

Ryan S. Schellenberg. *Abject Joy: Paul, Prison, and the Art of Making Do*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

In his Preface, Ryan Schellenberg, Associate Professor of New Testament at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, explains that *Abject Joy* is “about punitive confinement in the Roman world,” and thus “about constrained and abjected bodies” and “about survival, about ways of making do” (ix). Still, it will treat one prisoner and one prison text in particular—Paul’s letter to the Philippians, insofar as it is among the few extant voices from prison itself. As a “study of the historical figure of Paul,” the investigation seeks to avoid reading Paul as a moral exemplar, avoiding idealizing accounts that valorize Paul but also denigrating accounts that might vilify, by employing a comparative method that puts Paul alongside other prisoners using historical and more recent ethnographic accounts.

The Introduction names the specific interest and posture of the book, as a contribution to the “social history of emotions” by taking up Philippians as “a particularly intriguing instance of a prisoner’s discomfiting joy” (4). Philippians is “first, a biographical artifact, residue of a particular life” which witnesses “among other things, to his emotions” not “in the first place” to Paul’s “thought” (15). Accordingly, while the role of social location is taken seriously (insofar as “particular emotional dispositions emerge in the context of particular material and cultural conditions” [19]), Paul is not treated under the category of “political prisoner,” but instead is considered more generally to be in relation to “a shared cluster of experiences associated with prison—subjugation, violence, humiliation, loss of autonomy, deprivation, pain, fear” (24). Schellenberg presents Philippians as “an epistolary attempt to communicate and regulate emotion,” “an epistolary vehicle for the cultivation of positive affect” (20, 22), quite apart from any possible instrumental agenda or rhetorical aims. The book is thus not only punctuated with multiple warnings against idealizing, valorizing, or hagiographical accounts of Paul’s prison experience (even as he concedes that emphasizing his own paradigmatic virtue begins with Paul himself [xi]), but also self-consciously positioned in opposition to “political” or “theological” readings of Paul, since these so easily lead to valorizing accounts, or neglect to consider the “emotional” dimension.

Chapter 1 seeks to take Paul out of the realm of hagiography and legend, highlighting that Paul's multiple detentions (2 Cor 11:23) are to be understood in the context of "local magistrates and their non-elite detainees," arguing for a strict distinction between "Roman" or imperial officials and "local officials." The latter can hardly "be conceptualized as representatives of empire." Still, the incarceration setting of Philippians might be an exception to this general pattern (39). Chapter 2 elaborates on the phenomenon of imprisonment within the broader violence of the Greek and Roman worlds, while probing Paul's claim that "to die is gain" (Phil 1:23), alongside his vision and hope for glorious bodily transformation (Phil 3:20-21). Chapter 3 explains the complex roles of prisons and the prisoner in the social imagination of the Greek and Roman worlds as the backdrop to Paul's own self-depiction as a prisoner and his confident boldness in defense of the gospel (Phil 1:20). Chapter 4 elucidates Paul's claim of contentment (Phil 4:11) as a way "to exercise his residual agency, to perform an unabjected self" (22) in light of modern prison writing and ethnography. Chapter 5 interrogates Paul's multiple expressions of joy in the framework of ancient letters among friends and kin, to comparison with modern prisoners' expressions of joy and in light of recent studies of collective emotion and their regulation.

Schellenberg is to be applauded for pursuing, as a biblical scholar, a study of Paul in the framework of the ethnography and the neuroscience of emotion, making a distinctive contribution to the emerging investigation of the "history of emotion." The positioning of the study, then, in opposition to theological, political, or otherwise-framed historical accounts of Paul can be seen as a corrective, an attempt to elevate the fundamental significance of the emotional dimension in the biographical "residue" that are Paul's own prison letters. At the same time, it seems not an easy thing to try to neatly disentangle the emotional components of such letters from their instrumental purposes (even as the study of emotion also confirms that the affective domain is inevitably interconnected with and inseparable from the cognitive), and indeed the reconstruction of Paul's affect will remain as elusive as Paul's conscious rhetorical intentionality. Accordingly, the reader wishes for even further explanation, among the extant (undisputed) prison letters of Paul, why there is so little "emotional" content in Philemon (even as there is evident relationality), and so much in Philippians. Moreover, some further

exploration of Paul's apparently later reflections on his trauma (including prison experiences) would also seem appropriate in this connection (e.g., 2 Cor 1-7, 11-12; Rom 5, 8). For instance, the Roman triumph is helpfully explained in connection with humiliated prisoners of war, but Paul's own use of this (political) image of captivity as a self-depiction is not explored (2 Cor 2:14-16). Finally, what is missing is an interrogation into Paul's self-perception, specifically as a movement leader (as opposed to simply being a purveyor of Christ-faith and having a "social network") in connection with the challenge of the "regulation" of collective emotion in the context of the abjection of prison.

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Darin W. Snyder Belousek and Margaret R. Pfeil, eds. *Intercessory Prayer and the Communion of Saints: Mennonite and Catholic Perspectives*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2022.

That this book comes as the latest in the Bridgefolk Series will be enough to commend it to many readers. The Bridgefolk Conferences, gatherings of Mennonites and Catholics, have been a sign of hope for many of us and not only members of those two denominations. This volume gathers papers from two conference occasions in 2015 and 2016. The title of this volume accurately indicates the subject matter.

The 2015 conference presentations all engage with an inspiring story of prayer and healing. In 1987, Jun Yanada, the son of a Japanese Mennonite pastor, Takashi Yamada, was diagnosed with aggressive leukemia. He began treatment in the Japanese Red Cross Hospital in Nagoya near the Catholic Nanzan University and Monastery where Jun was a student studying the history of early Christian art. His professor was Fr. Alfonso M. Fausone, SVD. At the time, Jun's brother, Nozomu, was a student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana. In a detailed account, enabled by the careful research skills of Alan Kreider, the story of the illness and the