

have some. One might compare this book's method to Kaiser's *Toward an Exegetical Theology*. Both are helpful. Greidanus, however, had more time to develop the breadth of approaches necessary to preach a wide variety of OT genres. It is little wonder, then, that an endorsement by Kaiser graces the cover of Greidanus's earlier, foundational work on preaching Christ (mentioned above).

This volume can be used as a stand-alone resource or (in conjunction with a good commentary or two) to preach additional psalms. It includes several helpful appendices: a list of the steps for sermon preparation, various possible arrangements for sermon series, and several model sermons.

Overall, this reviewer was pleased with the volume. It sticks to its topic, develops it well, and gives clear options. Bottom line: this book will be helpful for pastors who want to begin or to develop further their ability to preach robust and engaging *expository* Christian sermons from the Psalms.

Stephen L. Huebscher

Death in Second-Century Christian Thought: The Meaning of Death in Earliest Christianity, by Jeremiah Mutie. Eugene: Pickwick, 2015. xvi + 228 pp. \$23.20.

Jeremiah Mutie has served in adjunct positions at both Liberty University and Beulah Heights University, and is now a Professor of Bible and Theology at Southern California Seminary. This volume, which examines the topic of death in second-century Christianity, is a reworking of his Ph.D. dissertation from Dallas Theological Seminary. Previous scholars have tended to emphasize either the radical uniqueness of early Christian views of death or the similarities between second-century Christian thought and parallel perspectives within the broader culture of the time. Mutie strikes a middle path by arguing that "there are significant conceptual similarities" as well as "significant conceptual differences" (x). He posits neither a "total continuation" nor a "total contrast" (16). "This study proposes that these similarities and differences can be accounted for on the principle of a critical adaptation, modification, and the utilization of existing views on death to present a Christian view of death in light of the level of revelation held by second-century believers" (x).

The book's introduction traces the concepts of death in Old Testament materials, the Greco-Roman milieu, and New Testament texts (18). Mutie concludes that the Old Testament documents lack the clarity of an overtly systematized approach to death and personal eschatology (31). Moreover, he finds it "impossible to talk about a single concept of death in Greek philosophy" (32). For instance, the Platonic notion of death "underwent development over the centuries prior to its interaction

with Christianity" (34). While Mutie does trace a continuation of thought between the New Testament materials and the later patristic sources, he maintains that a "fully developed doctrine of the intermediate state" only appeared with Irenaeus of Lyons (136, 148). It would be interesting, in this regard, to interact more fully with the claims of Charles Hill, who portrays Irenaeus's views of the intermediate state ("a subterranean waiting in the interim between death and resurrection") as *the* interpretive key to understanding the chiliastic stream of early Christianity (somewhat of a theological outlier, in Hill's view).

Mutie's stated methodology focuses upon "the key passages in the writings of second-century Christians" along with "historical and theological analyses of the key terminology and metaphors for death during this time" (18). Perhaps an examination of pagan assessments of the Christian view of death (as found in the primary sources of Marcus Aurelius and Galen) would have added further contour to the study. In addition, the volume may have profited from investigations of other evidences beyond textual discussions, such as a fuller linkage between the theological understanding of death and the practice of baptism (as a representation of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection).

Mutie's analysis highlights the nature of second-century Christian conceptions of death and the intermediate state as works in progress. Early Christian authors spoke of death using differing metaphors, such as "sleep," "sacrifice," and attainment" (20). The Greek notion of a "noble death," as epitomized in the courageous demise of Socrates and mediated through the Maccabean martyrs, affected early Christian martyrologies (38–39). Nevertheless, even though the deaths of Greco-Roman heroes and Christian martyrs were sometimes narrated using similar terminology, the descriptions "don't necessarily mean the same thing" (39). For example, while Ignatius of Antioch utilized the terminology and metaphors of his cultural environment, he adapted and modified them in order to "emphasize a distinctively Christian view of death" (10). In particular, Christians viewed death as an enemy whose guaranteed defeat was achieved by the victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ (52–53).

Several facets of Mutie's work will interest a broad range of readers. He highlights both the primitive acceptance of the *descensus Christi*, and the early Christian custom of inhumation (as opposed to cremation). "But as far as second-century Christians are concerned, any opportunity to preserve the body intact is a better option than other methods of disposal since it encourages respect for the dead and emphasizes their belief that the soul is alive as well" (181–82). In fact, Mutie argues that the cultural shift away from cremation toward inhumation "was the result of the changing view of death resulting from the teachings of Christianity" (157). He maintains that early Christians employed κοιμᾶσθαι as a metaphor for death rather than as a reference to soul-sleep, and he analyzes the spiritualized, realized eschatology found in Valentinianism. This reviewer especially enjoyed the fascinating descriptions of funerary customs found in the fourth chapter, which covered "Treatment of the

Dead in the Second Century.”

Unfortunately, over seventy typographical and similar errors mar the volume and should be corrected in any future edition. As a sampling of these copious slips, spelling mistakes occur in English (“unparalleled” for “unparalleled” on p. 138), French (“Chrésiennes” for “Chrésiennes” on p. 201), German (“Christendum” for “Christentum” on p. 104), Greek (ἄπουσία for ἀπουσία on p. 112), and Latin (*De resurrectionae* for *De resurrectione* on p. 178). The errors affect both ancient names (“Dominitian” for “Domitian” on p. 96), modern names (“Catolyn Osiek” for “Carolyn Osiek” on p. 225), and place names (“Lewinston” for “Lewiston” on p. 211). In a few cases, spelling mistakes completely convolute sentences, such as the insertion of “morning” for “mourning” on p. 182; “there” for “three” on p. 166; and “factitious” for “factious” on p. 56. Pages 125 and 177 contain jumbled phrases that simply confound the reader. On page 88, Mutie cites “Philippians 2:27,” while intending “Philippians 1:27.” Page 140 incorrectly refers to L. W. (Leslie William) Barnard as “she.” The index includes a few uncorrected queries meant to catch an editor’s attention (218, 222–23), as well as resource entries that belong in the bibliography (220–21).

The addition of argumentation to buttress various assertions would have strengthened the study, as when Mutie states without specific support that “the weight of the evidence” favors the Athenagoran attribution of *On the Resurrection of the Dead* (145). Indeed, such a conclusion can be rationally maintained, but a delineated rationale is missing. Similarly, Mutie claims that the authenticity of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is “settled” (187), overlooking the recent scholarship of Candida Moss. Nevertheless, his main point is sufficiently substantiated, that second-century Christian texts “critically adapt, modify, and utilize existing views of death to offer a distinctively Christian view of death that is both occasional as well as commensurate with the degree of revelation that they have” (53). *Death in Second-Century Christian Thought* opens new windows of inquiry into a fascinating and under-investigated field that possesses pastoral and existential as well as theological and historical significance. It is a welcome and worthy addition to the study of second-century Christianity.

Paul Hartog

The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation, by Rod Dreher. New York: Sentinel, 2017. 272 pp. \$25.00.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Rod Dreher’s much anticipated book, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, is how unremarkable his proposal really is. Yet it is a profoundly necessary correction for an American Christianity that has lost its biblical moorings and become just as secular as the culture