

by the triune God to enter the world and serve the public exists to stand for the oppressed, the marginalized, the poor, and the most vulnerable. It is his contention that this holistic and prophetic ministry of the church embodies the model of Jesus's leadership (42). Such a profound argument that the church is constantly called upon to become a prophetic and public voice in a given society must be understood in the politically and ethnically turbulent context of his native country and beyond. What makes his work important, after all, includes familiar stories of the interplay between internal immigration and missional church leadership, given that new immigrants, mostly young, represent the bulk of churches where he conducts his field research (72).

His account resembles stories of churches in many parts of the Global South, meaning that the extent to which church leaders in urban centers, like Addis Ababa, prepare for new immigrants from rural areas will continue to define and shape the fate and future of the church. Underscoring a significant contribution of his selected churches to the public, Deressa also tells his readers about some Oromo churches providing a series of much-needed social services, including education and health care (90, 94), reflecting the ideal of missional church. What's more, he aptly describes a typical feature of the church in the Global South: some Christians criticize their native cultures, while others try to retrieve their lost cultures, which reminds us of some foreign missionaries demonizing native cultures while evangelizing. His work also illustrates the necessity of contextualizing Christianity in native cultures.

This work could be strengthened through further engagement with the historical background and contribution of eminent church fathers, like Gudina Tumsa, whose extraordinary commitment, constructive influence, and enduring legacy have undoubtedly played an indispensable part in the now-prophetic and holistic ministries of the four churches and more (his name appears fleetingly on page 118). It would be also helpful if this work included stories about social, theological, and ecclesiological relations between diaspora Ethiopian Christians in the United States and Christians in Ethiopia. Overall, however, this intriguing book deserves being placed in seminaries, universities, and churches for scholars, students, and pastors.

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JESUS THE HARMONY: GOSPEL SONNETS FOR 366 DAYS, by Gracia Grindal. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021. 369 pages. \$24.99.

When Gracia Grindal came to my campus to read from her book, *The Sword of Eden* (2018), I was struck by her imaginative sensitivity toward the lives of Eve and Mary. Those poems helped me imagine more fully the earthy, painful, and glorious feelings of our first mother and of the mother of Christ. In her current book, *Jesus the Harmony: Gospel Sonnets for 366 Days*, a similar strength is on display, expanding its reach to many more figures in the gospels.

In this gospel harmony Mary comes first. Her labor at the birth of Jesus ends this way:

No trumpets blaring that the donkey
bore a king
Waiting his birth in a stable not for
hire.
Into their poverty, she lay down,
Her contractions pushing a bloody
crown.
Sonnet 14 (“Journey to Bethlehem”)

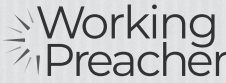
The ambivalent birth-and-death implications of Christ’s “bloody crown” illustrate a typical element of Grindal’s imagination: she finds language to connect different gospel moments in surprising, revealing, and challenging ways. And as in *The Sword of Eden*, she often finds

pain and glory intermixed. Even the phrase “she lay down” made me think anew of Mary’s birth pangs. The physical gesture of lying down was done of painful necessity, and yet it also flowed from her obedient choice. It was neither wholly one nor wholly the other. Or perhaps, more accurately, it was wholly both.

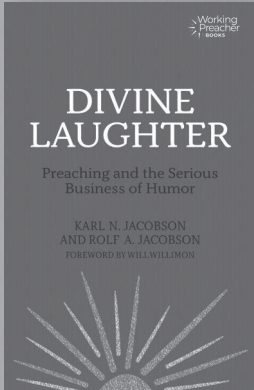
In Sonnet 22 (“The Prophetess Anna”) Grindal imagines the old woman in her younger years:

Barren, she lived dreaming that God
would hear
Her prayers, like Hannah or Elizabeth,
Waiting each month for the blood not
to appear.
Each time it came, she suffered a little
death. . . .

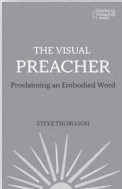
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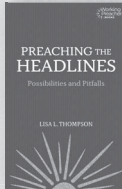
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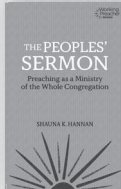


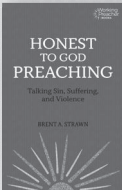
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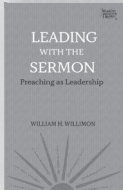


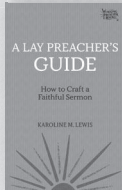


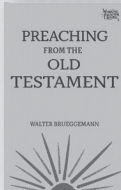


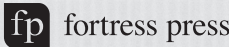












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Widowed, she married the temple
 night and day
 Fasting and praying, expectant in
 faith and hope,
 Believing that the promise would
 bear fruit.
 When Simeon's song burst out, her
 heart leaped up,
 A poor couple with a baby, the very
 truth,
 Ordinary earth, old Sarah's son
 Born to her, bright as the morning of
 Eden's dawn.

The “little death” in line 4 has an ambivalence that recalls the “bloody crown” of the earlier sonnet on Christ's birth: the earthly experience of a woman's pain as she goes through the presence—or absence—of God. And the phrase “she married the temple” evokes the richness of temple imagery, especially in the context of Luke's gospel. Finally, Grindal boldly imagines Anna as taking the baby Jesus as one “born to her.” Only in the context that Grindal provides, namely Christ as the typological fulfillment of “Sarah's son,” does this claim become believable in the life of Anna.

This book of 366 sonnets follows the life of Christ in the gospel harmony tradition of Tatian, Augustine, and many others. Its arrangement is therefore completely based on the gospel harmony without regard to the liturgical or solar year. It can be started at any time, laid aside, and picked up again at will. Its audience is clearly the devotional reader of Scripture who is seeking imaginative insight into the story of Jesus.

Not every poem has the strengths I have mentioned. Occasionally, Grindal seems unsure where to pitch her



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language. In her poem on the “Baptism of Jesus,” for instance, she identifies John the Baptist as Jesus's “best man for the nuptials . . . with next to nothing on.” Sonnet 151 on dietary laws mixes today's food pyramids with the sixteenth-century indulgence box: “We brawl / Over figures drawn on colorful charts, / Buy indulgences with goods we ingest.” Beyond these tonal problems, the collection could use more variety of perspective. The voice in most of the poems is that of a present-day observer or reader. As Grindal's main appeal