

century writings. Most of Zerbe's essays end with helpful concluding reflections. The beginning introduction supplies enticing incentives for the reader to join this scholar both to discover "a vital framework for understanding Paul's apostolic letters" and to reflect on "the contemporary implications of his legacy" (2). A succinct concluding essay would have demonstrated the writer's penultimate answers to difficult questions raised by his wrestling with Paul.

A careful reading of *Citizenship* will benefit my students attempting to assess Paul's credibility when offering pastoral guidance for congregations, including people not protected by an imperial safety net. Any student of Paul's letters will find in this book a rich theological resource for contemplating how affiliation with Messiah's global community will inevitably lead to confrontation with other political entities claiming the ultimate allegiance of their citizens.

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*Instead of Atonement: The Bible's Salvation Story and Our Hope for Wholeness.* By Ted Grimsrud. Eugene, Ore: Cascade Books. 2013. Pp. 270.

In his recent book, Ted Grimsrud challenges the common understanding of Jesus' death as a sacrificial atonement, believing that this view provides ideological cover for a retributive orientation in the contemporary world. Instead, he describes the "Bible's core salvation story" as based on God's love and mercy rather than divine wrath or impersonal scales of justice. Framed with a critique of the contemporary criminal justice system, his book argues for a shift away from violence in both biblical interpretation and the contemporary world.

Grimsrud introduces the book by describing the "popular meaning" of atonement as a "sacrificial payment that makes salvation possible" (3). Linking atonement to God's impersonal holiness that requires punishment to satisfy God's aggrieved honor or balance the scales of cosmic justice (7, 21), Grimsrud seeks to step behind post-biblical theology to replace the "logic of retribution" with a "logic of mercy" by focusing on salvation, since the latter "was made possible by God's mercy *instead of atonement*" (46; added emphasis). Despite its title, the book focuses more on violence than atonement in light of his base conviction that "God's will does not ever include violence" (21-22).

In the opening section, Grimsrud provides an overview of the Old Testament story, describing a positive role of law, an understanding of sacrifice, and the "message of key prophets," culminating in Jesus' teaching as consistent expressions of God's love and self-initiated mercy (23-88).

In the second part, Grimsrud argues that the significance of Jesus' death lies not in the necessity of its sacrificial atonement, but rather in the exposure of the worldly "Powers": the Pharisees' "cultural exclusivism"; the temple's "religious institutionalism"; and the Roman Empire's "political authoritarianism" (89-185). Grimsrud sees Jesus' life as a continuation of the Old Testament salvation story that exposes appeals to violence, sacred and otherwise, as a sham. Jesus' resurrection, then, reflects God's vindication of his life and message, and a repudiation of the idolatrous claims of these "Powers." Latter chapters argue that

Paul and Revelation also reflect a "restorative" rather than "retributive" mode (186-225).

Finally, the conclusion reiterates Grimsrud's focus on the Bible's "core message of mercy," briefly acknowledging that biblical material is "diverse" and "messy" on this topic while explaining why he sidelines so-called "pro-violence" biblical elements (233-236). The book ends with a brief contrast between retributive and restorative justice in the contemporary criminal justice system and an appeal for the latter "peacemaking approach" as more consistent with the Bible's salvation story.

Grimsrud adds to ongoing discussion among Anabaptist writers regarding how to deal with violence in the Bible and as justified by contemporary Christians (see recent work by Eric Seibert, J. Denny Weaver, Tom Yoder-Neufeld, et al.). He helpfully articulates a positive view of law as a gift and insists that Jesus' life proves more than simply a preamble to his death. The book is geared toward a broad readership and written in an accessible style, though there are consistently distracting stylistic issues.

While I strongly resonate with Grimsrud's commitment to nonviolence, insistence on the ongoing significance of Jesus' life and teaching, and critique of the contemporary criminal justice system, his book reflects several persistent and interrelated difficulties.

First, while he seeks to move behind postbiblical theology, Grimsrud provides inadequate discussion of the key biblical concepts related to his topic. While he defines *atonement* as it is commonly (mis)used today (3), he spends little attention on its biblical use; in contrast to 100+ pp. on Jesus, he passes over Leviticus and its scriptural basis for atonement in three (44-46). While Grimsrud provides his own definition for *salvation* as "restoration of harmony with God" (7) he does not acknowledge that *yeshu'ah* (in Hebrew) connotes military victory commonly linked to depictions of God as a warrior and judging king (Ex. 14:13-4; 15:1-3; Is. 59:16-19; Ps. 98), with the related verb *save* (*yasha'*) often tied to divine or human violence (Ex. 14:30; Jud. 2:16; 2 Sam. 22). Similarly, where he immediately identifies *salvation* as synonymous with *shalom* (peace) (1-2) and so dismisses a link between God and either violence or retribution (22), Grimsrud does not recognize that the basic meaning of the root *sh-l-m* lies in the restoring of equilibrium, often through (re)payment, requital, or retribution (Ex. 22; Is. 59:18; Jer. 51:6; Ps. 137:8).

Second, Grimsrud repeatedly contrasts a retributive (i.e., violent), impersonal view of God with a personal, restorative one focused on God's love and mercy. He does not, however, expand upon *hesed* (love/mercy) as loyalty that *prompts* judgment in light of violated covenant; neither the blessings or curses (Deut. 28-29) nor the results of violating ethical and ritual holiness (Lev. 15:31; 18:25-28) appear in his discussion of the Torah. Where he portrays mercy rather than judgment as the basic scriptural paradigm, he does not adequately recognize that these two are necessarily connected, since mercy presupposes judgment that decides to *forgo* punishment.

Third, Grimsrud's focus on the "main storyline" of the Bible (24) proves highly selective, avoiding elements that conflict with his perspective. For

instance, he emphasizes Exodus without noting its underlying view of God as a warrior (33); the Israelites' establishment in "the promised land" as part of "God's healing strategy" with no mention of divine or human violence (29-30; Joshua does not appear in the Scripture index); and the prophets' future hope while downplaying their extensive depiction of God's judgment, often as a "figure of speech" or "rhetoric" (36, 54, 58). Despite his insistence on continuity between Old Testament and New, Grimsrud neglects to mention Old Testament precedents for the "day of the LORD" in Romans (193) or the handing over of vengeance to God in the New Testament books he discusses (Rom. 12:19; Rev. 6:10). Even when Grimsrud discusses Jesus' "parable of the vineyard," oddly portraying the vineyard as the temple rather than the people (104; cf. Is. 5:1-7), he avoids its strong retributive judgment motif or the significant continuity between Jesus' teaching and the Old Testament on this topic. Finally, Grimsrud does not discuss Hebrews, the New Testament book that perhaps most thoroughly draws upon atonement language to depict Jesus' significance.

Fourth, Grimsrud provides a simplistic, synchronic reading of the Gospels. While he does so to appeal to "the common Christian reader" (69), the effect is that he does not take into account the rhetoric of the New Testament itself. Most striking, while Grimsrud notes that Jesus is a "partisan in a debate among Jews" (117), he repeatedly depicts the Pharisees among "the Powers" as legalistic, committed to "cultural exclusivism," "twisting Torah," focused on "external details," and the like (111-129); his critique of the Pharisees' attempt to "apply Torah more widely" (117) rings particularly hollow in light of his positive view of the Sermon on the Mount (114), where Jesus also drastically expands the law's reach. In his portrayal of the Pharisees, Grimsrud reiterates the very stereotypes that have historically prompted Christian violence against Jews, with prominent scholars who have written extensively and accessibly on Jesus and the Pharisees failing to appear (Jacob Neusner, A.J. Levine, Bruce Chilton, et al.).

Finally, for most of the book Grimsrud emphasizes the historical nature of salvation (29) as well as God's ability and willingness to intervene in history (38), most decisively in Jesus' resurrection (175-177). At the end, however, Grimsrud adopts an opposite, "materialistic" understanding of history as reflecting the "natural consequences" of a "natural and impersonal process" in order to insulate God from judgment (235), a move that seems to undercut his previous argument.

To conclude: within a few pages it becomes clear that atonement functions as little more than a foil for violence, which is the central concern of this book. Indeed, while Grimsrud identifies the "life and teaching of Jesus" as his hermeneutical key (23), his avoidance and downplaying of judgment motifs in the Gospels suggests that nonviolence rather than Jesus provides his interpretive center. In the end, Grimsrud's concern to "construct an understanding of salvation that has no need for violence" (19, added emphasis) trumps his claim to describe "how the Bible itself presents salvation" (24). His dual claims that "we do *not* find an atonement model in this story" (233; his emphasis) and that Jesus' death "adds nothing" to a biblical view of salvation (74, 82, 86, 233) exaggerate a selective counterreading, and in doing so mimic the very type of universalized

claim he sets out to debunk. In the end, this book may unfortunately harden opposition to the ongoing significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that Grimsrud seeks to promote.

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*Living Faith: Embracing God's Callings.* By Keith Graber Miller. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2012. Pp. 126. \$12.95.

In *Living Faith*, Keith Graber Miller encourages careful conversations about a "contemporary Christian theology of vocation from a Mennonite perspective" (77). This book provides the historical and current resources necessary for those conversations, as well as a helpful discussion framework to guide them. His thesis is that "sixteenth-century Anabaptists and twenty-first-century North American Mennonites do share some theological and ethical continuity in terms of their vocational experience" (76). Each group has taken seriously the challenge of living out its faith by following Jesus while engaging in various occupational, professional, and societal roles.

Graber Miller provides background to the subject of vocation and calling in the first four chapters of this book. He describes "how vocation or calling have been understood in the Christian tradition" (30) and provides accounts of calling in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In this section he identifies the evolution and changing perceptions of calling and vocation. Graber Miller describes this process beginning with a description of the understanding of call as a "member of the people of God" combined with (according to some) a call to a specific position or kind of work. He describes a narrowing of the understanding of Christian vocation in the early fourth century; the term vocation applied only to those with a "sacred calling or vocation" who occupied "official leadership roles in the church" (34). The sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther challenged this position and encouraged a broader understanding of vocation and call to recognize that "the everyday worldly activity of everyone in the priesthood of believers has religious significance" (39). The section ends with a discussion of the perspectives of early Anabaptists related to vocation and call. According to Graber Miller, these perspectives held that Anabaptists should occupy a more constrained range of occupational involvements than that advocated by the reformers. Anabaptists rejected occupational roles involving violence or coercion, participation in political activities, and engagement in many forms of economic activities because they exploited or harmed others in ways that violated their understanding of discipleship.

That historical perspective provides a helpful foundation for the next three chapters, which describe issues of vocation and calling that have been more recently engaged by Anabaptists. In some cases, these perceptions and practices have changed over time. For example, Graber Miller refers to work by Wally Kroeker of Mennonite Economic Development Associates that describes an evolving understanding that "money is a tool for potential good," and that