

Reviews



PAUL AND THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD: CHRISTIAN ORIGINS AND THE QUESTION OF GOD: VOLUME 4, by N. T. Wright. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. Pp. 1,658. \$89.00 (cloth).

This is a book which, if read carefully, you may never forget. It calls for determination to begin perusing, but can thrill the reader with its scope, profundity, and spiritual insights. With its analysis and synthesis it covers a vast array of subjects and themes regarding the Apostle Paul, both his life setting and his theological and biblical thought, with major attention being given to Paul's theology.

Book I is essentially an introduction to the whole theme of the book, divided into Part I, Paul and His World (3–347), and Part II, The Mindset of the Apostle (351–569). Book Two is a detailed development of the theme, divided into Part III, Paul's Theology (609–1265), and Part IV, Paul in History (1269–1519). Following the exposition is a detailed bibliography (1521–1590).

In these pages, Wright has attempted to present a sharply defined consideration of Pauline theology by elaborating on the context in which it is set, namely, the Jewish, Greek (Hellenistic), and Roman worlds in which Paul was born and lived. It is difficult to understand Paul's life and letters apart from this (that is, to read them with only a twenty-first-century perspective). Paul was a Jew and a Pharisee, born a Roman citizen, and schooled in the Hellenistic language. We need to remember that at his conversion/call experience he was commissioned to carry the Lord's name "before the

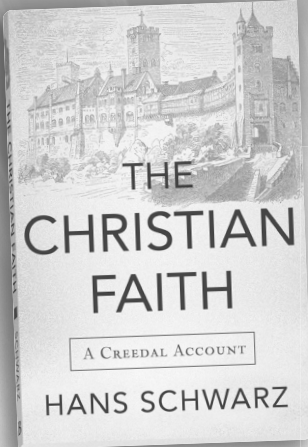
Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Parts I and IV, in particular, are devoted to this aspect of the study. The study of history is essential for an appreciation and understanding of theology.

One is reminded of the fact of Paul's interaction with his cultural, political, and religious environments. He was appreciatively involved with the religious and philosophical concepts found in Greek and Roman worship and learning. He could cite and use some of those insights, for example, Greek worship and words of their poets (Acts 17:22–29), the appointment by the God of Israel of political leadership, and the Christian response to those human authorities (Rom 13:1–17). But it was Paul's Jewish context that was determinative of his theology. Wright gives this definitive statement:

The key to it all then...is to understand the Jewish context from which Paul came, and then to understand the nature of the change in Paul's Jewish understanding caused by his belief in the crucified and risen Messiah. (1318)

It is that last phrase that is so critical in Wright's analysis of the apostle's theological thinking. The story/narrative of God comes to a climactic point here. We need to see beyond separate stories and perceive the "grand narrative." It begins with God as Creator—a purposive God (and monotheistic!). But the human creatures rebel and attempt to thwart God's plan. Then Abraham is called and receives the covenant—that God will bless him, make him father of a people through whom the world will be blessed. The story goes on—with

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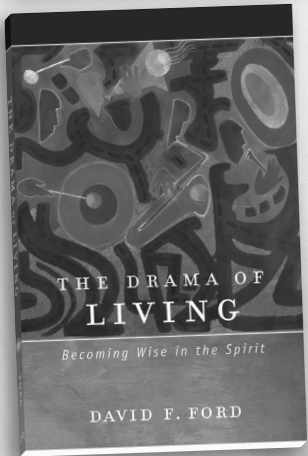


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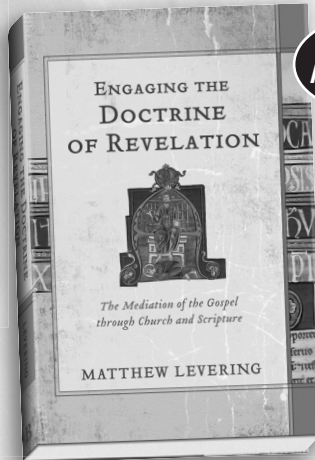
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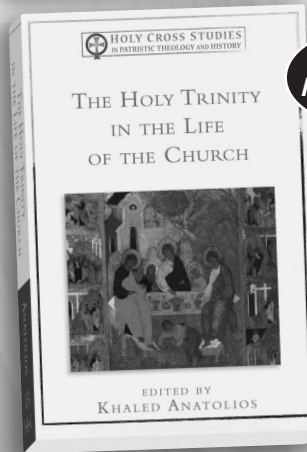
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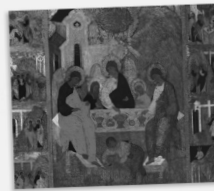
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promises of a redeemer, with Torah and its demands, and the hope of a glorious future. But when the heralded redeemer appeared they did not receive him. In fact, they crucified him. A *crucified Messiah!* But God raised him from the grave, exalted him, and promised new life by his Spirit to all who would receive him—Jew and Gentile alike. The new age has broken in; the future is assured, and we await the (second) appearance of the Anointed One. It is a Jewish story, yet open to all who exercise the faith that Abraham placed in the word of the God who promised.

The reading can be tedious, the argumentation can be dense, but as a study tool it can hardly be surpassed. By the use of the detailed table of contents one can follow the trend of the exposition, and make one's way through the forest *and* the trees. I can only give the book my highest praise, and I commend it to you.

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WAITING FOR GOSPEL, by Douglas John Hall. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012. Pp. 214. \$25.00 (paper).

Any preacher who has ever sprinkled a sermon with the words *must*, *should*, or *ought* will want to approach Douglas John Hall's book with fear and trembling. In his trenchant analysis of why the mainline Protestant churches are moribund, Hall takes critical aim at preachers who are legalistic, moralistic, superficial, and shallow. He also inveighs against simplification of the faith, theological neglect, entertainment, and American evangelicalism. Not much in the current religious scene escapes his penetrating analysis, for, as he says, these noisome activities have led to a deterioration of the church in general and gospel in particular.

At the outset Hall states his conviction that there is a real possibility the once strong eccle-

siastical institutions of North America will disappear in the near future. This doleful theme provides the backdrop of his book. But Hall holds out a rope of hope for the sinking ships: "The only thing that can salvage a moribund religion is a lively recovery of its life-giving essence.... The lesson of history is clear... it is whether we are able to hear and proclaim ... *gospel*" (x, xi).

Hall's main argument is presented in a lengthy, tightly reasoned preface. Thirteen subsequent essays unpack and expand the material presented in the preface. These essays take up the broad themes of "Mystery and Meaning of Gospel," "The Basics of Gospel," and "The Law within Gospel." Even though, for purposes of grammar, Hall uses the term "the gospel," he is careful to indicate that his central concern is "gospel" without the definite article. He notes that part of the problem in the expression "the gospel" is that it conjures up "a rather definite body of ideas, historic references, words, phrases, claims" (5). Gospel, used without the definite article, connotes for him the word *euangelion*, a broader, breathing term that reflects good news, good message, good tidings.

Gospel is for proclamation, not exhortation. The means by which the mystery of gospel can be spread is not by reducing it to "should" or "ought." Nor is it salutary to wallow in good feelings or trot unharnessed into social involvement. Because we live in a secular age we are all tempted to "dumb down" what is at the heart of the church: gospel. One symptom of this malaise is the increasing irrelevance of theology. The term, when it is used, has little currency today. People know what it means to be a doctor or a musician; but few can tell what a theologian is or does. Yet theology is the muscle that allows the gospel to reach and stretch. "No other discipline, science, art or trade (with the possible exception of the sex trade!) has enjoyed such a lengthy and intimate association with the human community as has theology within the bounds of Christen-

dom” (18). Making theology comprehensible and viable (and not just for those who teach it) is an abiding concern in Hall’s narrative.

The importance of theology as a means of presenting and interpreting gospel is stressed in the thirteen essays of the book. Hall confesses a strong affection for Martin Luther, especially the reformer’s emphasis on theology of the cross. In another chapter Hall lifts up the contribution of Karl Barth, “who can say it as it is.” Bonhoeffer also gets his own chapter, stressing the ethics of participation. Søren Kierkegaard dominates a wry chapter as he “Attends a Megachurch,” the final edgy and disconcerting essay in this collection. This piece could be read and profitably discussed by anyone who is concerned about church growth, especially those who seek “relevance” at the expense of gospel.

Anyone who cares about the church (pastors, lay folk, students, even professional theologians) should find this book bracing. While

Hall’s observations make good grist for discussion, not everyone will agree with all his observations or conclusions. Occasionally he lets his rhetoric get away from him. At different times he constructs sentences that go on for fifteen or more lines. Moreover, not everyone will share his impatience with six-minute meditations in favor of a nostalgic preference for two-hour sermons; it is apparent that Hall dislikes sound bites at the expense of sound theology.

Hall does not neglect other issues facing the church. For instance, he is impatient with those who emphasize social responsibility without theological grounding; but he makes it quite clear that social responsibility is not only proper but essential. At one point he plays a catchy riff on the Westminster Confession, recalling that the question “What is the chief end of man?” traditionally has as its answer: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Playfully, but quite seriously,

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Hall proposes a more apposite response for today: “The chief end of the human being is to be God’s faithful steward in a profoundly threatened creation” (107).

Though Hall’s book will be a bracing breath of fresh air for many, it may be a source of discomfort for others. He uncovers and examines issues that confront (and even undermine) the church. He picks and pokes at our premises and practices in a way that is impossible to ignore. It is difficult to read this book without smiling but also wincing at the pertinence of his observations. Arguing with him would be a little like tilting with a prophet like Isaiah. In the end we would wish to be with him, *Waiting for Gospel*, even though the exercise is sometimes like waiting for Godot.

Robert Brusic
Luther Seminary
Saint Paul, Minnesota

SAVING KARL BARTH: HANS URS VON BALTHASAR’S PREOCCUPATION, by D. Stephen Long. Fortress, 2014. Pp. 304. \$49.00 (paper).

Books on theological friendships are rare. This ought not be. What better way to compare and contrast differing theologies than through the crucible of intellectuals of differing confessions finding their way as friends? D. Stephen Long assigns himself the admirable task of saving the Balthasar-Barth friendship from neoscholastic misunderstanding and Protestant misappropriation. Long considers Balthasar an outstanding guide through Barth’s theology, both as an interpreter of Barth, as well as a theologian who supplements and forwards what Barth accomplished.

Long makes his case in a series of captivating moves, beginning with a chapter on their friendship. Although it was the Catholic-Protestant split that divided them (especially on the topics of “pure nature” and the *analogia entis*), on another level Barth and Balthasar

had much in common. Both loved Mozart. Both had a painting of the Grünewald crucifixion hung over their desk. Both wrote long, fascinating works of theology. Both saw Jesus Christ as the center of their theology.

Barth and Balthasar’s theological conversation begins with a letter Balthasar sent to Barth upon the publication of *Church Dogmatics* 2.1. Their friendship (which was always a conversation and a disagreement) continued until Barth’s death. They vacationed together. They taught seminars together. They corresponded.

It may always have been part of Balthasar’s program to welcome Barth back to Roman Catholicism. This was less a form of proselytizing, and more a sense on Balthasar’s part that either Barth misunderstood a basic theologoumenon of Catholic thought, or it had never been presented in the proper manner, and if only Barth could see Catholic theology in the light in which Balthasar saw it, there would be no barrier.

So, although Barth and Balthasar find substantial and sustained agreement on the “form” of theology and its impact on various realms of theological thought, such as God, in Christ; ethics, as dogma; and the church, always in renewal; it is around this particular locus, the *analogia entis*, that the two never find rapprochement.

It is also the case that Balthasar continually risks censure from his own Catholic community, and misunderstanding from the Protestant side, for his way of presenting Barth’s theology (and his lifelong commitment to do so). Chapter two in Long’s book is therefore devoted, in all its complexity, to presenting Balthasar’s interpretation of Barth, and charts the genealogy of its abandonment by Catholics and Protestants alike, if for different reasons.

It may do a disservice to Long’s work to attempt a one-sentence summary of Balthasar’s way of interpreting Barth, for in fact neither writer wrote in ways that can be simply summarized. Instead, Long notes, Balthasar him-

self believed “setting forth Barth’s theology is difficult. . . . it could not be done in a few propositions, but was more like finding the right way to present Mozart” (39).

There is, in another sense, a very straightforward way to summarize what was central for both Barth and Balthasar. Long offers the sentence, midway in his book, that anyone would do well to memorize. Barth and Balthasar sought “much more profound articulation of what mattered to both of them: *Christology with an analogy between God and creatures that prevented identity*” (44, emphasis added).

Two terms in the book are worth defining here in this review. It is not my intent to be pedantic, but honestly, even as a reader of the book somewhat familiar with theological reflections on the topics of pure nature and the *analogia entis*, they were not terms I had developed concise definitions of in my own mind, so I offer these reflections here.

First: Pure nature is the idea that created

nature is whole and complete on its own. It does not need God to be what it is. In theological systems that assume pure nature (and most Protestant theologies do so), grace is something added on top, extrinsic to, nature. The basic question: Was grace present prior to sin, or does grace only come into play when nature stops being pure? Both Barth and Balthasar reject the notion of pure nature, although they approach some questions about nature and grace from different perspectives.

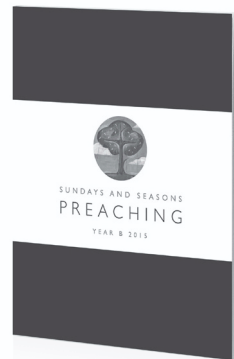
Second: *Analogia entis* is the theological concept that there exists something that analogically corresponds to the creator (of everything) that makes contemplation of the nature of that creator possible. In other words, the very *being* of creation offers an analogy by which one can contemplate the *being* of God. Barth was famously opposed to the *analogia entis*, especially in his early work, although, remarkably, he develops later in his *Church Dogmatics* an understanding of the hypostatic

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union as a potential locus for the *analogia entis*. Balthasar sees this implicit in Barth's work and expresses it explicitly.

The middle to late section of Long's book is a rip-roaring good read, especially if you like a theologian who picks a fight in a friendly manner. Here, Long outlines the collapse of Balthasar's interpretation of Barth—not the failure of Balthasar's interpretation, but rather its abandonment by later theologians both of the Protestant and Catholic variety. Then, one by one, he illustrates why they are wrong, or how they have misunderstood Barth, Balthasar, or both.

Long concludes the book with a chapter on Barth and Balthasar as unlikely ecumenists. Barth often said he believed the proper posture for ecumenism was dogmatic intolerance of others' positions (239). Balthasar was often suspect in his own community because of his fascination with Barth. Barth was involved in the church struggles during the war and following. Balthasar had left his Jesuit order and founded a new one, a religious community for men and women called the Community of Saint John. In spite of their oddly marginal positions vis-à-vis the church, their friendship became a model for ecumenism then, and Long argues it can be a model for ecumenical conversation today.

The precise way the two were ecumenical is summarized well in a late sentence of Long's: "Balthasar's theology was always caught between these two poles: convincing Catholics they were as christological as Barth's Reformed theology, and convincing Protestants they could affirm the *analogia entis* and thereby glimpse the whole creation as God's good gift in, through, and for the glory of the mystery that is the hypostatic union" (277).

Barth and Balthasar shared a common vision of Christ as a radiating center that illumined everything else. Barth is remembered for focusing on the center. Balthasar, for Long, is to be remembered for illuminating how that center in Barth can radiate out into even more

theological arenas than even Barth considered, especially into creation itself. It is Long's lovely accomplishment to invite all of us afresh to read Barth through Balthasar, and to read their friendship as a model for our own starting point in the continuing theological conversation.

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THE ENTANGLED TRINITY: QUANTUM PHYSICS AND THEOLOGY,
by Ernest L. Simmons. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014. Pp. 205. \$39.00 (paper).

There's a long history of lively interdisciplinary conversation in the liberal arts colleges of the Lutheran church in the United States. Bill Narum and Harold Ditmanson at St. Olaf or Stanley Olsen at Augustana come to mind. Here is a book that continues that conversation in the red-hot field of science and religion. What is remarkable about Ernest Simmons's contribution is that the theological locus chosen for the conversation is not simply the more conventional category of creation but the doctrine of the Trinity. For many Christians that doctrine probably has been a mystery that quickly becomes a muddle when they try to explain it. Of the Three in One, a wit has said sadly: "you will lose your faith if you deny it; you will lose your mind, if you try to understand it."

Simmons, drawing on thirty-five years of life in the creative ferment of Concordia College in Moorhead, takes up the challenge boldly. For the science side of things he turns to physics, carrying forward the programmatic legacy of the college's seminal dean, Carl L. Bailey. The sweep of the author's reach is ambitious. The conversation touches on each of the three articles and their connectedness and speaks to the human quest concerning origin, forgiveness, and hope. There's even a



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turning out toward the other religions that befits the author's conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity is not an insiders' matter, safely secured from the stuff of the world or the natural sciences' study of that stuff. This book will serve readers in advanced college and seminary classes and can be a boon to pastors responding to inquisitive laypeople embarked on a journey of faith seeking understanding.

The book opens with chapters covering the foundational concepts of faith, knowledge, and theology. Part II follows with a wonderfully clear and concise summary of the development of the doctrine. The "experiential roots and biblical witness" are seen to be at work in the apostolic fathers on through the likes of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Augustine. But it is the Cappadocian fathers and their theme of the Trinitarian dance of perichoresis that Simmons selects for crucial emphasis. Discussion of Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Luther concludes the historical treatment, which throughout emphasizes that the movement of Christian reflection is "from the experience of three to one, not one to three" (144). The stage is set for science to play "heuristic" and "supporting" roles, inspiring the theologian's reflection on perichoresis.

So what "physical metaphor" (161) does science offer for the Trinitarian life? Simmons is a theologian and is careful to acknowledge that he is not a scientist (137). But he can read and listen to colleagues across campus and he draws deeply on scientific understandings. Some of this will be familiar to other nonscientist readers and listeners, like myself. There is lucid description here of quantum "complementarity" by which the interconnectedness of physical reality can be experienced either as wave or particle. Niels Bohr's Copenhagen interpretation of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle is favored in thinking about how it is impossible to measure simultaneously particle and wave properties. But the science piece that may be new for many nonscientist readers is the notion of quantum

entanglement that finds its way into the book's title. Briefly, the point is that "particles that have once interacted can never be fully separated" (185); they have become "entangled." The term, first coined by Edward Schrödinger, may carry an overtone of being unwelcome, and Simmons is keenly aware that both ordinary experience and parlance at the macro level, and traditional theism, offer resistance to the help available from the quantum world. Well, what might follow for the bold or desperate theologian who heeds the inspiration the quantum world offers?

That inspiration might most basically lead the theologian back to the Mars Hill sermon Paul preached to the philosophers in Athens, asserting that God "is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'" (Acts 17:27b–28). We have the panentheistic entanglement of God in us and of us in God. Talk of that level of being "connected though separate" is fairly commonplace these days due to the work of Moltmann and Polkinghorne, among others. But Simmons, writing "mainly from a process perspective" (157, n. 21), doesn't stop there. He writes profoundly of how the immanent Trinity is entangled in the worldly work of the economic Trinity. The principle of complementarity is applied to that very work, so that "when we look for origins, we find Creator," but when we are looking for forgiveness or for hope, Son and Spirit may come into view (152). But this entangled Triune God is not to be split up, as when we pit one person against another in a bloodthirsty Father demanding the death of a loving Son. Just so, creation, incarnation, and sanctification are to be held together. There's even an original spin on the kenosis notion, as Simmons writes of how "*Christ kenotically emptied himself of the immanent perichoresis of the Trinity in order to enter into the economic perichoresis of the creation*" (177, emphasis his).

This is not sleepy bedtime reading. The conciseness of the writing and the sweep of the

author's vision will call for the reader's full attention. But there is gospel here, for Ernest Simmons points a way to a fuller grasp of the very good news that truly nothing can separate us from the incredibly entangled love of God.

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WORSHIP AS REPENTANCE: LUTHERAN LITURGICAL TRADITIONS AND CATHOLIC CONSENSUS, by Walter Sundberg. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. Pp. 190. \$18 (paper).

Walter Sundberg, professor of church history at Luther Seminary, has written a much-needed antidote to a popular understanding of Lutheran worship as a mere celebration of God's love, failing thereby to call worshipers to turn from their sins and repent. In a study that

is solid both historically and theologically, he makes the case that penitence and *conditional* forgiveness of sins have been at the center of a long tradition, both Lutheran and catholic, until about the 1960s, and that this tradition is worship as repentance.

Sundberg argues that conditional absolution—which declares that if you're not penitent you're not forgiven—is a “time-honored practice in Lutheranism” and “is a legitimate and effective exercise of the discipline of the office of the keys.” He points out that conditional absolution is closely related to other common practices of Lutheran churches in the past, such as exhortation to communicants and private confession. “There is no doubt that these practices have been abandoned in contemporary mainline American Lutheranism as represented in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” he observes (6).

Why have these practices been abandoned? Citing a book titled *All Is Forgiven: the Secular*

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Message in American Protestantism, by Marsha G. Witten, Sundberg maintains that “the temptation for the preacher is to modify and accommodate Christian faith to the dominant values of the culture in order to make religious practice more marketable” (3). Against this “feel good” approach to worship, Sundberg argues that, when we have confessed and received absolution, before we take Communion we also hear the “binding key,” warning that,

On the other hand, by the same authority, I declare unto the impenitent and unbelieving, that so long as they continue in their impenitence God hath not forgiven their sins and will assuredly visit their iniquities upon them if they turn not from their evil ways, and come to true repentance and faith in Christ, ere the day of grace be ended. (1)

This form is contained in the absolution for a specially appointed preparatory service to be held a day or two before Communion on Sunday and was recommended as a vesper service on Wednesday or Friday of Holy Week. It was in the *Service Book and Hymnal* used in many Lutheran churches from 1958 to 1978.

Sundberg has worked closely with the development *RECLAIM*, a new Lutheran hymnal “for church and home,” published in 2013. But when the “On the other hand” version of the binding key was included as a second option for absolution in the introductory edition of the hymnal, the advisory board members objected vociferously that absolution should be unconditional, that the conditional version confuses law and gospel and gets the order wrong by ending with judgment. This prompted Sundberg to make a defense, based on extensive research, which led to this book.

In the final version of the *RECLAIM* hymnal, the “On the other hand” absolution is contained in a special Order for Public Confession. In the regular settings for Holy Communion, a version of the binding key is contained in the second option for absolution, which concludes as follows:

The Almighty and merciful God grant unto you that are penitent, pardon and remission of all your sins, time for amendment of life, and the grace and comfort of his Holy Spirit. Amen.

Can present-day Lutherans abide absolution with a warning to the impenitent? It doesn’t seem likely. But Sundberg has made a strong case that at least may wake us up to the need for worship that takes our sin more seriously.

In pointing to worship traditions that do this, he ranges from the Pentecostal to the Catholic. And, invoking Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer, he critiques the so-called “church tradition” in which you’re born a Christian and are home free if you go through the rituals of the church. By contrast, he maintains that,

Whatever its faults and misuses over the centuries—and they have been legion—liturgical worship, at its best, has this purpose: *to call Christians to repentance; to warn them to be under no illusion as to who they are and how far they fall short when they stand before God and holy things; to teach them to worship God in humility, to feed them the Bread of Life, to make them ready to give testimony to Christ in word and deed.* (15, author’s italics)

“Where is the grace of God in this austere conception of liturgy and its purpose?” Sundberg asks, and answers that grace resides in the repetition (which he refers to as “blessed repetition”), assuming “the weakness and frailty of Christian believers,” realizing that they will never be “instantly and permanently converted” but inevitably will “fall away” and will need to be restored (15).

Making his case historically, Sundberg devotes chapters to “The Witness of the Early Church,” “Luther and the Binding Key,” “The Attack on Private Confession,” and “The Emergence of an Opposing Tradition.” At the end, he blames the liturgical renewal movement for turning worship as repentance to worship as celebration.

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In summary, Sundberg has made an important case for leaders of Lutheran worship to end the practice of dispensing cheap grace and to return instead to a tradition that brings us, as worshipers, to repentance.

Jack Miller
Millville, Minnesota

**WHAT A FRIEND THEY HAD IN JESUS:
THE THEOLOGICAL VISIONS OF
NINETEENTH- AND TWENTI-
ETH-CENTURY HYMN WRITERS,**
by Harry T. Cook. Salem: Polebridge, 2013.
Pp. 181. \$18.00 (paper).

Harry T. Cook—a retired Episcopal clergyman; former columnist on religion, ethics, and public policy for the Detroit Free Press; and author of *Long Live Salvation by Works: A Humanist Manifesto*—here addresses nineteenth and twentieth-century hymnody of North America.

Cook recounts his upbringing in a small Methodist church where he learned nineteenth-century gospel hymns. The emotional ties remained. He still sings them (xi), but has intellectually “left all that behind” (xi). He sketches a brief history of hymnody from Colossians through present-day congregations and then turns to a history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century North American Christianity. It moves from the Revolutionary War, through the “sometimes even execrable doggerel” (17) he is studying, to higher criticism. This leads to asserting that there is “little dependable information” about the person or persons of Jesus, that “the Jesus of Christianity is more a character of myth than a figure of history,” and that “the Jesus of church creeds resembles hardly at all the one depicted in the texts of the synoptic gospels” (31).

The central part of the book exegetes thirty mostly gospel hymns, with notes about their authors and contexts. He finds their picture of Jesus does “not reflect much, or sometimes

any, of its biblical or creedal depictions” (35). Cook has some heavy artillery: “Heaven and individual mortality are inventions of people frightened into selfishness” (47); the Jesus that “got drummed into the heads of generations of children in Protestant Sunday schools [was] a kind of benign scold who tsk-tsks...and promises a spiritual lollipop if one is particularly good” (91); “I Heard the Savior Say” is decent poetry and very Pauline, Augustinian, and Lutheran (maybe a stretch), but “by rational standards an intellectually bankrupt theology” (93); and the “idea that one can eventually turn in the...bloody cross for a place in heaven cannot be considered sane, even in a metaphorical way” (101).

Cook’s analysis pictures Jesus as “a blank canvas stretched on a frame” (131). Thirteen parts of this “collage” are analyzed. In an epilogue, Cook describes mainline denominations, their authorized hymnals, “smiley” praise music that makes one long for chant, Roman Catholics who have never heard chant, a downtown church with empty pews and an organist paid by an endowment from a dead industrial titan who loved Bach, a megachurch with new cars in a four-acre parking lot where people are weeping in a building that looks like a gymnasium, “new music” (with guitars, a keyboard, bells, and drums) in a snappy-looking new parish with smiling Father Jim and an unengaged congregation, Catholics singing Protestant hymns, and a rural church where congregational singing is a trial.

The thesis of the book is that hymns like “Softly and Tenderly” have been “perennial favorites of typical Protestant congregations” and some Catholic Christians in spite of “sophisticated theological systems” (167). Cook asks if this religion is a “psychiatric therapy on the cheap” or “an emotional teddy bear” (167) and gives his version of engaged religion—about the here and now, the biosphere, reason, and sustainable life. A new set of texts along



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the lines of Fosdick's "God of Grace and God of Glory" is called for (168).

Cook's analyses of gospel hymnody and places where "correct theology and liturgy [I would say "incorrect"] have become the primary concerns" and where denominational executives and pastors focus on survival (118–119) are well taken and drive the church to confession, but there are missing parts of the picture.

First, not only systematic theologians and church musicians have objected to gospel hymnody. So has the church catholic. Cook's focus is on American civil religion. Second, form criticism does not lead only to the absence of a Jesus: because a family tells different stories about great-grandmother does not mean she did not exist or was multiple people, nor can an intellectual moment trump accumulated wisdom across generations. Third, reason is no more trustworthy than any other human endeavor. Fourth, the most curious omission is the late twentieth-century hymn explosion that followed the meetings between 1961 and 1969 at the Scottish Churches House in Dunblane, Scotland.

There are two bigger concerns. First, a nineteenth-century category mistake collapsed congregational and choral song into the same thing, broke the folk-like spine of congregational song, and substituted the seductive mist of popular feeling. It gave rise to the notion that sixteenth-century followers of Luther sang in harmony (160), that the mist "works," and that Bach's music that was not meant to be congregational can be dismissed (162). This is the culture's presupposition. Where salvation by works is the control, the culture calls the shots. Though Cook does not like systems, works with its counsel of despair is the one he follows.

As I explained in *Let Justice Sing*, doxology fires justice and peace. Though the warning against cloying piety is important, all the hymnody "of previous eras" does not fit that description (154). Doxology and God "on the side of the poor" (155) are central to Mary's *Magnificat*, the quintessential spawn of the church's song.

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