

Toward the end of his book, Lefebure devotes an entire chapter to biblical exegesis as a resource for responding to religious diversity. He examines the history of biblical interpretation that supported hostility and suspicion toward other religions. He also highlights resources in the Bible for responding more positively to religious diversity as both a challenge and an opportunity. His treatment of the wisdom literature in the Bible is noteworthy. Holy Sophia may provide a meeting place for the religious traditions of the world, but the author is careful to remind his readers of the hermeneutical value of difference. In this, Lefebure turns to the work of Paul Ricoeur on religious language and the interpretation of sacred texts. His comments on the value of reading the Bible (both Testaments) with Jews could be expanded to include the careful reading of sacred texts (Christian and otherwise) with our friends who follow other religious paths.

In calling this volume a “handbook,” I wish to draw attention to its encyclopedic character. Lefebure has provided us with an enormous amount of historical data and theological reflection, all of which is carefully documented. This book will be of great value to anyone teaching in the area of religious diversity in America or hoping to negotiate the political and theological complexities of interreligious relations today.

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*Scribes and Scribalism*. Edited by Mark Leuchter. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2021. 183 pages. \$39.95 (paper).

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For this collection of nine essays, Leuchter provides an introduction subtitled “The Scholarly Context for the Study of Scribes and Scribalism.” In copying texts, scribes not only interpret texts but create them. The connection between orality and writing is complex and evolves from the eleventh century BCE to the turn of the era. Israelite scribes remembered the authoritative pronouncements of kings, prophets, sages, and elders, and shaped them, not only into narratives, but also into collections with an archival character. Leuchter contends that literacy existed in places outside of Jerusalem. The craft of writing seems to have been taught within scribal households and practiced by individuals who were not necessarily tied to the palace or the temple. The influence of Mesopotamian and Egyptian scribalism on Israelite scribal practice must be taken into account.

Part 1, “Praxis and Materiality,” contains three essays. Sarah Malena, in “Influential Inscriptions: Resituating Scribal Activity during the Iron I-IIA

Transition" (13–27), argues that scribal activity increased in the tenth century BCE largely because elites desired to have their names etched on prestige objects. Madadh Richey, in "The Media and Materiality of Southern Levantine Inscriptions: Production and Reception Contexts" (29–39), examines the tasks carried out by scribes in the production of inscriptions on basalt and limestone, and explains how the few extant papyri in the southern Levant are complemented by hordes of bullae in Lachish and Jerusalem that bound papyri documents. These bullae shed light on the processes of archiving and circulating documents that were later incorporated into the Hebrew Bible. Anselm Hagedorn, in "Scribes and Scribalism in Archaic Crete" (41–60), attributes the origin of writing in Crete to the influence of the Phoenician alphabet. Writing was valued because it strengthened the capacity of a community to remember its laws and traditions.

Part 2, "Power and Status," contains four essays. Brian Rainey's "Scribes, Schools and Ideological Conflict in Ancient Israel and Judah" (63–78), explores the question of the sociopolitical location of scribal training and the extent to which a particular context fostered a specific ideological mindset in the scribe. Jacqueline Vayntrub, in "Ecclesiastes and the Problem of Transmission in Biblical Literature" (79–93), examines the book of Ecclesiastes to see the extent to which the ancients regarded the written transmission of the words of an authority figure to be reliable. The dialogue between the frame speaker (Eccl 12:9–14) and Qoheleth (Eccl 2:15–16) calls into question the extent to which the personhood of an authority figure can be transmitted via a written text. Heath Dewrell, in "Textualization and the Transformation of Biblical Prophecy" (95–105), examines how the writing down of an orally delivered prophecy shifts the attention of the text to a future audience. He asks: Why would an ancient Israelite community want to preserve the original oracles of a prophet? Did the scribes frame collections of oracles with an eye to the future audience that might receive them? Antje Labahn, in "Reorientation in Responsibility of Levites Taking Care of the Ark: The Levites' Role in Samuel-Kings in Relation to Deuteronomistic Expressions Concerning Interpretation of the Law" (107–21), notes that there are only three references to Levites in Samuel-Kings: 1 Sam 6:15; 2 Sam 15:24; 1 Kgs 8:4. She explains how these three late additions to the Deuteronomistic history shed light on the evolution of the dual role of the Levites as carriers of the ark of the covenant and interpreters of the Torah.

Part 3, "Between Ideology and Authority," contains two essays. Laura Carlson Hasler, in "Writing in Three Dimensions: Scribal Activity and Spaces in Jewish Antiquity" (125–31), argues that the ancient Jewish scribes constructed within their texts the world in which they lived. If the unity of the biblical book was formed by the editors, then the goal of such a unity

may have been to archive texts that might later be retrieved (e.g., the books of Ezra-Nehemiah). She argues that scribes used writing to replicate space that could be adapted to their needs. Shawna Dolansky, in “Rejecting ‘Patriarchy’: Reflections on Feminism, Biblical Scholarship, and Social Perspective” (133–48), contends that many feminist interpreters take an ahistorical approach to biblical texts by imposing the contemporary category of “patriarchy” on biblical texts.

In sum, each of these essays contributes important insights on the ways that ancient scribes created their identity through the practice of their art.

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*On the Way: Religious Experience and Common Life in the Gospels and Letters of Paul.* By Kevin B. McCrudden. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2020. 210 pages. \$19.95 (paper).  
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In a crowded market of New Testament introductions, *On the Way: Religious Experience and Common Life in the Gospels and Letters of Paul* attempts to prick the curiosity of students by introducing the New Testament through the twin lenses of religious experience and communal response. The author holds that “the writings of the New Testament ... offer resources for wrestling with the complexity of issues that impinge upon [the students’] lives” (9) and desires to demonstrate “the relevance of the study of the New Testament for lived experience” (10).

To that end, McCrudden focuses on the canonical gospels and the undisputed Pauline letters, suggesting that both offer “different windows” into early Christian understanding of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The author does not explain why he begins with the Gospel of Mark, rather than the letters of Paul, which he acknowledges predate the Gospels, and therefore reflect the earliest Christian reflection on religious experience. But this placement may be due to his desire to focus on Paul’s contribution to the transformation and renewal of common life (193).

The book opens with a “Preface for Teachers,” which articulates the author’s motivation and goal for the work. In “Chapter 1: Religious Experience and the Common Life,” McCrudden discusses how religious experience is variously defined, the role of creativity and culture in interpretation, and the significance of the communal life, particularly in the first century. He does make a rather sweeping statement about American individualism in comparison to the communal sensibilities of the New Testament authors.