

when Catholic universities and hospitals regularly retain the services of union-busting law firms (in violation of “Economic Justice for All”), Catholic workers and institutions desperately need guidance on policies that would allow workers to exercise their right to organize for just working conditions.

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Paul, Politics, and New Creation: Reconsidering Paul and Empire. Najeeb T. Haddad. Lanham: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2021. vii + 213 pages. \$100.00

Najeeb Haddad’s *Paul, Politics, and New Creation* represents a revised doctoral dissertation, dealing with an important and yet controversial topic, namely, Paul’s relationship to the Roman Empire and the expression of that relationship in Paul’s letters. Haddad’s volume consists of five chapters. The first chapter pertains to Paul’s relationship to the Roman Empire in general, taking a look at the state of the question. Haddad argues that many of the scholars who focus on Paul as subversive rely on a paucity of evidence to support this view. It is difficult to reconcile the content of his epistles with an anti-Rome-imperial agenda.

Haddad’s study “is a critique of counter-imperial interpretations of Paul” (2). He argues that “Paul’s relationship to the civic authority is much more nuanced than previously suggested” (2–3). Paul’s language is often more cosmic than political, plus he does not condemn every aspect of the present age but finds some value in it as well. Haddad explains that “parallel language does not necessarily imply a particular meaning. In this context, parallel language does not suggest a Pauline counter-imperial agenda. Parallel language can, possibly, inform a specific situation, but one cannot come to conclusions without understanding linguistic and rhetorical contexts of the Pauline texts themselves.” (24)

The second chapter looks at Paul’s rhetoric. Haddad maintains that “Paul does not undermine the civic authority by incorporating any of the rhetorical devices associated with figured speech in these passages” (43). The third chapter examines the way Rome became autocratic. The fourth chapter is important because it takes a look at the “church” in Paul’s understanding, in light of Greco-Roman assemblies, as well as in light of the Septuagint. It becomes clear that Paul’s understanding is something new, beyond either what was found in Greece, Rome, or the Septuagint (110). The argument is that ancient Greco-Roman assemblies are more likely the background than the Septuagint. For Paul, it was about living peacefully with everyone, as they were centered on Jesus’s message.

I would pose one challenge here, and that would be that I think the Septuagintal background might be more significant than this chapter concedes, especially because of the context of *ekklesia* in the Septuagint, its use as a translation of Hebrew *qahal*, and the importance of this Old Testament ritual or liturgical community to what Paul discusses, e.g., in 1 Corinthians. The fifth chapter on creation and the new creation was quite illuminating. For Paul, as the chapter makes clear, the *kosmos* is creation where sin reigns. Jesus, however, reshapes “the course of history” (140) in Paul’s thought, and thus we have Jesus as new Adam initiating a new creation (165).

Haddad’s conclusion is spot on and provides a good summary of the volume as a whole, as when he explains: “For Paul, you were either among those ‘being saved’ or those ‘perishing’; you are either ‘in Christ’ or ‘in Adam.’ All things not ‘in Christ’ will eventually fade away leaving only the *new creation* in Christ. ... Though Paul wrote in a society heavily influenced by the Roman Empire ... the empire has remarkably little role in Paul’s eschatological soteriology” (175).

Haddad’s volume makes an important contribution to Pauline studies and would make a fine textbook for a course on Paul, or on politics and the Bible. Any scholar interested in this topic will have to contend with Haddad’s volume, which is erudite, and yet any graduate student would find the book sufficiently engaging and accessible.

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The Fullness of Free Time: A Theological Account of Leisure and Recreation in the Moral Life. By Conor M. Kelly. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2020. ix + 249 pages. \$159.95 hardcover, \$39.95 paperback, \$39.95 ebook.

Conor Kelly’s erudite and accessible vision of free time joins the ongoing theological and philosophical conversation whose diverse voices include Marva Dawn (*Keeping the Sabbath Holy*), Courtney Goto (*The Grace of Playing*), James Evans, Jr. (*Playing: Christian Explorations of Daily Living*), David Miller (*God and Games*), and Robert Johnston (*The Christian at Play*). Kelly “seeks to provide a deeply theological vision for the fullness of free time and then explore how the resources of theological ethics, especially the Catholic understanding of solidarity, can help moral agents transform leisure and recreation for themselves and in their communities in order to make this goodness of free time more apparent and appealing” (xiv). He describes these two aspects of free time over eight chapters which culminate in a compelling conclusion emphasizing the moral obligation of free time and less freedom for personal gratification.