

addressed in relation to them. Second, faculty who assign the book for a course that also involves writing instruction should take care to help students understand its scope and genre as a *textbook*. Inexperienced writers may mistake the encyclopedic rhetorical style as an appropriate model for their own writing, which will not encourage them to practice supporting their claims with reasons and evidence. This is a limitation of the textbook genre generally speaking, and not particular to Weaver's book. However, the book's lightweight size, black-and-white print, and inexpensive price tag may prevent students from clearly recognizing that it is a textbook and should be used as such.

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*Rethinking Christian Forgiveness: Theological, Philosophical, and Psychological Explorations.* By James K. Voiss, SJ. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015. xx + 428 pages. \$34.95 (paper).

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This book sets out to explore the distinctiveness of Christian forgiveness. It does so in the most thorough way, leading the reader through extensive literature in philosophy, psychology, and theology. While the ultimate goal is to address Christian forgiveness, the topic of forgiveness, in light of rampant abuses of human dignity in the last century, has garnered attention from a range of scholars in recent decades.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 reviews philosophical and psychological works on forgiveness, in three chapters. The first deals with philosophical approaches from a French-Continental perspective, focusing primarily on Jacques Derrida, with the response of Paul Ricoeur. Here, the main issue is whether there is such a thing as "pure" forgiveness, and whether it is even possible. Chapter 2 turns to Anglo-American approaches, which assume forgiveness is possible and focus on the conditions under which it can be enacted. The primary concerns revolve around resentment or affectivity in general, at the same time assuming a cognitive element to forgiveness, while treating forgiveness as a distinctively moral problem. The third chapter treats psychological approaches, in which pain and healing come to the fore; forgiveness may be a therapeutic issue that goes beyond merely moral concerns.

In part 2, James Voiss begins to explore his own approach, outlining a more phenomenological tack. He excavates what in fact occurs when forgiveness is enacted. His emphasis is on human becoming and the dynamism of "matrices of meaning," within which occur events that call for forgiveness.

These are the distinctive elements of what Voiss has to offer. The need to forgive presupposes an experience of harm, recognized as an assault of the self, which disrupts the matrices of meaning of self and world. This self and these meanings are part of the long process of personal becoming. Forgiveness is not a single event but involves the restructuring of constellations of meaning over time. This realignment of meanings has the character of conversion, constituted by a radical change of direction in the narrative one tells and within the set of relationships that comprise one's meaning world (175–77; 189–92). A final distinctive element is Voiss' insistence on broadening the scope of inquiry beyond the conscious cognitive level to include the unconscious dynamics involved, thus incorporating the fruits of the psychological literature and the focus on therapeutic forgiveness.

In part 3, Voiss turns to specifically Christian literature. He chooses to cover the territory by reviewing the work of three theologians from different theological affiliations. Lewis B. Smedes (*Forgive and Forget*) represents Reformed theology, Miroslav Volf (*Free of Charge*) takes a Lutheran approach, and L. Gregory Jones (*Embodying Forgiveness*) is a Methodist. Voiss reviews their approaches in chapter 7, and then raises questions, mostly about Volf and Jones, in chapter 8. He critiques their approaches for not getting deep enough into the cultural matrix of a postmodern world, remaining too much within a closed system of Christian apologetics. He further questions a theology of atonement that begins with God's wrath over sin. In chapter 9 he presents an alternative theological starting point—that of God's love rather than God's righteousness. Finally, in chapter 10 he brings all the pieces together in his own constructive, phenomenological yet Christian approach.

This book is both thorough and thoughtful. It is carefully written; one thing that stands out is the way Voiss delineates his points. He regularly says something like, "There are three important issues at stake here." He then works through them in order: "First ... second ... third ..." This makes a long and penetrating book manageable. In addition, he begins and ends each chapter with clear transition summaries. Voiss' recognition of the mediation of meaning in forgiveness, the human developmental dynamisms involved, the radical nature (conversion) entailed, and the depth of psychic engagement implicated makes a significant contribution to current discussions of Christian forgiveness.

There are two ways in which Voiss' work might be enhanced. First, given his insistence on both conversion and the psychological dimensions of forgiveness, the work of Robert M. Doran, SJ, on "psychic conversion" could elucidate these dynamics further (*Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations; Theology and the Dialectics of History*). Second, because of

Voiss' focus on shifts of meaning at the most basic levels of culture, as well as his attention to the role of mediated meanings in forgiveness, Bernard Lonergan's work (on which Voiss already relies) on realms of meaning—common sense, theory, and interiority (*Method in Theology*)—could provide some categories to advance Voiss' points.

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*Sacred Sense: Discovering the Wonder of God's Word and World.* By William P. Brown. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015. ix + 171 pages. \$22.00 (paper).

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William P. Brown, the William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, has written a book about a hermeneutical approach to Scripture that the book itself exemplifies. After the shock of the first sentence, I found the work totally engaging. (Fred Craddock, of blessed memory, was not a "great Methodist preacher," but a great Disciple of Christ preacher.) Brown explains that his "book attempts ... to follow a biblical itinerary of wonder" (3). It is a "book about reading Scripture with an eye for wonder" (11). The author understands his "role in relation to the biblical text" as an exegete, "a docent in the text of wonder" (159). His book exemplifies this hermeneutic of wonder.

Framed with introductory and concluding sections, the book devotes ten chapters to Old Testament texts and six chapters to New Testament texts. Together the chapters depict the sweep of salvation history, from creation (Genesis 1:3; 2:4b–3:24) through re-creation (Genesis 6–9), Exodus (Exodus 19–20), and prophecy (Isaiah 43:15–21; Amos 5:21–24, one chapter), with visits to Lady Wisdom (Proverbs 8:22–31) and Job (Job 38–42). Exegesis of the Song of Songs, one of the longest chapters, is the most gloriously sexy this reviewer has encountered. Salvation history continues with incarnation (John 1:1–18), resurrection (Mark 16:1–8; John 20:1–18; Luke 24:13–32), "Christ and Cosmic Wonder" (Colossians 1:15–20), and apocalypse (Revelation 21:5).

Five of fourteen exegetical chapters treat wisdom literature. Chapters are uneven in length. (Did some begin as sermons?) The principle of selection of texts for treatment seems to be that they are particularly wonder full. Strengths of the book include its use of etymology (see, for example, *adam*, 32–33; *hevel*, 86; *pleroma*, 117), its correction of misconceptions about familiar texts (for example, the creation of woman from man, 36–37, or the