

# REVIEWS

## Flawed Fruit

*The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John: The City as Symbol of Life with God* by Bruce J. Malina.  
Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000.

In *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John*, Bruce J. Malina applies the cultural anthropological model that he presents in *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (1993) to the final vision in the final book of the New Testament, Revelation. The title and even the text on the back cover suggest that the analysis contained therein will be insightful and not laden with physical interpretations of what the apostle John clearly presents as a symbol or sign (1:1). In referring to the final two signs, the New Jerusalem and the marriage of the city and the Lamb, the back cover states that *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John* (hereafter, *New Jerusalem*) “explains the significance of the celestial marriage of the City and the Lamb” and that the result is a “set of reading scenarios that describe and explain Revelation’s closing visions that mediate the theology of John the Seer.”

The reading scenarios presented in *New Jerusalem* are based upon an anthropological model that grants analytical primacy to the impact of the first-century Mediterranean social order upon the writers of the New Testament. But its misplaced over-reliance on this model ultimately strips *New Jerusalem* of any credible explanatory value as it pertains to the visions of the apostle John. Very little explication of John’s visions is presented as the book attempts to force the content of these visions into the broader framework of a Mediterranean world view. Its focus on this world view causes the book to lose all sight of the significance of John’s signs, which are not rooted primarily in the broader amalgam of Mediterranean culture, but rather in the much narrower, and even historically divergent, sub-strata of this culture, the social and religious mores of the Jewish people. Thus, rather than seeing the city as a continuation and even consummation of the reality of the tabernacle, involving the mutual habitation of God in redeemed humanity and redeemed humanity in God, the New Jerusalem is presented as a Mediterranean city that serves only as a symbol of a new earth in which God is among humanity. No clear distinction even is made between God’s redeemed and regenerated elect and the nations that walk by the city’s light (Rev. 21:24, 26; 22:2). And rather than seeing the marriage of the city and the

Lamb as the consummation of the union and mingling of God and redeemed humanity, this marriage is cast as a reference to a Mediterranean astrological phenomenon, a constellational alignment, which apparently signals a cosmic renewal that will occur with the advent of the new heaven and new earth. (See the April 2000 edition of *Affirmation & Critique* for a fuller development of the significance of the New Jerusalem as a consummate sign of God’s eternal economy.)

Throughout the course of *New Jerusalem*, there is an explicit call for a considerate reading of the text of Revelation. However, its own reading is not well-grounded in an understanding of the Old Testament types that the apostle John, a believer of Jewish descent, fully develops in his symbolic and visionary writings. Rather than discarding the sacred writings of his Jewish forefathers, John presents Christ as the fulfillment of all the types and shadows in the Old Testament. Without a detailed understanding and reference to these types, particularly the types of the tabernacle and the temple, any reading of Revelation will lack significance, no matter how much it is seemingly grounded in an understanding of the social order of the Mediterranean world. There are even instances in which the book simply misrepresents the details of the text itself.

*New Jerusalem*, rather than beginning with the text of Revelation, begins with a presentation and defense of Malina’s anthropological model. Embedded within this presentation is a call for considerate reading; that is, a reading that is circumscribed by an understanding of the social systems in which the text was generated.

All spoken and written patterns of language derive their meaning from some social system....What this means for reading a document such as the book of Revelation is that in order to be considerate readers, we must bring to our reading an understanding of the social system of the author. (4-5)

The social system that *New Jerusalem* finds most appropriate for considerate reading is that of first-century Mediterranean society. Without a knowledge and understanding of this social system, *New Jerusalem* argues that many improper readings of the text can arise, readings which are more reflective of the culture and society of the reader than those of the author. Labeling such readings as anachronistic and ethnocentric, Malina points out that inconsiderate readings abound in the interpretation of Revelation.

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Even though first-century Mediterraneans lived in a ruralized, peasant society, characterized by a present-time orientation, readers find endless reference to the distant future (even the twentieth and twenty-first centuries) in this book. This is extreme anachronism, in face of the fact that John tells of “what must soon take place” (1:1 and 22:6). (5)

**A**n emphasis on present-time orientation pervades *New Jerusalem*, largely, it seems, to counter the tendency of many evangelical end-time prognosticators to imbue current events with prophetic significance. *New Jerusalem's* disdain for such readings is evident.

Now if the book of Revelation describes only the author's present and what is forthcoming soon on the basis of that present, how do so many people find references to the future in that book? Of course, the answer is that they dismiss the author and the original audience as insignificant and presume that the book speaks directly to them and their times. Theologically, such readers do not really believe in an inspired biblical author but in an inspired biblical reader (see Malina 1991). Whatever meaning they might come up with is the meaning intended by the God who is inspiring them in their reading. Such readings are often allegorical (referring to something other than the person, object, time, or place to which the author refers). (6)

*New Jerusalem* should be commended for its willingness to confront readings that, often by their ludicrous interpretations and false prognostications, trivialize the sacred text, reducing it to a guidebook for averting apocalyptic consequences. *New Jerusalem* repudiates such futuristic readings of Revelation by asserting that “first-century Mediterraneans had no functioning abstract future category at all” (5), and by emphasizing that Revelation speaks only of “things that must quickly take place” (1:1; 22:6). *New Jerusalem*, consequently, limits its interpretation of the text to events occurring at or near the time of the writing of Revelation, and it derides any attempt to imbue Revelation with prophetic content. In an effort to lessen the appeal of futuristic interpretations, however, *New Jerusalem* advances an unfortunate claim that blatantly undermines faith in the divine inspiration of the New Testament.

And given what John the prophet has seen in his vision, all will take place “soon.” Yet the Bible consists of countless “predictions” of the forthcoming, many of which never occurred (for example, Luke 9:27: “But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God”; or Matthew 10:23: “For truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”) (6)

*New Jerusalem* suggests that the Bible should not be

viewed prophetically because some of its prophecies were not fulfilled. This is a high price to pay simply to buttress an argument for a present-time orientation in Revelation. It is an especially high price to pay because it is also false. Of the two examples of failed “predictions,” the first was fulfilled for the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the second will be fulfilled when Christ, as the Son of Man, comes the second time.

With an overwrought sense of having vanquished the proponents of a prophetic reading of Revelation, *New Jerusalem* then proceeds to reconstruct a more accurate reading model for the text, stating,

If contemporary persons are to be considerate readers of ancient documents, they must equip themselves with appropriate scenarios rooted in the social systems of the authors whose writings they intend to read. Otherwise the outcome of the reading process can only be misunderstanding or non-understanding....The understanding and interpretation of any sort of writing is ultimately rooted in a social system along with a set of scenarios sketching how the world of the author works. All interpretation, it would seem, requires such scenarios and ultimately rests on them. (10-11)

Rather than principally viewing Revelation as a divinely inspired text written by a believer of Jewish descent, *New Jerusalem* regards the larger Mediterranean social system as the hermeneutical key to interpreting Revelation. This emphasis drives *New Jerusalem* away from an investigation of the types in the Old Testament and toward conclusions that emphasize themes which bear little resemblance to items of the Christian faith. It is poor theology and in many respects not even very considerate cultural anthropology. In a forthcoming book, Shawn Kelley speaks of the importance of not assuming, as does Malina, that there is a fundamental cultural unity of Mediterranean culture, based on the concepts of honor and shame.

If we take seriously the existence of significant cultural diversity, then the best procedure may be to acknowledge the importance of honor in diverse ancient Mediterranean societies, and then proceed to the painful and complex task of reconstructing its various manifestations throughout the region. This is not the direction chosen by Malina and his colleagues. Instead they propose a specific definition of honor which they then apply to the New Testament. They constructed their definition by “lumping together those common qualities that Mediterranean people label as honorable” (ibid 26). The implication here is that the localized and temporal diversity, of which they are clearly aware, is not particularly significant. (5)

The need to acknowledge cultural diversity in the Mediterranean region is especially important when discussing

and attempting to explain texts written by authors of Jewish descent, especially authors who demonstrate a fidelity to and reliance upon the core Hebraic texts that define the essence of their cultural identity. From their inception as a race, the concept of separation has been a particular Jewish distinctive. In 1 Kings 8:53 Solomon highlights this distinctiveness: "For You have separated them from all the peoples of the earth to be Your inheritance, as You spoke through Moses Your servant, when You brought our fathers out from Egypt, O Lord Jehovah." In Leviticus 11:44 the theme of separation is linked to the sanctified and separated being of God Himself: "For I am Jehovah your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not defile yourselves with any of the swarming things that move upon the earth." First Peter 2:9 updates the theme of separation to the experience of the New Testament believers: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." In both the Old and New Testaments there is an emphasis on separation, not merely for the sake of separation, but rather so that God's chosen people could have fellowship with One whose holy nature is intrinsically apart from everything that is common and sinful. As a people for His possession, the imperative of separation for the physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob argues strongly against an anthropological formulation of a monolithic Mediterranean world view. It is an even greater disservice to attempt to apply this false monolithic formulation to the interpretation of biblical texts that by their very existence repudiate such an interpretive methodology.

*New Jerusalem*, assuming that it has established an appropriate framework for biblical interpretation, begins to apply it in chapter two in order to define the genre of the book of Revelation. It states, "A number of scholarly historians have called attention to the fact that the type of writing, imagery, and vocabulary of John's visions in the book of Revelation are typical of ancient astronomy and astrology" (16). This is in contrast to allegorical, historical, or prophetic interpretations.

Unfortunately, nearly all popular commentators look for theological relevance for today's Christians as they offer allegorical explanations....Some of these presumably are "historical," showing John's message to his oppressed and anxious churches, persecuted by Rome, alias Babylon. Others are "prophetic," demonstrating how John's words look precisely to the twenty-first century, with veiled but totally obvious reference to Russia, Washington, the oil-rich Middle East, and even to modern Israel. (16)

Instead of such interpretations, the prevalence of astrological themes in Mediterranean cultures leads *New Jerusalem*

to associate Revelation with themes that bear little resemblance to the thrust of the text.

The type of writing pattern or genre of Revelation is that of a first-century Mediterranean astronomical/astrological document describing the celestial visions of an Israelite astral prophet who believed in the resurrected Lord Jesus. His reading of the sky and its living entities provided him with a message for his fellow believers. The burden of his message is "do not be deceived"....The reason for this message is that he, in fact, knew what was going on, thanks to the celestial visions, which he shared with his fellow prophets, to be mediated to their respective churches. (20)

Where this ultimately leads *New Jerusalem* becomes apparent only in chapter four. Prior to this, however, the book devotes a considerable amount of space to describing the sociological and geographical features of ancient Mediterranean cities, presumably in the hope of arriving at a more considerate understanding of John's presentation of the New Jerusalem in chapters twenty-one and twenty-two of Revelation. For all of the pages devoted to describing ancient Mediterranean cities and in contrasting them to modern urban centers, there is very little development of the significance of the New Jerusalem as the consummate sign in the New Testament. The full extent, and perhaps the only development, is contained in the following paragraph:

As the figure representing the earth, the cosmic cube likewise points to the new Jerusalem as the new earth, the equivalent of perfection and harmony (as noted in 21:4-5). In ancient theory, the cube equally symbolizes perfect beauty; hence the new Jerusalem is likened to the beauty of an "adorned bride" (21:2). And as the proper locus of the presence of God in the holy of holies, the city is designated as temple (*skēnē*, literally "tent"), the place of the presence of God: "And God himself will be with them" (21:3). This statement clearly expresses what is distinctive about the new Jerusalem and hence the conspicuously salient quality of the new earth. All the other descriptive features of this final city are subordinate to the presence of God. (56)

Thus, the sign of the New Jerusalem is presented as a mere reference to the new earth in which God's presence will be found. This, however, clearly violates the distinction that the apostle John presents in Revelation 21:1-2:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

In addition to this fundamental error, *New Jerusalem*

never draws a clear distinction between the believers, who are, in fact, the New Jerusalem as the consummate dwelling place of God, the eternal habitation that He has been seeking (Isa. 66:1-2; Eph. 2:22), and those who dwell on the new earth. In addition to confusing the New Jerusalem with the new earth, *New Jerusalem* also misreads some of the few details of the holy city that it seeks to expound. For example, it speaks of “trees of life,” even though John speaks of only one tree, which typifies the unique Christ as our source and supply.

The water of life and the trees of life presumably nourish those living in the city in their endless existence. Only God is essentially immortal; humans need to drink and eat of whatever sources provide them with continued life. In case of illness, the leaves of the trees of life work equally well. (59-60)

The “life with God” in the subtitle is presented as a purely physical phenomenon that is quite reminiscent of the traditional understanding of the significance of the New Jerusalem. “Life for the residents of this sky city come into being is one of euphoric and endless ecstasy” (60). Given the fact that the New Jerusalem is presented as a sign of an idyllic life in the presence of God, a view that many Christians mistakenly hold, one is left to wonder if anything has really been added to the discourse on the New Jerusalem by all of the book’s appeals for considerate reading.

**I**n the final chapter, the marriage of the city and the Lamb is explained. The explanation, however, is so contrived that it seems more pagan than Christian or even Jewish. This wedding, rather than being a sign of God’s spiritual union with His chosen, redeemed, transformed, and glorified believers, is equated to an astrological alignment of the constellation Aries (the Ram) and a constellation “known to the ancients as ‘The Wedding of the Gods,’ which is located in the vicinity of Cancer” (71). The marriage in Revelation, thus, is interpreted to be “a celestial conjunction of the cosmic Lamb and the celestial city,” which could be labeled “a ‘wedding,’ albeit astronomical” (73). Since John, as “an astral prophet in the Jesus tradition, [who] reads the traditional Middle Eastern skyscape through Israelite lenses” (75), is apparently referring to this conjunction in “his altered state of consciousness experience” (19), the traditional Middle Eastern understanding of the significance of this constellational conjunction governs the interpretation in *New Jerusalem*.

The fact is that the very mention of the wedding of the Lamb with its celestial bride would clue the astute astral reader to the advent of the new sky and the new land....The fact that the Lamb is in conjunction with the city at the point where the Lamb began its cosmic career points to the onset of the cosmic (re)newal that the ancients expected. (73)

The cultural-anthropological model upon which *New Jerusalem* is based is widely regarded as ground-breaking, and the book in which this model is presented, *The New Testament World*, is widely read and assigned in courses covering New Testament topics. Even without regard for the considerations raised, for example, by Shawn Kelley, about the appropriateness of a monolithic model of Mediterranean cultural unity, if the application of this model produces interpretations of biblical texts that fundamentally diverge from the texts themselves, it is difficult to conclude that there is much utility to this methodology. A tree, in this case, Malina’s model, is known by its fruit, and *New Jerusalem* presents some fruit, in this case, an interpretation of Revelation, that is fundamentally flawed.

by John Pester

### Work Cited

Kelley, Shawn. “Honor, Shame, and the Revival of Orientalism.” Chapter 1 of a forthcoming book.

### Beginning to See the Body of Christ

*The Body: Being Light in Darkness*, by Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992.

**C**harles Colson’s book *The Body: Being Light in Darkness* (hereafter, *Body*) is an insightful exposé of shortcomings among Christians today with respect to the important scriptural truths that all believers are members of the Body of Christ and that the goal of our salvation is to bring us practically into Christ’s Body for the accomplishment of God’s purpose. *Body* provides evidence, both anecdotal and statistical, that the majority of Christians today pay little or no regard to God’s goal: the Body. It analyzes basic passages in the Word concerning the Body and attempts to show how Christians today can be brought into the experience of the Body. Because *Body* neglects the deeper, organic teachings of Scripture concerning the Body and seems to lack complete revelation of this central truth, its recommendations are not as helpful as they could be. The reader is left convicted of the need for a change in attitude and practice with respect to the Body but is also frustrated because *Body* does not adequately cover the scriptural revelations about the Body or the biblical pattern for living in the Body.

### An Indictment of Christian Practices Today

Much of *Body* is an indictment of the situation among Christians in the United States today. The first problem is that modern Christians understand the church to be a physical building rather than the living Body of Christ.

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No perception is more firmly rooted in our culture than that the church is a building....We call the place where we worship, *the* church. And when we say we are “building a church,” we mean we are constructing a facility, not that we are building men and women in spiritual maturity. ...This is no harmless colloquialism. It both presupposes and conditions our view of the church, creating what some have aptly called the “edifice complex,” wherein the importance and success of the church is directly measured by the size and grandeur of the structure itself....This perception of the church as a building is only a symptom of a much broader problem—a genuine identity crisis. Not only do we see the church as bricks and mortar; we also misunderstand its character and its biblical purpose and mission....This confusion strips the church of its authority. (30)

*Body* cites a 1991 poll of pastors who were asked how Christ would rate the church if He were to return today.

Less than half of 1 percent queried said that He would rate them as highly effective; 43 percent believed He would find them respectable, if not wholly successful; while 53 percent said Christ would rate the church as having little positive impact on souls and society. (31)

Because we do not know who and what we are as Christians, *Body* notes, “Our *raison d’être* is confused, our mission obscured, and our existence as a people in jeopardy. Worst of all, our leaders know it—but seem unable or unwilling to do anything about it” (31).

Another major problem among Christians today, which comes as a corollary to the identity crisis in the church, is what *Body* calls “hot tub religion” (39). Most Christians are not interested in satisfying God’s heart; most do not care for God’s purpose and plan; most Christians are looking for something to make themselves feel good. As a result, *Body* documents a consumer mentality in the church.

Ask people what they look for in a church and the number one response is “fellowship.” Other answers range from “good sermons” to “the music program” to “youth activities for the kids” to “it makes me feel good.” People flit about in search of what suits their taste at the moment. It’s what some have called the ‘McChurch’ mentality. (41)

*Body* goes on to give evidence that Christian bookstores now mainly sell “touchy-feely” self-help books, while serious Bible studies or books calling for self-sacrifice are no longer in demand. It cites a 1990 *Newsweek* survey to show that the recent rise in religion is unlike any revival of the past in that the main focus is not God, but finding a support group. “What many are looking for is a spiritual social club, an institution that offers convivial relationships but certainly does not influence how people live or what they believe” (42). In an effort to maintain

numbers in such an atmosphere, many Christian groups are willing to compromise biblical truths because they are too hard or not relevant for contemporary society.

**B***ody* analyzes Matthew 16 in detail to prove that the church is not a building but a gathering of people, that Christianity according to the Bible is corporate instead of individual, that the church belongs to God instead of man, and that the built-up church will triumph (chapter 5). It gives anecdotal examples of this, especially from Christians in Eastern Europe who were forced by persecution to lay aside their complacency and to stand together in unity as the Body (chapter 4). When Christians stand together in oneness, they are light and salt to society and can change the world. *Body* concludes:

There is today a widespread belief that one can be a Christian or develop one’s own faith system apart from the church. The proposition is ludicrous. For everyone regenerated by God is by definition a part of the universal church. It’s not a matter of choice or membership....The overarching fact, however, is that one cannot be part of a body God has created and at the same time declare that one is “independent” of that body. It is to deny what God Himself has ordained.

All Christians are in one body—the church universal. These believers then become the visible church as they become part of local congregations—the church particular. (69, 71-72)

**A**fter establishing the underlying problem and the scriptural mandate, *Body* goes on to list some important matters necessary to our practice of the truth that the church is Christ’s Body. As it speaks of each matter, *Body* exposes the true situation among Christians today and shows how far we must go before we can attain God’s goal. Instead of the unity and tolerance for others espoused by the Lord in the Gospels and by Paul in Romans 14, *Body* shows that most Christians today are caught up in the sin of presumption in which they second-guess God, become consumed with criticizing others who are not the same as they, and thus destroy the unity of the Body (chapter 7). Another problem is that Christians today are not under the authority of the Spirit. Instead, everyone has his or her personal agenda which creates division in the Body of Christ (114). Probably the most devastating problem in *Body*’s view is that to accommodate the feel-good mentality among Christians today, most preachers and pastors are willing to compromise the truths of Scripture. This means that the church has ceased to be “the pillar and base of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15); rather, she has become in and of the world and has entered what Colson calls the Babylonian captivity (chapter 17). He notes that Christians today trivialize and profane the holy with man-made marketing blitzes and carelessness concerning God’s Word. He urges pastors and

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teachers to forget their egos and begin perfecting every member to fulfill his or her proper function in the Body by valuing discipleship and maturity in Christ over large evangelical campaigns (chapter 21). If we continue with the majority being lukewarm Christians content to warm a pew and put money into the plate, *Body* correctly notes:

We do so at our peril. For the church is not His whim; it is His love for eternity. It is not a little business venture He founded two thousand years ago and now, in retirement, watches indulgently. Most of all, it is not our enterprise. (382)

### Falling Short of the Biblical Revelation

Although *Body* gives an excellent overview of a major problem among Christians today, it does not adequately expound the Bible's teachings on the Body, even though it gives a proper, but limited, definition of the church as the Body:

The church is the Lord's, bought with His blood on the rough wood of the cross. It is the holy city that will shine with light for all eternity. The Bride of the coming King. The assembly of believers redeemed by His grace, yet whose every deed will be scrutinized by His judgment. The Body that is His holy presence now, pointing the way to the coming kingdom. (382)

Unfortunately, *Body* does not develop or apply this definition in its suggestions for remedying the situation among Christians today. Most importantly, it neglects to mention that the church as Christ's Body, His bride, and His holy presence on earth today is primarily a matter of the divine life. We are His Body because we received His life at the time of our regeneration. We are able to shine out His light, act as salt in the world, live in oneness and harmony with the other believers, and be the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:15-16), that is, Christ's tangible presence to the world, because we are partakers of His divine life and nature (2 Pet. 1:4). *Body* rightly calls for an emphasis on Christian growth to maturity, but it neglects to tell us that the main factor of this growth is the divine life of the Triune God. If we want to experience the Body, we must pay attention to the divine life in our human spirit, nourishing it with the milk of the word and allowing this life to spread and develop as Christ makes His home in our hearts. We cannot have the outward expression of the Body apart from the inward, mystical, spiritual life of Christ. This is the crucial key to practically experiencing the Body in our daily life. Apart from the divine life, anything we do is merely in the realm of social reform or good, human works. We cannot resolve the problems rampant in Christianity today unless we all inwardly experience and nurture the divine life.

The second major problem with *Body's* blueprint for restoring the practicality of the Body among Christians today is its attitude toward denominations and local divisions among Christians. It correctly states that all Christians are members of the church universal, the Body of Christ. It also correctly notes that it is not enough to pay lip service to the church universal without being practically involved in a local expression of that Body, a "church particular." It is even correct in saying, "The church particular must in every sense feel and behave as a part of the church universal" (71). But in the end, *Body* does not indict Christianity's current divisive system of denominations and independent groups out of its acceptance of the belief that diversity is an inherent good. It states,

True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences, as modern ecumenists have done, but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while focusing on the great orthodox truths all Christians share. (104)

The Bible, however, does not say this. While Romans 14 requires us to bear those who are weak in the faith and to be broad in accepting those whose personal practices in worshipping the Lord are different from ours, this is extended within the context of a local church that eschews any hint of division. First Corinthians 1 insists that there should be no divisions among us, that Christ cannot be divided, and that as Christians we should think the same thing. In apostolic times there was only one church in any one city, and it was composed of all the believers in that city. Thus, the Bible refers to the church in Jerusalem (a city), the church in Corinth (a city), the churches in Galatia (a province), and the church in Rome (a city). The biblical mandated territory for a local church or an assembly of believers is the city in which all the believers reside. Smaller groups of believers could and did gather for prayer and fellowship in different homes, but the church, under one eldership, encompassed all the believers in that city. This restricting pattern in God's Word preserves the oneness of Christ's Body. Anything short of the Bible's full revelation of the Body and pattern of the practice of the church life cannot satisfy God, fulfill His plan, or usher Christians into the Body life today.

*Body* provides a necessary indictment, and it helps to point us, as believers, away from some profoundly misplaced notions of the church as the Body of Christ, but it does not go far enough because of its failure to speak of the organic component of the Body. It also fails to provide a necessary critique of the damage that the denominational system has done to the testimony of the oneness of the Body of Christ.

by Teresa Liu