

series of more detailed studies by him into sexual issues as revealed in early Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint, Philo and other Jewish writers, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament, all published by Eerdmans. It is a concluding summary, as it were, of those separate monographs on beliefs, practices, and laws related to sex and sexual behavior in late Judaism and early Christianity during the four centuries from ca. 300 BCE to ca. 100 CE.

Chapter 1 compares ancient accounts of the creation of human beings, not only in Genesis but also in Greek literature, all of which portray sexuality as basically good but needing to be circumscribed by laws and customs lest the social order be disrupted by uncontrolled desires. The other three chapters summarize attitudes and mores regarding households of men and women, behavior related to temples and other sacred spaces, and control of sexual passions constrained by social norms.

The traditional teaching that the primary purpose of marriage is the procreation of children can be traced directly to this cultural milieu, for in the ancient Mediterranean world, parents arranged for the marriage of their offspring to ensure that someone would inherit the family patrimony and take care of them if they managed to survive middle age. Romantic love had nothing to do with marriage—although mutual affection was regarded as rewarding, should it happen to arise after the wedding. Apparently, however, sexual intercourse even in loving relationships was perceived as driven by passion and even somewhat animalistic, without any thought of pleasuring one's partner or deepening the bond between husband and wife.

For those who are interested in the topic, the book is a handy and readable compendium of sexual mores in the ancient Near East, even if the descriptions are not as exciting as the title seems to promise.

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Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation. By Robert Bartlett. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2013. Pp. xviii + 787. \$39.95.

Advice on how to approach Bartlett's early history of the cult of the saints in the Latin West may be taken from a story he includes about Hugh of Lincoln. While venerating the Magdalene's relics at Fécamp, Hugh bit off two fragments with his teeth and handed them to his chaplain, saying "look after these with especial care" (243). Similarly, B.'s encyclopedic work is a highly synthetic and enjoyable read, especially in small bites. The first seventh of his 637 pages of text sketches the religious phenomenon chronologically. The rest is a systematic review of what the cult of the saints encompassed and its place in medieval society. B. demonstrates how the veneration of saints developed within the context of a religious community that itself underwent tremendous and constant transformation in late antiquity and beyond.

Well versed in the materials and deft in expository style, B. avoids many sloppy historical shortcuts, as when, for example, he extends consideration of martyr saints beyond late antiquity and into the mission fields of the Middle Ages. At the same time, his reliance on the Protestant Reformation as a terminal point exaggerates both its influence and theological homogeneity, thereby underrating the critical work of Renaissance authors who foreshadowed the emergence of the Bollandists.

In its systematic section, the volume covers such topics as shrines, pilgrimage, relics, miracles, art, literature, the sanctoral calendar, and saintly typology. B. attends sensitively to matters of historiography, as in his evaluation of the quantitative analysis of saints that was so common toward the end of the previous century. His conclusion offers insightfully summarized reflections on the Augustinian question that gives the volume its title.

The back matter is especially valuable: the bibliography is extensive and the index thorough. In short, B.'s work is astonishingly comprehensive, and the balance he strikes between narration and analysis is admirable.

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The Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an: Three Books, Two Cities, One Tale. By Anton Wessels. Translated from the Dutch by Henry Janson. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Pp. xxi + 312. \$28.

Wessels attempts a noble task, reading the three monotheistic scriptures (the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, the Qur'an) as a single, harmonious narrative, to model how these religions might get along. In doing so, however, he loses the sense of the individual scriptures. To bring these disparate texts into a single, coherent narrative, he imposes an external structure. W.'s own structure is Christian—he is a Presbyterian minister. Because he reads the texts harmoniously, he explains away, minimizes, or ignores their disparities. Muslims will find the book unsatisfactory because of its christological leanings and occasional sermonizing. Jews will be unsatisfied because W. minimizes the importance of Jewish identity and the Jewish connection to the land. In sum, his narrative focuses on “universal salvation.”

W. treats the Qur'an as a source of divine wisdom. Although apparently not a reader of Arabic, he has made careful study of the Qur'an in his native Dutch. He claims his book as a tale of two cities (good and evil) but tries to hold together too many different kinds of comparisons for this to be a useful structure. The cities keep changing and share little that might make them one story. He adds historical summary, he reviews the Deuteronomic History, and he reflects on the nature of kingship. None of this refers to the “tale of two cities.” The book is rather a collection of essays around the topic of the Bible and the Qur'an.

Although certainly not a fundamentalist, W. places too much credence in the historicity of stories in the Bible, particularly concerning Abraham and the reign of Solomon.