

## *Book Reviews*

### **Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to Inspire and Instruct, Vol. 2**

Edited by Paul N. Jackson  
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan  
2017, 192 pp., paperback, \$18.99  
ISBN: 978-0-310-52935-4

*Reviewed by Timothy J. Christian*

This second volume to the *Devotions on the Greek New Testament* series from Zondervan features the works of a number of veteran NT scholars from the broadly evangelical theological tradition, for example, Anthony Thiselton, David deSilva, Nijay Gupta, Steve Walton, Cynthia Long Westfall, and Todd Still to name a few. The book contains 52 short essays (2-4 pages each), presumably one for each week of the year, on particular NT passages which comment upon the Greek text and insights lost in English translations. Its strength comes from the quality exegetical work of the scholars who contribute these brief essays. The detailed, scholarly content of each essay is solid. Moreover, the book highlights passages from the whole NT covering every corpus of the NT, and in fact has at least one essay on every book of the NT.

There are, however, several issues with this second volume. Most importantly, the title and subtitle do not reflect the content of the book. In other words, it claims to be “devotions” and even “to inspire.” Yet the

majority of the content in these essays—I have deliberately termed them “essays” and not “devotions” because I do not think it appropriate to classify them as “devotions”—is focused upon instruction (“to...instruct”). This is highly problematic. The terms “devotions” and “inspiration” in biblical and spiritual formation circles have strong connotations that the material will have some deep practical and/or applicable insight into Christian living, theology, ministry, and the church. These terms conjure up the idea of daily devotional books such as Oswald Chambers’ *My Utmost for His Highest* or perhaps on a popular level something like Joyce Meyer’s *Starting Your Day Right: Devotions for Each Morning of the Year*. Such popular devotional books often lack content, biblical and exegetical accuracy, and pull heavily from pop-psychology. Thus, there is a strong need in the guild of biblical studies—and might I suggest even for popular audiences—for devotional materials based upon solid exegetical interpretations of the biblical texts. In that regard, this volume is tremendously disappointing, not in that it does not provide exegetical insight on the Greek text, but that it only has exegetical insight on the Greek text. Only a very small handful of essays actually break into the realm of application (see especially David R. McCabe on Rom 5:6, Nijay K. Gupta on Phil 2:3-4, and J. Scott Duvall on Rev 3:20). I think that this demonstrates still the lack of ability among biblical scholars to apply the biblical text to our current surroundings, whether that be daily living, Christian ministry, the church, or important theological debates. It probably stems from an underlying timidity and tentativeness within biblical studies to make truth claims about God. It is unfortunate that, even among evangelical scholars, we fall so short of the bar to inspire devotion and worship to God, applying the biblical text in practical and helpful ways. Now I am not sure what or whom is to be at fault for this lack of inspiration and overemphasis upon instruction in this volume (perhaps the editor; but I do not know). I certainly do not think that it comes from the contributors—my esteemed colleagues—whom are to be commended for their brilliance on the Greek NT. Regardless the reason, there were only a few moments while reading the book that the phrase came to mind, “That’ll preach!” This should not be so for a book claiming to inspire and be devotional. Every essay should leave the reader saying, “Amen! Preach it!” Even a simple, written prayer at the beginning or end of each would have helped (only a few did this). There are of course other series available that focus upon practical application of the NT to our world today, for example, the NIV Application Commentary series. Also, some

commentaries will occasionally provide a “Bridging the Horizons” section which discusses what the text means for today. After reading this volume, the need truly is still there for a Christian devotional book that is both based upon exegesis of the text (to instruct) and applies that to practical issues in life, ministry, and the church today (to inspire). In short, NT scholars still need to aspire to move beyond interpretation of the text to its application, at least when it comes to composing devotions on the Bible.

Another related issue has to do with the audience of the book: who is this written for? At times, the instructional nature makes it seem as though it is for pastors and students, yet often the language and terminology used is far too technical for them to understand. Also, there are often no aids for non-experts to read the long Greek passages. Other times, it seems as though it is written for scholars, but why would scholars write to instruct other scholars in ways that at other times are too simple and simplified? For future volumes to be effective, this issue of audience will need to be sorted out by the editors and publishers beforehand. The dual-audience approach did not work in this volume.

Overall, I would not recommend this book for those academically inclined seeking robust insights from the NT *that will also deeply impact their spiritual life*. Moreover, I would not recommend it to scholars because it will be far too basic at times, and there are better and more detailed resources to receive instruction on these passages (commentaries, articles, etc.). Others may differ in opinion and some scholars might prefer that there be a lack of application. For these, I would recommend this volume. But by and large, the book does not deliver spiritually transformative or formational devotions on the Greek NT, for which I am greatly disappointed.

## **The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel**

Tremper Longman III

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2017, 336 pp., hardback, \$32.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-2711-6

*Reviewed by David Nonnenmacher, Jr.*

Scripture's notorious books on wisdom (Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes) have long been at the center of discussion as scholars continue to debate wisdom's origin. Is wisdom the result of humankind's interaction with life's hurdles, or does it have a more divine heritage? Just what is wisdom, after all? The answer to these questions can perhaps be best seen in the title of Tremper Longman III's book *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*. Here, Longman heavily asserts that wisdom is not merely practical, but it is also theological, as the aforementioned texts consistently point toward one's relationship with the Lord. Rather than taking the more commonly implemented historical-critical approach to such a topic, Longman prefers the synchronic (or canonical) approach initially laid out by Brevard Childs. It is through this very methodology that Longman emphasizes the "wisdom books" along with the entirety of the canon as being the scriptures of the church.

*The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom* is markedly divided into five parts, all of which aim to explore the nature of wisdom primarily from an OT perspective. Part one introduces the reader to scripture's wisdom literature by first exploring Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Longman concludes that the premise of all three is that wisdom is "the fear of the Lord," but he notes that this is expressed in different ways. Proverbs is inclined toward prescriptive advice while wisdom in Job is mostly seen in the dialogue between him and his friends. Part two explores where wisdom can be seen in other portions of the OT. He begins by more broadly observing other books such as Deuteronomy and Psalms before narrowing his field to biblical figures such as Joseph, Daniel, Adam, and Solomon. In the case of the former two characters, Longman notes that "they both attributed their wisdom to God" (93), while the case of the latter two serve as the example of what *not* to do in the pursuit of wisdom.

Part three contains a substantial shift as wisdom is examined through both the broader context of scripture (from prophecy to law) as well through various writings found elsewhere in the ANE (from Mesopotamian to Egyptian). Longman opposes the statement that wisdom is set apart from other writings due to its cosmopolitan nature — that is, its connection with experience, observation, tradition, and correction rather than being derived from revelation. Part four inquires as to wisdom’s practicality. What are the consequences for those who adhere to a foolish lifestyle? Did Israel establish a cultural setting that cultivated wise living? And more uniquely, is there a deeper meaning to wisdom’s personification as a woman? Finally, part five discusses wisdom literature in the inter-testamental period as well as in the NT. Longman concludes here that the NT contains significant continuity with the OT, ultimately stating, “Jesus is the epitome of God’s wisdom, or, perhaps better, the incarnation of God’s wisdom” (256).

One of the many notable strengths of Longman’s work includes his insertion of summaries at the end of each segment. In league with this, he makes it a point to offer overviews before entering into critical analysis and interpretation, making readability a dominant trait in his writing style. This is especially valuable when considering the vast amount of material covered from front to back. With respect to content, Longman does well in challenging the modern understanding of wisdom. He demonstrates it to be something uniquely connected with the writings of the OT and the revelation of God — a position not generally upheld in scholarship today. It is difficult to critique this publication. Of the few things that could be pointed out, it could perhaps be said that Longman occasionally insists on some topics when they are not *entirely* relevant to the broader thrust of the text. For example, the personification of wisdom as a woman probably does not offer up as many challenges for female readers as he insists. Topics such as these may present themselves as mildly tangential, but Longman is quick to return to his point in well-orchestrated fashion.

It can be said without reservation that Longman’s *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom* has much to contribute to its field. It would do well in the hands of either a pastor or professor, but its rare tilt toward the esoteric may make this book not as suitable for a layperson’s Bible study. One can hope that more will chime in on the conversation as a result of Longman’s work.

**Christian Women in the Patristic World: Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second Through Fifth Centuries**

Lynn H. Cohick and Amy Brown Hughes

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2017, 336 pp., paperback, \$34.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-3955-3

*Review by Michael Tavey*

*Christian Women in the Patristic World; Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second Through Fifth Centuries* by Lynn H. Cohick and Amy Brown Hughes is an insightful read that will help readers understand how the female voice helped shape Christian theology and tradition in the early Patristic era. Such a book is needed, considering that most books devoted to the theological developments of this time period seem to solely focus on the male voice, with scant mention of how women helped shape theology of this period. A word of caution, however, should be noted. Not all of the women in their work can be historically verified. Some of these women, although influential within the Christian world, are most likely fictitious. Thus, the title can be somewhat misleading. Therefore, it is advised to read this book more as a prism on how the early Church was influenced and shaped by the metaphorical female voice, and not how literal historical women helped shape the early Christian era, although some of them most certainly did.

Cohick and Hughes structure their book according to nine chapters, with each chapter addressing a prominent “woman” who had some level of influence or legacy within the Patristic era. The first two chapters are devoted to three prominent martyrs: *Thecla*, the proto-virgin Martyr, and Perpetua and Felicitus. Concerning *Thecla*, legend has it that she was the first female martyr in the history of the Church. Concerning Perpetua and Felicitus, it is revealed how their martyr stories were the most retold and most influential in the early Christian era. These chapters help detail how their legacies shaped early Christian theology, and how their stories affected later prominent women in their own stories. The third chapter addresses “Christian women in Catacomb art.” The chapter details how such art became a vital part in the formation of worship practices

in the early Christian era. The fourth chapter explains how certain female voices, like Blandina, helped shaped the ascetic life of the Christian.

The fifth chapter focuses on Helena Augusta, and how she used her authority, power, and influence to help transition the early Church from a place of persecution to a place of prominent religious power and authority in Rome during the fourth century ADE. Most intriguing is the story that details her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where she supposedly finds the “True Cross,” or the cross upon which Jesus was crucified. The sixth chapter addresses how women took a prominent place in Christian pilgrimages, and how they influenced the understanding of Christian pilgrimage. The next two chapters focus upon four women: Macrina, Paula, Marcella, and Melanias. These four women are known for their great theological and doxological influence on the early Church. Most notable among them is Macrina who, according to Gregory of Nyssa, had a significant and prominent role in teaching and mentoring him. If so, then it is no understatement to suggest that Macrina had an instrumental, albeit indirect, part in the formation of the Constantinople-Nicene creed. The last chapter details the lives of Pulcheria and Eudocia, who were later empresses that affected the theology and growth of the Church in the fifth century ADE.

Cohick and Hughes’ book will provide teachers, students, pastors, non-pastors, and others with an insightful understanding of how the female voice shaped theology in the early Patristic era, and how such shaping affects our own theological and doxological lives.

### **Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches**

Mary M. Veeneman

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2017, 202 pp., paperback, \$24.99

ISBN: 978-0-80104-949-1

*Reviewed by Matthias Phurba Sonam Gergan*

Mary M. Veeneman begins by recounting Karl Barth’s personal, social, and historical background and framing these as key contributors to the development of his theology. The structure of the introduction

undergirds the rest of the book as Veeneman expresses her hope that readers will become better theologians by a greater awareness of how theological thought and methods are influenced by context.

The first chapter examines the “reasons for” and “methods of” theology. She begins by noting the general agreement on the Bible, tradition, and reason being the primary sources for theology with “historical location” being another key influence. Following this, she notes that despite starting from points of agreement theologies diverge due to differences in their understanding of the use of the Bible, factors informing their interpretation, orienting questions, and theological assumptions.

Resourcement and Neo-Orthodoxy theologies are the first methods examined by Veeneman. She sees these as reactions to late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century theologies. Avery Dulles, Karl Barth, and Wolfhart Pannenberg are the theologians chosen by her to represent these methodologies. The importance of Dulles’ approach lies in his efforts to build bridges even with sharply dissenting voices. She highlights Barth’s contribution in his ideas regarding a wholly other God connected to creation through Jesus as a source of hope. Pannenberg, Barth’s student is noted for his contribution in removing the sharp distinction between God and creation characteristic of Barth.

Paul Tillich is the first representative of the Theologies of correlation. Veeneman points to WWI as a key influence for him also while noting his emphasis on theology addressing present situations with the Christian message. Karl Rahner is contrasted with Barth for his choice to begin theology from questions regarding the human knowing of God. Finally, Bernard Lonergan is examined for his attention to the nature of human knowing and his study of the relationship between the cultural matrix and religion.

Postliberal Theologies are presented next and are characterized by their attempts to avoid the extremes of “propositionalism” and liberalism’s reliance on experience. George Lindbeck is noted for his rule theory, which points to the necessity of doctrines for identity. Next, Hans Frei’s aesthetic approach is highlighted for seeking the meaning of a text in the “story world” that it creates.

Millard Erickson, Stanley Grenz, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Clark Pinnock are examined under the category of Evangelical theologies. Veeneman notes that all three prioritize scripture, a characteristic of

Evangelical theologies. However, each of them emphasizes different aspects that led to unique contributions. Erickson is noted for his prioritizing of scripture over traditions and his approach oriented towards deducing ideas about God and reality using the scripture. Grenz is noted for his emphasis on the role of community in theologizing. Vanhoozer's canonical-linguistic approach is presented as an attempt to uphold the *sola scriptura* while connecting it to the practices of the church. Finally, Pinnock's open theist position and emphasis on narrative are presented as his key contributions.

Chapters six and seven are dedicated to the related yet distinct traditions of political and feminist theologies. Veeneman points to their commonalities in their emphasis on the specificity of people and contexts. They are also noted for the common influence of Vatican II – especially the *Gaudium et Spes*. Johann Baptist Metz is noted, as a pioneer of liberation theology and for his critique of Rahner. Gustavo Gutierrez is noted for his emphasis on praxis with critical reflection. Sin in Gutierrez's work is shown to be framed from a political dimension.

In Black theology, James Cone is noted for his emphasis on the use of scripture as a tool for addressing contemporary issues. Feminist theologies are categorized into three waves characterized by the background of the theologians in each. It is shown that the feminist movement became worldwide in the third wave. Elizabeth Johnson and Delores Williams are the two theologians examined within feminist theology. Johnson is noted for her contribution to the language for God and Williams for her development of Womanism.

Theologies of pluralism and comparative theology are the final categories presented by Veeneman. These categories are included due to the methodological challenges presented by them. She highlights the exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist conversation and the major voices in them. Jennine Fletcher is examined for her contribution showing the potential of feminist theology with its concept of hybrid identity for resolving the dichotomy between sameness and difference in models of comparative theologies. Finally, she notes Thatmanil's questioning of religion as a category as a key question moving forward.

The book offers a succinct yet insightful overview of major theological methods of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It highlights the impact of the theologians' context on their theologizing and the contribution of each development to what is seen as an ongoing conversation in theology. This leads to the singular "theological method" while engaging with the

larger community with different theologies. While the book is excellent as an introductory text, it can also ably serve as a refresher for more seasoned students.

**Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders: New Directions for Organizations Serving God's Mission**

Douglas McConnell

Mission in Global Community Series

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2018, 224 pp., paperback, \$22.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-9965-6

*Reviewed by Matthew Haugen*

In an increasingly globalizing era, organizations are faced with the tremendous challenge of interpreting and engaging with multivalent cultural contexts. Utilizing cognitive and social anthropology, psychology, and leadership studies, McConnell explores different perspectives on the cross-section of culture and organizational leadership with a particular focus on culture, human nature, individuals, and communities.

*Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders* is organized into eight chapters. Each chapter begins with a clear thesis and methodology, which entails different sets of typologies to analyze the given topic. A unique contribution in McConnell's exploration of the cross-section of culture and leadership is his use of case studies from international scholars in each chapter to provide examples for his analyses.

Chapter one focuses on organizations in light of God's mission. How does understanding the *missio Dei* and culture influence missional leadership? Chapter two focuses on worldview. How does understanding culture and human nature influence one's worldview, especially with regards to concepts such as embodiedness and embeddedness? Chapter three focuses on the relational nature of leadership. How do physically embodied and culturally embedded people relate to one another, especially in the context of an organization? Chapter four looks at imitation and rituals. How does Christian formation occur through mimetics and repetitious, deferent, communal habits?

Chapter five looks at the nature of authority within an organization. How should Christians exercise authority and how does trust factor into it? Chapter six looks at the social construction and maintenance of “worlds,” particularly those that are missional in the context of Christian organizations. How does the use of categories facilitate conversations cross-culturally as well as allow for the development of trust and understanding? Chapter seven looks at culture as it relates to organizations and leadership. How does a systems approach to analyzing and interpreting culture allow for interculturality in organizations and their leadership? Chapter eight summarizes the prior chapters while including some of the implications for each topic.

McConnell’s unique contribution in *Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders* is his intercultural disposition (with his inclusion of international scholars into the conversation) and his use of Hiebert’s model of culture (i.e., cognitive, affective, and evaluative) in tandem with cognitive anthropology to clarify how physically embodied and culturally embedded people (e.g., members) interpret, store, and transmit culture in an organization.

The primary critique that I have toward McConnell’s work is his ecclesial assumptions, namely that the church has a universal form and is just another organization. In McConnell’s defense, this book is largely devoted to providing tools for Christian organizations rather than prescribed organizational models, and he does recognize that his research is anthropocentric in nature.

Overall, this book substantially contributes to the interdisciplinary conversation between organizational leadership and intercultural studies. I recommend this book to those interested in the fields of anthropology, psychology, missiology (i.e., Church Growth movement), and leadership studies.

## **The Protestant Reformation and World Christianity: Global Perspectives**

Edited by Dale T. Irvin

Reformation Resources, 1517-2017 Series

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2017, 203 pp., paperback, \$39.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7304-0

*Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts*

There have been many books published to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, but this slim collection of essays is one that deserves to be noticed. The authors truly do bring global perspectives to the conversation and, by doing so, shed new light on that history and our position within that history. The contributions do not pull their punches, either. There is no rule here that an essay must end in cheering for the success of the Reformation. No, there is tension, criticism, wrestling, and ambiguity within these pages and the praise is hard-won. One should expect no less, though, when voices of those affected by the Reformation, but often bracketed out of the discussion, are represented in the conversation. That is what makes this book so refreshing and so challenging at the same time.

Dale Irvin is very conscious as a historian of the need for “reinvigoration and renewal” of the dialogue surrounding the Reformation through diverse perspectives and under-represented voices (ix). To that end, there are six essays in this collection exploring the Reformation history in relation to Muslims and Jews, the Roman Catholic reformer, Las Casas, women, those deemed “ethnics,” and Asians. It ends with a piece by Serbian Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Latinovic, on contemporary challenges to the continuing legacy of the Protestant Reformation. Of course, this foray cannot be and does not try to be exhaustive of all the possible perspectives and urgently arising issues that could be broached when speaking of the effects of the Reformation, but it is a very useful and rewarding step in the right direction.

Just to take one example, Charles Amjad-Ali does an excellent job of laying out the intricate relationship between Muslims, Jews, and European Christians at the time of the Reformation. While many think of Western Europeans as the inheritors of Greco-Roman civilization, Amjab-

Ali shows that the Islamic world inherited the Roman world through Constantinople, the capital of the Roman Empire, which survived long after the fall of Rome until it was conquered in 1453 (10). This inheritance then circles back into Western Europe through the great Islamic scholars which people like Thomas Aquinas depended on as sources. Amjab-Ali suggests that this route influenced the very theology that arose during the Reformation. “It was in the light of these masters [i.e. Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina/Avicenna, Ibn Rushd/Averroes] that Thomas reexamined Christianity and insisted on the perspicuity of the sacred text, as was centrally held in Islam. This then influenced Luther’s *sola scriptura* (and Calvinist centrality of the word of God – the scriptures) which had little or no space for the mediation of *traditio*” (11). By this recognition, Amjab-Ali does not just connect Islamic thought to the history of Western Europe; he links the influence of another religious group into the central theological rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation. From that point, he wades through the long history of conversation and influence, but also alienation and demonization of Jews and Muslims by the Reformers and their heirs up to the present day and the Muslim refugee crisis. This essay does not shy away from the hard, painful parts of that history, but it does end in hope for the further sanctification of Reformation theology and the development of “a sympathetic ear of inclusion, and a dialogical and vocational partnership for the sake of the world that God loves and for God’s shalom/salaam” (37).

Amjab-Ali’s contribution is only the first essay in what is a very rich collection. As a missionary in Japan, I especially enjoyed Peter Phan’s essay, “Protestant Reformations in Asia,” but the overall quality and the diversity of perspectives in this book means that it is worth reading cover to cover. I am sure this book will inspire conversation and further lines of needed research.

### **Essential Beliefs: A Wesleyan Primer**

Edited by Mark A. Maddix and Diane Leclerc

Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City

2016, 159 pp., paperback, \$17.99

ISBN: 978-0-8341-3570-3

*Reviewed by J. Russell Frazier*

Mark A. Maddix and Diane Leclerc, both professors of Northwest Nazarene University (NNU), are the editors of this collection of essays that proposes to introduce readers to the *Essential Beliefs* of Wesleyan theology. The purpose of the book is to provide *A Wesleyan Primer* (as the subtitle suggests) for devotees of the Wesleyan-holiness tradition to enable them to distinguish the essentials “from the non-essentials of our theology” (10). The editors hold that truth is principally personal, entailing “a personal engagement with God through Christ as enabled by the Holy Spirit” (13), and as such, theology should not be merely informative but “formative and transformative” (13). The editors sought “young theologians, or theologians from other cultures” (16), although only four of the twenty contributors represent cultures outside of the United States. This section also indicates that seven writers have some connection to NNU.

The introduction is entitled “Theology in Overalls,” a phrase borrowed from J. Kenneth Grider which points toward a theology for the laity (9). Maddix and Leclerc define theology as “the process of taking the grand truth of the scriptural witness to Jesus Christ and applying it to the present-day context” (9). Borrowing a cue from John Wesley’s sermon title, the design of the editors is to theologize in “The Catholic Spirit” (12). They assert that Wesleyans should engage theological challengers with a spirit of love: “...we must always, always love each other despite our differences over doctrine” (12). Against the “relative and *purely* contextual” background of post-modernity (12, emphasis in the original), the editors propose an attempt to transcend the “extreme positions between secular relativism and rigid absolutism” (13) and assert the precedence of genuine relationship with Christ, the Truth, “over static faith statements and cold, doctrinal propositions” (13).

The nineteen chapters are divided into the following five parts: “How to Do Theology,” “Who God Is,” “Creation, Humanity, and Sin,”

“Saved and Sanctified,” “The Church’s Meaning, Purpose, and Hope.” In the first chapter, “How and Why We Do Theology?” Dick O. Eugenio argues that the theological task is principally inductive, a creative task rather than a deductive one which derives understanding from what is already organized and systematized. He describes Wesleyan theology as scriptural, experiential, practical, grounded in transformative love, optimistic, and ethically responsible. Celia I. Wolff describes the manner and attitude in which Wesleyans read the Bible and the formative role of scripture within the Christian life. John Grant takes on the remaining three sources of theology (tradition, reason and experience) in a chapter on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

In Part 2 on “Who God Is” Timothy R. Gaines addresses, in chapter 4, the question “How Can We Understand the Trinity?” He affirms that who God is as Trinity is “substantially love, in mystical three” and that what God does as Trinity is “lead our hearts in love” (46-47). Benjamin R. Cremer appeals for a balanced understanding of Christ and for believers to participate in the cyclical story celebrated in the Christian year in order to experience transformation and to become the body of Christ in the world. Chapter six raises the question, “What Does the Holy Spirit Do?” In response, Rhonda Crutcher underscores the personality and the relationality of the Holy Spirit and the centrality of the Spirit in the work of redemption.

Eric M. Vail mounts a defense of the doctrine of “creation out of nothing” in chapter 7 of part 3 entitled “How Did It All Begin?” Ryan L. Hansen develops a relational view of what it means to be human, arguing his point from both the Old and New Testaments as well as from Wesley. Despite the fallenness of humanity, “Jesus, *the* quintessential human, is the one who opens up a new way to *be* human, healing the relation between God and humanity” (71). Chapter nine raises the question “How Do We Define Sin?” Leclerc discusses personal and original sin. The former is discussed in typical Wesleyan categories. Regarding original sin, Leclerc argues that the primary category is idolatry, which expresses itself as both egocentricity (the idolatry of self) and “exocentricity” (the idolatry of others). For Leclerc, these categories encompass more completely than other paradigms Wesley’s own understanding of sin. Sarah Whittle addresses the idea of systemic sin and the social, corporate, and personal responsibility toward it. Joe Gorman, in chapter eleven, addresses the problem of suffering, and while offering some viable explanations (e.g., God does not cause suffering), he concludes that the issue of evil defies explanation. In the last section entitled “A Church

Theodicy," he asserts that the incarnational presence of Christ through the church ministers grace in the midst of suffering.

Part 4 "Saved and Sanctified" opens with the question "What Does It Mean to Be Saved?" Jacob Lett, in response, discusses three "stages" of the impact of the atoning work of Christ upon responsive human beings: reconciliation, new birth, and participation. In chapter 13, David McEwan discusses the doctrine of entire sanctification. He asserts that Wesley held that the essential nature of God is love and living the sanctified life entails the fulfillment of the love command of Christ. The author of this chapter also discusses the limitations of sanctification in the Christian life. Gift Mtukwa grounds Wesleyan ethics in the *imago dei* in his chapter on "What Makes Ethics Christian?" Wesleyan ethics entails a call "to reform the nations" (111) and calls believers to holy living, entailing both "works of piety" and "works of mercy" (114). In response to the question, "How Do We Grow Spiritually?" Mark A. Maddix affirms the importance of the means of grace, i.e. the instituted (commanded by Christ), prudential (wise practices), and general (e.g. watching and denying one's self) means of grace. The Lord's Supper is also discussed in this chapter.

The fifth and final part of this book is entitled "The Church's Meaning, Purpose, and Hope." The author of chapter 16, "What is the Church?" Montague R. Williams discusses the marks of the church: unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. The four marks are a reality because God has declared it, but they are also an imperative for the church to become what God has called it to be. Joshua R. and Nell Becker Sweeden address the mission of the church in chapter 17. The Wesleys employed the *ecclesiolae* within the *ecclesia* as the Methodist movement served as a renewing force within the larger church. Thus, the church is defined as a renewal movement "as it integrally participates in God's mission in and for the world" (141). Kelly Diehl Yates employs the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace as foundational to an appropriate response to the treatment of people of other religions. She encourages optimism, humility, and coexistence as ways Christians should act toward those of other faiths. Charles W. Christian addresses the subject of eschatology in the final chapter. After a brief discussion of the historical positions, he discusses the themes which he believes arise from a Wesleyan view of the end times: 1) The kingdom is here and now and will be fully realized later; 2) The last days are about a Person [Christ], not a calendar; 3) God's goal is transformation, not escape; 4) Eschatology is about optimism, not pessimism.

The book has been written against the post-modern backdrop of diversity and aims to establish the essentials of the Christian faith from a Wesleyan-holiness perspective in light of such diversity. The writers affirm the importance of understanding the essentials of the Christian faith: "It is only as we understand these essentials that we can then translate them in ways that relate to those with whom we want to communicate" (10). On this point, one can certainly agree with the importance of the essential beliefs. However, the book does not describe the methodology employed for discerning the essentials. If, for example, the method entailed conformity to the creeds of the Christian church, why was a treatment of baptism omitted? The question remains: What determines what the essentials or non-essentials are?

In the opening chapter, Eugenio discusses the theological methodology that presumably sets the stage for the remainder of the book. He identifies the theological methodology as "inductive thinking" (22). He disparages deductive thinking as "simply learning information that is already ordered and systematized" (22). Though I understand that Eugenio is discussing "doing" theology, one must take care not to disparage the didactic role of systematic theology. Naturally, the reader wants to ask: What is the specific data from which a theologian proposes the general principles according to Eugenio? Here he proposes the following:

Induction involves exploration and discovery through relationships and through looking for the connections between Christian beliefs. *Conferencing* with others is the Wesleyan model of asking and responding to questions. It involves everyone in a worshipping community – leaders, scholars, theologians, and laypeople. All voices are heard with a spirit of humility (22, emphasis in the original).

While Eugenio indicates "students of the Bible and of theology" should engage in conferencing, little clarity is given about the composition of the "worshipping community." Could the "worshipping community" be comprised of individuals from other denominations or faiths? Are there "essential beliefs" to which one must adhere as a prerequisite to participation in this "worshipping community"? One can see the circular reasoning within such an argument.

Eugenio's proposal appears to disparage the didactic role of written theology. The orality of conferencing methodology points to the

tentative nature of the theological task. It also points to incompleteness. Is the task of theologizing done only when “all of the voices are heard with a spirit of humility”? Given the politics prevailing within the institutional church and the economic disparity, can we ensure that the voices of the oppressed and poor are able to present themselves at the conference, much less gain the same hearing in the din and the deference to Western thought found in many of our institutions? Despite the relativistic context of post-modernism, are theologians confined to making only “uncertain sounds”? Thus, one wonders about a methodological shift in Wesleyan-holiness theology as evidenced in the design of the discussions at the Global Theology Conferences of the Church of the Nazarene that reflects Eugenio’s conferencing methodology.

Another issue evidenced within this book is the shift in the controlling norm of Wesleyan-holiness theology. Several writers of this tome, if not all, assert the love of God as the essential nature of God. McEwen is representative when he writes: “At the heart of John Wesley’s theological understanding is the claim that the essential nature of God is love...” (104) which, in the opinion of this reviewer, reflects a misunderstanding of Wesley. Thus, *Essential Beliefs* seems to have modified the emphasis on the holy-love as the essential nature of God that was found in Wesley and neo-Wesleyan works to an emphasis on the essential nature of God as love alone. H. Ray Dunning (*Grace, Faith, and Holiness a Wesleyan Systematic Theology*, 105–117) underscores that the history of theology demonstrates the danger of the pendulum of theological currents vacillating between the immanence (love) and transcendence (holiness) of God, and he advocates a balance between holiness and love.

Rather than employing an inductive approach to scripture, Wolff recommends, “viewing the whole Bible through passages that highlight God’s active love for all of creation remains a sound Wesleyan interpretive lens” (33). Not only does she express the desire to read the Bible through a particular lens, her chapter also demonstrates another concern with the book, the lack of comprehensiveness. For example, Wolff’s chapter makes no attempt to address the authority of the Bible or the inspiration of scripture; it only addresses “How Do We Read the Bible for All It Is Worth?” Perhaps the issues of authority and inspiration are deemed non-essentials.

As stated above, *Essential Beliefs* is a collection of essays by various writers and as such, suffers from books of the same genre. The lack of a comprehensive treatment (however cursory the treatment might be)

gives evidence of the lack of usefulness of this book for certain purposes. The book lacks an interrelatedness of one doctrine to all of the other doctrines that characterizes a systematic theology – a feat rarely achieved in a collection of essays of various writers. Despite the faults, the writers make some important contributions to the on-going conversations in Wesleyan theology. The book should be valued for those seeking insights into an understanding of Wesleyan theology.

### **The Rise of Pentecostalism in Modern El Salvador**

Timothy H. Wadkins

Studies in World Christianity Series

Waco, TX: Baylor University Press

2017, 255 pp. hardback, \$49.95

ISBN: 978-1-4813-0712-3

*Reviewed by Robert A. Danielson*

As a scholar of Pentecostalism in El Salvador who has followed Wadkins' various articles on the subject, I have been eagerly waiting for him to write a full-length monograph on the subject. El Salvador is a wonderful microcosm of Latin American Christianity, with a rich history of Spanish Roman Catholicism going back to the period of the conquest, the introduction of Protestantism in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century led by the American Baptists, a strong voice in Liberation Theology with (now Saint) Oscar Romero and Jon Sobrino, and a rapid growth of both traditional and independent Pentecostal groups. Wadkins does a beautiful job of weaving these stories together to reveal both the complexity and challenges of the current religious setting of El Salvador.

Based on an extensive survey of nine major Salvadoran churches and detailed interviews with both leaders and members of these congregations and others, Wadkins builds an image of El Salvador, not from pure statistics, but rather from a constant series of narratives and vignettes of individual experiences. As one who has studied both Misión Elim Internacional and the Tabernáculo Bautista (both of which appear frequently in the book), he has a very clear and accurate view of the situation in El Salvador. I was equally impressed by his work on the much less-studied

Catholic Charismatic movement in chapter eight. This is an area that needs much more study to achieve a more well-rounded picture of Christianity in Latin America. While many Protestant scholars seem to accept the narrative that Pentecostalism will continue to grow and outpace Roman Catholicism, those intimately involved in the region know this will not be the case due to the growth and strength of Catholic Charismatics.

There are two areas that I wish Wadkins had dealt with more deeply, and two areas where I have some disagreement with the author. First, I would like to have seen more work done to set the book within the context of Spanish colonial Roman Catholicism with its indigenous elements. A large part of modern Pentecostalism is a reaction to that past and only makes sense within that context. Secondly, Wadkins makes a brief remark comparing Pentecostalism in El Salvador to the Roman Catholicism critiqued by John A. McKay in his 1933 book, *The Other Spanish Christ*. Wadkins (142) writes, "The historical Jesus is conspicuously absent among most Spirit-filled Christians in El Salvador. Interviewees dwell upon their personal experience of accepting Christ as a 'personal' Savior, which is quickly surpassed by the deeper, more profound experience of the Holy Spirit. For these individuals Jesus amounts to an abstract, ethereal Christ of faith, and they express little awareness of the life and ministry of Jesus as a basis for Christian discipleship or social praxis." This incredibly important comment needs more discussion, not just for Pentecostalism in El Salvador, but also for Global Pentecostalism in general. From my perspective, modern Pentecostalism is often becoming the new replacement for folk Catholicism as a modern version of a syncretistic folk religion due to its lack of Christology. This theological critique cries out for more serious missiological reflection. I fully understand the limitations of a book like this, and so I do not intend these comments as criticism, just the desire to see these areas more fully developed.

My disagreements with Wadkins are minor and are rooted in his interpretive framework and not his excellent descriptive work. First, he interprets the rise of Pentecostalism from more of a socio-political framework than I might like. For example, he frequently refers to Pentecostalism as somehow promoting individualism and democracy in El Salvador. I would argue that by its very nature, traditional Roman Catholicism in Latin America is a very individual faith already, with private altars in the home adorned with personal saints and private rituals of veneration. Pentecostalism might be building on this tradition, but I do not

think it is necessarily introducing it within the religious sphere. In terms of democracy, what I see more clearly emerging from the evidence is a more open division of the society along lines of class than previously permitted by the Roman Catholic system of parishes. Of course such class division existed before, but the various types of Pentecostal churches mentioned by Wadkins include churches just for the wealthy or middle class, where they can isolate themselves more from the lower classes. This hardly seems to harbor democracy. Secondly, I feel Wadkins either overlooks or minimizes the impact of immigration on the rise of Pentecostalism in El Salvador. This is true in terms of the transnational impact of Salvadoran immigrants in the United States impacting family connections, but also in terms of the internal turmoil caused by the disruption of the traditional family structure and its role. Many smaller Pentecostal churches are forming the support networks and playing the roles traditionally belonging to family members. The same is happening on the opposite side of things with the growing gang problem.

On the whole, Wadkins' work is a masterful descriptive work that is a must-read for any student of religion in Latin America. El Salvador is a microcosm of what is happening across the region, and because of this, this book should be read by those interested in modern themes in religion in all of the nations of the region, not just those interested in El Salvador. While I have some interpretive critiques of his work, this book is solid in its research, penetrating in its conclusions, and truly reveals the complexity of the religious context in modern Latin America. The work is clearly written, engaging in its narrative style, and accessible to people at all levels of the academic spectrum. Wadkins has given us a truly great work for understanding Global Pentecostalism in Latin America.

## **The Divine Christ: Paul, the Lord Jesus, and the Scriptures of Israel**

By David B. Capes

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2018, 224 pp., paperback, \$24.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-9786-7

*Reviewed by J. R. Wright*

David B. Capes has a noteworthy purpose in writing *The Divine Christ*. He seeks to refute the often arbitrarily accepted paradigm that Christology in the first-century gradually advanced from a “low Christology” (e.g., the Christology recognized during Christ’s life and immediately afterwards) to an eventually-developed “high-Christology” (e.g., as articulated in the Gospel of John). This paradigm was typified in the twentieth-century by the history of religions school (e.g., Wilhelm Bousset), and is more recently represented by the work of Bart Ehrman. However, as Capes notes, “This developmental scheme is based on the supposition that, during the three to four decades separating Paul from John, significant changes occurred with regard to the Christian disposition toward Christ. It assumes that Paul never identified Jesus with God in any substantial way” (156). Therefore, Capes returns to his earlier work on “OT YHWH Texts” in order to demonstrate that the aforementioned Christological paradigm is an erroneous one, and that the earliest Christians in fact held what one may define as a “high Christology.”

Capes begins his argument in chapter one (“‘Lord’ and ‘LORD’ in the Bible”) with a presentation of how the word κύριος has been understood and translated in the English Bible tradition. Essentially, Capes demonstrates the various ways in which κύριος in the LXX and NT can function on the one hand as a representation of יהוה, and on the other, in which κύριος can reference human rulers or persons of authority. Such semantic distinctions are of great relevance for any Christological analysis, as both meanings of κύριος are applied to Christ (as Capes will eventually demonstrate), and as one must inevitably establish a divine antecedent (i.e., that a particular application of κύριος to Christ associates Christ with God) in order to establish a “high Christology.”

In chapters two (“*Kyrios*/Lord as a Christological Title”) and three (“Jesus as *Kyrios* in Paul’s Letters”) Capes further explores the significance

of the attribution to Christ of κύριος. Chapter two delves deeper into the conclusion of the history of religions school, as argued by Bousset for example, that belief in Christ's divinity originated outside of the Jerusalem church. Essentially, Bousset and others of his persuasion argue that a rigidly monotheistic Second Temple Judaism would not have allowed the deification of Christ. Therefore, any such deification must have occurred later outside "true" Judaism in the Hellenistic environs of the diaspora, and in the greater Greco-Roman context in which the deification of human persons was already commonplace. Capes demonstrates that such notions have recently been refuted by scholars such as Martin Hengel and N. T. Wright, who argue that one should more properly perceive Judaism in the first-century as a spectrum of "Judaisms," and that any first-century Judaism must be considered thoroughly Hellenized. Therefore, according to Capes, the borrowing of κύριος by the earliest Christians did not have its origins *outside of Judaism*, but from within (i.e., the LXX). In chapter three, Capes identifies in detail three contexts in the letters of Paul in which the application of κύριος to Christ is found: ethical, eschatological, and liturgical.

Chapters four ("YHWH Texts with God as Referent") and five ("YHWH Texts with Christ as Referent") form the nucleus of Capes's argument. "YHWH Texts" as defined by Capes are OT "quotations and allusions [in the NT] that contain a reference to the unspeakable name of God [i.e., the tetragrammaton]" (86). While "YHWH Texts" with God as referent distinguish contexts such as justification and divine wisdom, "YHWH Texts" with Christ as referent distinguish contexts such as eschatology and the resurrection (149). It is through these references that Capes demonstrates Paul's "high Christology." In other words, Paul applies OT quotations containing the divine name both to God and to Christ as a way of demonstrating the divine nature and authority of both. By applying these texts to Christ, Paul has therefore demonstrated that he had Christ's divinity in view.

Capes concludes his work with chapters focusing on summary and exegetical implications. These implications need not be explicated in detail here, as they should be readily apparent. What is at stake is nothing less than the divinity of Christ as perceived by the earliest Christian communities and the thoroughly Jewish Paul. The work bears import for Christology, intertextuality, Pauline studies, and systematic theology. Capes's arguments are sound, well-structured, and scrupulously argued. Further, it

is a welcome rebuttal to recent secular trends in Christology studies, and should be considered an invaluable resource to students, pastors, and scholars alike.

### **Migrants and Citizens: Justice and Responsibility in the Ethics of Immigration**

Tisha M. Rajendra

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2017, 179 pp., paperback, \$25.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-6882-4

*Reviewed by Christopher Ashley*

The current political tenor surrounding issues of immigration in the United States is one of vitriol and shallow arguments. Tisha M. Rajendra bravely enters the conversation by attempting to reframe the debate from the typical dichotomy of cosmopolitans (who stress the universality of human rights) and communitarians (who emphasize the rights of nation-states to choose their own members) to an emphasis on justice as responsibility to relationships. Rather than framing immigration in an already-established ethical framework, Rajendra begins with the immigrants' diverse narratives, which resist shallow reductionism.

With migration active from anywhere to anywhere, Rajendra focuses on just three destinations of migration: the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Moreover, she directs the reader to three specific flows of migration: colonial, guest-worker, and foreign-investment-driven migration. Along the way, Rajendra critiques advocates of universal human rights and of Liberation theology's preferential option for the poor to ask, "Who actually has responsibility for specific populations of migrants?" Likewise, she critiques theories of migration such as Neoclassical migration theories (which assert that migrants are rational actors who make autonomous, rational decisions) and structure-dominant migration theories (which overemphasize structures of migration at the expense of individual agency).

Rajendra's account of justice as responsibility to relationships rejects broad theories of migrant justice, as each country has specific

responsibilities to specific populations. In the United States, America's involvement throughout Central America—such as capitalist investment and political intervention—has left millions of people displaced and economically destitute. Because of this specific relationship, the U.S. has a responsibility in our relationship to, say, Guatemalan migrants, who require the specific response of hospitality. In Germany, their guest-worker program recruited thousands of Turkish migrants who were valued purely for the labor; Germany has a specific responsibility to those Turks whom they exploited. In the United Kingdom, their history of colonialism irrevocably altered the definition of a Brit, such that Indians can claim to be royal subjects, free to migrate “home” to the United Kingdom.

Rajendra's approach is laudable. Combining the narratives of individual migrants and weaving in Biblical concern for the foreigner in both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament, she draws the reader's attention to specific persons and peoples. By employing a narrative approach to ethics, she brings the conversation down to the level of actual people. This is the given the current political climate, but it also corrects lofty ethical frameworks that ignore the myriad reasons that cause people to migrate. The only shortcoming is that Rajendra deals firstly with Christians whose main identity is their nationality. Thus, it is American Christians who are responsible for immigrants who cross the border into their country. This book would likely be dramatically different were it to address Christians whose main identity is the Church, an ecclesiological ethics of migration. However, given that many Christians in America *do* identify themselves firstly as Americans, this is an important work for rehumanizing immigrants and reframing the immigration debate.

## **Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness**

Jeffrey D. Arthurs

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

2017, 192 pp., paperback, \$18.00

ISBN: 978-0-8308-5109-4

*Reviewed by Scott Donahue-Martens*

*Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness* by Jeffrey Arthurs envisions the task of preaching in terms of reminding and remembering. Arthurs, a professor of preaching and communication at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary utilizes his expertise to encourage preachers to be confident preaching biblical stories. The work is supported by Arthurs' utilization of biblical theology, neuroscience, and communication theory. Preachers will find this work informative and practical. It offers a vision of faithful preaching while providing insight into ways preachers can improve. Arthurs shows the reader why remembering is so important to the Christian faith and how remembering can be central to preaching.

The central images of the work are preaching as reminding and viewing the preacher as a "remembrancer." The image of a remembrancer comes from the history of the British royal court where the remembrancer was tasked with remembering important information for the monarch. Arthurs supports the centrality of this image through biblical theology and the many ways that remembering is highlighted throughout scripture. Herein is a strength of the work. He explores what biblical concepts of remembering and forgetting look like and applies these concepts to preaching. The scriptural and theological explorations offer support to his overall argument and are compelling.

The first three chapters focus on God, people, and the preacher as each relates to remembering and forgetting. Ultimately, he asserts that remembering is more than mental recall of the past. Remembering involves will and emotion in the process of re-actualizing the past and envisioning the future. Arthurs emphasizes that preaching as reminding fosters "participation" in the events being remembered. This is done through the Spirit's power and the performative nature of words. This link between speech-act theory and homiletics offers insight into what happens in preaching. Throughout the work, Arthurs comments that he hopes this

view of preaching offers liberation to those who feel that they must preach something novel each Sunday. The book reclaims that there is power in telling the old stories and helping others remember them. Here, Arthurs utilizes his knowledge of communication theory to guide preachers on how to tell the story. The final four chapters are devoted to the methods and practices of reminding. He explores style, story, delivery, and ceremony and symbol as tools for reminding in preaching.

Forgetting also has a prominent role in the work. Part of why reminding and remembering are so important is because of a human propensity to forget. Like remembering, Arthurs explores the concept of forgetting biblically, theologically, and neurologically. Remembering and forgetting are formative processes that impact the way people think and act. Preaching can be a time of reminding so that remembering and forgetting are utilized in Christian formation. Arthurs offers insights into the process of remembering from a neurological standpoint that is accessible to theological readers. The neurological aspect of the work is especially noteworthy as it helps preachers understand how shifts in technology shape modern listeners and how preaching can adapt in light of technology.

Arthurs acknowledges that the task of preaching is shifting, especially as the setting of the United States is increasingly secular. At the same time, the central images of reminding and remembering could benefit from further consideration of what preaching as reminding looks like to biblically illiterate persons. He advises preachers to utilize materials that non-Christians would recognize to make comparisons with biblical concepts and stories. Thus, he shows how reminding and remembering can be important in preaching to new believers and non-Christians; however, the gravity of the shift in biblical illiteracy warranted more attention in homiletical approach and method. This is especially true if preaching as reminding is going to have such a prominent place. The image of preaching as reminding fits well with congregations comprised of people who already identify as Christian. More attention to what preaching as reminding looks like in post-Christian settings would improve the work by allowing the central image to relate to a current contextual need.

Arthurs work contains a number of illustrations from literature, sermon vignettes, and personal experiences that illuminate the theoretical propositions. *Preaching as Reminding* offers a compelling view of preaching that seeks to form faithful preachers, who in turn help form faithful Christians. Preachers may benefit from the practical wisdom that

Arthurs offers and the homiletical vision. The author takes seriously that preaching matters to God and that reminding can be a faithful means of proclaiming the stories of faith. The work contains wisdom gleaned from years of preaching and teaching preaching. *Preaching as Reminding* helps God's remembrancers understand and undergo the task of preaching.

### **The Letter to Philemon**

Scot McKnight

New International Commentary of the New Testament Series

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2017, 159 pp., hardback, \$25.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7382-8

*Reviewed by Timothy J. Christian*

Renown NT scholar, Scot McKnight, presents a very accessible, thought provoking, exegetical, and timely commentary on Paul's epistle to Philemon. His introduction (46 out of 114 pages) is perhaps the greatest contribution McKnight makes to Philemon studies, particularly his research on slavery in the ancient world (6-29), the New World, and today (30-36). His concerns are pastoral, ecclesial, and societal. Contrary to prior analyses, McKnight contends that Paul's main goal in Philemon is not the manumission of Onesimus, but rather reconciliation between "a slave owner (Philemon) and a slave (Onesimus)" (1). Moreover, he believes that Paul does not use indirection (*insinatio*) to make his point—as many other studies maintain—but rather that Paul directly appeals and requests Philemon to send Onesimus back to Paul for his useful service in the gospel. Moreover, McKnight contends that Paul did not see there being a moral problem with slavery in the Roman world. Rather, he thinks that Paul's Magna Carta (e.g. Gal. 3:28) was strictly for the church. Thus, "Paul's vision [of freedom and manumission] was not for the Roman Empire but for the church" (10). And again, "For Paul the social revolution was to occur in the church, in the body of Christ, at the local level, and in the Christian house church and household" (10-11).

The commentary is accessible to pastors, teachers, and students with all the Greek transliterated. Furthermore, McKnight does not get

bogged down in jargon and meaningless debates, but the commentary demonstrates the utmost discipline in terms of succinctness and brevity. Scholars, however, would have wished for more technical conversations, for example, textual criticism or grammatical analysis (though these are available in other commentaries). Concerning slavery, McKnight pushes against those who downplay the atrocities of ancient slavery. Moreover, his historical summary of slavery in the New World and today is superb and shocking, though there is a slight hint of critique of early Christianity for needing to have known better and done something revolutionary (politically) about slavery like we have in the past few centuries. Such a critique is anachronistic in my opinion, and early Christianity did not have any political power in the Roman Empire, often being viewed with suspicion as a superstition. I appreciate that McKnight strongly highlights elsewhere that the social revolution that Paul calls for is to occur in the church. Concurring, Paul is not much concerned about changing the politics and society of the Roman Empire (cf. 1 Cor. 5:12-13), but more so the church. In addition, McKnight is creative and imaginative, particularly in his insights regarding the oral performance of the epistle (85-88). Moreover, he makes an important distinction between anti-empire and supra-empire critiques, clarifying that Paul makes the latter (52-53, 61-62, 100). Lastly, McKnight provides excellent syntheses of the many possibilities of interpretation that exist in Philemon due to the limited data about the historical situation.

One major issue that I take up with McKnight is that he oddly sees a problem with Paul using indirection or *insinuatō* (my own dissertation topic) in Philemon. He thinks that Paul most often says what he means and has no problem being direct and to the point (44). While that is certainly true of Paul (see Gal. 2), that does not therefore mean that Paul is direct in every instance. In fact, in my dissertation ("Paul and the Rhetoric of *Insinuatō*"), I observe that *insinuatō* is a Pauline rhetorical tendency, as he uses it in undisputed epistles: Rom. 9—11, 2 Cor. 10—13, Gal. 4, Phlm. 4-7, Acts 17 and 24 (Luke's portrayal of Paul), and my dissertation argues also 1 Cor. 15. Another issue concerning *insinuatō* is that McKnight argues against Paul indirectly ingratiating that Philemon should manumit Onesimus. However, McKnight sees Paul as requesting Philemon that he send Onesimus back to Paul for his gospel ministry, yet Paul never directly states such a request in the epistle. If Paul did make such a request, then it was indirect and subtle, something that McKnight himself sees as uncharacteristic of Paul. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. Even if Paul was not

formally trained in rhetoric—and I grant that possibility, though Stanley E. Porter and his brigade claim that Paul most certainly *was not and could not* have been educated in rhetoric—McKnight himself elsewhere admits that rhetorical conventions are possible in Paul’s letters due to natural talent (43-44). It is quite odd then that McKnight will admit the possibility of rhetoric in Philemon, yet sternly reject the possibility of rhetorical indirection (*insinuatio*), especially when his thesis about the situation (that Paul requests Philemon to return Onesimus to Paul) is entirely missing in the text of Philemon and requires one to read the hints in between the lines. It seems that McKnight’s underlying assumption was that Paul was stationary in his direct approach to issues. Certainly Paul was direct and had no problem addressing issues head-on (see especially Gal. 1—3). But McKnight reveals his own ignorance of ancient rhetoric regarding this issue of indirection and its usage in Paul’s epistles. All the more, while trying to demonstrate that Paul is not using indirection (*insinuatio*), McKnight in fact unknowingly describes exactly what *insinuatio* is in his own words (avoiding rhetorical terms) and in fact demonstrates even more that Paul was using *insinuatio*. For example, he says that v. 17’s “appeal is direct, clear, and the climax” of the letter (102). Yet according to Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions, for something to be direct, it was stated at the beginning of the discourse. *Insinuatio*, on the other hand, was when the orator waited until the end to address the difficult topic directly, clearly, and even climactically. In other words, *insinuatio* is indirect in that it delays the contentious or prejudiced topic until the end of the speech, but when it gets to the end, the orator is direct about it, just at the closing of the argument. There are other examples of this, but I think this demonstrates enough that while McKnight aimed somewhat at accounting for the rhetoric of Philemon, that he really has fallen short, primarily—in my opinion—because he decides to cut himself off from Greco-Roman rhetorical terminology (both from handbooks [theory] and actual speeches [practice]).

**Will Willimon's Lectionary Sermon Resource: Year B, Part 1**

Will Willimon

Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

2017, 322 pp., paperback, \$24.99

ISBN: 978-1-5018-4723-3

*Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts*

A good sermon is a tightrope walk. A pastor must balance the multiple possible audiences present while drawing on a centered and real experience of her or his own faith. A good sermon can carry along the new person who walks in off the street for the first time as well as that deep, thoughtful elder sitting in the front row week after week waiting to be taken seriously, engaged, and challenged. Producing a quality sermon every week, though, can become a burden at times. There are times when a pastor can use some direction and inspiration.

Will Willimon has provided a welcome resource for those times. The thirty-six entries in this volume are each rich, little pieces that could spin out in a thousand different directions. Each entry has illustrations and suggestions that can be taken or left depending on need, but the general thrust of each sermon help is consistently interesting, thought provoking, and enjoyable enough assist a wide variety of pastors. You do not need to be an academic to use this book, but there is plenty here for the academic pastor also. Willimon is never trite, and he is willing to confront his reader/congregation while, at the same time, maintaining a gentle warmth and generosity as he guides the example sermon to its conclusion. Following in Willimon's footsteps, one can feel the unpretentious artistry and attentive skill in the way he explores a biblical passage and creates a sermon.

One of my favorite entries is the sermon help for New Year's Day on Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 called "Joy in the Time Being." Preaching on Ecclesiastes may seem like it would be depressing at the opening of the year, especially a passage that ends in a reflection on whether work is really worth it. However, Willimon does something refreshing with the passage. He guides us along to the recognition that, though we really want our work to be enduring and ultimately meaningful in some way, it is not. If we strive to make our efforts secure, lasting, and truly meaningful, we lose the joy in the moment, the pleasure of the process. "We are therefore invited

to live each day and to work, not seeking results, but rather enjoying the process of the toil. Only God knows where all of this leads, what is finally adds up to" (80-81). While this is a sermon help, it also seemed to be very applicable to pastors. I have heard many preachers legitimize projects and ministries with "eternal values," "divine calling," and place an absolute sort of meaning on the task they are endorsing. Yet, Willimon's sermon applies to the work of the missionary, the preacher, the factory worker, and the nurse. It was encouraging to see a pastor pull back from endorsing drive, the need for strong meanings, and the absolute rightness of "our cause." That call to humility and enjoying the task at hand was personally helpful and I hope this sermon gets preached a hundred different ways in a hundred different pulpits.