

ENDORSEMENTS



Conspicuous in His Absence *Studies in the Song of Songs and Esther*

February 23, 2021 | \$34, 336 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5488-2

Chloe T. Sun (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is professor of Old Testament and academic dean at Logos Evangelical Seminary and has published books in Chinese and English, including *The Ethics of Violence in the Story of Aqhat*, *Love Already but Not Yet: A Commentary on the Song of Songs* and *Attempt Great Things for God: Theological Education in Diaspora*.

What Should We Do When God Is Silent or Hidden?

“Dr. Sun sheds light on the problems posed by a belief in God who is both present and absent, is social and transcendent, and reveals himself and hides himself. She states the problem sympathetically and analyzes it with evident ecclesial concerns. I commend her for the artistry she exhibits in her analysis of the Song of Songs and Esther. I greatly value her contribution because I have raised more and more the questions entailed in God’s hiddenness over the years.”

—**Willem A. VanGemenen**, professor emeritus of Old Testament and Semitic languages, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“This fascinating book focuses on two of the more neglected books of the Bible. At first glance, Esther and Song of Songs are a mismatched pair. Their differences appear to outnumber their similarities. But through a meticulous cross-examination, Chloe Sun finds many fruitful connections, not the least of which is the apparent absence of God. Dr. Sun explores the links between these books, and interbiblical connections with other books in the Old Testament. Along the way, the motifs of time and space are visited, as well as feasting—all in relation to God’s perceived absence. We find out how Esther and Song of Songs present an alternative voice to that of most of the Old Testament. Dr. Sun also outlines the implications of God’s seeming absence for us today and how we might still find him. Highly recommended for all who wrestle with the mystery of this aspect of God’s character.”

—**Peter H. W. Lau**, researcher and writer, OMF International, and Old Testament book review editor for *Themelios*

“We seek God’s presence, but sometimes we experience God’s absence. Chloe Sun moves the theme of the absence of God found in the book of Esther and the Song of Songs from the margins to the center to remind us that ‘experiencing divine absence is part of the faith journey.’ She masterfully employs a sensitive understanding of genre, intertextuality, close reading, and the canon to disrupt our stereotypical understanding of God to lead us to a more profound faith. I enthusiastically recommend this book to all who want a better understanding of the Bible and, indeed, of God.”

—**Tremper Longman III**, distinguished scholar and professor emeritus of biblical studies, Westmont College

“Chloe T. Sun reminds us that God’s presence does not always conform to human expectations. As Sun brings together the Song of Songs and the book of Esther as conversation partners, she retrieves the theological theme of divine absence from the margins of scholarly discourse and brings it front and center. In this timely, thought-provoking work, Sun draws us in to consider how the absence of God in the Song and Esther attests to part of the real-life, multidimensional human experience with God.”

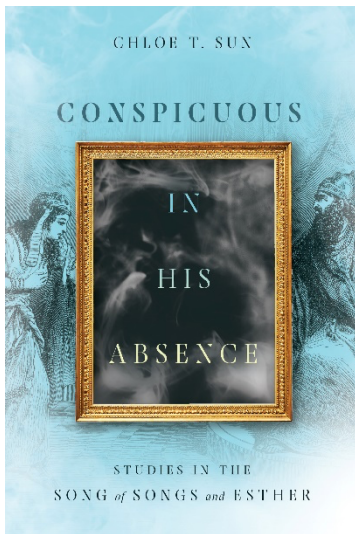
—**Denise C. Flanders**, assistant professor of biblical studies at Taylor University



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"With *Conspicuous in His Absence*, Sun offers an inviting and reaffirming treatment of key theological questions. Building on the conceptual pillars of divine presence and absence, she guides readers from a broad picture of Old Testament theology, through a series of carefully selected topics that elucidate the theological issues in question. She arrives at the conclusion that the Song of Songs and Esther complement and challenge the normative biblical theology based on the Torah and the Prophets, which foregrounds God's presence. Henceforth, these two books—through Sun's compassionate exposition—provide a much-needed companion for contemporary believers, so that they may acquire a more felicitous framework to think of God's nature during the perceived divine absence and act accordingly with human responsibility."

—**Sarah Zhang**, associate professor of biblical studies at GETS Theological Seminary, California, and author of *I, You and the Word "God": Finding Meaning in the Song of Songs*

"Dr. Sun provides a thorough analysis of the scholarly works and differing views on the difficult topic of the hiddenness of God in Song of Songs and Esther. She demonstrates how these books, which begin and conclude the Megilloth, respond to the conundrum of divine absence in faith and canon. Her writing is both theologically astute and pastorally sensitive. Dr. Sun's book is an important contribution to the theology of absence in times of suffering and uncertainty (which both love and potential genocide can engender). God's absence intensifies the longing for his presence. In a canonical reading, these books point to a God who expects his people to pursue love and do justice even when he is silent."

—**Ingrid Faro**, visiting professor of Old Testament at Northern Seminary

"What is the significance of books in the Bible that don't mention God? Chloe Sun has been thinking around this question and reading around what other scholars have written about it, and she here offers a book full of insights on whether God is there when you can't see him and what this God is like. In *Conspicuous in His Absence* you get the fruit of wide reading in the scholarly literature and discerning reflection in light of this reading. It's easy to stay with the mainstream of scriptural teaching and ignore its more exotic byways, and Professor Sun invites readers to profit from the margins without losing the mainstream."

—**John Goldingay**, David Allan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament emeritus, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

"In her latest book, Chloe T. Sun moves seamlessly between Old Testament theology and practical theology discussions centered around 'a theology of absence.' In so doing, the dynamism of her methodology mirrors the life of faith, which seeks divine presence in the face of apparent absence. The curated conversations—on theology, time, temple, feast, and canon—illustrate well the riches that can be gleaned when one reads often-neglected texts in the canon, especially alongside one another. This work is to be commended for the insightfulness and honesty it offers to those who desire to know God more fully."

—**Brittany N. Melton**, assistant professor of biblical and theological studies at Palm Beach Atlantic University and chair of the Old Testament study group of Tyndale Fellowship



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