

historiography,” which posits an uncritical accommodation to American cultural norms as the ideal, is also skillfully weighed in several essays.

As is the nature of the Festschrift genre, readers will find various essays more or less compelling relative to their own interests and passions. In this reader’s case, part 2 (“Inculturating the Catholic Tradition”) proved especially stimulating. Essays by David J. O’Brien, Michael F. Lombardo, Benjamin T. Peters, and Susan K. Sack offer rich insight into the opportunities and travails of the Catholic engagement of the Christ and culture nexus in the American context, and by way of some of Portier’s insights in this regard, notably concerning the emerging “evangelical Catholics” phenomenon. O’Brien is particularly perceptive in his high-energy discussion of the Americanizing/Americanization dynamics of the Catholic situation in relation to Portier’s thought.

It is hardly a secret in these days of a weakened Catholic subculture—and with the exception of the Hispanic/Asian realities of the church in America—that Catholic identity has become more porous, unstable, and increasingly deinstitutionalized. As some of Portier’s more recent work amply illustrates, how and why this has happened, along with speculation about the long-term consequences, will continue to play out in contemporary Catholic scholarship and in various church-related culture-war platforms. Portier’s voice and the collegial scholarship he has stimulated is a helpful directive in all of this even as a number of noteworthy questions inevitably arise. Will, for example, the subgroup of American Catholics that Portier, O’Brien, and others classify as “evangelical Catholics” prove a viable and enduring church-like “new pluralism” response to the situation—or simply be the harbinger of another sect-like fragmenting dynamic similar to those attending Protestantism’s engagement with modernity? As the authors in this salutary collection note in one complimentary manner or another, Portier’s keen sensibilities surrounding the creative engagement of personal faith with the wholesome integration of theology and history are well worth heeding in confronting these contemporary challenges and opportunities.

WILLIAM D. DINGES

The Catholic University of America

Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible. By Willie James Jennings. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017. xvii + 289 pages. \$40.00. doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.30

Willie James Jennings’ stirring commentary on the Acts of the Apostles is the most recent publication in the innovative Belief series. The goal of the

series is to amend the disciplinary chasm between theology and biblical studies by offering fresh retrievals of biblical texts in light of contemporary currents in theology and ethics. In *Acts*, Jennings approaches the biblical account of the early Christian community through the wound of racial segregation. At the heart of Jennings' retrieval of Acts is his contention that the text can be read as the unfolding of what he terms a "revolution of intimacy." For Jennings, the surest gift of the Holy Spirit is the desire for what God desires: the joining together of persons long separated by boundaries of fear, hatred, and history. Acts, then, is the story of the Holy Spirit broadening ever wider the boundaries of the people of God and of the human response to this risky, revolutionary broadening. As he moves through the text, Jennings' attention is on these moments of boundary transgression and surprising intimacy in the midst of empire.

The commentary is divided into five sections. The first, "The Revolution of Intimacy" (1:1-4:37), contrasts what Jennings terms the nationalist fantasy—the segregating desire for security—with the Pentecost event. At Pentecost, the "epicenter of the revolution" (27), the Spirit's descent ushers in a linguistic joining that foregrounds the events that follow. In the second section, "The Struggle of Diaspora" (5:1-9:43), Jennings' interpretation of Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40) evinces gentle attentiveness to that moment's intimate joy. It also nuances the notion of boundary transgression so central to the work. The eunuch is loved not in spite of his difference but because of it. Thus, the Spirit's transgression of borders is not to be understood as an act of assimilating dominance or divine annexation, but rather as the holy desire for communion, for subversive intimacy in and across difference.

In the third section, "The Desire of God Exposed" (10:1-15:41), of particular note is Jennings' examination of Peter and Cornelius (10:1-11:18). He draws readers' attention beyond the Spirit's descent upon the Gentiles—ostensibly the climax of the narrative—to the hidden moment afterward, when Cornelius and his household "'invited [Peter] to stay on for several days' (v. 49)." For Jennings, the work of the Spirit is the conversion of human desire. What is most remarkable about this moment, he argues, is that Peter and Cornelius *want* to remain together; once separated by religio-cultural boundaries, they now desire one another's fellowship. The fourth section, "The Spirit and the End of Segregation" (16:1-21:40), sharpens the commentary's focus on embodiment, while the fifth section, "The Disciple-Citizen" (22:1-28:31), examines the implications of Christian intimacy in the context of empire.

In addition to a passage-by-passage treatment of the text, several additional features serve as an asset to those referring to the commentary for

preaching or teaching. Each section includes one or more “Further Reflections,” helpfully offset in different font, about pastorally relevant topics such as “Marriage, Money, and Discipleship” (57–61) and “Citizenship and Struggle” (223–26). The text is also interspersed with quotations from theologians, writers, and civil rights leaders, set apart in boxes.

Jennings’ prose is musical and aesthetically charged; this is a text that preaches. As such, it is better served by patient meditation than quick reference. Unlike traditional biblical commentaries, the volume is most meaningfully approached as a whole rather than utilized as a reference. Readers seeking to focus attention on a particular passage are advised to read the introduction, which offers a compelling entrée into Jennings’ key hermeneutical categories and themes.

While the most obvious audience for this commentary is those preaching, teaching, or studying Acts, it is equally valuable for those engaging theological questions of place, race, (post)colonialism, or ecclesiology. *Acts* also serves as an illuminating companion volume to Jennings’ acclaimed *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (2011). In it, Jennings traces the spatial, economic, political, bodily, and narrative roots of what he terms Western Christianity’s diseased social imagination. The final chapter offers a compelling reimagining of what Christian communities might become—indeed, must become—if the inertia of racial-spatial segregation is to be overcome by love. Jennings describes this vision as one of “joining and communion,” a theme that similarly permeates his reading of Acts. *Acts* thus offers a stirring biblical foundation for the radically inclusive and subversive hope that is the heart of Jennings’ theological vision.

SUSAN B. REYNOLDS
Boston College

The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women. Edited by Elizabeth A. Johnson. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016. xiii + 354 pages. \$35.00 (paper).

doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.31

In *The Strength of Her Witness* (a set of essays published between 1990 and 2013), Elizabeth Johnson makes available a unique collection of feminist contributions to Christology, the Christian doctrine most often associated with the oppression of women. The book’s title is inspired by the Gospel of John’s account of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at a well (4:4–26). Unlike the Pharisee, Nicodemus, who meets secretly with Jesus at night and departs doubting (3:1–21), the Samaritan woman meets Jesus in