

*Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes.* By Mitri Raheb. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014. Pp. ix + 166. \$20.

In this excellent volume, Raheb summarizes for a broad audience both his experience and his research. He speaks as both pastor and historian. The majority of the book is dedicated to the geopolitical setting of Palestine as the central geopolitical setting of the Bible. R.'s detailed description shows his experience in and with this land, and he challenges the lay reader and the biblical expert equally. In a personal recounting, R. describes how his father, from 1905 to 1975, changed his citizenship five times (under the Ottomans, British, Jordanians, and Israeli), never leaving the same piece of land.

The questions R. raises regarding the varied and never-ending situation of the occupation of Palestine are of crucial importance for any biblical exegesis and political effort. In this context the book could not be more relevant or valuable, given that it appears in a year in which armed conflict between Palestine and the state of Israel has spiked once again.

Seeing the destruction and despair of this conflict, R.'s observation that not even postcolonial interpreters have taken the geopolitical situation in the region seriously raises very valid questions and criticisms. His historical overviews of the ongoing suffering are excellent and poignant, especially given the book's brevity. Particularly valuable are his descriptions of the growing self-articulation of Palestinian scholars.

Some of R.'s conclusions are worth highlighting for readers interested in both political and religious matters. R. does not see the root of the problem to lie only outside Palestine. He sees the depth of the problem also in the loss of memory of the Palestinians themselves and their absorption of colonial patterns and identity. That is why his invitation is not only to the informed global reader but also to the lay readers in Palestine, whom he invites to break out of patterns of victimhood and to assume responsibility for their lives. R. integrates this invitation with the perception of a God "who seems forever on the losing end, just like his people" (87). This correlation of God with the Palestinians does not come across as mere romanticizing, but as a genuine warrant for change. Especially notable in this context is that R. becomes a strong advocate for denouncing the oppression of women in the geopolitical situations he is describing. Here, as elsewhere, he calls for creative resistance. He is pristinely clear in his judgment that the situation of women has not improved in the last 2,500 years. Indeed, it has perhaps worsened in that women pay double the price for the political and religious oppression against them.

R.'s questions regarding spirituality and religion are vital. He asks about the power of fundamentalism and the blind support of the state of Israel by Christian fundamentalist groups in the United States. He also argues that there is too much blind adherence to religious agendas and not enough focus on lived religion and its spirituality in and around Palestine. He concludes that there will be no future for Palestine if there is no tolerance of diversity, no vision that includes the local region as such. This penetrating insight speaks for R.'s political engagement as much as his historical expertise.

Even though one perhaps does not feel compelled to follow all the details of R.'s argument, especially in its applications to the themes of God, Jesus, and the Spirit, the book is a must-read for all who are interested in interpreting the biblical text today. Not

all readers will agree that the central reason for God's revelation is to put Palestine, an occupied, maltreated state, onto the global map as an important player. Nevertheless biblical revelation did happen in a highly explosive geopolitical setting, and this fact often does not receive adequate attention from exegetes.

I do not find R.'s version of the theory of the so-called "Jewish invention of themselves" in 18th- and 19th-century Europe entirely convincing. The argument is too attenuated to be accurate. Moreover, it is offensive for Jews who are deeply rooted in their diverse ancestry in Europe and for Jews whose family members were exterminated in German concentration camps during World War II. However, R. does see the importance of describing Palestine as the historical and current place of Palestinian Jews, together with Palestinian Christians and Muslims. In my view, this affirmation is central to the important historical dimension of the Christian revelation that Jesus was a Jew.

The book brings together explosive and highly topical issues and questions of political dialogue and exegetical interpretation. It is a timely and important gift to a broad audience.

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*Protestantische Selbstverortung: Die Rezensionen Ernst Troeltschs.* By Maren Bienert. Troeltsch-Studien 5. Boston: De Gruyter, 2014. Pp. x + 206. \$98.

Some scholars are reluctant to write book reviews. Others do not hesitate, but actually welcome the opportunity. Few, however, have reviewed the number of books that theologian and philosopher Ernst Troeltsch did. His evaluations are not the typical brief "helpful" critiques, nor are they the usual "blood-sport" attacks. Instead, they are often lengthy pieces in which he not only carefully reviews the books but also uses the reviews to set out his own thoughts on the topic. Bienert's volume examines almost 100 of Troeltsch's reviews. B. concentrates on the reviews that cover topics Troeltsch found critically important.

One such topic is the question of the "religious apriori," which B. notes is one of the most disputed concepts in all of Troeltsch's works (77). She further notes that it recurs in a number of his reviews of books on Schleiermacher and, more appropriately, on Kant (79–90). A second topic is the relationship between theology and metaphysics. Troeltsch's reviews include one on a book by Georg Wobbermin. Wobbermin is important for three reasons: he was Troeltsch's successor at Heidelberg, he was regarded as the theological successor of Adolf von Harnack, and he attempted to formulate a conception of theology that was specifically metaphysical (50–61). Troeltsch claimed, however, that Wobbermin was in fact the theological descendant of Albrecht Ritschl and the philosophical offspring of Wilhelm Dilthey. For Troeltsch, Wobbermin erred in his overestimation of metaphysics and underestimation of epistemology, particularly the doctrine of knowledge and concept formation. These lead to a third theme: Troeltsch's long-time concern with "neo-Kantianism." This theme points to some of the serious problems with B.'s book.