

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



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## Book Reviews

***Evangelisch-Lutherisches Kirchengesangbuch.* By Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2021. 1,820 pages. Hardcover. €28.00.**

The new hymnal and service book of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche, SELK), abbreviated *ELKG*<sup>2</sup>, follows their excellent hymnal of the same name from 1987 (abbreviated *ELKG*<sup>1</sup>).<sup>1</sup> The new hymnal is available from the German Bible Society for a very reasonable price (<https://shop.die-bibel.de/Buecher-Kreatives/SELK-Gesangbuecher/>). The new book is significantly larger (1,820 pages vs. 1,296 for the 1987 hymnal). It has a sturdy sewn binding, featuring a blue cover with a new logo. The logo is an abstract cross made up of irregular geometric shapes. Besides the cross form, the geometric shapes do not have any particular meaning. They could be interpreted variously, perhaps as “the unity of Christ and his congregation,” or “the gifts of the Spirit in the body of Christ,” or “the variety of elements needed for forming worship and personal faith.”<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, ambiguity, variety, and diversity characterize not just the logo of the new hymnal but also its contents.

**The Chief Divine Service:** *ELKG*<sup>2</sup> presents more musical options than *ELKG*<sup>1</sup> had. The old hymnal had many variants within only one order of Holy Communion. *ELKG*<sup>2</sup> has two “forms” of the service of the Holy Supper. Order 1 is the traditional service of Holy Communion as is known to readers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) from *Lutheran Service Book (LSB) Divine Service, Setting Three*.<sup>3</sup> Order 2 of the Divine Service with the Holy Supper is the *novus ordo*, known to Missouri Synod Lutherans from *LSB Divine Service, Settings One and Two*. Notably, “Order 2” is the same as the order of service in the *Evangelisches Gesangbuch (EG)* for the mainline territorial churches of Bavaria and Thüringia.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most problematic aspects of the new hymnal is in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. SELK congregations now may use the 1971 “altered version” of these creeds—the version altered by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) mainline territorial churches. The LWF churches changed the words “niedergefahren zur Hölle”

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<sup>1</sup> Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche, *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Kirchengesangbuch* (Hannover: Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche, 1987) (hereafter cited as *ELKG*<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> It is explained at <https://selk-gesangbuch.de/hintergrund/graphisches-konzept/>.

<sup>3</sup> The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, ed., *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern, *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirchen in Bayern und Thüringen*, 2nd ed. (München: Evangelischer Preserverband für Bayern, 1995), pp. 1145–1159, no. 679.

(“descended to hell”) to “hinabgestiegen in das Reich des Todes” (“went down to the realm of death”).<sup>5</sup> A footnote gives a gloss: “Gemeint ist ein Ort (endgültiger) Gottesferne” (“What is meant is a place of [final, definitive] distance from God”). The same ambiguous note glosses also the unaltered creed. The gloss itself is a problem. Hell certainly should not be described as a place where the infinite, omnipresent God is absent or distant. What makes hell bad is not God’s absence but his vindictive presence (Matt 10:28; cf. Ps 139:8). The alternative creeds raise questions. Why would the SELK want to allow its congregations to avoid confessing FC XI and Christ’s descent into the real hell? Are so-called ecumenical versions of texts shared with the mainline LWF churches a good enough reason to make the church’s confession of the descent into hell ambiguous? Why would this be set forth for the SELK to use, when for a previous generation of the SELK the “alternative” creeds were not approved for use, and when previously their errors had been demonstrated?<sup>6</sup>

**Lectionary:** The lectionary in the new hymnal is mostly the same as in the old hymnal. The only lectionary offered is a one-year lectionary, in which the Gospel readings are usually the same as in *LSB*’s one-year series. The new book sometimes changes the historic Epistles. For example, on Trinity 14, the historic Epistle is Galatians 5:16–24 (sturdy paraenesis). The old hymnal had this as the first option, with Romans 8:12–17 as the second option. The new book gives Romans 8:14–17 as the only option, leaving out verses 12–13 (which the old hymnal included), which effectually removes the apostolic threat of death to those who live according to the flesh.<sup>7</sup> Another notable change in the church year is at Trinity 10 (Proper 56), where the new book moves Luke 19:41–48 (Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem) and makes it the alternative (Proper 57) to the new Trinity 10 Gospel reading: Mark 12:28–34, naming the Sunday “Israelsonntag: Kirche und Israel” (“Israel Sunday: Church and Israel”).<sup>8</sup> In my opinion, even the title “Church and Israel” of Proper 56 is problematic, since after the gathering of the Christian church, the church *is* the new Israel (Rom 9:6; Gal 6:15–16). Of course, the theme of the relation between Christians and Jews is very difficult, especially in Germany. It also seems problematic to me that congregations could now avoid the historic propers of Trinity 10, with Christ’s weeping over Jerusalem. This was probably not the intent of the

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<sup>5</sup> See below, n. 6; *ELKG*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 32–35.

<sup>6</sup> Gotthilf Döhler, “Altes oder ‘neues’ Apostolikum? Sieghafte Höllenfahrt Christi oder schrecklicher Abstieg in das Reich des Todes?,” *Lutherischer Rundblick* 21, no. 4 (1973): 210–232; Gotthilf Doehler, “The Descent into Hell,” trans. Walter C. Daib, *The Springfelder* 39, no. 1 (1975): 2–19.

<sup>7</sup> Compare *ELKG*<sup>1</sup>, pp. 180–181, Proper 059; and *ELKG*<sup>2</sup>, p. 292, Proper 61.

<sup>8</sup> Compare *ELKG*<sup>1</sup>, pp. 170–171, Proper 055; and *ELKG*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 271–277, Propers 56–57.

hymnal commission, but the danger is present that congregations could avoid these difficult, but important, biblical texts of the historic propers (Proper 57).<sup>9</sup>

A new day of repentance with full propers is provided for January 27: “Tag des Gedenkens an die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus” (“Day of Remembrance of the Victims of National Socialism”) (pp. 367–368, no. 79).

**Hymns:** There are 700 hymns (compared to 561 in the old hymnal), including 19 by Luther (compared to 35), 4 by Melancthon (compared to 6), 39 by Paul Gerhardt (compared to 40), 14 by Nikolaus Herman (compared to 12), 12 by Johann Heermann (compared to 16), 6 by Johann Walter (same as in the old hymnal), 10 by Michael Weisse (same as in the old hymnal), and 13 by Jochen Klepper (d. 1942) (compared to 11). Hymns from the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries are abundant. Hymns from before the Reformation and from the nineteenth century are far less frequent. The liturgical music section provides an impressive fullness of ancient and modern musical settings of parts of the liturgy (nos. 100–194).

**Psalms:** The singing of the psalms is currently being cultivated in both American Lutheranism<sup>10</sup> and the SELK. Besides Gregorian settings of psalms, the new *ELKG*<sup>2</sup> presents several different kinds of psalms: antiphonal, responsorial, Anglican, and other styles. Currently, LCMS congregations do not make much use of responsorial psalms, but the examples in the new *ELKG*<sup>2</sup> show how beautiful and beneficial they can be. The choir or cantor sings the verses, and the congregation sings a short refrain after each verse. Thereby, the people will have learned a short Bible passage or prayer by heart, and not too much musical skill is required of them. A good example in *ELKG*<sup>2</sup> is Psalm 31 (no. 810), with the response “Meine Zeit in deinen Händen” (“My time in your hands”).

**Liturgy of the Hours:** Matins and Vespers in *ELKG*<sup>2</sup> add prayers and responses not found in previous SELK hymnals (nos. 900, 905, 909, 910, 920, 925, 929, and 930). The new Matins has no option to use the Te Deum. The choice of texts seems to make the offices more generic and less doctrinal. Instead of the old Vespers responsory praising God’s word from Psalm 119:105 (*ELKG*<sup>1</sup>, p. 275), there is a more general praise of God’s work from Psalm 92:5 (*ELKG*<sup>2</sup>, p. 1464, no. 924). In the old *ELKG*<sup>1</sup> (p. 279), the responsive prayer versicles (a long-standing feature of the Liturgy of the Hours in German Lutheranism) were quotations from Scripture that confess sin and pray for the church and for missions. The new responsive prayer

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, LSB’s three-years series also omits Luke 19:41–48, and thus allows congregations to avoid this difficult but important Gospel reading.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Christian Worship Psalter* (Waukesha, WI: Northwestern, 2021); Benjamin T. G. Mayes, *The Brotherhood Prayer Book*, 2nd ed. (Kansas City, KS: Emmanuel Press, 2007).

versicles are nonbiblical quotations and are very general, focusing not on sin and salvation but on worldly trouble and relief, peace, and justice (pp. 1468–1469, nos. 929–930). The collects for the days of the week (another long-standing German Lutheran feature) have been changed slightly. The Monday collect removes the mention of “sin” (compare p. 1470 new vs. p. 280 old). The new book also removes the collect that confesses sin at the end of Vespers (old p. 282 vs. new p. 1471).

Compline is now gender neutral. The old version began, “Brüder, betet um Gottes Segen!” (“Brethren, pray for God’s blessing!”) (*ELKG*<sup>1</sup>, p. 283). This is now omitted (p. 1472, no. 933). Likewise “Brüder” (“Brethren”) in the reading from 1 Peter 5:8 is omitted (old p. 283; new p. 1472, no. 933). The old hymnal provided only for a man to be leading the service. “Wir bekennen Gott, dem Allmächtigen, und dir, Bruder. . . .” (“We confess to God Almighty, and to you, brother. . . .”) (*ELKG*<sup>1</sup>, p. 284). The new book allows a woman to lead the service: “und dir Bruder (Schwester)” (“and to you, brother [sister]”) (p. 1473, no. 934). Compline is also doctrinally weaker in other respects. The second option for confession in the new book’s Compline leaves out the mention of sin and confesses only insufficient love, omitting also the triple confession of guilt; and the following prayer asks not to be brought to eternal life but only “zum Leben” (“to life”) (p. 1473, no. 935). This is the exact same service as found in the hymnal of the mainline LWF territorial churches, *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, with only a few stylistic differences.<sup>11</sup>

*ELKG*<sup>2</sup> also has “alternative daily prayer services,” similar in concept to Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer in *LSB*. The prayers emphasize praise, peace, troubles, and relief. Taizé music and forms of prayer have been incorporated into *ELKG*<sup>2</sup>. “Prayer According to Taizé” consists of songs, responsorial psalms, Bible reading, and ektenia-style responsorial prayers. The themes include praise, peace, troubles, and relief. This order of service is mostly the same as in the *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*.<sup>12</sup>

**The role of women:** The new hymnal is designed to be used by female worship leaders. As previously mentioned, the Compline confession gives the option of being led by a woman. Also, the explanations for how to use the hymnal include this instruction: “The terms used in the hymns and forms of worship and devotion for the

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<sup>11</sup> Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern, *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Bayern und Thüringen*, 1256; *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Evangelisch Landeskirche in Württemberg* (Stuttgart: Gesangbuchverlag Stuttgart, 1996), no. 782.2; *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Evangelisch Landeskirche Anhalts, die Evangelische Kirche in Berlin-Brandenburg, die Evangelische Kirche der schlesischen Oberlausitz, die Pommersche Evangelische Kirche, die Evangelische Kirche der Kirchenprovinz Sachsen* (Berlin: Evangelische Haupt-Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), no. 786.2.

<sup>12</sup> Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern, *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Bayern und Thüringen*, no. 725; *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Württemberg*, no. 787; *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Anhalt, Berlin-Brandenburg*, no. 789.

individual roles (blue font color) are valid for persons of both sexes, insofar as church law permits this.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, for the new book, whether or not women lead worship is a matter of adiaphora, not doctrine. The egalitarian view of men and women is also found in the wedding vows, which are identical for both husband and wife (p. 1535), rather than following the differentiated complementarity of Ephesians 5, as *LSB* does.<sup>14</sup>

**Other questionable parts:** The new book signals many hymns and texts as “ecumenical” by using the marker *ö*, which stands for “ökumenisch,” and is defined as an “ecumenical version in the German speaking territory; agreement in text and melody (as of 2021)” (p. 15). With the repeated use of the *ö*, “ecumenicity” is constantly reinforced as desirable. One problem with this is that melodies or texts unique to confessional Lutherans seem thereby to be given an inferior status. This ecumenical signaling is yet another feature that was taken over from the *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*. It is found throughout the *EG* for Bavaria, for example.

A significant problem with striving to adapt SELK liturgies and hymns to “ecumenical” texts is that the modern liturgies, adopted from ecumenical sources, studiously avoid the topics of sin, forgiveness, evil, angels, and devils, even though the SELK hymnal commission examined these hymns and determined that they did not contain unscriptural or unconfessional content. Perhaps it could be said that the ecumenical hymns are deficient, even if not false. Likewise, the psalm selections of the new hymnal avoid the imprecatory verses. This raises the question: if one intentionally avoids certain themes and verses of Scripture, does this not dilute the theology and in fact distort Scripture’s meaning by hiding its essential features from the people? If the purpose of liturgy is to teach the people faith and fear of God on the basis of the Scriptures (see Ap XXIV [XII] 3), but parts of Scripture are intentionally avoided, how will the people be taught what they need to know?<sup>15</sup>

**Summary:** The new *ELKG*<sup>2</sup> has many good parts, but it also includes some seriously concerning theology. Its good parts include rich worship music and liturgical settings, psalmody, and a vast selection of hymns old and new. Its theologically concerning parts can be summarized as (1) ecumenical priority, from which comes the alternative versions of the creeds and theologically weak orders of service borrowed

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<sup>13</sup> “Die in den Liedern und Gottesdienst- und Andachtsformen verwendeten Begriffe für die jeweiligen Dienste (blaue Schriftfarbe) gelten für Personen beiderlei Geschlechts, sofern kirchliches Recht dies ermöglicht.” *ELKG*<sup>2</sup>, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> *LSB* 276. A SELK pastor has assured me that the full order of marriage from the SELK’s *Agende* includes the full citation of Ephesians 5:21–33, even if this is not reflected in the wording of the vows.

<sup>15</sup> *LSB* is not free of fault on this point. Psalm 95 in Matins and Morning Prayer omits the last half, which is central to the message of the book of Hebrews. Psalm 141 in Evening Prayer omits the imprecations, making a hard, difficult psalm nice and pleasant.

from the mainline LWF territorial churches; and (2) egalitarian feminism. How long can a church use liturgies that reinforce egalitarian feminism before it has definitively rejected what Scripture says about the order of creation and the complementarity of men and women? Already the voices clamoring for women pastors are not disciplined in the SELK.<sup>16</sup> Now such voices can appeal to their new hymnal too. It will be difficult for conservative SELK pastors to teach against what the hymnal says explicitly, such as if they want to teach that women should not lead public worship or that the creeds used by the mainline LWF territorial churches are theologically problematic and should never be used.

Beautiful and edifying stand beside problematic in this new hymnal. It is a beautiful book, but it would be better to keep the old one in print.

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***On Any Given Sunday: The Story of Christ in the Divine Service.* By Michael Berg. Irvine, CA: 1517 Publishing, 2022. 144 pages. Hardcover, \$29.95; paperback, \$22.95.**

I have a theory that when Lutherans here in the United States all used the official worship books of their respective church bodies—say, in the 1940s through the mid 60s—very few gave much conscious thought as to why they worshiped the way they did. There were the occasional publications that attempted to supply the answers, such as Luther Reed’s magisterial *The Lutheran Liturgy*,<sup>1</sup> Paul Lang’s *Ceremony and Celebration*,<sup>2</sup> Arthur Carl Piepkorn’s *The Conduct of the Service*,<sup>3</sup> and even various attempts at catechizing the laity through pamphlets such as *Our Way of Worship*<sup>4</sup> and Berthold von Schenk’s *The Little Service Book*.<sup>5</sup> But for the most part, everyone

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<sup>16</sup> E.g., SELK news on November 18, 2022, advertised a new issue of the pro-women’s ordination YouTube series *inFOyer*. “inFOyer mit neuer Ausgabe,” *selk\_news*, November 18, 2022, <https://www.selk.de/index.php/newsletter/9037-infoyer-mit-neuer-ausgabe-18-11-2022/>.

<sup>1</sup> Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1947; rev. ed., 1960).

<sup>2</sup> Paul H. D. Lang, *Ceremony and Celebration* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> A[rthur] C[arl] P[iepkorn], *The Conduct of the Service*, rev. ed. ([St. Louis]: C[oncordia] S[eminary] P[rint] S[hop], 1965).

<sup>4</sup> R[ichard] Jungkuntz and R[alph] Gehrke, *Our Way of Worship* ([St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House], n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> Berthold von Schenk, *The Little Service Book* (New York: Lutheran School of Our Saviour, n.d.).

used the church's worship books, some fully, many not. And that was that. Who needed to examine closely or think deeply about the services that the church had bequeathed to succeeding generations, let alone the reasons why this way of worship had been cherished by Lutherans ever since the Reformation? Until, that is, the social upheaval of the 60s, a renewal in liturgical studies that informed new worship books published in the 70s and 80s, and the rise of the evangelical megachurch and something altogether different. Since then, a better understanding of and appreciation for the church's historic patterns of worship have been all the rage, evidenced not only by numerous official publications but also a raft of homegrown efforts by pastors and musicians who have put pen to paper to provide a fitting apologetic. While tempted to offer a few examples, I will pass, since book reviews come with word limits.

A recent entry into this burgeoning field of study, however, is a small volume, *On Any Given Sunday*, written by Michael Berg, a pastor and professor in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). His modest yet profound goal is nicely encapsulated in his subtitle: *The Story of Christ in the Divine Service*. A single sentence in his conclusion nicely summarizes his point: "From the Nativity of Christ to his ascension into the heavenly realms we hear the story of Christ each Sunday" (111). In the second half of the book, Berg walks the reader through the Divine Service, making his case by demonstrating how the various parts of the service take the gathered assembly through the life of Christ. But he does not stop there. In addition to the life of Christ, the author traces other themes, such as how each iteration of the Divine Service walks the worshiper through the church year as well as through the life of the Christian. Berg's approach, while multifaceted, is eminently approachable and a delight to read.

A few highlights include an insightful discussion of ritual and the very nature of man as one who worships (72–77); a helpful treatment of the Kyrie that demonstrates how it is more than simply a repetition of the plea for mercy in the confession of sins (70); a brief but helpful encouragement toward individual confession and absolution (89); comments regarding vestments in the context of the Salutation (93); a very fine description of the purpose of the sermon, especially within its liturgical context (97); a very picturesque description of the crucifixion (106); and a helpful discussion concerning the importance of eating in the Scriptures (107).

I have mentioned thus far only the second half of the book. What precedes Berg's methodical review of the service is what one might call a modern-day parable. The main characters, John and Jennifer, are a young married couple beset by various marital and professional challenges. After laying their burdens at our feet, the author takes us with them to an Ascension Day service where they silently reflect on all that they hear and see during the service. All of the texts of the service are included for



the reader's own edification. By the end of the service, as you might guess, this couple departs the church in the confidence that God has not abandoned them but, on the contrary, continues to serve them with his grace and mercy.

Explaining the church's historic rites through story has a definite appeal. Rather than a mere cognitive presentation of information, the reader is invited to contemplate how the Divine Service tells the story of Christ. If there is any criticism of this approach, it is that it is somewhat unrealistic to think that two individuals could reflect so deeply on every part of the service. (At various moments while reading I could not help but wish that I had had such well-catechized members in my congregation!) More realistic would have been a slightly different approach in which we would have been given access into the musings of other members in attendance at that Ascension service. That, however, would have necessitated a much longer book in order to provide background information on the additional characters. Please understand, though, that this is a minor criticism. The author's use of story to convey the power of the church's rites is a new and welcome contribution to the ongoing conversation.

As might be expected, there are various points with which one might quibble. Most baffling to this reviewer is the lack of any list of abbreviations. Standard references in the footnotes to the Lutheran Confessions will be unhelpful to the non-Lutheran reader. The same goes for several references to *Lutheran Service Book* and *Luther's Works*, American Edition, for which only the acronyms are provided.

Such criticisms aside, *On Any Given Sunday* is a wonderful contribution to the ongoing catechesis regarding the deep truths that are confessed every Sunday as the faithful gather to receive life from their Lord through word and sacrament. This is the type of book that belongs in every church library. Though a very different genre, Thomas Winger's *Lutheranism 101: Worship* falls into the same category.<sup>6</sup> Both are resources that intend to equip the laity with a deeper appreciation of the liturgical heritage of the church that was taken for granted far too long.

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas M. Winger, *Lutheranism 101: Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

***The New Testament Commentary Guide: A Brief Handbook for Students and Pastors.* By Nijay K. Gupta. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. 120 pages. Paperback. \$18.99.**

New Testament professor and commentary writer Nijay K. Gupta has prepared this guide for beginning students and pastors baffled by the flood of commentaries that appear every year. Why not simply find a commentary on some New Testament book, purchase it, and begin reading? Because, due to the “inexhaustible supply of resources” (dust jacket), the hapless student, and pastor, may quickly be overwhelmed—and realize (too late!) that the commentary chosen does not match one’s level of expertise or even the subject matter. The guide is packed with much specialized information that helps beginners (and more advanced students) find commentaries that will be of benefit to them in reading, research, and sermon production.

In the first ten pages of the first chapter (“Introduction”) Gupta poses questions, and provides advice, for the following. Why read new commentaries? (Answer: Because there are always new things about ancient texts to discover and learn.) Pastors write good commentaries, right? (Answer: Not necessarily, because they are too busy) Should I buy a whole commentary set or single-author series? (Answer: It depends on the quality of the author.) What about study Bibles? (Answer: They can detract from the text itself if one relies too heavily upon the notes). The chapter concludes with an overview of twenty major commentary series, everything from the Anchor Yale Bible Commentary Series to the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary (10–36), with many in between. Unfortunately, the featured commentary series do *not* include the Concordia Commentary Series (CCS)! Each entry provides the series editor(s), series description, level (technical, semi-technical, non-technical), theological orientation (e.g., traditional/conservative, Evangelical, liberal), methods used (e.g., historical-critical or literary), and pricing, and notes. Before concluding the chapter Gupta provides brief mention of other resources (most are online) and Logos Bible Software (36–38).

The heart of the book is chapter 2 (“Commentary Recommendations”), wherein Gupta provides his personal recommendation and notes on commentaries for each book of the New Testament. Along the way, he breaks the featured commentaries down into four categories: (1) Technical (requires training in Greek, geared toward scholars, not pastors), (2) Semi-technical (academic discussions of texts but geared toward students and pastors), (3) Non-technical (geared toward laypersons who have had no seminary education), and (4) Hidden Gems (commentaries that Gupta has discovered over the years outside of the major commentary series). Turning to his treatment of Philippians (76–80), I am gratified to see that I am currently reading—in my own Philippians research—nine of the sixteen

commentaries Gupta recommends. Some of the favorite commentaries I use are too old for consideration (e.g., Lightfoot, Vincent, Lenski), but why did he not list Hansen, which is one of my favorite resources?<sup>1</sup> Gupta admits that his selections have had to be necessarily selective: “I have read many New Testament commentaries over the years—many dozens. I have a good sense of what is available. But like anyone else, I have my personal preferences” (40). (To have access to many more commentaries than Gupta can provide, go to [www.bestcommentaries.com](http://www.bestcommentaries.com). This website *does* consider the CCS volumes, I notice.) Near the end of the chapter occurs a subsection titled “Commentaries by Women and People of Color” (105–110), addressing a need for “more diverse voices” in biblical interpretation.

Finally, there appear three appendices: (1) “A Quick List of Recommended Commentaries” (111–113), (2) “German and French Commentary Series” (114–116), and (3) “Nijay K. Gupta’s Commentaries and Reference Works” (117–119). The volume concludes with endnotes (121–124).

Gupta’s guide offers a valuable service to students and pastors who want to invest in commentaries that will serve them for many years. Unfortunately, the guide is dominated by Gupta’s own preferences, which, as he himself admits, can be very subjective—and so fail to consider really good commentaries. Also, this work will quickly become obsolete as more commentaries appear. Nevertheless, this would be a great resource to have as one, for example, leaves seminary to begin full-time parish ministry elsewhere. And more experienced pastors (and professors!) can learn a thing or two as well. So, get the book, I say, and use it.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).