

# Reviews



**THE CONTINUING AUTHORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES**, edited by D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. 1240 pp. \$65.00 (cloth).

While there have been many treatises done on the question of what constitutes the authority of the books known as the Christian Scriptures, popularly “the Bible,” this is a massive attempt to analyze and adjudicate the nature of their authority and the issues involved. Professor Donald Carson, a research professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has assembled a team of biblical scholars to produce this lengthy treatise. He lays out a helpful Introduction (chapter 1) in which he summarizes what each of the thirty-four authors will examine in the remainder of the book; then at the end he concludes with a practical section entitled “Frequently Asked Questions” (chapter 36). A very helpful preparation for the reader.

The first unit is entitled “Historical Topics,” chapters 2–10, considering the development of views of Scripture from the early church to the present day. This approach should aid the potential reader of this book from jumping from reading Scripture to (simply) being acquainted with current beliefs/affirmations on the theme of its authority. The next section, chapters 11–24, is “Biblical and Theological Topics,” consisting of a series of examinations of issues like “God and the Bible”; “Myth, History, and the Bible”; “Reflections on Jesus’ View of the Old Testament”; and “May We Go Beyond What Is Written after All? The Pattern of Theological Authority and

the Problem of Doctrinal Development.” In chapters 25–30 we are introduced to a unit entitled “Philosophical and Epistemological Topics.” These range widely in subject matter and approach, but should serve to stir up the reader’s mind, and broaden one’s perspective. They cover topics as distinct (yet related) as religious epistemology, the idea of inerrancy, and science and Scripture. The next unit is named “Comparative Religions Topics,” chapters 31–34. A discussion of these competing claims about Christian Scripture is followed by distinct chapters on Quranic beliefs, Hindu scriptures, and Buddhist sutras, handled with both grace and sophistication. The final chapter (35) is named “Thinking Holistically,” called by the author “Take, Read.” He concludes with a personal appeal to the reader: “Let us therefore take and read this mirror to the soul, see our flaws, and turn afresh to the Lord, who loved us and gave himself for us. We should read to know him, love him and follow him” (1154).

The phenomena of radical changes in the diversity of stances toward the Bible are catalogued by Carson seeing the Bible “as text to be mastered and deployed to various social and academic ends, making it more difficult for the church to see it as the revelation of God, God’s Word to sinners to bring about their redemption” (4). He surveys how radical critics have deployed their slings against the idea of an inspired text, and have undercut the notion of Scripture as a divinely given message. In a listing of nine elements he illustrates the impact(s) of historical criticism (6). Carson also

reviews the development of the idea that the inerrancy of Scripture is a view that grew up late in the history of the church, being a feature of post-Reformation times, and especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Added on here would be the question of the authority of Jesus (in dealing with Scripture), and the story of the development of the biblical canon.

When all is said and done, there is the need for the recognition that the main point about reading Scripture is not to defend it, or to regard it as a source of more information. With the existence of the secular age in which we live, there is a necessity of constructing a Christian view of God, life, and the world. He cites Robert Yarbrough who writes of a “cognitive reverence”—which enables one to see Inerrancy as “a place to live”—not just a position to retain (9).

To sum up, permit a quotation from Carson’s FAQ. He cites a query which concerns the need to do more than collect a series of essays (i.e., this book) that we examine, study, master, and defend, rather than God’s revelation to us, something we must understand, trust, and obey. Carson agrees, and goes on to cite several other important issues.

But we are not treating the Bible aright if we defend its truth yet distance ourselves from its claims, demands, and promises. Our reading will be deepened when we understand the world and ourselves better; when we love God and hunger to be conformed to his word; when we keep trying to apply the Scriptures to ourselves and others in responsible ways; when faith and obedience become increasingly instinctive (1180).

Be aware, reader, that a volume of this number of pages will call for a plan for reading it. You might scan the table of contents to get a sense of how the themes are organized and developed. Possibly you may have favorite authors you will want to scan. Or favorite disciplines which will appeal to you. In any

case read, and retain the volume for a ready and profitable reference source.

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**SACRED SENSE: DISCOVERING THE WONDER OF GOD’S WORD AND WORLD**, by William P. Brown. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. Pp. 184. \$22.00 (paper).

Those of us who read the Bible for a living—pastors, professors, scholars—may admit that, on occasion, our reading can become mechanistic. We read to churn out a sermon, we read to plan lessons, we read to produce an article; we do not read to marvel at the words on the page or the God they describe. If you have ever found yourself stuck in such a rut when tasked with reading the Bible, then William Brown’s *Sacred Sense: Discovering the Wonder of God’s Word and World* is just the book to pull you out of it. Brown’s intent is to journey through the Bible with an eye to wonder. He calls himself a “docent” of the Bible, whose job is “to invite readers to explore the text, to offer a modicum of background information, and most crucially to point out things in the text that I find particularly wondrous” (159). This wonderful wandering through the Bible leads to many edifying discoveries, but most importantly the wandering is for its own sake. By reading for wonder, Brown helps reorient us to reading Scripture as an experience, not as a means to an end.

While it would undermine the very framework of his project to say that Brown has a goal to reach or an argument to prove, the book is nonetheless both focused and organized. Its premise is not to promote an uncritical approach to Scripture, nor to encourage a feel-good romp through the Bible seeking out a temporary spiritual high. Wonder, in Brown’s

view, has two sides: “awe and inquiry. Born of awe, wonder is ultimately more active than awe” (8). He notes that human beings have an innate desire for wonder, and that to satisfy it requires reading attentively, but not with any particular end-product in mind. He then proceeds linearly through the biblical canon, from Genesis to Revelation, stopping at sixteen texts along the way. The texts sampled are a representative selection of genres, including narrative as well as poetry, wisdom literature as well as prophecy, Old Testament as well as New, Gospels as well as Epistles.

Brown’s treatment of Job 38–42, in a chapter entitled “Wounded Wander,” is representative of his work throughout the book. He reframes Job, so often considered a reflection on theodicy, as a book about mystery. Even among readers who are not under the illusion that Job “solves” the problem of why bad things happen to good people, there still per-

sists a sense that it must “say something about” God’s justice. Under Brown’s guidance, reading Job becomes not about solving something, but about experiencing something. The character Job’s own experience is one of a wonder-full terror. In God’s speech from the whirlwind, Job is transported to the outer limits of creation, where he can observe that he is a “child of the wild” (76), connected to all of God’s creatures through the compassion of their shared creator. Having been thus transformed, Job returns to his household to marvel at the extraordinary nature of his ordinary life. Throughout *Sacred Sense*, Brown’s expansive understanding of “world,” encompassing all of creation, invites readers to experience a similar transformation, wandering in God’s word and world to be awakened to wonder in their own lives.

Brown has published extensively on biblical metaphor, and his affinity for those figures

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of speech makes reading his prose a delight. He compares Genesis 1 to “a Bach organ fugue, full of contrapuntal variations filling every nook and cranny of a Gothic cathedral” (15). He likens reading Ecclesiastes 3 to “listening to the hypnotic tick-tock of a grandfather clock” (84). Close reading of parts of the Bible also requires a broad sense of the whole, “just like observing a painting from a certain distance to gain greater clarity. It is one thing to study the brush strokes; it is another to behold the larger image that emerges from the canvas” (13). This particular metaphor was, for me, a helpful diversion from the metaphor of the Bible as “God’s story” that often dominates the study of Scripture. Rather than reading for what the Bible might accomplish from beginning to middle to end, Brown encourages us to let our gaze linger on its beauty. At the same time, Brown also affirms an overall narrative shape for the Bible, which “dramatizes the journey of God’s ever expanding love, from Jews to Gentiles to the earth and all therein, a love already established ‘in the beginning’” (155).

If *Sacred Sense* can help the seasoned student of Scripture rekindle a love for the Bible, it has equal potential for igniting such love in a fledgling reader. Brown offers helpful historical and/or literary backgrounds for each text: enough to empower the novice, but not so much as to bore the more experienced reader. The format of the book lends itself particularly well to small-group study in congregations. (If your congregation blushes easily, you might skip the chapter on the Song of Songs, though that would be a pity, because it is one of the most beautiful sections of the book.) While each chosen biblical text occupies a single, brief chapter and can stand alone in such a study, echoes of earlier themes and passages reverberate through the later chapters, making the book a unified whole. In other words, this book is very useful, and yet it reminds us that utility need not be the primary value for read-

ing a book, especially the Bible. Read this book simply for the experience of wonder.

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**MONEY AND POSSESSIONS**, by Walter Brueggemann. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2016. Pp. 319. \$40.00 (cloth).

The pastor seeking book-length resources on stewardship faces a rich supply of options. Such books tend to counsel leaders to talk about money in church more often, even and especially when they are *not* asking for it. In recent years, other guiding themes have included year-round stewardship, embracing the virtue of generosity, and various calls to re-examine our relationship with money. This stewardship literature is important, and from what I hear, the books do sell quite well. Indeed, wise church leaders long to discover better ways to address money and stewardship—it’s as if their very jobs depended on it. With few exceptions, conspicuously absent in this literature is much sophisticated biblical study. Enter, Walter Brueggemann’s *Money and Possessions*.

Part of the respected “Interpretation Series” from Westminster John Knox Press, *Money and Possessions* does not immediately strike one as a stewardship book. And, indeed, it does not fit the contemporary genre. Like Douglas John Hall’s classic, *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age* (1990, revised 2004), by refusing to adhere to the usual stewardship book style, *Money and Possessions* will long serve as a foundational text in the field.

Brueggemann himself needs no extended introduction. He has authored over 100 books and is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary. *Money and Possessions* is written in his usual, inimitable

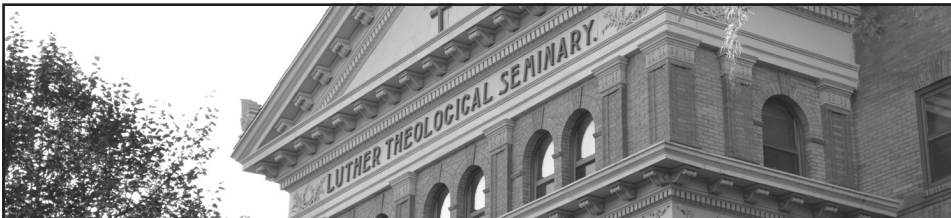
style: authoritative, perceptive, unyielding, and willing to connect the ancient words of Scripture to the unjust situations of our modern age. Unique to this book, however, Brueggemann extends his usual scope to include the New Testament.

It will not surprise the reader familiar with Brueggemann that his argument includes significant reframing of how the contemporary church interprets Scripture: “it is simply astonishing that the church has willingly engaged in a misreading of the biblical text in order to avoid the centrality of money and possessions in its testimony” (xxi). Reporting that he did not set out to “advocate,” Brueggemann eventually finds the texts will not allow him to avoid it. While noting their significant diversity, he argues in the preface that a worthy summation of Scripture is that “the biblical texts on money and possessions pivot on ‘God and mammon’ as a decisive either-or,” all the

while critiquing a predatory *economy of extraction* countered by a sought-after *economy of restoration* (xx).

Each of the 15 chapters covers a book or set of books from which Brueggemann draws out themes related to money and possessions. The chapter subtitles tell the story: “Deuteronomy: The Great Either-or of Neighborliness”; “Proverbs and Job: Wise Beyond Smart”; “The Five Scrolls: Scripts of Loss and Hope, Commodity and Agency.” In five chapters, Brueggemann covers the New Testament, splitting out the Gospels, Acts, Paul’s letters, the pastorals, James, and finally, “The Book of Revelation: The Ultimate Alternative.”

This section by section approach is effective and works to emphasize both the multivocal nature of Scripture as well as common themes and harmonies. The Bible takes on new meanings when read with money and possessions as a chief concern. For example,



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Deuteronomy's context has much to do with economic realities of the day. As Brueggemann puts it: "Israel's new habitat is to be amid a predatory economy" (35). Moses's warnings include that the land to be entered will be a *seductive* one, but also *transformable*, by which Brueggemann stresses how covenantal practices present the possibility of transforming the economy into one of neighborliness.

With Brueggemann as guide, Deuteronomy becomes a book concerned with the centrality of debt forgiveness, the danger of exploitative loans, and the redemptive practice of sharing. Brueggemann writes, "justice is the maintenance of neighborliness that permits all members of the community to flourish without the distortion or subversion of economic leverage" (51). Preachers, particularly, will appreciate the bounty of homiletical approaches opened up by Brueggemann's reading. Sermons on stewardship—even narrowly defined as the management of money and material possessions—may find their home far beyond the usual pericopes. Thankfully, ample topical and scriptural indexes will aid pastors who, each fall, return to the book seeking quotes for stewardship season.

While the lasting value of the book is the methodical way Brueggemann develops the deep, and sometimes unexpected biblical themes of money and possessions, stewardship leaders may at times become frustrated with Brueggemann's findings, and, to some extent, his necessary selectivity. Tithing, for instance, barely makes an appearance. Perhaps surprisingly, the theme Brueggemann made famous—that of God's liturgy of abundance amidst our culture's narrative of scarcity—is fairly quiet. Instead, Sabbath becomes a "refusal of the rat race of commodity acquisition" (23). Jesus's teaching is not about humdrum kindness, but "an alternative economy that is not preoccupied with wealth" (190). Over and again, Brueggemann refuses to ac-

cept interpretative traditions leading to more individualistic, heaven-minded, spiritual readings. Instead, Brueggemann is about systemic interpretation and communal callings.

To end at the beginning, the book's Introduction alone is worth the price of the whole, for it describes Brueggemann's six theses on the Bible and money. While some of the theses may seem old hat, they all pack a fresh punch. Even the opening thesis claiming, "Money and possessions are gifts from God," in Brueggemann's hands becomes a notion that upends any misconceptions of individual earning. God's gifts, when misconstrued, misused, or misjudged, become distorted in ways destructive to all of society. *Money and Possessions* deserves a prime location in any stewardship library, but reader beware, Brueggemann's conclusions will spice up staid stewardship sermons—to extra hot!

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**FORENSIC APOCALYPTIC THEOLOGY: KARL BARTH AND THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION**, by Shannon Nicole Smythe. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016. Pp. iv + 253. \$79.00 (cloth).

For all his critical importance in contemporary theology, Karl Barth's doctrine of justification has remained a largely underappreciated and underexplored area of his thought. *Forensic Apocalyptic Theology* seeks to correct this longstanding oversight, not only by launching a *fresh*, sympathetic, and contextualized reading of Barth's mature theology of justification, but also by setting him in conversation with more recent Pauline interpreters. The product of Smythe's labor is a true gift, not only in its appreciative reading of Barth on justification, but also in her effort to

show the relevance of Barth's witness for ongoing controversies over Saint Paul and his gospel of reconciliation with God in Christ. Smythe's carefully constructed examination is detailed, so I will offer an overview of the book's primary claims instead of providing a sequential summary of each chapter.

A critical aspect of Smythe's argument is to show the development of Barth's account of justification as well as its inner coherence. Thus, she begins with something of a hypothesized dialog between Barth in the second edition of *Der Römerbrief* (his early commentary on Romans) and contemporary, apocalyptically inclined readers of Paul, such as Ernst Käsemann, J. Louis Martyn, and Beverly Gaventa—to name only a few. The basic objective is to show that Barth's *Römerbrief* takes up a creative, multifaceted posture with regard to justification, one that encompasses both the cosmic, apocalyptic dimension of God's reconciling work in Christ, as well as the individual, forensic implications for particular sinners whom God justifies. Because Barth authored his Romans commentary prior to a later engagement with John Calvin's writings and the Reformed confessional documents, Smythe shows that Barth's is a fresh reading of Paul—rather than simply the repetition of an inherited Reformation exegesis of the Pauline witness.

From here, Smythe sets up her thematically structured exploration of Barth's doctrine of justification, coordinating her reading of Barth's *Römerbrief* with later developments in his mature thought. A key element of her interpretation is Barth's deepening interest during the 1930s in historic Reformed theology, particularly the works of Calvin and the Reformed confessions. This renewed appreciation for classic Reformed theology, on Smythe's reading, provided Barth with important conceptual clarification for many of the ideas he had already developed. The most important by-

product of this engagement is the development of a historicized theological ontology, one that radicalized the actualism of his earlier commentary on Romans. This, in Smythe's judgment, enables Barth to appreciate both the apocalyptic and forensic implications of Paul's gospel in an exhaustively Christocentric fashion, thus moving away from the time-eternity dialectic that had animated *Der Römerbrief*, and concentrating on the irreducibly fundamental status of God's concrete, revelatory self-disclosure in Jesus.

The remainder of the book consists of a thematic examination of Barth's mature doctrine of justification. Drawing on *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* and the fourth volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, Smythe frames her discussion topically, examining revelation, atonement, the aspects of justification, theological anthropology, and eschatology. This multifaceted exploration sketches in the details of a broader picture of Barth's understanding of God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ. Importantly, Smythe shows the ingenious ways in which Barth remains a thoroughly Reformation reader of Paul, yet also a creative one, willing to augment the insights of Luther and Calvin with his own contributions.

Particularly important about this endeavor, in my judgment, is its relevance for ongoing debates in biblical studies and theology about the proper interpretation of critical themes in Paul's letters, such as sin, righteousness, faith, the law, and atonement. By enlisting Barth as a resource for this kind of interdisciplinary engagement on such a crucial set of questions, one would hope that Protestant interpreters of Paul in the Reformation tradition might find new insights that fund a defense of a forensic account of justification. Many Reformed readers, in particular, will find Smythe's competently executed reading of Barth incredibly useful for future constructive projects of their own. On the other hand, many Lutherans will

find significant areas of difference that remain, especially regarding the proper distinction of law and gospel, the role of the external word in mediating God's justifying verdict to sinners, and the believer's life as *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously justified and a sinner).

*Forensic Apocalyptic Theology* accomplishes, no doubt, the task it sets forth. Smythe ably guides her readers through an array of often difficult texts in Barth's corpus, and does so in conversation with other Pauline interpreters. Nonetheless, the book bears all the marks of a published dissertation. I say this, not so much as a critique of the book, but rather as a caution to potential readers about the stylistic preference for repetition, excursive discussion of related issues, and detailed documentation. This book is to be commended to anyone with an interest in Karl Barth, current debates about the doctrine of justification, recent contributions in apocalyptic theology, and the theology of Saint Paul. Pastors, scholars, and students constitute a fitting audience for this book, and one hopes they will take note of Barth's evangelical witness to the God who rectifies all things in Jesus Christ.

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**WHY CHURCH HISTORY MATTERS:  
AN INVITATION TO LOVE AND  
LEARN FROM OUR PAST**, by Robert F.  
Rea. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic,  
2014. Pp. 233. \$18.99 (paper).

The quandary that we who teach the history of Christianity face is this: we don't know whether our biggest problem is with those who reject the value of history altogether, or those who love it, but in all the wrong ways. Certainly those who are hostile to history are a major problem; building on a general American cultural dismissal of history in general as being

"old" and "irrelevant," they see very little good in spending time with history. The more "progressive" wing of this approach can only see the past as something bad to be held up as a warning, and something that we enlightened moderns have moved beyond. But too often those who love history also misuse it; rejecting the present, they attempt to retreat to some perceived "golden age" in the past whose reality they wish to restore or repristinate in the present. This "golden age" (and they *always* differ on when that was) becomes a romantic vision of some sort of "Camelot," in which everything worked correctly. This can be some historical period, such as the Middle Ages or perhaps the Reformation. It can also be a form of Biblicism, which assumes we can replicate the church of the first century in the twenty-first century! The problem is, none of these ever work. Sometimes we historians don't know who is more dangerous, our enemies or our friends!

Robert Rea (Lincoln Christian University) has written a clear and concise defense of the value of the history of Christianity for Christians, avoiding both the facile dismissal of Christian history as well as the temptation to romanticize it. Suggesting that the history of Christianity helps the Christian community to celebrate our entire extended Christian family throughout the ages, he suggests that the study of our history helps us to understand the work of God in time and space, a continuation, as you might put it, of the incarnated presence of God in the world. Rea is not blind to the darker aspects of our common history; he writes: "God works through believers; we stand in this mighty flood of surrendered theology and service.... And although family can be messy, we are God's family" (193). The metaphor of family is an apt one for the people of God existing through time, as it helps us think of the people in this history as both beloved and flawed, capable of both great faith and failures. And woe



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to those of us who think that we can somehow escape the trials and temptations of those who have gone before us.

This is a very clearly written and helpful book for pastors and students, and for anyone, really, who wants to reflect carefully on our shared past. Rea organizes the book in three sections, each with several chapters (nine chapters in all). In the first section, he examines the various ways in which Christians have thought about their history, and how they have used (and more often misused) the traditions of their past. His focus is on the idea of “tradition” through the history of Christianity, and the various ways this has been employed across the Christian movements. Acknowledging the possible dangers of tradition, and the ways in which this concept has been misused, he still thinks that, even for Evangelical Protestants (of which he is one) tradition can be a positive concept.

In the second section, Rea seeks to encourage us to expand our “circles of inquiry” beyond the historical figures and traditions of our own immediate denominational families. Drawing on the metaphor of Heb 12, the picture of Christians being surrounded by a great cloud of historical witnesses (stretching back into the Old Testament), he pushes us to think about these historical individuals not as just stone monuments, but as figures with whom we can interact. One chapter helps us see these people as “accountability partners,” who will help us improve our Christian lives and Christian communities. Another chapter explores the idea of these historical Christians as possible mentors and friends.

In the third section, Rea moves from the larger concepts and ideas of the first two sections, and into more practical applications of these ideas into the lives of contemporary Christian pastors and Christian communities. As you might expect of a Protestant writer, Rea spends a great deal of time thinking about how

the historical traditions of biblical exegesis can be employed in the service of modern homiletical preparation and Bible study, a theme which has a great deal of contemporary “traction” among contemporary American Christians (including a series of commentaries on the biblical books employing historical exegesis). Another chapter considers briefly how the traditions of Christianity can also be used in other areas of ministry, an interesting section, but one that he doesn’t develop as fully as the previous chapter on biblical exegesis and study.

This is a good and valuable book; perhaps not the final word on the subject, but certainly a thoughtful introduction to the use of the history of Christianity within our Christian lives and Christian communities. Rea deserves our thanks for a thoughtful and useful book.

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**RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND CULTURAL NEGOTIATION: TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN MIGRATION**, by Jenny McGill. American Society of Missiology Monograph Series. Eugene: Pickwick, 2016. Pp. 275. \$34.00 (paper).

There exists a growing migration on a global scale. Millions are being displaced by war, drought, oppression, economic and political inequalities, and so on. When migrants travel, they take religious beliefs and cultural practices with them because these beliefs and practices are vital for their survival. There are different academic fields that study what happens to the cultural and religious identity of migrants when they encounter a new land and the positive socioreligious change that the migrants introduce to their host community. One of the academic fields that attempts to study

this phenomenon from a theological perspective is called *diaspora missiology*.

Diaspora missiology emerged in the last few decades as a growing field of study that focuses on the study of migration, globalization, and transnationality from the point of view of mission studies. This book by Jenny McGill is an interdisciplinary exploration of identity formation in migration that makes a significant contribution to this growing field of study. The main purpose of the book is to investigate “the relation of faith to identity in migration” and how this “provides new insights into how Christian migrants cope with and introduce positive social change into both their host and home communities” (15).

The author of this book, McGill, is a graduate of King’s College London and the Regional Dean for North Indiana and Illinois at Indiana Wesleyan University. She has previously worked at Dallas Theological Seminary and as intercultural consultant at Global Arena. In addition to her academic and work experience, her involvement in community service and research in Latin America, Asia, and Africa adds significant depth to her well-researched arguments in the book.

In this book, McGill explores the religious identity question in migration through the interdisciplinary lenses of theology, psychology, and sociology. She also employs the social science research methodology known as mixed methodology, using qualitative and quantitative measures. By studying temporary migrants residing in Texas, she offers some helpful suggestions on “how evangelical leaders who are educated abroad negotiate their religious, ethnic/cultural, and national identities” (6).

The table of contents presents a fascinating panorama of interdisciplinary studies from theological and social analytical perspectives. The book is divided into four sections. The first section is the introductory section, which in-

cludes the background of the study, research questions, research design and context, assumptions and delimitations, definitions, and significance of the research.

The second section offers the theoretical and theological framework for the research as well as the views of scholarship on the study of identity associated with religious identity in migration studies, Christian identity, theology of identity, and theology of migration. As a theoretical frame, McGill uses the work of psychologist Jenny Hyun Chung Pak. Jenny Pak’s contributions are on cultural, psychological, and theological studies, with a focus on the relationship between religion and ethnic identity formations. The two theologians that inform her theological framework are Miroslav Volf and Stanley Hauerwas. Volf has written profoundly about “otherness” in terms of God, neighbors, and otherness within ourselves, while Hauerwas has contributed to the study of narrative and its impact on shaping personal identity and Christian formation.

The third section contains the sociological research, which includes mixed methodology and field research on “the examination of the social construction of religious, ethnic, and national identities among foreign-born evangelical migrants who entered the United States to pursue advanced academic studies” (4). It discusses the results of eighteen interviews and 405 surveys from foreign-born graduate students and includes reviews of major findings of the research, application of the findings, and thoughtful suggestions for further research. Her primary conclusion is that religion and migration factors significantly in personal identity formation. The religious, ethnic, and national identities are impacted in their encounter with the host community. Her finding also shows that the host community also benefits from their encounter with the migrants in such a way that they are presented with “new meanings and methods” about

“racialization of ethnic identities and the conflation of religious and national identities” (179).

One central strength of the book is the theoretical and theological overview in the second chapter. At the macro level, the author deeply engages the work of psychologist Jenny Pak and theologians Volf and Hauerwas “in a larger discussion of the Judeo-Christian understanding of the nature of self and identity” (31). My only reservation on McGill’s research is its generalized focus on foreign-born (Asian and European) evangelical Christians studying in the United States. Such an approach, I think, can potentially lead to the false conclusion that every foreign-born Christian student

goes through similar experiences related to identity formation.

Overall, the book deserves to be read by Christians of all theological hues, and is a must read for scholars who teach interdisciplinary courses from theological and social science perspectives. It is also an excellent resource for students of theology to gain in-depth knowledge of religious identity and theology in migration. Helpful appendices list the interview participants and the interview questions, followed by a fifteen-page bibliography.

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