview," then an investigation of "Key Passages and Themes," and finally "Conclusions" for the reader to consider. Notable is both the degree to which Myers succeeds in remaining text-focused, showing the narrative progression and logic of each of the books, while also aligning these readings alongside critical first-century contextual factors. This includes not only standard topics such as Jewish sects (46-52) and the political situation of Roman Palestine (19-23), but also more nuanced discussions such as the genre of the works as ancient biography or historiography and the attendant implications of these designations (10, also 92-94), various rhetorical features such as *inclusio* (25, 52) and *synkrises* (80), and the relationship of John to Greco-Roman classical drama and its concept of "recognition" (*anagn risis*) (116). Throughout, Myers helps the reader to appreciate the historical and literary dimensions of the biblical texts and their continued relevance for today.

Myers executes her work well in terms of structural design, selection of topics, and explanation of key data, and overall offers a valuable and accessible treatment of the Gospels and Acts. There are a few features of the work, however, which make a full-fledged recommendation of the volume difficult should one be looking for a classroom textbook reflecting a relatively theologically conservative engagement with the subject matter. First, the author is skeptical of traditional authorship of the books and suggests points of tension between the Gospels, with John incorporating certain Markan elements possibly in order "to undercut them" (16). John is also seen as "challenging" the Synoptics with his "undoubtedly divine Jesus" (113). Additionally, the reader is warned against "assuming the depiction of [the Sanhedrin] in the NT is entirely accurate" (51). Likewise, Acts is found to be at fault since although Acts 2:17-21 contains an inclusive vision that women will prophesy, no such prophecies are recorded and thus "Acts does not always live up to its own standards of inclusion" (106).

Second, the author tends to minimize the distinction between canonical and non-canonical works and constructs a considerably positive view of the historical and theological value of the NT Apocryphal Gospels and Acts. For Myers, these works were "suppressed" by the Protestant Reformation but provide important "insight into some of the earliest interpretations" of the Gospels and "remind us of . . . the flexibility of canon among ancient Christians" (138). Variants

of the word "although" are employed in an apparent effort to bring these writings in closer proximity to canonical writings. For example, these writings "are committed to the stories preserved [in the Gospels] … *even though* they add to and answer questions left open in those same writings" (155). And "*although* later Christians came to disagree with the answers," these writings still address questions we have today (155, also 154). While it is of course the case that the study of the NT also involves investigation of non-canonical writings chronologically adjacent to the NT, instructors may find that the relatively laudatory treatment of the NT Apocrypha is not simultaneously balanced by a presentation of their attendant shortcomings or rationale for why Protestants have not accepted them as Scripture.

Lastly, Myers provides no explicit discussion of Christology or atonement and, should one be looking for a volume which presents the Gospels and Acts as strongly affirming the deity of Christ and his work on the cross as atoning for the sins of humanity, one may struggle to find those features in her various comments. For example, Myers suggests the possibility that in Mark "Jesus *becomes* God's Son and Beloved at his baptism" (29) and often refers to Jesus with more limited titles like "God's Beloved" (37) or "God's Spirit-possessed agent" (39). The purpose of Mark's Gospel, for Myers, is to present Jesus' life as a cosmic battle which rights the world's wrongs "by elevating the love of God and the love of others" (39). Additionally, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection seem not to be connected with sin but explained merely as "claiming that God's reign has come" (40). Likewise, in John, Jesus' mission is to suffer and die in order "to show his love for his disciples . . . so that they might imitate this love in caring for one another" (122). While at times Jesus is referred to as "God's Christ," "God's Son," and "Messiah" (64), the exact import of these titles is not articulated, and the notion that they are less concerned with divinity is suggested by the fact that John is seen as "challenging" the Synoptics with "an unwavering and undoubtedly divine Jesus" (113). For Myers, then, the focus in general appears to be on "faithful imitation" of Christ (111, also 11, 39, 102, 122), rather than his atoning death for the forgiveness of humanity's sins as the divine Son of God.

Of course, whether these three aforementioned features represent strengths or weaknesses is a value judgment on the part of the individual reader, yet those considering the volume for textbook adaption will nevertheless want to possess an awareness of these elements. Overall, Myers has written a helpful introduction to the Gospels and Acts which, even if one does not agree with all her conclusions, still offers thoughtful engagement with the historical background, literary structure, and contemporary issues related to these important texts.

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Martha MOORE-KEISH. *James.* Belief Theological Commentary on the Bible. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2019. 246 pp. $45.00.

Moore-Keish, J. B. Green Associate Professor of Theology, Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, as an early entry into the new Belief series, has written a freshly engaging commentary on James that narrows its focus to matters of theology. The volume provides a positive example of the benefits to the everyday reader of the Belief series purposes. Among these are the desire to revive the church tradition of theologians writing commentaries lost since the onset of historical-critical exegesis a century and a half ago. Speaking to the church on matters of concern to the church, both classic and contemporary, stripping out exegetical matters other than those that directly impact theological interpretation has value. This example results in a fairly

conversational tone church readers (members and pastors) will find fairly "easy-to-read" (the top category for my students' book reviews) and insightful (my top category for book reviews).

For color commentary this volume (and the series) focuses on classic theologians and traditions: so, lots of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Kierkegaard, mixed in with, Augustine, Venerable Bede and contemporary theologian, Elsa Tamez (*The Scandalous Message of James*, Crossroad, 2002), a real favorite, who tends to look to James for more of a social critique. Only occasionally is any reference to any critical, exegetical commentary or article made. A nice, bonus feature of the volume (series) are boxes with quotes from these theologians and others inset into relevant paragraphs.

In her brief introduction Moore-Keish nicely focuses on the fact that James lives in a world in which "Christians were all Jews" who know of "no conflict between Torah followers and Jesus followers." This understanding is critical to understanding the importance of James within the entire context of NT theology. However, she does this without taking any stance on authorship or date within her informed discussion regarding these things (6-10), agreeing with Elsa Tamez that "what matters is not so much the true identity of this man, but rather his message for today" (18-19). To me this seems to sidestep the logical trajectory of her evidence that James is pre-Gentile, pre-Pauline mission and in the view of many, therefore, most likely written by James, the leader of the Jerusalem church and brother of Jesus before AD 50.

This fence-riding characteristic of Moore-Keish's commentary reoccurs at other points. For example, when dealing with the identification of the recipients as "believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ" in 2:1, she takes up the long-standing debate regarding objective and subjective genitive and concludes that "perhaps James . . . intended readers to ponder both directions of faith" (85). The objective/subjective debate regarding "faith in or the faith of Jesus Christ" is really a Pauline theological debate (while James is pre-Paul, pre-Gentile in scope Moore-Keish says) having nothing to do with the phrasing or intention of this James passage, as consulting nearly any exegetical commentary reveals. So, the introduction of this debate as relevant to this passage seems misplaced and even more so concluding that the subjective genitive could even possibly be construed as true here.

One feature of the series may seem questionable to most *SCJ* readers. Parallel to the series' desire to involve a diversity of voices is its desire to challenge "shortcomings" of the "larger Christian tradition" (xi). Moore-Keish works out this mandate, for instance by highlighting James's identification of himself as a slave/servant of God to raise the very negative connotations of the word "slave" to Black Americans today and also the sex slavery trade today in general. However, she does not make at all clear what the point is for raising these contemporary concerns. Is she implying we should not translate it as "slave" or even mention this meaning of the word for fear of harming someone? Since this identifies the author, one has to assume it is intended as something positive. She also makes some traditional observations about "servant" in the next paragraph.

In a second example of something that might be questionable is when it comments on 4:2, which calls believers who become friends of the world "adulteresses." Moore-Keish is concerned that James unfairly "subtly associates infidelity with womanhood" to the exclusion of the responsibility of men (142). When this adulterous language is paired with the Jas 1:14-15 metaphor of a temptress bearing a monstrous child of her sin, it shows that a pattern of associating women as evil, she says, might subtly creep into one's teaching or thinking as "embedded stereotypes" (142). Now, my NIV long ago replaced "adulteresses" with "adulterers" in 4:2 to address this concern. But many might be concerned about blurring or altering metaphors and figures of speech chosen by NT authors like James, based as they may be, on objectionable,

cultural stereotypes. Might we not lose important implications of the metaphor or figure of speech by altering genders or other aspects of it? Moore-Keish's larger concern that metaphors like this do need to be addressed from a contemporary concern for how people think of women is justified. But, can't we just help people in the church understand the cultural biases that make their way into biblical language without disfiguring the image, at least in the process of exegesis and instruction?

While it sounds like I don't like this commentary, actually, in many places I do. I like when Moore-Keish introduces the idea of God not changing when discussing 1:17, saying that "for many contemporary readers, the real force of this affirmation that God does not change is moral, not metaphysical" (60). This fits since James then emphasizes God's constancy of being the good giver of all good things in people's lives. I like in 1:18 when she portrays the seed of the "word of truth" as "planted in us" at birth rather than planted in us with the reception of the gospel (72). I like when she comments on the idea of looking at a mirror in 1:23-24 as a first-century moral image of self-improvement. I really like, when commenting on 2:5-13, that drawing from John Cassian, she concludes, "Those who genuinely show mercy understand the royal law, which is true freedom, and which 'triumphs': that is, love your neighbors who are most in need, without expectation of return and thus by your life show the truth that mercy triumphs over judgment (101).

So, this commentary does many things that no other commentary does and shows the value of a theologian doing this kind of biblical work. However, the queries this review poses regarding this commentary's way of dealing with some passages demonstrates also the weakness of a theologian doing this work, at least without more commentary interaction. When it comes across critical, debatable passages, it cries out for the hand of a skilled NT exegete. So, while I would recommend this commentary as often having very helpful insight, I would encourage pairing reading of it with an exegetical commentary like McCartney (HarperCollins), Johnson (Doubleday), Davids (Eerdmans), or Blomberg/Kamell (HarperCollins).

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