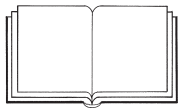

Book Reviews

Violence and Abuse

Gmelch, Michael: *Hört endlich auf damit, nur „betroffen" zu sein!: Missbrauchstrauma und die Bischöfe*, Echter, 2022. – 160 S.

Vielleicht hat sich Michael Gmelch beim Schreiben gefragt, ob einer der deutschen Bischöfe sich tatsächlich in die Wüste hat schicken lassen (oder sich selbst angeschickt hat, einmal in die Wüste zu gehen). Denn einem bischöflichen Wüstenaufenthalt galt der in seinem 2020 ebenfalls im Echter Verlag Würzburg erschienenen Buch *Schickt die Bischöfe in die Wüste!* ausgerufene Imperativ einer appellativen Vernunft, deren Imperativ wirklich wirken wollte. „Hört endlich auf damit, nur ‚betroffen' zu sein!" Das ist ein Imperativ, den G. bewusst und betont als Obertitel seines neuen Buchs gewählt hat in der Absicht, so die deutschen Bischöfe direkt anzusprechen. Wie sein erstes steht auch sein zweites Buch ganz im Zeichen eines appellativen Gebrauchs der Vernunft, dem man Seite für Seite anmerkt, dass die Haltung dessen, der da schreibt, die der Parrhesia ist, was sich wohl so übersetzen lässt: den freien Mut zu haben, Wahrheiten zu sagen, die einfach einmal gesagt werden müssen, und das auch dann, wenn es unbequeme Wahrheiten sind. Die im englischen Sprachraum weithin verbreitete Metapher „elephant in the room" bezeichnet ein offensichtliches Problem, das im Raum steht und dennoch nicht angesprochen wird. G. mahnt eindringlich und eindrücklich dazu, um keines der Dinge jetzt und künftig noch „drumherum" zu reden, welche den weiten Raum der Fragen um das „Missbrauchstrauma und die Bischöfe" – so der Untertitel seines Buches – bilden. Es gilt – und diesen Anspruch erhebt sein Buch ebenso unüberseh- wie unübergehbar –, den Schleier des Nichtwissens bzw. Nichtwissenwollens, der schlimme Wirklichkeiten verdeckt, zu heben.

Der Satz „habent sua fata libelli" – steht in einem Lehrgedicht des Grammatikers Terentianus Maurus, der vermutlich gegen Ende des zweiten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts lebte und wirkte. „Bücher haben ihre Schicksale." Ja, das stimmt. Das schlimmste Schicksal, das Bücher haben können, ist das, dass sie kein Schicksal haben. Eugen Drewermann ist es mit seinem 1989 im Walter Verlag Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau erschienenen Buch *Kleriker: Psychogramm eines Ideals* so ergangen. Es wurde viel verkauft. Ob es auch viel gelesen wurde, steht dahin. Und sollte es doch gelesen worden sein, wurden offenkundig seitens derer, die daraus hätten lernen können und müssen – die Bischöfe gehören sicher dazu –, keine Konsequenzen gezogen und keine – damals schon überfälligen – Maßnahmen ergriffen. Da wurde „Gutes unterlassen". Das Gute ist stets ein „to do", und das zu wissen braucht es nicht große Moralphilosophie oder Moraltheologie. Es reicht jener bekannte Sinnspruch, den die Welt Erich Kästner verdankt, der unter der Überschrift „Moral" einmal formulierte: „Es gibt nichts Gutes außer: Man tut es." Unzähliges und unsägliches Leid hätte sich verhindern lassen, wenn das Buch des Paderborner Kirchenkritikers eine Wirkung und nicht keine gehabt hätte.

G. hat ein Buch verfasst, das es uneingeschränkt verdient, ein Schicksal zu haben, das Wirkung(en) zeitigt. Denn es bietet eine ganze Menge gründlich erwogener und überdachter An- und Einsichten, mit dem kirchlich unumgehbaren Missbrauchsdrama als Missbrauchstrauma in jeglicher Hinsicht angemessen umzugehen. Was das Buch so

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ungemein lesenswert macht, ist die Tatsache, dass darin kenntnisnehmende und stellungnehmende Vernunft gewissermaßen Hand und Hand gehen. Sein Verfasser kennt sich aus in den komplexen Belangen und Bezügen, welche die Missbrauchsthematik bzw. -problematik hat, verfügt er neben seiner durch eine doppelte Promotion ausgewiesene Kompetenz in theologischen Fragen zudem über mehrjährige Erfahrungen als praktizierender Psychotraumatologe und Psychotraumatherapeut in der Begleitung durch Missbrauchsvorfälle traumatisierter Menschen. Überdies verfügt er als Priester der Katholischen Kirche buchstäblich über eine „Innensicht" der Dinge und weiß, wie viele in diesem System ticken. Und als Betroffener eines versuchten sexualisierten Übergriffs sieht er sich der eigenen Aussage nach eben in der Lage, doch in etwa „jenen, die unvergleichlich Schlimmeres erlebt haben" (13), nachfühlen zu können, wie es ihnen damit geht: nämlich gar nicht gut. Was G. mit seinem Buch bietet, ist guter Rat in mancher Form und davon eine ganze Menge. Wer das Buch liest, bekommt, um es einmal so zu sagen, während der Lektüre zwei Brillen aufgesetzt, die sich schon bald als echte „Sehhilfen" erweisen. Es sind dies „die System-Brille und die Trauma-Brille" (23), und die möchte er zuerst den Bischöfen und nicht zuletzt all denjenigen verordnen, die endlich das ganze Missbrauchsgeschehen „durchblicken" wollen.

Wohltuend für jede Leserin und jeden Leser des Buches ist, dass es in einer klaren Sprache verfasst ist, die auch nicht den leisesten Anklang an jenen unerträglichen, sich betulich gebenden kirchlichen Jargon zulässt und gerade darum sachlich zu überzeugen weiß. G. lässt die Fakten sprechen – und das aus gutem Grund. Denn diese sprechen für sich und verschlagen dem, der vor ihnen die Augen nicht schließt, bisweilen dann doch die Sprache. Es geht dem Buch und seinem Verfasser aber „nicht darum, mit dem Finger auf einzelne Bischöfe zu zeigen" (22), wohl jedoch darum, wie er es in einem passenden Wortspiel erläutert, zu eruieren, was passiert, wenn die deutschen Bischöfe in ihrer Gesamtheit als Episkopat ihr Episkop (Übersicht) verlieren als Teil(e) eines herrschenden kirchlichen Systems, das sie teilweise „systemblind" hat werden lassen. Es war am 26. April 1997, als der damalige Bundespräsident Roman Herzog in Berlin seine berühmte „Ruck-Rede" hielt. G. tut es ihm gleich, denn sein Buch hat ganz gewiss eine klare Botschaft, die besagt, es müsse jetzt „einen ‚gewaltigen Ruck', etwas ‚Mutiges' und Evangeliums-Gemäßes" (12) in den Reihen der deutschen Bischöfe geben als überzeugte und überzeugende Reaktion auf das „unheilige" Geschehen des sexualisierten Machtmissbrauchs. Die Verben („Tu-wörter"), die dann programmatisch die Richtung eines *modus procedendi* bestimmen, der das Prädikat, *dignum et iustum* zu sein, verdient, da es auch alle Opfer so sehen (können), werden dann ausdrücklich und ausführlich im Buch „durchkonjugiert", und da kommen dann erwartungsgemäß einige „Konjugationen" zusammen. G. nimmt die Leserinnen und Leser seines Buches mit auf einen Denkweg, auf dem er den direkt angesprochenen Bischöfen – doch nicht nur ihnen – so manchen „Denkzettel" verpasst. Sein Buch hätte ein gutes Schicksal, wenn es ihm gelänge, im besten Sinn des Wortes zu denken zu geben. Denn zu bedenken, zu überdenken gibt es im Hinblick auf das Bedenkliche und Befremdliche sexualisierten Missbrauchs kirchlicherseits etlich Ungutes, etwa ein bestimmtes überholtes Priesterbild (Klerikalismus) ebenso wie eine bestimmte, gleichfalls überholte Sexualmoral, und das ist längst noch nicht alles.

G. legt – alles in allem – eine durchdachte und übersichtlich gestaltete problemindikatorische Sicht der Dinge sexualisierten Missbrauchs in der Katholischen Kirche vor. Er vermittelt in gut verstehbarer Weise elementare und unverzichtbare Grundkenntnisse der Traumaforschung, gibt einen beachtlichen spirituellen Impuls mittels einer Relecture des Gleichnisses vom barmherzigen Samariter und erkundet, welche Handlungsoptionen jetzt angefragt und angesagt sind. Wer das alles – nicht nur als Bischof – „begriffen" hat, was da zwischen den beiden Buchdeckeln steht, weiß, warum es nicht damit getan ist, lediglich „betroffen" zu sein.

Bernhard Sill, Paderborn

Hack, Tobias/Hartmann, Richard/Lauber, Stephan (Hg.): *Machtmissbrauch und Gewalt – religiöse Versuchung und Versagen der Kirche*, Echter, 2021 (Fuldaer Hochschulschriften; 64). – 224 S.

„Die Täter haben es für sich geschafft, die Opfer als Opfer auszublenden" – so Matthias Katsch in einem Interview. Diese Erkenntnis zieht sich durch den Sammelband, der sich aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven der Fragestellung „Welche (bewussten oder unbewussten) Denkmuster und Traditionen tragen bei zu einer (auch) religiösen Rechtfertigung von Gewalt?" (14) nähert. Den Auftakt macht Aurica Jax, welche auf erwachsene Frauen und deren Gewalterfahrung blickt, was sie zu einer deutlichen Antwort auf die Fragestellung des Bandes führt: „*Alle Denkmuster und Traditionen, die Frauen gegenüber Männern abwerten.*" (15) Alle diese müssten „*auf den Prüfstand*" (16), um den Synodalen Weg nicht in einer Sackgasse enden zu lassen. Es brauche eine Auseinandersetzung, welche „zum einen die Fragen nach der *Verbindlichkeit* der bisherigen lehramtlichen Texte zum Amt und zum anderen die Frage nach der *Christusrepräsentanz* in den Mittelpunkt" (17) stelle. J. greift auf Erfahrungen der Arbeitsstelle Frauenseelsorge der DBK zurück, welche sich für von Gewalt betroffene Frauen und eine stärkere Sichtbarkeit von Frauen in Kirche und Gesellschaft einsetzt.

Stephan Lauber erhellt alttestamentliche Perspektiven auf die Rechtfertigung und Überwindung göttlicher Gewalt. In der biblischen Umwelt wäre die „Rede von einem gewaltlosen…Gott…als kraftlose Fiktion empfunden worden" (30). Diese Erkenntnis nähme den Texten jedoch nichts von ihrer Problematik für die Rezeption. Kursorisch skizziert er Gewalt als eine „Handlungs- und Erscheinungsweise Gottes" (33-48). Überwunden würden diese „Projektionen faktischer Gewalterfahrung" (49) in messianischen und eschatologischen Texten: durch die größere Gerechtigkeit und die Reue Gottes. „Jede Eindimensionalität…wird so aufgebrochen und die Überwindung der Gewalt…im Innersten Gottes selbst verankert." (59) Ute Leimgruber nähert sich dem Thema anhand der konkreten Vorgänge um die (Nicht-)Veröffentlichung eines Gutachtens im Erzbistum Köln, indem sie fragt, wer die Macht habe, über Machtmissbrauch zu urteilen – und diesen zu vertuschen. L. stellt drei Differenzierungen auf: (1) Das Verhältnis von Recht und Ethik, deren scharfe Trennung „ein Indiz für Vertuschungstendenzen" (87) sein könne. (2) Geht es um persönliche Verantwortung oder institutionelle Repräsentation? (3) Wird von Einzelfällen oder einem dem Missbrauch zugrunde liegenden System gesprochen? Ein induktives Vorgehen in der Aufarbeitung würde ein systemisches Problem offenlegen, weshalb L. für die Entwicklung von Standards für die Offenlegung von Missbrauch plädiert. Katharina Kluitmann OSF widmet sich der Aufarbeitung geistlichen Missbrauchs. Nach K. sind vier Dimensionen auszumachen: die Verletzung von Grenzen; die Abschottung der Betroffenen, wodurch eine „Totale Institution" (115) entstehe; schließlich die Überhöhung der leitenden Person und die Erniedrigung der Betroffenen. K. leitet daraus Warnzeichen und Schutzfaktoren ab, von denen vor allem die „Entdeckungswahrscheinlichkeit" (125) und das Nutzen ökumenischer Netzwerke hervorgehoben werden sollen.

Tobias Hack fragt, „welche Faktoren sich innerhalb der kirchlichen Sexualmoral identifizieren lassen, die die Ausblendung des Gewaltaspekts begünstigen" (135). Dabei sei es aus moraltheologischer Perspektive notwendig, „zwischen systemischen Risikofaktoren und direkten Kausalursachen" (141) zu unterscheiden. Dazu gehöre laut H. die Aufarbeitung des Umgangs mit Homosexualität, der zölibatären Lebensweise und das Phänomen des Klerikalismus. Wenig hilfreich sei auch die Vorstellung, dass die Ehe als einziger Ort legitimer Sexualität anzusehen sei. Er plädiert für die Rezeption des Gedankens der Selbstbestimmung und die Ausrichtung an einem humanwissenschaftlich-hermeneutischen Modell in der Sexualmoral. Herman Kügler SJ bringt die Themenzentrierte Interaktion (TZI) nach Ruth C. Cohn als „Haltung und Methode lebendigen Lernens" (173) in Gruppen aller Art ins Spiel. K. beschreibt deren Grundlagen, hebt dann auf das Aufkommen von Konflikten in der Zusammenarbeit ab. Diese seien unvermeidbar und gar notwendig,

„Gewalt und Machtmissbrauch hingegen nicht!“ (179) Die TZI würde es ermöglichen, Situationen tiefer zu analysieren und bewusster zu gestalten. Dies eröffne vier Chancen: die „Betroffenen müssen gefragt und einbezogen werden“ (187); eine klare Sachorientierung verpflichte Leitungskräfte zu Verantwortung; sie bewahre durch einen starken Realitätsbezug vor Idealisierung und Spiritualisierung und ermögliche durch ihre klare Wertehaltung „Vielfalt couragiert [zu] leben“ (189). Klaus Mertes SJ liefert einen Bericht zu seinen Erfahrungen mit Machtkritik nach einem Aufruf an ehemalige Schüler des Canisius-Kollegs sich zu melden, falls sie sexuelle Gewalt an der Schule erlitten hätten. M. beschreibt Ängste, die es zu überwinden gelte, und Vorwürfe (z.B. den Vorwurf der „Eigenmächtigkeit“ und der „Nestbeschmutzung“ [197]). Diese seien durch unterschiedliche Strategien begleitet: zum einen das Schweigen der Amtsträger und zum anderen „das autoritäre Milieu an der Basis: Es scheut nicht die Lautstärke“ (198), und der Vorwurf narzisstischer Motive von allen Seiten. Am Ende steht für M. die Erfahrung der Befreiung: von dem Bedürfnis nach Anerkennung und Aufstieg und zum Einstehen für eigene Werte und dem „Autoritätsgewinn durch Machtkritik, ‚soft power‘“ (203). Den Abschluss bildet ein Auszug aus einem Interview der *Herder Korrespondenz* mit Petra Morsbach. M. identifiziert katholische Propria im Umgang mit Machtmissbrauch wie die „absolutistische Struktur“, die „Sehnsucht katholischer Gläubiger nach absoluter Autorität“ und das „Amtsprofil des katholischen Gottesdieners“ (207). M. setzt diesen verantwortungsvolles Handeln in „Haltung, Wahrnehmung, Maßnahmen der kurzen Reichweite“ (212) entgegen.

Der Sammelband reiht sich ein in eine Fülle diverser Arbeiten zum Thema Macht und Missbrauch in der Katholischen Kirche und ist darin am ehesten in den Kategorien „Reflexion von Macht“ (Hilpert) oder „Perspektiven auf sexualisierte Gewalt“ (Müller) zu verorten. Der Band ist gut geeignet für eine erste Beschäftigung zum Einstieg in das Themenfeld. Er vereint unterschiedliche Perspektiven auf die Frage nach Macht, sodass diverse Leser*innen auf ihre Kosten kommen dürften, allerdings lässt die Zusammenstellung auch die Frage nach einer Systematik bzw. nach dem Grund für die Auswahl der verschiedenen Beitragenden aufkommen. Der Reiz der Beiträge liegt wohl vor allem darin, dass sie in ihrer gesprochenen Form im Rahmen des Kontaktstudiums diskutiert werden konnten. Vor allem für Studierende kann die Lektüre einen Anstoß zur Auseinandersetzung bieten.

Kristina Kieslinger, Waldkirch

Kießling, Klaus: *Geistlicher und sexueller Machtmissbrauch in der katholischen Kirche*, Echter, 2021. – 88 S.

Seit 2010 befassen sich Kirche und Öffentlichkeit mit dem Schrecken des sexuellen Missbrauchs. Inzwischen gibt es eine Vielzahl theologischer Veröffentlichungen zu diesem Fanal. Längst ist eingesehen, dass es nicht nur um sexuelle Abweichungen geht, sondern um ein Phänomen des Machtmissbrauchs, das sich ebenso in geistlicher Begleitung manifestiert. Klaus Kießling, Pädagoge und Psychologe an der Hochschule St. Georgen in Frankfurt, bringt in diesem kleinen Band präzise und zugleich auch erschreckend den Sachverhalt auf den Punkt, vor allem aus seiner psychologischen Expertise. Es geht ihm „um die Frage, was Machtmissbrauch zu einem geistlichen macht“ (7) und mit welchen Konsequenzen die sexualisierte Gewalt um der Menschen willen verhindert werden kann.

Das erste Hauptkapitel widmet sich dem Feld geistlichen Missbrauchs. „Geistliche Begleitung“ gilt inzwischen v.a. im inneren Bereich der Kirche als eine besonders wertvolle Form der Seelsorge. Sie hat für viele den klassischen Weg der Beichte abgelöst. Zugleich ist es eine Konstellation, in der die begleitenden Priester, Diakone und anderen Seelsorger der Gefahr unterliegen, durch ihren Einfluss Menschen, die sich ihnen anvertrauen, zu missbrauchen. K. zeigt die Konturierungen dieses Weges auf: Zum seelsorglichen Beziehungsfeld gehört wesentlich die Bereitschaft, sich und die je eigene Spiri-

tualität zu öffnen. Dabei geht es nicht nur um die Gottesbeziehung, sondern auch um die Selbst- und Weltbeziehung und somit um die wesentlichen Lebenskategorien. Diese Öffnung bewirkt eine Asymmetrie, die die „spirituelle Selbstbestimmung" gefährden kann. Die Gefahr der begleitenden Person ist, seine eigene Stimme als Stimme Gottes zu identifizieren und zu präsentieren; „spirituelle Vernachlässigung, Manipulation und Gewalt" (13) sind drei Spielarten des Missbrauchs, der hier beginnt. Systemische Bedingungen geistlichen Missbrauchs, wie sexueller Gewalt, sind geschlossene Systeme, die die jeweilige Begleitung absolut setzend monopolisieren. Die begleitenden Personen, so im Blick auf psychologische Beiträge, unterliegen der Gefahr, ihre Machtmotive, die ja Anerkennung finden, narzisstisch auszuleben. „Selbstüberschätzung, Überempfindlichkeit gegen Kritik, Suche nach Bewunderung und dominantem Interaktionsverhalten" (19) können daraus folgen. Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse sind programmiert. Aus der Psychoanalyse und Paartherapie hilft der Begriff Kollusion zum Verständnis, wie hier Menschen sich in gegenseitige Abhängigkeit begeben. „Repraesentatio Christi" ist einer der Begriffe, der gegen solche Missverhältnisse immun machen kann. K. fordert daher „unhintergehbare theologische Qualitätsstandards" und eine klar reflektierte Haltung der Empathie.

Im zweiten Kapitel beobachtet K. die Hintergründe der sexuellen Gewalt an Kindern, Jugendlichen und erwachsenen Schutzbefohlenen. Er reflektiert auf Tatorte, sensibilisiert für das Sündenbockphänomen, fragt Kirche und Theologie an und wagt erste Lösungsversuche. Sexueller Missbrauch und Gewalt gegen Kinder sind Phänomene, die weitgehend im Dunkel der Tatortfamilien wirken, deren Folgen für die Opfer gewaltig sind und nicht selten die Opfer wieder zu Tätern werden lassen. Depressionen, Schuldgefühle, v.a. aber auch Scham und Verachtung gegen die eigene Geschlechtlichkeit führen zu verratenen und gebrochenen Biografien. Die Möglichkeiten, solchen „Seelenmord" zu bearbeiten und Versöhnung zu ermöglichen, sind begrenzt. K. weist mögliche Schritte in fünf Phasen auf: Schock und Verleugnung; Zorn und Wut; Verhandlungen; Depression; Annehmen. Die geborgene Nähe etlicher Kinder und Jugendlicher in der Kirche, die erlebte und geliebte Näheerfahrung im Raum von Kirche und Schule eröffnen nach der Familie einen weiteren Gefährdungsraum, der nicht selten mit geistlicher Begleitung beginnt. Ursachen für den Missbrauch – sündenbockartig – bei Homosexualität und Zölibat zu suchen, die Kirche im Rundumschlag zu verdammen oder die liberalisierte Gesellschaft und ihre Medien zu verurteilen, reicht jedoch nicht aus, kann sogar als Verdeckungsstrategie des eigenen Fehlverhaltens missbraucht werden. Drei zentrale theologische und kirchliche Herausforderungen benennt er: Kirche darf sich nicht als geschlossenes System gestalten, das „reflexiv-kommunikative Prozesse" (49) blockiert. Kirche muss neu die Spannung zwischen heiliger und sündiger Verfasstheit austarieren. Sie braucht mehr das Credo der sündigen Verfassung als die Abwehr aller Wirklichkeit, die ihre Heiligkeit ankratzt. Schließlich muss sie eine neue Solidarität mit den Opfern und in anderer Weise den Tätern entwickeln. Antwortversuche stehen am Schluss. Nicht das Pflichtzölibat ist Ursache, es hat jedoch eine Tendenz, pathologisierte Männer anzuziehen. Im Kontext der Missbrauchsprävention und der Aufklärung brauche es eine radikale Entscheidung zur Prüfung jeglicher Vorkommnisse. Dabei sollten unbedingt externe Ansprechpartner*innen und Berater*innen mitwirken. Die Zuwendung zu den Opfern und ihre Unterstützung sind auch über juristische Verjährungsfristen hinaus unabdingbar. Täterarbeit dient dem Opferschutz! Zur Prävention gehören wesentlich Informations- und Aufklärungsveranstaltungen im Kinder- und Elternbereich und den Einrichtungen der Bildung. Prävention ist Leitthema in Aus- und Fortbildung.

Die kleine Schrift bietet eine hervorragende Übersicht und eröffnet viele Einsichten. Ihr wäre eine weite Verbreitung zu wünschen.

Richard Hartmann, Fulda

Koepping, Elizabeth: *Spousal Violence Among World Christians: Silent Scandal*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. – viii, 184 p.

This eloquent, fair-minded, and meticulous work makes its distressing subject a distressing but necessary read. The galling story of gendered abuse in the churches now spreads to Christian marriages. Koepping is an anthropologist, and priest in the Scottish Episcopal Church. She travelled to fourteen countries in six continents, having discussions "in houses, universities and seminaries, churches, house prayer groups, informal gatherings, women's shelters" (10), listening to women from fourteen different denominations describe their harrowing experiences of Christian marriage. Her research bears a quiet, unassailable authority.

The first of three parts describes legal and sociological approaches to marital violence, and the disciplining of wives in church history. Discussion groups used the idea of three levels of violence. "Shaking, pushing hard, slapping with a flat hand or hitting with a thin stick…swinging her against a wall by her hair" (14): that's just level 1. All over the world K. has discovered "the ingrained view of male and female resembles two distinctly different beings" (21), instead of a fundamental unity of the sexes. She correctly identifies two strands of thought about wife beating, "one being that of Chrysostom and Laurence Hispanus and the other Augustine and Huguccio of Pisa. The first pair opposed, and the latter accepted violence against wives." (41). The "rule of moderate chastising", proposed by Gratian in 1140 became canon law (46), and its influence remains strong. Equally harmful for wives was the framework of the household in which the husband and father could be expected to exercise correction "by word or blow" (42) (and the wife blamed for provocation – "she made him hit her"). K. finds the legacy of the medieval church is still active, "not only in ideas about men and women in relation to God and each other, but in the very words used to advise and control them" (60). Part two, "Views from the Field" reports distressing testimony from victims around the world. Chapter 4, "Church Leaders as Abusing Husbands", describes the hypocrisy and spiritual wreckage that brought about such abuse. There are several reasons why there are hardly any sermons preached about domestic violence, "as several Korean pastor-friends have said, 'because so many pastors beat their own wives'" (64). Church leaders are better able to "twist" biblical passages in order to validate their actions (77). They generally do nothing when violence is reported to them (68-71). Clergy wives are afraid to report violence for fear of reprisal, bringing shame on the church, or dismissal. While most married clergy would never "dream" of harming their wives, "their silence is sinful" (83) – a collusion with evil, for doing nothing and failing to address the abusive theology that informs violent behaviour is part of the global problem. A well-respected Indian nun was able to speak out about violence against wives only because she belonged to a world-wide order that protected her. She had "little regard for the bulk of diocesan priests who 'enjoyed side-lining when not insulting resident nuns in church so the local people know who counts'" and discerned that seminaries and churches were unwilling "to see it as a theological rather than a social issue" (105). There are "five areas of concern" in part 3. Many clergy don't even think about or recognise the issue. Clergy and church workers are inadequately trained to recognise or respond. Too many leaders blame feminism "for disrupting peaceful church life" (147). There is a need for "ministry to the abuser" (148), i.e., the creation of safe spaces for *men* to talk with other men about reasonable and unreasonable behaviour. And there should be recognition of "the culture card" (150), the tendency to excuse violence as something other people do, while failing to recognise what is going on nearer home.

K. is well aware that spousal violence is a reality in all world faiths. There is an emphasis on *physical* violence. Exposing psychological violence and its consequences for mental and spiritual health would require another book. It would be good (but impossible) to have statistics comparing incidences

of spousal violence in other faiths. There is a chilling but unstated parallelism in the book between church responses to spousal violence and their responses to the abuse of children. The same theological origins and patriarchal hubris underlie each, and K.'s work is a vital contribution to the eventual greater safety of wives in Christian churches and Christian homes.

Adrian Thatcher, Plymouth

Poupart, Matthieu: *Le Silence de l'agneau : La morale catholique favorise-t-elle la violence sexuelle?*, Seuil, 2024. – 176 p.

Ce qu'on appelle couramment aujourd'hui «la crise des abus» dans l'Église pose la question du lien entre la morale catholique et la violence sexuelle. L'auteur commence ainsi par mettre en exergue ce que lui apprend l'écoute d'une amie «très catholique», mais qui est incapable de comprendre la profondeur d'un traumatisme par viol et excusant l'auteur, un aumônier laïc. Ce point de départ de l'ouvrage révèle le «fond culturel diffus» de la pastorale catholique. Mais d'où vient qu'on puisse dire que les hommes ont des pulsions non maitrisables et ainsi culpabiliser les femmes? L'auteur commence par évoquer des figures des femmes au «sexe séducteur»; puis il analyse certains discours et images (cf. Maria Goretti) privilégiés par le magistère qui mettent l'accent quasi exclusivement sur la volonté de préserver la chasteté alors qu'il s'agit d'un viol (93); et enfin le «choix du silence». Des images qui donnent son titre à l'ouvrage. L'auteur, qui a participé au groupe de travail post-Ciase N° 8 (la Ciase est la Commission indépendante sur les abus sexuels dans l'Église, une commission d'enquête française créée le 8 février 2019), examine ensuite comment la morale catholique peut, parfois, favoriser la violence sexuelle et conduire au déni, alors que la Bible et la tradition lui offrent de belles ressources pour les dénoncer et ne pas y succomber. Avec Gn 38, il montre que, contrairement à l'idée courante de la responsabilité féminine, c'est Juda le fautif, et non Tamar (55). Il évoque de même la mauvaise lecture du crime d'Onan (66), etc. En même temps, la focalisation sur Padreblog et sur un livre de l'abbé Grosjean n'est-elle pas quelque peu excessive? Certes, cela illustre des poncifs catholiques qu'on retrouve plus ou moins dans d'autres textes que l'auteur décortique: la théologie du corps de Jean Paul II, la définition du viol par le catéchisme de l'Église catholique (1992)… et dont les conséquences peuvent être désastreuses, en forme de préjugés misogynes (cliché de la femme séductrice et de l'homme faible), de confusion entre des réalités différentes (concubinage, homosexualité, libertinage, viol…), d'autant que prévaut le «vide de la parole» et la loi du silence (137). Une réflexion qui met en mots et en exemples un aspect de la crise systémique des abus!

Marie-Jo Thiel, Strasbourg

Sociology

Breunig, Bernadette/Schweiger, Gottfried/Walser, Angelika (Hg.): *Familie im Wandel: Sozialwissenschaftliche, ethische und rechtliche Perspektiven*, J.B. Metzler, 2024. – vii, 177 S.

Der Sammelband ist in der Reihe „Kindheit – Bildung – Erziehung: Philosophie Perspektiven" des Verlags J.B. Metzler erschienen. Die drei Hgg. lehren an der Universität Salzburg: die Theologinnen Bernadette Breunig und Angelika Walser am Institut für Praktische Theologie und der Philosoph Gottfried Schweiger am Zentrum für Ethik und Armutsforschung. Neben der Einleitung der Hgg. enthält der Band neun Beiträge.

Der Sammelband geht auf ein vom Österreichischen Wissenschaftsfonds FWF finanziertes Forschungsprojekt mit dem Titel „Co-Parenting, Websites und Kinderrechte in der Reproduktionsmedizin" zurück. Dabei handelt es sich um eine Art von Dating-Plattformen, auf der sich Menschen, die den Wunsch haben, Eltern zu werden, jedoch ohne eine Partnerschaft miteinander einzugehen, finden können. Es handelt sich also um ein neues Modell von Familie und

gemeinsamer Elternschaft, bei dem die Eltern keine partnerschaftlich-sexuelle, sondern idealerweise eine freundschaftliche Beziehung führen. Um dieses komplexe Thema aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven – philosophisch, theologisch, erziehungs-, rechts- und sozialwissenschaftlich – zu beleuchten, fand im Rahmen des Forschungsprojekts ein interdisziplinärer Workshop statt, dessen Ergebnisse in diesem Sammelband dokumentiert und durch weitere, gezielt angefragte Beiträge ergänzt werden, um die Thematik umfassend zu behandeln. Wie der Titel sagt, werden die sich wandelnden Formen von Familie im 21. Jahrhundert in den Blick genommen: von Patchwork-Familien bis hin zum Modell der Co-Elternschaft. Dabei werden auch die sich daraus ergebenden ethischen Fragestellungen behandelt, besonders mit Blick auf die Reproduktionsmedizin, auf die Leihmutterschaft, auf Rechte und Pflichten von Eltern sowie auf die Rechte und das Wohl der Kinder.

Den Autorinnen und Autoren ist es wichtig, die verschiedenen Familienformen zunächst nicht moralisch zu bewerten. Stattdessen wollen sie sich auf die empirischen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Entwicklungen einlassen und die Realität des Wandels von Familienformen möglichst vorurteilsfrei betrachten. Darauf aufbauend stellen sie sich die Frage, welche familienpolitischen Schutzkonzepte Menschen benötigen, die in diesen Familienformen leben.

Nach der Einleitung, in der die Hgg. in die Entstehungsgeschichte und die wesentlichen theologischen und philosophischen Fragestellungen des Forschungsprojekts einführen und eine komprimierte Übersicht über die einzelnen Beiträge geben, eröffnet Eva Mendes den Reigen der Beiträge mit einer historischen Übersicht über die Geschichte der Familie seit dem 19. Jahrhundert (mit Schwerpunkt Deutschland). Als Pädagogin legt sie den Akzent dabei auf die Erziehungsfunktion der Familie. Als zentrales Motiv arbeitet sie den Aspekt der intergenerationellen Verantwortung für Kinder heraus, den sie auch in den diversen neuen Familienmodellen bis hin zum Co-Parenting gewahrt sieht. Entscheidend sei laut der Autorin, dass Kinder und Jugendliche einen rechtlich, sozial und emotional geschützten Raum haben, um im Zusammenleben mit Erwachsenen zu mündigen Mitgliedern der Gesellschaft heranwachsen zu können. Die Erziehungswissenschaftlerin Barbara Thiessen fragt in ihrem Beitrag nach den wesentlichen Komponenten familialer Verbände. Sie betrachtet Familie als eine auf Verbindlichkeit angelegte Care- und Solidargemeinschaft zwischen den Generationen, die nicht nur für die Familienmitglieder, sondern auch für die Gesellschaft wichtige Aufgaben wahrnimmt. Auch wenn sich die Familienformen verändern, bleiben bestimmte Aufgaben wie Care-Arbeit und die Erziehung von Kindern dem familialen Kontext zugeordnet. Sie müssen immer wieder neu und reflektiert ausgehandelt werden. Die Genderforscherin Karin Neuwirth zeigt anhand der Durchsetzung der Frauenrechte im Ehe- und Familienrecht, dass die individuelle Rechtsgleichheit die Grundlage für die rechtliche Gleichstellung unterschiedlicher Familienformen ist – von unverheirateten bis zu gleichgeschlechtlichen Paaren. In Bezug auf das Modell der Co-Elternschaft zeigt sie auf, dass in Deutschland und Österreich bereits rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen für deren Anerkennung geschaffen wurden, sofern dem Kindeswohl ein rechtlicher Vorrang eingeräumt wird und Co-Parenting-Vereinbarungen das Wohl des Kindes und die Eltern-Kind-Beziehung gewährleisten sollen. Die theologische Ethikerin Elisabeth Zschiedrich untersucht die Bedeutung der individuellen Entscheidung, Eltern zu werden, sowie die sozialen Konsequenzen dieser Entscheidung, d.h. die soziale Dimension von Elternschaft. Dabei ist die von Eltern geleistete Care- und Erziehungsarbeit als wesentlicher Beitrag für das Gemeinwohl zu sehen und zu würdigen – unabhängig von der konkreten Familienform, in der sie geleistet wird. Die beiden folgenden Beiträge von Bernadette Breunig und Angelika Walser befassen sich schließlich dezidiert mit dem Modell der Co-Elternschaft. Breunig stellt die Ergebnisse einer wissenschaftlichen Befragung von Menschen vor, die den Wunsch nach Co-Elternschaft haben. Sie analysiert die Motive, die zu dieser

Entscheidung führen, sowie die Unterscheidung zwischen einer partnerschaftlichen Liebes- und einer freundschaftlichen Beziehung zwischen zwei Menschen, die gemeinsam Eltern sind. Sie zeigt auf, dass Verlässlichkeit, Vertrauen, Stabilität und die gemeinsame Liebe zum Kind wesentliche Anliegen der befragten Personen sind. Diese Aspekte sind für eine ethische Bewertung von Co-Elternschaft als einer neue Form von Familiengründung von großer Bedeutung. Walser knüpft daran an und beleuchtet die Co-Elternschaft aus der Perspektive der katholisch-theologischen Familienethik. Sie bringt soziologische und theologisch-ethische Perspektiven miteinander ins Gespräch. Mithilfe von Hartmut Rosas Vorstellung der Familie als „Resonanzhafen" beleuchtet sie einerseits die Achse der Eltern-Kind-Beziehung und andererseits die Achse der Beziehung zwischen den Eltern. Während sich die erste Achse als stabil und verlässlich erweist und durch eine Co-Parenting-Vereinbarung zum Schutz des Kindeswohls abgesichert ist, ist die zweite Achse, die Beziehung zwischen den Erwachsenen, fragiler. Daher bedarf sie laut der Autorin unterstützender rechtlicher und sozialer Maßnahmen. Schließlich plädiert sie dafür, neue Modelle wie die Co-Elternschaft zu würdigen, sofern sie Ausdruck einer neuen Semantik von Liebe zu den Kindern sind und idealerweise auch zwischen den Erwachsenen auf freundschaftlich-liebevoller Basis zum Wohl des Kindes Stabilität und Verlässlichkeit gelebt werden. Umgekehrt betont sie die Bedeutung einer rechtlich verbindlichen Beziehung zwischen den Eltern, die füreinander Verantwortung übernehmen, für die Gewährleistung des Kindeswohls. Der Philosoph Gottfried Schweiger argumentiert in seinem Beitrag, dass der Wert der Familie in den sozialen Beziehungen liegt, die in Familien gelebt werden, besonders in Liebe, Fürsorge und Erziehung. Nicht die Familie als solche ist schützenswert, sondern insofern sie ein Ort für gelingende Beziehungen ist. Dies wiederum kann nicht von der Form der Familie abhängig gemacht werden, sondern von der gelebten Wirklichkeit der Beziehungen – auch in den neuen Familienformen wie der Co-Elternschaft. Die beiden letzten Beiträge widmen sich den ethischen Fragen reproduktionsmedizinischer Aspekte. Der Medizinethiker Nikolai Münch hinterfragt die ethische Beurteilung von Leihmutterschaft kritisch. Ethische Bedenken gegen die Leihmutterschaft sieht er u.a. darin begründet, dass sie grundlegende Vorstellungen davon, wie eine Familie gegründet werden soll, infrage stellt und ein Spiegel normativer Vorstellungen von Mutterschaft und Familie ist. Der theologische Ethiker Markus Zimmermann untersucht die Auswirkungen der Reproduktionsmedizin auf das Verständnis von Familie. Sein Fazit ist, dass die Reproduktionsmedizin einerseits neue Formen von Elternschaft bis hin zum Co-Parenting ermöglicht und andererseits die normativen Vorstellungen von Elternschaft und Familie im Sinne der gemeinsamen Verantwortung für ein Kind sowie einer stabilen und zuverlässigen Beziehung zwischen den Eltern weiterhin bestehen.

Dem Sammelband gelingt es, neue Familienformen und ihre konkrete Ausgestaltung aus unterschiedlichen fachlichen Perspektiven zu beleuchten. Wie ein roter Faden zieht sich die Überzeugung durch die einzelnen Beiträge, dass der Wert von Elternschaft und Familie darin liegt, dass sie für Kinder ein sicherer sozialer und emotionaler Rahmen für eine gesunde psychische und soziale Entwicklung sowie ihre Integration in die Gesellschaft sind. Diese Verantwortung kann auch in Familienformen geleistet werden, die nicht dem herkömmlichen Ideal der bürgerlichen Kernfamilie entsprechen. Entscheidend ist, dass die Beziehung zwischen den Erwachsenen von gegenseitigem Wohlwollen und Respekt, nicht notwendigerweise von romantischer Liebe getragen ist. Die Lektüre des Sammelbandes ist lohnend, da die Autorinnen und Autoren nicht nur neue Familienformen wissenschaftlich beleuchten, sondern auch die konkreten gesellschafts- und kirchenpolitischen Implikationen aufzeigen. Dabei wiederholen sie nicht die gängigen kulturskeptischen Argumente, sondern zeigen auf, inwiefern diese Familienmodelle anschlussfähig an die klassischen Ideale von Elternschaft und Familie sind – ohne die ethisch bedenklichen Aspekte der Entwick-

lungen im Wandel von Familie auszublenden. In diesem Sinne eröffnet der Sammelband einen Dialog zwischen neuen Familienformen und den traditionellen Leitbildern von Ehe und Familie. Beide Seiten können voneinander lernen und sich in ihrem jeweiligen Selbstverständnis kritisch hinterfragen, aber auch bereichern.

Martin M. Lintner, Brixen

Hertz, Rosanna/Nelson, Margaret K.: *Random Families: Genetic Strangers, Sperm Donor Siblings, and the Creation of New Kin*, Oxford University Press, 2020. – 312 p.

This book is the fruit of over 350 interviews conducted with children and adults in the United States regarding their experiences of family relationships that come into being as a result of new reproductive technologies. Based on their extensive qualitative research, sociologists Rosanna Hertz and Margaret K. Nelson offer the reader an in-depth account of the phenomenon of "donor siblings" as one of the "new sets of 'relatives'" (17) that arises from sperm donation. The object of their research is to "explore these unprecedented relationships as they emerge from networks of strangers linked by genes, medical technology, and the human desire for affinity and identity" (3). To this end, the primary research questions are: "Do parents and children believe shared genes make you a family? Do children look for and find anything in common with their donor siblings? What happens within networks that arise once parents and donor siblings find and meet one another?" (3) Part I discusses the complex reality of donor siblinghood, charting the existential trajectory from the individual decisions of parents to the social implications for their children. Part II then analyses five specific networks of donor siblings, spanning nearly two-thirds of the entire body of the text. Alongside an ample bibliography, two detailed appendices give a clear overview of the qualitative research process undertaken.

While the general interest of the book pertains to the creation of new forms of kinship as a result of sperm donation, the primary focus is on the relationships between genetic half-siblings who share a common biological father, namely the sperm donor. Thus, the central axis of the text is the "lateral bonds" (222) that are generated between these donor siblings. The authors examine the interplay between choice and shared genes in the decision to connect with one's donor siblings or not, the quality of the relationships generated from these connections, and the influence they have on the children's sense of self and their perception of the donor. While affirming that sperm donation can mitigate demographic thinning, the authors ask whether relationships between donor siblings have the capacity to endure throughout life, or from one generation to the next. For example, would the *children* of the donor siblings be interested in maintaining a relationship with one another or with their "donor aunts and uncles" for that matter? By analyzing the relational dimension of conception by sperm donation, the authors contribute to humanizing the roles of those involved in the process, which could otherwise be commodified as a mere "market transaction" (17). The authors study families with children conceived through sperm donation and the relationships between said families as a way of uncovering a "hidden population" (12). The strength of the book is to engage directly with the real-life experiences of these families. The authors succeeded at hearing from a high number of children, single mothers, and lesbian couples. In total, 92% of the parents interviewed were women, and the gender distribution among the children interviewed was rather equal (16-17). However, there was relatively less engagement with men in general and sperm donors in particular, whose lived experiences and perspectives remain relatively unknown, due perhaps to anonymity and social taboo. The authors did interview 12 sperm donors for this book and surveyed 145 sperm donors for a prior article (see "Sperm Donors Describe the Experience of Contact with Their Donor-Conceived Offspring", in: *Facts, View & Visions in Gynecology and Obstetrics* 7/2, 2015, 91-100). Nevertheless,

much remains to be explored. For example, how do donors experience being a biological father to children they may or may not ever meet? How does it impact their relationships with family members with whom they do share daily life? In this light, with due discretion and confidentiality, it would be enlightening to hear from the parents and family members of donors, to further elucidate the relational implications of sperm donation.

The subject matter of the book opens many other horizons for further research. As emerging reproductive possibilities impact families well beyond the United States, engaging with experiences in other countries would give rise to new insights, given the distinct social, political, cultural, economic, and religious realities of each context. In this vein, another avenue for research would be assessing the extent to which religion and faith communities implicitly or explicitly impact reproductive decision-making across different contexts. In the domain of theology, attending to the lived experiences of those involved in new reproductive technologies, as well as the constellation of relationships that they generate, provides a way of going deeper than the mere rehashing of doctrinal misgivings about their very existence. Indeed, as these technologies become increasingly commonplace, new moral, ethical, and pastoral considerations emerge, demanding careful reflection and further research based on current realities.

Overall, this book is not only a relevant reference for scholars in various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, kinship studies, and family studies. It can also serve as a helpful resource for mothers or couples who are either considering sperm donation or have already gone through with it. The first-hand accounts of other families provided in this text offer insights for discerning the many choices they face. The diverse perspectives presented, from the points of view of both children and parents, not only shed light on the decision of whether to pursue sperm donation but also on how to navigate relationships within the unprecedented family networks that it generates.

Julian Paparella, Ontario

Cultural Realities

Alpert, Erika R.: *The Relationship People: Mediating Love and Marriage in Twenty-First Century Japan*, Lexington Books, 2022. – xvii, 159 p.

As indicated by both the title and subtitle, this book deals with the issue of marriage in 21st century Japan. The author being an anthropologist, her views and methodologies regarding the theme are thus anthropological. More precisely, though, her work studies the effects of sociological analysis. Accordingly, the book neither presents nor analyzes traditional or wide-ranging Japanese views concerning marriage, nor does it tackle religious, philosophical, or theological reflections pertaining to the significance of marriage itself.

Human relations are vital issues covering all aspects of society, and this applies equally to marriage as well. Marriage is an encounter between two people, a meeting whose significance surpasses that of things occurring by mere chance. Hence, while debates related to concrete forms of marriage are indeed important, is not the matter of first pondering the issue of what marriage chiefly implies for humanity, namely, the value of marriage, of equal importance as well? Families constitute the smallest communities of human society, and they have their basis in individuals like these married couples. If this be the case, when thinking about the issue of marriage, would it not also be crucial on our part to reflect not merely on marriage within *Gesellschaft*, but also on marriage as *Gemeinschaft*? Of course, this book does speak of the current state of marriage in Japan, but to value and grasp its contents from an even broader perspective, I would like to offer a little more data.

First, the number of recorded marriages in Japan has fallen to its lowest level. In 2023 we had 474,717 marriages (as opposed to 504,930 the former year), and this happens to be the lowest since the end of World War II. Also, though the average age of those marrying for the first time shows an upward trend, it is clear that people are choosing to marry later in life. The average age of men

at their first marriage is 31.1 years, and for women it is 29.8, and yet, the rate of people choosing to remain unmarried keeps rising. It is now around 50% for men in their 30s, and 40% for women in their 30s. The proportion of those choosing to remain unmarried by the age of 50 (the lifetime never-married rate) is also on the rise, and it now stands at around 28% for men and 18% for women. So, why exactly are people evading marriage? I hereby wish to point out the following five reasons. First, economic factors are involved. That is to say, despite having a desire to marry, people perhaps feel concerned about their future married lives due to factors like sufficient income. Another reason is the fact that a single life offers more freedom and ease. The influence of neoliberalism might be behind this. A third reason is a waning in interpersonal affiliations, and with them the ability to get along with the opposite sex. A fourth reason is the feeling some have that marriage is unnecessary. However, is marriage just an issue of necessity? Would that not be an unusually utilitarian and self-centered way of thinking? Finally, some offer the reason that "they haven't yet met a suitable partner". This book presents tactics to overcome this issue, but what is equally vital is to study the causes of such problems and explore possible solutions.

In Japan, the customary mode of marriage, where men worked away from home and women served as full-time housewives, was once the norm. Today, though, "dual-income households", where both spouses work after marriage, account for over 80% of the wedded couples. As often cited in the book, Japan also has so-called "matchmaker" institutions, and a system of "arranged meetings" enabled by them. Of course, the precise form of this system is something that has evolved over time. As opposed to this, there exist also trends where two persons seeking marriage take the initiative on their own in creating occasions to meet. This is what is known as "marriage hunting", or briefly, "konkatsu". Explicitly this involves registering with professional matchmakers, using online dating sites, or participating in gatherings for singles (known as "gokon"). The institutional structure of matchmaking, together with databases and technical makeups like online profiles, shape the nature of the ties that link together the people who are single. What will be the mode of evolution of the many partner-matching industries in the future? Regardless of that, what we need to bear in mind is the fact that marriage commences with the encountering of two individuals as distinct persons, and that it is a liaison they nurture and sustain together, through mutual support. This book gives an anthropological perspective on these fundamental relationships.

Osamu Takeuchi, SJ, Tokyo

Iqbal, Roshan: *Marital and Sexual Ethics in Islamic Law: Rethinking Temporary Marriage*, Lexington Books, 2023, – v, 207 p.

In some ways, Roshan Iqbal's monograph chronicles her journey from initial "shock" and "distaste" when learning about temporary marriage in Islam – the word for these relationships, *mutʿa*, literally means pleasure – to her ability to see the practice in a more nuanced and critical light (1). It begins with an overview of its history and relevance in the contemporary context, introducing statistics that show that marriage rates are declining, and divorce and premarital sex are increasing among Muslims, thereby setting the stage for a renewed discussion of this highly contentious practice. She does not shy away from pointing out the double standards in these unions, where (permanently) married men are allowed to engage in several *mutʿa* marriages at the same time, without the need to register them, but married women are not. It leaves a reader questioning whether the problems with temporary marriage are in this double standard, and if it were to involve only unmarried partners, whether it would become more socially acceptable or even innovative in the contemporary context.

A key strength of this book is its diachronic approach to the exegetical tradition and its focus on hermeneutics, thereby allow-

ing the author a greater ability to examine methodological assumptions and to engage in a more deep-rooted critique. I. examines nineteen commentaries in three languages – Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu – which are important for any serious engagement with the topic, since *mutʿa* finds support mostly in Iran and the Indian subcontinent. The author takes great care to include the perspectives of marginalized constituencies, such as women and Zaydi and Ismaili Shiʿa. It was nice to see the work of Mujtahida Nusrat Begum Amin (d. 1983 C.E.), the first Muslim woman to write a multi-volume commentary on the entire Qur'an, and whose work is often marginalized. Through painstaking analysis, I. highlights how temporary marriage went through five stages of contestations, successfully illustrating the political undertones of this practice and how it evolved to become identity-forming for Twelver Shiʿi communities in contradistinction to Sunni exegesis and jurisprudence.

While I.'s historical overview and analysis is particularly convincing and well done, her own voice finds expression in four new directions: Muslim feminist methodology, legal ethnography, moral philosophy, and the science of sexuality, which she proposes as new research areas that can help shed light on the dilemma. Rather than provide an answer to the question that undergirds the book – does Islam permit temporary marriage or prohibit it – she utilizes some of these categories to ask a barrage of questions that are similarly unanswered, but that leave a reader with a sense of the complexity and breadth of the topic of temporary marriage in Islam. One has to wonder at the term "Islamic law" in the book's title and whether *tafsir* (Qur'an interpretation) or "exegesis" would have made a better alternative, since the bulk of the book revolves around the exegesis of Qur'an 4:124. To be sure, I. links her four new methodological directions to the work of Muhammad Taqi Mudarrisi (b. 1945) on the theory of *maqasid al-Sharia* (the objectives of the law), which clearly falls in the realm of "Islamic law", or *fiqh* (jurisprudence, ethical-legal reasoning) to be more precise. However, these four directions are not objectives per se, and I.'s approach is not an ordinary *maqasid*-type approach, where she identifies the relevant objectives and then applies them to the case at hand. Rather, I. seems to be utilizing Mudarrisi's work as an inspiration to do her own "structural *ijtihad*", that is, independent ethical-legal reasoning on the methodological foundations of the law (119). As a discipline, *fiqh* is informed by *tafsir* and vice versa. I.'s focus on *tafsir* allows her to delve deeply into the main proof text (Q. 4:124) that is utilized to support *mutʿa* in the realm of *fiqh.* Additionally, her analysis points to the need for a broader engagement with Islamic feminist hermeneutics and other new fields of study in the process of lawmaking in Islam. "Islamic law" in the title underlines this need.

I.'s initial reaction to *mutʿa* is one that is echoed by many Muslim women in different parts of the world, who may see it as a further leeway for infidelity among men, in addition to the problem of four [permanent] wives. This book brings a fresh new perspective to the topic, pointing to the multiple factors at play and competing interests in rethinking marriage in the present-day context. For a book on such a complex topic, it is easy to read, comprehensive and yet succinct, and provides an excellent balance between historical depth and contemporary relevance. It is suitable for students, specialists, and almost anyone who is interested in the topic of temporary marriage in Islam. Well done!

Nevin Reda, Toronto

Osuji, Chinyere K.: *Boundaries of Love: Interracial Marriage and the Meaning of Race*, New York University Press, 2019. – 277 p.

Boundaries of Love by Chinyere K. Osuji is what she describes as a piece of "critical constructionism" looking at the issue of ethno-racial boundaries. By this she means studying ethno-racial boundaries as they are constructed not only by elites and hierarchies but also by non-elites. Particularly, the book studies the creation of ethno-racial boundaries

by couples in interracial relationships and their interaction not only with each other but also with their children, their wider family, and their social setting. The book compares this process in the US and Brazil. This is an interesting comparison because on the surface it would seem that the US has a history of a more rigid social definition of race boundaries, and Brazil has a self-proclaimed "racial democracy", permitting the mixing of races and the crossing of racial boundaries. The study concludes that the reality is much more complex and challenging than this.

O. interviewed fifty-five individuals from interracial couples in Rio de Janeiro and thirty-eight in Los Angeles. The ages of the individuals ranged from twenty-one to sixty-five. There were also twenty-seven couple interviews in Rio and nineteen in Los Angeles. The sampling strategy was complex due to the fact that, in the two nations, racial identification and self-identification varied. The data was then examined using critical constructionism. It was found that, in different ways, the couples from both countries described their "romantic careers" using racial markers. Perhaps this could have been caused by the subject of the study, but the research noted that, as the respondents described who they dated, they mentioned their race. In both sites, they expressed a "privilege of preferences", detailing why they preferred a particular racial group. The book then looks at how couples regard and construct the racial identity of their partner. It was found that in the US there was a more complex and developed understanding of what blackness meant than in Rio. Perhaps this was because in Brazil the idea of "racial democracy" means that expressing strong barrier markers of race is frowned upon, despite the fact that differentiation actually still exists. In contrast, in Rio it was found that there was a more reflexive view of whiteness, and there was an understanding of race being ancestral, with mixedness being a given. One of the most interesting chapters is on how couples draw the racial boundaries for their children. How they labelled their children, which seemed to be something unavoidable, revealed the framework of race in the society. Thus, it seems that in Rio there was an emphasis on how the child looked. This may have been because the view of race was grounded on an understanding that racial ancestry is always a story of mixing. So, how the particular child looked was of paramount importance. In contrast, in LA, the parents took into account the categorization of the parents, and even if the child looked white, they might count her or him as black to access university support. We are left to wonder whether that categorization might change according to circumstance rather than only in official papers. We are also left to wonder whether the child growing up would engage with that categorization or reject it. The underlying thesis of the book is that the hierarchy of whiteness is not overcome by "color blindness" in the US or "racial democracy" in Brazil but rather covers over a perceived preference in society for whiteness and hides the fact that couples are constantly creating and recreating ethno-racial barriers with which they make sense of their own relationships and their engagement with family and society generally.

This is a helpful book that opens up ways of looking at ethno-racial barriers and their creation on a micro scale. The book does include consideration of the intersectionality with other barriers, particularly with misogyny, education level, and economic barriers, and this is something that could be developed further in subsequent research. As attitudes to race change in the media, how does the micro creation of race definitions and barriers shift? These longitudinal questions could be addressed to build on the already nuanced arguments in the book. Similarly, more study could be done on the different attitudes to race over different generations and how they shift over time. There is also the matter of not simply the growing influence of US attitudes to race, which is mentioned, but also how these boundary negotiations change as people migrate from one city to another and across national borders. The book is a useful contribution to the conversation about the construction of ethno-racial boundaries and opens the way for further investigation.

Philip Lane, Leuven

Pikandieu-Gomis, Thomas: *Donner sens à son mariage: Oser le mariage religieux, coutumier et civil*, Les impliqués Éditeur/ L'Harmattan, 2023. – 195 p.

L'institution matrimoniale, socle de la famille, traverse depuis quelques décennies une crise de sens et de compréhension qui, en plusieurs coins du monde, lui dénie son sens et sa valeur authentiques. Avec la mondialisation des idées, appuyée par les nouveaux moyens de communications sociales, même les peuples – surtout en leurs jeunes générations – qui semblaient foncièrement attachés aux valeurs familiales, et donc au mariage compris dans son sens authentique, se laissent phagocyter. Ainsi, même en Afrique, un nombre croissant de jeunes garçons et jeunes filles se mettent en couple sans passer par le mariage institutionnel, qu'il soit coutumier, civil ou religieux; ou s'ils le font, leur vie conjugale aura du mal à persister dans la durée. L'Église catholique n'a cessé, quant-à-elle, d'enseigner les valeurs du mariage, institution voulue par Dieu et seul moyen authentique et légitime pour fonder une famille. L'ouvrage du Thomas Pikandieu-Gomis rappelle ce sens authentique du mariage et encourage le lecteur, surtout africain, à demeurer attacher à cette institution fondamentale de la société africaine.

L'ouvrage, subdivisé en quatre parties et onze chapitres, contient une préface de Dom Michel Jorrot, qui présente et résume de façon admirable les différentes parties. À la fin du livre, le lecteur trouvera une postface qui n'est malheureusement pas signée. Bien que d'entrée de jeu l'auteur indique les destinataires comme étant ceux qui se destinent au mariage religieux catholique ainsi que les jeunes mariés, avec pour finalité de les aider à une prise de conscience de ce qu'est le mariage comme vocation propre et en comprendre le sens (17), il est heureux de se rendre compte à l'exploration de ce livre qu'il peut être d'un bénéfice incroyable aussi pour tous les pasteurs et toutes les personnes qui s'investissent dans la pastorale matrimoniale et familiale.

Dans son ensemble, l'ouvrage est un instrument pastoral. Mais l'auteur a cet insigne mérite d'avoir compris que la pastorale n'est pas une action isolée; elle prend en compte les autres domaines de connaissance et de la science. À ce propos, il est un ouvrage pluridisciplinaire. P.-G. présente le mariage sous ses divers aspects, en partant des fondements bibliques et de l'histoire de cette institution à ses aspects juridiques (civils et canoniques), en passant par ses aspects philosophiques, théologiques, sociologiques, anthropologiques et culturels, liturgiques, sans oublier à ce qui touche à l'administration ecclésiastique. L'ouvrage est une mine d'informations en même temps qu'il est riche d'enseignement et de renseignement pour le lecteur. Il est surtout un instrument de formation.

Nous pouvons cependant regretter que les chapitres qui traitent des aspects théologiques, mais surtout canoniques, contiennent des affirmations ou des enseignements inexacts pouvant induire en erreur le lecteur ou celui qui veut l'utiliser comme ouvrage de formation. Nous relevons ci-après quelques-unes qui nécessiteraient des corrections de la part de l'auteur pour la prochaine édition de l'ouvrage. Il entremêle les contenus et le sens au sujet des propriétés essentielles et des fins du mariage (47); des empêchements dirimants, des défauts et vices de consentement, des conditions de validité et de licéité de la célébration du mariage; des dispenses des empêchements, etc. (73-76). Il en est de même de l'application que P.-G. fait du privilège Paulin (79). En effet, selon l'enseignement de l'Église se basant sur l'épitre aux Corinthiens cité par l'auteur, le privilège Paulin s'applique lorsqu'il s'agit au départ d'un mariage naturel entre deux non-baptisés et que par la suite l'un des conjoints (l'homme ou la femme) reçoit le baptême. Le paragraphe sur la forme canonique, et le chapitre sur les mariages interconfessionnels (mariages à disparité de culte et mariages mixtes) (chapitre V) contiennent aussi des informations ou affirmations inexactes. C'est aussi le cas lorsque l'auteur parle de la coutume. Les canons 23 à 28 du Code de droit canonique de 1983 donnent des conditions pour qu'une coutume devienne une loi ecclésiale, et non pas des conditions pour qu'il y ait coutume

comme l'affirme l'auteur (86). Il y a aussi une confusion en ce qui concerne certains éléments canoniques, tels ce qu'il écrit dans l'appendice qui laisse croire que le mariage entre un non chrétien et un baptisé est différent du mariage avec disparité de culte (179). Par ailleurs, l'auteur met dans le même panier la dispense pour le mariage à disparité de culte et la permission pour le mariage mixte (180). Ceci fait comprendre qu'il est risqué de s'aventurer dans des domaines un peu techniques qu'on ne maitrise pas bien. Il aurait été judicieux pour l'auteur de se rapprocher des personnes averties dans le domaine. À notre avis, toutes ces pages devraient être revues avec l'aide d'un canoniste afin que l'ouvrage donne des informations justes au lecteur ou à l'utilisateur. On peut aussi regretter que la mise en forme du chapitre IX n'ait pas été bien faite, car certaines citations ne sont pas mises entre guillemets ou n'ont des guillemets qu'au début et pas à la fin, ou alors ont plusieurs formes de guillemets (126, 128, 129). Nous signalons dans le cadre la mise en forme, la note 121 qui semble ne pas être à sa place. En effet, cette note de bas de page traite d'autre chose que ce à quoi l'auteur a voulu renvoyer.

À la fin de l'ouvrage, P.-G. a placé un appendice qui donne une liste de dossiers à fournir pour le mariage à l'Église. Il aurait été bien qu'il dise sur quoi il se base pour donner cette liste. Est-ce à partir d'une norme universelle valable quel que soit le lieu où l'on se trouve ou alors une pratique particulière applicable uniquement dans le pays ou dans le diocèse où lui se trouve. En effet, certaines indications contenues dans ce qu'il écrit risqueraient non seulement d'être difficilement réalisable, mais aussi pourraient compromettre la finalité recherchée par l'acte. Il s'agit notamment de la notification à donner «à chacun des mariés, pour qu'ils remettent au curé de leur paroisse d'origine» (180). Le droit de l'Église prévoit, au canon 1122 que «si un conjoint n'a pas contracté mariage dans la paroisse où il a été baptisé, le curé du lieu de la célébration transmettra aussitôt que possible la notification du mariage contracté au curé du lieu où le baptême a été conféré». En remettant ledit document aux mariés, il y un risque qu'il ne parvienne jamais au destinataire, surtout si la paroisse où est célébré le mariage est éloignée de la paroisse de baptême du marié. Nous pensons que des précisions seraient à faire à ce niveau.

Au moment où la majorité des théologiens et canonistes africaines militent pour qu'on mette fin, dans les Églises particulières d'Afrique, à l'obligation pour le baptisé catholique de faire trois célébrations du même mariage (coutumier, civil, religieux), l'auteur de cet ouvrage estime le contraire. Nous ne pensons pas qu'une telle célébration multiple soit nécessaire. L'expérience a montré que cette obligation est à l'origine du découragement observé chez de nombreux couples qui tardent à régulariser leur situation matrimoniale. À notre avis, l'on devrait plutôt voir comment arriver à ne célébrer qu'une seulement fois un mariage, tout en veillant bien sûr à ce que les valeurs africaines et chrétiennes de l'institution matrimoniale et familiale soient respectées, à partir du moment où les conjoints ont accepté les fins et les propriétés essentielles du mariage tel que voulu par Dieu. P.-G., dans le dernier chapitre parle, avec son cœur, aux couples à partir de son expérience comme préparateur de couple au mariage. L'illustration de ce qu'il dit par des exemples rend le livre captivant. En plus, il donne des conseils pour mieux vivre son mariage, transcender les difficultés, relever les défis que l'on rencontre dans le mariage, et limiter les séparations ou les divorces (165-176). Nous recommandons cet ouvrage comme «livre de chevet» des couples, un manuel de formation des accompagnateurs des couples, des conseillers matrimoniaux et des prédicateurs de retraites pour couples. Les pasteurs en panne d'idée pour leurs homélies de mariage y trouveraient aussi des orientations judicieuses.

Jean Marie Signié, Yaoundé

Roy, Shreya: *State, Law and Gender: Debating the Age of Marriage in India, 1872-1978*, Boydell & Brewer, 2023. – 394 p.

Ideas of gender equality and women's empowerment are at the forefront in India as

never before, and young people may have forgotten the evils of *sati* or child marriage. Raising the age of marriage to 18 for girls and 21 for boys by the Indian Parliament in 1978 was a significant achievement, and Indian society seems to be on a trajectory of social improvement. However, as positive as this is, it is important not to forget how we got here. This book is a significant work in the field of marital law. It studies the past and traces processes that led to the present, allowing Roy to propose an outline for future laws. The author begins by showing that Indian colonial society had intertwining layers of diverse patriarchal discourses which in many ways depended on the subjugation of women, with prepubescent marriage and *sati* as central to the social structure. This led to child marriage being an unnoticed social problem that received little consideration from policy makers. R. recounts the evolution of laws curbing the practice: the *sati* regulation of 1829, the Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act of 1856, the Age of Consent Act of 1891, the Sarda Act of 1929, and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006.

R. focuses on Hindu women with particular attention to Bengal, noting that this is representative of the condition of women across the country. In the mid-nineteenth century, new laws were formulated that banned widow burning, allowed widow remarriage, and restricted child marriage. R. examines the situation of the girl-wife in those times and describes in detail how the practice of *sati* was finally banned in 1829. The situation of women is vividly described. The interaction of British rule with Indian culture is portrayed, and the ups and downs of the reformative steps are realistically presented. R. shows that even in the context of subjugation, some women were able to be administrators, scholars, and activists, such as Gargi, Maitrayee, Meerabai, Ahalyabai, Rani Lakshmibai, and Shammohini Devi. The 1857 revolt and its consequences are described. R. then focuses on Act III of 1872, the first civil marriage act which abolished early marriage, made polygamy penal, and sanctioned widow remarriage and inter-caste marriage. R. presents the role of Brahmos in Bengal as well as the work of Rammohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, Debendranath Tagore, and others. The controversy regarding the Age of Consent Act of 1891 is told through a touching case study. That act redefined rape as an act of sexual intercourse with a woman under twelve, with or without her consent, including a husband with his wife. The debate which surrounded it is discussed. Some criticized the act as an attack on their religion and social customs. The reformers took a humanitarian position and emphasized the difference between girlhood and womanhood. The response from women in Maharashtra and their interest in women's education is discussed. The Sarda Act of 1929 evolved through significant legislative measures. It was the climax of an eight-year campaign to raise the age of consent inside and outside of marriage. The influence of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and the Women's Indian Association (WIA) is discussed using their writings, private papers, and autobiographies. A long process of education and outreach to villages finally led, only in 2006, to the passage of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006. The current debate concerns raising the minimum marital age for women to 21, making it equivalent to the requirement for men.

As R. says, the rules of society do not change in one day, but any change starts with the law. This book shows us how the laws supporting women's rights came into being in their social context. It draws on parliamentary debates, census data, newspapers, magazines, and other works of the time to give a detailed discussion. We are deeply appreciative for this amazing book.

Geevarghese Kaithavana
& Nidhi Sam Alayam, Kerala

Debates On Marriage and Sexuality

Augustin, Bernhard/Rees, Wilhelm (Hg.): *Ehe und Familie: Orientierung in bewegter Zeit*, Innsbruck University Press, 2023. – 388 S.

Im Gefolge von *Amoris laetitia* (AL) und dem von Papst Franziskus ausgerufenen „Jahr

der Familie“ 2021-2022 sind eine Reihe von Publikationen zu Ehe und Familie erschienen. Der von Bernhard Augustin und Wilhelm Rees vorgelegte Sammelband will dabei „Orientierung in bewegter Zeit“ geben angesichts der Herausforderungen der Gegenwart.

Nach dem knappen Vorwort (9f.), das auf eine Vorstellung der Einzelbeiträge verzichtet, werden die fünfzehn im Band versammelten Aufsätze in fünf Themenblöcken präsentiert. Im Abschnitt „Grundlegung“ widmet sich Bernhard Augustin, Studentenseelsorger und Opus-Dei-Priester, aus religionsphilosophischer Perspektive der Erkenntnis der Wirklichkeit von Ehe und des Partners als notwendiger Voraussetzung für die Entscheidung zur Ehe, jedoch ohne Hinweise auf AL (13-41). Tobias Giglmayr, Regens des Priesterseminars Salzburg, stellt im Anschluss die jeweilige Berufung zu Ehe oder Zölibat gegenüber (43-57). Im einzigen englischsprachigen Beitrag des Bandes legt der in Rom lehrende Exeget Eusebio Gonzalez die Sicht von Ehe und Familie im Neuen Testament dar (59-79), so die Übertragung entsprechender Metaphern auf die Nachfolge Jesu, aber auch Gegensätze zwischen Herkunftsfamilie und Jüngerschaft sowie die Betonung der Gleichheit von Mann und Frau in den frühen Gemeinden. Josef Spindelböck, Professor für Moraltheologie ehedem in St. Pölten, nun in Trumau, untersucht die Aufnahme der Lehre vom Gewissen in AL (81-103), geht dabei jedoch auf das in AL bedeutsame Prinzip der Individualethik bzw. der Unterscheidung der Situation nur am Rande ein (100f.).

Im zweiten Abschnitt „Aussagen der Päpste“ beleuchtet zunächst der Brixener Moraltheologe Martin M. Lintner die Perspektive von Papst Franziskus auf Ehe und Familie (107-128) und arbeitet dabei heraus, dass sie für Franziskus ein „Herzensanliegen“ (107) waren; der durch ihn vollzogene Paradigmenwechsel hin zu einer „Pastoral der Ermutigung und Befähigung“ (127) zeige sich vor allem darin, dass nicht die moralische Beurteilung im Vordergrund steht, sondern eine wertschätzende, verständnisvolle und anerkennende Haltung, gerade angesichts der aktuellen Herausforderungen. Stanislav Přibyl, Dozent für Kirchenrecht in Budweis, analysiert im Anschluss den personalistischen Ansatz in den Aussagen von Johannes Paul II. zu Ehe und Familie, vor allem in *Familiaris consortio*, und deren Einfluss auf das kirchliche Recht (129-146). Christian Schaller vom Regensburger Institut Papst Benedikt XIV. versucht hingegen, den Familienbegriff dieses Papstes darzustellen (147-161). Die eigenwillige nichtchronologische Reihung der drei Päpste verwundert; sie mag ihren Grund darin haben, dass die Aussagen von Franziskus am aktuellsten sind und sich auch Johannes Paul II. sehr intensiv mit Ehe und Familie beschäftigt hat, Benedikt XVI. jedoch nur recht peripher.

Praktische Fragen der pastoralen Begleitung stehen sodann im Abschnitt „Ehe als Beziehung“ im Zentrum. So schildert Eva Bitzan, selbst Ehe-, Familien- und Lebensberaterin, die Tätigkeit der Familienberatungsstellen in Österreich, die auch Ehe- und Partnerschaftsberatung anbieten, bis hin zu einem konkreten Fallbeispiel (165-179), während Franz Harant, Priester und Beziehungs-, Ehe- und Familienseelsorger im Bistum Linz sowie Leiter der Regenbogenpastoral in Österreich, spirituelle und pastorale Aspekte zur Paarbeziehung beleuchtet, aber auch zu Ehevorbereitung, Seelsorge mit Geschieden-Wiederverheirateten und zur Regenbogenpastoral mit LGBTIQ*-Personen, bis hin zu liturgischen Segensformularen (181-214). Gertraud Kirchengast, Mitarbeiterin im Familienreferat des Bistums Graz-Seckau, stellt schließlich die Praxis und die Vorgaben der Ehevorbereitungspastoral vor, näherhin der Ehevorbereitungskurse in Österreich (215-247).

Im vierten Abschnitt „Ehe und Kinder“ bieten zwei Professorinnen der Pädagogischen Hochschule Augustinum in Graz einen grundlegenden und informativen Überblick über wesentliche Fragen der Erziehung: Katharina Orgis erläutert die zentralen erziehungswissenschaftlichen Diskurse der Gegenwart (251-274), Renate Wieser hingegen aus spezifisch religionspädagogischer Warte Grundfragen religiöser Erziehung (275-304).

Kanonistisch-juristischen Perspektiven ist der letzte Abschnitt „Ehe und Recht" gewidmet. Johann Bair, der an der Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät Innsbruck lehrt, legt die Entwicklung des staatlichen Rechts bezüglich Ehe und Eingetragener Partnerschaft in Österreich (307-324) dar. Ein Plädoyer für eine kirchenrechtliche Beratung als Teil der Ehevorbereitung, um die pastorale Relevanz von Ehenichtigkeitsverfahren erkennbar werden zu lassen, gibt Reinhard Knittel ab, Domkapitular und Offizial des Bistums St. Pölten (325-340). Mitherausgeber Wilhelm Rees, Professor für Kirchenrecht an der Universität Innsbruck, beschließt den Band mit der ausführlichen Darlegung der römisch-katholischen Normen zu Ehe, Familie und christlicher Erziehung und deren Umsetzung in Österreich und stellt hierbei Bezüge zu AL her (341-385). Angaben zu den Autorinnen und Autoren finden sich schließlich in einem eigenen Verzeichnis (387f.).

Vielfältige Perspektiven auf Ehe und Familie werden somit im vorliegenden Sammelband präsentiert: aus unterschiedlichen theologischen, aber auch nichttheologischen Disziplinen; aus Fachwissenschaft wie aus konkreter pastoraler Praxisbegleitung; aus verschiedenen kirchlichen Strömungen und theologischen Richtungen von Opus Dei bis Regenbogenpastoral. Diese Breite macht den Band spannend als Beitrag für den interdisziplinären, aber auch innerkirchlichen wie kirchlich-gesellschaftlichen Dialog über Ehe und Familie. Dass das Blickfeld weithin auf Österreich beschränkt bleibt, ist der Anlage des Bandes geschuldet und kann auch als Vorzug gesehen werden, weil landesspezifische Probleme und Lösungswege zur Sprache kommen. Das ambitionierte Ziel, „Orientierung in bewegter Zeit" zu geben, kann der Sammelband allerdings – wie auch andere Publikationen – wohl nur bedingt einlösen angesichts der immensen Herausforderungen der Gegenwart im Blick auf Ehe und Familie. Einen beachtenswerten Baustein hierzu aber stellt der Band indes durchaus dar.

August Laumer, Augsburg

Holton, Kevin T.: *The Abolition of Marriage: Freeing the Right to be Religious and Leaving the Left Alone*, Hamilton Books, 2020. – x, 120 p.

Kevin Holton's *The Abolition of Marriage* enters a critical conversation at the intersection of law, culture, religion, and family life. Written in a style accessible to both scholars and lay readers, the book sets out to trace the development of the legal and cultural institution of marriage in the United States. Holton's thesis is that American legal and cultural norms have shifted away from understanding marriage simply as a covenantal, lifelong heterosexual union oriented toward stability and the raising of children, toward a view of marriage as an easily dissolvable contract designed primarily for adult fulfillment. He explains "the real question and debate should be whether the liberal state has any right to be licensing marriage at all" (1) and argues for "marital disestablishment as the best possible solution to social tension existing between Christian traditionalists…and secular or progressive liberals" (23). This shift, he argues, is best approached by replacing this with civil unions or leaving it to churches and their members to oversee traditional marriages and their expectations.

H. situates his work not simply as a lament for the past but as a diagnosis of a social and legal transformation. He argues that "no-fault" divorce laws, cultural attitudes toward autonomy, and the gradual redefinition of marriage in purely individualistic terms have collectively hollowed out the meaning of the institution for many. What remains, in his estimation, is not marriage as historically understood, but a shadow of it – a privatized arrangement easily entered and exited. This is what he provocatively terms the "abolition" of marriage. One of the notable strengths of H.'s work lies in his ability to blend cultural analysis with data and legal critique. He marshals sociological evidence to demonstrate the harms that family breakdown visits upon children and highlights the growing social costs of fragmented family structures.

For a Catholic or religious audience, his analysis may tend to draw out the political

polarization typical of the US landscape. Those who hold more traditional values and concerns about the sacramental and covenantal meaning of marriage will likely lament the changes and hope for social and political support for traditional marriage and family life, echoing some of the ideas in *Familiaris consortio* and *Amoris laetitia*: that children have a right to the stability of their parents' union, that marriage forms the foundation of the family as the "domestic church", and that legal structures should reflect and promote the good of family life. Those with more progressive values will appreciate the social changes taking place and the argument for disestablishing the role of the state in defining and supporting traditional marriage. H.'s book therefore offers not only a sociological and historical critique but a lot for all readers to consider from a legal perspective as well.

The work has certain limitations. First, while H.'s analysis of divorce law and cultural shifts is incisive, his proposals for reversing the trend are not the focus. The book describes what has been changed but offers less concrete guidance on how to recover it, especially in a pluralistic society where appeals to tradition or religious conviction are often met with skepticism. Readers may find themselves longing for a more robust articulation of policy solutions or pastoral strategies. Second, H.'s writing, though clear and passionate, may be of interest more to those doing ministry or research in the United States. His focus and audience are limited in that sense. While H. rightly underscores the radical change introduced by no-fault divorce and cultural individualism, he sometimes underplays the fact that marriage has always been subject to both cultural and legal shifts. The risk here is that marriage is presented as a monolith of the past, when in fact it has taken multiple forms across time and cultures despite what some on the political spectrum may believe.

The book is a valuable and thought-provoking contribution. Its greatest strength lies in calling attention to the profound public consequences of private marital decisions and how these might be dealt with politically and legally moving forward. The text and its ideas are timely and well researched. The book provides an important resource for understanding the cultural currents against which the church must witness. It can serve theologians, ethicists, and pastoral ministers as a bridge text, articulating in secular terms many of the insights the church has long proclaimed about the importance of marital permanence and fidelity. The book could also be valuable in classrooms, particularly in courses on family studies or ethics, where it could generate lively discussion about the relationship between law, culture, and morality. It offers a sobering assessment of the state of marriage in contemporary America.

Randall Woodard, Saint Leo, FL

L'Archer, Marie-Claude: *Pourquoi pas le polyamour? Déconstruire le mythe de la monogamie pour tous*, Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2023. – 274 p.

In our current media landscape, the discussion regarding alternative relationship models is omnipresent. While recent decades saw serial monogamy and cohabitation challenge the foundations of traditional marriage, today a more fundamental shift is occurring. The self-evidence of monogamy as the only legitimate bedrock for a romantic relationship is increasingly being questioned. As the popularity of non-monogamous relationship forms rises, so does the need for a clear framework to understand this evolution. In her work, Marie-Claude L'Archer, a Canadian expert by experience and a well-known media figure in the field of polyamory, sheds light on this theme. Although the subversive nature of consensual non-monogamy is slowly fading, L. observes that our society remains permeated by myths and prejudices regarding polyamory. She defines this relationship form with precision: a constellation in which multiple partners maintain a romantic and sexual relationship with each other simultaneously, based on full mutual consent and equality. In the first two parts of her book, L. dissects common stereotypes. She does not do so from a position of naive optimism; she is disarmingly honest about the high demands a poly-

amorous life places on those involved. It requires superior emotional regulation, refined relational skills, and constant, transparent communication. Nevertheless, she argues in the third part that every profound relationship choice – whether monogamous or not – requires respect, commitment, self-reflection, and resilience. For L., there are no conclusive psychological or biological arguments proving that monogamy is more correct. The ultimate touchstone for her is what appears life-giving to the partners: a choice rooted in a persistent inner desire and clear knowing, rather than societal pressure toward monogamy. Choosing polyamory to save a dying relationship is often destructive, whereas choosing from a desire to grant the other freedom and to foster personal growth can be enriching. This vision breaks the conviction that one person must be the fulfillment of *all* intimacy needs. For those who can transcend the threshold of jealousy, the path even opens toward "compersion": the ability to experience joy in the happiness that one's partner finds with another.

While L.'s analysis nuancedly explores the human capacity for multiple attachments, another perspective emerges when we consider the symbolic and philosophical power of a relationship choice. Here, the discussion leaves the purely psychological plane and enters the realm of anthropology. For Christians, the choice for monogamy is not merely a practical or psychological preference but an identity marker deeply rooted in faith in the God of the Covenant. In this view, the exclusivity between partners reflects the exclusivity of God with his people. Just as God desired to be the "only one" for Israel, so do believing partners wish to be each other's exclusive chosen one, as a tangible icon of God's love. Christian marriage is understood here as a sacramental sign of the relationship between Christ and the church: one Bridegroom and one Bride. Within this symbolism, exclusivity is seen as an essential part of total self-giving. The reasoning is existential: a gift is only truly total when nothing of the same type is given elsewhere. It is not a matter of a person being unable to love multiple people at once but rather that total entrustment implies that one does not simultaneously open oneself relationally in an identical manner to third parties within that same category. This Christian vision is not a cultural or biological necessity but a theological-normative assumption tracing back to the biblical phrasing in Genesis 2:24 regarding "becoming one flesh". In the Catholic tradition, this verse is understood not merely physically but as the sharing of one life path and one mutual belonging. This unity is conceived as structurally exclusive. Although this reasoning is sometimes empirically contested, it finds rational support in human psychology: the need for an exclusive primary attachment feels more stable to many and provides the emotional peace and security necessary for a lasting covenant. Socially, this form also frequently offers the clearest context for raising children.

When we place L.'s work alongside this theological reflection, we see two consistent but distinct frameworks. L. demonstrates that polyamory can take a stable and well-considered form, provided there are high relational skills. There is no unambiguous scientific evidence that one relationship form is more correct than the other. However, for those living within a Christian perspective, the choice for monogamy gains an extra dimension that transcends psychology. For them, lifelong fidelity and exclusivity remain not only a secure framework for attachment but a sacred space for a unique encounter with the divine.

Ilse Cornu, Leuven

Lora, Marco: *Il matrimonio in Giovanni Paolo II: Corpo e liturgia, una realtà nuziale*, Editoriale Romani, 2023 – 400 p.

Quest'opera, e quella di Imperatori che segue, esprimono, in modo chiaro e coraggioso, un ideale del matrimonio rispetto al contesto odierno del mondo occidentale. A partire dagli scritti di Giovanni Paolo II, Marco Lora – laico sposato e dottore in teologia, impiegato nell'Ufficio per la Pastorale della Salute della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana – presenta la vita matrimoniale come

una "liturgia del corpo" che sorge dal rito del matrimonio. Il libro rende pubblica l'integralità della tesi dottorale di L. presso il Pontificio Istituto Teologico Giovanni Paolo II per le Scienze del Matrimonio e della Famiglia di Roma. Il testo prende la forma di un commentario, molto approfondito e abbastanza laudativo, sugli insegnamenti di Papa Wojtyla a riguardo del matrimonio. Il primo capitolo elabora le premesse di una "liturgia del corpo" nuziale. Il secondo capitolo ripercorre le *Catechesi sull'amore* ed altri testi magisteriali per mettere a fuoco il concetto del "linguaggio del corpo" per poi esporre, al terzo capitolo, il suo nesso teorico con la "liturgia del corpo" in una prospettiva nuziale. Il capitolo quarto considera i possibili esiti di questo argomento secondo Giovanni Paolo II, mentre il capitolo quinto opera una verifica di confronto con la riflessione liturgica contemporanea nell'ambito italiano. L'intuizione principale del libro, il "nucleo della ricerca", consiste nell'affermazione che "il linguaggio del corpo è effettivamente ininterrotta continuità della lingua liturgica", associando inseparabilmente l'azione liturgica e l'atto coniugale: "l'atto sessuale degli sposi rinnova una vera liturgia – una liturgia sacramentale, una liturgia che appartiene alla Chiesa cattolica – attraverso ciò che è loro proprio, l'oggettività del dono pieno di sé attraverso il reciproco incontro dei corpi" (279). Questa prospettiva mette a fuoco la connessione intima tra la vita della Chiesa e la vita coniugale.

Purtroppo, la mancanza di un'adeguata e problematizzata critica lascia aperta la possibilità di esagerate assolutizzazioni, fino a tradire il senso bello e luminoso che L. intende. A livello fenomenologico, non è per niente scontato che l'atto sessuale sia un'estensione "effettiva" ed "ininterrotta" del rito del matrimonio celebrato in chiesa. L'insistenza sul carattere *ininterrotto* di questa continuità non prende in considerazione le distanze salutari tra questi atti ben distinti nel tempo e nello spazio. La liturgia non è il luogo dell'incontro sessuale tra due corpi in modo *effettivo*. Sia a livello pratico che a livello morale, c'è una distinzione netta da salvaguardare tra lo spazio pubblico e quello privato. In questo senso, l'esperienza concreta dell'amore nelle coppie costituirebbe una preziosa istanza di verifica delle intuizioni ed anche degli esiti della ricerca. A livello epistemologico, sviluppare una teologia del matrimonio attraverso un linguaggio liturgico presuppone che, per il lettore, il paradigma della liturgia sia più carico di senso rispetto a quello del matrimonio. Un tale approccio sarebbe persuasivo soprattutto per chi studia la liturgia, o per chi ha una maggiore esperienza quotidiana della liturgia rispetto al matrimonio, come per sacerdoti, religiosi e religiose. Agli sposi, anche quelli con una frequente esperienza liturgica, si potrebbe chiedere se non sia più rilevante capire la liturgia a partire dalla vita coniugale invece del contrario.

Julian Paparella, Ontario

Imperatori, Mario: *Il Matrimonio: Sacramento nuziale del "Mistero grande" sulle frontiere del mondo*, Edizioni Porziuncola, 2023. – 224 p.

Mario Imperatori – teologo gesuita e già decano della Pontificia Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Meridionale (Sezione San Luigi a Napoli) – offre un saggio per chiarire la natura del matrimonio dal punto di vista della teologia sacramentaria. Il punto di partenza di I. è l'osservazione che oggi "la confusione regna sovrana" (5) a riguardo del significato teologico del matrimonio, "sfidata dal contesto sociale e culturale" (16). Nel primo capitolo, I. espone il significato teologico della distinzione sessuale tra maschio e femmina, designata come fondamento del libero consenso degli sposi. Il secondo capitolo cerca risorse su questa distinzione sessuale nella Sacra Scrittura. Il capitolo terzo, che occupa più della metà del testo, presenta il rilievo del matrimonio come sacramento della fede. La conclusione ribadisce l'importanza teologica della Sacra Famiglia per la sacramentalità del matrimonio. Attraverso questo percorso, I. solleva nodi critici come la ministerialità degli sposi, la natura sponsale della Chiesa, la possibilità di un *ordo* dei coniugi ed il legame tra i sacramenti del bat-

tesimo, dell'eucaristia e del matrimonio. I. articola la specifica sacramentalità del matrimonio in relazione con gli altri sacramenti, in particolare quelli della iniziazione cristiana. Il registro dell'opera rimane abbastanza teorico e fondamentale, anche se alcune domande pastorali (in particolare quelle dei battezzati non credenti e dei divorziati civilmente risposati) vengono brevemente prese in considerazione in vari punti del testo. A livello pastorale alcune affermazioni possono condurre a giudizi o esclusioni, come l'insistenza sull'imprescindibilità della fede dei coniugi per la sacramentalità del matrimonio, quale criterio che in assoluto rimane non verificabile.

Quest'opera rispetta quasi tutti gli elementi annunciati nel titolo. Ciò che resta da sviluppare è la riflessione sulle ultime parole del titolo: *sulle frontiere del mondo*. L'assenza di uno sguardo realistico ed equilibrato sul mondo odierno rischia di ridurre la sua "estrema complessità" (16) ad una questione di "confusione" culturale, senza proporre vie di crescita e di maturazione che corrispondono alle condizioni concrete delle persone, come se "una comprensione teologicamente adeguata del matrimonio" (143) fosse in grado di risolvere le vere sfide del matrimonio e delle coppie nel contesto contemporaneo. Ci si domanda se una teologia più concreta della vita coniugale sarebbe in grado di risuonare con il vissuto delle coppie, anche quelle che non sono sposate canonicamente nella Chiesa cattolica, nel riconoscimento che *tutti gli esseri umani* e non solo tutti i battezzati credenti e praticanti "sono infatti chiamati a diventare segno, ciascuno secondo la propria specifica vocazione, dell'unico grande *Mistero nuziale, che è la ragione ultima di tutto ciò che esiste*" (19).

La forza di queste due opere è la proposta di un approfondimento serio sul significato teologico del matrimonio, l'uno attraverso un prisma liturgico e l'altro con una visione sacramentale. Entrambe forniscono tanti spunti da sviluppare. Allo stesso tempo, però, le opere potrebbero prestarsi al rischio di rinchiudersi in una concezione *metafisica* del matrimonio. Questo rischio ha un duplice profilo. Da un lato, non riceve la testimonianza della vita concreta degli sposi nel fare teologia a proposito del matrimonio. Dall'altro lato, non nutre il dialogo tra vita e teologia, al servizio della risonanza del lavoro teologico con l'esperienza di fede e di amore degli sposi. In questo senso, ci si potrebbe chiedere: *quale rapporto mutuo tra la teologia del sacramento di matrimonio e la concretezza della vita coniugale? Occorre una svolta empirica nella teologia sacramentaria del matrimonio?* Un approccio concreto alla teologia del matrimonio, possibilmente con una prospettiva interdisciplinare o ecumenica, permetterebbe di "contemplare Cristo vivente che è presente in tante storie d'amore, e invocare il fuoco dello Spirito su tutte le famiglie del mondo" (AL 59). Punto chiave resta la presa di coscienza che la presenza di Dio, al cuore del matrimonio e della famiglia, non è esclusiva a chi vive una valida unione sacramentale, perché la grazia di Dio "lavora invisibilmente" in ogni cuore di buona volontà (GS 22). Per rendersi conto della grandezza del Mistero nuziale nel contesto odierno, segnato dal pluralismo e dalla globalizzazione, la riflessione teologica è chiamata a guardare oltre i soli matrimoni sacramentali dal punto di vista del diritto canonico. È giunto il momento, sia per il lavoro teologico che per l'azione pastorale, di costruire ponti anziché frontiere tra il significato evangelico dell'amore e il vissuto reale delle persone nel mondo di oggi, superando i confini della Chiesa cattolica.

Julian Paparella, Ontario

Rinne, Pärttyli/Brecher, Martin (eds.): *Kant on Sex, Love, and Friendship*, de Gruyter, 2023. – 192 p.

Sabourin, Charlotte: *Kant on Marriage*, Cambridge University Press, 2025. – 60 p.

As noted in both books' introductions, scholarship on Kant has expanded, in the last thirty years or so, to engage discussions of love, marriage, sex, and friendship, not the typical themes one would turn to Kant for. Questions about "pure reason", the "moral

law", and "aesthetic judgment", which he examines in his main works, have been traditionally the formidable areas of Kantian scholarship. The growing interest in topics of love and intimate relationships in Kant is undoubtedly connected to a parallel broadening of academic philosophy to include areas previously considered outside its scope. This alone, however, is not sufficient in explaining the new directions in Kantian studies. As some of the most recent scholarly works have contended, Kant's anthropology seems to offer a more balanced framework for the consideration of how emotions and feelings interact with morality, thus contributing in original ways to the debate. That said, the question remains: What does Kant have to contribute to the philosophical debate on sex, love, friendship, and marriage? This is the question that both books place front and center, and right away they acknowledge the main challenge, namely Kant himself. Anyone who has some familiarity with Kant's work is well aware that Kant's views on sex, women, and race are, to put it mildly, questionable – sex is objectifying by turning oneself and others into a thing, women are passive citizens under the protection and direction of men, marriage is only between a man and a woman, same-sex relationships are "unnatural" – thus making it very hard to see how they could be integrated in a more innovative reading of Kant. Yet, Charlotte Sabourin, in her presentation of *Kant on Marriage* as well as the collection of essays, in some measure, on *Kant on Sex, Love and Friendship,* defy such critical readings and propose to reframe Kant's position. How far one can go in reframing Kant on marriage, sex, and friendship while accounting for his views on women, sex, and race is the challenge these works embrace.

Let's start with S.'s book. Its merit is that she presents the context of the debate on marriage in Kant's time, showing that while he held a somewhat novel position by not considering procreation as the sole end of marriage, he still agreed completely with the jurists of his day that marriage provided the only acceptable framework for sex. On the question of equality between the partners, Kant sees it as the result of a marital relationship, whereas Von Hippel – a jurist and a friend of Kant – argues for a more expansive equality that precedes marriage. The significance of this different position emerges from the discussion on infanticide, a rather widespread phenomenon at the time of Kant. Since marriage was not open to all, but only to people with financial means and of similar rank, it is mostly women of lower status that found themselves in the situation of having a child out of wedlock and who, if charged with infanticide and found guilty, would be put to death. While, according to S., Kant seems to show compassion for the women in this predicament, he does not make any room for alleviation of the penalty, nor does Von Hippel, but the latter is far more conflicted than Kant, indicating that Kant, though compassionate, is less open toward mitigating or changing the existing laws that might allow for a more egalitarian marriage.

S.'s central claim is that marriage conceived by Kant is transformative of sex; it goes from being objectifying to being reciprocal and mutual. S. takes marriage to be a relationship unlike legal contracts, where the parties take each other as property (something that would go against Kant's position on human beings as ends in themselves); instead she reframes it as a relationship within a community, that is "simultaneous" and "reciprocal" where all parties are involved with each other and no one is subordinate to or above the other. While she acknowledges that Kant's view of woman as a "passive citizen" makes her practically subordinate to man and therefore that marriage is not a simultaneous and reciprocal relationship as Kant describes it, S. still contends that marriage as conceived by Kant "carries interesting transformative possibilities" (54), and that it can achieve these only if it admits of a "more robust commitment to legal equality" (36). Sure. But that not being the case at the time of Kant (and we should ask, is it today?), the transformative potential of marriage, if it is a thing, requires the pre-existence of a legal framework and conditions that make it possible. Even then, such conditions alone are not sufficient.

The collection of essays in *Kant on Sex, Love and Friendship* edited by Pärttyli Rinne

and Martin Brecher displays similar expansive efforts, with the view that understanding how sex, love, and friendship function in Kant's practical philosophy allows for a more comprehensive understanding of his ethical project (9). The volume presents a wide range of issues such as same-sex marriage, the problematization of consent in sexual relationships, moral character development, the role of love as a necessary moral predisposition, and the role of friendship for improving one's virtue as well as for promoting the happiness of others. All the essays are well constructed and provide rich analyses of various aspects of Kant's lesser-known thought. Reading them gives the impression of entering a large building with quite a few rooms, each disclosing a variety of things one would not know the existence of had they not entered. The collection gathers some more skeptical readings of recent literature on Kant's scholarship on love and friendship, and some more optimistic readings. As an example of the more skeptical kind is the essay by Robert B. Louden which opens the collection and which questions the more positive interpretations of Kant's position on sex as objectifying, and of marriage as the only framework for redeeming sex; ultimately Louden is not convinced that marriage constitutes a step toward morality that facilitates mutual understanding. On the more positive side, the essay by Melissa Seymour Fahmy seeks to provide an account of sexual relationships that are acceptable and within a Kantian moral framework, while recognizing that most find Kant's views on sex unacceptable. She does not think consent is sufficient, even though it is needed to avoid using each other as a means and sets the happiness and wellbeing of the partner and of oneself as the parameter for moral sexual relationships.

All the essays, regardless, acknowledge the problematic nature of Kant's position on matters of sex, love, and friendship, and when they provide more optimistic readings, they do so by suggesting ways by which Kant's views would be reconcilable with his theoretical moral framework. As hinted at the beginning, this can only go so far before the whole structure crumbles. As R. writes in the conclusion of his essay on the conceptual structure of love in Kant's writings, its practical import is not so evident, and he cautions against elevated enthusiasm about matters of love, sex, and friendship in Kant, urging everyone instead to maintain a critical and alert attitude when it comes to equality and inclusion in discourses that "advocate the normative ideal of universal love" (146). I could not agree more. That said, both texts offer relevant scholarship on Kant's writings and provide thought-provoking analyses which are certainly worth the read whether one is a Kant scholar or simply interested in learning more about Kant's views on sex, love, friendship, and marriage and whether they can in fact be reconciled with his moral framework.

Elvira Roncalli, Helena, MT

Snyder Belousek, Darrin W.: *Marriage, Scripture, and the Church: Theological Discernment on the Question of Same-Sex Union*, Baker Academic, 2021. – xxi, 297 p.

Darrin Snyder Belousek (S.-B.) has written a book that gives a sympathetic reading of the Bible's statements on same-sex relationships. Ultimately, though, it does not escape a certain biblicism that puts ideas over people. It takes seriously the lived reality and self-attested values of gay and lesbian relationships, avoiding any a priori condemnation or short-changing of their relationships. Beyond the 300-page book, there is a 200-page pdf available online with essays that examine specific topics, like specific Pauline passages, in detail. The author is of the Mennonite tradition and thus looks to the Bible as the first and last word on ethical and relational issues. This is, in my reading, both the strength and the weakness of the text. It provides the reader with a lengthy and broad engagement with the biblical testimony, which is essential as one navigates LGBTQ+ issues in a Christian context. Yet, such an approach also allows one's interpretation of the Bible to betray one's ethical judgment formed in the encounter with fellow Christians. S.-B.

evidently has great compassion and sympathy for the gays and lesbians that he has met and is also very aware of the good that can come from their relationships. Yet, because he concludes that the Bible cannot approve such relationships, his compassion must turn to pity, and, rather than affirming these friends he has met, he has to instead tell them that these relationships that bring them happiness are not from God and must be abandoned.

The structure of the book is clear. It begins with assessing the current landscape regarding attitudes to same-sex relations. It then looks at the theology of marriage in the Bible and the early church. The heart of the text is part 3, which examines principles and precedents for changes and adjustments in the teaching on sexuality. The final part gives a summary of what S.-B. sees as the church's most compassionate response. This is summed up by a short personal afterword by Wesley Hill, a prominent evangelical apologist who is gay but attests to finding the best path in celibacy for Christ. All in all, the book says to gays and lesbians, "we love you so much and we want you to find your only true happiness in giving up on any intimate relationships and finding your strength in Jesus". This is a standard compassionate evangelical (and Catholic) response to queer relationships that premises acceptance on repenting of one's queer ways. Of course, this will not be good news at all for most queer Christians. It seems that this Bible-based approach leaves one pastorally at a loss to account for the very goods in queer relationships that S.-B. describes.

David Dawson Vásquez, Rome

Gundry, Judith M.: *Women, Gender, and Sex in the End-Time: Household Roles in 1 Corinthians 7*, Mohr Siebeck, 2025 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament; 548). – xix, 239 p.

An keiner anderen Stelle innerhalb des Corpus Paulinum werden die Rollen und Relationen von Frauen in der christlichen Gemeinde so eingehend behandelt wie in 1 Kor 7,1-40. Die vorliegende Monographie Judith M. Gundrys, ao. Professorin für Neues Testament an der Yale Divinity School, beinhaltet eine Reihe intensiver Analysen und Interpretationen dieses inhaltsreichen Textabschnitts in seinem kultur- und religionsgeschichtlichen Kontext. Die kurze Einführung (1-4) enthält einleitende Bemerkungen und Zusammenfassungen der leitenden Fragestellung seiner einzelnen Kapitel.

Themen des ersten Hauptteils sind die Evaluation und Ergänzung bisheriger exegetisch-historischer Zugänge zu 1 Kor 7. Kapitel 1 (7-32) bietet einen gründlichen und instruktiven forschungsgeschichtlichen Überblick, an dessen Ende G. die erkennbaren Zusammenhänge zwischen der Vorliebe des Paulus für die Sexualaskese als adäquate christliche Lebensform und der eschatologischen Naherwartung des Völkerapostels fokussiert. Kapitel 2 (33-74) stellt der Gedankenführung des Paulus das von Aristoteles in der *Politeia* formulierte Konzept der οἰκονομία gegenüber. Der „domestic code" (73) in 1 Kor 7 stelle dem aristotelischen Ideal des aus Mann, Frau und legitimen Kindern bestehenden *Oikos* als grundlegender politischer Entität das frühchristliche Ideal der egalitären Reziprozität ἐν Χριστῷ als ideale soziale Relation während der noch verbleibenden Zeit bis zur erhofften Parusie Christi gegenüber.

Der zweite Hauptteil enthält fünf miteinander verbundene historisch-kritische Studien zu verschiedenen Themen und Abschnitten von 1 Kor 7, in welchen die intendierte Abgrenzung der paulinischen Argumentationsstrategie von Aristoteles eine Anwendung erfährt. In Kapitel 3 (77-89) fragt G. nach den Beweggründen für den Rat des Paulus, nicht mehr zu heiraten (1 Kor 7,25-28.32-38). Im Kontext des von ihm favorisierten Verhältnisses der Christen zur vergehenden Welt sei die positive Bewertung des Verzichts auf Ehe (und Prokreation) angesichts der erwarteten allgemeinen eschatischen Unheilssituation vor allem Ausdruck eines „prioritizing of women's interests" (89). Kapitel 4 (91-110) fragt nach den Gründen der in 1 Kor 7,8f. und 39f. formulierten Präferenz, dass auch christliche Witwer und Witwen in Korinth ehelos blei-

ben und fortan sexuell enthaltsam leben sollten. G. erkennt hierin sowohl eine Relativierung herkömmlicher sozialer Relationen angesichts des nahen Weltendes als auch Reflexe einer besonderen Akzentuierung der aktuellen prekären Lebenssituation von verwitweten Frauen, welche wohl mit der Wahrnehmung des auf ihnen lastenden wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Drucks bzw. des Zwangs zur Wiederheirat zusammenhängt.

In Kapitel 5 (111-132) geht es um die Bedingungen und Einschränkungen der ehelichen Sexualaskese (1 Kor 7,2-5), die G. zutreffend mit dem paulinischen Entgegenkommen gegenüber der *Conditio humana* begründet. Weniger überzeugend erscheint mir indes ihre Deutung des in V. 5 erwähnten gemeinsamen Gebets als „prayer for protection from conception" (132), welches den Eheleuten den Geschlechtsverkehr ohne folgende Schwangerschaft und Geburt während der unheilvollen Zeit der *Krisis* ermöglichen sollte. Ich würde eher daran denken, dass es dem „Kirchenpolitiker" Paulus hier immer noch um die Ehe als Ordnung zur Erfüllung des gemeinsamen geschöpflichen Auftrags (Gen 1,28) in dieser Welt ging. Kapitel 6 (133-168) befasst sich mit der Klärung des Verhältnisses christlicher Männer zur vergehenden Welt in der Digression 1 Kor 7,29-31. In den fünf parallelen Ermahnungen erblickt G. keine bloße verallgemeinernde Relativierung der irdischen Wirklichkeit durch die eschatologische Wirklichkeit, sondern eine „specialized instruction to a specific group of Corinthian men" (168), welche ihrerseits die Vermeidung einer eschatischen Gefährung der Schwangeren und Gebärenden im Blick hat. In Kapitel 7 (169-191) werden die paulinischen Weisungen hinsichtlich der Scheidung insbesondere von religionsverschiedenen Mischehen (1 Kor 10-16) thematisiert und im Hinblick auf ihre – lebensweltlichen und spirituellen – „unintended consequences" (191) für die geschiedene christliche Frau kritisch betrachtet. Die Zusammenfassung (193-196) enthält eine Synthese der einzelnen Kapitel und unterstreicht die Relevanz der gewonnenen Einsichten für die Erfassung der übergreifenden Bedeutung der untersuchten Sinnabschnitte in 1 Kor 7,1-40 als Ausdruck der paulinische Wahrnehmung von Frauen und Geschlechterrelation vor dem Hintergrund der anbrechenden Endzeit.

Die lesenswerte Monographie bietet zahlreiche erhellende Einblicke in einen wesentlichen Bereich der Ekkesiologie und Ethik des Paulus und zeigt deren enge Zusammenhänge mit seinen eschatologischen Hoffnungen und Befürchtungen. Dabei werden eine Reihe von Fragestellungen und Hypothesen mit unterschiedlichen thematisch verbundenen Abschnitten des untersuchten Textes in Beziehung gesetzt, was immer wieder zu bedenkenswerten Befunden führt. G.s Rekonstruktion einer tendenziell monokausalen Herleitung der paulinischen Sexualethik erscheint mir zwar nicht durchgängig zwingend. Sie führt aber immer wieder zu innovativen und plausiblen exegetischen Analysen und historischen Interpretationen.

Michael Tilly, Tübingen

Shining, Phil/Epple, Nicol Michelle (eds.): *Exploring Sexuality and Spirituality: An Introduction to an Interdisciplinary Field*, Rodopi, 2021. – xviii, 405 p.

The codification of sexual conduct and the institutionalization of spiritual practices are witnessing an extreme polarization today. Contemporary readings claim that sexuality and spirituality are not distant strangers but are both innately good and worthy of celebrating. The book consistently attempts to explore the interconnectedness of these two areas. Its scholarly essays discuss the multiplicity of problematizations, exploring eroticism, inner spiritual cultivation, intimate relationships, gender empowerment, sex education, and ecstasy embodiments. Particular references to prehistoric art, sexually charged landscapes, queer theology, *antra*, the Song of Songs, *la petite mort*, asceticism, Hinduism, Taoism, and feminism witness to its rich content. The multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary methods portray a different style of writing.

The book contains five parts with two articles each, indicating an emerging academic field of study. The first part, "Natural Instincts", introduces, differentiates, and elaborates the inherent connection between sexuality and spirituality. It affirms that sexuality and spirituality are natural human desires. Awakening mind, sexual union, purified landscape, spiritual realization and animality, sexuality, and spirituality manifested in the prehistoric art are interconnected and are in constant flux with each other. They manifest a cosmotheandric principle that interconnects. The articles are a debut in the poetic dance between landscape's natural sexuality and life's sexual nature. The second part, "Religious Rapture", explores the dichotomization of eroticism and mysticism that religion led to rapture. The extensive interconnection between microcosm and macrocosm, and the spirituality of pleasure of Shavism and the Kula Tantra, reveal the spiritual dimension of the sexual relationship that affirms the creator's original intent.

The third part, "Alternative Ecstasy", analyses the complex relations between spirituality and religion established by people and communities. The queer and feminist perspectives add credit to the contributions and help to revisit the religious roots. The fourth part, "Taboo Challenges", focuses on the tensions that permeate the intents of integrating sexuality and spirituality. It analyzes the taboos that challenge modern society in contemporary lived experiences. It elaborates the relevance of Tantra as a competent component of sex education in intercultural societies in achieving union with the divine. Part five, "Limit-Experience Embodiments", connects the interdisciplinary research on sexual practices that potentially generates spiritual experiences. The limit-experience characterizes the dissolution of the frontiers between subject and object, moving from the desexualization of pleasure to self-transformation.

The book encompasses a variety of fields that vary from sacred to profane, sacred scripture to empirical experimentation, in-depth interviews to news reports, personal views to collective educational proposals, and contributions from lecturers to social activists, worshipers to psychonauts, celibates to sex masters, analysts to subversive poets. It takes the reader from anatomically modern human expressions to contemporary sexual and spiritual expressions, from the early notion of spirituality of animism to the spirituality of sacred sex, from the instinctive notion of sex and spirit to the fully formed experiences of sexuality and spirituality. The book does not leave a field untouched. The rich and vast multiplicity of the exploration shows that the interplay between sexuality and spirituality tells us about the complex web of transversal relations, intersections, and overlappings between the disciplines in which the central problematizations can get traced. Certainly, the book is more than a simple compendium of ideas on sexuality and spirituality.

Amid the plurality of thinking and its contradictions, the book attempts to present the best illustrative picture of sexuality and spirituality in all its depth and complexity. The volume will be highly effective for readers engaged in the integration of scholarly and practical knowledge, considering the relevance of the spirituality of pleasure of eastern philosophy to the western sexual tradition, which has a tendency to pose sexuality as being antagonistic to spiritual liberation. The book shatters the taboos of sexuality and attempts to find alternative solutions for a complex society. Parting from the ancient practices to the new age enriched ways of living, it affirms rescuing spirituality from the repressive forms of religions. The fragile and fleeting aspects of the society, here, become a strong and a sacred sign, subtle fibers of energy connecting to strong cords of energy.

In sum, the study tries to explore secular spirituality and the divine sexuality through their historical elements in occidental and oriental developments. In the present extreme polarization of sexuality and spirituality, the book situates itself in the middle, "in the between", as William Desmond claims, challenging one to move towards the other and both towards the Ultimate. The research intends a physical and spiritual rebirth, reintegrating the "between", between self and the landscape, between inner experience and the

infinite. It stands between western psychology and eastern spirituality. Finally, this volume could be called a queer book, which opens up space for an alternative thinking and society.

Jayaseelan Savariarpitchai, Rome

Salzman, Todd A./Lawler, Michael G.: *Sexual and Gender Doctrinal Language: A Source of Pain and Trauma in the Catholic Church*, Paulist, 2025. – xviii, 234 p.

The aims of the book are to make clear the connexions between abusive behaviour in the churches and the abusive doctrinal teachings that legitimize it (xvi-xvii), and to make appropriate proposals for doctrinal reform. It is a very necessary task, throughout the Christian churches.

Chapter 1 explores some of the foundations for reform including broadening the sources of ethical knowledge, the common good, a relational and holistic understanding of the person, human dignity, and solidarity with the sufferings of others, all inspired for Catholics by *Amoris laetitia*. Chapter 2 is a devastating analysis of trauma, co-authored with the Catholic feminist theologian Julia Feder, on the types and effects of religious trauma and spiritual abuse. The "Catholic language of sexual morality" actually "*inflicts* trauma on the Catholic faithful" (36, author's emphasis). "In the case of priestly ordination, doctrinal language that claims an 'ontological change' creates a culture of clericalism that enables sexual abuse and its cover-up." (39) This is explored in chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides positive accounts of the psychology and meanings of sexuality, critiques the pejorative use of the term "gender ideology", and replaces the natural/biological complementarity of the church with the authors' holistic version, expressed earlier in their *The Sexual Person* (2008), which justifies "just and loving sexual acts between people with a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual orientation" (89).

Chapter 5 explores abusive doctrinal language as it relates to *marital* sexual issues. The language forbidding contraception, further marriage without annulment, sexual intercourse among cohabitors, and (homologous) artificial reproductive technology (ART) is described, together with its trauma-producing effects among the faithful. These effects, born by the experience of the traumatised, greatly add to the weight of the revisionary arguments, rehearsed again throughout the book.

Chapter 6 calls for "a change in sexual doctrine" (116) as it impinges on and harms homosexual people in particular. Natural law arguments cannot be used against them because we now know that for lesbian and gay people same-sex love is natural. The recent doctrine of "heterosexual and reproductive complementarity" is comprehensively deconstructed; the *sensus fidelium* ("the moral sense of the Christian people" (127) is given due experiential and revelatory weight. People who are trans or have intersex conditions are presented on their own terms and in the light of medical and scientific advances, all of which show complementarity and the two-sex binary, assumed in most theological anthropology, is simply inadequate with regard to facts, and traumatic in its effects. "Doctrinal teachings on LGBTQI+ people alienate, cause trauma, and damage emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and relationally…" (134).

Chapter 7 exposes the idea of "not unjust discrimination" (135) in employment practices in Catholic institutions, and in proscribing same-sex parenting. A final chapter, "Women and Trauma in the Catholic Church" finds further fault with complementarity, not least that it guarantees forever the supremacy of men in its hierarchical scheme, and excludes women from the priesthood, causing them "great pain and trauma" (168).

The book admirably deploys revisionary arguments in its arguments for the development of doctrines about sex, sexuality, and gender, and also of the language – often harsh, cold, dogmatic, exclusive, judgmental, and inflexible – by which such doctrines are expressed. Sensitive use is made of Pope Francis's writings, especially *Amoris laetitia,* which clearly support reform but without altering the language of earlier texts. Whereas the arguments for change will be familiar to

readers caught up in interminable arguments about sex, what gives the book real power over others arguing for change is the consideration of the trauma-inducing consequences of conventional theological anthropology, and the elevation of experience, especially traumatic experience, among the sources of divine revelation. This is a courageous essay, easy to read. It will be a comfort to Christians (not just Catholics) traumatised by church teachings but to many Protestants too who are spiritually wounded by literalistic biblical interpretation, conversion therapy, and – if they are gay – compulsory celibacy.

Adrian Thatcher, Plymouth

Bloomer, Fiona/Turtle, Kellie (eds): *Reimagining Faith and Abortion: A Global Perspective*, Policy Press/Bristol University Press, 2024. – 199 p.

The global statistics on abortion presented in the book are staggering. There are 121 million unintended pregnancies annually, of which 61 percent end in abortion, totaling 73.3 million abortions annually. This corresponds to a global abortion rate of 39 abortions per 1000 women aged 15-49 years. 25.1 million abortions each year are unsafe, with 24.3 million (97 percent) of these in developing countries. In light of those statistics, and drawing on the experiences and academic backgrounds of eleven researchers from 8 countries in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist faiths, as well as religious and secular backgrounds, this book serves as a valuable resource for thoughtful and challenging reflection on faith, theology, abortion, language, and politics. It is also a book which starkly demonstrates the need for the lived experience of women and pregnant persons to be heard and taken seriously, their agency recognized and enabled. It is worth noting that editors Fiona Bloomer and Kellie Turtle "are neither religious scholars nor sociologists of religion, but rather scholars of abortion discourse, law and policy, working in a social science discipline that has not engaged at all with religious counter-narratives that challenge the dominant anti-abortion hegemony" (3).

Reading the contributions of people of different faiths makes clear that there exist various understandings of personhood and the prioritization of human value. These warrant examination and critical analysis. The majority of the articles are written from within a Christian perspective, simply because that is the hegemonic reality in the world. In the main, they hold a position which sees the fetus as having priority over the life of the pregnant person. Jews, on the other hand, hold the most liberal views on abortion of any faith group in the US (12). This raises questions as to whether and how legislation which prioritizes one theology over another may be imposed, through legislative texts, on people who sincerely and reflectively hold other theologies. And some of those legislative texts are severe. In Malawi, for example, anyone who assists a woman in securing an abortion can be jailed up to 14 years (82). Similarly, as our scientific understandings of human life in all its facets change, it becomes evident that there is a need for theological reflection on the development of doctrines, to keep doctrines coherent with our growing understandings. Despite seeming commitments to a separation of church and state, the languages of faith impact significantly on society. It becomes evident, then, that the issue of abortion cannot be solved without the religious institutions being involved in that resolution.

The book challenges the language used in speaking about abortion. It becomes evident that the terms used for decades, i.e. pro-choice, pro-life, anti-abortion, continue the polarization already extant in our social discourse. What is needed is to situate abortion in "the holistic context of social justice" (6), to enable conversations and listening to take place. The situation in Northern Ireland shows the value of one such change, where the use of the term "reproductive justice" has proved effective in moving minds and hearts to a space where justice can be determined on a case-by-case basis, with the pregnant person able to exercise real agency. It becomes evident, whether in the realm of secular

society or faith, that the experiences of women and pregnant people are, by and large, unheard, by default deemed of no value. In both contexts, it is almost exclusively men who determine and state how the situation of women, and especially of pregnant persons, is to be understood, and how they are to live. This book calls for change, to the point where women are able not just to speak but to be heard, their experiences, and their agency, valued. Working out how that may be done will not be easy, given that we each come to the task with our own backgrounds, contexts, and often fixed social and religious frameworks.

The tenor of the book is at times problematic. While, as already stated, there is real need for the involvement of religious institutions, there is seldom a hint of recognition that behind what appear to be even the most anachronistic doctrinal statements, there may be something of deep and ancient value which needs also to be heard, even if then updated. It is hard, without allowing for such deep hearing, "to bridge knowledge and understanding on abortion and religion within societies" (2). That concern is somewhat offset by two recognitions. These are that the aim "is not to dismiss sacred texts but to reread them in the light of the community of believers today" (25), and that "the exclusion of the faith sector from civil society attempts to enhance sexual reproductive health and rights is…not surprising, but simultaneously not sustainable if the aim is to work for comprehensive systemic change" (34). Unfortunately, even when there is recognition that the faith sector must be included, the general tenor is that its only way of inclusion is to jettison its doctrinal statements. Despite that concern, the book offers a real chance to reflect on our deeply held values, to seek ways to engage with others in deep listening, and to find together ways to move forward in justice. Two stand out. One is the 2005 work of the Church of Sweden, and its publication of *When Life Does Not Turn Out as Imagined*, on how the institution and its actors could handle and relate to abortion in the context of everyday life in ministry or pastoral care. (ch 4) The other is a study in Northern Ireland which "set out to explore how people of faith, who were prochoice, engaged with the issue of faith and abortion." (148) Its work is expanded on in chapters 10-12.

The book will challenge people of both the "my body, my choice" (179) and "anti-abortion/pro-life" persuasions. That it will result in a full change in hearts and minds is unlikely. What is more likely is that the former will be brought to a deeper and more reflective understanding of their position, enabling the opening to true dialogue, the latter brought to a place of less stable ground, of greater uncertainty, where exploration, discovery and new understanding may take place, and where the experiences of women and pregnant people will be recognized and upheld. These alone would be worthy results.

Ray Temmerman, Winnipeg

Ott, Kate: *Sex, Tech, and Faith: Ethics for a Digital Age*, Eerdmans, 2022. – xiv, 193 p.

In an age when digital innovation moves at lightning speed, often outpacing ethical reflection, this book steps in as a necessary and timely guide for anyone seeking to know the complex intersection of sexuality, technology, and Christian faith. This book is not just a theological inquiry but a pastoral and prophetic call to engage the digital world with wisdom, courage, and compassion. Structured in five chapters along with an introduction, the book tackles pressing issues such as digital pornography, dating apps, virtual intimacy, sex robots, and the digital manifestations of sexual violence. The introduction sets the tone for the book, highlighting how digital technologies are reshaping not only how we live but also how we love. These changes challenge traditional Christian sexual ethics, which has often been static, rules-based, and limited in its understanding of human sexuality. The author argues that to offer a meaningful Christian response, we need two things: a more inclusive, values-

based understanding of sexuality, and a solid grasp of digital literacy.

In the first chapter, the author unpacks the reality of digital pornography and its intersection with broader sexual cultures, ranging from sexting and erotica to body image and violence. Especially among youth, digital content not only shapes desires but also reinforces harmful norms, including racism, sexism, ableism, and heteronormativity. Yet, instead of simply condemning pornography, the author contrasts the degrading digital aspects with theological ones that affirm the body and human dignity. The second chapter shifts focus to online dating, hookups, and digital matchmaking. While these platforms have opened new paths for connection, they also raise questions about authenticity, embodiment, and the formation of moral knowledge in virtual spaces. The author wisely invites the Christian communities to explore how faith-informed sexual relationships can be nurtured amid ever-shifting digital terrains, where identity is fluid, communication is fast, and meaning-making is often fragmented. The third chapter is perhaps the most sobering chapter in the book. Here, the author exposes the dark side of sex tech: revenge porn, deepfake exploitation, sexual harassment in DMs, and abuse in VR environments. While the previous chapters touch on violence, this one dwells in it, offering a powerful theological and ethical reflection. Importantly, the author critiques the way some Christian traditions have normalized suffering, encouraging silence in the face of abuse. Faith communities are called not to endure violence but to confront it with clarity, courage, and care. In chapter four, the conversation turns to sexual experiences in immersive online spaces, where avatars and virtual personas engage in acts that evoke real emotional and physical responses. Far from being trivial or escapist, these experiences challenge us to rethink what intimacy means. The author claims that emotions, attachments, and desires formed in virtual reality are no less real and may even deepen our understanding of connection, vulnerability, and desire. The final chapter enters the emerging world of AI companions and sex robots. While such technologies may seem futuristic or even absurd, they reflect a very human longing for intimacy, touch, and connection. Some are created with altruistic intentions: to help those who struggle with social interaction, disability, or loneliness. Yet, they also raise profound ethical questions. The Christian tradition has often focused more on controlling behavior than nurturing affective needs. This chapter invites a shift in that paradigm. What if, instead of fearing AI, we imbued it with values that mirror our highest hopes rather than our basest instincts?

One of the book's strengths is its format. Each chapter presents a real-world issue, followed by theological reflections and scriptural engagement. It ends with discussion questions that encourage personal reflection and group conversation. The book does not offer easy answers, but it does offer better questions. These are questions that challenge, stretch, and deepen our understanding of what it means to be faithful in a digital age. The author's tone is both pastoral and prophetic: compassionate toward real human struggles, yet unafraid to critique systems of power, shame, and exclusion. This is not a book of abstract ideas. It is a book grounded in real lives, real desires, and the real need for ethical wisdom in a world that is often morally disoriented. Finally, *Sex, Tech & Faith* is more than a book; it is a companion for the journey of living faithfully in the midst of rapid digital change. It reminds us that sexuality is not just about rules but about values: mutuality, dignity, creativity, and love. It calls for a new kind of Christian ethics, one that is flexible, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the gospel's vision of justice and grace. In the words of Mihee Kim-Kort, this book is for anyone "who needs a guide for asking new and different questions in faithful ways". Whether you are a pastor, teacher, student, or simply a curious reader, *Sex, Tech & Faith* is a must-read. It will inform your mind, stir your heart, and perhaps even heal your faith.

Jayaseelan Savariarpitchai, Rome

Christian Life

Bourgue, Augustin: *Prier en famille, mission impossible? Petit guide pratique tiré de l'expérience des familles*, Éditions Emmanuel, 2022. – 180 p.

En lien direct avec l'approfondissement des doctrines sur le sacrement de mariage, des initiatives pastorales ont longuement insisté et promu des récollections de couples et la prière familiale. Des témoignages de saint(e)s ont valorisé l'importance de ce temps spirituel en famille, à la fois pour les enfants et pour les parents. Des pratiques et des «rituels» se sont développés. Ils ont renouvelé la grâce du mariage et fortifié les enfants dans la croissance de leur foi. Prier en famille, c'est accomplir une des missions familiales. Cependant la prière familiale au fil des années change de visage avec les enfants qui naissent, qui grandissent, qui veulent marquer leur différence. Comment s'adapter aux âges et aux évolutions? Quelle méthode employer et quels conseils judicieux faut-il suivre?

Prêtre du diocèse de Paris, l'auteur a travaillé avec 60 familles selon une méthode à la fois pratique et concrète. Il cherche à cerner la réalité pour en évoquer quelques conséquences stimulantes pour tous et opérer ainsi une réflexion théologique sur la prière. Un questionnaire détaillé a été envoyé à ces nombreuses familles aux profils variés et aux sensibilités liturgiques différentes. Les thématiques sont ensuite rassemblées et organisées de manière réflexive: Pourquoi prier en famille (1)? Où, quand, comment et avec qui les familles prient-elles (2)? Quelles sont les difficultés les plus fréquentes et les solutions trouvées (3)? Comment la prière familiale rejoint-elle le rythme du temps liturgique (4)? Le dernier chapitre évoque l'influence des événements familiaux sur la prière ensemble: joies, deuils, temps forts, anniversaire de mariage, épreuves et maladies (5). Dans chaque chapitre des phrases tirées de l'enquête ponctuent la démarche: cela rend la lecture vivante et souvent rapide d'application.

Comme toute prière, se tourner ensemble vers Dieu fortifie les cœurs et mène à Jésus. Les membres de la famille se donnent ainsi la main pour se conduire mutuellement vers le Créateur et le Sauveur. Ces «mots» difficiles deviennent proches pour les petits et les grands en la personne de Jésus. Prier est possible grâce à l'Esprit reçu au baptême et dans tous les sacrements: la prière est un lieu d'accueil de la présence divine et en même temps un lieu d'apprentissage de cette présence. Comment Lui parler sinon par les mots de la Bible et ceux que prononcent nos proches? L'égale dignité des membres de la famille permet à chacun de vivre le chemin de sainteté initié au baptême. Les parents et leurs enfants s'évangélisent réciproquement. Ils témoignent de l'action divine dans la vie ordinaire: une communion s'établit et grandit. La famille devient une véritable «cellule de base»: une *ecclesiola* qui se développe «en âge et en sagesse». Cette prière est un lieu et un temps privilégiés pour partager des intentions, s'encourager l'un l'autre, vivre le pardon. La mémoire familiale est vivante et l'intercession assume les détresses connues et proches, et celles que le monde éprouve. Pour l'auteur, la famille qui prie n'est pas une famille parfaite, mais une famille qui accueille et tend vers la sainteté. Il rappelle l'exemple profond de la «sainte famille» de Nazareth, même dans les incompréhensions de Marie et de Joseph. L'épisode de Jésus au Temple à 12 ans est riche d'enseignements. «Une famille chrétienne n'est pas une famille parfaite, mais une famille qui accueille le réel comme il est, sûr que le Seigneur l'attend là et qu'il lui donnera, par sa grâce, d'en faire une occasion d'aimer et de porter un fruit abondant. Une famille chrétienne, une 'sainte famille', est une famille qui trouve sa vérité sous le regard de Dieu, qui place toutes ses relations…et tous ses projets sous son amour, en demeurant ouverte à l'œuvre de l'Esprit Saint en chacun.» (40) Plus qu'un rite supplémentaire, la prière en famille est une disposition de cœur vécue en vérité entre «enfants d'un même père» qui n'ont pas le même âge!

Le chapitre 2 se centre sur le «comment faire» cette prière. Toute la créativité des témoignages des parents consultés s'y déploie pour le plus grand bonheur des lecteurs. Quel

sera le rythme de ces rencontres à la maison ou bien d'une prière durant un voyage ou en vacances ? La symbolique du matin et du soir est bien rendue. Un exemple de déroulement est proposé, mais l'auteur tient à la fois à dire l'enjeu d'un minimum de ritualité (signe de la croix, lecture d'une parole) et nous indique qu'il n'y a pas de modèle et qu'il faut s'abstraire de l'usage d'un Kit prière. D'ailleurs la prière familiale est une prière souvent «bousculée». Nous ne sommes pas dans un monastère et les difficultés ne tardent à survenir. Le chapitre 3 est réaliste et incontournable pour éviter de rêver la prière ou de la formaliser à outrance. Chacun doit viser à prier «pour de vrai», avec les enfants: les parents ne sont pas des animateurs, mais qu'ils prient avec leurs mots aussi ou bien en reprenant les grandes prières des saints de l'Église. Faire naître une certaine discipline du silence, de l'écoute, du recueillement est tout un travail qui passe par le chant, la position du corps, ce qui peut concentrer l'attention visuelle de tous: icones, statues, photos. Les bougies ont leur place, mais pour honorer une présence et non pas pour jouer. L'expérience montre qu'il faut soigner la préparation de la prière et régler la participation des enfants: donner la parole à chacun. Croire en l'Esprit qui met sur les lèvres des plus petits des affirmations imprévues et étonnantes. L'ennui n'est pas un adversaire du goût de prier si l'on pense enrichir les rencontres des apports de l'année liturgique. A chaque grande Fête (Toussaint, Noël, Pâques …), l'attente est joyeuse et se sert de signes différents qui mènent au grand mystère (chapitre 4) vers lequel on chemine en Église. Ne faut-il pas du temps pour faire route avec Marie et Joseph et arriver avec eux à Bethléem pour la naissance du Sauveur?

Cette prière est traversée aussi par les événements liés à la famille élargie et aux soucis d'un peuple: anniversaire d'un membre, anniversaire de mariage et de baptême, premiers sacrements, santé, violences, guerres (chapitre 5). Ces lumières permettent de porter ensemble certaines obscurités de la vie: tensions et jalousies, maladies, accidents, décès des proches. Le livre se termine en évoquant des rituels plus élaborés: la place de la liturgie des heures, les bénédictions, l'écoute de la Parole de Dieu, les neuvaines. Des sessions adaptées et des pèlerinages seront des apports nouveaux pour la prière de chaque famille. La construction de cette «petite Église» que sont les époux dès le premier instant du mariage, prend du temps et ne peut se passer d'une prière régulière. Ce livre élabore une théologie pastorale en acte: il est suggestif et fera du bien aux lecteurs (trices).

Alain Mattheeuws, Namur

Brügger, Tobias: *The Christian Body at Work: Spirituality, Embodiment and Christian Living*, Nomos, 2021. – 375 p.

Tobias Brügger's book is a dissertation accepted at the University of Zurich, and it evidences both the positives and the negatives of a dissertation. The positives include a creative theological argument, well-supported by modern theological and sociological citations, offering more than the usual pablum of the influence and manifestation of Christian faith in the workplace. The negatives are the underside of that, an argument so dense, and at times sidetracked by the overabundance of supporting citations, that it is difficult to follow. The lack of an index, which would enable researchers in the field to mine more easily the extensive data provided in the book, is a major negative. The data discussed and the conclusions drawn from it focus on Christian managers in business contexts in Switzerland, but it can readily be applied to broader work contexts.

The book is about faith, spirituality, and religion in the workplace, symbolized throughout as "fsw". B. offers a broad discussion of whether and how the terms faith, spirituality, and religion are related, and how Christian existence is embodied in work settings. In this analysis, he considers three separate data sets: relevant research on "fsw" and theological approaches to work, empirical data on Christian managers, and literature that both explores and accentuates the embodied character of Christian existence. He makes a distinction that is crucial throughout between the term *Christian* and

the terms *faith*, *spirituality*, and *religion*. While the latter terms refer to things, the former refers to people who profess an allegiance to Jesus the Christ, and this allegiance is the primary criterion for applying the term Christian to them. The concepts of body and embodiment have become critical in recent studies of Christians at work, and B. argues that any description of the embodiment of Christians at work must have substantial similarities to a Christian incarnational account of existence. The Christian tradition holds that the historical person Jesus, called the Christ, is the embodiment of God in human form. There is an ongoing aspect to that tradition that insists that Jesus is now embodied in history in those who belong to him. Their bodies are members of Christ (1 Cor 6), and they are members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12). In incarnational terms, *Christian* living involves all that the Christian does, including work. B. explores this notion in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

In chapter 5, he first complains about the theological neglect of work settings and then discusses a selection of accounts that theologically examine them. Some analyses offer a Christian theological approach but ignore belonging to Christ as the real existential situation in which a Christian perspective on work is actually embedded. B. dubs any approach that considers Christian existence but does not show how a Christian mode of existence may be embodied in contemporary work settings a lame approach. He draws upon C.S. Lewis's understanding of Christian living and Anthony Kelly's work on ongoing incarnation to propose how the personal concept *Christian* can carve out a space in which key theological, Christological, anthropological, and ethical perspectives can be brought to bear on how *Christians* live their lives in general and their work lives in particular. In chapter six, B. proposes in detail that the remedy to the lameness of many approaches to the question of Christians at work can be found by focusing on the personal concept *Christian* and recovering its existential aspects. He sketches the formation of the Christian body at work and argues for the identification of the many individual Christian bodies with the one body of Christ. He also uses scenes of Christians at work to outline the dynamics of Christian living in present day work settings. He offers a picture of the formation of the Christian body at work and how the concept of *Christian* can provide a conceptual locus where crucial theological, Christological, anthropological, and ethical considerations with regard to work meet and make sense. Ethical or moral considerations inevitably enter into the discussion of Christians in work settings, and B. complains about a tendency to reduce these considerations to ethical or moral aspects and to ignore the more constitutive features of Christian living. It is one thing, he argues, to explore the ethical dimension of the religion-work relationship, but quite another thing to reduce the relationship to its ethical or moral dimensions. Ethics is existentially embedded, he argues, in being a Christian, and Christians behave ethically at work, and everywhere else, by living and acting out the presence of Christ that they embody.

This is an insightful and useful book for Christians seeking to live out not only their work lives but also their everyday lives. I recommend it to them. It is not an easy read, but it will be a fruitful read for those interested and brave enough to face it.

Michael G. Lawler, Omaha, NE

Cruciani, Maria/Persiani, Mario: *L'abito e la lampada: Due sposi leggono le parabole delle nozze*, Cittadella, 2023 (Tra Bibbia & Psicologia). – 230 p.

Il volume appartiene alla collana Tra Bibbia & Psicologia e intende offrire una lettura delle due parabole evangeliche dette *delle nozze* (la parabola del banchetti nuziale di Mt 22,2-13 e quella dell'attesa dello sposo di Mt 25,1-13), collocandole all'interno delle usanze matrimoniali ebraiche e rileggendole in traporto alle sfide contemporanee per i coniugi. L'elemento di congiunzione utilizzato per mettere in rapporto questi due contesti è il rapporto dei coniugi con le due

famiglie di origine: come le nozze giudaiche erano veri e propri riti familiari, così anche oggi va posta attenzione al "ruolo delle famiglie di origine nella nuova famiglia che si va a costituire" (40). Va rilevato, però, che questo aspetto, che è dichiarato essere ciò su cui si intende "focalizzare" (40) il lavoro, sembra venir meno nelle pagine successive, nell'analisi della due parabole. Anche quando, per presentare il matrimonio oggi, vengono esposti gli strumenti offerti da un Consultorio Familiare di Roma, solo alcuni percorsi formativi presentati sono inerenti al tema delle famiglie di origine (52-59), mentre altri, pur interessanti, toccano altri temi, quali il lavoro, la malattia, la convivenza, i figli, il sacramento (57-82). Il volume si muove, così, tra le parabole e la loro esegesi, la lettura fatta da una coppia di sposi, la loro esperienza come accompagnatori di coppie, elementi di psicologia della famiglia e le attività proposte dal Consultorio familiare di riferimento. Si tratta, pertanto, di un'esperienza pastorale riflessa a partire da studi psicologici e della consulenza familiare.

Il contributo di maggior rilievo del volume è dato dallo sguardo di una coppia nell'esegesi delle due parabole sulle nozze. L'esegesi si mostra ampia e ben fondata (come l'ampia bibliografia consultata lo dimostra), con lo scopo esplicito di superare qualsiasi lettura allegorica che non riesce a cogliere lo specifico registro parabolico. A tal fine, il verbo "simboleggiare" molto presente nell'esegesi della seconda parabola (ad es. 171; 172) non sembra del tutto adeguato all'esegesi offerta; così come le espressioni "il messaggio della parabola", "il messaggio per l'oggi", che rischiano di ridurre la portata dell'esegesi proposta. La lettura delle due parabole evangeliche prese in considerazione (quella dell'abito nuziale e l'altra, delle dieci vergini) ha, comunque, il merito di mettere in rilievo proprio l'aspetto specifico delle nozze, che, secondo gli autori, "la riflessione cristiana non sembra aver messo sino ad oggi sufficientemente" in luce (12), quando, invece, tale "immagine non appare affatto secondaria nei due racconti matteani". L'interpretazione che i due sposi autori fanno dei due testi evangelici, oltre alla prima parte esegetica, è costituita da una serie di riflessioni che attingono principalmente alla psicologia e all'esperienza di accompagnamento di coppie nella pastorale familiare, riuscendo in questo modo a focalizzare sull'aspetto delle nozze stesse. È qui che emerge, però, anche l'aspetto di maggior debolezza, ossia il rapporto tra esegesi biblica, esperienza di coppia e consulenza familiare, ovvero tra esegesi e "elementi della realtà sponsale umana" (180). Una parola sembra indicarne l'articolazione proposta: "accostamento". Tale termine, assieme ai suoi derivati (accostare, accostato), è collocato nei punti di passaggio tra l'esegesi di brani in questione e lo sguardo alla realtà nuziale e il contributo della psicologia (135, 146, 147, 180, 190), così come tre volte nelle due pagine della conclusione (195-196). Tale articolazione non appare adeguatamente fondata o approfondita, lasciando al lettore l'interrogativo se, di fatto, gli elementi non siano davvero semplicemente giustapposti l'uno all'altro. D'altro canto, si capisce bene che chi scrive ha alle spalle un'ampia esperienza pastorale di accompagnamento di coppie ed è, forse, proprio questo approccio pratico che permette agli autori di far risuonare tra loro esperienza e parola biblica, frutto di una lunga frequentazione sia della vita coniugale che della Scrittura, offrendo connessioni suggestive tra esse.

Francesco Pesce, Roma

Pesce, Francesco: *Amare per credere: La fede cristiana alla prova delle relazioni*, San Paolo, 2023. – 160 p.

In *Amare per credere*, Francesco Pesce, presidente del Centro della Famiglia di Treviso, parte dalla premessa che "siamo fatti di relazioni" per invitare il lettore a "contemplare Cristo vivo presente in tante storie d'amore" (25). Secondo P., la fede cristiana si colloca nella sfera relazionale dell'umano, dove il Risorto ci viene incontro. In questo senso, il libro "intende indagare l'esperienza di fede come *affare di relazioni*" (17), alla luce della vita familiare e seguendo la logica dell'*Amoris laetitia* (AL). Una tale riflessione

è alimentata da piccole frasi e brevi citazioni di persone che l'autore ha incontrato nel contesto del suo ministero in quanto teologo e pastore. Nei primi due capitoli cardine, P. getta uno sguardo fondamentale sull'esperienza dell'amore familiare. Il primo capitolo tratta il rapporto tra "relazioni umane ed esperienza credente". Nel secondo capitolo si scopre "l'azione del Risorto dentro le relazioni" alla luce della *Deus caritas est* di Benedetto XVI, per *allargare i confini dell'amore*. Seguono quattro capitoli che trattano ambiti di vita in cui si dispiega il legame tra le relazioni e la fede: nel capitolo terzo, protagoniste sono le coppie durante la preparazione al matrimonio; nel capitolo quarto, si esaminano i vari riti familiari; nel capitolo quinto, è trattata la Settimana Santa durante il *lockdown*; mentre, nel capitolo sesto, l'esperienza di fede delle persone "nella terza età".

Il libro avvia una riflessione molto interessante sulla ritualità nel contesto culturale contemporaneo (cap. 4), ed offre pagine molto suggestive sul ruolo delle persone anziane nelle comunità di fede (cap. 6). A proposito della preparazione al matrimonio, l'autore ricerca percorsi che integrino la fede come una *risorsa per le coppie in cammino*, "a partire dalla situazione in cui si trovano", superando la tendenza pastorale di presentare una certa "idea di fede" come se essa fosse "l'unico ingrediente del matrimonio" (68), senza, cioè, prendere sul serio il rilievo antropologico, relazionale, sessuale, sociale ed economico del percorso di ogni coppia. L'importante è permettere alle coppie di scoprire la dimensione spirituale del loro amore verso un cammino di fede possibile all'interno del loro vivere insieme. È come se le coppie scoprissero "una terza presenza" in mezzo a loro che ne custodisca l'amore e ne allarghi i confini. Spetta, poi, alle comunità cristiane testimoniare "che il Signore è interessato al loro amore e che desidera entrare e cenare con loro", partecipando all'intimità della loro vita coniugale e familiare (74-75).

Un punto di forza evidente del libro è l'originalità e la rilevanza del suo approccio: mettere, cioè, in prima fila i racconti di vita familiare come fonte principale, a partire dai quali riflettere teologicamente sul legame tra amore e fede. In questo senso, P. mette in atto, attraverso questo testo, la dinamica della fede cristiana che, secondo lui, "fa uscire la Chiesa stessa a fare i conti con la quotidianità delle famiglie, riconoscendola come terreno nobile per la vita di fede e per la teologia, per camminare insieme" (129). Così facendo, il libro intende far assaporare al lettore la vicenda delle famiglie nel contesto contemporaneo. L'autore riesce a ben contestualizzare il suo discorso a livello storico, culturale e religioso, secondo l'attualità dell'Italia odierna, riferendosi anche alla situazione della pandemia dovuta al Covid-19. Uno sviluppo ulteriore sarebbe quello di intraprendere un approccio simile anche in altri ambiti culturali, affinché questo ricco metodo non sia limitato al solo contesto italiano. Pertanto, sarebbe utile che ci fosse una maggiore spiegazione della metodologia insita nel testo. Attraverso veri racconti familiari, l'autore concretizza le intuizioni presentate nel magistero di papa Francesco, in particolare nell'AL, ma anche nella *Fratelli tutti* (2020) e nella *Desiderio desideravi* (2022). Sarebbe interessante fare un collegamento con la *Laudato si'* (2015), ed anche con il magistero di Giovanni Paolo II. In effetti, tanti aspetti di questo libro troverebbero una bella risonanza con ciò che viene scritto nella *Lettera alle famiglie* (1994), in particolare nella sezione intitolata "Lo Sposo è con voi" (18-23). Il libro conclude aprendosi ad un bell'orizzonte ecclesiologico, parlando di "Una Chiesa che sa di casa", mettendo, così, a fuoco la relazionalità nelle comunità cristiane e, suggerendo "alcune conseguenze per l'agire della Chiesa" (17). L'autore fornisce anche punti suggestivi che meritano un maggiore sviluppo. Senz'altro, un libro intero potrebbe essere dedicato agli argomenti introdotti dentro il testo di P.

Insomma, il libro nella sua interezza, è una lampada per le coppie, per le famiglie, per la pastorale famigliare, nonché per la teologia della famiglia, presentando in modo leggibile, ma anche profondo, tante luci per orientare ed illuminare la "spiritualità familiare". Con il suo metodo ed i suoi contenuti, P. mostra come la fibra spirituale delle famiglie, che trova le sue radici nell'esperienza dell'amore

familiare, si dispiega "dentro i ritmi della vita quotidiana, con semplicità ed anche spontaneità, si alimenta delle relazioni, segnate da tensioni di crescita e da momenti di stagnazione, chiede la partecipazione di tutti, è caratterizzata dall'essere e dal far insieme, [ed] ha come orizzonte il mondo intero, per imparare ad 'abitare oltre i limiti della propria casa' (AL 276)" (128-129).

Julian Paparella, Ontario