

The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church. By Peter J. Leithart. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016. Pp. x + 225. \$21.99.

Peter Leithart's provocatively titled book sees denominationalism, the form that Protestantism has taken in the United States, as collapsing. It preserved for a while a vitality in American Christianity, as opposed to the churches of the old Christendom, but in institutionalizing division, it represents an *alternative* to the one church for which Jesus prayed. Thus, it has falsified the central Christian truth about the church. L. describes his book as an agenda for conservative Protestant evangelical churches, an interim ecclesiology on the way to a fully reunited church that is no longer described as Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Reformed, Methodist, or by any other name. He envisions a restructuring of global Christianity into what he calls a "Reformational Catholicism," a biblical church, teaching the whole Bible (though he does not mention the deuterocanonical books); a sacramental and liturgical church in which the Lord's Supper is celebrated weekly, with worshippers clapping their hands, swaying to the music, and raising their hands in prayer; and a metropolitan church built from the ground up, with each congregation together with its elders an assembly of a single church, presided over by a single "angel" in each city who together will form an interlocking network of overseers around the world. The World Council of Churches' 1961 New Delhi statement on unity provides a summary of his vision, with the United Church of South India as an example. L. acknowledges that such a church would mean the end of Protestantism, which has a positive content but is Protestant only in defining itself against other families of churches. But it also means the end of Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, which also are defined by their differences from other parts of the church.

L. writes from a historical perspective, arguing for the catholicity of the Reformation. For example, he maintains that Reformation iconoclasm was a purgation of idolatry, not a rejection of sacramentalism. Much of the book is a critique of denominationalism which he views as essentially sectarian and indifferent to doctrine. He presents an overview of anti-Catholicism in the US, rooted in part in the blending of American Protestantism with the country's civil religion, making Catholics seem anti-American because of their internationalism which to Protestants seemed to place loyalty to their church above loyalty to the nation. He maintains that blacks and whites frequently worshipped together until the Civil War introduced a racial divide into churches that persists to this day. His critique of evangelical individualism is trenchant, including its transformation of social evils into individual sins, so that racial tensions are seen as the result of poor relations rather than as rooted in social structures. He critiques the anti-sacramental, anti-liturgical, and anti-creedal character of many conservative Protestant churches. A chapter on "The Restructuring of Global Christianity" includes a too brief section on the new, independent churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, often with Pentecostal leanings, which in their difference often represent a new form of Christianity, neither Catholic nor Orthodox, nor entirely Protestant. He acknowledges that some of the independent churches have abandoned the fundamentals of Christianity and are no longer Christian. Their distance from the tradition poses difficulties for his

vision of a Reformational Catholicism that he does not really address. But even this brief consideration underlines his point that the old map of Christianity as Protestant–Catholic–Orthodox no longer works.

There is considerable wisdom in L.’s vision, as in arguing that Paul’s warnings about “discerning the body” (1 Cor 11: 29) are concerned not with the theology of the Supper but with factionalism in the church, or stressing the need to work out doctrinal differences without requiring the church of the future to hold to absolutely uniform beliefs. But in spite of his ecclesial vision, he has not moved very far beyond his own roots in the Reformed tradition. He argues that Catholics and Orthodox need to purge doctrinal traditions such as the papacy, Marian doctrines, icon veneration, and the cult of the saints in light of the Bible and describes the Eucharist as a “communal meal of joy and thanksgiving” (177), but it is not clear that he deals adequately with Christ’s eucharistic presence, so strong in the tradition. Nor does his saying that to become Catholic he would have to agree that he has never presided over a valid Eucharist really reflect Catholic theology today. This issue is more complicated.

But L.’s vision is challenging for all the churches. His “Reformational Catholicism” wants to bring an end to Protestantism as a family of churches defined over and against Rome and Orthodoxy, seeing this as a defection from the Gospel. Catholics and Orthodox Christians need to hear his plea for a more inclusive eucharistic discipline. All need renewal in light of the word of God.

Thomas P. Rausch, SJ
Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles

Women Deacons? Essays with Answers. Edited by Phyllis Zagano. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2016. Pp. xvii + 252. \$24.95.

If married men can be ordained to the permanent diaconate without prospect of advancing to the priesthood, why not women? To answer that question, these twelve essays—five newly translated from Italian, three from French, and four in original English—seek to retrieve what was suppressed by the International Theological Commission (ITC) in 2002: “This collection is aimed at presenting the entire story, the majority of which the ITC may have accepted between 1992 and 1997 but which it eventually eviscerated in 2002” (xvi). Zagano has recently been named to the special commission called by Pope Francis to examine the question anew. These essays provide an invaluable background for understanding the issues biblically and historically. The major questions are: “Were they ordained to the major order of deacon? What were their tasks and functions? Can they belong to the renewed order of deacon today?” (xi). The studies are detailed and cannot be easily summarized, so I will highlight some of the more important features here.

Paul’s endorsement of Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2) seems to have created problems for 1 Timothy who mentions women in the middle of his treatment of deacons (3: 11: “. . . women likewise . . .”) but cloaked it with ambiguity because of social tensions over