Chris L. de Wet, *Preaching Bondage: John Chrysostom and the Discourse of Slavery in Early Christianity*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. Pp. xiii + 329. ISBN 978-0-520-28621-4. US$95.00.

This first book of an exciting young South African scholar is based on his doctoral research, but bears only a pale resemblance to his doctoral dissertation. Rather, it constitutes a much more mature reflection on his subject – the discourse of slavery in late antiquity – shaped by further engagement and discussion with a wide circle of scholars from a range of disciplines. Pitched as a project in cultural historiography, it asks large questions about the legacy of slavery, challenging current complacency by exposing largely unconscious and socially problematic discourses of domination that continue to persist into the present. This book may be about the period of late antiquity, but it draws a long trajectory from the classical Greek and Roman past into Hellenistic Judaism, early Christianity, the 'crisis of masculinity' of the fourth century, and well beyond. Similarly, while the focus is the discourse of a single late-fourth-century author, the Syrian priest John Chrysostom, subsequently bishop of the eastern imperial capital, Constantinople, de Wet provides a model for the analysis of other late-ancient authors on the topic, as well as demonstrating the pervasiveness within Christian circles of the main threads of this particular writer's approach. In essence, the book offers a major contribution to the history of ideas in western thought, delineating how a core set of ideas, transformed through a Christian lens, led to the passive acceptance of the (gendered) oppression of other human beings. The implications of the study presented in these pages are extensive and this is a book to be read by scholars across a wide range of interests and disciplines.

The book offers a highly sensitive and sensitizing reading of slavery, in which the overwhelming disempowerment of the slave is exposed at every level. It begins with a rich and detailed Introduction (pp. 1-44). Here De Wet sets out crucial terminology, his methodology (he owes a major debt to Foucault and de Certeau, a lesser one to Bordieu), and the essential features of slavery in Roman society. The account of slavery in late antiquity he offers aligns for the most part with that of Kyle Harper[1] and other recent scholars on the topic, namely that in this period throughout the Roman world slavery continued to be a fully functional and essential aspect of society. Very little in the daily life of the Roman citizen could occur without it. In this respect, as the rest of the book repeatedly demonstrates, the lives of the citizen and slave were enmeshed, the key concept that differentiated them being the gendered hierarchy of power-relations, or what de Wet terms 'kyriarchy'. This he links to heteronomy of the body, the key concept explored in this book. In the view that came to hold sway, true somatic autonomy did not exist. Everybody's body was 'made to be ruled . . . the closest one could get to freedom was to be ruled by the most beneficial force' (p. 40). That force came to be categorized as the Christian god, with slavery to god becoming paradoxically linked to mastery of the self. This interiorization of mastery, allied to a metaphorization of slavery, lies at the heart of the Christian discourse of slavery, but is not unique to it. Rather, as de Wet sets out carefully and persuasively in this introductory chapter, and in greater detail in Chapter Two, 'Divine Bondage: Slavery between Metaphor and Theology' (pp. 45-81), it relies on ideas that had been developing over centuries within the classical world from the denaturalization or de-Aristotelianization of slavery in Roman thought (via Xenophon) to the idealization of individualism as expressed in the Augustan reforms concerning the control of sexuality to the popularization of metaphorical and moral slavery by Stoicism (e.g. Marcus Aurelius) and its evolution via Hellenistic Judaism (Philo). As the book proceeds to show, the shift in focus from corporeal slavery to moral slavery had a dark underside. Not only did it promote indifference to the institution of slavery, but it frequently, if unintentionally, reinforced its structures and carcerality. To the question, were slaves any better off under Christianity, the answer is a bleak no.

In the five chapters that form the core of the study, de Wet systematically sets out why this is the case. Here, the writings that form the core of the study are frequently set within the larger context of Roman society, while the reader is referred to the opinions of other late-ancient authors to show that the findings are not specific to Chrysostom but more generally representative. Chapter Two ('Divine Bondage', pp. 45-81) delves in greater detail into the philosophical as well as specifically Christian ideology that informs the concept of moral slavery. For those who have been following the substantial body of publications in recent years on the emotions,[2] this is where the therapy of the emotions of

[1] *Slavery in the Late Roman World*, AD 275-425. (Cambridge 2011).

[2] From the now classic works of Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton 1994) and Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian*

Graeco-Roman moral philosophy meets the Greek Christian discourse of bondage to God and slavery to sin. The close alliance of ideas between the Judeo-Christian domain and the slavery discourse of Stoicism and Cynicism the chapter brings to light extends the implications for the practice of slavery in the Roman world beyond the immediate late-ancient Christian context. Chapter Three, 'Little Churches: The Pastoralization of the Household and Its Slaves' (pp. 82-126), shows how the idea of *oikonomia* or proper administration of the household, key to the treatises of Xenophon and other Roman writers on slavery, is also central in the thought of Chrysostom. Chapter Four, 'The Didactics of Kyriarchy: Slavery, Education and the Formation of Masculinity (pp. 127-69), focuses on the role of slaves in the education of the citizen child in which masculinity and its formation 'dominate'. Chapter Five. 'Whips and Scriptures: On the Discipline and Punishment of Slaves' (pp. 170-219), takes up the subject of discipline and punishment. Chapter Six, 'Exploitation, Regulation, and Restructuring: Managing Slave Sexuality' (pp. 220-70), explores the management of slave sexuality. At every step of the way de Wet shows how seemingly positive ideological shifts, like the extension of the requirement of virtue formation (mastery of the passions) onto a Christian master's slaves or Chrysostom's promotion of reductive tactical slaveholding as part of asceticizing or 'pastoralizing' the household, did little to ameliorate the lives of slaves while serving to reinforce eroding Roman male kyriarchal authority.

In putting forward his thesis, de Wet demonstrates an expansive command of the literature on slavery, sexuality, and the Roman household. The footnotes in this book which reference this are particularly valuable. Where criticism could be offered concerns the occasional misreading of the Greek of the Chrysostomian texts offered in support of his arguments. So at p. 231 the final sentence of the lengthy citation is awkwardly mistranslated as 'For even those from the domestic slaves are favored, that if a master receives chattels, he should violate none of them', when the Greek (καὶ γὰρ τῶν οἰκετῶν ἐκεῖνος εὔνους λέγεται, ὃς ἂν τὰ δεσποτικὰ δεξάμενος χρήματα, μηδὲν ἐξ αὐτῶν διαφθείρῃ) reads 'For even among the domestic slaves, whoever receives the master's chattels, but violates none of them, is said to be favoured'. This is unfortunate, as the idea the Greek expresses here (you pat a male domestic slave on the back for not violating the female slaves under his authority, yet violate them yourself) adds ammunition to his overall reading. At p. 249 de Wet misattributes the subject referenced at the beginning of the lengthy citation on p. 248, when he argues that 'having illegitimate children with slaves and prostitutes introduces an all-encompassing disgrace (*atimia*) for the [citizen] male'. Rather than 'all-encompassing' for the latter, the *atimia* in the household, city, and law-courts is in fact attached to the offspring of the liaison. It is the child who has no honour within the domestic, civil or legal domains, referencing the injustice that the child suffers because of the father's actions. None of these instances undermines the overall case that is made in this book, which is otherwise systematically set out and well supported.

Ultimately, this is not an optimistic or comfortable book. Rather it cleverly and consistently reveals discursive and conceptual strategies pertaining to an uncomfortable topic – slavery – that are troubling. Further, the findings of this book are presented in a manner intended to trouble complacent views about the essential social justice or societal good of the maturing Christian message. It demonstrates the truth of the thesis first put forward by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson[3] to which de Wet pays tribute in a subtitle in Chapter Two (p. 46). One cannot read this book without concluding with its author that the metaphorization of slavery that had its origins in Hellenistic, Jewish and early Roman imperial thought and that became a central tenet of Christian ideology has indeed cast a long and disturbing shadow.

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Temptation (Oxford 2000) to, e.g., David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto 2006) and Jamie Dow, *Passions and Persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Oxford 2015).

[3] *Metaphors We Live By* (2003[2] Chicago).