

the Christian tradition treats it as phatic communication, nodding reverentially while paying little attention to its actual content. Nonetheless, this is a one-sided collection. Even when Scripture is not the primary motivating factor, it often lends legitimation to violence, as in the case cited by Clenman. Most obviously lacking here is attention to the long history of the use of Scripture, in all three traditions, in support of violent action. In light of that history, the claim of Fodor that words in themselves are not dangerous is either naive or disingenuous. And if there is any evidence that violent divine commands ever made anyone *less* violent, I am not aware of it.

In all then, these essays are thoughtful representatives of one side of a debate. There are many books that are equally one-sided in indicting Scripture, so this volume too is a valuable contribution.

JOHN J. COLLINS 

Yale Divinity School

The Joy of God: Collected Writings. By Sr. Mary David Totah. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019. xviii + 189 pages. \$18.00 (paper).

doi: 10.1017/hor.2021.29

The Joy of God is just what the title implies: a collection of snippets from letters, notes, and lectures that Sr. Mary David Totah wrote to her sisters in St. Cecilia's Abbey on the Isle of Wight and to family and friends on both sides of the Atlantic. The foreword by Fr. Erik Varden provides necessary background and context for Sr. Mary David's writing, and a final chapter describing her last bout with cancer gives the book closure. The writings themselves have been arranged into chapters that trace the spiritual journey from Call to Acceptance, and the editors have provided references for the Scripture and other writings Sr. Mary David cites.

As one would expect from a Benedictine, Sr. Mary David's writing is steeped in Scripture, making this a book that might appeal even to those Christians whose church does not have a monastic tradition. As one would also expect from a Benedictine, her writing is filled with practical advice. For example, responding to someone who is worried about how she feels about people and events, she writes, "Simply do without the feelings you have not got and behave as if you had them ... Just try to *act* as you know you should and all will be well" (74–5, emphasis original).

A professor of English literature before entering religious life, Sr. Mary David writes clearly and concisely, and she writes with an awareness of contemporary developments in psychology and anthropology without dismissing the rich Benedictine tradition. For example, responding to a sister who is

discouraged by her inability to do everything correctly, Sr. Mary David writes, “The religious life is not about ‘getting things right.’ ... It’s rather about coping creatively with our imperfections, refusing to be discouraged by them, but instead, to see God working in and through them” (66). Her examples and her language make this teaching as applicable to life outside the monastery as it is to life within the cloister.

Joy of God is like many other spirituality collections; those who know the writer will find much that is nourishing, especially as the writing stirs memories of a gifted mentor. Others who are just beginning a more serious, conscious effort at developing their spiritual life will also find much that is useful in the collection. Those who have been serious seekers for some time, however, may come away thinking that they have read similar teaching many, many times.

One surprising aspect of *Joy of God* is the lack of inclusive language. Perhaps Sr. Mary David adopted the style that uses the masculine as the “generic,” or perhaps the editors changed the feminine pronouns to masculine in hopes of making the book appeal to everyone. Whichever the case, the lack of feminine pronouns is jarring in a book containing writings by a woman for other women. Still, the book could be useful in a teaching situation. Some entries in the book span several pages, but many are just a paragraph or two. As such, they could be useful discussion starters for small parish groups, for RCIA programs, or for student reflection papers.

LINDA S. HARRINGTON
Independent Scholar

Politics after Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World. By David VanDrunen. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020. 400 pages. \$29.99 (paper).

doi: 10.1017/hor.2021.21

VanDrunen has produced a clearly written, vigorously argued political theology in the tradition of the Protestant “two kingdoms” separation between this worldly politics and the reign of God. His primary contribution is to develop an analysis of the political implications of the covenant between God and all of creation as set forth in Genesis 9. This Noahic covenant, VanDrunen argues, is universal and intended to preserve the world; as such, the Noahic covenant is distinct from the later biblical covenants that are with specific groups and lead to salvation. In VanDrunen’s perspective, the universal Noahic covenant legitimizes religiously diverse political communities and supports the familial, economic, and judicial institutions