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One has to admire the industry, enthusiasm, and creativity with which Chen tackles the antediluvian puzzle. The author exhaustively compiles the sources, which are treated with philological acumen; he puts forward many interesting literary interpretations; and his main point about the rise of the Flood in the OB period is well established. As for some of the other developmental conclusions, the numerous methodological difficulties that Chen lists in his introduction and the fact that many pieces of the traditions are likely missing place question marks over several of his suggestions. Still, those looking to work with Mesopotamian Flood traditions would be wise to consult this monograph and the author's dissertation.

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Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion: Essays in Honor of Donald Wiebe. Edited by WILLIAM ARNAL, WILLI BRAUN, and RUSSEL T. MCCUTCHEON. Sheffield: Equinox, 2012. Pp. ix+243.

Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion honors the influence of University of Toronto's Donald Wiebe and his 1978 essay of the same name. The result is a collection of fifteen essays, subdivided into sections, "General Failures" and "Special Failures." Some of the authors, Luther Martin, Russell McCutcheon, Darlene Juschka, or Johannes Wolfart, will be known to most readers, but the balance may not be. This review focuses on the implications of the curious inaptness of the core notion of "failure of nerve" but first attends to some salient aspects of this collection.

Of the five essays classified as "General Failures," fans of Russell McCutcheon will find his critique of cognitive and evolutionary psychological approaches to religion an intriguing development of his continuing battle for a historicized conception of religion and "religion." But, now, instead of attacking "tender-minded" neotheologians, like Mircea Eliade, for hiding a neotheological agenda behind the methodological assertion of a *sui generis* "religion," McCutcheon wields his critical ax against "tough-minded" cognitivist science of religion (CogSci). CogSci, like Eliade, deploys a discredited *sui generis* (and thus theological) notion of religion (91). Although these newest pretenders to the throne of "Prince Charming of Theories" promise nothing less than a "tough" regime of "scientific" studies of religion, McCutcheon thinks they are not nearly tough enough. CogSci, in effect, picks right up where E. B. Tylor's essentialist, animist theory of religion left off in the mid-nineteenth century: religion is the worship of superhuman beings. But the CogSci neo-Tylorens "fail" to historicize religion or "religion," much less even adequately conceptualize it, as Émile Durkheim argued almost exactly a century ago (*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, bk. 1, trans. J. W. Swain [New York, 1915]).

Honors for the best essay in the "General" section go to Johannes C. Wolfart's sparkling historical engagement with the all-important early modern theological trend "confessionalism." One of the targets of Wiebe's (and my) attack on theologizing is what we call "confessional" theologizing. By this we mean sectarian attempts to place particular religious grounding under arguments about religion in the university. The

greater danger to religious studies as an academic discipline lies in confessionalism that takes a stealthier form. Ironically, Wolfart argues that today's "confessions" are being made not to advance a standard theologizing project but to offer mea culpas for colonialism. Notables like J. Z. Smith and Tomoko Masuzawa, respectively, number prominently among those who line up "quite eagerly" to confess the "sin of colonialism"—especially how colonialism "imagined" our standard concept of religion from encounters with the "other" in the Atlantic world. But Wolfart establishes that it was in early modern Europe, not the Atlantic world, that our notions of religion were hammered out on the anvil of the "*peccatum gravissimum* of confessionalism proper" (108). Confessionalism forced the "hardening of doctrinal differences in a divided Christendom" and thus shaped the rigid way the West has conceived religion ever since. In distracting from this essentially early modern European locus of the origins of our discourse about "religion," Smith and Masuzawa show themselves to be "first-rate mythographers, as opposed to historiographers of Religious Studies" (108). By foisting postcolonial liberationist memes onto a fictional history of the study of religion, Wolfart concludes that Smith and Masuzawa have "complicated considerably the task of actually knowing our own history" (107). Wolfart's brilliant essay helps repair some of that damage.

Of the essays classified as "Special Failures," seven contributions to the volume home in on "failures" in three specific areas: Islamic, early Christian, and biblical studies. Multiple favorable citations to such authorities as Burton Mack, Talal Asad, Richard Horsley, J. Z. Smith, William Arnal, and Wiebe himself dominate. There is much here in the details offered for the specialist to savor about the utility of Wiebe's hermeneutics of suspicion. We certainly need to be alert for the way believing scholars (as well as other brands of ideologues) "fail" to bracket out their commitments in doing scholarship. Any anthology of fifteen essays will drop a clunker or two. Wiebe takes offense, for example, that some scholars of religion might actually be religious (20). Imagine that. Yet, Martin is quick to celebrate Wiebe's migration from "Mennonite religiosity" to "non-theism" (3), as if this represents some sort of triumph. Go figure.

While this short review cannot possibly accommodate the elaborations offered by seven such specialized essays, their general drift can partly be deduced from the tendencies of the authorities listed. Consider Herbert Berg's impressive survey of the history of Islamic studies. Wiebe taught his students to be alert to the way Christian theological perspectives can shape putatively "objective" studies of religion. Berg seeks to document such confessional theological agendas underlying selected works by several classic scholars of Islam. Although I cannot speak to the accuracy of Berg's judgment, the quality of the scholarly apparatus Berg brings to the task merits his being taken seriously. Another author, Aaron Hughes, in effect updates Berg's critical survey by focusing on Christian theological intrusions into Islamic studies after 9/11. Sarah Rollens sings the same Wiebean hermeneutic tune of suspicion of hidden confessional Christian theological agendas by targeting scholarship on the identity of Q, the hypothetical source of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Not surprisingly, Rollens claims to discover a consistent attempt by Christian scholars to falsely establish the exceptionalism of early Christianity over the mainline Jewish religion of the day. Another contributor, John Parrish, offers an intricate essay leaning heavily on J. Z. Smith's comparative structural studies. Parrish seeks to "defamiliarize" received conceptions

of the “lord’s dinner” of 1 Corinthians, especially as the text refers to “demon worship” and similarly curious, opaque biblical references featured by Smith.

Don Wiebe and I, in our own respective ways, have long argued vigorously for a study of religion true to the universal values of the university. This has necessarily meant first exposing, then challenging, theologizing in the study of religion—especially the stealthy kind. Yet, I have never been convinced that these efforts at doing theology in the secular university—and a soft brand of liberal Protestant theology at that—constituted a “failure of nerve.” Rather, a “failure” of intellectual honesty, candor, or integrity, perhaps, seems better to label what I call the “theologizing malaise.” What better label to slap on the practice of giving lip service to the secular values undergirding the modern university, all the while exploiting the university for religious purposes? So, “failure of nerve” simply fails to reflect an accurate diagnosis of the “theologizing malaise.”

Am I just quibbling over words? I do not think so. Wiebe’s insistence on the inapt metaphor “failure of nerve” not only “fails” to reflect a compelling understanding of the theologizing malaise but in doing so “fails” to provide a remedy for it. Do the theologizers really lack nerve, or are they just not persuaded? Indeed, to persist in doing even “soft” theologizing in the secular university, all the while pretending not to be, strikes one as requiring excessive amounts of “nerve.” Reliance on the central metaphor of “failure of nerve” implies that all theologizes need is a stiff scolding. But it fails to address why their “caretaker” attitudes toward religion persist. Wiebe’s charge presumes that we live in a “command economy” of ideas, where chiding folks for failure of nerve is supposed to snap people to attention. But issuing commands to “nerve” buys us no insight into the motivations of the theologizers. Why do they think they are right to do so? Why, for example, does the conviction that religion is “good” persist, both in commonplace discourse and the university (Ivan Strenski, *Why Politics Can’t Be Freed from Religion* [Oxford, 2010], chap. 2)? Complaining of failure of nerve tells us nothing about the reasons this fallacy or the theologizing malaise maintain traction in discourse about religion.

Let me suggest that it is more “scientific” to cast a wider net in seeking the underlying causes both of the theologizing malaise and of resistance to a science of religion. What incentives condition the persistence of theologizing in the academe? In this light, charging “failure of nerve” may simply be hectoring to no avail. If there is failure, then perhaps scientists like Wiebe need to do more to persuade people that a science of religion is worth doing. Consider the following scenarios. On the side of the “caretaker” theologizers, do they perhaps have stronger reasons for pursuing a theologized study of religion than some science of religion? Wiebe and company evince no interest or appreciation of what these positive motivations might be. Among black scholars of religion, Cornel West, for example, asserts that “theological commitments and practical relevance are central to what African-American scholars do” (introduction to *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, ed. Cornel West and J. Eddie S. Glaude [Louisville, KY, 2003], xii). History tells us why West might say such things about his own community. What motivations might drive other theologizers in the study of religion? McCutcheon does make an effort to comprehend this “theologically liberal scholarship” (79), yet he hesitates at the threshold to inquire how and why such liberationist politicizing of the university has traction. Perhaps such reluctance is

symptomatic of the larger “failure” linked to the failure to “sell” theologizers in the religious studies academic community on a science of religion. Why do so few want to “buy” their vision of a science of religion? Theology as well as liberationism engages race, sex, gender, sexuality, and the postcolonial situation in religion. They fizz with existential energy, political commitment, and the excitement attending social movements “thinking about transforming conflicts and underlying structures of injustice” (78). Unless Wiebe recognizes the power of liberationist and religious concerns, and devises a positive strategy to deal with it, scolding theologizers and liberationists might continue to be the real “failure” in question.

Why should “scientists of religion” not think harder about how the career of science can stir the soul? For starters, I believe that scientists of religion need to develop a durable and compelling celebration of curiosity, questioning, skepticism, and learning about religion. I believe we need to “sell” the scientific study of religion by showing how it addresses what people should value at a time when those very values are being attacked from many quarters, from both outside and inside the university. These are values that are neither quaint nor made otiose by theoretical fads arising from the latest annual meeting of the Modern Language Association. They are public values that the university is expected to exemplify and that are badly needed in public life. For better or worse, we do not live in a command economy of ideas, even if Wiebe’s badgering about failure of nerve implies that he thinks we do.

Finally, to attack theologizing, one needs to fix on a target. Just what is it to “theologize”? Yet, although somewhat dated and conceptually challenged, a rereading of Wiebe’s title essay can be mined for some well-formed arguments for a secular study of religion. In particular, it boasts a timeless example of how to parse the confused rhetoric of “theology” often deployed in theologizers of the study of religion (9–10). Wiebe’s model critique of Charles Davis’s confused talk of “theology” or “theological” shows what hopeless conceptual disarray reigns there (9–10). Davis equates “theology” with mere “reflection” on religious subjects but then with special discourse that assumes divine existence. Readers will also recall uses of the term, “theology” or “theological” that purport to substitute for anything we might otherwise call “religion” or “religious.” Even ill-fitting objects such as rituals, experience, social organization, materiality, and so on, become “theology.” But, the sense of “theology” that stirs up Wiebe and me is the doing of theology—overwhelmingly some variety of Christian theology—within the university (whether openly or not). And let us leave aside for one moment how imperialistic the unqualified use of the term “theology” is. What about Shaivite, Ismaeli, Catholic, Neo-Orthodox, Apophatic, Natural, Lutheran, Shi’i, and so on, “theologies”? And, do not get me started on theologizers who speak of Daoist, Samkhyan, or Theravada Buddhist “theologies.”

But are Wiebe, and the contributors to this volume, any clearer and more consistent than Davis? Too frequently not. Wiebe, for example, stumbles right out of the gate, by insisting not only that regarding religion as autonomous necessarily throws it into “theological” camp but also that marking religion as a distinctive domain of human culture does as well (10). Yes, Wiebe’s critique applies to Eliade’s ideal of religion as *sui generis*. But simply marking “religion” or the “religious” as distinctive classes of culture does not constitute a “theological” move, any more than marking an esthetic, economic, political, or moral domain as distinctive constitutes equivalent “ideologi-

cal” intrusions. Nor is Wiebe correct to say that assuming the mere distinctiveness of religion or “religion” entails its inexplicability in relation to other aspects of culture (14). A Marxian might reduce religion to economics (explain religion in terms of economics), but Weber stood Marx on his head. Reduction (explanation) may run in many different directions, with religion taking its turn as explicans and explicandum with other dimensions of culture. In this light, it is bizarre that this entire volume continues merrily along using the term “religion” to designate some common reference out there. I leave it to others to decide what kind of “failure” that may be.

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The Nay Science: A History of German Indology. By VISHWA ADLURI and JOYDEEP BAGCHEE. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. xvi+494.

The Nay Science: A History of German Indology is an extraordinary work. Not for the fainthearted, it is a very detailed history of German Indological scholarship, more particularly at the Schools of Bonn, Berlin, Halle, Heidelberg, and Tübingen. It cannot stand as a general history of the discipline of Indology in Germany, admittedly, because various academic developments, at Würzburg (1821), Marburg (from 1843), and so on, and various authors (Theodor Aufrecht, Gustav Oppert, Karl Seidenstücker, Heinrich Zimmer, etc.) are left undiscussed. It is, however, a brilliant in-depth investigation as to how, from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, German founder figures and consolidators of the emergent *Wissenschaft* of Indology approached the crucial Sanskrit texts of the Mahābhārata and Bhagavadgītā (the latter being a smaller and more theological dialogue imbedded within the sixth book of the former, the world’s most voluminous epic poem). Because of this chosen concentration, German research on most other Indian texts, ancient or otherwise, naturally had to be left aside.

On the estimates of these two gifted Indian authors, German research on these works, from the 1790s to the 1940s, was riddled with hidden agendas. These were mostly neo-Protestant theological in vein, with historico-critical techniques applied to detect *Urtexten* that showed earlier and powerfully heroic and chivalric values before being corrupted by Brahmin revisers and their ritual concerns. The reconstructed original versions, or a whole *Urepos* being unveiled behind them, were made analogous to primary texts of the Bible before they were modified and misinterpreted under the influence of Roman Catholicism. Another agenda commonly showing up was the Aryanist one (sometimes patently racist), so that the original Indo-European conquerors of the Subcontinent reflected in the Mahābhārata were paralleled to the Germanic tribes, implicitly legitimating conquest (and in the West this meant the German overcoming of the Roman Empire, the Protestant subversion of Roman Catholicism, and by modern times German expansionism and even the Nazi quest for racial purity).

Among scholarly estimates discussed, we find the Berliner von Schegel brothers’ Romantic extolling of ancient India’s poetic sublimity (in the 1810s), yet with the caveat that its epic pantheism bore signs of philosophical and moral enervation (31–40); Heidelbergers Adolf Holzmann Sr. reading the Mahābhārata (in the 1840s) as a