

Goddess and God in the World: Conversations in Embodied Theology. By Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016. xvi + 325 pages. \$29.00 (paper).

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In this collaborative work, Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow trace the arcs of their respective theological developments as these emerge in the journeys of their lives. The conversations of the title refer not to a transcript of a spoken exchange, but to the substantial and engaging dialogue of their lives, work, and development as feminist thea/ologians. This text offers even readers familiar with the contributions of Christ and Plaskow fascinating insight into each author's formation and theological reasoning. Rather than an index, a thorough bibliography of each author's work appears at the end, while footnotes throughout the chapters cite influences on each author.

The book is organized in two parts, entitled "Embodied Theologies" and "Theological Conversations." In the first part, in alternating chapters, each author recounts her feminist formation and how this affected her developing theological voice. This section summarizes the authors' early family contexts, graduate school experiences at Yale, and early teaching careers. The alternating authorship of these chapters works effectively to tell two distinct stories, while keeping the authors' journeys in chronological narrative sync.

The personal narratives of part 1 are punctuated by two jointly written chapters, the first entitled "God in the History of Theology" and the second, "Feminist Theology at the Center." Each of these succinct chapters functions effectively to place the authors' individual stories in the larger contemporary theological and feminist context.

In these eight chapters of part 1, neither author explores intimate detail in the manner of full-blown memoir, yet both write quite personally. The narrative chapters are compelling and engaging, placing each author's well-known corpus within her life's context, helpfully demonstrating the progression of their theologies over time and in response to constructive criticism.

In part 2, again in alternating chapters, Christ and Plaskow assess their commonalities and explore their disagreements regarding the nature of God/Goddess. These chapters model respectful analysis of disagreement that is both academic and personal. As in the personal narratives, each author is vulnerable, acknowledging places in her theological journey where she may not have full self-understanding, even as she clearly articulates and rigorously explains her objection to the other's theology of God/Goddess.

Although deciding whether to stay in or leave a religious tradition forms part of the backdrop to their differences, the major disagreement that the authors "have been arguing about for over two decades" (231) is whether

or not the Divine is a personal entity, with the attendant implications for considering evil.

Whereas Christ maintains that Goddess is love, a personal being, Plaskow understands God to be an impersonal force, the source of *all* that is, which, therefore, includes ambiguity and even evil. Despite this vitally important, fundamental difference, the authors recognize that their ethics are, in Plaskow's words, "virtually identical" (238).

A coauthored conclusion is a satisfactory summation, rejecting relativism while admitting "a standoff" (299), and encouraging readers to "engage in theological conversations at once committed and open, appreciative and critical, respectful and challenging" (302). This volume is an excellent example of just such a dialogue.

Given feminist rejection of dualistic thinking, it is curious that at the end of the jointly written, short introduction, dualisms are evident in the framing of seven of the eight "questions to ponder" that the authors suggest readers consider—for example, "Is God or Goddess to be found outside the world, or within it?" (xv). Perhaps this is a pedagogical tactic, pushing student readers to take sides, but the title also suggests a dualism not resolved in the theological conversation.

Since I believe that feminist theology is important for all theologians, not only for those who identify as feminists, and, further, that feminist theologies beyond Christian circles are important dialogue partners for Christian theologians, I believe this mature and thoughtful conversation by these pioneering feminist theologians is an important volume for all theologians, whether feminist, Christian, or not.

Finally, a very valuable trait of this work is its intentional accessibility. Readers can follow the authors' arguments and theological disagreements without being versed in specialized vocabulary. Each author manages to discuss difficult theory (such as process metaphysics and gender performativity) in language appropriate for upper-level undergraduates.

ALISON DOWNIE

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

The Invention of Judaism: Torah and Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy to Paul. By John J. Collins. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017. ix + 319 pages. \$29.95 (paper).

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In this study, John J. Collins argues that Judaism was conceived by the authors and earliest interpreters of the Torah. Many readers of this journal