

### Book Reviews

Yohanan Aharoni, Michael Avi-Yonah, Anson F. Rainey, Ze'ev Safrai, *The Carta Bible Atlas*, 4th ed. Jerusalem: Carta, 2002; distributed in the U.S. by Eisenbrauns, P.O. Box 275, Winona Lake, IN 46590. Pp. 223, cloth, \$38.95.

This very useful atlas was originally published in Israel under this title and then translated into English and published in the U.S. as *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*. Changes from the third edition are few indeed, with a brief new introductory note, a slight reordering of the end-pages and the addition of an index or persons. Those who already have the third edition should be satisfied with it.

An edition of the atlas is useful and should be in every serious Bible scholar's library. It goes through the Bible chronologically (and on into the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70) giving detailed maps of different biblical and extra-biblical events along with generous explanations of these events. For example, a map of Abram's migration shows the entire ancient Near East, with arrows indicating the suggested route from Ur to Haran to Shechem, down into Egypt at Zoan, and back north to Beer-sheba. Relevant scripture verses accompany the maps. While many of the maps are conjectural, the volume supplies an invaluable supplement to the biblical text, breathing additional life into the journeys and battles which a simple textual rendition is unable to parallel.

David W. Baker

Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. 187 pp., paper, \$20.00.

In 1981 Robert Alter wrote *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. In 1993 David Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell offered *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*. Like these earlier contributions, *Reading Biblical Narrative* explores the distinctives of Hebrew narrative. The unique characteristics of Hebrew story telling are summarized and demonstrated with examples taken from a range of Old Testament texts.

This work began as a series of 13 lectures delivered at Tel Aviv University 1999 - 2000. It was subsequently published in Hebrew and then translated and published in English in 2001. Amit works with the Tanakh translation and makes judicious use of Hebrew in her explanations. Amit's text is 147 pages of content (this excludes bibliography and notes) compared with Alter's 189 pages of smaller type and the even longer text by Gunn and Fewell at 205 pages which also contains an extensive bibliography. The most significant difference of Amit's text is that it omits full discussions of scholarly debate or history and remains focused on demonstrating characteristics of Hebrew Bible narrative. This, combined with its easy reading style, makes it ideal for introductory courses on biblical exegesis and the bibliography provides direction for those interested in further study.

Introductory chapters cover the power of stories (chapter 1) and incorporating the findings of historical biblical criticism (chapter 2). The following chapters cover matters determining story boundaries, understanding plot and structures, characterization, the use of time, setting, determining significance, and narrative context. Chapter seven covers the role of the narrator. Although many narratives are employed for examples and comparisons, the

author most fully considers the accounts of Tamar and Judah in Genesis 38 (an account first treated by Robert Alter and also by Gunn and Fewell), Tamar and Amnon in 2 Samuel 25, and Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21, often returning to them for further consideration throughout the book. (Anyone inclined to write on these texts would do well to make use of Amit's book.)

The author's chapters covering narrative techniques such as plot and structure, characterization, time, and setting are well done and clear and will certainly improve a reader's ability to do a close and judicious reading of the text. I would have liked to have seen more work with the play of language present in the Hebrew Bible. Alter, for instance, devotes a chapter to the use of repetition and Gunn and Fewell devote a chapter to repetition, metaphor, and allusion.

Amit combines an unwavering trust in the narrator with a claim that one can discern a 'plain interpretation' (page 129). Amit states, "Whatever accords with the narrator's statements or God's must be beyond doubt" (page 129.) This un-nuanced stance combined with the book's brevity and focus is one of its weaknesses. While careful to differentiate between the narrator and the author, she resolves contradictory statements within the text by bracketing them as belonging to different authors with different agendas (page 99). Gunn and Fewell deal with this same issue in a more nuanced way and bring into the discussion the use of irony directed both towards characters and toward the reader. While rightfully critiquing those who create interpretations based too much on lacunae and gap-filling while ignoring textual data, Amit too easily suggests, for example, that Judah in Genesis 38 should be viewed in a favorable light because the narrator seems concerned to present him that way. Others who read this story see a much more ambiguous character.

Amit touches lightly on the role of a reader. She challenges those who assess characters based on assumptions they bring to the text. However she fails to address the way in which we all read ideologically and her discussions of the text's ideology focus on historical concerns (e.g. page 120) and do not mention matters that affect present day issues. For example, the text's patriarchy and its influence on the presentation of women within the text is something that needs to be addressed. If the goal is to develop skill with reading Hebrew narrative, then issues such as these must also be brought to the table. Admittedly they lead into areas of study outside of narrative criticism yet they play such a significant role in our reading that to leave them unaddressed leaves the student of scripture with the mistaken idea that we read objectively and the text alone controls the meaning.

Donna Laird, Drew University

Andrew Louth, ed., with M. Conti, *Genesis 1-11*, Ancient Christian Commentary of Scripture: Old Testament, ed. T. C. Oden. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001. lii + 204 pp., cloth, \$40.00.

Exegetes do well by remembering the observation of John Donne that "No man is an island, entire of itself." While we do have our own exegetical observations to make, we are blessed by a 'great cloud of witnesses', living and dead, who have plowed these same fields before us. Part of the task of any exegete worthy of that title is to be aware of the thoughts of these others.

The aim of Thomas Oden and InterVarsity Press is to aid in this endeavor by making available commentary on Scripture from the patristic period, the first seven centuries of the Church. Oden begins by introducing the project itself, the plenteous resources which had largely been neglected up to now, the ecumenical range of contributors and consultants (Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Evangelical), as well as providing useful comments on misogyny, anti-Semitism, and Pelagianism. The volume editor, professor of

patristic and Byzantine studies at the University of Durham, then introduces the volume itself. He comments on the varieties of versions (Hebrew, Greek, Latin) and various theological issues such as typology and original sin.

The commentary proper begins each section with the verse or pericope under discussion (taken from the RSV). Following an overview of the passage, there is comment on words and phrases drawn from the fathers. For those used to working with Jewish sources, the layout is similar to that of the rabbinic commentaries.

The volume, and the series, fills an important gap in exegetical resources. While it will not be the only, or even the first, commentary which a student of Scripture will have on the desk, it is an important resource if one wants to seriously grapple with the text. If nothing else, I hope that the series lifts our modern eyes from a superficial personal application based on all too shallow exegesis to a time when the Bible was considered worthy of serious theological engagement.

David W. Baker

Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. 11112 pp., \$95.00.

A seasoned student and gifted teacher of Hebrew Bible, the late Professor Terrien has pressed a wealth of insights into his substantial Psalms volume (971 pp.). Chief among its assets are the depth of introduction and richness of actual translations. Ancient Near Eastern Background, Music of the Psalms, and Theology of the Psalms are among the valuable topics treated in over 60 pages of rich and readable introduction. True to form (and faithful to text), Terrien attends to divine presence in the Psalms: "The apprehension of the Presence or the terror of its loss dominates the imagination of the psalmists" (57), and again: "The motif of Yahweh's presence seems to constitute, alone, the generative and organic power of [a theology of the Psalms]" (46).

Translation of each psalm is fresh yet not forced, marked by a studied attempt to retain the Masoretic Text, at least in its consonantal form. Consider a sample from the first psalm:

*"Blessed is the man*

*That does not walk with the ungodly for guides,*

*Nor stand on the roadway with the sinful,*

*Nor halt for a rest at the camp of cynics,*

*But his delight is in the Law of the Lord..."* (p. 69, italics and arrangement original).

Within the commentary proper each psalm is presented by translation, bibliography, and a discussion of form, commentary, and date-and-theology. Form is treated with brevity. Occasionally a brilliant insight breaks through (e.g., twin palistrophes in Ps. 51). Commentary is thoughtful, arranged by strophic headings.

This volume lies open to lay and scholar alike. While it offers a more current bibliography than Artur Weiser's Old Testament Library work, some still will favor Weiser's gift for penetrating the pathos of the poet. Finally, avoidance of Hebrew in Terrien's writing will ease reading for some while complicating it for others.

Paul Overland

## Book Reviews

Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. Pp. 712, cloth, \$29.99.

Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, vols. I and II. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, 2005. Pp. 693 and 589, respectively, cloth, \$50.00 each.

Eminently readable, Koptak's volume opens a healthy variety of vital topics in a 30-page introduction. While based on the NIV translation, his work includes a responsible sampling of insights from Hebrew while not overwhelming the reader with detail. Despite relatively brief treatment of textual issues, still it remains sensitive to poetics and rhetorical dimensions of the text. The primary strength of this work lies in its conscious effort regularly to bring biblical insight into conversation with modern culture. It places implications for personal transformation within easy, even unavoidable reach.

Arrival of Waltke's work has been worth the wait. Consistent with the author's commitment to careful scholarship, this two-volume work, 25 years in the making, spares nothing in pursuit of detailed explication of the text. Witness the extent of introduction and bibliography (170 and 37 pages, respectively). The collage of apparently disconnected sayings contained in Proverbs poses for Waltke the principal challenge—to discern latent connectedness through poetics. Here he at times concurs, at times contrasts prior proposals—all in quest of exposing the tissue of the wider text, those sinews knitting the composition into a more cohesive (and thus more illuminating) whole.

Regular attention to fine shades of meaning further evidences a scholar's care. A rare treasure of seasoned insight, this work will become a must-read or at least a must-consult for all serious scholarship in Proverbs from this point forward.

Paul Overland

Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999. 422 pp., paper, \$34.00.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Ecclesiastes*. JPS Bible Commentary. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004. 87 pp. plus 24 pp. introduction.

At a recent SBL reception Professor Michael Fox was presented with a *festschrift*—an index of longevity applied to the study of Hebrew wisdom literature. While the two volumes reviewed here do not include that *festschrift*, they are representative of works that have issued from his decades of scholarship.

In *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up* Fox offers a significant deepening of his earlier study entitled *Qohelet and His Contradictions* (JSOT Supplement 71). It is difficult to overestimate the value of this new volume for anyone determined to get a grip of this provocative and timely biblical book. For his trek into the uneven territory of Ecclesiastes, Fox rightly starts at the trailhead marked by those statements within Ecclesiastes which veer in opposite directions (p. 3). For example: for the author of Ecclesiastes is all of life darkly futile or can one find periodic points of light and joy amid pervasive gloom?

Three primary strengths of *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up* are its depth of introduction, conscious engagement with alternative interpretations, and readability. First, the introduction commands fully 34% of the work, and offers carefully-researched insights concerning principal concepts emerging from the landscape of Ecclesiastes (e.g., Hebrew terms for *vanity* / *futility* and *chasing after wind*). Second, Fox carefully introduces the reader to alternative interpretations, beginning in the preface with an overview of

commentaries. As a result, one detects a sense of dialog among scholars rather than a one-sided lecture (fitting for a biblical book so marked by internal give-and-take!). Third, the work is eminently readable, despite a no-holds-barred policy of wrestling with profound questions of interpretation. Frequent use of Hebrew in transliteration makes this work of particular use to those wanting to stay close to the original composition.

At one-fourth the overall length, *Ecclesiastes* (JPS) treats many of the same introductory topics in a 24-page introduction, but in overview fashion. A snapshot of nine key terms compresses to four pages. When reviewing alternative interpretations, medieval Jewish writers occupy a suitably prominent position. The layout of the commentary-proper offers a bilingual biblical text above (Hebrew, New JPS English), with relatively brief verse-by-verse comment below. Many notes involve clarifying the translation, suggesting that Fox may not have been entirely satisfied with the NJPS rendition. For the student wishing either a briefer treatment of particular passages (when compared to *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up*), or one seeking rapid access to past Jewish interpretation viewed through the lens of a modern master-scholar, this JPS commentary is a true treasure.

Paul Overland

Reuben J. Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Gospel 4-Pack*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press/Pasadena, Ca.: William Carey International University Press, 2005. Pp. Matthew xx + 304; Mark xix + 271; Luke xx + 420; John xix + 302, paper, \$88.95.

This set of four volumes serves as an important tool for textual criticism in the gospels. Each book provides the complete text of Codex Vaticanus, as exemplar, with numerous other uncials and papyri arranged, likewise in full, in horizontal lines underneath. Swanson supplies users with an introduction extensively explaining the nature and use of the tool. Its primary contribution is that it provides the Greek text of the gospels, *not* as eclectic texts – as one would find in the most common editions (NA27 and UBS4) – but in word-for-word transcription. Even the most comprehensive critical editions of the gospels, S. C. E. Legg's *Nouum Testamentum Graece: Euangelium secundum Mattheum* (1940) and *Marcum* (1935) (both available from scholarly reprints, <http://members.aol.com/goodbooks7/>) are eclectic in compilation and presented exactly like the critical apparatus of the NT27. Another source for an enormous amount of textual material on the gospels and other documents, available free of charge and updated regularly, is Wieland Willker's website ([http://www-user.uni-bremen.de/~wie/ww\\_tc.html](http://www-user.uni-bremen.de/~wie/ww_tc.html)).

The present edition, however, is unique in its presentation of full texts, allowing users to consider variant readings within their particular manuscript's context. This is an important feature that, when used carefully, will reward thorough study. One should note, though, that no attempt is made in this set at analysis of textual variations. For a recent approach to that subject, one may consult Wayne C. Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition: Evidence of the Influence of Apologetic Interests on the Text of the Canonical Gospels* (Atlanta: SBL, 2004). Swanson's work is acclaimed by Bruce Metzger as "an innovative and useful tool for the study of the Greek text of the New Testament." (p. ii). One could hardly offer a dissenting opinion to such praise. Indeed, serious exegesis or textual criticism in the gospels can hardly be engaged without these important tools at hand. The only uncertainty pertaining to it is its availability. At one point it was distributed by Tyndale

House Publishers (Wheaton, Ill.), who has indicated that the set is out of print. The individual volumes for the gospels (and other NT books) are still widely available.

Daniel M. Gurtner, Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, MN

Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. xx + 213, paper, \$20.00.

Richard B. Hays' book is a collection of revised essays that were originally published over a span of more than two decades. Following his influential volume *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, this work covers a wide variety of issues related to "Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture," and argues for a more sophisticated reading of Paul that goes beyond simply concluding that he was proof-texting, arbitrary in his referencing, or contradictory. Hays' stated purpose is threefold: to demonstrate that Israel's Scripture was foundational to the apostle's theology, to argue that Paul's own hermeneutical framework is a worthy model for contemporary readers, and to encourage the modern church to allow a "conversion of the imagination" that happens when one reads and interprets as Paul did (*viii*). What exactly does Hays mean by a "conversion of the imagination?" He envisions this as an "epistemological transformation" (*x*) or paradigm shift that involves both a new understanding of one's identity and a mind that is renewed and "remade by the gospel" (196). The title is quite apt given the centrality of this concept in nearly all of these essays.

Hays highlights six themes that contribute to how Paul operated as an exegete. First, an emphasis on "metalepsis" runs throughout each chapter, whereby he reasons that Paul's quotations can only be fully appreciated when a broader context of the original citation is recognized. Second, Hays argues that Paul's quotations and allusions were meant to shape identity by helping his readers to reimagine themselves as the people of God. Third, Paul employed a narrative-approach to understanding Scripture. Hays argues that, for Paul, Scripture is not "merely a repository of isolated proof texts, rather it is a saga of God's election, judgment, and redemption of a people through time" (*xvi*). Fourth, Paul's interpretation is shaped by an apocalyptic perspective that demonstrates the Christ event as the necessary lens through which the Scripture is to be perceived. Fifth, the task of exegesis, for Paul and for the church, is as much an art as a science, and that his interpretation should be appreciated poetically as well as technically. Lastly, Hays posits that Paul approached Scripture from a "hermeneutic of trust," and that the church would better understand the apostle's thinking by approaching the texts in faith.

Though Hays rightly admits that his overall thesis is not unique, the individual essays are creative and thought-provoking while at the same time examples of responsible exegesis. Even more, he does not shy away from hotly debated topics such as the meaning of *dikaiōnē theou* (chapter 3), the functions of the law (chapter 5), and Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4 (chapter 7). At the same time, Hays proves himself to be open to criticism and appreciative of feedback especially in chapter 9, a response to critiques of *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*.

As convincing as Hays' thesis is, though, one is continually confronted with the question, *could Paul's original audience pick up on these frequent allusions, or bring to mind the original context of Paul's quotations?* He suggests that Paul's original reader "not only knows Scripture but also appreciates allusive subtlety" (49), but does not offer substantial explanation of how this knowledge was obtained. On occasion he does provide a possible scenario that mitigates this concern, but without a more thorough exploration of this matter, the issue is difficult to evade.

Nevertheless, in the end Hays is successful in proving his overall thesis. *The Conversion of the Imagination* is a clear and compelling investigation into how Paul used Scripture in a meaningful way and there are few better qualified for undertaking such a work. As this topic will undoubtedly continue to be discussed and debated among New Testament scholars, one will hardly be able to engage without reference to this deft exegete and critical work.

Nijay K. Gupta, South Hamilton, MA

Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, translated by Rosemary Selle. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. xii + 385, paper, \$30.00.

This book contains eighteen essays written between 1971 and 2003. The final essay, "The Significance of Matthew's Jesus Story for Today," is new, providing a useful summary of issues discussed throughout the book. The essays are divided into various sections, including: Matthew's story, Matthew and his traditions, christology, ecclesiology, ethics, miracles, Matthew and Israel and hermeneutics. In the course of these discussions, the reader is able to follow the thought of one of the most important commentators on Matthew of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, whose contributions include a commentary on Matthew in four volumes in the original German (EKK) and three volumes in English translation (Continental Commentaries and Hermeneia).

Luz tackles some thorny issues in these essays. None is as difficult as the issue of anti-Judaism in the Gospel of Matthew (pp. 343-361). While evangelical readers may welcome Luz's refusal to follow the popular call to discard these difficult sections of scripture, they will certainly be challenged by his conclusion that texts such as Mt 23; 27:25 and 28:11-15 cannot inform our current attitudes toward Judaism. Rather, these texts represent Matthew's reflection on his own situation, and need to be reconsidered in light of the Church's abominable record of persecution of Jews.

Luz is able to come to this conclusion because of both his understanding of Matthew as story, and his utilization of the hermeneutical method of H. G. Gadamer. By employing Gadamer's method, Luz reminds readers that biblical texts possess not only a meaning for their original audience, which the exegete needs to recover, but also contain an "effective history," or history of reception. Stated briefly, "effective history" means that texts continue to live in the context of their interpretive communities, which are both shaped by the texts and shape the understanding of the texts themselves through their historical location (see pp. 325-327). Thus, pluralism in interpreting texts is not a surprising phenomenon, but a natural corollary of text's effect upon interpreting communities.

In short, Luz's essays provide useful insights for the interpretation of Matthew's Gospel and the broader issues of how scripture becomes word of God to readers and hearers today, especially in our post-Christian and post modern world. Rather than endorsing a cavalier attitude that "everything goes" in interpretation, Luz is able to relate how religious pluralism makes Matthew more relevant for readers today. For example, by exploring the "effective history" of the text in the church fathers (and mothers) and in Anabaptist sects, the one is confronted with demands that often are domesticated in the dominant traditions, particularly Reformed and Catholic, of the church. For example, Luz understands that the demands of Mt 5:43-48 and 6:10 are better understood in Anabaptist tradition than in the more "mainstream" traditions, and the effective history of these smaller bodies within the church informs readers how better to understand the evangelist's message. Yet, these traditions also highlight the inconsistencies of Matthew himself, especially in light of Mt 23, which appears the antithesis of 5:43-48.

In conclusion, Luz's essays provide the reader with an important insight into the development of thought of an important commentator on Matthew, whose own struggles with the text are reflected, but not necessarily resolved, in the course of these studies. This book provides a helpful companion volume to the massive commentary, and also supplies readers with productive insights on specific topics. The book is a necessary tool for any serious students of Matthew.

Russell Morton

Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne, eds., *The Face of New Testament Studies. A Survey of Recent Research*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic; Leicester, UK: Apolllos, 2004. 544 pp., paper, \$34.99.

*The Face of New Testament Studies* is the companion to *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold). This is a collection of twenty-two essays which covers a generous swathe of issues germane to the study of the New Testament. The book seeks to "provide 'macroscopic' overviews of the field and give students a handle on the most important voices in the discipline" (p. 9). Students of the New Testament will find *The Face of New Testament Studies* a helpful point of departure for their own research, for these essays provide summaries of current research, analyses of various positions, and relevant bibliography.

The book itself divides into four parts, organized by fields of scholarship:

Part 1, "Context of the New Testament," contains two articles. Sean Freyne's article focuses upon the social climate of Galilee and Judea. In the second essay, David Fiensy discusses the material culture of the Roman Empire and Asia Minor.

Part 2 consists of five essays on "New Testament Hermeneutics." (1) Eckhard Schnabel brings readers up to date on the field of textual criticism. (2) Stanley Porter assesses the state of Greek grammars available today and some challenges to older ways of the study of syntax and grammar. Next, (3) Greg Clark provides a historical overview of "general hermeneutics." A survey is given, moving through the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and late Modernism. (4) David DeSilva surveys the state of social-scientific criticism as it is practiced within New Testament studies. DeSilva distinguishes "social description," which assesses socio-cultural realities, from the use of social-scientific "models" that seek to explain behaviors, structures, and patterns reflected in the NT texts. Finally, (5) Craig Evans discusses the New Testament's use of the Old Testament. He covers Jewish exegesis in antiquity and various methods employed by the writers of the New Testament.

Part 3 is designated for "Jesus" studies. Four essays are included. (1) Scot McKnight examines recent scholarship and concludes: "though it has taken nearly a century of badgering and bullying, Christian scholarship has gradually accepted the challenge of Henry J. Cadbury to avoid modernizing Jesus, and...finally offered to the reading public...a Jewish Jesus who is credible within first-century Judaism" (p. 176). Next, (2) Klyne Snodgrass discusses different scholarly assessments of Jesus' parables. (3) Graham Twelftree considers "the history of miracles in the history of Jesus." (4) Craig Blomberg discusses the scholarship of the Gospel of John.

Finally, Part 4 concerns "Earliest Christianity." This section contains a series of eleven essays covering a range of topics germane to New Testament studies. Steve Walton discusses the complex status of *Acts* studies. Bruce Chilton discusses the scholarship on James the brother of Jesus. Donald Hagner discusses the Gospel of Matthew and the issue of 'Christian Judaism' or 'Jewish Christianity.' Bruce Fisk covers aspects of Paul's life and

letters. James D.G. Dunn writes about Paul's theology. Darrell Bock discusses Lukan scholarship. Robert Webb surveys Petrine scholarship. Peter Bolt surveys recent scholarship on Mark's Gospel. George Guthrie discusses recent research on the book of *Hebrews* with a view to its first-century context. Klaus Scholtissek surveys recent research on the Johannine Gospel. Finally, Grant Osborne discusses recent trends in the study of Apocalypse of John.

Don Carlson, Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion

Francis J. Moloney, *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004. 224 pp., paper, \$19.95.

Francis J. Moloney occupies the Katherine Drexel Chair of Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America. His *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* was the 2003 Reference Book of the Year according to the Academy of Parish Clergy. The 2004 book is billed as a New Testament Commentary but it is not truly that. Only 55 pages of the 224 page text are devoted strictly to commentary.

The book is organized in four parts. Part the first, is entitled "Mark." To the author, Mark is a "shadowy figure" and one cannot be certain as to the identity of this Mark. Nor can it be accurately determined when this story of Jesus first saw the light of day. However, he does posit that this Mark, whoever he is, is a "creative and original thinker." According the Maloney, Mark never appears as a character in the work or is named. He points out that this is a characteristic found throughout the book with numerous nameless persons as principle characters in the story. Papias' second century reference to Mark gets only passing recognition. Maloney views the work not as history but as a proclamation of the faith of the early church. The desire of the writer of Mark was to communicate a particular theological perspective.

The second division of the book deals with "Mark: the Storyteller." The author views the many summaries in Mark as textual markers delineating the structure of the work. In this section the author sees the Gospel story unfolding in four parts:

1. The Gospel Begins
2. Jesus' Ministry in Galilee
3. Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem, Death, Resurrection
4. Women Discover the Empty Tomb

The first half of the Gospel answers the question, "Who IS Jesus?" The second half of the Gospel presents "The Suffering, Vindicated Son of Man, the Christ, the Son of God."

The commentary is found in Part Three of the work. The limited remarks are helpful and at times provocative. The author asserts that, "Mark, the storyteller has consciously taken material from traditions about Jesus that come to him and shapes them in a way that is referred to as 'chiastic.'" He accepts the fact that Mark concludes at verse eight of chapter six.

In the third section of the book, the author deals first with "Mark, the Interpreter of Jesus of Nazareth" including "Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Son of God, and Jesus the Son of Man." Next in this section are the author's assertions on "Mark the Interpreter of Christian Community" including "The Disciples," and "At the Table of the Lord."

The fourth part of Maloney's work is entitled, "The Good News of the Gospel of Mark." In this section, he sees Mark looking back to the biblical traditions and the events in the life of Jesus to revive the flagging spirits of the struggling Christian Community.

At the conclusion of each of the four sections are helpful and extensive footnotes. The work concludes with a thorough fifteen page bibliography, a three page index to modern authors and a five page index to ancient sources. The work is certainly engaging.

Richard E. Allison

Kenneth Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. 144 pp., paper, \$19.95.

This brief guide to Hebrews features a very innovative approach to the exploration of a biblical text. Rather than start “behind” the text with arguments concerning authorship, audience, and situation, Schenk begins “within” the text with an exploration of the “story world” created by the text, laying out, in effect, the narrative world and plot into which the author invites his audience. He continues in a second chapter to investigate the complication and resolution of that plot (“Humanity’s Problem and Christ’s Solution”) more fully from within Hebrews’ “narrative,” and follows this with detailed examinations of the opening chapter of Hebrews, the “characters” who exhibit faith and distrust, and the background and significance of the author’s argument concerning the sacrifice and priesthood of Jesus. Only after taking the readers through the “story” and argument of Hebrews does Schenk return to the historical questions about the situation addressed by this text, and how Hebrews offers a “word-on-target” for that situation.

The volume is well written, thoroughly conversant with contemporary English scholarship on Hebrews, and well documented. It admirably achieves its goal, which is to provide a first introduction to this difficult sermon. Sidebars, tables, and a glossary make the running text even more accessible to readers unfamiliar with Hebrews (many sidebars provide the text of verses from Hebrews relevant to the discussion), with the environment of the first century, and with literary-critical approaches to the Bible.

David A. deSilva

Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text.* New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. cxxvii + 989, cloth, \$75.00.

Harris’s commentary on 2 Corinthians demonstrates depth of scholarship and attention to detail. His descriptions of the Greek text are thorough and precise. He shows acute awareness of textual and grammatical issues. Nevertheless, the commentary also suffers severe shortcomings, which limit its value to students and scholars.

Positively, the detailed discussion of the Greek text of 2 Corinthians will be helpful to any intermediate to advanced student or scholar of the Greek language. Readers may question, however, why Harris utilizes the older Bauer-Armdt-Gingrich-Danker (BAGD) lexicon, the second English edition of Bauer’s lexicon, rather than the Bauer-Danker-Armdt-Gingrich (BDAG), third English edition, of Bauer.

While this choice may be explained by Harris having completed most of his work before BDAG was available, a more serious shortcoming is to be noted in Harris’s lack of engagement with rhetorical and social scientific investigations of 2 Corinthians. While one may question some of the assumptions of sociological or socio-rhetorical criticism, 1-2 Corinthians are the NT writings where the methodology is most helpful. One wonders why, for example, in commenting upon 2 Cor 2:17, where Paul notes that he and his associates do not act as “peddlers of the word of God,” Harris makes no allusion to popular images of

philosophers, particularly the Cynics, against whom such exactly charges were often raised (pp. 253-56). Reference to the later work of Lucian of Samosata, *Philosophies for Sale*, would also provide a helpful illustration to popular conceptions of philosophers, against which Paul was contrasting his own behavior. This lacuna is all the more surprising in light of Harris's comments on 2 Cor 11:7, where he specifically does note the contrast between Paul's behavior and that of "peripatetic lecturers" (pp. 754-56).

In contrast to many other scholars of the Pauline corpus, Harris attempts to reconcile the chronologies of Acts and 1-2 Corinthians to explain Paul's circumstances and reasons for writing. While some would find this approach to be helpful, others might consider it an attempt at harmonization. Harris also distinguishes himself from numerous other commentators on 2 Corinthians in hypothesizing that the letter is a single unit, rather than a composite of Pauline fragments (see pp. 8-51). Harris recognizes that the tone of 2 Cor. 10-13 is very different from 2 Cor 1-9. This feature is explained by the theory that although 2 Corinthians was written as a single letter, it was not all written at the same time, and 2 Cor 10-13 was added to chs. 1-9 after Paul received disturbing news about the state of the Corinthian congregation (pp. 50-51). A similar theory is also found in the commentaries by Ralph Martin and C. K. Barrett's classic.

Also problematic, Harris's commentary does not offer adequate indexing. Indexes are included for modern authors, Greek terms, and subjects. Conspicuously absent are an index to scripture references and an index of ancient writers. Readers may wonder why such useful tools, necessary for any critical commentary, are wanting.

In conclusion, Harris's commentary has much that is useful, particularly with regard to grammatical analysis. The book needs, however, to be supplemented by social analysis, such as the works of Theissen (*Social Aspects of Pauline Christianity*), Malherbe (*Paul and the Popular Philosophers*), Meeks (*First Urban Christians*), and Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth; Philo; Paul Among the Sophists*). It is unfortunate that the findings of these scholars could not have been more effectively integrated into Harris's commentary.

Russell Morton

Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon*. Anchor Bible 34C. New York: Doubleday, 2000. xvi + 138 pp., cloth, \$21.95.

Recognized scholar Joseph Fitzmyer, S. J., offers a solid and responsible introduction and commentary on Paul's letter to Philemon. The introduction and a substantial bibliography (28 pages of resources) occupies the first full half of the volume. This introduction treats the usual issues of historical setting (authorship, date, the vexed issue of the location of Paul's imprisonment), offers a reasonable defense for the now almost universally adopted explanation for the occasion of the letter (Onesimus has sought out Paul as a mediator between himself and Philemon, and is not a "runaway" slave) and judicious critique of other available reconstructions, and provides a helpful section on the institution of slavery in the Greco-Roman world. This is followed by a clear analysis of the letter's significance, theological contribution, and structure. A verse-by-verse commentary follows in the second half, providing all the text-critical information, the lexical analysis, comparative texts, and other historical-critical interpretive aids.

David A. deSilva

Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John*. Black's New Testament Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson; London: Continuum, 2006. xvi + 347 pp, cloth, \$29.95

It takes significant courage to contribute a commentary on Revelation as a successor to G.B. Caird's classic *Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (1966), for Caird's volume for years was the standard for both readability and scholarship. Nevertheless, after four decades Caird's work has become dated, and a supplement is needed. Boxall, who, like Caird, hails from Oxford University, has taken up the challenge admirably.

Boxall begins with a brief introduction (pp. 1-20), which concludes with an outline of Revelation. From the beginning, the reader may observe both Boxall's debt to the tradition of Caird, as well as where he supersedes his predecessor. Boxall's discussion of the genre of Revelation demonstrates, as well as can be expected in a mere two and a half pages, an awareness of the controversy surrounding apocalyptic and apocalypticism. Is Revelation an apocalypse, a prophecy or both? Boxall opts for the third conclusion, noting that the Apocalypse is also in the form of an epistle. Yet, Boxall also recognizes that John is heir to a long tradition of Jewish visionary literature, including apocalyptic speculation and *merkevah* mysticism.

Boxall differs from Caird most dramatically in allowing for the possibility that John, son of Zebedee could be the author of Revelation. Nevertheless, he concludes that a certain agnosticism in the area of authorship is necessary (p.7). Likewise, Boxall differs from Caird in recognizing that the opposition that John sees is not necessarily overt imperial persecution as much as local, provincial harassment and persecution (see Rev 2:13). Here Boxall demonstrates acute awareness of current scholarship that calls into question the existence of an imperial persecution during the reign of Domitian.

Boxall's sensitivity to the text, as well as his awareness of scholarly debate, is particularly evidenced in three areas: his discussion of the throne scene in Rev 4-5; John's use of combat myth in Rev 12-13, and the disturbing portrayal of Babylon in Rev 17. In Rev 4-5, he notes how the twenty four elders may represent both the twenty four priestly orders of 1 Chron 24:1-18 as well as the total of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. Here Boxall notes, correctly, that John's imagery may be multivalent. What is disappointing, however, is his lack of recognition that John may also utilize Greco-Roman astrological imagery as well, providing a rich tapestry of allusion for the reader. Boxall's understanding of the Lamb imagery of Rev 5 is more satisfactory, noting that the Lamb represents both a sacrifice and an avenging agent.

Boxall's recognition of the presence of combat myth in Rev 12 acute, although Caird's analysis may, ultimately, be more correct. Although Boxall notes the work of Yarbro Collins, he does not reference the foundational studies Gunkel and Bousset. Boxall also provides careful consideration of feminist critique of John's imagery in Rev 17. Yet, he also recognizes not only John's disturbing imagery of Babylon as the Great Prostitute, but also the counterbalancing positive female imagery, such as the woman of Rev 12 and the portrayal of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21-22. Thus, Revelation's disturbing imagery derives from John's uncompromising contrast between good and evil.

At various points in the commentary, Boxall includes helpful excurses which provide the reader with assistance in understanding the Apocalypse and its ancient world. In the commentary sections themselves, Boxall is somewhat constrained by the limits of the Black series. The other serious weakness of Boxall's work is that the bibliographic references are almost exclusively to titles available in English. Thus, the reader is not only denied reference to some of the classic foreign language works, but some of the more recent interesting commentaries, such as Giessen's, are also not mentioned.

Overall, Boxall provides a good introductory commentary upon the Apocalypse of John. His work represents some of the best elements of the tradition of Caird in that Boxall notes the relevance of the apocalypse for its original readers. Likewise, Boxall brings the discussion of Revelation up to date with reference to contemporary scholarship.

Russell Morton

William Yarchin, *History of Biblical Interpretation*. Hendrickson Publishers: Peabody, Massachusetts, 2004. Pp. 444, cloth, \$34.95.

William Yarchin presents *History of Biblical Interpretation* to meet the need for a single-volume reader that covers the entire span of the Bible's history, presenting various aspects of its interpretative tradition. Given the vast presence the Bible enjoys in world culture, a truly comprehensive survey of the history of biblical interpretation is admittedly beyond the book's scope. Taking this into consideration, Yarchin has selected only readings representative of the most influential exegetical treatments of biblical texts through the ages. He has carefully selected only those portions which contain some of the more clearly expressed statements of biblical interpretation. Consequently, and to the author's own admission, some works have been excluded in favor of others. For example, Yarchin deliberately excludes New Testament exegesis as well as the Jewish kabbalistic interpretive tradition. Even so, students of the Bible are sure to reap maximum benefit from *History of Biblical Interpretation*.

The contents of the book proceed chronologically from the second century B.C.E. to the end of the twentieth century C.E., presenting both the Christian and the Jewish exegetical traditions. The book is divided into five major sections. Part 1 (150–70 C.E.) covers the important elements of pre-Christian and pre-Rabbinic biblical interpretation. Part 2 (150–1500) deals with key figures among the Church Fathers. Part 3 presents rabbinic Judaism, introducing the reader to the important Jewish contemporaries of the Church Fathers. Part 4 (1500–present) illustrates the shift of scholarly interest in the Bible to philological and historical questions. Part 5 (1970–present) deals with the issues which occupy modern interpreters, issues such as “subjectivity” and “ideological motivation”. Each chapter begins with a succinct introduction by the author in which he provides context and background relevant for approaching the author(s) and/or period under discussion. At the end of these helpful introductions are included short bibliography—six works at most—for further study. Readers will find these bibliographies very useful, for they include classic studies on the subject as well as more recent articles.

A special feature of *History of Biblical Interpretation* is W. Yarchin's own contribution of fresh, original English translations of three commentary traditions on Psalm 23. Yarchin has rendered into English the Hebrew and Aramaic of Traditional rabbinic comments on Psalm 23 as they appear in the *Yalqut Shim'oni*. He has translated the Latin from the patristic *Glossa ordinaria*. Also, an English translation is given for the sixteenth century Latin text of the *Critici sacri*.

The real strength of the book is that it includes a representative sample of classical Jewish as well as patristic interpretive traditions. Moreover, readers will also gain from its pages an exposure to more recent theories of biblical interpretation and the contributions from a range of scholars like P. Tribble, Edgar V. McKnight and Segovia. *History of Biblical Interpretation* is sure to provide students, pastors and teachers alike with a real sense for the rich interpretive traditions which the Bible has, and continues, to generate.

Don Carlson, Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion

David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 289 pp., \$24.99 (paper).

This is the fifteenth book in the series of the Cambridge Companion books on the Bible, church history, and theology, with more volumes projected to follow. The books in the series are written to serve non-specialists, helping them to acquire an introductory grasp of vital historical topics. One indication of the intended audience is the absence of reference notes in the chapters. The readers are not cheated on content, however; and a rich bibliography at the end of the book directs readers to numerous primary and secondary sources for each person or movement covered in the book.

The editors provide a helpful introduction to the book, in which they cover the historiography of the Reformation period over roughly the last half century. They note the loss of interest in Reformation theology, as scholars abandoned the “great men and their ideas” approach to history, while turning to more critical questions of the period and refocusing on the social history of the common person in the sixteenth century religious setting. They point to renewed interest now in the theology of the Reformation and its many spokespersons. This volume, then, comes at a favorable time.

Eighteen chapters comprise the book, each written by a specialist on the topic. There are four chapters on the religious background to the Reformation, giving new prominence to the rich diversity of late medieval theology which was the soil from which the Reformation grew, though it was not the cause of the Reformation. Three chapters cover Luther and the development of Lutheran theology, including an interesting study on Melancthon, who modified Lutheran theology even while he preserved Luther. Four chapters serve the Calvinist Reformation, giving attention to Bucer along with the standard figures of Zwingli and Calvin. The thought of the English and Scottish Reformations merit three chapters. The Radical reformation is represented by only one chapter on Anabaptist theology, but it is the longest chapter of the book. And Anabaptist sources in the selected bibliography are again lengthy, rivaling the sources for Luther. Finally the editors each write a chapter on the Catholic reformation, one covering Catholic theologians before Trent and the other focusing on the theology expressed at the council of Trent.

Overall, it is an accomplishment in intellectual history. Not only will the reader acquire a great store of information, s/he will likely be stimulated to pursue additional reading on the thought of the reformation. The editors encourage that pursuit in their concluding section, where they sketch out new sources for and fresh inquires about Reformation thought.

It is easy to be enthusiastic about this book. It is informative, contemporary, accessible to the ordinary reader, and about the ideal length. It concludes while the reader is still interested in the topic and anxious for pointers toward other sources in the field. It demonstrates that specialists can communicate with common readers and instill in them the passion of the scholars’ pursuit of knowledge that matters. And all this comes at a price an ordinary person can afford!

Luke L. Keefer, Jr.

James J. Buckley & David S. Yeago, eds., *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. 283 pp., paper, \$29.00.

The opening sentence of this book presents its central claim as: “knowing the triune God is inseparable from participating in a particular community and its practices – a

participation which is the work of God's Holy Spirit" (1). Resulting from the work of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology in Northfield Minnesota, *Knowing the Triune God* is an attempt to do theology in a way that engages "the whole of the Christian tradition, in its diversity and richness" (3). A joint venture of both Catholic and Evangelical theologians, including Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics, the book is divided into nine essays, each written by a different theologian, and each covering a specific topic relating to the idea of knowing the triune God through the Church by the Holy Spirit. This is a laudable effort with a worthwhile benefit for anyone seeking a richer understanding of Christian theology.

This book is very helpful as a survey of theological concepts with deep academic and insightful discussion stemming from a strong grounding in the tradition of the Church. It is historically rooted, challenging in its discussion, diverse in its bias, and broad in its topics. This book will whet the theological appetite, and provide a great basis for further inquiry and greater study. It is a difficult read, exposing the deeper end of the theological pool, and is therefore probably best-suited for the graduate-level student.

*Knowing the Triune God* is divided into three sections, each consisting of three individual chapters. The first section of the book deals with the sources of knowing the Triune God. The sources include the *Church*, focusing on its practices, theology and doctrine, the *Bible*, and the *liturgy*.

The middle section of the book deals with aspects of formation in knowing the triune God, focusing on a few specifics within the *sources* mentioned in the first section. The three individual chapters here include *contemplation*, focusing on St. Augustine's understanding of contemplation as a joint exercise in theology and spirituality, the *baptismal catechesis*, concerning the teaching and preparation surrounding baptism in the early church, and *interpretation*, referring to the interpretation of the created order.

The final section of the book offers three areas of dispute concerning knowing the triune God. Here, the theologians tackle questions surrounding the fractured state of the Church, the question of whether Christians serve the God of Israel, and the issue of natural revelation and its implications for the role of the Church in knowing God. I thought this section was interesting, but it was more of chore to read and altogether not critical to the book.

The premise of Susan Wood's insightful discussion on liturgy is the idea that "In the liturgy, we do not acquire knowledge about God; we acquire a knowledge of God" (96). The idea of the participatory knowledge of God is prevalent throughout the book and especially in Wood's discussion of liturgy, as well as the chapter on baptism and contemplation. Wood goes on to say that "it is not by looking at things, but by dwelling in them that we understand them" (101). She applies this to liturgy by saying that as we "dwell" in the liturgy of the Church, we actively participate in the Christian story and our lives are thus formed "into a Christian community" as we assume that drama as our own (106-7).

Along the lines of ecclesiastical participation, L. Gregory Jones, Dean of the Divinity School and Professor of Theology at Duke University, writes a beautiful chapter on baptismal catechesis, which I found especially insightful. It really exposes the richness of the process of baptism for the early church:

Overall, this dramatic journey of baptismal catechesis highlighted the centrality of initiation into the spectacular drama of God's creating, redeeming and consummating work. [...] Through a combination of scripture preaching and teaching, formal instruction, dramatic ritual, spiritual direction, and apprenticeship in the deeds of holy living, the practices of baptismal catechesis fostered a spectacular vision - and,

more importantly, embodiment – of what it means to become part of the journey into the reign of God’s dazzling light. (161)

*Knowing the Triune God*, is a rich and challenging book offering a greater theological understanding, especially concerning the knowledge of God and the function of the Church in that knowledge. It will encourage deep thinking over a broad range of theological matters, undoubtedly leaving the reader hungry for more. One frustration with the book is the lack of biblical discussion on the Spirit’s role in the Church. The authors seem to simply make the assumption that anything the “Church” does is an act of the Spirit, which was surprising. I would have loved to see a greater development of the theology of the Spirit. Another hesitation is that at points, the book is simply a chore to plow through, with seemingly insignificant academic discussion that becomes even harder to follow given the sequestered format of the book. Regardless of these critiques however, reading this book is well worth the effort and will prove helpful in any effort to further know the triune God and the function of the Church in that pursuit.

Ryan W. Likes, John Brown University

Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. 314 pp., paper, \$ 30.00.

Reinhard Hütter assumes the task of defining the role of theology as a purpose of the church in contrast to both academic theology, which remains detached from the average Christian, and modern thought in which “the church is nothing else than a private association of people with common interests...this sociological self-designation undermines the church’s own self understanding, that is, the promise entrusted to it and its mission”(3). He writes, “The problem emerging in theology is at the same time a problem for the church,” which is the tendency to either privatize religion or, on the contrary, “toward objectified, increasingly reified forms of faith designed to counter the subversive dynamic of modernity itself”(3). Hütter makes a valiant effort, employing the works of exceptional theologians to demonstrate the validity of his resolution.

Hütter’s style and language demand the reader to have a thorough background in theological discourse and some familiarity with the authors from whom Hütter shapes his arguments. This book is best suited for educators and students of upper level theology, perhaps in a class on methods of theology. Church leaders who wish to cultivate a deeper understanding of theology in their congregations will find this book useful as a foundation and motivator.

The book is best read in order from start to finish; Hütter establishes a foundation and methodically builds layers upon it. I found section three of Part One a powerful aid to understanding his argument, as it sets the basis for Part Two in which Hütter develops the supporting points. His work reaches full strength in Part Three, building on the role of the spirit in church theology and Luther’s *Doctrina*. Part Four is the climax and conclusion, explaining, as the title suggests, theology as church practice.

Hütter begins with a discussion of Adolf von Harnack and Erik Peterson’s approach to the church as a “public” and the need for doctrine, although he differentiates between doctrine and theology. Hütter defines pathos as “the surrender to God’s presence such that this presence defines or determines us and in so doing inevitably also defines or determines out theological discourse” (31). Secondly, he describes poiesis as creative work; both terms are foundational to the book, as theology is necessarily an actualization of being acted upon.

Part Two involves George Lindbeck's work on church practice in the cultural-linguistic model, which Hütter uses to explain, "Faith is actualized within these contexts of language and activity that themselves actualize the content of faith... the inseparable juxtaposition of faith actualization and faith content" (45). Therefore, those in the church learn religion by practicing its exercises.

After establishing the groundwork, Hütter begins Part Three by tying the book together with a concise summary of his overall purpose,

My intention is to articulate critically, from the perspective of the Trinity and the economy of salvation, the relationship between church and theology, and to develop the pathos of theology explicitly from both a pneumatological and ecclesiological perspective (95).

The Christian is the poetic work of the Spirit, Hütter writes, "The existence of the church and of every believer is pathically determined in that they are constituted by the Spirit, that is, insofar as their qualification as a work of the Holy Spirit is their pathos" (118). Theology is a natural outworking of this in the church.

Hütter then revisits the concept of the church as a public, which is vital to his discussion,

"The church as public and theology as the discursive church practice mutually imply one another. If the church is indeed a public, then it requires a discourse that publicly gives account of the actualization of the core practices and of doctrine. If theology is the discursive church practice (rather than the science, philosophy, history, or philology of religion), then it presupposes the church as public" (166).

Because the church is a public, it must participate in theology. That participation is rooted in the Spirit's work, and is implemented in the church through exercise.

Hütter binds all his points together to demonstrate the importance of theology as a specifically church practice. Theology is the expression of the pathos of the Holy Spirit working in the church itself. Hütter provides a detailed and thorough demonstration of his thesis. I appreciate the overarching theme of faith as pathos, being worked upon, or "suffered," through the creative work of the Spirit. I am concerned that the depth of technical language might repel much of the church itself, ironically leaving his exhortation beyond its reach. His thoroughness and precise use of language lends towards repetitiveness. The book is excellent as a technical exposition on the purpose and place of theology. Church leaders and theologians should consider Hütter's proposition and flavor the church with the practice of theology.

Laura J Smith, John Brown University

John Schwarz, *A Handbook of the Christian Faith*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004. 295 pp., paper, \$13.99.

In his preface to *A Handbook of the Christian Faith*, John Schwarz makes very clear the purpose of his book and his target audience. He writes: "I decided someday I would write the kind of book that I wished someone had given me when I became a Christian, a book that answered questions like the following...." Schwarz proceeds to list numerous questions he had when he first became a Christian, ones that he would attempt to answer in his book. And he does indeed succeed. *A Handbook of the Christian Faith* is a

manageable, 295-page overview of the Christian faith, discussing most of the basic tenets of Christianity.

Schwarz chose an appropriate layout and flow to introduce the Christian faith. He begins with the Bible, proceeding from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Following his discussion of Jesus, the Gospels, and what he calls the "Outward Movement" (the remaining books of the New Testament), Schwarz hits several more topics with chapters titled "The Church", "Christian Beliefs", "Other Religions", "Growing In and Sharing Christ", and "Living Christianly", in that order. Each chapter is divided into sections by titles in large print. These titles not only make the book easy to follow, but they also make the material less overwhelming, as the text is broken into many parts.

On the whole, Schwarz is very thorough. He introduces all the major players in the Bible, from Adam and Eve to Paul of Tarsus. He also provides biblical references, so that a reader might be able to find the stories in Scripture. He supplies readers with historical contexts, citing names like Constantine and Augustine. And perhaps the most daunting task he tackles is introducing Christian doctrine without regard to a specific denomination. While there will certainly be discrepancies between Schwarz and some denominations, he does a fair job in discussing doctrine, beginning with a doctrine of creation and concluding with an eschatology. He uses a salvation by grace through faith model to explain Jesus' life and work.

Much to his credit, Schwarz does not shy away the hard to explain issues in the Bible and Christian history. Though he does not mention the Documentary Hypothesis in discussing the two accounts of creation in Genesis, he does acknowledge that two separate accounts are present. He also mentions Q in discussing the Synoptic Gospels, which exemplifies the appropriate balance he maintains in mixing scholarly material with more general knowledge. Of course, *A Handbook of the Christian Faith* is just that: a handbook. Thus, it cannot, should not, and does not mention every detail of Christianity.

This book would be an appropriate tool for a new Christian to have. Not only would it provide a basic introduction to the religion, it would also prompt more questions to be answered by a different means. The book might also be useful to a seasoned Christian who would like a refresher in details or a reminder of his or her heritage as a Christian. And, while this text might not be academic enough to be used in a classroom, it would make a good text for a Sunday school class to delve into. It really is quite amazing how much Schwarz manages to pack into one book, one text that can be easily transported, easily referenced, and easily shared.

Michelle Skupski-Bissell

Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003. 293 pp., cloth, \$23.00.

In this carefully researched and well-written analysis of 18<sup>th</sup> century British and American revivalism and some of its leading figures, Mark A. Noll unearths the fascinating story of the rise and development of early evangelical Christianity. Using a pleasingly clear writing style, the author begins by describing the contours of the political, ecclesiastical and spiritual "geography" of 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain and North America. He then goes on to trace the antecedents of Evangelicalism back to a variety of revitalization movements in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the Continent and in England, each of which shared a common concern to return to "a more personal and more internal practice of the Christian faith" (p. 54). With Noll's able guidance, early Evangelicalism's conviction that a personal and sensible relationship with God lies at the heart of true Christianity is found to be rooted

solidly in the fertile soil of Puritanism's experiential Calvinism, Continental Pietism's focus on "true Christianity" marked by personal godliness and a "palpable experience of God," (p. 85) and the voluntarily organized lay societies dedicated to spiritual renewal that sprang up within the confines of the High-Church Anglicanism of England. Having laid this foundation, the remainder of the book charts the growth and development of early Evangelicalism, describing its subsequent fragmentation and eventual consolidation, as well as the religious, social and psychological conditions of the time that both shaped it and were shaped by it.

This book is highly recommended as a reliable and insightful account of the rise of evangelical Christianity. Professor Noll admirably achieves his goal of using his historical and biographical material to "clarify the significance of what happened when hundreds, then thousands, then tens of thousands, came to agree with George Whitefield that 'it was best to preach the new birth, and the power of godliness, and not to insist so much on the form'" (p. 25). The author is well acquainted with the relevant sources and writes with understanding and empathy about a century peculiarly characterized by frequent, dramatic outbreaks of revivalistic spirituality which generated both ardent defenders and angry detractors. His account of the rise of evangelicalism is placed carefully and credibly within the cultural and social contexts of the day, a procedure that makes his analysis very convincing. Weaving his narrative of historical causes and effects together with fascinating biographical accounts of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers, among others, Noll retells the story of this 100 year segment of church history in a way that is at once both lively and life-like. This study has the additional advantage, as should all good histories, of containing insights and observations that are relevant for today's readers, particularly those who label themselves 'evangelical.' As one progresses through the book, it is hard to avoid a sense of déjà vu as it becomes strikingly clear that the over-riding emphasis on a personal, experiential relationship with God, accompanied by the tendency to devalue ritual and liturgy and to derive and validate religious truth from personal experience and direct communication from God, as well as from the Bible, is nothing new to modern evangelicalism. Another challenging insight comes from his observation that because early evangelicalism was primarily personal in its focus and orientation, it did not have a strong reforming influence on society in general. Writes Noll, "Changing the world was never as important for the early evangelicals as changing the self or as fashioning spiritual communities in which changed selves could grow in grace" (p. 262). The fact that this evaluation could legitimately be made of large portions of the evangelical church today, shows in ways both commendable and convicting just how close to its roots evangelicalism has remained since the early days of its development.

Mark Hepner, Papua New Guinea

Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003. 240 pp., \$25.00.

Gordon Lathrop's book seeks to examine "the ways in which Christian worship may help us to imagine, understand, care for, and live in the world" (ix). Written in a style that is geared toward clergy and theological students, Lathrop seeks to enact a liturgical renewal in a "top-down" fashion by appealing to those who have the most influence on the actual structure and content of church liturgies. Throughout the book the goal of evaluating how liturgical practice should and does shape the personal cosmologies of all its participants is readily evident and forces the reader to consider the influence that the liturgy can have upon one's life.

The book's introduction is a cosmological prolegomena that convinces the reader of the importance of the task at hand. With the first section, "Liturgical Worldmaking", Lathrop provides the philosophical foundation for liturgical cosmology, drawing on ancient philosophical cosmology and reorienting it in relation to the Gospel of Mark. This important initial groundwork is referred to often in the rest of the book. The second section, "Liturgical Ethics", is the most practical of the three as Lathrop examines the ethical implications of baptism, Eucharist, and liturgical time. In each chapter, he offers a list of very concrete and practical suggestions for renewing and reorienting liturgy in order to reflect a more ethical cosmology. This section could be read as a stand-alone section, although its depth will be missed without reading the first part of the book. Additionally, the section could be used after the initial reading as a reference for ideas to transform liturgical practice. The final section of "Liturgical Poetics" seems to be the least helpful of the three; however, the beginning contains a helpful and necessary caution in regard to how the liturgy could reinforce "cosmological distortion".

A recurring theme in the book is that of a liturgical juxtaposition of cosmologies, which is expounded early in the work:

For the Scriptures, none of the various candidates for a central cosmic principle can be adequate--not the perfect sphere, not the ruling planets, not the conquering god, not the dominant role of humanity, not the end of time, not the Logos, not the Son of Man, not the tree of life. But the cosmologies suggested by all these can be received if they are turned, if their terms are reused to speak of the living God, if the community encounters that living God through all the gaping holes in their cosmological fabric (44).

This refusal to concede to a meta-cosmology is found throughout the book, along with other facets that point to the author's postmodern tendencies. Often Lathrop finds the power of liturgy within the mixture of two seemingly contradictory components: "silence is set next to speech, concrete symbols juxtaposed to lengthy discourse" (196).

The real foundation for Lathrop's work is Plato's story *Timaeus*, which Lathrop says is the Western world's most influential philosophical cosmology. Lathrop goes on to argue that the story of "the son of Timaeus" in the Gospel of Mark functions as an "explicit *mimesis* and reversal of Plato and made the Gospel of Mark a profound contribution to cosmology" (31). Lathrop does not argue that Mark's Gospel is a full cosmology, but says that "[t]he biblical business, time and again, seems to be to propose a hole in these systems or to reverse their values while still using their strengths, to turn or re-aim their words toward another purpose" (39). This idea of exposing "holes" in various cosmologies is returned to again and again and makes the valid point that no cosmology is essentially perfect and beyond critique. This also seems to be another way for Lathrop to reject any sort of meta-cosmology and to retain his postmodern bent.

One of the most disheartening aspects of Lathrop's book for many will be the rejection of many biblical stories as historic events. While some may concede to him that the son of Timaeus story in Mark may not exactly be historical fact, I would think that many would be taken back by his assertion that the exodus did not actually occur. In a similar manner, some will find his suggestion to bless homosexual couples and to baptize homosexual individuals as contrary to biblical standards.

While these two aspects of Lathrop's own personal beliefs might find disagreement with potential readers, it would be wise to take Lathrop's own advice and see this simply as a "hole" in his own personal theology and to not throw the book out altogether. He offers

profound reflection upon an event that for many worshippers is nothing more than a dull ritual reenacted on a weekly basis. With his help, even with its “holes”, the Christian liturgy can be used as an event that transforms the way God’s people understand and live within his universe.

Matt Cleaver, John Brown University

Therese of Lisieux, *The Little Way for Every Day: Thoughts from Therese of Lisieux*. Edited and translated by Francis Broome. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.

Devotees of St. Therese of Lisieux will find in this little volume daily readings arranged for an entire year. Each month begins with a carefully chosen Scripture text, which establishes the theme. Daily readings are comprised of two or three sentences which are excerpts taken from her autobiography, poems, letters, and other written materials. Scriptural references are usually cited in endnotes. The readings are intended to be used devotionally, and the editorial arrangement and lack of annotation presuppose a familiarity on the part of the reader with St. Therese. For those who have never read the Little Flower, some of her language may be startling, if not baffling. For example she prays, “I beg You, O Jesus, to cast Your divine glance on a great number of little souls. I beg You to choose in this world a legion of little victims worthy of your love” (67). The book would be more accessible with the addition of a brief introduction to St. Therese, including a biographic sketch and her importance in the history of Christian spirituality. For those already familiar with St. Therese, this book is a fine little companion for daily devotions or a series of retreat.

Elaine A. Heath, Perkins School of Theology.

Mark Water, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Prayer and Praise*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004. 1184 pp., cloth, \$24.97.

This lengthy Christian prayer reference encyclopedia is a treasure trove of prayer. It gathers over 5,000 prayers and articles about prayer between its covers. Part One contains the prayers of individuals arranged by topic. Part Two contains historical works by various authors on the subject of prayer. The work opens with a table of contents for the two parts of the book. Part One begins with a detailed table of contents and concludes with an index to authors and subjects plus an appendix of biographical information. Part Two opens with a detailed table of contents. Part One, however, is cross referenced to appropriate articles in Part Two. The work is very well indexed for friendly exploration.

Part One includes a number of contemporary prayers but the main emphasis of the section is the rich heritage of classic Christian prayers. The goal of selecting edifying Christian prayers is surpassingly attained. Prayer selections from such personas as Abelard, Alcuin, Anthony, Baxter, Bede Durer, Fenelon, Kepler, Milton, Moore, Knox, Luther Schweitzer, Anselm, Augustine, Blake, ten Boom, Spurgeon, Francis, Tyndale, Polycarp, Gregory, Andrews, Dionysius, Erasmus, Bonar, Ignatius, Jerome, Kuyper, Calvin, Clement, Tyndale, Eusebius, Melancthon, Kempis, Law and Pascal are found there as well as prayers by 400 other persons. Then in addition there are prayer sections from *The Book of Common Prayer*, *Gallican Sacramentary*, *Lenten Triodon*, *Leonine Sacramentary*, *Serum Breviary*, *Book of Common Worship*, *Didache*, *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*, *Euchologium Anglicanum*, *Genevan Book of Order*, *New Church Book of Worship* and *the Treasury of Devotion*. Divisions in Part One include such headings as: "Prayers for Christian Growth,"

"The Christian Year," "Everyday Life," "Daily," "Blessings and Doxologies," "Bible Prayers," "Famous Prayers" and many others.

In Part Two there is a massive collection of extracts on the topic of prayer from such people as: Anselm, Edwards, Murray, Origen, Francis de Sales, Forsyth, Kempis, Augustine, Bounds, Tertullian, Wesley, Taylor Chrysostom, Madam Guyon, Calvin, Bruce and an additional 80 others. Also found in Part Two are collections of prayers from six sources. These include: "Roman Catholics and Prayer," "Stories About Prayer," "Helping Children Pray," and "Quotations About Prayer and Praise."

This is a book that every pastor, student and all other persons interested in Christian prayer can spend a lifetime. It is both selective and fulfilling.

Richard Allison

Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, Study Guide Edition. Wheaton: Crossways Books, 2005. 396 pp., cloth, \$25.

The tradition of Francis Schaeffer lives on. It has been restated and applied to the context of Western Civilization thirty years later by the comprehensive world view writing of Nancy Pearcey. Pearcey, who studied at L'Abri and continues to work with others who are off-spring of the Schaeffer legacy, has written an astute analysis of the role of Christianity in the public realm.

The introduction of the book, which has thirteen extensive chapters and four appendices, describes how we have a cultural need to understand the Christian worldview and train our children in thinking in terms of worldviews. The next four chapters explain what a worldview is, and how the failure of Christians to think in terms of worldview has isolated them from the culture, including a wide variety of subject areas. Of the Christian view which should engage culture and influence all subject areas, she states, "all creation must be interpreted in light of its relationship to God" (p. 35). But this has not been the predominate perspective. Our beliefs have been locked into a private world and we have failed to think Christianly about all matters. She critically remarks that, "In many Christian schools, the typical strategy is to inject a few narrowly defined "religious" elements into the classroom, like prayer and Bible memorization—and then teach exactly the same things as the secular schools. The curriculum merely spreads a layer of spiritual devotion over the subject matter like icing on a cake, while the content itself stays the same" (p. 37).

Pearcey supports many of her cultural points with a variety of anecdotes such as explaining the compartmentalization of subject matters by telling of the Christian physics professor who believed his physics had nothing to do with his faith. The first section of chapters on worldview thinking looks quite a bit like some of the foundational work of Schaeffer in *Escape From Reason*. At first this began to bother me, then as I read further it was obvious she was going deeper into the issues than Schaeffer did, was broadening the topics, and was providing new examples. One of the strengths of this section was her philosophic analysis of how Platonism has so strongly influenced the West, especially its impact in the church in creating a radical dualism between the material and the immaterial, and between the secular and the sacred. This section is essential reading for anyone planning to send their children to the public schools or off to contend with the philosophies of the modern university.

The second section, chapters five through eight, is the best section of the book. It focuses on the impact of Darwinism and on its philosophical and scientific failures. Two points that she argues for are the central focus of this section. First, evolutionary Darwinism is necessarily linked to naturalism. Second, the link between Darwinism and naturalism is

the reason why it is held to so dogmatically and often uncritically. This makes belief in evolution a philosophical question and not a scientific question. It is believed because it supports naturalism, and naturalism is an assumed, not proven belief. This includes a classical apologists' approach to the design argument in that it has historically been argued that design is obvious in biology, and that now the argument is shifting to biochemistry, cosmology, and the structure of DNA. She explains how Darwinism has universal implications for setting the foundation for pragmatism, law, and opening the door to the postmodern reaction. Much of Pearcey's background is in science and this section confirms her understanding of this area and the ramifications of naturalistic Darwinism.

Chapters nine through twelve delve into the development of evangelicalism in America. Pearcey traces the expansion of Christianity through the Great Awakenings which as she says, "With few outright atheists to address, the revivalists did not seek to convert people to Christianity so much as to what they called 'experimental religion'—the idea that religious truth should not merely be believed but also experienced" (p. 269). This led to revivals which were reproduced by techniques. This helps explain, says Pearcey, why evangelical churches are typically weak in apologetics and worldview thinking. Evangelicals have bought into the two-fold view of life which separates the religious and experiential from the secular and rational. This has also led to two wings of the evangelical church, one populist and the other scholarly. Chapter twelve's focal point is the role of women in beginning and participating in the culture war. The "feeling" orientation of the American church resulting from the divided reality has contributed to the "feminization" of the church.

The last chapter, number thirteen, describes living out the Christian worldview in practice. This includes such areas as in leadership, the use of money for ministry, the marketing of the gospel, the Christian writer taking credit for something he has not really written, and how all of these are best addressed when the Christian world view is practiced properly. She affirms, "Only by sitting in the supernaturalist's chair will we have the courage to do what's right even when it costs" (p. 376).

The book includes four appendices on the secularization of American politics, Modern Islam, the war between materialism and Christianity, and finally a section on practical apologetics at L'Abri. The book is long and could be more effective as three books: one on worldviews, one on science, and one on politics in American culture. Due to the overload of topics, frequent quotations, and useful anecdotes, the reader could have problems relating the examples to the broader principle. But these are very minimal concerns.

The book builds on the work of Francis Schaeffer, James Sire, C.S. Lewis, Phillip Johnson, and other twentieth century apologists. Pearcey takes us into the twentieth century by successfully critiquing the anti-intellectual, feeling-oriented, market driven Christianity of today. It is her belief that in order to win the world for Christ, Christians must also win the mind of the world. This book, which received an Award of Merit in Christianity Today's 2005 book awards and won the 2005 ECPA Gold Medallion Award in the Christianity and Society category, can be read as an introduction to worldview thinking by those unfamiliar to the concept or by those who want to probe deeper into the Christian worldview. It ties together thoughts that I have never seen associated to one another before. It should be read by all who want to think Christianly and should be required reading for teenagers before embarking for the University.

Mark Hamilton, Ashland University

Kyle D. Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006. 233 pp., paper, \$29.95.

Kyle Fedler, Assistant Professor of Religion at Ashland University, has provided us with a much needed book for establishing foundations for Christian ethics in his recent *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality*. He does this by a thorough investigation of the sources on which we draw, sources necessary for making the claim that the *content* and *vision* of our ethic is *specifically* Christian. In Part I, Fedler provides a brief yet helpful and critical overview of philosophical proposals, the language of ethics, and the different ways for construing the moral life. He then moves on to a rich exploration in Part 2 of the “Biblical Foundations for Morality.”

In Part 2, Fedler starts with one of the most important, yet often neglected sources for Christian ethics, the role of Scripture, by emphasizing that it is important to attend to *how* we use the Bible in ethics. He elevates our awareness that it’s not just that we think the Bible is an authoritative source for Christian ethics, but it is equally important to give attention to the ways and methods for how Scripture is used, or abused, as a source for ethical convictions, decisions and actions. He offers concrete suggestions for the Bible’s role in ethics and in our moral deliberations. This sets the stage for his exploration of biblical foundations for morality in the remainder of Part II.

Fedler first takes us through Genesis, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Prophets. He describes Genesis 1 through 3 as the “scaffolding upon which we build our moral vision” (page 68), a structure assumed and built on in the Law and the Prophets. He goes on to describe the moral ethos of various texts and presents some theological and ethical implications of this biblical material that moves us toward important moral considerations. His insights into the Mosaic Covenant in chapter 6, particularly his focus on the Ten Commandments, are especially pertinent for Christian ethics today. He gives readers a perspective that can reclaim the importance and narrative context of the Decalogue for a faith community as opposed to a random collection of prohibitions carved in stones for public display.

The “scaffolding” continues to rise and reaches its pinnacle in *Exploring Christian Ethics* in chapter 8. Fedler explains the implications and normativity of Jesus Christ and discipleship for Christian ethics. The “very heart of Christian ethics” is the teaching, ministry, and life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (page 139). The centrality of Christ for our morality and ethics are rooted in the “imitation of Christ” in our lives as followers and disciples (chapter 9). This story of Jesus is continued in the story of the Church and is at the heart of the “ethics of Paul” (chapter 10). While Paul did address a number of ethical issues facing the early church, issues such as sexuality, divorce, remarriage, gender relations, ethnic conflict and civil authority, we are reminded that Paul’s moral vision was rooted in the Gospel of Christ. Fedler therefore provides us an important reminder, through the apostle Paul, that Christian ethics is not about our opinions and stands on particular issues, but is instead, informed by the Gospel of Christ, being “new creations,” and grasping that it is this Gospel and Christian faith which shapes our moral convictions and character.

There are many strengths to this book and much to commend it not just as a textbook for courses but one important for people desirous to understand what it is about Christian ethics that makes it specifically *Christian*. It is well organized, clear and easy to read. While the focus is not applied ethics, Fedler does provide helpful questions and suggestions for practical application. He is clear throughout the book that we ought to take seriously the implications of the Gospel and Christian faith in all areas of life, such as economics, sexuality, justice, peace making, families, the environment, respect for all of life, and politics to name a few. By providing such an important work in the “biblical foundations

of morality,” Fedler equips his readers to think and imagine the myriad of possibilities for the relationships between our Christian faith, our character and our moral convictions.

Wyndy Corbin Reuschling

Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005. 399 pp., paper, \$14.94.

The subtitle of *God's Politics* reflects the two problems which Jim Wallis seeks to address related to the relationship between Christian faith and our current political climate. Why does the Right get it wrong? Because, according to Wallis, conservative political politics, viz a viz the Republican Party, have politicized evangelical Christianity in particular and squeezed it into its own ideological mold, using it to justify policies that betray commitments to biblical Christianity, such as working for peace, alleviating poverty, and advocating for social justice. However, the Left doesn't "get it" according to Wallis. Why? Instead of politicizing Christian faith, the Left has privatized it, pushing it to the margins by ignoring the importance of faith commitments to the majority of Americans. What Wallis appeals to and presents in his book is "God's Politics" that are "not to be ideologically predictable or a loyal partisan" (page 5). The major motif of *God's Politics* is God is personal but never private (chapter 3). It's not that Christians should not be involved in political and social activism according to Wallis. Wallis has a long history of social activism as founder and president of Sojourners, a ministry that believes the Gospel (read: "evangelical") integrates faith with commitments to social justice. Sojourners has been an important voice for reminding Christians and others that biblical faith is not only compatible with working for peace and justice but actually demands it.

Wallis' book, *God's Politics*, attempts to give Christians who are weary and suspicious of party politics an alternative vision to what is presented to us by Republicans, Democrats, and Libertarians. The vision offered by Wallis is a fourth option, a "prophetic politics" (chapter 6). A prophetic politics, in line with the biblical prophets and Jesus, would enable us to expand our horizons beyond the litmus tests of abortion and same sex marriage to a more comprehensive moral vision that includes eliminating poverty, addressing racism and sexism, caring for the creation, and active involvement in peace making to name a few. For Wallis, these issues can not be tagged as "just" conservative or "just" liberal concerns according to party politics. His appeal to us is that we see these as Christian concerns, rooted in a prophetic vision found in Scripture and at the heart of God's *shalom* for our world.

After identifying his concerns in Parts I and presenting his alternative of prophetic politics in Part II, Wallis then moves on to address three particular issues of concern, issues where he present alternatives according to a prophetic politics. In Part III, he addresses the problem of war, violence, and international relations through the sub-title of the section, "When did Jesus become pro-war?" Wallis' focus is on the current war on terror and in particular the war in Iraq as well as the larger Middle East conflict. He exposes the ideologies masked as theology used to justify war and the predicament and problems this has presented for our global relationships and our moral credibility in the world. Wallis then turns to the prophet Micah to inform our response to war, global justice and peace.

In Part IV, Wallis takes on economic justice as a moral issue by posing the question, "When did Jesus become pro-rich?" For Wallis, the presence of poverty in the world's richest country is a serious moral failure. He is dismayed by our unwillingness to see poverty in such a light. He identifies the ways in which the Right reduces solutions to poverty to the personal level without identifying the historical and structural causes of poverty. A prophetic politics is a call to responsibility by all and for all to work for economic

justice. He ends this section with a reflection on the prophet Isaiah and a reminder that “budgets are moral documents” and perhaps more accurate reflections, beyond our rhetoric, of what a people truly value.

In Part V, Wallis addresses the selective nature of morality and the danger of “litmus tests” to ethics by wondering, “When did Jesus become a selective moralist?” Wallis takes the opportunity to expand the conversation on pro-life to one that is consistently and more comprehensively pro-life for not only abortion but capital punishment and the anti-life ideologies and racist policies and practices that have been America’s “original sin” (chapter 19). Wallis links this with his concerns about the selectivity of the “family values” debate, helping us to see the various cultural and social forces, such as violence, the media, the structure of work, gender equality, and the quality of our community lives as serious “family values” that the Church may have a prophetic word to say and different model to present to our culture.

Wallis’ book is provocative, intentionally and helpfully so, from one who has an admirable and lengthy track record in courageously speaking up on these issues for well over forty years. While one may disagree with some of Wallis’ diagnoses, analyses and solutions, this is an important book to read for the following reasons. *God’s Politics* gives us a language and perspective to address issues from the perspective of Christian faith. Wallis names the limitations of Republican and Democratic politics by presenting a wider moral vision that is rooted in biblical faith and that is more reflective of the spiritual roots of evangelical social activism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This book therefore is an important reminder of the nature of evangelical faith and a helpful remembrance of a different kind of evangelical history than is being written today. *God’s Politics* is an important caution to our idolatrous tendencies to place our hope in political leaders, party politics and power instead of in God. Even though Wallis purports to take on both the Right and the Left, much of his critiques are leveled against the policies and practices of the Right. Perhaps this is because they have been the ones in power, those who have courted the votes of religious conservatives most aggressively, and have most often used religious language to support their policies. The warning against idolatry however still extends to the tendencies of Christians to place their trust and hope in either political party rather than in God.

This is where Wallis leaves us in *God’s Politics* in his powerful epilogue. It is a call to trust God, to hope and to carry on in the task of prophetic politics since “we are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”

Wyndy Corbin Reuschling

Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004. Pp. 287, paper, \$15.99.

Mark Dever’s book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on church health. He is a local church pastor, pastoring Capital Hill Baptist Church in Washington DC, and is also Executive Director of 9Marks Ministries.

In a world where it can be so easy to be caught up in programs, events, and the latest contemporary whatever, and thinking that all of this is healthy, Mark Dever is calling the church back to her historical, healthy roots. A driving force behind the book is these thoughts from Mark,

Unhealthy churches cause few problems for the healthiest Christians; but they are cruel taxes on the growth of the youngest and weakest Christians. They prey on those who don’t understand Scripture well. They mislead spiritual children. They even take the curious hopes of non-

Christians that there might be another way to live, and seem to deny it. Bad churches are terribly effective anti-missionary forces. I deeply lament sin in my own life, and sin's corporate magnification in the life of so many churches. They seem to make Jesus out to be a liar when He promised life to the full (John 10:10). (p. 13)

With these thoughts, and others, in the background, Dever launches into his model of church health. Even though the work is entitled, and he will enumerate, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, there are really only two overarching marks to his model. Dever states,

We need churches that are self-consciously distinct from the culture. We need churches in which the key indicator of success is not evident results by persevering biblical faithfulness. We need churches that help us to recover those aspects of Christianity that are distinct from the world, and that unite us. (p. 28)

What are those marks? The two overarching marks are: 1. The preaching of the Message; 2. The leading of disciples.

Mark number one breaks down this way in the author's work —

1. Expository preaching
2. Biblical theology
3. Biblical understanding of the good news
4. Biblical understanding of conversion
5. Biblical understanding of evangelism

These marks all reflect the concern to preach rightly the Word of God. As one reads these five marks there will be a lot of unanimity over what is written. I personally believe these chapters are worth the price of the book and more.

Mark number two breaks down this way in the author's work —

6. Biblical understanding of church membership
7. Biblical understanding of church discipline
8. Biblical understanding of church leadership
9. Concern for promoting Christian discipleship and growth

These all reflect concern the right administration of the borders and markers of Christian identity. These four marks have the potential to create a lot of discussion between one church community and another. Different backgrounds can and do see these areas differently.

The two appendixes ("Tips for Leading the Church in a Healthy Direction" and "The Numerical Nineties and Beyond") are invaluable to anyone concerned about church health. Appendix two is a review of crucial literature written beginning with a work published in 1987 by Kennon L. Callahan and concluding with a work written by David Garrison in 2004.

Dever says this about the appendix: "Here, in outline form and in chronological order, is just a small sample of prescriptions from various recent authors for the problems of the local church." (p. 249)

I found Dever's work stimulating, refreshing, and reformatory. As mentioned, the first five *Marks* are calling us back to God, and we need to be reminded that the church belongs to God in Christ Jesus who is the head of the church. Also, I found it very practical to take the two appendixes mentioned and to place them before my congregational leadership. Why not? To have a healthy church, it is up to the leadership to lead the way. Thus, you too will find it a wise practical application to place these two appendixes before your leaders as a teaser to then, asking them to read the book for their personal edification, and then for the healthy edification of the congregation that they are serving in for the Lord of the Church.

G. Edward Wishart

Michael Jenkins, *Letters to New Pastors*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006. 186 pp., paper, \$15.00

Rest assured, anyone reading this book in lieu of ordination exams will be forever grateful they read Jenkins' *Letters to New Pastors*. In fact, if there was one book I recommend to any candidate for ordained ministry, Jenkins' book of letters is it.

Jenkins' *Letters to New Pastors* is a surprisingly important book for *all* pastors. Between the lines of these fictitious letters of a mature pastor to brand-spanking-new pastors, Jenkins subtly is calling all pastors to stay connected. There is, on one hand, much for new pastors to learn from more experienced ones. Also, on the other hand, the church has a great need for "old" pastors to communicate the wisdom they possess to "new" ones. Everyone has something to learn from this unique book. In other words, this book *is* for everyone. Though the book does not contain a table of contents, the main topics include the following: calling, advice, Christian denominations, preaching, discipleship, the pastoral vocation, teaching moments, the Sabbath, creation, theological language, counseling, church politics, "spiritual" matters, the Bible, reading, authority, hospitality, grief and loss, the question "is it all worth it," and much, much more.

Certainly, *new* pastors will get a kick out of this book. Its lessons and reminders are refreshing and hauntingly amusing. This book tries to get at the heart of good pastors – the spirit. Jenkins fashions these letters in a thoughtful and intentional way as the author-narrator builds relationships with his pen pals. This book reminds pastors that the calling to ordained ministry is the last thing any of us should individually seek. Rather, it is a calling that comes from God alone, and God's calling is purposefully our vocation's life-force, or else our *good-intentions* run the risk of endangering congregations. This is a crucial lens for anyone.

Pastors of all ages and experience levels will appreciate this book. From the mundane everyday frustrations of where to place the coffee table, who can use the church's fine china, and rations of post-it notes that come with church work, Jenkins at the offset reminds us that "the kingdom of God is not immune to irritation and annoyance," insert a great sigh of relief for those new pastors reading this, "and the church is not an idealist's abstraction or a utopia," writes Jenkins, "The church doesn't hover twelve feet off the ground. Whatever miracles of transformation and formation God is up to in the church, they happen right where you live and worship" (7). Our preaching and pastoral care happens under the strangest and graceless of circumstances, but no matter what, we are always called to remember that in life and in death, we are God's. And if we're anything else, we are missing the point.

Jenkins' real kicker is perhaps unexpected. Sometimes those hard-to-love dysfunctional members in our church are, in fact, the best teachers and gifts God has given us. A tough pill to swallow. But an essential lesson, perhaps the number one lesson, for new pastors of all ages to learn and appreciate, again and again. After all, according to St. Gregory, the church is a "weird beast," and "the pastor is more likely to be just another orangutan in God's ecclesiastical zoo. Christ himself is the zookeeper, the caretaker" (8, 9).

After reading this book, one thing is clear. A pastor's road of discipleship is not meant to be a road walked alone. We are all in this together, and Jenkins reminds us that the great friendships of our time are essential to Christ's ministry in the world. I hope you enjoy this book as much as I have.

Joshua Stewart, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth, Texas

Halbert Weidner, *Grief, Loss, and Death: The Shadow Side of Ministry*, The Haworth Pastoral Press, 2006. 81 pp., cloth, \$19.95.

Weidner writes this book for the wounded minister. The shadow side of ministry according to this insightful author is the human side. It is the side of ministry that lives outside of the professional role of pastor. How does a pastor deal with inevitable grief, loss and death on a personal level? At the same time how does one handle such disasters on a professional level?

The author, who is pastor of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Honolulu, Hawaii, writes from his experience in a Catholic parish. However ministers of all denominations would profit from exposure to this book.

It will help prepare caregivers for the stress on their personal lives by the demands of ministry. A seminary class on practical ministry would be wise to include this book on a reading list for new pastors.

“The shadow side of ministry shoots a bullet through the brain that does not kill or prevent thinking or feeling. But the bullet creates a hole, a long, hollow, empty chasm that thinking and feeling must somehow bypass. The wounded minister does not recover the previous self, cannot remember what the old self thought or felt. Like a veteran of a secret war, there may be a new life after the shameful wound, but no public way to heal. But there is a public way of speaking about it and this may help relieve some of the shame and some of the self-blaming.”

Treatment of individual subjects brought up in the book is profound but not extensive. Weidner does not pretend to have an ‘academic’ answer for many of the issues he uncovers. His uncovering of them however is important.

Cliff Stewart

David L. Bartlett, *What's Good About This News? Preaching from the Gospels and Galatians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003. 152 pp., paper, \$19.95.

This book consists of David Bartlett’s Lyman Beecher Lectures along with accompanying sermons that serve as sermonic example of each lecture. Bartlett is committed to Good News. He teaches homiletics at Yale Divinity School and his practical instructions to his students prove invaluable throughout the book. For example: “I nag new preachers not to nag. I urge them to try the following experiment: Try preaching a sermon that does not once say ‘we ought’ or ‘you ought’ or ‘we must’ or ‘you must’ or ‘let us remember that...’ which is always just a veiled rhetorical way of saying ‘we must.’”

The context for these Beecher Lectures is that they were delivered within days of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Bartlett is very much sensitive to the context of this bad news. He is able to use it effectively in his emphasis on good news from the Gospels.

He is attempting to describe different aspects of the good news from each of the four gospels and the letter to the Galatians. What is it that makes the gospel – gospel in various strains of scripture? In the local church setting this reviewer would comment that the lectures and sermons are intellectually out of reach of the normal non-academic setting, but they are not to be dismissed. This book could be the start of a preacher looking at each of the four Gospels asking the same question Bartlett asks in this series of lectures and sermons. What’s good about this news? The answers might surprise you.

Cliff Stewart

## Book Reviews

Brian K. Blount and Gary Wayne Charles, *Preaching Mark in Two Voices*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. 273 pp., paper, \$24.95.

More books in the pastor's library need to be written like this preaching text on the Gospel of Mark. Blount, an African American seminary professor (Princeton Theological Seminary) and Charles, a suburban local church pastor (Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Alexandria, VA) team up to write an effective commentary with examples of sermons that emerge from good exegesis.

What makes this exposition even stronger is the diverse cultures from which each author emerges. It provides a dimension to the book that is not often found. In fact, I am aware that Ashland Theological Seminary is attempting this same kind of diverse cultural teaching in many courses.

Professor Blount's honesty and insight into his own background reflects one who both knows his text and also applies it to his life both past and present. The sermon entitled 'Makes Me Want to Holler' is one that should be in an anthology of sermons that cause one to not just talk about the faith but put it into action. Blount, of course is a well-known New Testament scholar whose analysis of the text reflects a depth that Charles cannot match. However, Charles has his own moments of sermonic insight that is hard to match also. His reflections on the demoniac of Mark 5 alongside a personal encounter with schizophrenia are one the reader will not forget.

If one is preaching through the Gospel of Mark I would suggest that this volume is indispensable to getting to the heart of the text and at the same time modeling preaching that takes the text to the heart of the reader.

Cliff Stewart

Sally A. Brown, Patrick D. Miller, eds., *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005. 167 pp., paper, \$24.95.

Edited by Brown and Miller, this collection of essays/sermons focusing on the subject of lament provides a diverse look at an aspect of faith and worship that has largely fallen to disuse in American culture. Duff, in her essay of 'Recovering Lamentation as a Practice in the Church', notes that in the Old Testament book of Psalms, Lament psalms far outnumber the Psalms of Praise. However in a commonly used Presbyterian hymnal the responsive readings include praise-oriented psalms at a ratio of sixteen to one!

The Princeton Theological faculty members who contributed to this volume provide an interesting assortment of perspectives. New Testament professor Brian Blount provides a striking 'Lament' sermon that is characteristic of his rich African American background and sensitivities. Ellen Charry shares personal insights dealing with the untimely death of her husband.

From the introduction is this statement: '...what ultimately shapes Biblical lament is not the need of the creature to cry its woe, but the faithfulness of the God who hears and acts.'

This book bridges the gap between theoretical theology and real life existential situations of loss and grief. It is very helpful to the pastor who wants to embrace this kind of honest prayer in worship.

Cliff Stewart

J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Did you know that it is possible to bake your own bread? Sadly, most people do not. They say that bread-making requires a skill only the most well-trained chefs can acquire. But give that same skeptic a slice of bread mixed and kneaded by your own hands, cut while still warm from the oven, and there is the possibility that you will have won a new convert.

Kent Edwards will in the same way convert the most jaded preacher into believing that it is possible to preach a sermon so warm and inviting, so crackling with energy and excitement, so filled with richness and depth that your hearers will come away having feasted on the word of God. Kent's goal in his book *Effective First Person Biblical Preaching* is to move preachers out of their well-worn style of expository preaching into using the richness of narrative preaching. He says "The primary reason I preach narrative passages of Scripture in a narrative style is to be faithful to the biblical text. I want to say what God said in a biblical text, and only what God said in a biblical text. I cannot be faithful to the meaning of the original text without being homiletically respectful of its genre" (pp. 20-21).

Kent makes it seem possible that anyone can bake their own bread, I mean, preach their own first person narrative sermon. He accomplishes this through an engaging writing style that describes his own successes and failures in narrative preaching. He gives invaluable suggestions and practical advice every preacher can use even if he or she never preaches a narrative sermon. However, for those who have the desire to preach a narrative sermon, he makes the impossible seem possible. He does so by describing sermon preparation as a series of steps, not unlike a recipe, and by insisting on the importance of developing conflict and tension as absolutely essential in making the sermon interesting, vital, and effective.

Kent divides his book into three parts. The first two parts describe the separate halves of the sermon preparation task: the exegetical stage and the homiletical stage. In part one he invites the preacher to exegete a narrative passage of Scripture in order to determine the single big idea inherent in the story itself. Part two is to take all the passion and energy of the story and prepare a presentation of that same idea in a story that connects with us in our totally different culture and context. Part three of the book answers frequently asked questions.

Kent's description of the questions to ask and the process to use in preparing the sermon moves along in concise, readable style. By the time you finish the book you say, "I can do that!" Then he concludes with several narrative sermons - both written out and on an enclosed CD-ROM - that demonstrate effective first-person biblical preaching. You have not only learned how to bake bread; you have eaten it too.

Douglas J. Pretorius, St Paul Lutheran Church, Bellville, OH

J. Ellsworth Kalas, *Preaching the Calendar: Celebrating Holidays and Holy Days*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. 136 pp., paper, \$14.95.

The author is now professor of Homiletics at Asbury Theological Seminary, and has a rich background of service as a pastor. His suggestion is that pastors consider preaching the calendar. For many years pastors have been urged to preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Why not also put a calendar into the hand that holds the Bible? Don't many people come to church on certain Sundays of the calendar year with certain expectations? Kalas suggests that the preacher acknowledge this fact and consider

sermons that take seriously the particular day in the yearly calendar. This book's simple format is taking sixteen recognizable days in the calendar, providing a brief introduction to the particular day along with a sample sermon. The sermons are of uneven quality but they do stimulate creative thought for the sermon writer. Of particular interest is the discussion and sermon on 'Low Sunday.' Not to be overlooked are the short but valuable histories of special Sundays in the church year. Use this book for sermon starter ideas and focus.

Cliff Stewart

Dean Borgman, *Hear My Story: Understanding the Cries of Troubled Youth*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003. 415 pp., paper, \$19.95.

In the Preface of his book *Hear My Story: Understanding the Cries of Troubled Youth*, Dean Borgman outlines a number of goals for the volume. He wants to bring the suffering of youth to attention, to look for a holistic solution to the problem by taking into account the hurts of other nations, and provide a resource for those people working with these troubled youth. His method of accomplishing these goals is telling stories of triumph and defeat in youths' lives, thus the title of his book. He emphasizes this power of stories in the first chapter "The Postmodern Challenge...and Stories" and reiterates it often throughout the book. For all the emphasis he places on telling stories, however, Borgman fails to provide readers with a significant amount of them. And those included are often told in third person, thus taking the voice away from the troubled youth.

Borgman organizes his book in a manner that will allow it to be used as a reference book. He divides the text first into four sections: Context and Scope of Trouble; Growing Up Healthy and Unhealthy; The Problem of Violence; and Addictions, Healing, and Reconciliation. He further divides these sections into chapters. And within these chapters, he divides the material with bold headings, making it relatively easy to locate a specific passage. He concludes each chapter with "Questions for Reflection", which primarily prompts personal reflection, and "Resources", which lists books, videos, and websites to consult for more information. These are both very worthwhile additions to the book, inviting readers to pause and digest the information in each chapter and to seek further details about the ideas presented.

Borgman believes that ultimately Jesus is the solution to the problems of troubled youth. He spends all of Chapter 3: "Facing Troubled People with Jesus" discussing Jesus' role as healer and inserts Scripture references throughout the rest of the book. Borgman also emphasizes that we must understand how youth got into trouble before we can help get them out. Thus, he discusses many factors that might have led to problems, from the lack of father involvement to social disorders. Then he discusses the problems themselves, covering timely issues like school shootings, bullying, and life in ghettos. He concludes his book with what we might consider the toughest issues: suicide, murder, drugs and alcohol, and sexual struggles. And true to his purpose, he does examine the troubles of youth in terms of the world, not just this country, often comparing American statistics with worldwide statistics. He provides good amounts of factual data, citing studies, polls, and statistics. He mixes in some interviews, and the occasional story.

In his Preface, Borgman offers some very pertinent advice: read the book in parts. Don't attempt to read it cover to cover, as the material is thick. He suggests exploring first the chapters that are most appealing, then reading the others when appropriate. This book is 415 pages long and indeed thick, not necessarily in topic, as he suggests, but in writing style. Borgman tends to wander in his discussions, use language that is not as precise as it could be and use language that is vague.

As Borgman suggests, the youth worker might be the person most interested in this book. The material could provide a glimpse into the mind of a youth the leader is struggling to work with. *Hear My Story* plays to a very specific audience, and those outside of this audience may not want to delve into this lengthy book.

Michelle Skupski-Bissell

J.O. Balswick, P.E.King, K.S.Reimer, *The Reciprocating Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005. 334 pp., paper, \$24.

I have taught courses in Human Growth & Development and Developmental Psychology for a number of years and have always found the standard textbooks to have a common problem—they give little or no serious attention to the spiritual aspect of human development. Additionally, as authors Balswick, King and Reimer note, existing developmental theories lack a guiding teleology (goal) of human development. This book is a refreshing answer to the problem and so much more. In fact, the authors begin the book by stating clearly their purpose in writing: “to present an integrated view of human development that is based on social science research and biblical truths” (p. 9).

The book is written in three parts. Part One is comprised of five chapters that lay the foundation upon which the rest of the book builds. Chapter one describes the current state of developmental theories as having the *developmental dilemma* of not moving beyond a naturalistic teleology. The authors cite a number of reasons for this and then discuss how modern theorists seem to be shifting their focus from individual development to that of personal development in the context of relationships with others. From a Christian worldview, the authors expand the sphere of relationships to include a relationship with God. They define the *reciprocating self* as “an emerging aspect of personal identity understood in the context of relationship, both with God and with others” (p. 22) with the best relational contexts for healthy development being rich in “unconditional love commitment, gracing, empowering, and intimacy” (p. 25) and that there is a certain mutuality of influence that occurs in these environments.

Chapter two elucidates the concept of the *reciprocating self* from a theological perspective and discusses in depth why it is important for us to understand God’s intention for human development. The issue of teleology is addressed in connection with a discussion of the *imago Dei*. The authors state, “Being created in the image of God is very important to a Christian view of human development” (p. 31). It is from understanding that God has created humans in His image that one can begin to comprehend how egregiously hollow the views of human development are that have embraced only a naturalistic paradigm. Chapter Three focuses further on delineating the conditions for optimal development in relationships. The authors contrast: personal relationships rich in *covenant* (unconditional love) *commitment* with those that are conditional in nature; responses to failure that are *gracing* with those that are shaming; utilization of power and resources for *empowering* others with those that seek to control; and relationships that promote *intimacy* with those that promote isolation. Chapters Four and Five present an overview of developmental theories that help the reader better understand the concept of the *reciprocating self*. The authors interact with the theories to show strengths and limitations in them in relation to their theological model. The works of Lerner (developmental systems theory), Vygotsky (social context theory), and Bronfenbrenner (ecological theory) have much in common with the theological model presented and are intricately woven into the fabric of each of the chapters in the next section.

Part Two contains six chapters that present the *reciprocating self* as encountering various issues associated with the life-span stages of *Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence,*

*Emerging Adulthood and Young Adulthood, Middle Adulthood, and Late Adulthood.* While not exhaustive, the authors present a number of developmental issues encountered at the different stages as seen through the lens of the *reciprocating self* model. These chapters do a masterful job of approaching developmental issues from a Christian perspective. For example, in discussing attachment in infancy, the authors discuss whether there is any connection between the quality of relationship (between infant and caregiver) and the ability to form a relationship with God in later development. Biblical references are also given where appropriate in dealing with developmental issues. An example of this is found in the section on care for the elderly in *Late Adulthood* (chapter 11). Each of the chapters addresses the impact of various ecosystems upon development of the *reciprocating self* and the type of support that is necessary for optimal outcomes.

Part Three is comprised of three chapters that have direct connection with practical ministry in the local church. Chapter 12 addresses the topic of *morality*. Utilizing Kohlberg's theory as a starting point, the authors build the case for moving beyond *stages of moral development* toward the development of *moral transformation* of the person via the *reciprocating relationship* with God and others. Chapter 13 deals with *spiritual and religious development*. The authors delineate between these two concepts before discussing such development from a theological perspective. The works of Fowler and Loder are examined prior to a section on *differentiated faith*. The chapter ends with a proposed model for the development of differentiated faith as conceptualized by the authors. The book concludes with a chapter titled *Turning Steeples into Scaffolds* that addresses "the wider religious and social context within which a differentiated faith might best be developed, nurtured, and maintained" (p.285). It seems fitting that a chapter should be devoted to how the Church (which is made up of persons at all phases of development) can become a community that promotes healthy development. The chapter ends with some practical principles for helping such a community develop.

This book is an excellent resource for anyone interested in human development from a Christian perspective. It contains a set of discussion questions for each chapter (listed in the Appendix) that provide opportunity for personal study and reflection on the material presented. I believe this book has much to offer and I recommend this book as supplemental reading for the graduate courses I teach.

David P. Mann

C. K. Robertson, ed., *Religion as Entertainment*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. 301 pp., paper, \$29.95.

In his introduction, C. K. Robertson, the editor of this book, writes that his goal in gathering these essays is to "promote broader and deeper conversation for students, scholars, and educated readers regarding the influence of religion on our culture and the influence of our culture on various aspects of religion" (3). The wide range of topics covered here, based on the underlying theme of religion and its connection to entertainment, provides a variety of starting points for good conversations and discussions seeking biblical and culturally relevant solutions to challenging problems for the church within the American culture.

Robertson primarily intended this book as a "college or seminary textbook, addressing issues pertinent to classes in history, religion or cultural studies" (3). While this book could be used to spur discussions in the classroom, it may contain too many topics and be too broad to cover in a class. However, it could possibly be better used as a resource for research in the history or culture of any of the topics addressed within the essays. One could read a single essay within this compilation for study, research, or discussion on any one of

the individual topics, or one could read the book as a whole in order to study or discuss the broad topic of religion and entertainment.

The book is divided into two main sections. The first one is entitled "How Religion Is Used *as* Entertainment" and covers a wide variety of topics from the Awakening to religious cults to televangelism. Michael Rusk begins this collection with a discussion of the Great Awakening and the development of the American expectation to be entertained in worship. Rusk focuses on Whitefield's and Edwards' sermons and their development as religious entertainment.

In this first section, Donald Heet writes an essay on preaching. Heet discusses the difference between preaching as entertaining versus preaching as mere entertainment. He uses John Chrysostom (the Golden Mouthed) as an example of a good preacher who does not "succumb to the temptation of becoming an entertainer, but [has] the obligation not to be dull" (69).

Robert Viau writes an essay on religious cults and their replacement of traditional, established religion for many in the U. S. Viau writes that the theatrical techniques of the charismatic leaders of cults are used to create "shock, surprise, and extreme sensation to make a strong impact on potential followers in a world in which most people's senses have been deadened by constant bombardment" (119). Viau argues that many cult followers adopt this entertaining spirituality in place of more traditional religion because of many cults' willingness to arise to meet "cultural, social, and political problems that the current established orthodoxies could not solve" (115).

While the first section is about religion as entertainment, the second section is about "How Religion Is Used *in* Entertainment." The essays in this section also cover a wide range of topics relating to how entertainment is portrayed in television, movies, and music. James McGrath starts this section off with an essay on religion in science fiction television and movies. McGrath discusses the different portrayals of religion and religious ideas within science fiction and then goes on to conclude his essay by writing, "Religion in science fiction is thus a prophetic announcement of possible futures for religious traditions, and provides religious communities with an opportunity to address not merely contemporary issues, but future ones as well" (168).

Robertson himself writes an essay included in this section about "Ministers in the Movies." Robertson traces the development of the portrayal of ministers in the movies from heroes to hypocrites. He then ends his essay by discussing an interesting idea of movie directors as a type of ministers "offering their own grand visions of God, life, and existential meaning in new and creative ways" (237).

S. Clark Heindel discusses the youth culture's frequent replacement of religion with music in his essay "It's Only Rock and Roll." Heindel writes, due to the church's problem with initiating youth into the community, many youth's "search for meaning, joy, love, took them [...] to the rock music culture—not to traditional Judeo-Christian avenues" (277). Heindel's point is that many youth have felt more entertained and accepted in the rock culture than in the traditional religious culture.

These six essays are only a taste of the fourteen essays within this compilation. Combined, these essays discuss many of the avenues of the main topic of religion and entertainment. From Eastern meditation to Elvis, these essays provide challenging questions that need to be, not only discussed, but also answered.

One difficulty, as one can probably see from this review, is that this book is very disjointed at times. It is often difficult at first to determine how some of the specific essays fit into the broad topic. The drastic differences between topics often make it difficult to

smoothly travel through the book's various themes. However, the wide range of topics does provide a colorful mix of questions and problems addressing the church today.

Liza Miller, John Brown University

Nigel Brush, *The Limitations of Scientific Truth: Why Science Can't Answer Life's Ultimate Questions*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2005. 280 pp., paper, \$14.99.

"Science can be a seductive alternative to Biblical truth-but how trustworthy are the claims of science? Brush examines the inherent limitations of scientific truth and reveals why Biblical truth is the only authority that can be completely trusted."

"Science is a process of searching for the truth, and there are few things more certain in science than the fact that as the process continues, current theories will be revised and eventually abandoned in favor of new theories." From the Preface

These are just two statements that can justly sum up the work by Dr. Nigel Brush, assistant professor of geology at Ashland University in Ohio. Dr. Brush received his Ph.D., from UCLA. He is a committed Christian and scientist and has conducted archaeological, geological, and environmental fieldwork in England, Canada, New York, Ohio and California.

Brush's book needed to be written. It will help the Christian to understand why the Bible is still the leading document of absolute truth.

Brush divides his book into seven parts:

Part 1: The Human Quest: Seeking Truth— Here he deals with "Ultimate Questions" and three pathways to truth - religion, philosophy, and science.

Part 2: Shifting Sands: The Temporal Limitations of Scientific Truth— In this section Brush reviews revolutions in astronomy from Ptolemy to Einstein, as well as the ruling paradigm of truth in science.

Part 3: Faulty Foundations: The Logical Limitations of Scientific Truth— Brush answers the question, *Why does scientific truth change?* In answering the question, he takes us on a journey through Bacon, Hume, the Vienna Circle, Popper, Lakatos, Feysabend, and wonders why there is a reluctance to abandon falsehood.

Part 4: Biased Methods: The Cultural Limitations of Scientific Truth— What a journey we are taken on in this section of Brush's work: Seeing science as history, literature, and propaganda; Traveling through notables such as: Gould, Lewin, Ferris, Morton and Broca, and others. Here Brush strives to help us understand the self-examination that is taking place in science.

Part 5: Undiscovered Countries: The Spatial Limitations of Scientific Truth— This is a journey through the micro-universe, macro-universe, and the hidden universe showing why absolute truth will not be found through scientific research.

Part 6: False Interpretations: The Empirical Limitations of Scientific Truth— Brush examines the greatest of all obstacles to a successful dialogue between science and nature — *the empirical limitations*. We are introduced to Stephen Hawking, C. S. Lewis, Carl Sagan, the Apostle Paul and others. We share a journey on purposeful design, and subjectivism.

Part 7: The Human Quest: Finding Truth— In conclusion, Brush presents a model for science. Here there will be some surprises to some minds. Science should be seen as a tool and as a servant. Science does not provide absolute truth and should not be feared. Christians should see science as useful. Christians also need to face along with scientists, what Brush believes to be the real ultimate question: "*How will you interpret this evidence?*"

Will you cast your lot with the age-old rebellion of mankind against God, or will you submit to His authority and mercy?" (p. 276).

Brush has given us a primer on scientific data from astronomy, to biology, to quantum theory, to cosmology, and other areas. His book is a wonderful resource to have at one's fingertips. He has also given to me, a new assurance, a stronger affirmation that the word of God is with us to assist into the journey of absolute truth as no other evidence can. Science and philosophy can assist us on the journey, but it is only the Word of God that can truly bring us to the absolute truth: God as found in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit of the Living God.

Do we need to fear science and philosophy? No! When it is understood that they are tools, and servants of God to help us to know truth, then there is nothing to fear. Christians need to remember, all truth is truth from God, no matter where that truth is found. Thus, we are liberated. Science is not a threat to our faith, because the evidence shows that science cannot produce absolute truth.

I hope that Brush's book is well received and that the word is spread about this work. It is truly worth the reading and the sharing, and the confidence that will grow in the believer's life from spending time with this marvelous work.

G. Edward Wishart

Fleming Rutledge, *The Battle for Middle-earth: Tolkien's Divine Design in The Lord of the Rings*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004, 204, 373 pp., paper, \$20.00.

Widely held to be one of the best loved stories of our time, J. R. R. Tolkien's fantasy saga *The Lord of the Rings* is also cherished by many as a great Christian allegory. As such, many authors have contributed to the parsing of Tolkien's tale into themes, motifs, and archetypes. The attempts of such authors can be stymied, however, by the fact that Tolkien often expressed his preference for the power of story over the ham-handedly didactic nature of direct allegory. In light of this difficulty, Rutledge uniquely honors Tolkien's intent by structuring his analysis around the progression of the *Rings* narrative rather than a thematic outline of his own design. In doing so, Rutledge gradually reveals what he calls the "deep narrative" underlying Tolkien's work and how it touches the very heart of what it means to be a Christian struggling against evil in a fallen world.

While it is difficult to tweeze the arguments of an analysis that is so organically drawn, it can be said that Rutledge's book is strongest where it discusses the issues of divine election, human susceptibility to evil, and the importance of empathy. In tracing the various paths of Tolkien's central characters, Rutledge shows that all three of the above topics are at the heart of each conflict and that successful resolution comes primarily out of the characters' ability to rely on the hope that good is at work in the world rather than their own ability to judge. In making this point, the author frequently takes a slightly more devotional bent as he applies this lesson to our own human history.

While Rutledge's unique format lends to the narrative-like build of his analysis, it also, in the opinion of this reader, weakens his book a bit. The text sometimes seems to ramble aimlessly – dropping and picking up points as they appear in the course of the saga. At times, one longs for the point for point structure that the author chose to avoid. Furthermore, the book is slightly diminished by Rutledge's frequent reference to current events such as the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> and America's military efforts in Iraq. Such references give this analysis of Tolkien's timeless story the flavor of dated political argument.

Nevertheless, *The Battle for Middle-earth* is a worthy purchase for those who believe that Tolkien's saga is one of the "stories that really matter," to quote the character Sam Gamgee. It will lend such a reader fresh eyes to see the Christian heart that wrote the tale and a new appreciation for the power of storytelling. If nothing else, it will inspire the reader to crack open his or her copy of *The Lord of the Rings* once more, and that's a welcome inspiration to any true fan.

Adam P. Kime

Ben Witherington III and Christopher Mead Armitage, *The Poetry of Piety: An Annotated Anthology of Christian Poetry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. 172 pp., paper, \$16.99.

Although Ben Witherington III and Christopher Mead Armitage never directly state a purpose for their book *The Poetry of Piety: An Annotated Anthology of Christian Poetry*, their brief introduction suggests that they want readers to recognize the tradition of religious poetry and discover its relevance for today. *The Poetry of Piety* is an anthology of work beginning in the mid-1500s with one poem by Sir Walter Raleigh. The remaining entries following chronologically and end with one poem by Peter Kocan, born in 1947. The chronological ordering of poems highlights the progression of poetry through the years. Thus, there is a high representation of sonnets, some poems written in quatrains, and very few written in free verse, as free verse has been popular only a short time compared to the more traditional styles of writing.

Each entry is set up in the same manner. Witherington and Armitage begin with a brief biography of the poet, followed by a poem that addresses a Christian topic. The commentary on the poem is divided into two sections: "The Poetry" and "The Piety". As one might expect, "The Poetry" section discusses the poem in literary terms focusing on the composition of the poem. "The Piety" discusses the apparent and suggested religious elements present in the poem. This division in the commentary is one of the shortcomings of this book. It is difficult to separate form and function, which the authors attempt to do in dividing their commentary in two sections. Too many times their "Poetry" section made comments that should have appeared under "Piety", and vice versa. It might have served the poems and the book as a whole better just to have one fluent commentary following each poem. The discussion of each poem ends with "Questions for Reflection" that invites the reader to reflect on his or her life in light of the message the poem conveys.

Anthologies of poetry as a subgenre do a disservice to the poets and the poems they contain. Poems are meant to be read in the context they were written. Plucking a poem out of the book it was published in is like reading a verse of Scripture without considering the verses before and after it. This said, Witherington and Armitage do a fair job in preserving the integrity of the poems. For more famous poets who produced lots of work, the authors include more than one poem. John Donne is represented by 6 poems whereas F. R. Scott, by only one. Often times the authors also provide a historical context for the poem, which further places it in its original context.

The ideal reader of this book is one who is just beginning to appreciate poetry. It shows the transformation of poetry over the years and provides brief commentary as insight into the poems themselves. The reader should also be one who is concerned with appreciating poetry more for its insights than as an art. A subtitle for this book should have included the word devotional, as the entries and their Questions for Reflection read more like devotionals than as scholarly discussions of poetry. Thus, *The Poetry of Piety* has a place

among today's anthologies as it appeals to a very specific audience, one that gains members rapidly in a society that shies away from the challenges of poetry.

Michelle Skupski-Bissell

categories? Jesus never really talks about God's substance, but he speaks regularly about God's acts.

Oliver Crisp's article about Barth on creation critiques Barth's view from the perspective of American evangelicals in a reformed tradition; although the context of Barth's own theology is his critiques of the Roman church and European liberalism, so the matches won't always be neat. For example, Barth's reaction to natural theology came from his critique of Roman theological ideas and his reaction to Nazism and the way Nazi Germans tried to use the church for its own purposes. Yet Crisp's conclusion is balanced, "What Barth offers is a biblically informed and theologically robust doctrine of creation...." And, Crisp, comments that there is no theologian with whom he agrees on every issue.

Blocher's work on Barth's anthropology is also quite long, but it begins with the right issue, I think. There are differences in Barth's discussions on anthropology from the hermeneutical clues he gives when he comments upon his own work, and Blocher is balanced in dealing with the difficulties of Barth in his consistently thought out anthropology in positive ways.

Richardson's work on Barth's view of revelation indicates Barth's break with propositional revelation and how he uncouples a theology of revelation from natural theology. The important issue for Barth is the living presence of Christ in revelation. After Richardson outlines Barth's view, he doesn't seem to take us to any platform from which to assess it.

Macchia discusses Barth's pneumatology, trying to bring into harmony a number of different perspectives on the place of the Spirit, particularly in the church, in Scripture and in the new birth. Macchia comments that he finds "Barth's pneumatology so rich and complex that even where I take issue with him I am made to wonder whether or not I have understood him correctly." A humble comment.

McGrath examines Barth's doctrine of justification, admitting his immense debt to Barth vision which is intellectually coherent, and which makes us think. McGrath suggests that a full critique of Barth demands a reconnection of the disciplines of systematic theology and biblical studies. He mentions briefly one issue that comes up in a number of the chapters, that of universalism, which he believes is the inevitable conclusion of Barth's doctrine of election. Bloesch, in his foreword to the work, distinguishes the universal dimensions of the atonement from the universal restoration of the whole of human creation. Bolt, pg 213, says that Barth thinks it proper for Christians to hope for the salvation of all people. And Karkkainen tries to make the point that universal reconciliation does not leave anybody or anything out, and in his article he is the only author who cites a collection of passages from the Dogmatics.

The last chapter by Franke on the Postmodern turn of theology poses challenges to foundationalist theologies. He provides a helpful assessment of where Barth's theology differs from that of Postmodern thinking. Franke cites McCormack and Hunsinger, and their critique of von Balthasar's formula that ignores how Barth remained a truly dialectical theologian. And Franke believes many evangelical critiques of Barth are flawed for they don't present his views accurately. As for Franke he asserts the need to remember that Barth's focus is theological, not philosophical; and where he anticipates

## Book Reviews

postmodern themes we need to read that within the framework of the whole of Barth's theology.

A book filled with provocative ideas about Barth as various evangelical theologians assess him.

Robert Ives, Pastor Emeritus, Grantham Brethren in Christ Church, Grantham PA

Justo L. Gonzalez, editor. *The Westminster Dictionary of Theologians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006. 440 pp., cloth, \$44.95.

Written by Hispanic scholars under the editorship of Justo Gonzalez, this volume is a fine companion resource to any pastor's library. Of particular value is the coverage of globally well-known contemporary theologians. The dictionary was originally written in Spanish and published in Spain. This reviewer could not detect a specific Latin American bias, but did note a freshness and clarity for individual entries. Entries by editor Gonzalez are particularly helpful (see 'John Calvin' as an example.) An index to entries would have been appreciated.

Cliff Stewart

Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005. Xviii + 1736, cloth, \$49.95.

Jewish interpretation of the Hebrew Bible started with the Mishnah in the first centuries A.D. , which itself received interpretation in the Talmud. The two main centers producing Talmudic commentary were Jerusalem and Babylonia. The present work is a dictionary of these early sources, and others which were written in Hebrew and Aramaic. It was first published in 1903, the year of the author's death, and is an important tool for those interested in post-biblical interpretation. This is a reprint in one volume of previous two-volume editions, with no changes made from the original text.

David W. Baker

Shirin Taber. *Muslims Next Door*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004. Pp. 137, paper, \$9.99.

*Muslims Next Door* attempts to narrow the perceived cultural gap between American Christians and Muslims of all types. Shirin Taber is uniquely qualified for the task, as the daughter of an Iranian Muslim father and an American Catholic mother. She has traveled to many different Muslim countries, most notably her father's native Iran. Furthermore, she has befriended many Muslims in America and has been able to obtain a broad understanding of the types of struggles, hopes, and fears that beset the average Muslim living in America post 9-11.

Each chapter in *Muslims Next Door* attempts to combat stereotypic misconceptions about Muslims. Examples include, “all Muslims hate the West,” “Muslim women are oppressed,” and “all Muslims are radical fundamentalists.” The chapters end with discussion questions geared towards engendering kindness toward Muslims. Most of these discussions revolve around how the chapter affected the reader’s previously conceived notions of Muslims. The chapter structure, as well as the book as a whole, is very well-written, well-organized, and easy to grasp. It lends itself to being read as part of a small church group.

Since *Muslims Next Door* concentrates mainly on stereotypes and how they can affect the relationships between Muslims and Christians, it is intentionally lacking in theological discussion. Taber notes in her introduction that discussion of the theological differences between Muslims and Christians was beyond the limits of the book. While I applaud her decision to stick to her strengths, the missing theological discussion may be the only real weakness when one considers the book’s intended audience. Many Christians who are wondering about Islam would be interested in discussing theological differences, at least on a somewhat superficial level. As a result, many small groups looking to discuss Islam will be forced to supplement *Muslims Next Door* with another volume. And that is unfortunate, because Taber’s warm and caring voice would do a great service to the sometimes cold and dividing topic of theology. However, even with this weakness considered, the low price and readability of Taber’s book makes it worth a purchase, even if it cannot answer all questions Christians have about Muslims.

*Muslims Next Door* is recommended for anyone seeking to know more about the lives and struggles of Muslims in their neighborhood or around the world.

Benjamin Gemmel

John S. McClure. *Preaching Words: 144 Key Words In Homiletics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. 170 pp., paper, \$24.95.

McClure’s book would be considered a companion volume for homiletic students. It is a broad-brush approach defining many elements of sermon writing, strategies for composition, and methods of delivery. Although the author presents a way that this book could be used systematically as a text for class syllabus, I would find that to be rather laborious and disjointed. The book does provide a way for one to familiarize oneself with some new developments in the field. The bibliography is a helpful tool in and of itself.

Cliff Stewart

Lane P. Jordan. *12 Steps to Becoming a More Organized Mom: Positive and Practical Tips for Busy Moms*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006. 264 pp., paper, \$14.95.

I was a little misled by the title of this book. I thought this was going to be a book about organization in terms of the traditional sense of the word. I was thinking on

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the line of organizing my home in the physical sense, my kitchen, closets, etc. It is more in the sense of how to become a more successful Mom by creating a balance of discipline and fun, time for the kids and time for yourself, taking care of the family's physical needs regarding meals, managing work and finances and seeking God.

Lane does have a lot of good suggestions but I felt most of it, for me, was common sense. At times I found it overwhelming and found myself feeling guilty because I never could find the time to do many of the things she suggested. What the reader needs to understand is that not all the things suggested may work for her family due to the age of the children, marital status and financial situation. You need to pick and choose what would work for you and realize that you may not be able to do everything Lane suggests.

The one thing I liked is that Lane asks you to do a personal inventory at the end of each chapter. This helps the reader to step back and take a look at your priorities in each of the 12 areas she discusses. She also gives suggestions on how meet those priorities.

This is a good book for Moms with young children. I think if I had read this book when my children were younger I would have done a few things differently.

Donna Johnson