Miroslav Volf. *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good.* Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011.

A Public Faith engages three central questions: How does the Christian faith "malfunction"? What does it mean for Christians to "live well"? How do Christians share the vision of "living well" with a diversity of others – particularly those of other faiths? (xvii). In the first three chapters, Miroslav Volf argues that faith should be prophetic. A prophetic faith requires followers to "ascend" in order to receive a message, but then "return" and convey it to others (9). When faith disproportionally favors or even eliminates "ascend" or "return," it malfunctions.

Faith that is not malfunctioning influences the entire life of followers, including their approach to work and politics. Volf names this pervasive approach a "thick" faith (40). Countering claims that religion produces violence, he argues that what is needed for peace is more faith rather than less, and specifically more "thick" faith (40). Mennonites will hear many familiar sentiments in Volf's description of a "thick" faith that leads to peace. The author includes love of God and neighbor, self-giving love for the sake of others, hospitality, forgiveness, and placing judgment and wrath solely into the hands of God. He further argues that most religions engage in peace building, but the media and the public fixate on the violence done in the name of religion rather than the peaceful acts (53).

Love of God and neighbor, mentioned in relation to a "thick" faith, also serves to answer Volf's second question, concerning the definition of living well. Chapter four addresses this question and argues that living well requires Christians to love God and love neighbor (58). Only this way can followers of Christ flourish. Relying heavily on Augustine, Volf argues that loving God and neighbor results not only in our own joy but in compassionately seeking the well-being and well-living of others (71). The Christian hope that everyone should flourish and live well fuels missionary endeavors, and it answers Volf's third question, how to engage with a diversity of perspectives.

When Christians love their neighbor, they should want to share the wisdom of how to live a flourishing life. Sharing it with others requires neither accommodation to, nor retreat from, the world, but dynamically engaging

culture (96). Engaging culture requires accepting some aspects of it while rejecting or transforming others (91-92). By engaging with culture, Christians recognize that they are both "givers" and "receivers" of wisdom (111). Acting as both giver and receiver grounds Volf's vision for inter-religion dialogue, religion in the political sphere, and the relationship between church and state, discussed in chapter seven. The author argues that religions should neither seek a common ground nor emphasize their differences. The former leads to conformity, the latter removes all commonalities between religions (130). Instead, religions should practice "hermeneutical hospitality" in which they engage each other's sacred texts, practice generosity, and live as "companions rather than combatants" (136). Religions will not all agree, but "the point is to help them argue productively as friends rather than destructively as enemies" (137).

Finally, in regard to the political realm, political structures cannot be devoid of religion, since attempts along that line merely replace religion with a different worldview, secularism (125). Instead, all perspectives, including those of secularism and various religions, need to speak in "one's own voice" and bring "the wisdom of their own traditions to bear on public decisions and debates" (130).

Several aspects of this argument echo Mennonite history and theology. Volf seeks to root religion in love of neighbor and to make faith a part of all aspects of life, and he views faith as a source for peace rather than violence. He provides a particularly interesting conversation partner in seeking to understand and challenge Mennonites' history of removing themselves from the world. Approaching faith as a combination of "ascent" and "return" brings together often highly debated aspects of Christianity such as spirituality, prayer, worship, mission, and service. The author's analysis of faith malfunctions is perhaps the most thought-provoking element of this book: examining faith according to malfunctions would generate self-reflection for individual denominations or even specific church communities.

Nevertheless, Volf's argument could have benefited from a more in-depth discussion of his visions for faith. In his approach to culture, for example, the author names slavery as a cultural aspect that Christianity rejected, but he does not adequately address Christianity's long history of supporting it (92). His work could spark discussion in denominations and

individual churches, but his vision requires further development before implementation.

Sarah Freeman, PhD candidate, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario

John Kampen. *Wisdom Literature. Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

John Kampen, Van Bogard Dunn Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Methodist Theological School in Ohio and a noted specialist in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, proposes in *Wisdom Literature* a remarkable treatment of the Qumran wisdom texts. The compositions examined are *Instruction, Mysteries, The Evil Seductress, Wisdom Composition, CryptA Words of the Makil to All Sons of Dawn, Sapiential-Didactic Work A, Ways of Righteousness, Instruction-Like Composition B, Beatitudes,* and *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*.

The book's introduction begins with a brief yet informative summary of the first forty years of research pertaining to the study of wisdom and wisdom literature at Qumran. This survey highlights the difficulty inherent in identifying whether a text is truly "sapiential" or not. In fact, much of the early work done on the Dead Sea Scrolls (hereafter "DSS") tended to dismiss any significant link between these texts and wisdom as such. Early researchers more readily tended to associate even such a seemingly sapiential word as "knowledge" with the texts of Gnosticism. As Kampen points out, the reluctance to connect these texts to the biblical wisdom tradition was essentially due to the relative scarcity of the word "wisdom" in the texts.

Following this survey, the author offers a detailed discussion of form-critical factors used to identify a DSS wisdom corpus. The relevance of this analysis is not limited to the study of the DSS but proves significant for biblical studies as well.