

All of the revivals studied had certain common characteristics. “No single economic cause can be assigned to them, but they were shaped by the occupation of their participants” (274). Each community was shaped significantly through a common livelihood such as fishing or mining that brought with it a sense of danger and a potential loss of life. Another common factor in all the revivals was that of prayer and an expectation that revival was close at hand. Thus, various catalysts—the Lord’s Supper, overseas missions, and even temperance and music—could play significant roles in bringing about revival.

This book is a starting point for additional research on still other regional and denominational groups in existence during the Victorian era. Such groups include Seventh-day Adventists, who embraced their own form of revivalism and whose prophetic voice, Ellen G. White, rejected popular notions of revivalism, and Mormons. More research is needed for building upon Bebbington’s work.

College libraries will do well to add this volume to their collections if they are interested in American religious history. Unfortunately, the price of the book makes it unlikely that it will receive a wide circulation outside of academic institutions.

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Collins, Paul M., and Barry Ensign-George, eds. *Denomination: Assessing an Ecclesiological Category*. Ecclesiological Investigations, 11. New York: T. & T. Clark, 2011. x + 177 pp. Hardcover, \$110.00.

It is rare to find an entire book seeking to clarify a single term in ecclesiology. *Denomination* is such a book, and its editors are to be congratulated on publishing a collection that sheds light on a reality that has not been given due scholarly attention. In fact, since the publication of *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* by H. Richard Niebuhr in 1929, the only major works discussing the denominational configuration of Christianity with this term in focus were two volumes edited by Russell E. Richey (1977 and 1994, the latter together with Robert B. Mullin).

The editors of this collection are a British Anglican priest and former theology professor and an American Presbyterian minister, who serves as a denominational theologian. Together they aim at a deepened reflection on whether the existence of denominations in the contemporary global Christian church can or should be accentuated in a more theological manner than is usually the case. A first step toward this aim is reflected in the title, which claims that the term “denomination” is an “ecclesiological category” and, at

the same time, limits this claim by suggesting that this category must be duly assessed.

Not surprisingly, the responses to their thesis differ. With its tapestry of nine “denominational” or “confessional” perspectives (Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Quaker, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic), one would not expect much agreement. The contributions demonstrate the range of feelings that a simple term can evoke and of the divergent perspectives extant in ecclesiology including the bold suggestion that “denomination” is a necessary term and entity (Ensign-George’s introductory chapter), a more-or-less hesitant support (Steven Harmon, Baptist), a somewhat uneasiness with the term (Gesa Thiessen, Lutheran), a critical acceptance (Amy Pauw, Presbyterian, and Peter de Mey, Roman Catholic), a near-complete acceptance (Paul Avis, Anglican), and total rejection (Elena Vishnevskaya, Orthodox). One of the strengths of the book is that it presents conflicting views even on the basic question of whether, and if yes, to what extent, the term “denomination” can serve to clarify ecclesiological discourses.

Another remarkable feature is the structure of the nine contributions, which approach the debate from widely different angles, with varying emphases, and rather diverse outlines. Yet, with only two exceptions, they each contain deliberations on four aspects: (1) a discussion of the term, (2) regional case studies on how particular church bodies match its meaning, (3) the relationship between particular confessional polities or ecclesiologies with “denominational” identity, and (4) the meaning of denomination(s) for ecumenism.

What is somewhat surprising is how often churches or their representatives prefer *not* to use the term in spite of the fact that the characteristics of their body of believers do correspond to the most basic description of “denomination”: an “intermediary” entity that exists “to mediate between . . . the church universal and the local congregation” (6). Of course, uneasiness may exist because of inherited alternative terms that various traditions have favored: “movement” (Pentecostals/Wolfgang Vondey), “connection” (Methodists/Russell Richey), “convention” or “fellowship” (Baptists), “confession” (Lutheran), “association” or “meeting” (Quaker/Ann Riggs), and, of course, “church” (Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic).

This mosaic of terminology raises the question of whether there are persuasive reasons why the term “denomination” and all these other descriptions of God’s people should or should not be used in ecclesiological reflection and even in other contexts in which the subject of the church is addressed. Avis asserts that this way of speaking betrays a sociological perspective that is better avoided when we speak of the things of God (22). But are not other descriptors or images for “church,” including *ekklesia*, borrowed from extratheological language as well? The Orthodox abhor the

term because according to them the church does not have parts. Thus, they view the term as supporting the idea of a divided church (91, 93). Yet, this approach does not as neatly solve the problem of Christian unity versus diversity; even the various autocephalous churches of Orthodoxy do not agree with each other in every matter. Some churches with Anabaptist or nonconformist backgrounds avoid the term “denomination” because for them the church is Spirit-led and missional, which is why they tend to use self-descriptions that appear more dynamic. However, like “denomination,” ultimately other terms merely illustrate the nature of theology, which can absorb thought patterns, expressions, and meanings from outside religion and mold them into theologically appropriate language.

It is typical for collections of essays such as this to contain inconsistencies or to lack clarity in some aspects. In this book, this happens right at the center—defining what a denomination is. Ensign-George suggests a five-part definition: “a contingent, intermediary, interdependent, partial, and permeable embodiment of the church.” (6) The other essays are responses to Ensign-George’s paper and his definition is echoed by several contributors either in full (Harmon, 39) or at least partly (Vishnevskaya, 90-94; Pauw, 139-140; de Mey, 158). However, others ignore Ensign-George’s definition (e.g., Avis, Thiessen, Vondey, and Riggs), produce their own definition (Richey, 69), or use an alternative one (Harmon, 36-38). This certainly adds variety, but it also leads to a picture in which even the main motif remains somewhat fuzzy.

Perhaps this fuzziness is unavoidable to some extent, and certainly the book was meant more as a stimulating contribution to the debate than as a well-argued position on the essence of the term “denomination.” By providing material from across the spectrum of Christian traditions, it answers some questions but raises new ones. To what extent can or should theology and ecclesiology, in particular, adopt empirical (e.g., sociological) findings and terminology? What is the relationship between systematic theology and external reality in more general terms? Moreover, when reflecting upon the authors’ understanding of the relevance of the “denominational” paradigm for ecumenism viz. interchurch relations, one also finds a large variety of ideas (in part contradictory ones) that all need further debate.

Some insights in particular are significant for Seventh-day Adventist theology. Pentecostals stress the “eschatological orientation of the body of Christ” (110), which implies a contrast between narrowly (i.e., purely organizationally) conceived denominational identities. The “liminal character” (110) of denominations and the missionary orientation of Pentecostalism (108) define an ecclesiology that resembles Adventist self-conceptualization in a striking manner. As for Baptists, their emphasis on the local congregation as *ekklesia* enables denominations to be considered as *ecclesial*, but not as *ekklesia* (39, 42-43). This Anabaptist impulse is of vital importance in each centralized church organization. Yet, the most ingenious affirmation is, in my

view, Pauw's assertion that "to claim a denominational identity is to see one's own body as a part of the universal church but not as the whole church" (133). This awareness existed among Seventh-day Adventists as early as 1860 when they decided *not* to name themselves the "Church of God" because they wanted to avoid the "appearance of presumption," while also expressing their mission to the world in their chosen name. At its best, therefore, the term "denomination" reveals that every Christian movement faces the challenge of relating to other parts of Christianity in meaningful ways, while affirming the reasons for its own existence.

Altogether, the value of the book lies not only in its diversity of perspectives, but also in its presentation of many aspects of a commonly used but ecclesologically under-reflected reality. While some of the essays lack conciseness, they confirm that "denomination" is a useful term, even if only to describe elements of an intermediate church level and to define adequate limits to other ecclesiological terms. One does not have to like the word, but theologians will benefit from using it in a more thoughtful manner. Thus, anyone interested in ecclesiology, interchurch relations, and the sociology of Christianity will be stimulated by reading this book.

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Dever, William G. *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where Archaeology and the Bible Intersect*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. x + 436 pp. Paper, \$25.00.

William G. Dever is Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Arizona and is currently Distinguished Visiting Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at Lycoming College. He was director of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem and has directed excavations at important sites such as Gezer and Khirbet el-Kom. However, for most archaeology scholars, Dever needs no introduction since he is a bastion in the field of ancient Near Eastern archaeology.

The style and content of this handbook corresponds with the author's previous volumes: *Did God Have a Wife?* (2005), *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* (2001), and *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (2003). In the words of Dever, this volume is written for "students of the Hebrew Bible . . . primarily for the non-specialist" (vi). However, it should be read by a broad audience, including lay people and scholars as its appeal is Dever's unique perspective on archaeology, coming from his nearly 50 years of field experience and his willingness to write what he feels and never pull any punches. The volume includes footnotes with sources (and often Dever's thoughts on said sources) and an ample bibliography, which will be most beneficial to undergraduate students just