considers situations in Catholic hospitals in the US where consciences of patients or providers come into conflict with Catholic magisterial positions, suggesting communal discernment to support complex decision-making. And finally, Virginia Saldanha shows the ways that religious and cultural symbols in India have been appropriated to justify patriarchy and reproductive injustice against women, and the role of feminist theological method and religious activist movements in reclaiming spiritual and practical agency.

The editors aimed for the volume to be a practical guide for medical practitioners in Catholic institutions, educators and students of theology and ethics, ecclesial leaders, and the faithful, and they have succeeded. In particular, the round table chapters consolidate many of the book's major themes and put different global contexts into conversation. These chapters would work well to assign on a syllabus or to a parish reading group. In their concluding arguments, some authors are optimistic about the role of Catholic theology in furthering reproductive justice, while others criticize the institution's limits and failures in supporting the dignity of those who reproduce. Taken together, the authors' heterogeneous views resist flattening the complexity of the topics of reproduction and the common good and illustrate the urgency of discussing them across global and cultural contexts.

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Holy Body: Gender and Sexual Difference in Theological Anthropology and Ecclesiology. By Brianne Bell Jacobs. Lexington Books, 2025. x + 177 pages. $105.00 hardcover, $94.50 ebook.

Debates about sex and gender are popping up like whack-a-mole, and the topics of gender, sex, biology, and gender roles are at the forefront of politics and social life, from trans* inclusion in sports to the Catholic Church's talk of "gender ideology." It is in this context that *Holy Body: Gender and Sexual Difference in Theological Anthropology and Ecclesiology* offers a timely and compelling account of gender and sexual difference that is unparallelled in scope, content, and method. Brianne Bell Jacobs takes the wide range of topics and issues seriously while simultaneously taking a step back to theologically assess the entire picture. In doing so, she frames the problem as a "Patriarchy Crisis" and sets out to "reevaluate the meaning of sexual difference in theological anthropology and ecclesiology" (1).

To begin, Jacobs asserts that "The meaning of sexual difference is not already there, a priori, in biology" (36). Jacobs draws upon scientific studies in an accessible way, demonstrating that biology

reveals sexual variation that is not limited to male and female. This sets the stage for her compelling argument that the gender binary is a social construction and not a medical reality (58). In examining the development of the gender binary in Christian history, Jacobs dialogues with theological anthropology and feminist theology and, importantly, takes these fields to their next steps. She argues that the identity of "woman" is created to perform subjugation, which in turn establishes the category of "man." "In other words," Jacobs argues, "the Roman Catholic Church does not just treat women as less-than. The binary supported by the Roman Catholic Church dynamically produces the social reality of 'woman' as the one who is subjugated, and of 'man,' as the one who is, above, subjugating" (63). Jacobs treats tradition seriously, dialoguing with Aristotelian philosophy, early church tradition, Thomas Aquinas, Johann Baptist Metz, and Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*.

Jacobs strikingly defies all of the standard approaches. She does not give in to easy arguments of the left or right. She recognizes the gravity of harm when gender and sexual difference is misunderstood. She is just as comfortable engaging in a scientific examination as philosophical analysis, while being firmly rooted in the field of systematic theology. In a world of silos and polarization, the seriousness of Jacobs's research and her refusal to settle for easy answers makes this book stand out from the field. Jacobs notes that she intends this book not as a refutation of Catholic tradition but rather as a resuscitation: "I mean to give it life; or better, I mean to let it, the tradition itself, give us life" (7). In this mission, she exceeds her goal. This book is a testament to a God of life who calls us all to be generative. It envisions the body of Christ expressed in the world in ways that are equally new and rooted in tradition.

Individual chapters of this book can be helpful additions to undergraduate and graduate courses. For example, the first chapter outlines three perspectives on sexual difference in theological discourse. Jacobs reads authors with charity and nuance, modeling for students how to approach authors with critical thinking. Again, she never discounts an entire way of thinking, instead analyzing the context, contributions, and limitations of each theologian and stance. The second chapter similarly looks at the science of sexual difference, drawing on genetics, endocrinology, and neurology, and is an accessible and helpful contribution to ethics and anthropology courses.

Most importantly, Jacobs offers a stunning vision of bodies as generative, which has implications in theological anthropology and ecclesiology. She does not erase difference, but rather, takes seriously that all bodies are loved by God and as such are graced (95). This is not simply about individual bodies, for it has ecclesiological

implications as the body of Christ, the body of the church is the "affirming community that makes love of self, others, and God possible" (123). She puts forward a theological anthropology and ecclesiology that is rooted in dignity and oriented towards justice, like when she argues, "All bodies across the scatter plot of sexual difference are graced when we generatively perform a more just world together" (2).

"All bodies are generative" has the potential to become a core foundation of theological anthropology and ecclesiology, just as Elizabeth Johnson's phrase "the symbol of God functions" serves that role today. This book is not simply well researched, impeccably argued, beautifully written, and spiritually rooted, though it is all those things. Jacobs's *Holy Body* has the potential to make a generational impact. This book should be read by every theologian.

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The Gap in God's Country: A Longer View on Our Culture Wars. By Laurie M. Johnson. Cascade, 2024. viii + 338 pages. $38.00 paperback.

In *The Gap in God's Country*, political scientist Laurie M. Johnson presents a sweeping diagnosis of the political landscape of the United States, with special attention to those communities outside of large urban centers. Through historical analysis, engagement with political theory, theological study, and philosophical reflection, Johnson crafts a compelling project that invites the reader to reconsider American politics and religion. The author's approach is pragmatic, but ambitious—as the conclusion sums up, the author's vision "is little more, and nothing less, than a healthy community" (286).

The author's concern for the health of society in the United States, including and especially the health of small and rural communities, is palpable throughout the book. Johnson writes not as an ideologue but as one committed to forging a balanced stocktaking. Johnson proceeds with a methodology that feels both liberating and creative, if favoring syncretic methods over deep studies of sources. Johnson acknowledges that this may feel to some readers as if certain thinkers are not given their full due, but the goal of this book is not "narrow but safe and sure scholarship" (12); it is the more difficult work of "finding common ground in a highly divisive social climate" (1).

The first chapter pulls together four of what the author calls "theory streams": classical conservatism (especially Edmund Burke), Marxian critiques of capitalism, political theology (particularly Walter Brueggeman, Dorothy Day, and Charles Taylor, among others), and political psychology. Chapter 2 is a sweeping description of how large-scale