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***The Postilla of Nicholas of Lyra on the Song of Songs.* By Nicholas of Lyra. Introduced, translated, and edited by James George Kieker. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998.**

This is the third volume of a series of texts and translations on biblical studies being issued by Marquette under the guidance of Kenneth Hagen as the general editor. *Reformation Texts with Translations (1350-1650)* is proving to be a very scholarly, yet readable addition to a pastor's library. James George Kieker is to be commended for accomplishing his goal of making the translation "clear and useful."

One of the benefits of this series is a brief introduction regarding the author. In addition to his life and works, a short summary of his place in exegetical history is provided. Finally, Kieker supplies a few examples of Luther's exegesis in relation to Lyra which should encourage the Lutheran pastor to plunge a little deeper into Luther's writings.

Nicholas sees the *Song* as a parable, but he desires to present a better and more literal interpretation than the Jews or other Catholic expositors. This literal sense is "not that which is signified by the words, but that which is signified by the things signified by the words" (31). Thus, the bride is the church of both Testaments and the *Song* is to be read as a retelling of the church's history from Adam through Constantine to the end of the age. His exegesis is thought-provoking and eye opening with regard to a discussion of what the literal sense really is.

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***African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness.* Edited by Milton Sernett. Second Edition. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 1999. x+608 pages. \$23.95. Paper.**

Milton Sernett, one time professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois (1972-75), originally published *African American Religion* in 1985 to challenge an historiographical claim: that the paucity of sources for the African American religion in America rendered the task of interpreting that tradition within American religion generally an historical impossibility. Sernett's first edition effectively accomplished that task. Now in its second edition, *African American Religion* remains a rich collection of resources and an absolute necessity for any serious student of American Christianity.

Sernett organizes the text chronologically for the most part, beginning with the seventeenth century and ranging through the late 1970s. Seven sections cover different historical periods and geographical regions. The majority of the material comes out the broader Protestant tradition, though Sernett does include selections

from outside of Christianity. Additions to the second edition include more material considering the so called "Great Migration," as well increased primary source material by women.

In a sense, *African American Religion* acts simultaneously as an affirmation and a mild corrective to Albert Raboteau's *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Sernett successfully shows that, even given their challenging circumstances, African Americans were remarkably successful at fashioning a visible and lasting institution (a point also made by Eugene Genovese in his outstanding *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* [New York: Random House, 1972]). Yet, the reader comes away from the anthology with a sense of incompleteness. Not in the volume proper, but in what in the companion volume it ultimately lacks. In other words, *African American Religion* anticipates serving as a attendant volume to a technical history of African American religion. That volume has yet to be written.

Along these lines, though narrowing the point, American Lutherans have not sufficiently considered the contributions of African Americans to their own tradition. That may in part be due to the simple demographic fact that Lutheranism's numerical strength has historically been in the north, while, at least until the Great Migration, the majority of America's blacks lived in the South. It may also reflect Lutheran historians' penchant for writing confessional histories of the church in the United States. Other interpretations are also possible. What is certain is that Jeff G. Johnson's *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story* has simply initiated the historical task of interpreting Lutheranism among African Americans, though it remains an incomplete endeavor (one may see my critique of Johnson's "Muhlenberg's Relationship to African Americans," in *CTQ* 63 [January 1999]: 63). Much remains to be done to tell the story of African America Lutherans fully. Sernett's volume, however, should serve as an aid in that task. The field for the history of Christianity in general and Lutheranism in America in particular is ripe. One can only hope that Sernett's work will encourage more scholarship in this area.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

Affirmations and Admonitions: Lutheran Decisions and Dialogue with Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic Churches. By Gabriel Fackre and Michael Root. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998. Paper. 124 pages.

At its 1997 national assembly, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America acted on three significant ecumenical statements. The assembly passed the *Formula of Agreement* with three Reformed church bodies (the Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ). The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* with the Roman Catholic church also passed, affirming its claim that the remaining differences on justification between the two church bodies ought not be divisive or

condemned by the other. The *Concordat of Agreement* with the Episcopal Church in America failed to gain the two-thirds majority required for passage – by only six votes.

Fackre (Reformed) and Root (Lutheran) were participants in the ecumenical dialogues leading up to these agreements. Professor Fackre was actively involved only in the *Formula of Agreement*, but his three essays deal with ecumenism in general and all three proposals. Root's four essays also provide general thoughts on ecumenism, as well as specific ideas about the three proposals. With the single exception of Root's final essay, this collection was presented to ELCA seminaries prior to the votes as the Hem-Fry lecture series for 1997.

The essays by Fackre are all marked by an attractive humility. He argues that one ought to learn from the points of difference between one's own theological tradition and that of a dialogue partner. Within this perspective, the different church bodies complement one another. Each entity should be affirmed for its differing "gifts" and each also has important admonitions it can offer to other Christian church bodies. Such a characterization of the theological divisions among Christians obviously means that they ought not continue to divide us.

In his first two lectures, Fackre defines the gifts of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions respectively. In general, Lutherans have a charism of concern for fundamental Christian beliefs. The specific beliefs for which Lutherans have contended most vigorously are characterized by Fackre as "haveability" and "simultaneity." The former refers to the traditional Lutheran insistence on the reality of Christ in the Sacrament and the Lutheran understanding of the person of Christ, which affirm that the finite is capable of the infinite. "Simultaneity" refers to the doctrine of *simul justus et peccator* which shows itself in the Lutheran understanding of justification by grace through faith.

On the other hand, the Reformed doctrinal gifts are "Sovereignty and Sanctification." "Sovereignty" implies the refusal to bind God too closely either to sacraments (Christ is, after all, at the Father's right hand) or confessions of faith (a creed presents a theology that must always be subject to potential revision). "Sanctification" is the perspective that sees grace "as power as well as pardon," a gift found not only among the Reformed, but also in Rome. These "gifts," when turned toward the dialogue partner, become admonitions or correctives to the partner's theology.

Fackre then turns to congregational life, where, referring to AC VII, the church is found. In contemporary congregational life Fackre sees both the worst examples of Christian accommodation to culture and hopeful signs of

"neo-confessional" pastors across denominational boundaries who are seeking to reclaim the Christian faith. How might the passage of denomination-wide ecumenical statements play into congregational life? Fackre dreams that congregations set free by ecumenical agreements will "become the locus for rare in-depth exploration of and witness to catholic faith, with commensurate enrichment of mission in all of its senses" (61).

In a chapter titled "What Are We Doing?" Root first provides a framework of understanding for church unity. Referring, like Fackre, to AC VII, Root sees church unity as constituted by the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments (no references to purity). This church unity creates a unity of faith and then unity of persons (common life). If a church can affirm the gospel and the sacraments of another, then they ought also to share a common life together. The prejudice of the churches should be in favor of unity.

Root's second chapter suggests criteria for ecumenical judgments. Lutherans have historically stressed theological criteria, affirms Root, but his focus is more toward praxis that is essential to the identity of the church. If nothing essential is missing, then we are obligated to unite. It is clearly Root's contention that the agreements of 1997 reflect the satisfying of such criteria, although he acknowledges that significant differences still exist between the Lutheran, Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman churches. The differences are acceptable, however, under the principal of an "internally differentiated consensus" (the term is Harding Meyer's). He illustrates the principal at work in the agreement on justification: "Even if the doctrine of justification is the article by which the church stands and falls, we do not need to agree on every aspect of justification in order to say we are in fact preaching the same gospel rightly" (83).

The third of Root's contributions discusses the practical results of the decisions—assuming their passage. He notes that both doctrinal relativism and changing moral positions (ordination of practicing homosexuals) present challenges to how the agreements might be accepted. In addition, differing polities would lead to various means and levels of acceptance within the churches. Quoting John Spong, Root acknowledges that ecumenical decisions may represent no more than skepticism about the possibility of any final theological truth. Root denies such skepticism at work in this process and affirms instead [in] "the Christ who comes to us graciously in word and sacrament we, that is, Lutherans and many other Christians, are one. Because we are one, we should seek to live out that oneness not just in informal and ad hoc ways, but in an institutionalized, structured, ongoing common life" (107). Root does ask worriedly: "[W]hether a common life . . . will lead to an

erosion of the classical core of Christian belief within the ELCA?" but reassures himself and his readers that he does not believe that to be the case.

His final contribution to the book was written after the ELCA actions of 1997. He offers his interpretation of why the *Formula* and *Joint Declaration* passed and the *Concordat* failed. The failure of the latter was probably due to the fact that it would have required actual organizational changes. He closes on a note of hope that a revised *Concordat* will pass the next assembly, together with new ecumenical proposals involving Moravians and others.

There is much that Fackre and Root offer for Missouri to consider seriously. Surely we can learn from other churches and ought to approach ecumenical issues with humility. Our strictures about fellowship with other Christians have, more often than not, resulted in more avoidance of other Christians than in genuine efforts to understand and persuade. Having said that, it is plain that Fackre and Root have more in common with one another than with either Missouri or the kind of Christians who formulated earlier joint doctrinal statements, for example, the confessions of the first seven ecumenical councils. The difference is in the attention given to the little word of AC VII that is omitted in this book: "purity." Neither Fackre nor Root captures the spirit of the Augustana's teaching on church because of this omission. If the church is wherever one finds some form of "Gospel preaching" and administration of sacraments, then the passion for purity at work through the ages was mistaken. This book suggests a perspective that views the historic church as more of an obstreperous old crab than the bride of Christ.

An "internally differentiated consensus" simply begs the question of "purity." It also begs the early Christian passion for orthodoxy. Root downplays the historic points of theological divergence among the western churches. For example, on the question of the Lord's Supper, the crucial issue for Lutheranism has been the dependability of the external word, not, as Root claims, "a metaphysical mistake about the mode of presence." Theological truth, however, is all about God (a rather metaphysical issue). For Root, theology is more about us than God. That presents a real problem. While one ought not minimize the importance of the communicant's confidence at the altar, for instance, the truth or falsehood about which he or she is confident is actually the more important thing.

Fackre's stance is similarly unconvincing. It is necessary to be open to another Christian church as they contend for the truth. Nonetheless, we cannot glibly maintain that being open to affirmation and admonition finishes the ecumenical task. What if the Reformed admonition regarding the sovereignty of God results in a false (metaphysical) conclusion: that the finite is incapable of the infinite, for example? Or, what if we disagree with such a

Reformed statement as: "Of course, sacramentology is not soteriology" (24) and say, "If 'Baptism now saves us' (1 Peter 3:21), then true sacramentology is soteriology!" What then? Do we unite, or do we recognize that someone is wrong and work to correct the falsehoods?

Root and Fackre ought to be commended for presenting a vision of revived concern for Christian truth within traditional Christian denominations. Fackre rightly lauds the movement of some toward new study of the ancient ecumenical consensus. (Thomas Oden and company certainly qualify.) This, it seems, is the direction that ecumenism should be exploring more vigorously. Such an approach would not produce easy agreements, it would instead promote a passionate defense of the earliest Christian creeds and agreements and use them to explore later divisions. While both authors seemingly would favor such promulgation of the Christian faith, neither seems to realize that the watery form of ecumenism they represent has proven a failure in that task.

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A History of the Synoptic Problem. By David Laird Dungan. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1999. 526 pages. Cloth. \$39.95.

The "Two Gospels" hypothesis, which sees Matthew as the first Gospel and Luke as the second, has failed to replace the "Two Source" hypothesis, which gives place of honor to Mark and "Q." This battle Dungan concedes to the opponents of the theory also known as the Griesbach hypothesis, but not without presenting an intriguing account of how biblical scholarship arrived at its present state of affairs. He marshals a marvelous array of historical data to show how the church viewed the relationship of the Gospels to one another and how the scholars arrived in positing "Q" and Mark as foundational documents for the synoptic Gospels only in the last half of the nineteenth century. In the midst of a hostile scholarly environment, Dungan offers a virtual history of theology around a core of theories offered for the Gospels' origins. He knows the Griesbach hypothesis has attracted few converts. The only consolation is that Markan priority is less assured, but this good news-bad news has been counterbalanced by a resurgent scholarly devotion to the non-existent "Q" document, to which scholars attribute several stages of development ("Q¹," "Q²," and on, and a "Q" community.) What scholars determine "Q" or its antecedents to be one day may be different the next. By the nature of things, a hypothetical document is immune to the critique afforded real documents. Though "Q" remains elusive, its place as the

untouchable foundation for Gospel studies is assured for the foreseeable future, so Dungan opines. Though discussion about "Q" is abstract, its results are disastrous. Jesus and His words are relegated to the shadows of an unrecoverable history and the earliest recoverable form of Christianity is a religion of ethics and not grace. The preacher, in looking at the Gospel texts, has no certainty about their origins or the processes which led to their final form. Worse, Jesus is irretrievable. Without the constraints of an authoritative text, the preacher is now free to dip into the process that produced the Gospels at those points that serve his purposes.

Ten of the twenty-three chapters address the attitudes towards the Gospels in the first five centuries. Included here is an analysis of Luke's preface in showing how this Gospel handled the historical details it purports to relay. Dungan also discusses how the church wrestled with four Gospels, which, in spite of their similarities, obviously differed. Harmonizing the Gospels still attracts conservatives, but the process is not without its serious drawbacks. A second section, also with ten chapters, outlines the origins of the *textus receptus* and the rise of the historical-critical method. A matter for conservatives to ponder is that the *textus receptus*, which is behind the King James Version, was pieced together by Erasmus and hence, its claim to authenticity is not without problems. Practitioners of the historical-critical method are faced with the embarrassment that its originator, Baruch Spinoza, had a profound hatred for supernaturalism, including that of his own Judaism. Throughout, Dungan shows how current philosophies and political situations influenced Gospel studies. He argues persuasively that nineteenth-century German nationalism was a factor in scholars replacing Matthew with Mark as the first Gospel. Mark, with no reference to Peter's receiving the keys, better served imperial policies, which saw Rome, especially with its dogma of papal infallibility, as the real enemy. For his efforts in promoting the now standard Markan priority, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann was awarded an appointment to the University of Strasbourg. A third section focuses on recent theories of Gospel origins, including those with which Dungan has been involved. More than a hundred pages of endnotes provide ample documentation and additional discussion.

Dungan shows how historical-critical and textual reconstructions are not based on objective criteria, but are inherently subjective and biased, being influenced by theological, philosophical, and political developments. The most "objective" methods and conclusions have histories that serious scholars should subject to the same kind of analyses to which they subject the Gospels. He uncovers the biases on which much of biblical scholarship rests. Knowing one's biases is therapeutic and acknowledging them can be pleasantly

reconstructive. Dungan has produced a necessary and very readable historical and theological prolegomena for all students of the Gospels.

David P. Scaer

Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning. Edited by Robin Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998. 452 Pages, Paper. \$34.95.

Robin Leaver is not a Lutheran, but he continues to offer important work for the Lutheran community because he understands Lutheran theology. His willingness to defend the most difficult issues of practice is quite striking, especially in light of the many within Lutheranism who are tired of the battle and seem to be jumping ship right and left for new identities. Though Leaver did not author this book, *Liturgy and Music* is worthwhile reading throughout, but readers will without a doubt enjoy how Robin Leaver tends to shine.

There are two significant reasons why Leaver continues to work from within the context of the Lutheran theological tradition. First, the defense of matters like theology equals practice, substance equals style, content equals form, has a better chance of being heard, honestly listened to, and quite often even respected within the Lutheran context. For therein lies a high view of God's activity as the faithful worship, a view that is rarely found outside of Lutheranism. When God's act is held up, our response is put in its proper place. The extra-Lutheran polemic concerning such matters is normally about high standards, which is quickly seen by objectors for what it is—snobbery. Secondly, and this is not an insignificant factor, four of the most influential Lutherans in history—Heinrich Schütz, Michael Praetorius, Johann Sebastian Bach, Martin Franzmann—have shaped Leaver's thinking, writing, and scholarly pursuits. Great mentors indeed!

Leaver collects a number of essays on what many consider to be two very different subjects: liturgy and music. This union is important because the two are frequently separated in journals and, more tragically, in pastors' thinking. The significance of the union is stated in the introduction: "Liturgy and music are not presented as two domains isolated from each other but rather are interpreted from the premise that foundational issues in liturgy have their interrelated counterpart (and counterpoint) in music. So much so, that we can rightfully say we have *musical liturgy* rather than music during liturgy."

The collection is informative in the wide range of liturgical perspectives presented, and it is healthy because of the "lifetime" approach that pervades the writing. All the writers support and practice liturgy and therefore think of the long-term, lifetime understanding of the church's life. They also then know that liturgy and music of substance and worth requires time, perhaps

even a lifetime to sink in, rehearse, practice, and live—while it becomes an *ethos*. That understanding then defines life together.

The volume's essays speak to that behavior on twenty-five subjects such as: the liturgical year, the structure of the liturgy of the hours, the place of the homily, the role of prayer, the role of liturgical music, liturgical music as homily and hermeneutic, hymnody in reformation churches, ritual, the eucharist, symbolic actions, and others. One comes away amazed, yet again, at how prayer life shapes all that surrounds it. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*.

While Dr. Leaver's work and influence reaches far beyond Lutheranism, he articulates a Lutheran identity about matters of worship practice that helps Lutherans define a faithful Lutheran *ethos* (behavior) in these times. That is what makes *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning* important for the readers of this journal. Readers of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* will probably not agree with all that is said here; nevertheless, they will find *Liturgy and Music* informative and even stimulating reading in these times of challenge for Lutheran theology and practice. While the whole volume is salutary reading, readers of this journal will especially appreciate Chapter 21: "Liturgical Music as Anamnesis." Here the very heart of the theology equals practice discussion is eloquently defended and held up for the benefit of the faithful.

Richard C. Resch

Christology. By Hans Schwarz. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998. xii + 352 pages.

Hans Schwarz opens this book by noting a resurgent interest in the quest for the historical Jesus, which began in earnest with Albert Schweitzer. He aims to address modern questions regarding the historical Christ by engaging in dialogue with earlier theologians. Beginning with the Enlightenment and its encouragement of reason over revelation, Schwarz traces developments in Christology. He attempts to cover all sides of the debate over Jesus, from Jesus' self-understanding, to the relationship between Jesus' humanity and divinity, to His resurrection. Schwarz delves into eschatology, the eucharist, various critical methods, and general directions in Christology from the early church through medieval times down to the twentieth century.

Schwarz divides the book into three main sections: 1) In Search of the Historical Jesus; 2) The Biblical Testimony and its Assessment Through History; and 3) The Relevance of Jesus Christ for Today. Each of these sections could easily be expanded into a full volume. In an attempt to cover the vast scope of each section within a relatively small space, Schwarz touches only briefly on many theologians. The brevity with which lifetimes of work and complex theologies are addressed can, at times, create misleading notions of what these theologians actually taught. Schwarz' book might be more effective if he covered less ground

with more detail. He also seems to lean toward a kind of decision theology at times and allows for paths to salvation other than Christ. "Jesus is unique, but salvation through him is not exclusive" (287). Despite these difficulties, Schwarz' conclusions about the historical Christ are more often helpful than not.

The strengths of this book do help compensate for its weaknesses. As Schwarz examines the various christological issues, his assessments are usually agreeable with orthodox understandings of Christ. For instance, he supports Christ as both divine and human, the virgin birth, and the historical fact of the resurrection. Where much of modern scholarship points to redaction in Jesus' predictions of His death, Schwarz supports Christ's predictions as genuine prophecy.

Perhaps his most valuable contribution to modern scholarship is a willingness to engage seriously the biblical witness of the historical Christ. His view of Scripture is best summarized by the following quotation:

... this means also the obligation for scholarship to stay in tune with the New Testament and not to reconstruct a contextual Jesus who stands contrary to the biblical message. There must be a fidelity to the biblical documents, not just because they happened to be received in the canon, but because the church decided that qualitatively there was more to be gained from them than from extracanonical literature. Fidelity to the New Testament also implies an acceptance of its truthfulness (334-335).

In an age when the starting point for much of biblical scholarship seems to be a healthy dose of textual skepticism, it is refreshing to hear someone who is at least willing to shape his scholarship around an appreciation for the sacredness of the text of Scripture.

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Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon. By Allen Dwight Callahan. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997. Paper. 96 Pages. \$11.00.

Most Christians assume that Paul wrote canonical Philemon to reconcile two estranged individuals to one another in Christ: master Philemon and the slave Onesimus, who had been a runaway (Greek: δραπετης; Latin: *fugitivus*). However, no formal identification of Onesimus as a runaway ever occurs within the letter (although Paul does refer to him twice as a "slave" [δουλος] in verse 16). Admittedly, the "runaway slave hypothesis" in Philemon is just that—an hypothesis. Yet, as many believe, it is still the best way to regard the letter as a whole and allows the gospel to predominate in the interpretation of the letter instead of some alien view. Few moderns challenged the idea that Onesimus was a runaway slave until the great doctoral dissertation (later

published) of John Knox in 1935, who presented an altogether different understanding: Philemon was not a personal letter of reconciliation but rather a public appeal to the Colossian congregation for the full-time services of Onesimus whom Paul desired to have henceforth as a missionary companion. Since that time there have been several more recent attempts to maintain and augment the Knox thesis (Cope, Winter, and now Callahan come immediately to mind). An representative example of the effort to uphold the traditional "runaway slave hypothesis" is John G. Nordling, "Onesimus fugitivus: A Defense of the Runaway Slave Hypothesis in Philemon," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41 (Fall 1991): 97-119.

Callahan, to his credit, points out those aspects of his background that make it impossible for him to believe the traditional interpretation of Philemon. Raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Callahan is spiritual heir to a group of antebellum slaves who once walked out on a Philemon sermon delivered to them by the Rev. J. Colcock Jones, a white Methodist missionary to slaves in Georgia, who urged fidelity and obedience to masters: "Some [of the slaves] solemnly declared that there was no such Epistle in the Bible; others, that it was not the Gospel; others, that I preached to please the masters; others, that they did not care if they never [sic] heard me preach again" (in A. Raboteu, *Slave Religion* [Oxford, 1982] 139, cited in Callahan, 1).

After discounting any internal evidence in the letter itself which might suggest that Onesimus had indeed been a runaway slave (4-12), Callahan attempts to pin this interpretation on Chrysostom of the fourth century A.D., claiming that abolitionist Christians were, even then, challenging the "Roman slavocracy" of late imperial times (15). From then on, the runaway slave hypothesis became the dominant interpretation of the church, assumed by most theologians (Callahan engages Chrysostom, Luther, and Lightfoot, 4 and following). Ultimately, though, the dominant theory has to be rejected because this kind of "uncharitable guesswork" buys into the "stereotype of the thieving, indolent slave" which is "part of the mythology of all slaveholding societies" (9).

Callahan's counter proposal is an extension of mid-nineteenth-century exegesis, which strove to advance biblical arguments against slavery. Palpable tensions in the letter between Philemon and Onesimus reflect a falling out between estranged brothers, not a violated master-slave relationship (11; 30; 50; 69-60). After all, Paul refers to Onesimus in verse 16 as an ἀδελφός ἀγαπητός *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί) and in the Lord (ἐν κυρίῳ). Two articles in the *Harvard Theological Review* (86 [1993]: 357-76; 88 [1995]: 149-156) attempt to achieve this "alternative argumentum" in Philemon and probe ancient brotherly relationships in general.

One should note, however, that ἀδελφός is just as indeterminate a word in the Pauline correspondence as δούλος ever was. *Brother* occurs so frequently in the New Testament that, if considered in its own light, it can mean scarcely more than "Christian" or at least "correligionist" (one may compare von Soden, "ἀδελφός," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1.144-146). Nor can the *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί) designation easily support Callahan's literal brother theory: circumcision (Romans 2:28; Galatians 6:13; Philippians 3:3), the unregenerate life apart from Christ (Romans 7:5, 18, 8:8-10), and one's presence "in the flesh" (2 Corinthians. 10:3; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:22; Colossians 1:24; 2:1, 5) are dominant contexts for the ἐν σαρκί phrase elsewhere; so why must it support Callahan's peculiar interpretation in Philemon 16? Answer: it does not have to, so the "alternative argumentum" is hardly ironclad, no matter how much supplementary material Callahan supplies. Indeed, the entire theory tests upon the most dubious of evidence—namely, well known, frequently used words in the New Testament like *brother* and *in the flesh*, which need not support the highly specialized interpretation Callahan desires here. Less partisan interpreters suggest that ἐν σαρκί in Philemon 16 denotes a "purely human relationship" (one may compare Philippians 1:22, 24) between Philemon and his restored slave, as opposed to their shared Christian identity "in the Lord" (one may compare E. Schweizer, "σάρξ," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 7:127). The following italicized words demonstrate, indeed, that Paul has been building a rhetorical contrast since 14b to distinguish two positions that he hopes, henceforth, can be reconciled in Christ:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|---|
| "by necessity" | vs. | "willingly," 14b |
| "parted from you
momentarily" | vs. | "receive him back...forever," 15 |
| "a slave as it were" | vs. | "more than a slave...a beloved brother" 16a |
| "especially to me" | vs. | "how much the more to you," 16b |
| "both in the flesh" | vs. | "and in the Lord," 16c |

So the "beloved brother" descriptor cannot be taken literally here, but is part of the expansion. Paul has been painting a "new Onesimus" since 10b and verse 16 is the climax of that description—right before Paul finally gets to the point of the letter wherein he urges Philemon to welcome Onesimus back (17b). Onesimus has been and remains a slave, to be sure, but now that he has been forgiven and restored to Christ, he is considerably more than a slave; in fact (as Paul emphasizes through the rhetorical expansion), he is Philemon's and the congregation's beloved brother in Christ!

"Slave" (δούλος) also can mean more than literal servant, of course (one may compare "Servant of the LORD"; "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus," and others). That Onesimus was indeed a slave, and a runaway at that, is suggested not so much by the doubled occurrence of the word δούλος in verse 16a, as by Paul's insistence that Philemon should welcome Onesimus (προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ, 17b), that Onesimus wronged Philemon and *owed* him something (τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, 18a)—vocabulary that can signify fraud or at least financial mismanagement in the extra-biblical papyri—and that Paul is so concerned about repayment that he lapses into the language of a formal *chirograph*: "credit this to [my] account" (τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα, 18b); "I Paul write it with my own hand" (ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ, 19a); "I will repay!" (ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω, 19a). Just why Paul was so concerned about repayment is never revealed in the letter, but the offer to help Philemon and his household get back on their feet again financially after a runaway slave incident remains, I submit, the one most likely possibility. The point is, quite apart from its longevity as dominant interpretation in the church, the runaway slave hypothesis rests on several points within the existing text that—overall—would seem to point in that direction (as is more fully demonstrated in my 1991 article). Also, Onesimus' likely behavior outside the text quite convincingly fits the stock pattern of the criminal runaway slave that any ancient would have recognized. In this letter, therefore, Paul minimizes the (once obvious) fact that Onesimus had been a runaway slave because that reminder would have damaged Philemon's inner man and made it difficult for him to forgive Onesimus. Forgiveness and the reconciliation of former antagonists in Christ are what Philemon and the entire canon of Scripture are about, not mere brotherhood, equality, tolerance, or anything else. (Callahan writes an excursus on Paul's "I will repay," for example, in which he argues that reparations should be paid to African Americans for the past injustices of slavery, 56-62).

Callahan's estranged brothers theory rests almost completely upon that word *brother* in verse 16 and, as has been demonstrated, can easily be demolished. Hence Callahan's treatment of the problem—although quite comprehensible to current American social consciousness—would almost certainly have been lost on Paul, the earliest Christian *ekklesiae*, and Christians of every time and place, save our own. So Callahan's book seems grossly idiosyncratic and cannot be recommended.

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