

REVIEWS

The Wisdom of the Cross and the Power of the Spirit in the Corinthian Church: Grounding Pneumatic Experiences and Renewal Studies in the Cross of Christ. By Cletus L. Hull III.

Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018. x + 157 pp.

Cletus Hull is that desirable combination of pastor-scholar. A pastor for over thirty years (Christian Church, Disciples of Christ), he has also served as chaplain in two psychiatric hospitals. With two doctorates—DMin (Fuller) and PhD (Regent)—he is well-qualified in both pastoral and academic contexts. (Full disclosure: Hull includes this reviewer in his acknowledgments, viii.)

The Wisdom of the Cross and the Power of the Spirit in the Corinthian Church presents Hull's PhD dissertation for an audience of other pastor-scholars. When quoting the Greek New Testament or analyzing Paul's rhetorical use of the LXX text of Isaiah (21-22, 51), he leaves Greek words untranslated. That suits the scholar, but it makes Hull's book less accessible to readers lacking facility with Greek.

Hull repeatedly makes an important point: Christian experiences of the Holy Spirit must be grounded in a biblical and well-thought-out Christology centered on Jesus' cross and resurrection. He clearly shows that Paul's Christology and pneumatology are interdependent. A key for this interdependence is Paul's understanding of God's wisdom revealed in Jesus' cross. In turn, the cross is key to Spirit-empowered ministry in the church. Without the cross in our theology and practice of healing ministry, we risk theological distortions and ministry practices that wound rather than heal (144-53).

To ground our interpretation of Holy Spirit experiences in Christology, we could go to John 14-16, 1 John 4:1-6, or 1 Cor 12:3. Hull chooses to

focus on 1 Cor 1:18–2:16. This enables him to ground pneumatology in Christology but also in the cross of Christ.

Part One of Hull's study provides thorough exegesis of the passage, including historical and socio-cultural descriptions of the Corinthian setting. Central to Hull's thesis, however, is the chapter on "Wisdom" in Old Testament, New Testament, Qumran, and Greco-Roman sources (68–78). Particularly in contrast to Greco-Roman "wisdom"—so prized in Corinth—God's wisdom has power to save by the apparent weakness of the cross. Hull's next chapter focuses on "power and weakness" and their importance for the kingdom of God and our ministry practices (79–89). Part One concludes with separate chapters on Paul's Christology and his pneumatology.

Part Two juxtaposes Paul's pneumatology with his Christology. Coming immediately after the previous chapters devoted to those topics, this first chapter of Part Two could seem repetitive. Still, review of exegetical findings from Part One prepares the reader for the book's final chapter: "Conclusions and Conjectures for Practical Ministry." As a pastor, Hull wants insights from exegesis to inform his ministry practices, and he wants to encourage other pastors toward Spirit-empowered ministry that is well-grounded in Christ and his cross.

This last chapter is perhaps the book's best, bringing exegetical, theological, and historical observations to bear on the present moment. On foundations laid through Scripture study, Hull can declare that "the preaching of the cross" brings "the release of the power of the Spirit." He continues: "Every sermon must lead people to the cross," where we find "the true wisdom that liberates the power of God in the life of the church" (144).

The connection between the cross and the Spirit means pastors should pray for healing for suffering people—people for whom Jesus suffered. But if prayer does not immediately relieve suffering, "a reasonable theology of the cross and suffering" (144) can support us as we confront the limits of our understanding. This point is worth underscoring.

Simplistically blaming insufficient faith for continued suffering comes from a healing theology that needs to be healed—corrected by re-orientation

toward the cross (144-46). Indeed, we may need to crucify “our ministry” to let Christ do his (147)! If “Christ’s work on the cross empowers us to live by the Spirit” (150), our willingness to be seen as failures may enable someone to receive healing from the crucified Giver of the Spirit.

Having appreciated the message and motivation of this book, I trust to be forgiven for voicing some complaints. The first is that the book needs alert proofreading, as the discussion is often marred by distracting errors. Although the reviewer’s place is not to make a list of these, the reviewer feels some obligation to point out that such problems hinder a reader’s engagement with theological arguments. With apologies, I mention a few examples: “context of that proclamation” should be “content of that proclamation” (25, quoting Fee); “suped” should be “suppressed” (27, quoting Hengel); “1 Cor 5:17-21” should be “2 Cor 5:17-21” (93); “seed” in Galatians 3 refers to Gen 22:18 et al, not Genesis 3 (94); and “fad” should be “fact” (104, quoting Bultmann). Again, these are a few of many that proofreading should have caught. The number is remarkable because this dissertation (I assume) passed inspection by faculty readers.

Editorial guidance could have suggested omission or revision of some things perhaps important in the dissertation but somewhat extraneous to the aims of this book. For example, since the debate between the “New Perspective on Paul” (NPP) and the “Traditional Perspective on Paul” (TPP) is introduced, it needs more treatment than Hull gives it (4–5, 9–10, 101–03). When Hull says, “Grace is imparted or imputed, not earned as the NPP implies” (103), he betrays a misunderstanding of the NPP as serious as the errors he ascribes to the NPP. If discussion of the debate is included (I am not sure it should be), Hull should give attention to more examples of the NPP than to E. P. Sanders and James Dunn. He might find N. T. Wright, for example, supportive of Hull’s own pneumatic applications of Scripture.

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Holiness in the Letters of Paul: The Necessary Response to the Gospel. By J. Ayodeji Adewuya. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016. xv + 187 pp.

In *Holiness in the Letters of Paul*, Ayo Adewuya gives his readers a first major treatment of holiness in the Pauline epistles apart from a few unpublished theses. Adewuya (PhD, Manchester) comes from Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostal traditions and has written extensively on holiness and community in 2 Corinthians 6–7 and holiness in Romans 6–8 as well as a commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians. He is Professor of Greek and New Testament at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, Tennessee, USA.

Adewuya contends that the “main thrust” of Paul’s letters is holiness and how to live as God’s holy people (x); therefore, this demands a focused examination of holiness as a “stand-alone category” in Pauline thought (ix, n. 2). In the process, Adewuya challenges the false dichotomy of holiness/sanctification being either a status, in which ethics are minimized, or an ethical state, which can lean toward legalism. He also seeks to correct an overemphasis on an individualistic experience of sanctification to the neglect of its relational and communal dimensions. Instead, holiness is multidimensional, both positional and ethical as well as personal and communal. As such, one must avoid making one aspect of holiness the whole.

In terms of method, each chapter looks at the concept of holiness first by determining Paul’s use of the *hagios* (“holy”) word group and its cognates, and then moving on to related holiness language, aspects, and motifs in that particular letter or letters. For instance, his coverage of the Pastoral Epistles explores the following terms: *hagios*, *hosios*, *hagnos*, *eusebeia*, and *katharos*. From these, he says, the gospel “should produce a life of holiness: there is no separation between belief and behavior” (158). Most chapters close with practical summary points, like the one on 1 and 2 Thessalonians; Adewuya deduces that sanctification is a work of God that

requires a response that is practical, progressive, holistic, progressive, and preparatory for the parousia.

Adewuya begins his heuristic study with an essential overview of holiness in the Old Testament (OT). Holiness, he denotes, derives from God, who is holy, other, and pure. Holiness means to be set apart *and* to follow ethical demands as God's holy (elect) people. This relational holiness, which manifests itself in the community through social relationships, is missional—revealing God to the world. Throughout the book, he refers to this background as necessary.

In the next nine chapters, Adewuya examines holiness in the thirteen canonical letters of Paul. Some of these contain revised and updated portions of previously published material. In his coverage, Adewuya makes the case that Paul's view of holiness is multifaceted with various, complementary components divulged in different epistles. For example, several dimensions come to the forefront in the Corinthian correspondence. He argues from the temple metaphor and communal meals that holiness not only involves separation from contamination (idolatry and immorality) but also is inherently relational, which requires ethical responsibility. In this manner, personal sanctification intricately relates to the whole community—a “community-oriented holiness” (61). Adewuya determines that holiness in 2 Corinthians must be defined in ecclesial terms, which leads to another facet, missional holiness. The *ekklēsia*, as the holy dwelling place of God (temple metaphor), should make God known through the contrast of its distinct holy identity with the rest of society not along racial, institutional, or political lines, but through forgiveness, reconciliation, separation, and cleansing.

Even in epistles without the *hagios* word group, Adewuya delineates the underlying holiness concepts. One example is Galatians where he maintains that the crucifixion metaphor is central to understanding holiness. Sanctification is an active life of experiential participation in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ that leads to transformation. Here, a sanctified life is “both energized and lived by the power of the Spirit” (98).

In his last chapter, Adewuya concludes with a helpful summary of his findings, ending with four practical implications. First, to Paul, holiness and holy living are “central place” in God’s purpose and desire—not tangential. For Pentecostal readers, he notes well here and in chapters on Romans, Galatians, and the Pastorals that the gift of the Holy Spirit is “the Source and Enabler of holiness” (162). Second, “holiness demands a divine-human partnership” with subsequent experience to conversion (162). Third, holiness is preparation for the parousia. Fourth, holiness is not static but requires constant pursuit.

As the first major work on holiness in Paul’s letters in a long while, Adewuya has filled an important lacuna in holiness and Pauline scholarship. Through his delineation of the multifaceted dimensions of holiness—“separational, ethical, communal and missional” (160)—he accomplishes his goal of correcting one-faceted, too-narrowly-interpreted views of holiness. He rebalances with relational and communal aspects the overly-individualistic emphasis on sanctification common among Western Christendom. He also seeks a way forward for those entrenched on either side of the status or state debate. Furthermore, he makes a critical case from Paul that believers both have the duty to live holy lives and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so. Holy living takes place in community, not in isolation. Holiness is the fruit of the gospel, God’s will, but also every believer’s responsibility.

This heuristic study is purposefully economic due to its coverage of holiness in the OT *and* Paul’s epistles. As a result, some points may leave technical readers longing for a more comprehensive explanation. Case in point, how do purity, contagion, and holiness relate to one another in the OT? Nonetheless, an exhaustive treatment is not the author’s intent. Such a work may be the next step needed in this field of study. The only other shortcoming is a series of typographical errors on pages 11, 18, 20, and 144. For readers from Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostal traditions, Adewuya stresses the Holy Spirit’s fundamental role in sanctification. He also employs distinctive phrases like “growth in grace,” “subsequent experience to

conversion,” and “work of grace”; he keeps interpretation, however, within exegetical limitations of the biblical text. This makes the work accessible to a broad audience. Scholars, practitioners, and non-specialists alike, whether inside or outside the Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostal traditions, would benefit significantly from this critical examination of holiness in Paul’s letters.

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Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship. Edited by Lee Roy Martin. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016. viii + 305 pp.

A unified theology of worship from the Pentecostal perspective seems to be a daunting task given that Pentecostals value what Lee Roy Martin describes as “spontaneity and liberty” in worship over more formulaic liturgies. Nevertheless, Martin praises the creativity of the diverse voices that contribute fifteen essays to theological reflection on the topic and challenges the reader to identify a continuity in thought and shared ethos among the various contributors. The general characterization of Pentecostal worship in this book is consistent with the universal function of worship as theocentric praise and anthropological service to God. However, three overarching convictions can be discerned that demonstrate a shared Pentecostal ethos: (1) an expectation of divine encounter in the context of worship, (2) an anticipation of a personal and/or communal transformative experience in worship, and (3) an emphasis on the Spirit as the agent of encounter and transformation in the context of the Pentecostal worship service. The contributors to the book under review identify the worship service as the sacred space where Pentecostals practice their distinctive doctrines of the Holy Spirit.

The first two convictions can be described using Philip Sheldrake's typology of spirituality ("Christian Spirituality and Social Transformation," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2016). The first conviction can be characterized as a mystical type of spirituality that focuses on the immediacy, or direct experience, of the transcendent God in the worship service. The second conviction represents the prophetic type of spirituality that envisions communal and social transformation. The third conviction reflects a shared theological emphasis among Pentecostals on the work of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual life of the individual and community. The mystical, prophetic, and pneumatologically-oriented qualities of Pentecostal religious experience have since been identified by Daniel Castelo (*Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 2017) as evidence that the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement is, in fact, a mystical tradition. The contributors to the book under review share a conviction that God's transcendent presence can be experienced in a direct way in the context of Pentecostal worship. Furthermore, the contributors emphasize an active, prophetic engagement in the world that is born out of the Spirit's transforming presence in Pentecostal worship services.

Scripture is a central resource for the development of a language of worship for the purpose of theological reflection on Pentecostal self-understanding as a worshipping community. Several contributors develop a biblical perspective on worship and identify the Pentecostal worshipping community with the covenant community of Scripture. Jerome Boone identifies the Sinai pericope (Exodus 19–24) as the central worship metanarrative that establishes the identity of the covenant community of Israel as a holy nation and priestly kingdom. The covenant identity is conferred through their participation in worship. According to R. Hollis Gause, the New Testament worshipping community participates in Israel's communal vocation of priestly service before God through Christ, the officiating high priest and perfect sacrifice. Frank D. Macchia describes the diverse expressions in Pentecostal worship as the realization of the priesthood of all believers. The democratization of the charisms in

Pentecostal worship is formative and transformative for the community as the Spirit generates a unity in spirit and harmony in worship that reflects the Christocentric worship of Scripture.

Several contributors engage how the liturgical language of Scripture and various worship narratives have been interpreted as descriptive and prescriptive models for Pentecostal worship. Jacqueline Grey surveys early Australian Pentecostal interpretations of Isaiah that engage the text as a prescriptive model of worship, while Lee Roy Martin finds biblical patterns in the Psalms that express the covenant theology and covenant identity of the community. Biblical patterns of worship also provide guidelines for mystical encounter and potential prophetic transformation. Recitation of the Qedushah in Isaiah, the engagement of the whole person (i.e., body, mind, emotions) in the Psalms, and the narration of Christocentric worship in John's Apocalypse act as patterns of "true worship" and transformative encounter with God. Kimberly Ervin Alexander describes how three aspects of Pentecostal experience—rapture, rapport, and proleptic—are evident in the periodical testimonies from Pentecostal worship services. Early Pentecostals interpreted their mystical experiences in worship as anticipation and representation of their participation in the eschatological events of John's Apocalypse. Melissa L. Archer further identifies how imitation of the liturgical activities of the narrative worshippers in the Apocalypse can be identity-forming for the community and a catalyst for divine encounter.

Pentecostal worship reflects a commitment to the restoration of the identity of the covenant community through mystical encounter with God and the subsequent transformation of the individual, the community, and the world through the work of the Spirit. Daniela C. Augustine adopts the language of liturgical theology to describe how the worshipping community embodies the covenant identity of priesthood and how the community is restored to the liturgical fellowship of the cosmological temple in the Garden of Eden. Augustine describes Pentecostal worship as *theologia prima*, which she defines as the liturgical activity of communal witness to the divine actions of redemption and the renewal of God's people and creation

in history. The priestly service, embodied in the activities of the worshipping community, occurs in the context of the altar, which Johnathan Alvarado identifies as the central sacred space for divine encounter and spiritual transformation in Pentecostal worship services. The Spirit is the facilitator of divine encounter at the altar and creates the opportunity for the renewing of individual and communal self-understanding. Pentecostal worship services provide a space of liturgical, theological, and ritual play where the Pentecostal identity is cultivated through direct experience of the Spirit. Peter Althouse further develops the concept of ritual play and describes Pentecostal worship services as the liminal space of potential transformation.

Several contributors offer theological reflections on distinctive Pentecostal practices in worship services. John Christopher Thomas defends the use of anointed cloths in Pentecostal services on the basis of Acts 19:11–12. Early Pentecostals used anointed cloths as a method of prophetic engagement with people who could not attend a worship service. Daniel Castelo offers a defense of creedal forms of liturgy and Chris E. W. Green calls for reflection on trinitarian forms of Pentecostal worship. Antipas L. Harris reflects on the influence of African spirituality on enthusiastic modes of early Pentecostal practices. Finally, Wilmer Estrada-Carrasquillo discusses the participatory elements of Hispanic worship services. Thomas, Castelo, and Green raise questions regarding the role of sacramental theology and systematic theology in the development of a theology of worship, while Harris and Estrada-Carrasquillo explore the intersection between a theology of worship, culture, and social behavior.

The contributors to this anthology do not offer a systematic theology of worship but raise questions regarding the theological language and methodologies that can be employed to describe and critique distinctive Pentecostal practices in the context of worship. Several contributors draw on sacramental theology, liturgical theology, and systematic theology to reflect on Pentecostal worship, while others emphasize communal and social aspects of worship. Each contributor shares the Pentecostal ethos of the

anticipation of divine encounter and the expectation of the Spirit's transforming presence in worship that empowers the renewed individual and renewed community for prophetic engagement in the expansion of God's kingdom in the world. I suggest that a taxonomy of religious experience, such as Sheldrake's typology of spirituality, is helpful for describing and understanding the range of religious experiences and spiritual practices in Pentecostal worship. In addition to the mystical and prophetic dimensions of Pentecostal worship, Sheldrake's ascetical type of spirituality, which emphasizes individual discipline and detachment from the material world, offers an additional avenue for theological reflection on a Pentecostal theology of worship.

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Pentecostals in the 21st Century: Identity, Beliefs, Practices.

Edited by Corneliu Constantineanu and Christopher J. Scobie.
Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. x + 265 pp.

Editors Corneliu Constantineanu and Christopher J. Scobie undertake the historic task of clarifying the identity, major doctrines, and practice of the Pentecostal movement. Constantineanu is Associate Professor of New Testament and Biblical Interpretation and Dean of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia, while his co-editor, Scobie, serves as adjunct professor in the same seminary as well as pastors a church in Ljubljana, Slovenia. In *Pentecostals in the 21st Century*, the editors invite top Pentecostal scholars and pastors to reflect on various aspects of Pentecostalism ranging from hermeneutics to Spirit-baptism to discipleship. That the task they undertake is immense they acknowledge in their introduction: "The relative newness of Pentecostalism as a movement, the lack of uniform Pentecostal doctrine across adherents, various theological

extremes (examples of both fundamentalism and liberalism can be observed), and the fact that church ecologies (in relation to governance and authority) are diverse, all conspire to create a significant challenge to speak to [Pentecostal] identity” (3). The goal of their endeavor is to explicate the ecclesiological and pneumatological practices of the global Pentecostal movement.

Setting the tone for the volume, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen in his essay, “Pentecostal Identity,” makes the case for a Pentecostal identity based not on “creeds or shared history” (16) but on “Christ-centered charismatic spirituality” (17). Throughout the last one hundred years, this charismatic spirituality has led Pentecostals to experience the presence of God in worship services as they respond “bodily” (22) in corporate gatherings. Kärkkäinen brings special attention to the emotive, enthusiastic, and kinesthetic displays of Pentecostal adherents such as standing, kneeling, raising the hands, and the laying-on-of-hands during prayer. These dynamic worship experiences have grown out of the understanding that the presence of Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit can be mystically encountered and that these encounters can generate a greater capacity to experience the “full gospel” of justification, sanctification, healing, Spirit-baptism, and the premillennial return of Christ (19-20). Ultimately, these worship gatherings facilitate a “meeting with the Lord” that takes priority over more traditional worship practices (“sermons, hymns, and liturgy,” 26).

Roger Stronstad undertakes exegetical work in his reflection on “Some Aspects of Hermeneutics in the Pentecostal Tradition.” Using Luke-Acts, he helps the reader view Luke through the lens of an historian, theologian, teacher, exegete, and narrator. His most insightful work is done as he unpacks Luke’s use of the LXX, typologies, and parallelism in portraying the events of Jesus’ life as mirrored in the events of the early church and its leadership in Acts. The present volume is at its best when writers such as Stronstad showcase their exegetical expertise and add to the larger Pentecostal studies conversation.

The volume continues with Jean-Daniel Plüss addressing the Pentecostal reenactment of the Last Supper in various protestant traditions, Edmund J. Rybarczyk shedding fresh light on a Pentecostal's understanding of salvation, Glenn Balfour revisiting the practice of water baptism, Frank D. Macchia exploring the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Keith Warrington defining the gifts of the Spirit, Cecil M. Robeck surveying New Testament contributions to ecclesiology, Christopher J. Scobie articulating functional discipleship, Amos Yong pointing to the need for deep ecumenism within and around the Pentecostal movement, and Corneliu Constantineanu speaking to social engagement connected to Romanian Pentecostalism.

Excellent work is also achieved by Van Johnson in his essay on the "Fulfillment of God's Promise in the Soon-to-Return King." Johnson gives a brief treatment of the apocalyptic genre, the history of the development of a homogenous eschatological framework for the Pentecostal movement, and even some of the contradictions many in the Pentecostal movement still blindly (and optionally, we may add!) choose to embrace by holding to a dispensationalist worldview in one hand and a "full gospel" theology in the other: "The popularity of dispensationalism among Pentecostals is a bit ironic because the system itself rules out the existence of a modern-day Pentecostal movement. Dispensationalism limits the period of miracles to the time of Jesus and the early church, which prohibits any return of speaking in tongues and spiritual gifts later in church history" (188).

Johnson's essay provides a backdrop for Wonsuk Ma's essay on "The Theological Motivations for Pentecostal Mission." Because of the perceived imminent return of Jesus as outlined in a dispensationalist, pre-tribulation rapture of the church, the Pentecostal movement was initially filled with a sense of urgency. They understood the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the church as a "revival and renewal movement, challenging and energizing the church to recover its 'apostolic' authority and call to witness for Christ to the ends of the earth" (243). According to Ma, the movement's emphasis on mission via church planting and evangelism is deeply connected to its eschatological orientation.

While all of the essays are worthy of reading and reflection, Kärkkäinen, Stronstad, Johnson, and Ma give this volume some of its strongest pieces, taking seriously the need for more rigorous work on both exegetical and historical fronts to give additional clarity to the past, present, and future mission of the Pentecostal movement. This will continue to be a challenge as the one-hundred-year-old movement moves into the future, especially in light of the Pentecostal expansion through the African Independent Churches, most Chinese house church networks, and the majority of Latin American evangelicals.

I recommend this volume for students, pastors, or theologians who seek to familiarize themselves with the history, theology, and mission of the Pentecostal movement. The reflections are accessible, informative, and robust, making it a solid launching pad into the Pentecostal world for both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals.

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The Letter to the Hebrews: A Centre for Pentecostal Theology Bible Study. By Jeffrey S. Lamp. Cleveland, TN: CTP, 2018. xiv + 165 pp.

While Pentecostals and Charismatics have not been shut out of the commentary writing business, with the work of Gordon Fee and Craig Keener alone attesting to that fact, a complete commentary series directed towards Pentecostals and Charismatics has proven to be more elusive. Jeffrey Lamp aims his volume on Hebrews directly towards “pastors and lay persons who desire to live a Spirit-filled life that is formed and directed by Holy Scripture” (xii). The author’s faculty status at Oral Roberts University and publication by the Centre for Pentecostal Theology both bolster the

claim that this book is written by a Spirit-filled believer for Spirit-filled believers.

What Lamp presents his readers is not so much a commentary as a Bible study on the book of Hebrews. Instead of writing a critical commentary, Lamp bases his work on the popular 4MAT method of learning: meaning, content, experiment, and creative action (xii). He applies this method to his book by arranging each chapter with these divisions: Setting the Direction, Hearing the Word of God, Connecting with Hebrews, and What If (xiii-xiv). This arrangement, along with the outlines and handouts included, offers readers a book useful for group study as well as for personal use.

Lamp covers introductory matters in a concise yet clear manner. He explores the literary genre of Hebrews, noting its complexity (2) and concluding that the book displays characteristics of not only of a letter but also of homily and rhetoric (4). Although he mentions various options regarding its authorship, he rightly for this type of work chooses not to assign an author, although he does examine various theories of authorship (6). Other introductory matters that he scrutinizes include provenance, date, and its contribution to the New Testament. Lamp also notes the epistle's high Christology and examines it as an example of how early Christians interpreted the Old Testament and related the old and new covenants (6-9). Lamp offers his own translation of epistle's Greek text that is both readable in English and faithful to the original language. As befitting a work of this nature, critical concerns and textual variants are ignored.

Lamp offers commentary that is both rigorous and accessible at the same time. Laypersons should feel challenged by what they read, but not overwhelmed by what the commentator provides. Lamp makes allusions to the Greek language without bogging the reader down in minutia (14). His exposition of Heb 1:1-3:6 warrants closer examination. He spends chapter one of his book wrestling with issues of God, the Son, and angels, while in his second chapter he introduces another character, Moses. Lamp's summary of the argument put forward by the Hebrews author that Jesus,

the Son, builds the house on behalf of God while Moses is only a part of that house, demonstrates that the Son is as superior to Moses as he was to angels in Hebrews 1 (34). Readers should find this summary of one of the Hebrews author's first major theological points to be enlightening because of the clarity of Lamp's writing.

Lamp's commentary on Hebrews 5–7 is perhaps one of the greatest strengths of the book. He demonstrates both in his commentary and in his conclusion that the Hebrews author “suggests that the high priesthood of Jesus is the antidote to the spiritual malaise that appears to be afflicting his hearers” (68). In Lamp's explanation of Melchizedek and his priesthood and its relation to Christ he offers a simple but glorious comparison: they both are eternal (62).

As for criticism, Lamp waits until his commentary on Hebrews 11 to make any points specific to the Charismatic or Pentecostal realm. Commenting upon the first verse, he writes that certain Charismatic groups like to overemphasize the word “now” to highlight the present reality of faith (101). Briefly delving into the Greek, he notes that *de* is a conjunction and that translating it as “and” is just as appropriate as translating it “now” (101). Despite some groups' tendency to misinterpret the passage, the author of Hebrews stresses that “faith is a present response to the hopeful realization of God's future promise” (101). Although one should not force the text to say more than what it actually means, addressing more Pentecostal and Charismatic themes would better serve the audience that the commentator is trying to reach.

The most helpful aspects of Lamp's study of Hebrews are the outlines and handouts he creates. These tools provide the reader with valuable aids that help examine and explain the text. One should not ignore Lamp's commentary on the text either. Although it is not a critical work, it is not meant to be. Therefore, his commentary serves its purpose well. Lamp also offers a suggested bibliography for further study of Hebrews that contains several prominent volumes.

Readers of this book will find the commentary approachable and illuminating. Written in language that is understandable and accompanied by a clear translation of Hebrews, Lamp's scholarship undergirds his commentary, but resists overwhelming his intended audience with academic and critical arguments. Lamp delivers a study that will educate and inform pastors and laity alike.

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Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Edited by Fenggang Yang, Joy K. C. Tong, and Allan H. Anderson. *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, 22. Leiden: Brill, 2017. xiv + 373 pp.

This collection of essays began its journey in the “Global ReOrient: Chinese Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements in the Global East” symposium held in November 2013, at Purdue University in the US. The final versions of several studies presented at the conference form roughly one-third (or six chapters) of the book (ix). Five additional studies were commissioned, and five more are revised studies previously published in the *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* (11). Two editors, Fenggang Yang and Joy K. C. Tong, were responsible for the conference. Yang is Professor of Sociology and Founding Director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue, while Tong is Visiting Assistant Professor in the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Wheaton College. The third editor, Allan Anderson, is Professor of Mission and Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham, England.

Of the book's four parts, the first, “Historical, Global, and Local Contexts,” with four chapters, sets the context of the book. The chapters by Donald E. Miller and Daniel H. Bays situate Chinese “Pentecostal/Charismatic” religion vis-

à-vis the prevailing understanding of the term in academia. The authors rightly argue that the historical, cultural, religious, and political context of China has played a crucial role in the shaping of the unique form of Pentecostalism in China. These studies, therefore, warn outsiders to treat the subject matter with due caution. J. Gordon Melton's treatment of the True Jesus Church serves as a perfect case for the contextual uniqueness while Connie Au's early history of Pentecostalism in Hong Kong among the elite sheds light on the subsequent spread of Pentecostal faith among the poor.

The second part of the volume, comprised of three studies, is devoted to the True Jesus Church. Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye's historical study focuses on Wei Enbo, the founder of the church, and the influence of Bernt Berntsen on Enbo and the church. Especially fascinating is Ke-hsien Huang's study that casts the church's worship in the context of traditional Confucian values such as order, propriety, and control. Yen-zen Tsai's chapter focuses solely on the practice and role of glossolalia in the church, which had a wider impact on Chinese Pentecostalism.

The third part, "Pentecostal or Non-Pentecostal," presents the challenge of answering the question, "What makes selected Chinese churches Pentecostal?" by selecting three Chinese Christian groups to illustrate the complexity of the task. Jiayin Hu takes a close look at the Local Church movement and concludes that this indigenous movement is not Pentecostal. Michael Chambon, coming from a Catholic perspective, raises the question whether the widespread practice of healing makes a Christian movement or community Pentecostal. Yi Liu defines the contemporary revival in Henan Province as Pentecostal, yet differently from how the rest of the Christian world defines it.

The final part, "New-Wave Charismatics in Chinese Societies," is the longest with six chapters, all of which investigate today's Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic communities both inside and outside of China. Celena Y. Z. Su and Allan H. Anderson provide a helpful chapter on the fast growth of unregistered churches in China. It is followed by Karrie Koesel's discussion of the challenging place in which these churches are situated,

requiring them to navigate carefully their way through the socio-political system to have their voices in the public arenas. Rachel Ziaohong Zhu presents a rare study on Catholic Charismatics in China while Kim-Kwong Chan presents Singapore's City Harvest Church as a model of a diasporan Chinese megachurch that has embraced the multiracial and postmodern lifestyle. Across a strait, in a socially and religiously restrictive environment, Weng Kit Cheong and Joy K. C. Tong study Full Gospel Tabernacle, another overseas Chinese megachurch in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Both cases may serve as a useful model for an urban Charismatic church in China when socio-political conditions allow. This part of the book ends with a chapter by Joy K. C. Tong and Fanggang Yang on Forerunner Christian Church, one of the most influential Chinese churches in the U.S., and its leader, Grace Chiang. These sixteen chapters are bracketed by an introduction by Yang and Tong and a conclusion by Anderson.

Reviewing a collection of essays by different contributors comes with a challenge. For this book, due to my inherent interest in the subject, I read all the chapters. First of all, the editors are to be highly commended for producing this groundbreaking book. Everyone agrees on the importance of the Chinese churches in the development of global Christianity. The sheer size of its population—and hence the large number of believers—significantly affects the global picture. Asian Christianity (with less than 9 percent of its population Christian), lagging far behind the world average (over 33 percent), will be significantly boosted if the Chinese church maintains its current growth rate. Whether a large part of it is Pentecostal/Charismatic has been an ongoing debate for some time. This book provides the most substantial discussion of the subject as the contributors approach it from different academic angles.

Secondly, the book convincingly illustrates the complexity and challenges of any study on Chinese Christianity. The vastness of the country poses a fundamental challenge, while the large number of unregistered church networks further hinders an accurate picture of Chinese Christianity, making it almost impossible. Understanding Chinese Pentecostal/Charismatic

Christianity is further complicated by the lack of agreement on the definition of Pentecostalism among scholars. The Introduction helpfully presents these and other challenges. I would also add that the subject matter is a fast-moving target. By the time of publication, some data of the book may have already been dated. For example, the most informative chapter by Su and Anderson provides important updated information on the unregistered or “The Third Generation” churches in large cities (229–34). Since the publication of the book, however, many of them were closed by the new government policy. In the “The Missionary Movement of Chinese Churches” (235–37) section of the same chapter, there is no discussion on the China Mission 2030—the unprecedented mission network among unregistered urban churches and its well-coordinated annual mission conference in 2016–18. The movement began after all the chapters had been written. Since developments in Chinese Christianity are often drastic and swift, the other challenge I would add is the volatility of the situation in which Chinese (especially unregistered) Christians live and witness as the followers of Christ. Therefore, to protect believers, many researchers are unwilling to publish sensitive information. Perhaps for this reason, studies on Chinese Christianity often favor historical inquiries, shying away from contemporary subjects. And this is a valid concern. Until the social situation changes, these challenges will loom large over any published studies on Chinese Christianity. For future researchers who need to tread with caution, the short conclusion by Anderson provides several important “rules of engagement.”

While the book will serve as an important resource for any study of the subject, it calls for a continuing exploration of what it means to be Pentecostal/Charismatic believers or communities in China today. This identity in China will challenge the rest of the world to pay close attention to the role of the socio-cultural and political context of each setting in the formation of a local Pentecostal/Charismatic identity. From a missional viewpoint, the study also makes the world church, especially the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, think hard to explore ways to stand in

solidarity with fellow Christians in inclement or hostile environments. The book, therefore, has a deeper import than perhaps the editors and the publisher may have initially thought.

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God Forgive Us for Being Women: Rhetoric, Theology, and the Pentecostal Tradition. By Joy E.A. Qualls. Frameworks: Interdisciplinary Studies for Faith and Learning. Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018. xiv + 225 pp.

Throughout the history of the Pentecostal movement, as women have faithfully served in the ministry of the church, there have been ongoing debate and controversy within the Pentecostal tradition concerning the positions of leadership women should or should not hold. Joy Qualls, Associate Professor and Department Chair of Communication Studies at Biola University, contributes to a series of interdisciplinary studies for faith and learning as she provides a chronological study of rhetorical history exploring inconsistencies of women's roles, opportunities, and positions held in the Assemblies of God and its implication for the Pentecostal tradition and beyond.

In Qualls' study of the oral controversies and rhetoric that are woven into the doctrines of the Assemblies of God, she contends that rhetoric from the founders of the organization "both open a space for women as active participants in ministry" while at the same time create distrust and a "dissonance by the dichotomy of policy and practice" (28). Since Pentecostals have been characterized by orality, she reveals rhetoric that both endorses and discourages women who aspire to fulfill their calling and openly proclaim the gospel.

In Chapter 1, Qualls thoroughly investigates the rhetorical history of the Pentecostal tradition as a launching pad for her study and subsequent implications. She addresses various challenges and contradictions in women's leadership roles in the Assemblies of God and describes ways the evangelical movement influenced and substantially contributed to the dissonance within the organization. Problems that exist within the organization include "multiple narratives and competing messages" concerning roles of women, the lack of a strong unifying central organization, the evangelical culture that has historically rejected women in leadership roles, and the positions held on social-cultural issues, both secular and religious (31). Qualls contends that "what began as a movement counter to the culture has been absorbed by the culture and the politics of today" (33).

In the second chapter, Qualls presents varying perspectives of the early pioneers and historians in the Pentecostal movement on the "distinct" role of women within history and the impact of their voices around the world. She highlights accounts and narratives of several key women who were actively involved in Pentecostal fellowships and ministry as well as those who established churches prior to the Azusa Street Revival and advocated for unique rhetorical opportunities (41). Qualls contends that the contributions of these women led to and had "significant influence on the formation and development of the Assemblies of God" (35).

In Chapter 3, Qualls more specifically focuses on the conflicting rhetoric of women's roles within the Assemblies of God pertaining to their "institutional authority and cultural authority" (94). She identifies many of the women who were actively involved in ministry during its formative years as well as the influencing male voices that set the tone for contradiction in practice that limited women's roles and opportunities. Qualls evaluates historical documents and discourses describing the formative era of the Assemblies of God, arguing that in its initial formation, rhetorical conflicts of doctrine (The Sixteen Fundamental Truths) and

practice of women's roles in ministry occurred from its inception and continue today.

In the fourth chapter, Qualls discusses the next developmental season of the Assemblies of God as being a period of "growth and influence" (1927–1990s), but notes how over time it "lost sight of its unique cultural and religious identity" (36). As the fellowship grew and became more institutionalized, shifts in ideology influenced its unique foundational approach to theology. As a result of the distinct call for greater male participation and leadership (123) and a shift from a "prophetic position to a priestly function," women lost the prominent ministerial role they had enjoyed during the early years. Leading male voices interpreted Scripture as encouraging the limitation and suppression of women's roles and the elevation of men's. In their view, women's intellect was not only subservient to that of men, but equivalent to that of children (122).

Qualls further describes how the Assemblies of God responded to shifts in the broader American culture including feminism and stronger roles and autonomy for women in the workplace and the marketplace. The reactionary stance of the Assemblies' male leadership, which chose to remain conservative, caused further dissonance for women who desired to serve in the church, even though they persisted in creating opportunities to serve (125). Some sociological and theological scholars argue that the Assemblies of God "sacrificed its moment in time to be a catalyst for the changing role of women in the church and in American culture" (36).

In Chapter 5, Qualls examines "the relationship of the Assemblies of God to the broader evangelical community" (37). The organization gained greater influence, becoming a dominant fixture in the evangelical community, particularly the National Association of Evangelicals. Due to the historical influence and precedence established by women in the Pentecostal movement, Qualls explains ways the Assemblies of God could have more intentionally used their position of influence to help liberate and advance women to serve in ministry. Instead, they aligned with the

evangelical community by embracing a conservative political position that diminished the impact of their role in the broader culture (166).

In Chapter 6, Qualls explores the recent history of the Assemblies of God and the twenty-first century as they held a position of prominence in the Pentecostal movement worldwide. This era included scandals involving well-known ministers and other hardships within the organization that were handled in a dysfunctional manner, especially where women leaders were concerned. However, eventual changes in the denominational leadership transpired that signified a transition in rhetorical practice regarding the role of women in ministry with implications that fostered a cultural shift within the Assemblies of God. Male pastors were being encouraged to encourage openly women in ministry and allow them to preach, teach, exhort, and use their abilities to benefit the church (186).

In the seventh chapter, Qualls summarizes the purpose of her study, the contributions it makes to the rhetorical theory, and its implications for future study. She contends that the renewed focus on women in the Assemblies of God has created an opportunity for a new rhetoric, opening more open doors, and opportunities and “a renewed sense of calling and purpose” throughout the Pentecostal movement (38).

In an era when more women are speaking out and voicing their past and current experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and harassment, Qualls exposes controversies and discrepancies caused by historical rhetoric that continue to sideline and limit opportunities for women in ministry. Although her intention was not to contribute to feminist theory, Qualls does contribute to the study of gender and rhetoric. I highly recommend this book for its stated purpose as it explores the impact of tensions generated in the rhetoric of opportunity and constraint faced by women seeking positions of ministry in the Pentecostal movement (203). Hopefully, those currently holding positions of leadership, both men and women, will better understand how the rhetoric of Pentecostal tradition has impeded the progress of women in fulfilling their calling and using their voices of influence to promote the greater cause of spreading the gospel beyond the

discrepancies and controversies of gender-related positional restraints. This work is applicable to religious organizations beyond the Pentecostal tradition and reflects the larger societal problems and institutional barriers that impact women in leadership.

Throughout the book, Qualls thoroughly dissects the rhetorical controversies of Pentecostal women in ministry leadership as they continue to struggle to define, promote understanding, and find acceptance for their role as women pursuing a ministerial calling.

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The Miracle Lady: Kathryn Kuhlman and the Transformation of Charismatic Christianity. By Amy Collier Artman. Foreword by Kate Bowler. Library of Religious Biography. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. xii + 242 pp.

Religious movements in America seem always to have brought with them sharp reactions from other social and cultural venues. The Charismatic Movement of the 1960s through the 1980s typically incited vehement criticism from traditional Christian churches and leaders, who claimed that the movement engendered riotous emotional outbursts of fanaticism but little else. These critics believed that such religious activities created no real spiritual benefits, but rather were harmful to Christian life.

Amy Artman attempts to portray Kathryn Kuhlman as the primary force that reconfigured the Charismatic Movement into a socially acceptable Christian practice. Artman describes Kuhlman's personal and professional journey equally as an evangelist with large meetings (like the Billy Graham model), as a television show host (like Oral Roberts), and as a self-promoting celebrity (like Jerry Falwell and Jim Bakker). These means of

ministry promotion fit perfectly in the post-World War II American culture and brought attention to a broad spectrum of ministry approaches developing at the time. During that period of increasing awareness, Kathryn Kuhlman as a woman evangelist proved to be more interesting and recognizable than her predecessor Aimee Semple McPherson, the previous generation's independent female spiritual leader. Though Artman presents a sympathetic and generally factual view of Kathryn Kuhlman's difficult and unusual life and ministry, she is not above making occasional critical observations.

Artman portrays Kuhlman as taking a different approach to healing ministry than had been the norm to that point as well as carefully promoting selected elements of the narrative of her origin and early ministry while downplaying and avoiding others.

Kuhlman seemed to imply . . . that her healing ministry began as she rejected the practices [of other healing ministers] she deemed offensive and as God revealed to her a better way. Perhaps she truly was inspired to craft an alternative approach to divine healing. In all other versions of the beginning of miracles, however, everything began with a surprise announcement at a Tabernacle service in Franklin. . . . After recapping her years in Concordia and Idaho, skipping the years in the West and leapfrogging over her marriage and divorce, Kuhlman laid out the story as she would tell it throughout her life. Her account of her development of an awareness of the healing power of God rested on her devoted study of the Bible and a progressive revelation from God. Typically, she did not credit any early training and influences (48–49).

None of the author's evaluations appear to denigrate Kuhlman's theology or Charismatic miracle claims. She notes that Kuhlman consistently refused to take credit for the supernatural works of God, always claiming that she "had nothing to do with" any miracles. Kuhlman also "maintained throughout her career that she had no control over the healing

taking place in her ministry . . . ‘What is always so thrilling is to see God at work. I have nothing to do with it’” (151, 155).

Artman’s theme is that Kuhlman refined the image of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity. Her dynamic personality, frank responses to questions, and highly successful appearances on secular television seemed to make critics drop their apprehensions about miraculous Christianity. In evaluating the effect of Kuhlman’s television program, *I Believe in Miracles*, Artman offers the story of Colonel Tom Lewis as an example of “the testimonies of a variety of culturally elite guests . . . [that] contributed to the gentrification of charismatic Christianity” (138, 143). As he related on the show, Lewis’ original intention was only to investigate reports of the miraculous, and at first had felt like an outsider—uncomfortable and awkward— but soon was “drawn into the charismatic experience.” By watching guests like Lewis, viewers “saw a refined image of charismatic Christianity that was appealing” (137).

In the earliest stages of her television ministry, Kuhlman featured not the elite but the average American. She broadcast “images of average people speaking freely about divine and spiritual healing into hundreds of homes in the Pittsburgh (PA) area. This witness on the most public of technologies (television) began the dissemination of a gentrified form of charismatic Christianity into the homes, lives, and minds of people previously unexposed” (63). As time went on, Kuhlman “interviewed a wide assortment of guests” including an Apollo 15 astronaut, politicians, and professional football players (143). Artman concludes that “the presence of so many respected, professional people on Kuhlman’s show during its ten-year run testified to the growing cultural acceptance of charismatic Christianity in America” (144).

Kuhlman’s difficult childhood and chaotic early personal life are faithfully recorded by Artman without condemnation. Artman also outlines a short history of American Pentecostalism, briefly analyzing the ministries of such famous Pentecostal ministers as William Branham, Charles Price, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Smith Wigglesworth. As the history

continues, Artman also identifies the “leading lights” of the Charismatic Movement of the 1960s and 1970s including Oral Roberts, Rex Humbard, Pat Robertson, A. A. Allen, Ralph Wilkerson, Chuck Smith, and Norman Vincent Peale. Artman observes that Kuhlman’s ministry was found to appeal also to Roman Catholic believers and leaders, such as Bishop Fulton Sheen. In 1971, Dr. J. Massyngberde Ford of Notre Dame University was on Kuhlman’s show. According to Artman, “Ford’s presence on the show . . . was notable not just for her status as an academic but also for her Roman Catholicism. Featuring Catholics on [I Believe in] Miracles contributed to changing the popular conception of charismatic Christianity by locating adherents outside of conservative, rural, southern, Protestant circles” (139).

Much of Artman’s narrative describes specific details of events and personal interactions of Kuhlman with celebrities, supporters, and critics. Oral Roberts was Kuhlman’s personal friend, who receives praise rather than any rebuke from Artman for his support for Kuhlman. She portrays some other supporters, such as Tink Wilkerson, a businessman in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as antagonists in sheep’s clothing rather than truly helpful friends. Artman exhibits neither blame nor praise Kuhlman’s later life and the events and people surrounding her death and legacy include various social and personal issues, leaving analysis to the reader.

Overall Artman has written an interesting biography of one of the most effective evangelists in all Christian history. She can be credited with successfully demonstrating her thematic intention, that Kathryn Kuhlman was a major force in transforming Charismatic Christianity from merely another phase of a much-maligned element in an extreme brand of Christianity to a “gentrified” acceptable aspect of historical, evangelistic, experiential spirituality in modern American life.

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For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference. By Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2019. viii + 196 pp.

Volf and Croasmun write *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* to spur their target audience—Christian, Jesus-following theologians—toward the pursuit of a living theology that discerns, articulates, and “commends visions of *flourishing life* in light of God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ” (11). While they target many of their remarks at professionally trained theologians, such as those graduating from seminaries and universities, they make the point that, ultimately, all followers of Jesus are called in some way to engage in healthy, robust, vibrant theology that fosters a flourishing life and culture.

The authors define a flourishing life as one focused on striving for the “good life” (13), a life for which all humans were essentially created, but not necessarily rightly pursuing. The thoughtful and evocative challenge the authors offer to professional theologians is to lead the way in the pursuit of the good and flourishing life by way of establishing a “tripartite structure,” the pillars of which are: (1) lives that are well led, (2) lives that go well, and (3) lives that feel good.

A major impediment to theologians arriving at a place where they might pursue environments that perpetuate this tripartite and flourishing structure are institutions of higher learning: places that are subject to the standards of evaluation accepted by professional guilds and accrediting organizations. A case is made that it is simply too expensive to get degrees and find positions in theological fields where graduates might earn a salary sufficient to support themselves and pay for their degrees. Because of this, many potential theologians are avoiding seminaries and other theologically oriented schools to pursue other endeavors. Therefore, Volf and Croasmun issue a challenge to institutions to re-structure their curriculum to be more focused on preparing graduates to engage the environments wherein they

are called, thereby stimulating the churches, families, and communities that comprise them to engage in flourishing lives. The authors ask:

Why does the world need multi-million dollar theological heads working for ninety-three thousand dollars a year? Why aren't the ten long years of postgraduate study of academic theology followed by thirty working years just a massive waste of time and money? Why should we employ and pay academic theologians—even pay them poorly (as we increasingly do) (57–58)?

The authors give a four-fold affirmative response to these questions that particularly focuses on those who teach theology in academic institutions, the individuals who attend those institutions, and those directly impacted by them. First is the necessity of and prescription for a “renewal of theology” (61). Theology that promotes flourishing must focus on God coming to indwell the world to bring freedom from guilt and to inspire love for God and love of neighbor. The authors propose that this be done through the pursuit of “a biblically rooted, patristically guided, ecclesially located and publicly engaged theology done in critical conversation with the sciences and the various disciplines of the humanities at the center of which is the question of the flourishing life” (82).

Second in the authors' four-fold response is the “challenge of universality” (85). By universality the authors mean that the entire world and every person in it must be seen as the home of God. This is accomplished by adhering to six foundational principles: (1) trinitarian monotheism, (2) God's unconditional love, (3) reverence for Jesus as the Light of the World, (4) a distinction between God's rule and human rule, (5) the moral equality of all human beings, and (6) “freedom of religion and areligion [sic].”

Third is the call for theologians to live lives in which there is an “affinity between life and thought” (120). That is to say, there must be a congruity between their thoughts, words, and actions. When this happens, their words and their actions will garner a weight wherein the effects bring

the desired flourishing ethos to all aspects of culture. The authors call for theologians to have an intellectual disposition characterized by (1) a love of knowledge of God and the world, (2) a love of dialogue partners, (3) courage, (4) gratitude and humility, (5) firmness and gentleness, and (6) faithfulness.

Fourth, for theologians to help establish a good and flourishing culture, a realistic vision of what that culture might look like must be established, not merely in a conceptual framework, but in reality. The authors aptly state that “flourishing requires the transformative presence of the true life in the midst of the false, which requires the true world come to be in the midst of the false world” (150). By false, they mean the fallen world, the one that works against the flourishing life. Yes, they hold that the flourishing life is a possibility even in the midst of the falsity of human fallenness.

It may be disturbing to some that postmodern/deconstructionist/Nietzschean philosopher Michel Foucault is used to support the authors’ positions in several instances. If this were an olive branch offered to millennials or more liberal readers, it seems that there are plenty of other out-of-the-box thinkers to whom they could have referred.

Ultimately, the book *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* presents a concise, workable, and palatable challenge to implement practically eternal theological concepts. It is biblically based and both theologically and philosophically challenging. If the goal of the authors was to spur their target audience toward the pursuit of a living theology that discerns, articulates, and commends visions of flourishing life in light of God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ, they have accomplished their task.

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“The Spirit Helps Our Weakness”: Rom 8,26A in Light of Paul’s Missiological Purpose for Writing the Letter to the Romans. By Thomas A. Vollmer. Biblical Tools and Studies 36. Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2018. xviii + 319 pp.

Thomas A. Vollmer’s revised doctoral thesis, *“The Spirit Helps Our Weakness”: Rom 8,26A in Light of Paul’s Missiological Purpose for Writing the Letter to the Romans*, addresses the nature of “weakness,” the purpose of prayer, and the role that the Spirit plays in Pauline thought within the title verse. Employing a framework based upon Udo Schnelle’s criteria for historiography, Vollmer determines the implications of the phrase, “the Spirit helps our weakness” (*to pneuma synantilambanetai tē asthenia hēmōn*), within the Roman historical context and within Paul’s own matrix of Jewish background and Christian identity. As such, he seeks an interpretation that fits within the broader context of the entire epistle and as understood as part of Paul’s mission to spread the gospel message to see that the gospel impacts the lives of God’s people.

In chapter one, having explained that the points of comparison and contrast between Rom 8:26 and 27 require analysis of the verses together, Vollmer covers the history of interpretation of this passage organized by theme, along with consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of each. While these frameworks lend insights to the meaning of Paul’s texts, Vollmer desires to see a stronger link relating these two verses on the Spirit’s work to the entire Roman epistle and its overall purpose.

The overall purpose of Paul’s letter to the Romans is the subject of the second chapter. Vollmer concludes that various proposed strategies and motivations can account for some of the letter, but not the whole. Vollmer proposes that Romans be primarily understood in terms of Paul’s mission. By this, he means that Paul desired to convince the Roman church that his gospel was the correct one and held the expectation that they form a community of faith, follow a new way of life, and communicate the gospel to others. This purpose, though not necessarily Paul’s only rationale, incorporates insights from several of the aforementioned motivations for

writing Romans, and is consistent with Paul's self-understanding in his ministry as well as the central purpose for all his writings. That is, Paul's reason for living and writing was based upon his conviction that Jesus brings salvation, which, in turn, was the reason he desired unity for the Roman church and the ability to use Rome as a base for bringing the gospel to Spain.

The remaining chapters cover exegesis. Chapter three deals with Rom 8:26a within its broad and immediate context in the letter to establish the way in which God's intervention in the world is what overcomes the weakness of believers. Knowing that the Spirit is the mediating agent through which God establishes new life and creates his people establishes the hope that believers have in the midst of weakness, suffering, and trial.

Chapter four considers the first words of Romans 8:26: "likewise indeed" (*hōsautōs de kai*). Through surveying how this adverbial clause is used in Paul, the whole of the New Testament, and the Septuagint, Vollmer concludes that it links the verse to a more immediate referent. The hope of 8:24–25 relates to the Spirit in vv. 26–27, a connection that fits nicely with Paul's conception of mission and of the Spirit's role in the fulfillment of that mission. The Spirit is the agent by which believers have hope in the midst of suffering.

The fifth chapter highlights the theological, Jewish, and Pauline understandings of the Spirit (*to pneuma*) to find that the Spirit consistently mediates the accomplishment of God's mission in the world. That the Spirit "helps" (*synantilambanetai*) is the focus of chapter six. Vollmer identifies an administrative and management context for this verb, and the verb clearly establishes that it is the Spirit alone who helps and intercedes on behalf of the believers in their unknowing.

The seventh chapter returns to an investigation of "our weakness" (*tē asthenia hēmōn*) that the Spirit addresses, a discussion begun in ch. 3 with the immediate context of 8:26a. This weakness refers to a limitation in the ability of the Roman Christians to pray—not a sinfulness or sickness on their part—that pertains to being unable to "live in accord with God's

design” or to not being able to “succeed in expanding God’s mission to the world” (261). Therefore, Vollmer is able to reiterate that the Spirit is God’s missiological and mediating agent, a leader, who aids believers in overcoming their weakness so that they may be aligned with God’s will.

As is typical with revised dissertations, especially one that features untranslated Greek and German portions, biblical scholars compose the intended audience for this volume. Students may find Vollmer’s work to provide a helpful model for historical criticism and to apply Schnelle’s principles for exegesis. Vollmer generally provides thorough coverage not only of the historical context for the Roman epistle but also of the history of interpretation. He also provides an analysis of the words and phrases used in Paul and contemporaneous texts.

It would have been beneficial had Vollmer more clearly stated some of his exegetical conclusions. For example, his analysis of *ti proseuxōmetha*, either interpreted as “what to pray for” or “how to pray,” indicates that the believers struggle with the content of their prayer as opposed to the manner of prayer (127). In contrast, the use of *dei*, “it is necessary,” in the next clause leads him to conclude that the issue is not a lack of knowledge but an inability “to perform prayer in a manner that coheres with God’s will,” to be “connected” with God (133). He subsequently switches back to a reference to a struggle with content. Understanding that the purpose of prayer is to form the believer to see the world through God’s eyes and consequently carry out his mission, one wonders how Vollmer would understand the implications of whether the weakness in prayer of which Paul speaks involves content, manner, or both.

Nonetheless, Christian readers will be edified by Vollmer’s exegetical affirmations of how the Spirit leads, guides, and intercedes on believers’ behalf. The Spirit allows God’s people to accomplish what they could not do on their own to become heirs of God. It is powerful how Vollmer notes one specific way in which this takes place: the Spirit helps them overcome their limitations in prayer with groaning, the sound of frustration that is rooted in the desire for redemption. In other words, the Spirit intercedes

and helps believers by continuing to convict them of this very weakness, a weakness which does not bring despair but hope as God's people patiently wait for the realization of their salvation (8:24–25).

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