

suggests. The argument presented is more clearly understood if parts I, VI, and VII are read consecutively, and parts II–V are seen as distinct essays for those interested in the historical context of Jesus' death and resurrection, or in the social and political implications of a nonviolent atonement. It is the argument advanced in parts I, VI, and VII that elicits a theological response, and it is that argument that must strike us if this collection of essays is to aid our consideration of the place and impact of violence in Christian theories of the atonement.

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*Tell Me, O Muse: The Song of Deborah (Judges 5) in the Light of Heroic Poetry*

Charles L. Echols. New York: Continuum Press, 2008.

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Reviewed by Kelly J. Murphy, Emory University

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The goal of Echols's detailed study of Judges 5 is to "demonstrate that the Song has been reworked, and that it was originally a heroic victory song" (12). Judges 5 is a chapter whose text and meaning is notably obscure, and despite continuous study there is no scholarly consensus concerning its key aspects, including linguistic complexities, unity, and, most importantly for Echols, genre. He argues that ascertaining the genre of the text is essential to its interpretation, maintaining that previous classifications of the Song have led to misunderstandings, especially concerning the role of Yahweh in the poem. Echols attempts to rectify previous generic classifications through a comparative study of heroic poetry. He argues that Yahweh's role in the original form of the Song is unusual, as the original text lacks any explicit statements crediting the deity for victory over the Canaanites. Instead, the actions of the human characters are the focal point. Echols argues that this is because the original text of Judges 5 belongs to the genre of "heroic victory song," in which "the overarching purpose is to praise the human characters, who predominate, for their actions" (198). Echols's work is neatly divided into two parts.

Part I includes a detailed survey of arguments on the age of the Song, an excellent annotated translation of the text, and a thorough discussion of the various arguments regarding its unity, a crucial issue since, as Echols upholds, it impacts the understanding of the poem as either sacred or profane and speaks to the issues of genre, authorship, date, and occasion. Echols offers a thorough examination of the arguments both for and against the poem's unity, concluding that the religious material found in the Song was added later. The original poem was comprised, he posits, of vv. 6–30 (minus "Bless Yahweh!" in v. 9c) and was not overtly religious but largely secular. Echols then compares the presence of Yahweh in the Song with the

presence of Yahweh in Judges 4, the Song of the Sea, 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18), and Hab 3, concluding that, unlike Judges 5, where the human figures predominate and are given credit for victory, these other biblical texts consistently attribute deliverance from threat to Yahweh. Part I concludes with a discussion of various attempts by scholars to reassert the prominence of the deity in the Song. Echols argues against this and instead concludes that “the minimal depiction of Yahweh is intentional on the part of the poet” (130).

Part II of the book contains a comprehensive analysis of heroic poetry, investigating examples of the genre from various times and locales. In attempting to discover the true genre of the Song, Echols establishes that it should not be classified as narrative heroic poetry, though it does resemble this genre, due to the fact that the purpose of the Song is incongruous with the purpose of the narrative type. According to Echols, heroic narrative “endeavors primarily to entertain by relating a story of a great action” (162), while the general purpose of the Song, in contrast, is to praise. Echols maintains that this *raison d'être* identifies the Song as lyric poetry and subsequently offers a detailed examination of the subgenres of the lyric family. He concludes that the Song corresponds most closely to the subgenre of “victory song.” This is due, in part to its battle context, and in part to the dominant praise of the heroes and heroines in the text. Echols further refines the classification to “heroic victory song,” the purpose of which is to praise human characters for their actions. Thus, this generic classification explains why Yahweh plays such a small role in the original Song.

In addition to explaining this difficulty of the text, Echols's classification of Judg 5 as a “heroic victory song” proffers a heretofore unidentified literary genre within the Hebrew Bible. Such a proposition may suggest that not all of the texts found in the biblical canon were originally intended for worship or liturgical purposes. Echols argues that the Song was first used in a non-religious setting to praise the heroes for “a battle of great significance for the settlement period” (198). Echols even has an audience in mind, writing that “... possibilities include all of the ten tribes named in vv. 14–18, the six which participated, Zebulun and Naphtali, or perhaps one of the participating tribes” (199). Thus Echols argues that the original Song may provide a glimpse into the social context out of which it arose, and serves as a reminder that the sacred and the profane were not always inseparable in ancient Israel. The Song was later altered by the addition of abundant praise to Yahweh, resulting in the poem as it now stands.

Echols's work offers a new, thorough, and insightful analysis of Judg 5. The discussion of the text's critical issues is firmly reinforced by comprehensive knowledge of and engagement with scholarship on the text. The annotated translation is highly detailed, and the depiction of the various debates regarding the age and unity of the Song are methodical. Echols's proposal of the original Song as “heroic

victory song” is tantalizing, especially because it provides a literary explanation for Yahweh’s obscure role within the text. However, reflections on the poem as offering a window into the social context out of which Judges 5 may have emerged are less convincing. Given recent deliberations over the historicity of the book of Judges, it seems doubtful that it is possible to identify exactly when and to whom the Song might have first been sung as specifically as Echols maintains. Though it is likely that the book of Judges contains kernels of historical veracity, this possibility can neither be confirmed nor disproven. The strength of Echols’s work lies not in his attempt to pinpoint the historical context of the Song, but rather in his thorough attention to detail, his excellent engagement with previous work on Judg 5, and his proposal of a new genre within the Hebrew Bible.

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*Gods in the Global Village*

Lester B. Kurtz, 2nd edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2007.

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Reviewed by Nathan Loewen, McGill University

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Lester B. Kurtz is known for his writings on conflict and religion. They could be characterized as “critical sociology”. While *Gods in the Global Village* presents an introduction to the sociology of religion, it is more a vehicle for Kurtz’s assessment of the role of the world’s religions in constructing a global community. Since Kurtz’s writing is carried by his vision of global unity, the unpleasantly dull nature of the “introduction to ...” the textbook is avoided. This same drive leads Kurtz to cursorily run through major themes and developments in the sociology of religion. If used as a textbook, however, these points are occasions for further research.

Kurtz’s accomplishment is to synthesize existing sociological investigations of religion into a discourse on how the world’s societies are re-organizing their daily lives relative to the conditions of globalization and the continuing structural differentiation of societies. The discourse takes a macro perspective, primarily studying five of the world’s religious traditions—Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Islamic—as points of reference which organize its analyses and hypotheses. Popularized analytical metaphors are used to good effect: sacred canopy (Peter Berger), religious marketplace (Rodney Stark), and elective affinities (Max Weber). Kurtz’s hypotheses, discussed below, modulate the discipline’s consensus on secularization.

Kurtz depicts the worlds’ situation as one of “common crisis” (Kurtz 2007, ix): the threat of nuclear war is augmented by the actions of irregular militias and terrorists, and, the last 50 years of global economic development have brought about