



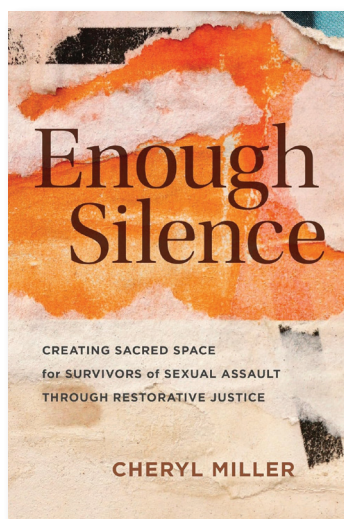
Book Reviews

April 2026

Section Editors: Craig L. Nesson, Cheryl Peterson,
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Review a book!

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Enough Silence: Creating Sacred Space for Survivors of Sexual Assault through Restorative Justice. By Cheryl Miller.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024.
ISBN: 978-0-8028-8371-1. x &
166 pages. Paper. \$24.99.

For clergy and congregations seriously interested in fostering healing for survivors of sexual abuse or assault (and potentially their offend-

ers), this lucid, spiritually insightful, skills-building book should be required reading. In *Enough Silence*, Miller introduces restorative justice as a potent framework for trauma-informed pastoral care (and, more broadly, for approaching conflict within congregations and organizations). Two features make *Enough Silence* particularly effective for a clergy and congregational audience.

First, Miller spells out the principles and step-by-step practices of restorative justice, illustrating them with the moving story of “Clara,” a fictional character (based on a composite of actual stories) who experienced child sexual abuse by her now-deceased father and chooses to pursue a victim-offender dialogue between herself and a surrogate offender—someone who abused his own daughter and is taking responsibility for his actions, moving beyond denial and rationalization based on “thinking errors” (39). After lengthy prior preparation with the facilitator of a safe, structured environment for a conversation between a victim and her actual or surrogate offender, a victim-survivor reclaims their power by finding a direct voice amid ambivalent emotions toward the one who harmed them; both participants communicate (after earlier clarifying) their fears, interests, and hopes. Miller compellingly combines story, philosophy, and the nitty-gritty of preparing and experiencing a facilitated dialogue.

Second, although Miller does not engage in explicit theo-

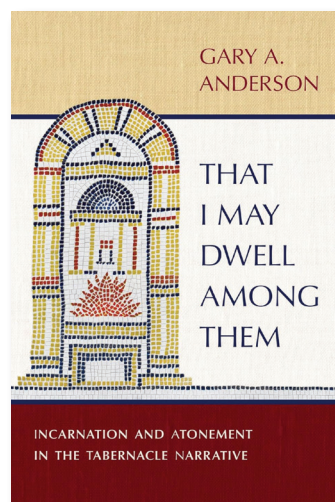
logical reflection, she does speak of Christian themes such as faith, forgiveness, and accountability, and weaves in abundant, perceptive scriptural references throughout her narrative about Clara’s inner journey and an account of the theory and methods of restorative justice. For example, when describing the significance of preparing the “right questions” to pose to a surrogate abuser, and how words “exchanged with the one who should have been an enemy” brought “new life,” Miller cites Genesis 1:3 (“Let there be light”) and John 1:1 (“In the beginning was the Word”) as revealing “that words become the source of power” (96). She observes that Jesus demonstrates a facilitator’s skill of neutrality in communicating that he knows the truth about a woman’s life (John 4:17-18). Moreover, as a victim-survivor of our sin, Jesus “suspended judgement to see our humanness and dignity” and enter a reconciled relationship (103).

Miller adds that those hoping to facilitate victim-offender dialogues will need 30-40 hours of training, partnerships beyond the congregation, policy-making, and “examining and dismantling” any “toxic culture” (137) in a church’s own leadership (she describes restorative justice-informed means to do so, such as clarifying stakeholders’ values). Her work serves as an educational primer on restorative justice that is infused with Christian spirituality and biblical motifs.

In a season when Lutherans in Minnesota and elsewhere are forming communities of witness and resistance to abusive paramilitary state power in their neighborhoods, I find myself wondering how restorative justice practices might work in the context of political polarization, where there are dissonant perceptions of who is inappropriately violent or disruptive. Miller’s *Enough Silence* provides a solid and spiritual foundation for leaning into that question in a more informed way.

Amy Carr

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That I May Dwell Among Them: Incarnation and Atonement in the Tabernacle Narrative. By Gary A. Anderson.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023.
ISBN: 978-0-8028-8306-3. 254
pages. Hardcover. \$35.99.

Gary A. Anderson, Professor of Catholic Thought at Notre Dame, is honest to admit that the Tabernacle Narrative found in Exodus and Leviticus is a very “tedious” and “tiresome” account. He cites Goethe’s judgment of it being “completely unbearable” (69). I concur. This is a pains-



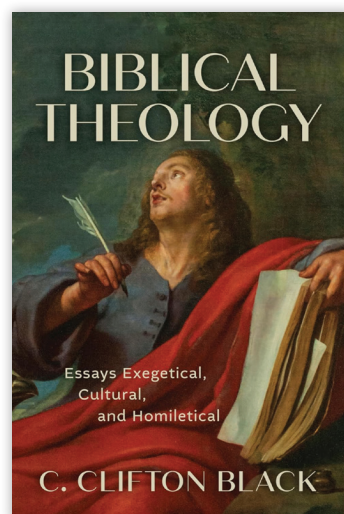
taking scrutiny of biblical texts in search of what the author hopes will deepen our understanding of the relationship between God's living Word in the Old and New Testaments. He seeks to exegete in a way helpful to Christian understandings of the incarnation and atonement.

Anderson's starting point for interpreting the Tabernacle Narrative to Christians is its undeniable reference in the prologue of John's Gospel where the Word become flesh is described as "tabernacling" or "tenting" among humanity. The allusion is to the tabernacle, the moveable dwelling of Yahweh and the Ark of the Covenant. The author takes great care in describing the instructions from Yahweh in Exodus for creating the tabernacle and its furnishings. These were looked upon as almost as holy as Yahweh, since this is where God chose to dwell, analogous to the closeness of the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Leviticus details the manual of liturgical forms and the descriptions of particular rites for the sacrifices overseen by Aaron, his sons, and their descendants.

The second part of Anderson's study is more accessible, titled "The Priestly Narrative in Larger Canonical Contexts." This features chapters on "The Sin of the Golden Calf" and "The Binding of Isaac and Sacrifice." The two concluding chapters on "Incarnation" and "Atonement" are of direct relevance to Christian readers. Here Anderson demonstrates how our understanding of these crucial topics can be more deeply understood in connection with the relation to the Tabernacle Narrative.

While exhibiting a strongly traditional Roman Catholic sensibility regarding the theme of sacrifice, his most frequent references are to the Protestant biblical scholar Brevard Childs of Yale and the Jewish Scripture scholar Jon Levenson of Harvard. The author employs colorful analogies when he senses that a fine interpretive point may be eluding the reader!

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***Biblical Theology:
Essays Exegetical,
Cultural, and
Homiletical.*** By C.
Clifton Black.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024.
ISBN: 978-0-8028-8444-2. 512
pages. Hardcover. \$65.99.

This is a treasure-trove of more than thirty essays collected over the long career of the Methodist biblical theologian C. Clifton Black, who taught for most of his career at Princeton Theological Seminary. They include a wide

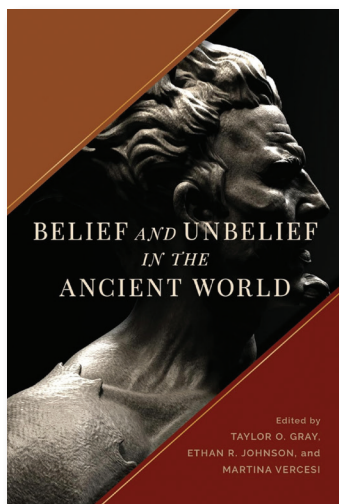
variety of writings, including deep probes into New Testament texts that always are supported by references to Hebrew scripture and other biblical commentators, ancient and modern. The last quarter of the book is devoted to what he names "Feuilletons" (meaning "light, popular pieces") and "Declarations," shorter pieces that demonstrate the author's good sense of humor and sensitivity to current issues in church and culture.

The chapter titled "The Persistence of the Wounds" probes the church's neuralgia regarding biblical lament and the disinclination of preachers to explore its connection to the Gospel. Here he quotes the moving testimony of Nicholas Wolterstorff in his book *Lament for a Son*, whose twenty-five-year-old son Eric died in a mountaineering accident about whom he wrote: "I bear the wounds of his death ... They mark me. If you want to know who I am, put your hand in" (92-93). The chapter, "Ave Maria, Gratia Plena," explores deeply "the biblical witness to Mary as a paradigm of grace" (193), moving beyond the texts of the Annunciation and Magnificat to revisit all the Gospel references to the mother of Jesus.

My favorite chapter is titled "The Kindness of Strangers" which finds its origin in the presidential address Black delivered in 2023 to the American Theological Society in Princeton. He chose to address what he judges to be the dire state of our American political and cultural situation, in which he asserts, "Cruelty is our daily danse macabre" (314). This is the occasion for engaging in a wide-ranging study of the biblical word "kindness," *hesed* in Hebrew, *eleos* in Greek, including cognates and near synonyms.

The author includes a brief historical foray into what he calls "the eclipse of kindness" (326) in the modern, post-Hobbesian world and urges that we need "to grasp the shovel, dig as far down as we can, strike bedrock, and find that our Creator has built us to love. 'We love, because God first loved us' (1 John 4:19)." Citing Howard Thurman, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Hans Ur von Balthasar he concludes: "The kindness of strangers cannot be generated by leaders in houses of worship, by teachers in classrooms, by members of academic societies. Only a Power outside ourselves can free us from bondage within, spiritually endowing those able to receive it" (330). Now that is an encouragement for our times!

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Belief and Unbelief in the Ancient World.

Edited by Taylor O.
Gray, Ethan R. Jonson,
and Martina Vercesi.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2025.
ISBN: 978-0-8028-7897-7. 288
pages. Hardcover. \$33.63.

This book of eleven essays is written by scholars from various perspectives. Each essay discusses ancient Mediterranean Religion influences on Judeo-

Christian beliefs of the times. This is a treasure chest of detailed resources (footnotes overwhelm many pages), but this might overwhelm curious lay readers. There are many helpful illustrations and pictures.

One question that ties all these essays together is: Why do people have belief systems which evolve into religions? In any given historical age, religion is both a framework for interpreting life experiences and responses to threatening phenomenon. People search to understand why things happen. This might include attributing divine retribution for disobedience or explaining the instability of both creation and the human condition. (102-103).

The essays trace religious history as far back as the Greek speeches of the Greek historian Thucydides (7-22) and includes accusations by Roman community leaders of Christians being atheists for not bowing to the Roman gods, whose blessings contributed to community stability and military victories (23-33). Christian teaching of eschatology posed the greatest threat to all to the Roman belief in a cyclical timeline (36).

According to the Apostle Paul, “weak faith” involved Gentile converts seeking circumcision to conform to Jewish practices (69-70). Augustine proposed that trust in the catholic faith is reasonable—and thus to be passed onto future generations—to bring a right relationship with God. This faith translates into new hope beyond the unpredictability of life’s events, thus maintaining stability in the community (95).

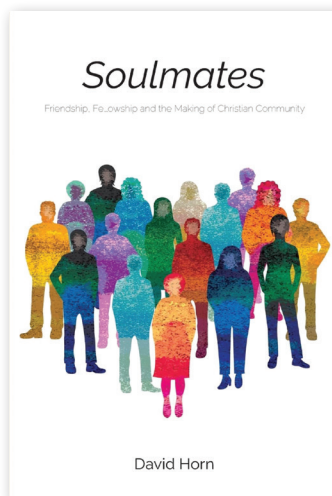
Beliefs embedded in worship rituals continue to provide wisdom for addressing life circumstances within a given religious framework (105). A modern example might be 12-step groups that provide a path to recovery from the substance or drugs. The 12 steps provide a ritual, which if regularly practiced, provide positive results for a higher quality of life.

The use of statuettes, mortuary seals, rings, and pottery utensils may portray religious counter narratives that supplement written texts that are usually authored by an elite class. A 560 BCE ceramic artifact illustrates a human sacrifice but also depicts disapproving faces in the background (146-147). Images from the Persian period suggest rulers were polytheists who accom-

modated to local religions for political purposes. Thus, Cyrus respected the God of Judea alongside other deities as he sought cooperation in building projects. (114).

The last chapter deals with the religious meaning of inscriptions on various storage jars (pithos). Figurines and coins suggest the images of God as a bull, ostrich, or lion. These results are not final, so further study is necessary (251).

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Soulmates: Friendship, Fellowship and the Making of Christian Community. By David Horn.

Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock,
2025. Reprint. ISBN: 979-8-3852-
5957-1. xiii & 173 pages. Paper.
\$27.00.

David Horn writes eloquently on the hard work it takes to create authentic and faithful Christian community. Using personal stories, Horn makes tangible the ideas he is discussing—

the five vignettes used early in the book reappear toward the end as examples of how Christian fellowship could have formed. His text is exceptionally well-researched, drawing from centuries of philosophers and theologians’ perspectives on friendship, fellowship, and relationships.

The book is comprised of seven chapters. The first details the five windows or vignettes, described above, and the varied relationships one finds at a church. Chapters two and three explain what friendship is, setting the stage for contrasting it with community as found in chapters four and five. Chapter six revisits the five windows; chapter seven ties it all together and explores creating Christian fellowship through hospitality.

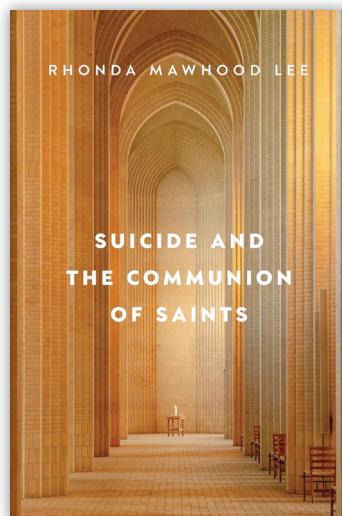
Among Horn’s main points is that Christian fellowship is not the same as friendship. While relationships that form at church may lead to friendships, they must never be allowed to morph into cliques. What the church should strive for through hospitality is a Christian fellowship that is, “Nonexclusive, Non-preferential, Nonreciprocal, Without concern for status, [rooted in] Divine obligation/calling, Self-giving, Static, Christ-based, Indirect Knowing, [with the] Communication of transparency, without secrets” (109). These ten ideals create a lofty goal that reflects the beauty of the Kingdom of God and the reality of the Body of Christ as revealed throughout Scripture.

This book is a useful resource for pastors looking to create or expand a sense of fellowship in their context. Although not



organized as a study, it could be used well with a Congregation Council or in a book study. Horn's work is beneficial not just for those within church walls, but for those beyond our membership.

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Suicide and the Communion of Saints.
 By Rhonda Mawhood Lee.

Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2025.
 ISBN: 978-0-8028-8471-8. 160 pages. Paper. \$4.46.

This helpful and easy-to-read handbook is useful for anybody with a loved one who has contemplated or completed suicide. With discussion questions at the end of each chapter, the author

is a very passionate survivor whose mother took her own life (17). Two themes threaded throughout the entire book include that feelings can be complicated and that one needs to carefully thread the needle in the use of language about this reality. The author herself still is out her complicated feelings.

Roughly divided into two sections, the first five chapters attempt to reframe the history and religious premises of suicide. Surprisingly, little is written in Scripture about successful suicides aside from Samson in Judges 16, and Judas Iscariot in Matthew 27:3-8 and Acts 1:18-19 (contrasting versions). Much folklore surrounding suicide is from Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, often based on Deuteronomy 32:39 and represented as an unrepentant sin upon death (38). Historically, those completing suicide have been associated with seventh level of Dantes inferno or suffering present isolation and despair (41-42).

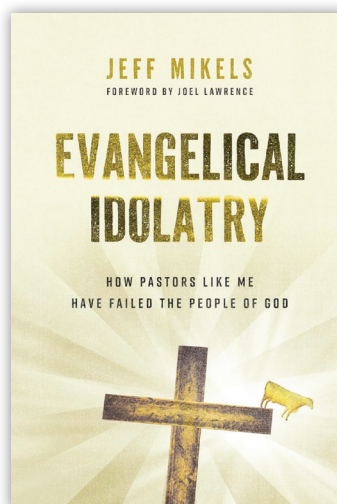
A chapter on "Sinful Settings" discusses women's suicide fearing violation by conquering enemies (49). Africans bound to become chattel slaves in North American opted to end their own lives, even by self-starvation. Psalm 88 and Job 3 give voice to people of faith contemplating ending life. Acts 16 provides an example of Paul's followers surrounding the jailer in Phillip who was attempting to kill himself after the shaking of the prison foundations.

Lee offers a threefold plan for those with loved ones who are contemplating taking of their own life. First, listen with kindness to give voice to their pain without judgement. Second, offer a broader perspective on life to widen the tunnel vision beyond thinking ending their life is their only option. Third, tell them why we value their life and help reframe their reality beyond the moment. Other suggestions include removing guns in the house,

entrusting weapons to a friend or family member. Sit with them as long as possible, even if it means sleeping on their couch overnight (79-80). A loved one, however, can only interrupt some suicide attempts. This is a sobering reality. Survivors need not carry the guilt if suicide still occurs.

We can help reframe by avoiding the term "commit suicide" which implies "sin" rather than illness. Self-murder, taking one's life, and recognizing "mental illness" are better interpretive frames (15-16). Lee believes the communion of saints welcomes all people regardless of their religious beliefs about death and the afterlife. A strong belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ offers hopeful direction for further study. Clergy, church workers, and funeral directors will find this book valuable. St. Martins-in-the-Fields is a helpful resource organization.

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Evangelical Idolatry: How Pastors Like Me Have Failed the People of God. By Jeff Mikels.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2025.
 ISBN: 978-0-8028-8466-4. vii & 234 pages. Paper. \$28.99.

In *Holy Envy*, Barbara Brown Taylor wrote that her Religion 101 students deepened their engagement with their own faith by studying other religious traditions. Although Pastor

Mikels and I are not from different religious traditions, there are significant differences between his Evangelical Christianity and mainline Lutheranism. So much so, that I approached this book with the same hopes Taylor had for her students. We can all learn something from the faith experiences of others, and I hoped that Mikels's vulnerable engagement with his own self-confessed failings as a pastor would have much to teach me about my own church leadership.

A pastor for over twenty years in the Evangelical tradition, Mikels aims to expose what he calls "idols of Evangelicalism," what has formed and sustains these idols and then to address them for the sake of the gospel (13). He examines the doctrinal roots of Evangelicalism and then offers his own personal confession of how these roots led him to certain beliefs he now names as in opposition to the gospel, biblically addresses the responsibility of Christians in the world today, and finally names the idols he sees in the evangelical world today in order to dismantle them.

Mikels' doctrinal conclusions seem painfully obvious to me, a pastor in the MORE progressive culture of the Evangelical

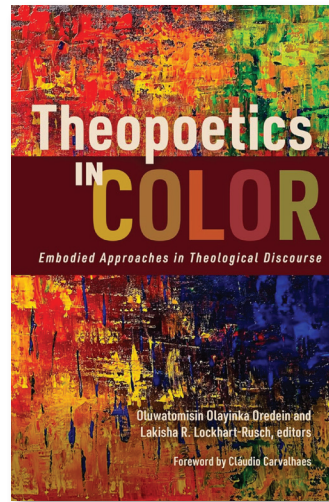


Lutheran Church in America. *Of course*, the political dogma of “personal responsibility” is antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus that prioritizes care for marginalized populations and places responsibility on those most powerful for the care of those most vulnerable. Isn't it *obvious* that Evangelical Christianity has (wrongly and for the purposes of power consolidation) adopted aspects of the current political landscape as if they are central tenets of Christian faith—some even supersede Jesus' stated supreme commandments? It is tempting for me to pass this book off as an Evangelical finally “coming to his senses” by understanding Jesus' true teachings and how they *really* relate to our current circumstances.

However, for leaders of the church or leaders of any kind, that reading would be far too easy. Instead, this book invites the reader into Mikels' radical reexamination of his faith and surrounding culture, and his confession of former understanding he now sees as contrary to the Gospel of Jesus for the life of the world. When someone risks everything, voluntarily relinquishing group status in self-stated service of truth, their story is valuable on that merit alone. Instead of litigating each of his stances (both those he has disavowed and those he has kept but modified), readers who keep an open mind will appreciate his humility and the all-too-rare relinquishing of power in service to truth. Whether readers agree with his every point, his refusal to worship at the altar of power, choosing instead the way he has discerned as humble discipleship, is convicting and inspirational. Borrowing a bit of humility as a lens through which to hear his story, it is time well spent for anyone navigating power, systems of power and their corrupting influence on leaders of myriad human systems.

As an examination of power and its corrupting influence on belief, anyone, no matter their connection with the church, could benefit from this book. It invites all readers into honest reflection about their history and relationship with power. For Evangelical Christians it would be a provocative read, and for mainline churchgoers and leaders it is an invitation not into condemnation but empathy and recognition of power's influence on all humankind.

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Theopoetics in Color: Embodied Approaches in Theological Discourse. Edited by Oluwatomisin Olayinka Oredein, and Lakisha R. Lockhart-Rusch.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024.
ISBN: 978-0-8028-8018-5. 192 pages. Paper. \$26.99.

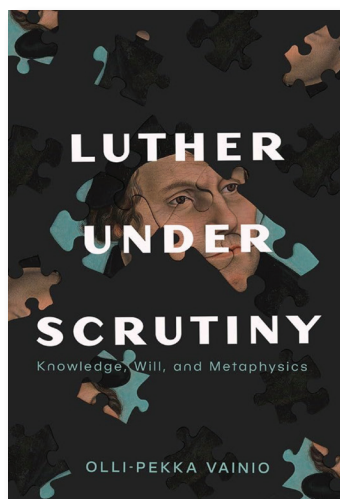
This collection of essays, solicited and collected from thirteen “minoritized”

scholarly voices, articulates a process-oriented project in theological meaning-making that aims at “theopoetical” expression. This is not an easy term to define, even though Olayinka Oredein, one of the editors, takes up the task in the Introduction: “Theopoetics is the space of how the self knows God. It is theologizing done amid the quest for spiritual and physical freedom” (7). It involves “creative God-reflection from the space of the body and toward the totality of liberation” (11). Oredein cites such well known “theopoets” as Amos Wilder and Rubem Alves, while arguing that this volume looks entirely to people of color as interlocutors to carry out efforts at “embodied theology” in which “the flesh is the knower and the means” (40).

Theopoetics is a mind-expanding term that aims both to expand and carry the work of theologizing beyond mere words. The ensuing chapters therefore make an impression that must be experienced, as the authors often contend. The three essays on “Methods and Inquiries” are especially impenetrable. More illuminating is the section on “Interlocutors” that are more specific to the works and issues of particular theopoets. Especially moving is the testimony of James Howard Hill Jr. in “Somethin’ Like Sanctified,” where he reflects on the difficult “haunting” he experiences from the spectre of his sometimes abusive preacher/father (“I love my father, but I do not know him”). In “Imaging Loss and Longing,” Yohana Agra Junker details her embodied reactions to the “aesth/ethic” of Doris Salcedo’s site-specific artistic installations (91-92) as a catalyst for assisting the process of physical grieving.

To my mind, the most productive and illuminating essays were the final two. The first, by Brian Bantum, is titled “We with God,” in which he turns Karl Barth’s emphasis of “God with Us” on its head with reference to a “theology that speaks of God through the materiality of our world” (155-156). The book then concludes with an “Afterword,” in which the two editors engage in a free-flowing dialogue about the origin of the book and its difficult ontogenesis during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Luther Under Scrutiny: Knowledge, Will, and Metaphysics.
By Olli-Pekka Vainio.

Waco: Baylor University Press, 2025. ISBN: 978-1-4813-1911-9. xiii & 221 pages. Paper. \$47.99.

Vainio is Professor of Dogmatics at the University of Helsinki and one of the key representatives of the Finnish School of Luther interpretation who has had his work translated into English (cf.

his *Justification and Participation in Christ*). This book is a collection of essays which offers a penetrating look into Luther's thought from a mature Finnish school perspective.

The book consists of ten chapters, divided into three parts. Each part reflects the subtitle of the book; hence, the first part discusses knowledge (chapters 1-4), the second part explores the will (chapters 5-7), and the third part focuses on metaphysics (chapters 8-10). The author offers an epilogue about the relationship between Lutheran theology and postmodernity.

The book as a whole demonstrates fluency with Luther's entire corpus, familiarity with relevant secondary literature, and an awareness of Luther's thought in its contemporary context. Vainio's discussion of reason (chapter 1), for instance, dialogues with Luther scholars such as Oswald Bayer and Theodore Dieter, drawing from various works of Luther (for example, his 1539 *Verbum caro factum est* and *Disputatio de homine*).

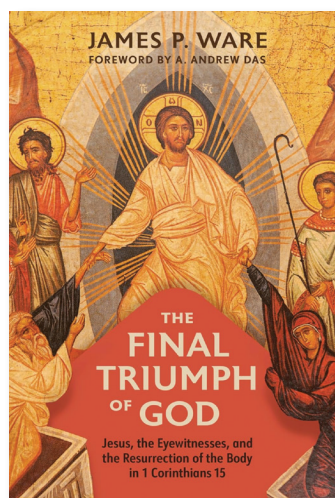
Vainio's essay on moral deliberation argues that Luther affirmed a "third use" of God's law as it gives "form to" (62) the Christian life. Also, Vainio argues that Luther's teaching on "[b]ound choice" (69) places him on the horns of a dilemma: either univocity regarding God's love or "theological pessimism" (96). The latter, which Vainio argues is the most coherent, renders theological speech meaningless by reducing it to the experience of the pious believer.

In the discussion of theosis (chapter 8), the author helpfully answers objections to the Finnish school. Upon addressing the claim that "[t]heosis excludes imputation as a central feature of justification" (144), he states that "the basis for imputation of Christ's righteousness is ... Christ's own righteousness," received by faith, rather than the "renewal caused by Christ's indwelling" (148). In an intriguing analysis of the metaphysics of theosis and the question of whether this entails that a believer consists "of two persons" (55), Vainio proposes a modified version of Mannermaa's "ecstatic formal unity" (160) model. Simply put, the believing person is not absorbed into God's life but instead retains their human nature "since Christ is actually present in the person giving his divine life to human faculties" (169). This

provision of divine life is proportional to "the extent that sanctification takes place in the believer" (163).

Vaino's clear, succinct, and penetrating analysis of Luther's thought in conversation with philosophy and theology establishes this book as essential reading for anyone desiring to grasp the best that the Finnish School of Luther interpretation has to offer. As such, it is essential reading for any serious student of Luther's thought.

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The Final Triumph of God: Jesus, the Eyewitness, and the Resurrection of the Body in 1 Corinthians 15. By James P. Ware.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2025. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7947-9. iii & 458 pages. Hardcover. \$44.00.

In *The Final Triumph of God*, James P. Ware provides a comprehensive, verse-by-verse commentary focused exclusively on 1 Corinthians

15, which he identifies as the "fullest treatment of the hope of the resurrection within the entire Bible" (1). This work stands out as a unique, full-length exegetical study devoted entirely to this pivotal chapter, providing fresh insights into its structure, theology, and historical context. Ware's central purpose is to dismantle a popular paradigm in Pauline studies which suggests that Paul envisioned a non-physical, ethereal resurrection body. Instead, Ware argues that Paul's theology is a "robust doctrine of bodily resurrection" (8) that is entirely consistent with the physical resurrection of flesh and bones described in the Gospels and Acts.

The book is organized into fifteen chapters, corresponding to the logic of the biblical text. Chapter 1 establishes 1 Corinthians 15 as the "goal and culmination of the epistle" (10). Here Ware solves three scholarly puzzles (how 1 Corinthians 1-4 relates to 5-16, what is Corinthian wisdom, and the function of 1 Corinthians 15) by showing that 1 Corinthians 1-4 introduces a false philosophical wisdom denying resurrection, 1 Corinthians 5-14 addresses the resulting behavioral problems, and 1 Corinthians 15 serves as the climax refuting this core theological error. Chapter 2 examines verses 1-2, framing them as a "revelatory proclamation" (55) where Paul makes the gospel more fully known to correct the congregation's lack of understanding. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide an in-depth analysis of the apostolic formula in verses 3-11. Ware highlights that the verb for "raised" (ἐγείρω) signifies that the corpse gets up from the tomb, which



“necessarily entails the revivification of the body” (87). He also clarifies Paul’s self-description as an “untimely birth” by proposing it is a comparative birth analogy: while other apostles were successfully brought to birth through witnessing Jesus’ ministry, resurrection appearances, and receiving the Spirit at Pentecost, Paul—absent from these foundational events—experienced a failed birth into apostleship. Christ’s extraordinary post-ascension appearance then miraculously birthed Paul into the already-complete apostolic body, explaining his unique irregular status.

Chapter 6 considers the Stoic conditional logic in verses 12–19 to demonstrate the futility of faith if the resurrection is denied. Chapter 7 discusses Christ as the last Adam (verses 20–23), whose resurrection is the cause and wellspring for the faithful. Chapter 8 tackles difficulties in verses 24–28, arguing that Christ’s kingdom is not temporary but everlasting and without end. In Chapter 9, Ware interprets “fighting with beasts at Ephesus” literally, using it to show that the life of cruciform discipleship is meaningless without a future hope. Chapter 10 addresses philosophical challenges entertained by Paul in verses 29–34, attributed to skeptics who found the reconstitution of the body from decay to be absurd.

Chapters 11 and 12 explain several of Paul’s analogies. Ware insists that the “spiritual body” is not made of “spirit-matter” but is the physical body “animated by the Spirit of God” (327). James Ware’s key contribution is demonstrating that Paul’s paired verbs *σπείρεται/ἐγείρεται* in 1 Corinthians 15:42–44 share a single subject: the present mortal body. This implies the same perishable body that is sown in death is raised imperishable,

refuting interpretations claiming Paul envisions a non-physical or radically discontinuous resurrection body. Chapter 13 describes the bestowal of the Holy Spirit as the means of this transformation. Chapter 14 analyzes the mystery of verses 50–53, clarifying that flesh and blood refers to humanity’s “bondage to corruption and decay” (373) rather than the material substance of the body itself. Finally, Chapter 15 celebrates the resurrection as the final triumph of God over sin and death, where the creator God is revealed as all in all.

Ware’s work engages deeply with contemporary New Testament scholarship, directly challenging a popular view that interprets Paul’s resurrection theology as non-physical or purely spiritual. Building upon traditional exegetical methods while incorporating insights from ancient Greek philosophy and rhetoric, Ware disputes interpretations popularized by scholars such as Dale Martin and Paula Fredriksen, who argue for a non-material or ethereal resurrection body composed of spirit-matter. While some scholars may still find his traditionalist conclusions tenuous, Ware’s rigorous methodology and comprehensive treatment demand serious engagement from the academy.

This book offers rigorous exegesis valuable to scholars, students, and pastors alike. While technical discussions may challenge general readers, Ware’s careful arguments and pastoral sensitivity make complex material accessible. Whether one agrees with all conclusions, *The Final Triumph of God* is an essential contribution to Pauline studies deserving serious engagement.

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