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Book Reviews

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Table of Contents

Editors' Note

In response to the large number of book reviews received by *CTQ*, the Editors have decided to offer a monthly book review at the *CTQ* website (https://www.ctsfw.edu/resources/concordia-theological-quarterly/ctq-book-reviews/). These book reviews will provide further engagement with current theological resources outside of the usual publication schedule of *CTQ*. At the end of each year, these online book reviews will be gathered into an annual digital-only supplementary issue to be distributed to our online subscribers. The following is the inaugural edition of the annual supplementary issue, covering online book reviews from August through December 2025. We hope that these reviews will prove useful and edifying to the church and to her mission.

The Editors

CTQ 89 (2025): 387–398

Book Reviews

***The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*. By Ben Myers. Christian Essentials. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018. 147 pages. Hardcover.**

Repetition is essential for depth. Without returning to once-learned things, we may never truly know them. Liturgical churches may take this for granted and, like Esau, spurn their birthright, but Lexham Press's Christian Essential series is a beautifully designed set of books on the ancient catechetical topics that engages ancient things in fresh ways. Ben Myers' book on the Creed is one of three currently available, each of which is copiously and attractively illustrated and skillfully laid out. The existence of the series with its commitment to "basics. . .unfolded afresh" (as the Series Preface expresses its intention) is altogether laudable.

The genesis of Myers' contribution was in a series of catechetical sermons on the Creed preached at a Uniting Church in Sydney, Australia. That denomination's melding of Methodism, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism (similar to the United Church of Canada) would not necessarily prepare the reader for Myers' depth of engagement with the church fathers in his preaching. He has constant reference to Irenaeus, to Athanasius, and to Gregory of Nyssa. A helpful index at the back of the book displays his references and where the reader can follow up with his own investigation of Irenaeus' *Against the Heresies*, Jacob of Serug's *On the Mother of God*, or Origen's *On First Principles*—three among a large company of patristic citations.

But what *is* the consensus of the fathers? Myers places the Creed within its ancient setting in the baptismal rite—surely a patristic norm—but baptism is never explicitly regenerative in his text. Myers is clear that "[s]ome early Christian teachers suggested that heaven and hell might in fact be the same place" (92), but he is unclear how many fathers thought this or what his criterion of selection was for formulating his unique understandings of hell and of the final judgment, neither of which jives with the Athanasian Creed's explicit formulations on damnation and judgment. Myers' deployment of the Creed as a rule of faith follows Irenaeus closely, but when one father says one thing and another father another thing, who shall decide? Who watches the patristic watchmen?

Myers' writing is fluent, clear, and beautiful, and his summary of the book as an "invitation to happiness" (xvi) in that word's deepest sense could scarcely be improved upon as a way of understanding what we invite people to believe when we invite them to trust in Christ for salvation and life everlasting. Yet with the peaceful invitation to the beauty of faith, there must also be a refutation of falsehood, so that the new Christian does not stumble early for lack of knowledge and ignorance of danger. In refuting falsehood, Myers often boxes himself in rhetorically. He will bring up some objection to Christianity, for example, that it is patriarchal or

Western (a priori bad and evil things), and rather than destroying the lofty thought raised against Christ or Scripture (2 Cor 10:5), he is eager to explain how *really* Christianity is necessarily egalitarian (but cf. Eph 5) or *really* the most profound depiction of the ascension is an Aboriginal artist's painting of Jesus ascending down into the ground. These points are likely unconvincing to those opposed to the gospel, who hold all cultural power in the contemporary West, and Myers' way of handling objections sets an example of accepting the enemy's framework and then justifying one's Christianity within that always-shifting, never-satisfied frame. His harsh words for ancient Gnosticism are welcome, but there are other opponents now abroad in the land. This book is a pleasure to read and to argue with, but we await a clear, Lutheran explanation of these ancient, evergreen topics keyed to contemporary challenges to the faith and drawn thoroughly not from this father or that father but from Scripture, as the ancient creeds are.

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***Theological Commonplaces. On the End of the World and On Hell.* Vols. 32–33 in one volume. By Johann Gerhard. Translated by Richard J. Dinda. Edited with annotations by Joshua J. Hayes, Benjamin T. G. Mayes, and Aaron Jensen. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2021. 398 pages. Hardcover.**

In a previous book review, I have given an overview of the Gerhard dogmatics published so far in English from 2002 to 2020 by the editors and staff at Concordia Publishing House. The topics in the present volume are from two of the original quarto volumes: "On the End of the World" and "On Hell."

Regarding the doctrine of the end of the world, Gerhard sets forth its multifaceted practical use. We should: 1) view all visible things as fleeting, passing, and transitory and earnestly conform ourselves to godliness; 2) be called back from an inordinate love of the world; 3) be called back from the greedy acquisition of riches; 4) avoid the postponement of repentance; 5) be stirred up to sincere fear of God; 6) be stirred up to a desire and love for heavenly things; 7) be stirred up to a zeal for doing good; 8) be stirred by a desire for a blessed departure; and 9) be encouraged amidst all the persecutions and adversities that Christian face in this world (155–162). As in all his dogmatic treatises and volumes, Gerhard leads the reader to the practical use of doctrines, both for the preacher and the hearer.

Particular questions that Gerhard treats at length are the questions of the annihilation of the world, millennialism, and the duration of the world. On the matter of the annihilation of the world, the editors give a very helpful discussion (x-xiv) to

complement the author's own extensive treatment of this topic (62–108). By annihilation, Gerhard means "not just the end-time destruction of the world before God makes a 'new heaven and a new earth,' but the total reduction of the present world to nothingness (annihilation), with the exception of human beings and angels" (xi). Gerhard believed that this view best fits with Scripture, but does not claim it is a dogma, and he recognizes the fathers of the church and Lutheran predecessors who disagreed with this position (xiii). You will have to read Gerhard in this volume for yourself to decide whether he has made his case.

In the matter of millennialism, orthodox Lutheran readers are in for a real treat. Gerhard dredges up from the various tributaries of church history just about every idea that has ever been proposed concerning the millennium. Here he quotes or references the millennialism of some early church fathers, Anabaptists, Socinians, select 16th century Jews, a few Calvinists, a few Roman Catholics, and even Paracelsus (112–152). It seems no age has been immune to this heresy, and Gerhard refutes them all. But he does come close to advocating a type of post-millennialism in which Christ will return at the end of the thousand years, i.e., he does not interpret "one thousand" metaphorically (xiv).

Lutherans who are interested in young-earth creationism will want to read through the short section where Gerhard lists the "Gentiles" who estimated the duration of the world from its beginning to their own point in history (36). Included in this list are Plato, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Cicero, Lactantius, Aeschylus, Sotion, Pliny, Eudoxus, and Plutarch. If you wondered whether Gerhard was a classicist, here is plenty of proof! Finally, he points to three things related to the end of the world that foreshadow the end of all things. These are: 1) the Noahic flood; 2) the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and 3) the destructions of regions through fires, floodwaters, earthquakes, and "openings of the earth" (153).

Regarding the treatise "On Hell," the editors preface the work by noting that in it "readers will find a thorough response to the perennially popular heresy of universal salvation regardless of faith in Christ" (xv). Lest we think that "universalism" is a modern heresy, Gerhard lists many both inside and outside the church who deny the existence of hell: 1) Juvenal; 2) Epicurus; 3) Epicureans and mockers of Christians in the ancient church; 4) Cain, son of Adam; 5) Eunomius; 6) Armenians (they teach that Christ destroyed hell, but they affirm eternal punishment for unbelievers and the evil); 7) a Frenchman named Almericus; 8) a Dutchman named Herman Ryswick; 9) the Albanensians (ca. 796 AD); 10) the Albigensians (ca. 1216 AD); 11) Nicolaus of Calabria; 12) indirect denial by Origenists, Anabaptists, Libertines, since they teach that at some time the ungodly will be saved; 13) the Photinians, i.e., the Socinians; and 14) three popes—Paul III, Julius II, and Leo X (207–208).

Gerhard treats the doctrine of hell at length. The average Lutheran pastor or lay theologian will be amazed how much we do know about hell from Scripture. As to

the question of what "hell" is, Gerhard clears up that confusion right away by stating that the word "hell" may be used in two ways: 1) for eternal death and the eternal state of ungodly men; 2) the place where this happens (209). If you ever wondered, as I have, what the "worms" in hell are, Gerhard explains that they are "the constant and continual gnawing of conscience, which arises from the memory of sin; a sort of mad, displeasing, and fruitless repentance; a very great and uninterrupted anguish of heart. For just as worms gnaw away corpses by their constant biting, so also that inner worm of conscience will constantly prick the soul of the damned" (256; see also 297–298).

On the question of the degrees of punishment in hell, that is explained thoroughly (303–306). On the question of whether body or soul, or both, will be in hell, the answer is the latter (315–317). As to the location of hell, Gerhard argues convincingly that it is "truly distinct from the place of the blessed and is separated from it by a very great distance" and then admits we do not know its location (323). He thoroughly refutes the Roman Catholic view that hell is at the center of the earth (318–326).

As to the use of the doctrine of hell for the preacher and the hearer, Gerhard states that it should "turn our eyes and minds from the visible to the invisible, from the present to the future, from the temporary and momentary to the eternal" (328). The doctrine: 1) recalls us from ungodliness, security, sins against conscience, and proclivity to sin; 2) recalls us from the desires and all pleasures of the flesh; 3) leads us to a true fear of God and repentance; and 4) consoles us amid adversities, persecutions, and martyrdom, in that the sufferings of the godly in the present time do not compare at all to the eternal suffering of the ungodly (328–334).

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***The Venerable and Adorable Eucharist: A Study of the Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the 1500s*. By Tom G. A. Hardt. Translated by Mark E. DeGarmeaux. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2023. 448 pages. Hardcover.**

Dr. John Stephenson describes *The Venerable and Adorable Eucharist* by Tom G.A. Hardt as an "intellectual marathon" (xiv). His description is apt. While any survey of historical theology risks antiquarianism and generalization, Hardt does not take the challenge lying down. His interaction with the primary sources from Luther, Melanchthon, Brenz, Hunnius, and others is impressive, as well as his broad acquaintance with secondary literature. Neither does he show blind loyalty to any school or theologian. While dedicating his book to Hermann Sasse, he is not afraid

on that account to disagree with Sasse (52, 82). While Hardt's book is thorough and scholarly, it is not on that account irrelevant to the parish pastor. Any treatment of the consecration and duration of the sacramental union properly belongs to what an altar guild should know. Hardt's book contains detailed treatments of the repletive and definitive modes of presence (79), how nominalism's doctrine of omnipresence affected later Lutheran descriptions of the personal union (41), and how liturgical ceremonies demonstrate the propriety of adoring Christ present in the Holy Communion (202–203). His central thesis is that there is a fundamental disagreement between Luther and Melanchthon on the meaning of the *Verba*, and as such, on the consecration and accompanying adoration. Luther's mode of speaking was "the bread is the body," and that this occurs as the direct result of the consecration (190). Melanchthon preferred to locate the "foundational factor" of the Sacrament in the action, and specifically the completion of the action (198). Such a difference is the well-documented source of the debates in Lutheran circles surrounding the beginning and duration of the sacramental union.

In chapter 1, Hardt treats philosophical and theological presuppositions of Aquinas, Ockham, Biel, and Luther. Hardt notes that the nominalism of Ockham and its accompanying notion of concrete presence "laid the theological foundation for the visible reality of the eucharistic miracle of transformation" (13). Ockham's view is crucial to understanding Luther's own, according to Hardt, for Luther holds with Ockham, against Thomas, that Christ is not merely present in the Supper "*modo substantiae*" (18). Rather, Luther holds a total and complete identicalness of Christ's heavenly and eucharistic body (21).

In chapter two, Hardt deals extensively with Luther's Christology. According to Hardt, Zwingli's opposition to Luther's adoration of the Sacrament stemmed not from the disagreement on the Lord's Supper, but from Zwingli's christological convictions that forbade worshipping the body of Christ inside or outside the Sacrament (55). This chapter spends more time refuting kenotic Christology than arguably is necessary, spending nine pages on Kjell Nilsson's view alone (65–74). Additionally, footnote 182 contains an odd objection to the Formula of Concord's interpretation of Luther's Christology.[1] Hardt maintains that the Formula "confessionalizes" (185),

[1] Specifically, Hardt argues that Lutheran Orthodoxy introduced the *genus majestaticum* within the *communicatio idiomatum*. On page 74, following a critique of Nilsson, he writes, "Orthodoxy, of its own accord, introduced the participation of the attributes of majesty under the *communicatio idiomatum* but, unaware of certain difficulties in the definitions, retained the existence of special groups." In footnote 182 commenting on this statement, Hardt says, "When the Formula of Concord appeals to WA 54:49.33ff [cf. AE 15:293] for the *communicatio idiomatum* in the sense of the *genus majestaticum*, this is incorrect. Luther speaks there only about the actual assuming of the human nature into personal union with the divinity: 'That God is man'" (74, footnote 182). Citations of Luther are from *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976), vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986), vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown

and seems to say that this distinction was introduced in Orthodoxy via Chemnitz's *Repetitio sanae doctrinae*. The problem remains that the Formula of Concord says this distinction is present in Luther. This demonstrates a recurring tendency in Hardt's text. He often labels any caution of adoration or emphasis on the entire action of the Supper as Melanchthonian and therefore sees a large gap between Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy.

This tendency reappears in chapter 4, where Hardt claims that Luther positively and "unabashedly" picked up and used the term "impanation" to describe his doctrine (149). This is not entirely accurate, as the reference cited by Hardt in WA 26:434.39 does not establish that Luther unabashedly endorsed this term. Luther simply used it because his adversaries accused him of it.[2] While Hardt acknowledges that Luther takes this term from his enemies, he also seems to believe that it accurately describes Luther's doctrine, namely that "it is the body of Christ through impanation" (149). Later Lutherans rejected impanation as another philosophical explanation of the sacramental union that demands local inclusion of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine.[3]

Hardt's words against Edward Peters likewise reveal this unbridgeable gap he sees between Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy. In chapter seven he says that Peters shows "an irrational desire to harmonize different opinions with Lutheranism on this point (of adoration)" (271, footnote 174). This desire is not entirely irrational. It simply recognizes that the emphasis on the use and the action of the Supper was not entirely rejected even by the most orthodox theologians after Luther. For example, Hardt claims that Chemnitz's "solidarity with Luther is obvious" (213). Nevertheless, Chemnitz says in both quotations cited by Hardt on the topic of adoration that it takes place in the "action" of the Supper (309, 311). Furthermore, Hardt claims that Johann Gerhard is distinctly Melanchthonian (298), but concedes that Gerhard also accepts the adoration of Christ in the Sacrament in a certain sense (298, footnote 306). There are certainly different emphases between Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy. An emphasis on the entire action combined with Aristotelian causality gave birth to receptionism. Yet, those who emphasize the entire action can still

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and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), 15:293 (hereafter cited as AE) (= *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. [Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2009], 54:49.33 [hereafter cited as WA]).

[2] The text reads, "Einbrödunge des Leibs Christi (wie sie reden). . ." That Luther uses "wie sie reden" ("as they say") demonstrates that he does not mean to take up the term impanation (*Einbrödung*) for himself, but rather to use the term which his adversaries have used to accused him. The *American Edition* of Luther's works reflects this by putting the term in quotation marks (AE 37: 290). Although the editor of Hardt's book listed page 292 in footnote 110 as the corresponding reference, Hardt's citation in the *Weimar Edition* corresponds to AE 37: 290.

[3] See for instance the entry "Impanation," in *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, ed. Ludwig Fuerbringer, Theodore Engelder, and Paul E. Kretzmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), 349–350.

affirm the efficacy of the consecration, the enduring presence of Christ, and approve of adoration shown to Christ that only an Arian would forbid.

Neither Tom Hardt's weighty scholarship nor the above minor criticism should deter the aspiring reader from *The Venerable and Adorable Eucharist*. Tom Hardt contends mightily and convincingly for the consecration as the beginning of the sacramental union and the enduring presence of Christ. His text provides a thorough overview of primary and secondary sources related to Luther and the Sacrament of the Altar. This English translation of his work makes a fantastic addition to books such as Bjarne Teigen's *The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz* and Edward Peter's STM dissertation "The Origin and Meaning of the Axiom- Nothing has the Character of a Sacrament Outside of the Use, in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Theology." Although an English translation of *Venerabilis et Adorabilis Eucharistia* has come into print after these works, it is equally foundational for regaining the biblical and confessional emphasis on the consecration and appropriate adoration of Christ wherever he is present. Furthermore, what comes through in the volume is a love and piety toward the Holy Communion, something which is profoundly Lutheran.

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***Dienst an der Kirche durch Wort und Sakrament: Theologie und Kirche in konfessioneller und ökumenischer Verantwortung.* Edited by Werner Klän und Michael Schätzel. Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2023. Hardcover**

I am the God who saves them all!
So do not fear to heed my call;
I am at work in what you do:
My wounded hand serves them through you.

This is the final stanza of the hymn "'I will be Present,' Says the Lord" by Kurt Reinhardt, which begins this Festschrift dedicated to Hans-Jörg Voigt, bishop of the Selbstandige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (SELK) and erstwhile chairman of the International Lutheran Council (ILC), on the occasion of his 60th birthday. Having met this real *Konkordienlutheraner* myself and having heard him teach when I was an exchange student in Oberursel, Germany, I can say with confidence that this is well-deserved. The "wounded hand" of the Lord has indeed served the church through him.

This volume is divided into six sections: the Word of God, the Ministry of the Church, the History of the Church, Church Teaching, Church Practice, and the Relationship between Church and Society. It contains 32 articles, most of them in German but some in English. It also includes two by Bishop Voigt himself, along with a short biography of him.

This volume lacks no variety. At nearly 500 pages, it contains valuable technical studies, meditations, analyses of and recommendations for pastoral practice, and more. Since the reader of this review will not want to wade through a full analysis of every article, I have selected several essays to summarize. For those interested, a very brief one-or-two-sentence summary of every article is included in the introduction to the book.

In the first article of the volume, Dieter H. Reinstorf meditates on the Parable of the Sower and illustrates how it helped him, and may help others, overcome the malaise and worry that accompanied the church shutdowns during the pandemic. He rightly notes that we are not given to despair, but to find comfort in God's promise that his word shall not return empty. The harvest will be great, even if the life of the church has been greatly disrupted.

Jorg Christian Salzmann analyzes the terms "shepherd" and "teacher" in Ephesians 4:11, arguing that the two form a hendiadys (i.e., they are not two different people but the same). He offers several explanations of these and other New Testament offices based on context, historical dating, and cross-examination of the New Testament books. What is especially helpful is his use of Ephesians 4:11 to reflect on ministry practices today, even if we cannot mimic the ancient offices and duties exactly.

In a similar vein, Thomas M. Winger takes in a "bird's eye view" of 1 Timothy and how it is likely that Timothy was not only a pastor but more like a modern-day bishop—Paul's "apostolic ambassador" with authority over other pastors.

Horst Gorski, inspired by Bishop Voigt, whom he much admires, examines the connection between unity and peace both theologically and practically in the world. Through historical examination, he concludes that in every time and place, the church's need for theological and political leaders is never gone. Church and society are "co-evolutionary" [*koevolutionär*]: the church evolves to face challenges, but its evolution is not strictly dependent on social changes—they are concurrent. Gorski names the modern inclusion of laity in synodical functions (parallelling democratic society) as one such instance of co-evolution. This will ring true to LCMS Lutherans, as democratic polity is part of our history as well. The reader will benefit from perusing his descriptions of the various church governments and their connections, his insights into our modern technical age and its challenges, and his upholding of the uniqueness of the pastoral office.

Matthew C. Harrison writes on Hermann Sasse and his views on the ordination of women in the Lutheran Church—a topic of extreme interest in worldwide Lutheranism, and one that especially affects the SELK, and has affected bodies like the NRK (Japan Lutheran Church), who broke unity with the LCMS on precisely this issue. He outlines Sasse's argument against the Australian Lutherans, against Helmut Thielicke, and against anything or anyone that would relativize dogma.

Special attention must be paid to Jobst Schöne—that great churchman and friend of the SELK and LCMS—who before his death provided an article that is admitted up front to be "fragmentary," as he was ill at the time of writing. While he could not give it his full attention, this article nevertheless does a magnificent job of tracing and critiquing the development of the concept of "bishop" from the Reformation up to the founding of the SELK.

Robert Kolb examines how Luther's formulation of the doctrine of justification impacted seven of his and Melanchthon's students. Among the concepts used to flesh out justification are: restoration to righteousness, vicarious satisfaction, victory, and faith as trust. Many pastors, students, and scholars will benefit from his detailed treatment of the history and content of the immediate post-Reformation preaching of justification.

Burkhard Neumann provides a look into ecumenical Roman Catholic concerns. He laments the lack of a theology of the word among the churches and the one-sided emphasis on the sacraments, especially within the Roman Catholic Church. Neumann then seeks to reflect on a theology of the word, with an aim toward "ecumenical openness" (*ökumenischer Offenheit*). For those who wish to better understand the issues within modern ecumenical dialogue, this article is most eye-opening and helpful.

Finally, Jürgen Kampmann presents an extensive article on online communion. Hygienic requirements in Germany made the reception of the Sacrament difficult, if not impossible, during the pandemic. Out of this difficulty came the practice of "communing" over the web. This digitalization of the Supper is still an issue for SELK (and is for churches like the LCMS as well, as the resolutions at our recent national convention show). Using Christ's institution of the Supper, the Bible, and the confessions of Christendom, he contends that arguments for digital communion are "superficial" (380) and cannot be supported by the Lutheran Church.

The reason for summarizing these various articles is not only to pique interest, but to show the variety, not only of topics, but also of theologians and perspectives. Representation ranges from the LCMS and SELK to the VELKD, EKD, and Rome. Thus, the volume gives insight into both inter-Lutheran dialogue and inter-denominational dialogue.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the book does not uphold a single doctrinal standard. More "conservative" readers will likely balk at Denecke's praise of the

LWF and some of the other authors' higher-critical viewpoints, just as more "liberal" readers will likely reject President Harrison's (and Sasse's) argument against women's ordination. Nevertheless, the authors in this volume present thoughtful insights into several topics and are committed to making a good confession in the face of error, even if not every reader will agree with their methods or conclusions.

What does unite the authors is thankfulness for the care, dedication, compassion, and doctrinal stalwartness of Bishop Voigt. In this way, he reminds me of Hermann Sasse, who refused to compromise on the doctrine of the Lutheran Confessions, but who also had friends everywhere and earned widespread respect for his honesty and dedication to the ecumenical task. I believe that Bishop Voigt also recognizes this attitude as the way forward, not only in world Lutheranism, but in the broader Christian church—the hope "that they may all be one" (John 17:21) in unity of confession.

All in all, the reader will find the riches of this book engaging and will appreciate the smorgasbord of topics and perspectives—and perhaps you will come to see the great influence of Bishop Voigt and appreciate what he has done, even if you have never met him.

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***Finding Phoebe: What New Testament Women Were Really Like*. By Susan E. Hylen. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023. 188 + x pages. Paperback.**

Two tantalizing verses toward the end of Romans raise many questions about the role of women in the early congregations. There Paul commends "our sister Phoebe, a servant [Greek: *diakonon*] of the church at Cenchreae," and urges the congregation to "welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well" (Rom 16:1–2).[1] So who was Phoebe, and what did she do? Here Paul calls her "sister," *diakonos* (this obviously is where our word "deaconess" comes from), and "patron"—but what did these words *mean*, in the parlance of the day? Also, Phoebe obviously traveled a long way—from Cenchreae, near Corinth, in Greece, to Rome—and she was sufficiently important for the apostle to include her in his letter.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

But this is the only time Phoebe is mentioned in the whole of Scripture. "Wouldn't it be interesting to know more about her?" (1).

And so the book begins. According to Hylen, modern interpreters are of the opinion that ancient women "weren't able to do much" (3). Her research into the history of the New Testament contradicts this modern misimpression. Hence, her book is constructed in such a way as to take the modern reader on a tour which examines the following points of interest: Part 1 (Wealth and Property), with chapters on Ownership, Management, Marriage, and Occupations; Part 2 (Social Influence and Status), with chapters on Patronage, Social Influence, and Education; Part 3 (Virtues of Women), with chapters on Modesty, Industry, Loyalty, and Marital Harmony; Part 4 (Speech and Silence), with chapters on Everyday Speech, Prayer and Prophecy, Silence, and Speech and Silence. The chapters reveal that women could indeed own property distinct from their husbands' estates; that managing property and household affairs were women's jobs, to be sure, but they had help from slaves to do the heavy lifting; that wives were not necessarily under the legal authority of their husbands; that women held all kinds of honorable (and dishonorable) occupations; that women could be patrons and hold civic leadership; that women of high status were capable of speaking truth to power (elite males); that women could be highly educated (though education was intended more for men of high status); that women were supposed to defer to their husbands, but usually eclipsed them in modesty, loyalty, and sexual restraint; that everyday speech of women was expected as a matter of course; and that silence wasn't a blanket rule for women but depended more upon the status of the other person. I am skimming the surface.

The entire book is packed with revelations of this type, supported both by contemporary inscriptions, papyri, and extra-biblical texts, as well as pertinent New Testament passages, of course. In fact, most chapters are constructed from "outside in"—that is, they begin with establishing patterns of women's life from the extra-biblical milieu before turning to New Testament examples wherein the patterns reappear. Thus, in the chapter on Industry, for example, after establishing that women were hard-working and efficient ("she made wool," on the ancient funerary inscriptions), Tabitha is presented as one who was "always doing good and helping the poor" (Acts 9:36). The first concluding question is, "What wording [in the Acts passage] points to women's labor?" Then, "What suggests that this activity is praiseworthy?" (105). Such questions help readers view New Testament women against the backdrop of ancient society—a laudable objective, to be sure. Also, such questions are excellent "discussion starters" in modern Bible studies.

Hence, the book seemingly has much going for it at first blush. It is disarmingly simple and intended to pique the interest of especially lay (women) readers to get them to know the controverted texts better. By ending the book with a chapter on

"Speech and Silence," Hylen all but invites readers to question the cultural appropriateness of Paul's statements that women are to "keep silent" in the churches (1 Cor 14:33b–36; 1 Tim 2:11–15). Still, Hylen does not take the issue head-on. Instead, she invites readers to consider other New Testament passages where women did indeed "speak" to men, and even to Jesus himself (e.g., Matt 15:21–28; 27:19; Mark 6:17–29; Luke 2:36–38; Acts 16:15; 18:26; 21:9; see p. 165). How did the rules of the culture apply in each situation? Was the speech of these particular women acceptable? *Now* reconsider the Pauline prohibitions. How might Phoebe have felt about them in light of these cultural considerations? The best one can say after this process of interpretation—and reinterpretation—is that *it all depends* on where your church is coming from when assessing one's own ideas about women in ministry: "How does your understanding of the New Testament contribute to your understanding of women in ministry today?" (174).

So Hylen, despite apparently wanting to present a fair and impartial picture of women congregants in the earliest Christian assemblies, really does not do this, in my opinion. One subtle, yet telling, indication of where the author is "coming from" is her contention that Phoebe was a "deacon" (1, 2, 39, 62, 71, 97, 99, 139, 150, 163, 172), but never a deac*oness* (added emphasis). Same with "patron," but never "patr*oness*"; "priest," but rarely "priest*ess*" (though see 111, 120); and "prophet," but not "prophet*ess*" (added emphases). These distinctions demonstrate, in my opinion, that Hylen, like many proponents of women's ordination today, buys into a functionalist view of the Office of the Ministry: because an obviously gifted woman can preach, teach, lead, and pray as well as any man can, she should be ordained! Of course, Hylen never comes right out and says this, but the subtle assumptions point in this direction, in my opinion. Also, more forthrightly, Hylen is a professor of New Testament at Emory University and a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA; from the dust jacket). In other words, she holds office in a church body that all but countenances women pastors.

I cannot recommend the book for either clergy or lay readers unless a seasoned pastor (who has the exegetical chops) uses the book to teach students that the arguments for women's ordination, though subtle, are very powerful and need to be watched out for by all of us. Then perhaps the book can be profitably used, with care and discernment. Someone needs to separate the proverbial wheat from the chaff for the benefit of our laity. And this is just what pastors are for, according to the word of God: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim 4:16, KJV).

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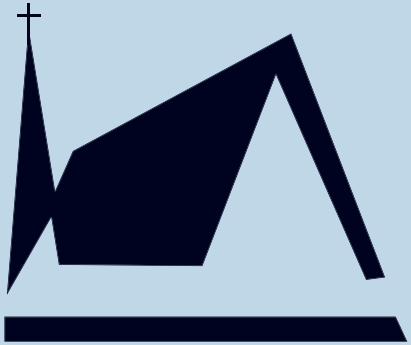

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