

as the Voice of the Exiles and Constructor of Exilic Ideology,” *HUCA* 76 [2005]:1–45). What is remarkable about their attitude toward sacred writings in a time of crisis is that instead of questioning their validity when things did not happen as they expected, they immersed themselves in the words they believed were from God and struggled with their difficulties. In a moment of crisis God said, “Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll” (Ezek 3:3 NASB). Many struggling Christians today are trying to find divine direction for their lives by listening to sermons which may or may not be biblically grounded. Graves in his book gave us a glimpse of how early Christians filled their minds with God’s word, and this can be a reminder for modern-day Christians to do the same.

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Higton, Mike, and Jim Fodor, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology*. New York: Routledge, 2015. xii + 450 pp. Hardcover, \$240.00.

The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology is different from other books on theological methodology focusing on scientific principles, rules, and procedures. Instead, it characterizes as a practice shaped by a community which sets canons of excellence for theological activity. The editors—Mike Higton, professor of theology and ministry at Durham University; and Jim Fodor, professor of theology and ethics at St. Bonaventure University—together with twenty-one other contributing authors, have provided a useful text that feels like tips from experienced theologians to a new generation of practitioners in training. The *Companion* maps a variety of virtues in terms of practices that have bearing on what makes one a good practitioner of theology. In this way, it brings virtuous and pragmatic insights to the components of the quadrilateral—reason, scripture, tradition, and experience—without the further claim of ordering, balancing, or prioritizing the relationship between these sources (5).

Part I has six chapters and is devoted to “Reason” taken as a social activity seeking for a settlement in an ongoing, iterative, unpredictable negotiation (10). In order to be theological, this negotiation takes into consideration the subject matter of theology—God—and theology’s continuous revising of human speech about him in the light of the interaction between the Christian church and other secular constituencies. The concern at the outset is to use many different forms of theological language (e.g., sermons, orations, novels, systematic treatment, and even silence) to portray a higher-order world of meaning that is connected to the bodily experience of the reasoner (24). It progresses to a portrayal of practicing theological argumentation in times when there is a plurality of traditions and authorities with the goal of identifying the ontology (description of reality) and logic (rules of inferences) assumed in the structure of the argument. This analysis will enable clarity in engaging many conversations within a tradition or in the public square.

The five chapters in part 2 on “Scripture” are devoted to devotional, theological, political, and literal/figurative readings of Scripture that pivot on the present time while relating to readings pivoting on historical-critical reconstructions of the past and receptions in the tradition of the church. This section seeks to retrieve the validity of liturgical readings (133) and political judgments (160). Also, it demonstrates how Scripture is used and abused in authorizing theological proposals and, at the same time, enables individuals to participate in the subject matter of Scripture (spirituality). Then, it provides a helpful taxonomy on different aspects of the nature of Scripture that maps four different theological realms; namely, principles, images, testimony, and data (149). The chapter on “The Literal Sense and the Senses of Scripture” is of interest in relation to the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief on creation, inasmuch as the chapter examines the theological language used in the creation and flood narratives according to patristic and medieval exegesis. The argument urges the avoidance of naïve literalism toward a literal sense that also has a spiritual sense (186). It often, in my view, neglects the possibility that these ancient texts may refer to external reality (ontology) in their own Hebrew way. Hence, the controls of interpretation were separated from the text itself and put in the hands of the church.

Part 3 is composed of seven chapters on “Tradition.” This part holds the view that since theology is always written in a specific tradition, it is necessary to know the fixed points and structure of the conversation for its continuation. This engagement with tradition is conditioned to the attitude of the community of faith. At times, some classic texts, creeds, and confessions may receive recognition and authority by the community. At other times, some traditions may be questionable and unethical. In both situations, the practitioner has to identify and expose the traits of the tradition instead of dispensing the engagement. The chapter “Engaging with the Contemporary Church” does systematic ecclesiology by investigating two incongruencies between the empirical and doctrinal levels of ecclesiology. The first is the dissonance between its own doctrinal coherence and its reality. This method of diagnosis is helpful in the field of applied theology, with a fresh approach for problem-solving and intervention in response to ecclesiological problems (283). The second kind of external dissonance occurs between traditions. The author, after surveying what has been called “ecumenical winter,” suggests a new kind of “reparative receptive ecumenical learning” that focuses on the exchange of experiences of suffering in one’s tradition and possible solutions from a different tradition (288).

The last and longest section, part 4, with eight chapters, is devoted to the many ways in which the practice of Christian theology may appeal to “Experience.” At the outset, this part emphasizes experience as an epistemological category open to the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Then, it shifts to the theological practice of conceptualizing and acting against oppressive social constructs through the discourse of feminist, black, liberation, and postcolonial theologies. In this section the term “practice” refers to the

means of attaining collective justice and self-transformation. It ends with a refreshing discussion on theology and culture.

The book as a whole understands *practice* as an activity judged in a community setting, thereby overruling individualistic approaches to theology. For example, part 1 on “reason” emphasizes the social aspect of reason referred to as “conversation,” “shared conversation,” “public reason,” “people seeking a settlement,” “social activity,” and “team sport.” This kind of understanding tends to stimulate collegiality between the practitioner and the interlocutor of theology by ameliorating the tone of discussion so that it is held in a less confrontational and more contextually engaging way.

On the other hand, this same communitarian emphasis—necessary for the book’s claim to interpret practice in terms of standards of excellence held by the community—implicitly gives, in varied ways, too much weight to tradition and ecclesiology as compared to Scripture. Thus, the initial claim—that the quadrilateral sources are simply “aspects” of the same activity, without the further claim of ordering them—does not harmonize with the actual practice of the authors. That is not to say, however, that the *Companion’s* communitarian emphasis requires ecclesiology become first-theology; instead, it is to say that the attempt to structure the book by following the quadrilateral without prioritization between its parts is formally impossible.

The book is valuable for its many notable examples and pieces of advice intended to increase the quality of the practice of theology, so the preferred audience is young theologians in the making. Yet its price certainly limits its availability to the point that it will most likely be accessed in institutional libraries.

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Kolig, Erich, ed. *Freedom of Speech and Islam*. London: Ashgate, 2014. 276 pp. Hardcover, \$119.95.

When I first saw the title of this book, it raised a question in my mind that could be answered in one word: *none*. The correct answer, of course, is much more nuanced. It may depend on who you are, where you are, who lives near you, and what is happening around you. This book deals with these nuances in wonderful detail. It is a book for serious students of Islam and will be of particular interest to missiologists, sociologists, jurists, journalists, and others planning to write about Islam.

As with all edited volumes, it is a mixed bag and will probably be read selectively. It is worth noting that four of the chapters have been written by Muslims and one by an ex-Muslim. There is a very helpful, brief biography on each contributor.

As the editor notes, “The idea of freedom . . . is articulated in various empirically tangible forms. . . . Some of the chapters . . . do not seek to present fact-based, empirical, ethnographic minutiae, but transcending that, engage with generalisations.” As the editor further notes, “Freedom of speech and expression is an equally elusive ‘entity.’ . . . It is an almost mystical quality” (15).