

two chapters to Qur'anic exegesis and only nine chapters to the Qur'an as text, as well as twelve chapters to its history. For this reason, one cannot help but note how the critical-historical dimension is neglected in the book in favor of a more content-literary approach. This brings us back to defining the field of Qur'anic studies and whether it should cover *What the Qur'an is and how it was made* or rather *What was said about the Qur'an*.

The indices of Qur'anic verses, Bible references, prophetic traditions, places, and people are much appreciated. Furthermore, the generous titles, offered on almost every page, and the extensive bibliography, at the end of each chapter, make reading this volume easy and productive. Therefore, I highly recommend this book to students and scholars of religious studies.

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Paul and the Good Life: Transformation and Citizenship in the Commonwealth of God. By Julien C. H. Smith. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020. xi + 208 pages. \$39.99 (paper).

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This is a well-written and engaging study. Seemingly a product of and, particularly for, upper-division honors students, the book would serve well within courses presenting character or virtue education. The scholarship and application of research provides an excellent example for how to construct, apply, and evaluate an argument. The initial chapter, "Salvation and the Good Life," sets up the admittedly "artificial framework" of four core "thematic foci" (4) and, subsequent chapters on "Citizenship," "Character," "Community" and "Creation." Following these is a sixth chapter on "Paul and the Good Life" and a brief conclusion, "In the Image of the King." This primary material is supported by almost as much footnoted information serving both references and opportunities for further reading.

There is much to praise for the treatment of the various aims/goals stated (14, 16, 21, 25, etc.). General pleas for readers to consider what and how we consume, or the specific notion that salvation was intended to be something more than what happens after death, are easy to appreciate. But as the reader is moved from developed philosophical views prior to Paul, to Paul's world (assessed with both broadly sketched history and specifically cited epistles nuanced by both lexical issues and rhetorical strategies), and then on to contemporary concerns ranging from addictive behaviors to specialized economies, one quickly realizes what Smith admits about this breadth of ideas: "Paul must be coaxed into conversation with Aristotle and the wider Greco-

Roman philosophical tradition of virtue ethics" (3). Indeed, a basic problem is how to put largely *ad hoc* letters in service to a process of group formation up against developed treatises. Related, how can one understand the relationship between the political model of an ancient king and the emphasis on kinship pervasive in Paul's letters?

The book presents more a comparison of ideas than a history of group formation. These comparisons are clearly rooted in a confessional stance wherein what Paul likely meant is taken as a relevant foundation for contemporary choices peppered with appreciable mention of, for example, N. T. Wright, L. Newbigin, D. Willard, and especially P. Hadot. But, beyond a section on the Roman Empire's maladaptation of Christianity (179f), there is little tracing of developments between Paul and the contemporary world. Within this approach, two particular concerns are noted here. First, the more specific and focal notion that "Paul understands Jesus as a type of ancient ideal king ..." (4) remains difficult. Some data from Paul's letters engage this notion. More data exist if one follows Smith's view that Colossians and Ephesians are from Paul (e.g., 125). But the question remains: How would this view or, Paul's presumptive endorsement of it, function for diverse populations called to be in Christ? More specifically, how would this idea relate to the data in the letters supporting the integrity of their newly found kinship (an institution typically in tension with politics) in Christ? So, in the chapter focused on "Character" (63f), excerpts from Philo, Lucian, Plutarch, and so on survey the notion of the ideal king as one who leads or forms *in persona*. Although noteworthy, how did this idea impress upon or form groups otherwise struggling to understand the value of marriage or how to appropriately engage in the Lord's meal? Second, Smith's notion that "Christ himself embraced" (53) suffering or, that "the 'ruling' virtue espoused by Jesus the king and those loyal to his reign is suffering" (55) is overstated. Of course, Jesus and Paul recognized suffering as a consequence to living a countercultural life. But Paul seems to endorse remaining committed to a life in Christ despite suffering and while awaiting something like the Creator's vindication of the suffering of Jesus. What that transformed life looked like remains to be revealed by God. Until then, those in Christ were called to serve one another as if family while anticipating that return.

Thought experiments and illustrations might not capture every specialist's interest. But this book makes it clear that some can specialize in making connections. And although one might not agree with every specific detail among the multitude of insights Smith offers, the scholarship and writing make this product well worth the read.

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