

the Sabbath; (3) the relationship between old and new covenants in God's redemptive plan; (4) the priority/integrity of the Ten Commandments as enduring moral law; (5) the interpretation of Hebrews 4; and (6) the historical-theological developments of Sunday observance in favor of the seventh-day Sabbath in light of prophetic apocalyptic material (Daniel and Revelation). The discussion revolving around the hermeneutical, exegetical, and theological issues in approaching and interpreting Hebrews 4 provides one example of the complexity of issues at play and confronts the reader with material worth the read toward understanding the passage at hand.

If Donato's *Perspectives on the Sabbath: Four Views* point-counterpoint discussion aims to determine which of perspective of the Sabbath is most faithful to Scripture, what should one conclude? Which position is most faithful to Scripture? While Donato leaves each reader to answer for himself or herself, this reviewer suggests that the seventh-day Sabbath, Saturday position presented by MacCarty is the most consistent, plain, and compelling. As stated above, the interpretive divide falls most starkly between MacCarty and Blomberg's positions. Does one take the Sabbath texts as they read across both Testaments, or does one adjust the texts in favor of a hermeneutic of fulfillment in Christ? While MacCarty is criticized (unfairly) for seemingly stringing together Bible passages in ways that make it difficult to identify how the texts are being related, he argues that in the end the issues go beyond hermeneutics in that the only defense of the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is that it is God's bidding. It is a matter of faith in response to the text—both Gen 2:1-3 and Exod 20:8-11. No amount of discussion regarding “fulfillment in Christ” can move the reader from those two scriptural anchor points. No explicit NT text states that Sunday observance replaces the seventh-day Sabbath as expressed in these two biblical texts.

This text brings the latest discussion of the Sabbath/Sunday issue under one cover. Its point-counterpoint format unfolds the strongest of both old and new argumentation in favor of and against the four perspectives presented. It is a must-read for any scholar, pastor, or layperson desiring an understanding of the issues toward either making informed decisions for themselves or helping others relate to the seventh-day Sabbath.

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Johnson, Matthew V., James A. Noel, and Demetrius K. Williams, eds. *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon*. Paul in Critical Contexts. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. viii+175 pp. Hardcover, \$39.00.

The authors of this book attempt to place Paul's epistle to Philemon within the context of the African American experience. It is a compilation of seven articles, all designed to expose the prejudices of Western ethnocentrism and

culture, biases against blacks, women, and other entities. An attempt is made to read into the silence of Onesimus the plight of African Americans.

“No Longer as a Slave’: Reading the Interpretation History of Paul’s Epistle to Philemon,” by D. K. Williams, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin, recalls various interpretations of Philemon from early church history to the present. Williams shows how the conservative perspective has been more influential than the emancipatory one. The epistle was generally employed to maintain the status quo on slavery. Despite a number of valid arguments, this chapter remains confusing, because Williams does not always follow the historical sequences when he places Luther and Chrysostom within the setting of the early church. Primary sources are missing. However, Williams is well documented and shows how the many conservative interpretations of the difficult v. 16, led the African American churches to reject, or more likely, to ignore the epistle. It is interesting to note how presuppositions can influence exegesis.

“Utility, Fraternity, and Reconciliation: Ancient Slavery as a Context for the Return of Onesimus,” by Mitzi J. Smith, Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at Ashland Theological Seminary, attempts to interpret the “usefulness” of Onesimus. Using both Greco-Roman and Bible sources, the author shows how the kinship language does not imply manumission. “The language of friendship functioned as euphemistic rhetoric,” he says. The acceptance of Onesimus “for eternity” may imply the eternal relationship between a master and his slave. The numerous references to the OT and NT enhance one’s understanding of what slavery was and how it was used as a metaphor in redemption’s realm.

In his “Nat is Back: The Return of the Re/Oppressed in Philemon,” by James A. Noel, Professor of American Religion at San Francisco Theological Seminary, places the epistle to Philemon in the context of slavery in North America. He confronts the context of ancient slavery and the context of his current interpretation. Through the title of his article, Noel underlines how the arguments for the subjection of the black slaves, such as they appear in the various nineteenth-century speeches and legislation, remains in the subconscious of Whites today. The author claims that “to reverse the partition wall” blacks should no longer be viewed through socioeconomic criteria, but “in God.” It is a brilliant analysis, which offers a challenge because it demonstrates how easily biblical hermeneutics can be skewed through extreme fundamentalism and prejudices.

“Onesimus Speaks: Diagnosing the Hys/Terror of the Text,” by Matthew V. Johnson, Senior Pastor at The Good Pastor (Baptist) Church, appears to be a cry of suffering. His analysis is built on the silence of Onesimus in Paul’s letter. It is an indictment against present-day American White society, which speaks about Black slavery and fails to listen to them, and against Paul that maintains Onesimus in silence. The silence of Onesimus is interpreted

by Johnson as God's silence in the face of shameful acts. Moreover, Paul is presented as betraying the hope of the oppressed yearning for freedom and inclusion in the community of Christ. Johnson overlooks the historical context of Paul's time. When he dispatched the letter Onesimus must have implied by his gestures that Philemon should be the first person to break the silence. Johnson, however, appears to forget Paul's consistent appeals to unconditional love in his letter to the Christian community. This exegesis is based on present-time attitudes toward slavery, not on the context of the letter.

"Ain't You Marster?" Interrogating Slavery and Gender in Philemon" is written by Margaret B. Wilkerson, former Chair of the African American Studies department at the University of California at Berkeley. Through the analysis of recent literature and movies, Wilkerson shows how biblical views affect the current descendants. Her analysis may be helpful to understand the condition of African Americans today, but it fails to provide a coherent approach to Paul's epistle. Her treatment of Philemon's attitude toward Onesimus presupposes that nothing has changed in historical and socioeconomic factors since the distant past to our present time.

"Enslaved by the Text: The Uses of Philemon," by James W. Perkinson, Professor of Ethics and Systematic Theology at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit. His concern is not so much with Black enslavement as it is with the enslavement of the interpreters chained to presupposition with the assumption that the Bible establishes the supremacy of Whites. He trails Allen D. Callahan's exposition and his assumption that Onesimus was not a fugitive slave. The views of Perkinson are founded on the reaction of slaves to the conservative preaching on Philemon's epistle by Charles Colcock Jones, a Presbyterian minister. This story helps Perkinson to analyze the relationships between Whites and Blacks from their corporal attitude.

Lastly, Allen Dwight Callahan, Professor of New Testament Studies at the Seminário Teológico Batista de Nordeste in Bahia, Brazil, presents "Brother Saul: An Ambivalent Witness to Freedom." Through the use of many examples, he points out how slaves and women have used Scripture against Scripture to overcome Paul's apparent mandates against them. Some "transgressions" of the words of Paul regarding women and slaves are defended through the use of his own declarations or the apostle's life experiences reported in the book of Acts. Callahan underlines Paul's ambiguous position in the Bible's treatment of the African American.

This book has the merit of denouncing the exegesis of the Bible in general, and that of Paul's writings in particular, with the assumption that he supported slavery. It identifies the fact that the poor, slaves, Blacks, and women have suffered through the centuries because of brainwashing perpetrated deliberately to preserve the privileges of the ruling classes. For them, the only road to freedom is traced through a disregard for certain passages of Scripture and the practice of

selective reading by relying only on facts or statements that favor their yearning for freedom. The authors have attempted to give a voice to the presumed slave Onesimus, who had nothing to say in the epistle to Philemon. The attempts, however, are limited because they make use of what they denounce. Indeed, reading the epistle to Philemon in the framework of African American social and cultural makeup today by applying them to the past centuries has led to the use of the very weapons traditional scholars have used in the past. As a result, both suffer from the same deficiencies. The text is interpreted through today's familiarity with the topic. Even if this approach explains the suffering of the descendant of former slaves, it introduces assumptions and preconceptions responsible for deviation from the intended text of the epistle; thus, it brings a deviation from the very truth it contains. On the other hand, it must be noted that this book confirms a point often forgotten; this letter was not only sent to Philemon, but also to the church that was established in his house. Paul's intent was to change the mindset of the society in which Onesimus should have to live as a free man: the church. Release from bondage without acceptance from a welcoming society, or without its moral and socioeconomic support, can only perpetuate slavery in one form or another. What would the life of Onesimus have been like if the church had failed to express the love of Philemon? In a way, this book confirms what Paul was trying to say.

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Malphurs, Aubrey. *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011. 269 pp. Paper, \$16.99.

Aubrey Malphurs is a name well-known in church-planting circles. His seminal work, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (1992), has been the preferred textbook for church planting across denominational lines for close to two decades. Malphurs is a prolific author with twenty other publications to his credit. His current role is as professor of pastoral ministries at the Dallas Theological Seminary. In addition, Malphurs is actively engaged in church consultation and training on most weekends and is president of the organization he founded, "The Malphurs Group."

Malphurs's varied experience enables him to look at church planting from many vantage points. His field experience with planting undergirds some of his basic premises, namely that church planting is: exhausting, exciting, a faith venture, and a planned process. Additional insights are drawn from four basic sources: (1) students from Dallas Theological Seminary whose ministry path was church planting; (2) Malphurs's own local church experience at Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall, Texas; (3) consultation with a variety of local established churches and church plants; and (4) information gleaned