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REVIEWS

The Story of Original Sin.

Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013

JOHN E. TOEWS

The doctrine of “original sin” continues to provoke the composition of books. The past quarter century has witnessed an on-going investigation into the doctrine, and for good reason. It still pertains to theological conversation, and its pertinence frequently arises in unanticipated areas. For example, recent developments in science and genetics have challenged the idea of all humans descending from one primordial couple. If there were no singular Adam and Eve, then their sin could not be passed to all of humanity.¹ The doctrine appeals partly because of its significance for such religious and philosophical doctrines as: ontology (who and what are we?), soteriology (in what ways and how was Jesus Christ a savior?), and Christology (in what ways was Jesus human and divine?). It also appeals because of simple inertia; it has been a familiar doctrine for 1,500 years. In whatever way one views sin, one cannot deny the influence of the concept of original sin on contemporary discussions about religion and human behavior. This essay will accordingly review one recent publication: John E. Toews’ *The Story of Original Sin*.

Toews commences his book with autobiographical confessions. In his youth he accepted without question the “typical” position on original sin. It is a doctrine to which most in western Christianity still subscribe: Adam and Eve sinned, human nature has thereafter been corrupted by Adam’s sin, sin has literally been passed on through sexual transmission, and there was and is nothing anyone can do about it. In Toews’ words, “Sin was an ontological reality... I was sinful by nature apart from any choice or action of my choosing [and] sin defined my being from the moment of conception.”²

Toews began questioning the standard interpretation as he grew older and his theological acumen matured. He especially noted problems with the theological tradition of original sin. Focusing on the text of Genesis 3, the Apostle Paul's comments in the book of Romans, and a misreading by Augustine of Hippo, Toews argued that a series of misunderstandings, coupled with acceptance for nearly 1,500 years, have led many people to read back into the text a theological position that is not present. He asseverated, "There is no association of the serpent with Satan or the demonic; Eve is not pictured as seducing Adam sexually or in any other way; the words "sin," "transgression," "rebellion," "guilt" in Hebrew or English are not used; there is no linkage between... disobedience and sex."³ Obsessions over sexuality, the body, and even the inheritability of sin originated nearly a millenium after the composition of this text.

Toews' emphasis on the absence of the "stain" of original sin in the text obligated him to expand upon the history of the interpretation of Genesis 3. In this he stands in a long line of scholars who read the Genesis 3 pericope as indicating the "sin" of disobedience and mistrust of God. Regarding the man and woman in the Garden of Eden, he observed, "They both, standing together, decided to mistrust God, to mistrust the word of God, in quest for autonomy that would make them wise."⁴ Moreover, their punishment was expulsion from the garden and therefore removal of intimacy with the Divine, not condemnation of their genetic progeny.

Toews claims the literature of Second Temple Judaism (200 BCE – 200 CE) supports his thesis. While he concedes that the idea of the hereditary transmission of sin must have been circulating at the time, he found nothing in the literature to suggest approval of it. The Wisdom Literature of the period evidences no theology of sin, no concept of a fall of humanity, and no original sin. Adam was a hero, not a problem, and in the book of Sirach, "Mortality... was a part of God's plan from the beginning, not a function of Adam's sin."⁵ He finds that even the apocalyptic writing of the period ultimately rejects it, but not without first entertaining the origins of evil and the responsibility for it: "Both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch reject it [hereditary transmission of sin] in favor of individual responsibility for sin."⁶

Christianity emerged within Second Temple Judaism. For Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ introduced a watchfulness into their

world view. Many expected Jesus to return soon, and so they maintained apocalyptic expectations. Among those with an apocalyptic theology was the Apostle Paul. According to Toews, the anticipation of the world's end informed Pauline theology, and this must be understood in order to understand Paul's comments on sin:

Paul believes that Adam's transgression in Genesis 3 introduced the Present Evil Age. Adam's sin was due to an apocalyptic event. The serpent (not called Satan in Gen 3 or Rom 5) symbolized an apocalyptic agent who introduces Sin (*hamartia*) as power. Sin in Romans 5 is singular and is about apocalyptic power, not sins as acts.⁷

For Toews the second apocalyptic event was a bookend to the first. He observed, "Messiah Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were God's apocalyptic answer to the apocalyptic power of Sin introduced by Adam into the world."⁸ He further draws support for this interpretation from the writings of Paul. It should be noted that discussion of the Genesis 3 passage featured more prominently in the literature of Second Temple Judaism than it did in the New Testament canon. Only three of the New Testament's 27 books mention the passage. This is a telling fact in itself. As one might expect, the apostle Paul made the most comments on Genesis 3. Toews argues that Paul suggested not that sin was genetically inherited but that it was a cosmic force unloosed by one man: Adam. It was later undone by Jesus.

Toews suggested that neither the early Greek "Fathers" nor the earliest Latin-speaking theologians maintained a notion of inherited guilt. Their literature discusses the same transgression of God's command, humanity under a curse, but no inheritance of sin. In a very real sense, the notion of inherited sin guilt violated their conceptions of free will, especially in the Greek-speaking East. "Guilt for sin could only be the result of a freely committed personal act," Toews observed.⁹ This observation begs the question: from whence or whom the concept of original sin? Toews traced the problem over time to a figure who has become the main boogie man of modern theology: Augustine.¹⁰ The notion had been circulating especially in North Africa perhaps because of the severity of the persecutions there. However, Augustine articulated its ontological

importance in more significant ways than had other prominent North Africans such as Tertullian and Cyprian.

Augustine first employed the phrase “original sin” in 397 CE, in his *To Simplician: On Various Questions*. If, as Toews argued, the doctrine was without biblical foundation, then how did Augustine formulate it? Augustine seized upon Romans 5: 12, which Toews claims he cited more than 150 times.¹¹ Since Augustine could not read Greek, he read Latin translations. Following the work of Henri Rondet, Gerald Bonner, Gerald Bray, and others, Toews asserts that Augustine relied especially upon Ambrosiaster’s shoddy translation of Romans 5: 12. The crucial passage in question, Romans 5: 12d, was translated as “in whom all sinned.” The problem of course is that this is not what the text says, and it implies that all sinned in Adam, as if all of humanity sinned at the same moment in time. Toews notes,

Augustine quoted this passage, mistranslation, mis-exegesis, and all. As nearly all modern Protestant and most Catholic commentators have pointed out, Ambrosiaster relied on a Latin version which rendered *epho as in quo*, “in whom” rather than as “on account of” or “because of.”¹²

Toews asserts that Augustine’s chief concern was with the Pelagians, who emphasized free will. Ever pugnacious, Augustine found in the doctrine of Original Sin a ready arrow for his quiver. To the Pelagian stress on human moral perfectibility, Augustine could use the mistranslation of Romans to universalize Adam’s transgression and condemn all humanity since Adam.¹³ Toews further investigated whether Augustine committed to this textual misinterpretation intentionally or out of a lack of access to other translations. Though the evidence is somewhat murky, it appears that several people confronted Augustine about the doctrine. Toews follows Bonner in suggesting that Augustine was ill-disposed to being persuaded otherwise. Augustine’s concern for defending the faith proved, if one will pardon the verb, too “tempting.” Western Christendom has been saddled with the idea ever since.

The Story of Original Sin makes an important contribution to the academic conversation. Although the book is not the first to challenge Augustine’s doctrine, its unique contribution is its careful investigation into the scriptural,

literary, and philosophical contexts of the biblical text. It demonstrates that the Traducian theory enjoyed little traction in Second Temple Judaism and the first four centuries of the church. Its investigation of the doctrine's history from the Late Antique to Reformation is another contribution. Readers may be surprised to discover that the doctrine first appeared in a church council only in 529 at the Council of Orange.

Another surprise relates to Anabaptist theology and its rejection of infant baptism. Many inheriting the Anabaptist stress on adult baptism may well consider the theology as relating to the voluntary nature of belief and of "believer's baptism," choices which infants would be incapable of making. In fact, there is another reason why Mennonites and others within the tradition do not baptize infants. It relates to the Anabaptist rejection of the concept of original sin. Toews suggests that Adam and Eve's sin did not alter human ontology. Their sin was moral, that is, a matter of choice. Although each individual has his or her individual "fall," Toews avers, "The Anabaptists believed that human beings retained the image of God and have free will to choose to sin or to obey God."¹⁴

One of the strengths of the book also signifies a weakness. Its concision and pinpoint focus prevent one from descending into the many rabbit holes that present themselves. The temptations to descend into those historical, philosophical, and theological rabbit holes are legion, and Toews should be congratulated on his self-restraint. That said, Augustine was an incredibly complex thinker, and as noted, an avid theological pugilist. A treatment of only 108 pages must inevitably omit a broader and possibly helpful conversation on Augustine. Similarly, another necessary but unfortunate omission relates to Medieval theological wrestling with the concept. Not all Medieval theologians found the doctrine acceptable.

The book also leaves little room for asking, "Now What?" For example, the last chapter, "Where do we go from here?" was simultaneously informative and yet unfulfilling. While it is salutary to understand how other Christian theological traditions have conceptualized sin, it gets the reader no closer to understanding how to move on. Toews' brief comments on reframing the concept by using the language of "sin" rather than the language of "pathology" were

helpful. One wishes he were afforded more time to pursue these observations about language. However, one can still imagine some readers - perhaps with an elemental understanding of Augustine – still perplexed because Augustine also posited the so-called “Free Will Defense” of God and the existence of sin. If sin also has a locus in human free will – and God presumably supports this freedom of choice – then how pathological can Adam’s sin have really been? Toews’ treatment will surely not be the last, but it was an eloquent and much needed Anabaptist analysis of the problem(s) posed by the doctrine of Original Sin.

NOTES

- ¹ Denis Lamoureux, “Beyond Original Sin: Is a Theological Paradigm Shift Inevitable?” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 67: 1 (2015): 36.
- ² John E. Toews, *History of Original Sin* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), p. 3.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 13
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.
- ¹⁰ See, for example, Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988).
- ¹¹ Toews, *Original Sin*, p. 84
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

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Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia.

Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2012.

GUTIÉRREZ Y MUHS, G., Y. FLORES NIEMANN, C.G. GONZÁLEZ, AND A.P. HARRIS, EDS.

Gutiérrez y Muhs, Flores Niemann, González, and Harris have compiled a collection of 30 essays, each written by various academicians, female and male, minority and majority, and each exploring the intersectionality of race, class, gender and/or sexualities within higher education today. To contextualize these essays, the editors first provide a framework examining a specific contradiction within academia – that of meritocracy versus structural impediments to the advancement of certain groups. As articulated by Harris and González in the book’s introduction,

On the one hand, the university champions meritocracy, encourages free expression and the search for truth, and prizes the creation of neutral and objective knowledge for the betterment of society – values that are supposed to make race and gender identities irrelevant. On the other hand, women of color too frequently find themselves “presumed incompetent” as scholars, teachers, and participants in academic governance. The essays collected in this volume examine the ways that higher education reflects and reproduces – yet also sometimes subverts – the social hierarchies that pervade American society, including race, gender, class, and sexuality (p. 1).

The book is divided into five sections: general campus climate, faculty/student relationships, networks of allies, social class in academia, and tenure and promotion. Within each section are various essays speaking to some aspect of the broader topic. For example, essays in the section addressing relationships between faculty and students discuss such varied topics as the experience of female students of color in the natural sciences, the effect of anticipatory career socialization on African American women in the academy, and the impact of student teaching evaluations on women and other minorities.

Taken as a whole, the essays are a good mix of quantitative research findings and personal experience. Only personal narrative would make it too easy to dismiss the book as simply 30 anecdotal stories – the research findings help to counter that problem. Only quantitative research could too easily obscure the lived reality of presumed incompetence – the personal narratives help in that

regard. If I were to have any criticisms, my first would be that in many ways this volume is not saying anything new. As the editors themselves acknowledge, another book (*This bridge called my back*), first published in 1981, addressed these very same issues. I suppose, however, that is the point. Despite 30 years and various social changes, the same problems remain. This brings me to my second criticism. I would have found it helpful if more had been done with the section involving allies and the larger issue of bringing about change, so as to obviate the need for another such book 30 years from now. Nevertheless, this volume can serve as a useful read for anyone in higher education, as well as validation for those experiencing the phenomenon of “presumed incompetence.”

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Songs from an Empty Cage: Poetry, Mystery, Anabaptism, and Peace. C. Henry Smith Series, no. 10.

Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House, 2013.

JEFF GUNDY

Jeff Gundy, professor of literature, writing, and American Studies at Bluffton College, is perhaps best known as a poet. But in this collection of essays, Gundy ventures into the realm of theopoetics. He defines theopoetics as “a relatively new term for an old tradition that favors an intuitive, imaginistic approach to ultimate questions over narrowly logical and rational discourse.” He explains that “theopoetics happens where poetry and theology cross paths, and especially when poetic methods of exploration are brought to theological questions.” For most of the history of Western Christianity, of course, the logical and rational has held sway in defining how we think about the divine. Indeed, theologians and church authorities have often attempted to suppress imagination and desire in deference to reason and authority, neither of which, Gundy points out, can survive without imagination and desire. In contrast to this dominant tradition, Gundy encourages us to move us toward a place in which poetry, imagination, metaphor, and desire all play a primary role in our thinking about God.

The goal of logical and rational theology has been to provide answers and certainty about God. But what if those answers and that certainty actually stand in the way of our thinking about God? Gundy quotes American writer James Baldwin, who once said, “the purpose of art is to lay bare the questions which have been obscured by the answers.” For Gundy, theopoetics plays much the same role – embracing the questions, and recognizing that our ongoing wrestling with them is more important and valuable than reaching a comfortable conclusion that we imagine will resolve that process.

Gundy reminds us that “our most cherished traditions” all began as a rebellious opposition to received wisdom, but that those rebellions ultimately were transformed into their own rigid traditions. We must constantly engage in a process of determining which aspects of those traditions are life-giving and which are outmoded or even destructive. And while reason and evidence are

important tools in that process, they are not enough. “We cannot pursue truth without beauty,” Gundy reminds us.

Gundy begins his collection of essays with a series of “Notes toward an Anabaptist theo-poetics,” a set of thirty-three statements that frame many of the issues he will take up in subsequent essays. In these notes Gundy points out that “our God-talk is mostly really human talk [and] that the Great One may not be obsessed with the creation of orderly institutions and systematic belief systems.” Much of our religion, furthermore, seems to him like “the will trying desperately to do the work of the imagination.” Gundy quotes fellow poet Ruben Alves, who argues that “theology wants to be a science. . . . It wants to have its birds in cages. . . . Theo-poetics instead, empty cages, words which are uttered out of and before the void.” This book, then, is a collection of Gundy’s songs from those empty cages.

While the various chapters all somehow address these themes, they do so in various ways. In “Declining to be in Charge,” Gundy looks at the ways in which Mennonite literature has been used to define Mennonite identity, and celebrates the ways in which literature can open up new understandings of a particular tradition. In chapter 4 (“The marriage of the *Martyrs Mirror* and the open road, or why I love poetry despite the suspicion that it won’t save anybody”), he returns to list-making, offering us sixteen generalizations, opinions, and speculations about the value of poetry and what it might offer to our theology. Poetry does not have to be narrative, it resists spurious clarity, it doesn’t worry about keeping its stories straight, and offers us a way to think and work in metaphor while de-familiarizing those metaphors that have gone dull and stale. Perhaps more poetry is just what our theology needs.

In chapter twelve (“The farm boy’s thoughts turn toward beauty”), Gundy acknowledges that Mennonites have often been suspicious of beauty, and have attempted to control it so that it does not lead us astray. In doing so, Mennonites have historically cut themselves off from something that is neither luxury nor sin, but “as essential as food.” The Mennonite emphasis on following Jesus, while commendable, has caused us to focus almost exclusively on doing the right things and not doing the wrong things, and to view the pursuit of beauty as “frivolous at best and a harmful distraction at worst.”

Toward the end of the book, in an essay on “apophasis and mystery,” Gundy again summarizes some of the main ideas he has explored in the various essays.

Unlike traditional theology, with its emphasis on dogma and certainty, “art, poetry, and theopoetics dwell on this ground of making strange, bringing us back to the uncertainty and oddity of the most familiar things, and within . . . the awareness that language is always metaphorical . . . incapable of any absolute or final precision. . . . There is always a gap between the name and the named, the signifier and the signified.” The error to which all of us are prone is “trusting too much in the capacity of human language and human thought to capture and define God.” This does not mean that we give up purpose and meaning, but that we grasp such things less tightly, recognizing the limits of what can be accomplished through our own knowledge and words.

Gundy’s theopoetic musings will not be for everyone. The ground onto which he ventures will strike some as too shaky and unstable. And yet for those brave enough to follow him on it, Gundy’s path offers opportunities to find new and exhilarating ways to think about the divine and to orient ourselves in relationship to it.

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A Dangerous Mind: The Ideas and Influence of Delbert L. Wiens.

Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015.

JOHNSTON, W. MARSHALL, AND DANIEL J. CROSBY, EDS.

The eclectic-yet-sensible nature of the structure of *A Dangerous Mind* appears to be a reflection of a value that Delbert Wiens, Ph.D. holds very dear. In his introduction, W. Marshall Johnston claims that Wiens "... was in the first, or even anticipated the first, generation to realize that classics, biblical studies, philosophy, theology, history, and apologetics do not have to be treated as separate areas of inquiry." (p. 19) The confluence of various disciplines throughout the book, on prominent display particularly in Delbert's own writing (see section 4 of the volume), thereby proves to be prophetic in precisely the sense that I think that Johnston intends it to be (cf. p. 18). This theme of confluence, in both its disciplinary and denominational varieties, will be the overarching theme of this review, uniting the man himself with this multifaceted tribute to him. In this way, I hope to write a review in the spirit of ancient biography as defined by Johnston in his (avowedly "semi-classical") biography, communicating a book (in this case) "...according to a theme illustrated by significant moments." (p. 26)

"Hope for *Halig*," Johnston's first contribution in the volume, is itself an intellectual patchwork of themes the confluence of which underscore (often-times explicitly) themes that occupy the rest of the book. The aforementioned definition of ancient biography is followed by a *conspectus* of Delbert's unique approach to knowledge. An extended reflection on metaphor and on how Delbert frequently both struggled with it and used it to great pedagogical effect precedes a discussion of the challenges and delights of anachronism, using examples from the lives of Delbert and Johnston's own family. *Hope for Halig* concludes with a brief overview of Delbert's personal travels and intellectual work. This unusual placement echoes Delbert's own view of his life's pilgrimage, as the meaning of the whole began to emerge for him only after many of the individual parts had been experienced. (p.34) Paul Toews's retrospective look at "New Wineskins for Old Wine," one of Delbert's most influential and controversial works, effects a different sort of confluence, telling side-by-side the histories of the reception of "Wineskins," of Delbert's early life, of the life

of the early denomination, and, to a great extent, of late—twentieth-century Mennonite Brethren intellectual culture. This chapter is a remarkable tribute to Delbert, and it will surely also be of interest to those who, despite not knowing Wiens personally, are studying the history of the modern Mennonite intellectual tradition.

Peter Klassen's essay, "Memoirs," provides a fitting beginning to the book's second section, whose overriding theme is the confluence of past, present, and future. Focusing on Wiens's unique and memorable way of answering student questions, the reader is given a well-written and interesting comparison between Delbert's combination of intensive detail and charity and the responses of Mennonite leaders during early modern interrogations of their beliefs. The precise connection between the two cases is sometimes obscure, but the confluence of past and more-distant-past is appropriate given the tenor of Delbert's thought and the nature of this book as a whole. Faith Nickel Adams's amusingly but fittingly titled "A Living Braid of Social Justice" is arranged according to some of the major themes of Delbert's pedagogy: the center-periphery distinction and pervasive use of metaphor. The author's occasional use of "braid" as both metaphor and pun had me smiling. Her lengthy description of undergraduate life at Tabor College conjures up very similar memories from my own time at Fresno Pacific, and her depiction of Wiens's "skills in framing questions" (p. 73) and extracurricular interactions with students recall the experience of studying under the book's editor, Dr. Johnston. Adams's "braiding" together of Wiens, Bonhoeffer, theater, and the Tabor undergraduate experience in the 60s prove to be an idiosyncratic but thoughtful confluence illustrating the social justice fruits of a mind influenced by Delbert's teaching. Richard Wiebe provides the most resounding critique of Delbertian thought in the entirety of the book. His chapter is a convergence of an appraisal of Wiens's work with Marxist philosophy. It is, at its best, a reminder that "economic class membership" (p. 82) must be taken into consideration along with considerations of "demographics" (favored by Delbert) when discussing any matter having to do with human consciousness. At its worst, it becomes a series of assertions about economics being the ultimate material ground of theology and ideology without so much as a summative sentence telling the reader *why* such views of human identity are basically correct or should be taken into account by Delbert. In essence, it seems that we are being told that we should all go read Marx

in order to understand the shortcomings of conservative Mennonite Brethren ideology, but few hints are given as to why this is so. The reader hoping for detailed engagement with Wiens's cited articles will be sorely disappointed here. A concluding section detailing Delbert's "great books" approach to course design is an informative and welcome addition to the volume's celebration of his teaching.

The confluence of worldviews in Silas Langley's "Triangles, Lines, and Radical Signs" is a fascinating thought exercise and tribute to Delbert. The careful reader will note some prominent weaknesses, however. These include a marked tendency to generalize to the point that crucial distinctions become lost and the truth of a matter distorted in the process. The biggest culprit here is Langley's characterization of "Neoplatonism." "Neoplatonism" is simply not the unitary, monolithic system that Langley makes it out to be. It is a modern term not used by the writers who are usually placed in this category, most of whom differed from one another on key points of doctrine, and all of whom thought that they were merely drawing out the meaning of Plato's (and, indeed, Aristotle's) philosophy. It would be more accurate to speak of "Plotinian Neoplatonism" or "Proclus's Philosophy." Moreover, even if "Neoplatonism" as such were to be defined according to the teachings of one of its putative exemplars, such as Plotinus, one wonders if the bold claim that the "...understandings of transcendence..." between Gnostics and "Neoplatonists" "...are essentially the same..." (p. 87) is even true. Judging by his own view on the matter, as expressed in his essay "Against the Gnostics" (Enneads II.9), Plotinus certainly did not think so. The Gnostics, he claims, attribute causative power to evil, a belief that he expressly rejects as being incompatible with the idea (that Langley does note) of evil as non-being. If evil for the Gnostics is a part of the causative hierarchy of the cosmos, then the Gnostics and the "Neoplatonists" have in fact very different understandings of the nature of hierarchy and transcendence. For Gnostics, the origin of evil is not merely the absence of the Good, but it is a principle within the hierarchy of causes. For Plotinus, only the One/the Good is properly called a principle. This crucial distinction is lost in Langley's effort to subsume the two systems of thought under one sign. My criticism here, however, should not be taken as a denigration of the chapter as a whole, whose strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. Its illustration of major trends in the history of ideas and symbolic illumination of relationships

between them reveal both the insight of the author and the degree to which he has been touched by Delbert's teaching.

Devon Wiens's "Falling Forward" might just as appropriately have been titled "Falling Together," as the author's experience in encountering and working with Delbert is eloquently described using the latter's ability for seeing where things flow together, be they intellectual disciplines (in a "core" curriculum prophetically foreshadowing FPU's current Civilizations series), time periods, or cultural milieux. The intellectual fruit that such a confluent education produces is on full display in Greg Camp's summary of Delbert's "From the Village to the City: A Grammar for Languages We Are." "'Village to the City: A Grammar for 'New Wineskins for Old Wine'" is an immensely enjoyable read, able to serve as both an introduction to Delbert's thought and as an application of this thought to a specific context with which we are all familiar: education.

Next follows a collection of scholarly essays, some of which draw more directly from Delbert's work than do others, and all of which are intensely interesting in their own right. This section of the book will surely interest scholars of early Christianity, and its articles cannot be ignored in future studies in the field. The first three essays effect a confluence of the Christian and the pagan in the context of the ancient world. In "Pagans and Galatians," Marshall Johnston combines the German-cum-Delbertian instinct always to consider the audience for whom letters are written with his knowledge of pagan cults in ancient Anatolia and highly precise philological analysis in order to produce an erudite reading of Galatians 5:12, one that is not cut off (pun intended) from its broader context. Richard Rawls responds to the challenges raised by Delbert in "New Wineskins for Old Wine" by exploring a parallel case of a religious community having to deal with a culture somewhat foreign to it: Christians in the second-century Roman Empire. His discussion of Christian and imperial reactions to a rain miracle is a singularly compelling read, being exceedingly well-researched and steeped in the traditions of ancient Christian apologetics and Roman imperial history. The subject of early Christian apologetics is taken up yet again in Daniel J. Crosby's contribution, which reflects the author's excellent command of the field of Delphic scholarship in showing why Christians felt the need to address the "Delphi of the Mind" in their apologetics work.

The final two essays of Section 3 deal with the convergence of American secular culture and religious identity. A comparison between the culture-shock experiences of Mexican immigrants in the United States and the Mennonite Brethren in Salvador Diaz's "From the Pueblo to the City" reads like a good sermon. It briskly unveils the sometimes-mobile, sometimes-impenetrable, oftentimes obscure boundary between communal religion and the culture at large through a series of anecdotes that are a lively and welcome look at a way of living in a religious community different from that to which Americans of European descent are likely accustomed. False generalizations are to be found here and there (most egregiously, the suggestion that translating the Bible into the vernacular was an idea that emerged during the Protestant Reformation; medievalists would like a word), but the author himself confesses to speaking about such things from the perspective of a non-expert. Peter Smith's "On Building the Kingdom: A Heresy in the Fresno Pacific Idea" critiques the notion of "building the kingdom" in the latest version of the titular Idea. A work firmly and deliberately situating itself within the "Delbertian tradition," it shows through a plethora of Biblical examples why such an approach to "kingdom" in its theological sense represents a misunderstanding both of Christians' relationship to Christ's kingdom and of their relationship to secular, professional society.

Finally, the reader is treated to a collection of unpublished works by Wiens himself. Do not let their placement at the end of the book fool you. The sens and matiere of the preceding sections are only fully understood when one has been acquainted firsthand with Delbert's unique and challenging way of thinking, and the papers included do not disappoint in this regard. "Mennonite Syndrome" is a masterpiece of a speech, exquisitely written and expertly combining the personal experiences of a group of Mennonite intellectuals with universal themes from Plato's *Symposium* and St. Bernard of Clairvaux's *De Diligendo Deo* (On Loving God). In fact, even when describing the particular experience of a particular group of Christians, Delbert's analysis of the drive that causes us to seek something we have previously glimpsed, along with his conclusion about where such desire finds its ultimate rest, should feel familiar to almost anyone, as if Delbert himself were describing the life of any thoughtful university student. The confluence of particularity and universality here, couched in a

learned prose filled with etymologies and references to Greek, Latin, and German thought, is one of those rare pieces that has scholarly merit while feeling like a personal letter written from – and to – the heart. “We do not know how to get back to the center from the loose ends that are our specialties,” (p. 215) Delbert says in the avowedly shadowy “Bowel Rumbblings or Bone Roaring or Something.” But shadows are useful inasmuch as they reveal outlines or patterns, provided that they are true patterns. His observations about the loss of a central idea in the modern university, the need for a sense of continued personal growth that, absent society’s ability to facilitate this growth, relegates higher education to the status of a refuge, and the relationship of the university to the demands of culture, have the ring of truth about them. It is this chapter, if any, beguiling and occasionally opaque though it may be, that may prove to be truly prophetic. A brief reflection on the function of creeds as well as on the simultaneous need for denominational clarity and interdenominational ecumenicity constitutes the next work. The volume ends with a retrospective talk in which Delbert reflects on the significance of the course of his own life. True to form, he does not let the narrative end before he has described his experience using allegory drawn from a Biblical episode: that of Peter stepping out of the boat and walking on water. The volume’s artist, Josiah Muster, rightly chooses to depict this story in his piece “On Water,” which introduces this collection of unpublished works.

The unique combination of chapters in this book, some being biographical, others laudatory personal reflections, and still others academic essays, make the volume an edifying read for the scholar and the interested member of the Mennonite Brethren community alike. The scholar will find sophisticated reflections on Christianity and its intellectual milieu throughout different periods of its history, but he will also be treated to stories about the man whose ideas inspired the topics of the essays. The non-scholar, primarily interested in the more biographical pieces, will nonetheless be able to benefit from the scholarship of Delbert’s intellectual successors, as the academic essays are as lucid and readable as they are rigorously researched. I imagine that this confluence of

different types of writing, entirely accessible to each of its intended audiences, would have made Delbert proud, given his diverse intellectual and geographical background and affinity for communicating with people from all walks of life. This collection, much like the thought and writing of the man who inspired it, is always delightful, is frequently but productively challenging, and refuses to be ignored.

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