

for pleasant reading. Diefendorf asks the right questions and cautiously analyzes her data. She also evokes the sights, sounds, smells, and the *mentalité* of sixteenth-century Paris, using vivid imagery, gripping narrative, and a sensitive portrayal of the feelings of both Catholics and Huguenots.

Specialists in sixteenth-century France and the Reformation will find much to ponder in this slim volume, while researchers will benefit from its extensive endnotes (55 pp.) and bibliography (27 pp.) containing nearly 600 sources. For graduate and undergraduate students alike, *Beneath the Cross* will enhance their understanding of the Protestant Reformation and socio-religious conflicts in Early Modern France.

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Droge, Arthur J., and James D. Tabor. *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992. xii + 203 pp. \$25.00.

May a person ever voluntarily terminate his or her own life? The dissolution of familial responsibility for the aged and infirm and medical technology's ability to maintain basic biological functions, often at high cost economically and emotionally have brought this issue into the consciousness of the American populace. The exploits of Jack Kevorkian have recently focused the gaze of America via the media and the courts, and promise continued attention in the years ahead. This provides the backdrop of this book by Arthur Droge and James Tabor. They attempt to reconfigure the current debate concerning voluntary death through an historical investigation of Judaism and Christianity in antiquity: "Ours is not an attempt to find ancient answers to modern questions; rather, by interrogating the ways in which self-killing was understood in the ancient world, we ourselves may choose to conceptualize suicide differently" (14). In sum, they argue that "voluntary death", "the act resulting from an individual's intentional decision to die, either by his own agency, by another's, or by contriving the circumstances in which death is the known, ineluctable result" (4) was readily accepted, even honored, by Greco-Roman society, Jews, and Christians until Augustine reversed the ethic in his polemic against the North African Donatists. As a result, according to the authors, we may draw no definitional distinction between martyrdom and suicide: the distinction rests strictly on personal commitments (187-88).

Tabor and Droge work through a mass of material on "voluntary death, spanning the roots of western culture in Israelite and Greek antiquities. In Greek philosophical schools, only the Pythagoreans and the neo-Platonists, opposed voluntary death. Instead, the debate centered upon the proper grounds for self-destruction. The Hebrew Bible never censors voluntary death, but merely records such instances as an acceptable

practice. In the Hellenistic era, however, a shift begins that sees death as a way to acquire life in the world to come. Thus, within Josephus, Philo, and the early Rabbinic materials, "voluntary death, given the proper circumstances, not only is noble but also can lead to life in the world to come" (106).

The authors devote the rest of the book to early Christian attitudes towards voluntary death. Jesus' death as voluntary (and thus noble) in the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John, became paradigmatic for the early Christians. Paul's reflection on death mirror Seneca's: he chooses life, not because voluntary death is wrong, but because it is better for *others* (not himself) for him to remain alive (Phil 1:21-26). Early Christian martyrs thus embraced voluntary death, radically transvaluing reality from this world to the next. Martyrdom, even voluntary martyrdom, became an early Christian ideal, a means of obtaining the "crown of immortality." Augustine drastically alters the traditional Christian position on voluntary death to discredit the Donatists. Drawing upon Plato, not the Bible, he argues that only God may separate the body from the soul. Thereby voluntary death, now distinct from "martyrdom" becomes a "damnable and detestable crime" (179).

Tabor and Droge have convincingly shown how Augustine radically altered ethical thinking on voluntary death within Western culture. No longer can one uncritically appeal to the "Judeo-Christian tradition's prohibition against voluntary death" as a sufficient warrant in the current ethical debate. The second thesis, that we may not therefore draw a distinction between martyrdom and suicide, however, is much more problematic.

Although insistent upon the conceptual difference between antiquity and today, contemporary concerns for "voluntary death" as an "individual act" cloud Tabor and Droge's conceptual categories for the phenomenon in antiquity. First, the authors never adequately relate "voluntary death" to the Mediterranean culture of "honor" and "shame" which the practice presumes. It is interesting to note, for instance, the relationship of women to "voluntary death." At Massada, the men murdered their wives and children, and preserved for themselves the "honor" of voluntary death lest they be "shamed" by the Roman pillaging of their property (i.e., their wives and children). Outside a few isolated cases, only within Christianity could women have the "honor" of a noble, voluntary death. Closely related, Tabor and Droge problematically isolate "voluntary death" from issues of power and the political structures of antiquity (and concurrently, today). Voluntary death was the ultimate protest against political regimes who depended upon structures of violence to legitimize their oppression of others. In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Germanicus infuriates the crowd by pulling the lion upon him, rather than passively accept the "justice" and "due process" of the legal system. In a real sense, voluntary death exposed the regime's claims to power as spurious and tenuous. When the regime becomes "Christian," as in Augustine's North Africa, ethical considerations

must legitimate the state-oppression in the name of Christianity. The distinction between self-inflicted death and martyrdom becomes convenient for such a purpose.

In sum, dynamics of power complicate Tabor and Droge's notion of voluntary death. Once factored into the analysis, the distinction between suicide and martyrdom reemerges as the distinction between death of convenience and a death of resistance, reactive self-destruction when no other options seem available versus active self-destruction to reveal the nature of power that inflicts oneself and others. Not only does such a distinction ring true for those in antiquity, it may also help us see what is truly at stake in the contemporary debate as voluntary death becomes more and more convenient.

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Erickson, Millard J. *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991. 663 pp. \$29.95.

Millard J. Erickson has once more written an important book. The various pluralistic tendencies with which contemporary theology has to contend raise serious questions for almost every foundational orthodox Christian tenet. Christology is no exception. In the last two decades there have been sufficient problematic developments to warrant a careful rethinking of the orthodox approach to the incarnation. *The Word Became Flesh* seeks to give an affirmative answer to the question of whether the traditional doctrine that Jesus of Nazareth is fully divine and fully human can be stated in a way that is intellectually justifiable in the context of the current problems of Christology.

The extent of these difficulties is particularly evident in three areas. Much of the challenge to orthodox Christology stems from the use of historical criticism which today views with suspicion the words and deeds traditionally attributed to Jesus. There have also been widespread social and political changes which regard as inadequate the orthodox Christology done by westerners, and middle-class male westerners at that. Finally, there are increasing suggestions that a cultural paradigm shift from the modern to the post-modern period considers that old ways of doing Christology no longer speak to this generation.

In response to this new situation, Erickson has divided his book into three main sections. The first part is an attempt to understand the basic orthodox interpretation of the person of Christ as it developed from the biblical materials up to the Council of Chalcedon. Both the biblical presentation and the account of the Christological controversies are illuminating. Part Two, "Problems of Incarnational Christology," examines and evaluates several contemporary Christological views and the specific