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Stephen D. Renn, ed., *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005. 1171 pp., hardcover, \$29.95.

The editor is the Coordinator of Language and teaching at Inaburra School in Sydney, Australia. His dictionary examines 7,260 Hebrew and Greek words. Each entry is anglicized and accompanied by the Hebrew or Greek word plus the code number for the revised Strong's numbering system. It is intended to be a replacement for Vine's Expository Dictionary. Words are listed according to their English equivalent. Where required, both the Old Testament and New Testament words are recorded along with their range of meaning and explanation. There are a number of additional notes that accompany the words where appropriate.

As an add-on to the book, there is a CD that contains the complete dictionary with limited commentaries, Bible versions, topical works, backgrounds, and maps. There is an index to all Hebrew and Greek words. These include the word in the original language, its English equivalent, and the Strong's number.

The work contains only key words and is not exhaustive. In fact, some words are rather limited. For example, under "learn" and "teach" there are eight Hebrew and three Greek entries. There are at least eight Greek words with reference to teaching and learning used in the Bible, however, so this is a non-technical reference work suitable for some pastors and lay students.

Richard Allison

Marc van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000-323 BC*. 2d ed. Blackwell History of the Ancient World. Oxford/ Malden: Blackwell, 2007. xix + 341 pp., paper, \$37.95.

In this volume, Van De Mieroop provides us with a clear and accessible history to the ancient Near East. While the second edition appears only three years after the book's initial publication in 2004, the changes made reflect the goal of making the book more accessible and useful for students as an introduction to ancient Near Eastern history. To this end, the second edition contains a number of new illustrations and maps, and the "Guide to Further Reading" at the end has been expanded by several pages.

The present work begins with an introductory chapter that briefly discusses methodological approaches to ancient Near Eastern history in light of the available sources. In this chapter, Van De Mieroop also surveys ancient Near Eastern geography and prehistory. This chapter thus lays the necessary groundwork for the rest of the volume.

The remainder of the work is divided into three main parts that reflect, according to Van De Mieroop, basic forms of political organization characterizing

ancient Near Eastern history: city-states (ca. 3000-1600 BCE), territorial states (ca. 1600-1000 BCE), and empires (ca. 1000-323 BCE). Part I begins with a discussion of urbanization and the development of writing in Mesopotamia. Over the course of five chapters spanning the Uruk expansion to the collapse of Hammurabi's dynasty in Babylon, Van De Mieroop characterizes this unit of ancient Near Eastern history as one of competing city-states and varying degrees of political centralization.

Part II surveys the ancient Near East during the later part of the second millennium, describing the formation, interaction, and collapse of various territorial states: Kassite Babylonia, Hittite Anatolia, Egypt, Mittani, Assyria, Elam, and Syria-Palestine. Van De Mieroop portrays diplomatic and economic connections between these states as a key feature of this period. The introductory chapter of Part II provides a helpful framework for describing these interactions, and this part's concluding chapter avoids facile, single-solution explanations when discussing the collapse of the regional system at the end of this period.

Lastly, Part III surveys the history of the ancient Near East during the first millennium, tracing the domination of Assyria to the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires and concluding with the conquest of Alexander the Great. The relationships of these empires to Egypt and the Levant are also discussed. While brief and somewhat elementary, Van De Mieroop's discussions of Israel and Judah within this larger context will be of interest for biblical scholars.

Overall, the book is well-structured and accessible. The prose of the text is clearly written and readable. The present work's many maps, illustrations, and boxed features (including English translations of pertinent texts) are useful and will be of interest to students. Every chapter except the first begins with a timeline of key events, offering to the reader a helpful framework for understanding the chapter's contents. The king lists at the end of the book provide a practical reference guide for beginning and advanced scholars alike.

In the midst of these positive elements, there are a few elements of the book that could have been developed more. Van De Mieroop chooses to adopt the Middle Chronology throughout for simplicity's sake, which is understandable given that this work is an introductory textbook. Nevertheless, the present work would have benefited from brief descriptions of the various chronological views in order to make students aware of different options such as the Ultra-Low Chronology, which has recently received renewed attention in the scholarly literature (e.g., Hermann Gasche, et al., *Dating the Fall of Babylon: A Reappraisal of Second-Millennium Chronology* [1998] or *Akkadica* 119-120 [2000]). Another drawback to the present work is that Van De Mieroop devotes only a short chapter to the Persian period at the end of the book. Additional information on the Achaemenid empire would have been helpful, especially since this period has become a significant focus in recent years among both historians and biblical scholars.

Despite these minor points, *A History of the Ancient Near East* is a well-written and valuable work. Van De Mieroop has combined both clarity and accessibility, making this a welcome addition for beginning students of ancient Near Eastern history.

Benjamin J. Noonan, Hebrew Union College

Thomas A. Robinson, *Mastering New Testament Greek: Essential Tools for Students*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007. 230 pp., paper with CD ROM, \$19.95.

This third revised edition of *Mastering New Testament Greek* expands previous resources and adds three new ones—an index of Greek word endings, a visual model for prepositions and cases, and a short Greek-English cognate dictionary.

Brief recommendations for how to use the book are followed by a list of roughly 250 Greek words and their English transliterations. Robinson recommends learning these first, since it is a fast and easy way to begin to build one's Greek vocabulary.

The next section lists the most common cognate roots in order of their frequency of occurrence. As one might expect, this section comprises almost half the book. The information provided for each root includes its basic English meaning, memory aids (if any), the actual Greek words based on the root and their English translations, their parts of speech, etc. This tool allows users to learn whole groups of words by becoming familiar with a single root.

The third section compares Greek prefixes and suffixes to English ones, then provides examples of English words using them. The section that follows lists "Identical Greek/English Prefixes and Suffixes" along with their meaning and an English example for each. Section five, "Derived English Words," lists the English word, a breakdown of how it is derived from the Greek, and a definition of the word.

The sixth section is the "Mini Greek/English Cognate Dictionary" which is alphabetized by the basic Greek cognate stem, followed by the English meaning and several examples of English words using the stem. The last section provides charts showing how prepositions and cases relate to words.

These main sections are followed by two short appendices and three indices. The first index lists words that appear ten to nineteen times in the New Testament. The second index is basically a Greek parsing guide, but instead of complete words it lists word endings and is alphabetized backwards, starting with the last letter of the ending. The third index/mini dictionary lists Greek words and cognate roots along with their corresponding page number in Section 2.

The CD-ROM included with the book contains six tools for learning Greek. The simplest tools—for alphabet and pronunciation—work best. I could not get the vocabulary tool to work at all; the instructions/help were inadequate and I could not find the pdf help document that was supposed to be on the CD. Some might find the verb "decoder" and word deconstructor helpful. The Greek Internet Grammar tool connects to an internet site that contains basic grammar information, but is still "under construction." All in all, the CD-ROM was a disappointment.

On the whole, this book can be a helpful resource for students learning New Testament Greek. The tools it contains, particularly the section on cognate roots, have the potential to enhance one's ability to master the language. How much one gets out of

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Mastering New Testament Greek depends on whether or not the tools Robinson provides meet a need and how much effort one is willing to put into learning Greek.

Lori Shire

Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 297 pp., paper, \$21.99.

The modern study of the New Testament has become a maze of scholarship that, according to Bockmuehl, has largely lost its way. He sees several factors that contribute to this academic din, including “an almost total collapse of method” (31) and a super-saturation of literary output that lacks quality. But, he finds the most disturbing element of the modern approach to this discipline within the biblical studies guild is a lack of “*shared purpose or subject matter*” (38). Though Bockmuehl acknowledges that some scholars have tried to rescue NT scholarship from this plight, such attempts have fallen short again and again. While accepting that there are no easy and quick solutions, he proposes two avenues for reining in and “refocusing” New Testament studies (as the subtitle asserts).

First, Bockmuehl encourages that scholars pay closer attention to the “effective history” of the NT which involves an appreciation for what influence it has had throughout history, not just among scholars, but also as evident in more common thought as evidenced through art and other forms of popular expression. In particular, he is interested in the period before 150 AD, because it offers the best “historical understanding of early Christianity’s texts, persons, and events” (169). Secondly, Bockmuehl suggests that one should appreciate the fact that the NT was intended for a particular kind of reader – what Bockmuehl refers to as the “implied reader” (see 68-99). At least discussing the relevance of the implied reader might aid the discipline in discerning a common goal – if such an objective is desirable. Though these are his two main propositions, he also continually affirms the significance of the canonical shape of the New Testament. He finds that, in the midst of the theological cacophony of the canon, there is a christocentric melody encouraging the notion that “the New Testament text itself begs to be read *systematically*...” (108).

What Bockmuehl has offered is hope for a way forward through a dizzying labyrinth that constitutes the present state of the field. I am quite happy with his suggestions, but I am not optimistic that it will bring the kind of unity for which he hopes. No doubt evangelicals, such as myself, will applaud his efforts and encourage others to read this book. But, those with a hermeneutic of suspicion will probably not find Bockmuehl’s presentation compelling, however cogent his arguments may be. In fact, in some ways, this book may deepen a rift between those who wish to better “see the Word” and those who don’t. Nevertheless, Bockmuehl’s voice is, at many times throughout the book, a prophetic one that is calling the discipline away from the over-specialization to which it is now resigned. If some are unhappy with his proposals, I am sure Bockmuehl would welcome other suggestions. He concludes his book with a

summary “epilogue” in hopes that the discussion will continue. I think all can agree that such a conversation is welcome and necessary.

Nijay K. Gupta

Simon J. Gathercole, *The Pre-existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. xi + 344 pp., paper, \$34.00.

It has become fashionable in the circles of New Testament scholarship to remark about how the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels is not presented as having preexisted. Unlike the Gospel of John, the authors of the Synoptics do not provide a prolegomena describing Jesus as a preexistent being nor does there seem to be any statements by Jesus that would confirm such a conclusion. But Gathercole’s book provides a reason to rethink this approach. Through a careful study of the Synoptic Gospels, he demonstrates that there is sufficient evidence to assert that the authors do communicate a belief in the preexistence of Jesus. The book is divided into four parts.

In part one, Gathercole provides an overview of early Christianity. He demonstrates that sufficient evidence exists to claim that belief in Jesus’ preexistence was an important part of Christian theology prior to the writing of the Gospels. This is evident not only in the Pauline Epistles but also in Hebrews and Jude. Moreover, in the Synoptics, the transcendent quality of Jesus’ actions suggests he is a preexistent being. These include his transcendence between heaven and earth (the transfiguration), his authority to forgive sins, and his controlling of nature (calming of storms). Coupled with these are activities that are carried out “in the name of Jesus” which stands in the OT framework of the “name of YHWH” and provides him an inclusion with the divine identity (76). Even statements made by Jesus suggest his ability to transcend space and time as with his promises to support and affirm the work of the earthly Church from his heavenly location (Matt 18:15-20; 28:18-20).

Part two contains the substance of Gathercole’s argument. He focuses on those statements in which Jesus says “I have come” followed by a purpose clause. After an overview in which he answers possible opposition from some, he notes that the “I have come” statements are not used by people in general or even those specially commissioned by God. They are, however, often used in conjunction with angelic proclamations which, as Gathercole suggests, is where they are best understood. “The angelic statements provide both more appropriate and more abundant evidence than any of the other theories reviewed earlier. *Crucially, angels do sum up their earthly activity in a particular visit with the ‘I have come + purpose formula’*” (113-14). “[T]he structure of angels’ comings from heaven to earth – to fulfill a divinely ordained function that is the purpose of the mission – fits extremely well with the language of Jesus’ ‘coming’ sayings” (115). Following a broad survey of ‘coming’ sayings in Jewish literature, he concludes that there is a consistent use of the “I have come” + purpose formula in early Judaism, not for human figures but for the visit of heavenly figures (145-46). With this in mind, Gathercole examines ten of these sayings in the Synoptics which he concludes provides

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evidence for Jesus having come from heaven. These statements are not about preexistence, as such, but rather focus on Jesus' purpose. However, the implication is that Jesus was preexistent and came to fulfill a specific divine mission (176). Complimenting the above is a brief examination of these statements in which Jesus claims "to have been sent", which also. Gathercole concludes, supports his contentions.

Part three is a critique of the Wisdom Christology. Gathercole concedes that this category has been helpful, but is not as relevant as some have claimed. Moreover, since Wisdom, unlike Jesus, was not understood to be a preexistent entity apart from God, but as an attribute of God, it does not really convey the notion of a preexistent being that became incarnate (209). In particular, Jesus' statements about gathering Jerusalem should not be read through Wisdom Christology, but as Jesus the transcendent figure who exists in the history of Israel (Matt 23.37).

Part four is an examination of four titles of Jesus in the Synoptics: Messiah, Lord, Son of Man, and Son of God. While the first two titles provide some evidence for a belief in Jesus' preexistence, the second two titles are more firm. This section closes with a chapter in which Gathercole engages some modern theological debates in conjunction with preexistence.

This is a well researched and written treatment on the topic. The strength of his argument is found in his quarrying of the historical data which he applies to the text with careful exegesis. Gathercole is aware that he is writing against the grain here and he is to be commended for his efforts. Whether one agrees with him or not, it is clear that his challenge to New Testament scholarship cannot go unanswered. While it is probably too detailed to be used as a textbook it will certainly warrant reading by scholars and students alike.

John Byron

Michael C. Parsons, *Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007. 230 pp., paper, \$19.95.

The work is an interesting guide to the writings of Luke including volumes I (the Gospel) and II (Acts). Parsons views Luke's writings as undergirded by Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions. He considers Luke an interpreter of the gospel story utilizing traditions and social conventions of the world. His thrust is to challenge the reader to approach Luke-Acts as if they were a part of Luke's audience, the first century Gentile church.

Parsons is professor of Religion at Baylor University where he has taught since 1996. He is the author of eight books most of which focus on Luke-Acts.

Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist is a non-commentary commentary in which one will find plenty of exegetical material. However, this material serves basically as examples of the use of Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions. After an introduction to his work, the author proceeds to approach Luke-Acts as the title suggests. Thus the three sections of the book are devoted to Luke as storyteller, interpreter, and evangelist.

As a storyteller, the author begins by viewing Luke-Acts as a travel narrative sharing an overarching geographical plan. The Gospel ends in Jerusalem and the church begins in Jerusalem. Throughout, the author leans heavily on the rhetorical traditions of the Greco-Roman world utilizing *chreia* (anecdotes reporting edifying sayings or actions), fables and narrative based on Theon's *Progymnasmata* to understand more fully Luke's message. These terms are adequately explained by the author.

As interpreter, the author views Luke as introducing his Greco-Roman understanding of social customs and cultural values. These include with their definition and illustration friendship and physiognomy. Also, Parsons in this section views Jerusalem not as the center of the world, but that the Gospel moved beyond it encompassing the whole world. As evangelist, Parsons views Luke-Acts as reconstituting the people of God.

Extensive and valuable footnotes are found at the end of each chapter. A twenty page bibliography as well as an "Index to Modern Authors" and an extensive "Index to Ancient Sources" add to the value of the book.

Richard Allison

Brian S. Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Letter*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 214 pp., paper, \$22.00.

In this interesting exercise in exegetical interpretation with a view towards New Testament ethics, Brian Rosner investigates the much-neglected, but highly provocative statement "greed is idolatry" in Colossians 3:5 (see, similarly, Eph 5:5: "the greedy person is an idolater"). Acknowledging that a host of interpretive, historical, and theological questions are raised by this terse phrase, Rosner approaches his study on the analogy of mountain climbing. This involves looking at the models of other climbers (ch 2: history of interpretation), collecting maps and supplies (ch 3: methods and hermeneutical approaches), comparing similar peaks (chs 4-7: backgrounds and origins of concepts), and the surveying of the immediate surrounding regions (chs 8-9: the direct exegesis of the given passage).

Rosner's exhaustive exploration of the interpretive history of this phrase yielded six distinct meanings of the association between greed and idolatry in Col 3:5: "greed is as bad as idolatry, leads to idolatry, entails the worship of the demon or god of mammon, like idolatry involves forbidden service and obedience, like idolatry involves inordinate love and devotion, or like idolatry involves misplaced trust and confidence" (pp. 46-7). Provisionally dismissing the "nonmetaphorical" options as viable interpretations, Rosner finds the latter three options to be most probable. Thus, in terms of method, he devotes a major section to how and why analyzing the phrase in question as a metaphor is profitable.

As a large portion of the book involves a survey of the concepts of "greed" and "idolatry" throughout the Old and New Testaments (and early Judaism), Rosner nearly develops a biblical theology of wealth. No textual stone is left unturned as he explores

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key biblical texts (e.g. the Ten Commandments, the incident of the worship of the golden calf, etc.), comparative Jewish texts such as Philo's writings and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament milieu (including portions of the gospels, Revelation, Romans and Philippians). In terms of origins, Rosner draws the broad conclusion that Jewish traditions such as the first commandment are foundational.

When looking at the immediate epistolary context of the criticism of greed, Rosner concludes that the reference probably involves the sharing of possessions in the "family setting of the early church" (p. 128). On the basis of his analysis, then, Rosner is able to develop a "profile" of the greedy which pertain to "*those with a strong desire to acquire and keep for themselves more and more money and possessions, because they love, trust, and obey wealth rather than God*" (p. 129). In Colossians and Ephesians, the linking of greed to idolatry is meant, then, to expose the greedy as those who refuse to offer God the exclusive right of love and trust (see p. 148). In the concluding chapter Rosner offers some theological reflections on how the modern church can profit from a focused concern with greed and the relationship between attitudes toward material possessions and religious worship.

This book is a very welcome contribution to New Testament ethics and a masterful example for students especially regarding how to do biblical exegesis. His mastery of hermeneutical tools, his detailed knowledge of both ancient biblical and non-biblical text, his comprehensive analysis of early and modern interpretations, and his pastoral and theological sensitivity are admirable. Perhaps a couple of small quibbles are worthy of notice, though. Rosner's dismissal of the option that the phrase is meant to view money as a god may have been a bit too hasty. The line between speaking *metaphorically* of a god and *literally* may be more hazy than we presume (see Acts 17:18). Secondly, Rosner seems to treat the phrase "greed is idolatry" in Colossians as an idiomatic phrase and, thus, not too directly tied to the argument of the letter altogether (though he is interested in the *Sitz im Leben* of the phrase in the early church). He does not offer, then, a verse-by-verse analysis of the phrase in its literary context (as one might see in a commentary). However, the inclusion of this sort of section in his book may have enabled him to ground his argument more closely in its immediate context.

In the end, though, the exegetical strengths of this book far outweigh the very small criticisms mentioned, and students and pastors alike will find this work intellectually stimulating and theologically refreshing.

Nijay K. Gupta

David M. Scholer, ed., *Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century, Pivotal Essays by E. A. Judge*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008. 227 pp., paper, \$24.95.

Scholer presents an anthology of eight important essays of E. A. Judge on the demographics, social classes, institutional structures, and cultural conventions related to class in the Roman Empire. The individual essays address a particular topic of social situations in the first century. Judge, an early pioneer of social-scientific criticism, uses

various New Testament issues to provide an understanding of the early church's character as a social institution within and as a reflection of its culture. The essays illustrate the Hellenist community's social institutions, identify the social classes from which Christians were drawn, discuss the Christians' relation with public authorities, and describe the organization of the early Christians, primarily using Pauline documents.

Judge's essays provide one with a perspective on New Testament authors and readers influenced by political and social situations of the times. He explains the reader's social situation as demonstrated in the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles. His discussion of social patterns of the Christian groups in the first century includes ideas such as national monarchy, eschatology, Jerusalem, Hellenistic cities, obligation of the individuals to society, household societies, the republic, cultic gods, social identity of early Christianity, the position of women, and judicial hearings. Judge uses a broad scripture base for his discussions of the readers; however, he only uses St. Paul's letters to illustrate the writers' social situations. Judge also uses St. Paul's writings to discuss rhetoric in antiquity, Paul's place in society, Paul in the Jewish establishment, Paul and Hellenism, the systems of rank and status, and the way people use rank to assert superiority over each other.

Since the book is an anthology of essays, there are no transitions between essays. Therefore, if one attempts to read it as a book, it is difficult reading. The first essay has a great preface which serves as an excellent introduction to the essay, but the remaining essays do not have an introduction. Each essay has good material on the social issues of the first century, and this book of essays is a great resource for New Testament scholars. However, the various themes of the individual essays make it difficult at times to see the overall thrust of the book.

Eldridge Frazier, II

Colin G. Kruse, *The Gospel According to John*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. 395 pp., paper, \$16.00.

The fourth Gospel is well served, in terms of commentaries, by seasoned scholars such as C.K. Barrett, H. Ridderbos, and L. Morris; in more recent years commentaries by D.A. Carson, C. Keener, and B. Witherington III have taken up the task of renewing interest in John's Gospel for a new generation of students, pastors, and scholars. Many of these aforementioned works can be intimidating due to technical discussions and advanced excursions on Greek grammar and historical background. What good evangelical resources are there for lay people or ministers who do not know Greek but still desire an exegetically-driven analysis of the biblical text? This appears to be the niche of the Tyndale Commentary series and Colin Kruse's contribution succeeds in engaging in this theologically-rich Gospel in a simple and cogent manner.

In a brief chapter on introductory issues, Kruse offers a conservative approach to the author, purpose, and audience of the Gospel. The "beloved disciple" is best understood as the apostle John who became a leading figure in Ephesus (p. 18-19). The

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purpose of his Gospel was to encourage belief in Jesus as the Messiah (John 20:30-31), but secondary objectives may also have included edification for suffering and persecuted believers (p. 19) as well as providing a supplement to the Synoptic Gospels (see p. 23). In accordance with this scenario, Kruse proposes that a date of writings in the 80s or 90s AD is quite reasonable. Also found in the introduction of the book is a brief summary of John's theology pertaining to the trinity, eschatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, sacramentalism, faith, obedience, as well as discussions of the themes of "witness" and the role of "the Jews."

The exegetical comments that comprise the majority of the book are clear and reasonable. On most verses, Kruse has only enough time to fill out the meaning of the statement or paraphrase the sentence. When he encounters a real exegetical controversy, he offers multiple perspectives and hints at the most plausible solution. The hermeneutical approach to the commentary is never overtly mentioned in the preface or description of the series, but it appears that Kruse is especially interested in the socio-historical background to the letter, and literary features with special attention to intertextuality and the influence of Old Testament (and intertestamental Jewish) themes. Another notable feature is Kruse's repeated caution against over-stating the case for John's anti-semitic tendencies (see pp. 213-4).

Though the commentary does not presuppose a knowledge of Greek, Kruse deftly corrects misinterpretations of John's Gospel based on grammatical issues. For instance, in John 10:29-30, when Jesus claims that "I and the Father are one," Kruse points out that the adjective "one" is in the neuter form and not the masculine and thus it should *not* be understood that they are one person. Rather, the implication is that "the oneness of Father and Son here is oneness in mission and purpose" (p. 242).

Given the brevity of the commentary and the constraints of writing to those that do not have training in exegesis, Kruse inevitably avoids depth in his analysis on most occasions. But, I am amazed at how smoothly the commentary flows and how he is repeatedly able to illuminate a passage with only a few sentences. My only criticism, perhaps, is his tendency to appeal to rabbinic texts to shed light on Jewish thought and attitudes. The problem of anachronism is probably in the minds of readers that come to the text with a background of theological study and they might give Kruse the benefit of the doubt that he is aware of this danger. However, given that the primary audience is church lay leaders and pastors, I feel less comfortable.

The above minor criticism notwithstanding, Kruse offers students and Christian leaders a concise commentary on the Gospel of John that precludes overly allegorized or spiritual readings as well as historically dismissive ones. This book is a valuable resource for the pastor's library.

Nijay K. Gupta

Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 286 pp., paper, \$30.00.

Ben Witherington, professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, is not just a prolific writer, but a prolific *commentary* writer who wishes to cover every book of the New Testament in his lifetime – and he is currently a good way along! His approach is technically a *niche*-commentary as his subtitle demonstrates, but Witherington is always attentive to the basic exegetical and historical issues that arise from the text. Nevertheless, he has become famous for his “socio-rhetorical” approach. His method is “rhetorical” in the sense that he wishes to be attentive to the rhetorical categories and conventions that Paul works with in constructing the arguments and language of his letters. Whereas many scholars have leaned heavily on the paradigm of “Paul as letter-writer” (i.e. epistolary analysis), Witherington makes the argument that in the first century the sending of letters was still seen as “oral textuality.” Thus, Paul’s epistles were “surrogates for oral speech, surrogates for what Paul would have said if he were with the recipients” (p. xiii). How does this affect the interpretation of the letter? Witherington brings this to bear on a number of levels, not least of which in appealing to early rhetoricians (like Quintilian) and demonstrating that Paul acknowledged and employed many formal rhetorical tools. A central concern of ancient rhetoric was in the *type* of speech (i.e., deliberative, forensic, and epideictic). Witherington is so insistent that this greatly affects how one reads Paul’s letters such that “failure to recognize the species of rhetoric Paul is using and such crucial matters as where the thesis statement or final summary of the speech is leads to all sorts of misinterpretation of these documents” (xiv). The “social” aspect of the methodology of commentary is meant to bring out the context of the letter and how Paul’s rhetoric is meant to address directly the problems, questions, or happenings in the churches.

The commentary is always exegetically rich and written in a smooth style that is not bogged down with overly technical comments. Any appeal to the Greek text is transliterated and footnotes, for the most part, are brief. The reading level of the commentary suggests that it is geared towards pastors and students with a view towards theological issues and the enrichment of personal devotion. A number of helpful features are certainly noteworthy. In the introduction, Witherington includes an annotated bibliography that comments on the most useful commentaries, monographs, and theological studies. Secondly, on several occasions, the reader encounters helpful excurses (called “A CLOSER LOOK”) on various theological problems such as the language of election, the supposed problem of anti-semitism in 1 Thess 2:14-16, the *Parousia*, and the “Restrainer” in 2 Thessalonians, among others. Thirdly, Witherington includes, on occasion, a section called “Bridging Horizons” which looks to bring the ancient message of the text into the modern world and explore the theological and pastoral applications of the passages in view.

In terms of the overall orientation of the commentary, Witherington shows a fine balance of appeal to the Old Testament backgrounds, the contemporary Jewish and

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Greco-Roman contexts, and modern interaction with other commentators (especially I.H. Marshall, A. Malherbe, C. Wanamaker, and to a lesser degree, F.F. Bruce, E. Best, and J.B. Lightfoot). Witherington defends the Pauline authorship of both epistles and the canonical orders as the correct historical ordering as well (with 1 Thessalonians written before 2 Thessalonians; *contra* Wanamaker). He labels 1 Thessalonians as "epideictic" and 2 Thessalonians as "deliberative," with the latter addressing social and eschatological problems.

Witherington writes in such a pleasing style that this commentary is enjoyable to read (unlike many very workmanlike, reference commentaries). His approach covers a range of issues and opens the reader's eyes to the ancient world as well as the intertextual fields of discourse happening in the text. If I have one concern with the commentary, it is that Witherington has pressed his rhetorical approach too far. Though he has established that a rhetorical approach is needed, it is not clear that Paul would be quite so familiar with the detailed techniques demonstrated by Cicero or Quintilian. Where did Paul learn such techniques? Also, the reliance on determining the type of rhetoric seems too rigid for Paul, though one could see how a more tentative hypothesis can be insightful.

Overall, in a world stuffed with commentaries (especially on Paul's letters), this work will have no trouble defending its place as supplementing other rhetorically-driven commentaries and also culling theological insights from these fertile texts. Pastors and seminary students will find this an excellent guide to the Thessalonian epistles.

Nijay K. Gupta

Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus: A Commentary*. New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002. 328 pp., cloth, \$39.95.

This commentary contributes to Westminster John Knox's "New Testament Library" series which claims to offer "critical portrayals of the historical world in which the books [of the New Testament] were created." It also aims to "pay careful attention to their literary design" as well as to "present a theologically perceptive exposition of the text." The style of the commentaries series is marked by the presence of an original translation and a level of engagement accessible to pastors and students as Greek/Hebrew words are transliterated and footnotes are kept to a minimum. This particular volume on the Pastoral Epistles is by catholic biblical scholar Raymond Collins (Catholic University of America) who is known for his research on the Thessalonian correspondence in particular.

In the brief introduction (14-pages), Collins treats issues such as literary features, key themes, and general orientation to the letters. Included as well is a discussion of the authenticity of the letters. He agrees with the critical scholarly consensus that these letters are pseudonymous based on concerns with stylistic and lexical issues, theological views, and historical peculiarities of the three documents. Thus, Collins concludes that "Revering the memory of Paul and intending to actualize his teaching, an anonymous author invoked his authority in composing the Pastoral Epistles"

(8). However, given the brevity of his argument for pseudonymity and the nature of his textual comments, he seems to argue *from* this conclusion rather than *for* it. Indeed, he appeals frequently to how "the Pastor" (his title for the pseudepigrapher) includes fictional historical and personal details for the sake of epistolary "verisimilitude" (see, e.g., pp. 8, 99, 129, 214). However, under Collins' theory of pseudonymity, some historical details in the texts seem completely superfluous, such as "Paul" remembering Timothy's tears (2 Tim 1:4). The scenarios that Collins' suggests that can account for these details appear to be, at times, a tenuous attempt to imagine the thoughts of the man who is imagining Paul's thoughts!

Nevertheless, there is still much to commend this commentary. Collins offers, as promised, a vast amount of valuable contextual information regarding parallels to relevant contemporaneous literature. He draws connections between the Pastorals and a number of Hellenistic conventions including common epistolary characteristics, rhetorical devices and designs, and philosophical thought. It is not unusual for Collins to provide illuminating "background" information quoting frequently from writers such as Epictetus, Euripides, Aristotle, Plato, Plutarch, Lysias, and Onasander.

If there was a time when the Pastoral Epistles were neglected in Pauline studies, that problem is in the process of being dealt with as recent commentaries have appeared from such scholars as I. Howard Marshall and Philip Towner. Raymond Collins' contribution is a welcome one as we continue to situate these important canonical letters in their socio-historical, literary, and theological contexts.

Nijay K. Gupta

Rebecca Skaggs, *The Pentecostal Commentary on 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude*. New York/London: T & T Clark/ Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004. Xiv + 175 pp, paper, \$24.00.

Dr. Skaggs has produced a brief commentary on the epistles of the Apostles Peter and Jude. Because this commentary claims to be "Pentecostal," I will evaluate it by its contribution to a Pentecostal understanding of Christianity. The Holy Spirit's role in Christianity is vital, and I appreciate anyone who helps develop a greater awareness of His work in Christ's Church. Depending on what translation is used, Peter refers to the Holy Spirit six times at 1 Peter 1:2, 1:11, 1:12, 1:22, 3:18, 4:14, and 2 Peter 1:21. Jude refers to the Spirit twice at verses 19 and 20. Dr. Skaggs comments on these verses in particular will be very relevant as well as her three sections devoted to the Holy Spirit (see pp. 14-15 "The Holy Spirit in 1 Peter"; 90-91 "The Holy Spirit in 2 Peter"; and 154-155 "The Holy Spirit in Jude").

"To the exiles...chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood" (1 Peter 1:1, 2, RSV). This is the Apostle Peter's first mention of the Holy Spirit in his first letter to those under his care. Peter is telling Christ's sheep that they are "chosen," "destined" and "sanctified" so that they may be obedient to Christ and be "sprinkled with his blood," a critical Old Testament reference to holiness. These are important themes for the Apostle

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and a wonderful opportunity for us to better understand the Spirit's role in our Christian life. The phrase "sanctified by the Spirit" is an important theme to Pentecostals because of their deep roots in the Holiness Movement of the 1800s. Skaggs, however, offers us only one sentence regarding this theme: "Satisfaction means a setting apart, and however the theological concept is viewed by scholars, it is quite clear that the author is saying that the readers have been set apart by the Holy Spirit according to God's plan" (16). I refer to commentaries because of the "theological concept" that is elaborated upon. Skaggs gives us no such help. She merely restates here what the Apostle has said.

The next reference to the Holy Spirit occurs in 1 Peter 1:11, "they [the OT prophets] inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them..." Skaggs gives us a little more insight here. She reports that this title for the Holy Spirit is unique in the New Testament and serves as an experiential bridge between Peter's suffering believers and the suffering OT prophets. "Indeed, it is by means of the work of the Spirit that Peter's suffering readers are participating in the sufferings and future glory of Christ which were prophesied by the prophets" (21). This spiritual relationship is not spoken of further than this. This is a missed opportunity to really advance Pentecostal understanding of the relationship between the Old and New testaments.

1 Peter 1:12 ("...those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven...") is not even mentioned in Skaggs' commentary! As we remember, Peter was the one who stood up from among the eleven and preached on the day of Pentecost about the good news of Christ having ascended and who was pouring out His Spirit upon His Church (Acts 2:14ff.). No mention is made of this obvious connection. And no scholarly comment upon this verse means a possible vital furtherance of our understanding of Pentecostal homiletics is missed.

For a reference to the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter 1:22 we have to look to the King James Bible: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love..." Granted, Skaggs is not using the King James Bible for her commentary text, but this is an important verse because many Pentecostals use the King James Bible and hold it in very high regard. Skaggs does not comment at all on this important textual tradition. The link between the Spirit's work, the Christian's obedience, and love is a strong one, heavily supported by the New Testament writers.

There are two usages of the phrase "in the spirit" in 1 Peter 3:18 and 4:6. It could be argued that these verses are not talking about the Holy Spirit, but the human spirit as opposed to the carnality of human "flesh." Nevertheless, when a Pentecostal reads the phrase "in the spirit," the Word of God has effectively grabbed their attention and rightfully so. (Skaggs does not have a section in her commentary on 1 Peter 3:18-22, but is actually included in her section on 13-17.) Skaggs does, however, capitalize "Spirit" in 3:18, so in her mind it is a reference to the Holy Spirit. Here our commentator does give us somewhat to sink our teeth into. She refers to "in the Spirit" as "the area in which the Holy Spirit works without human limitations, whereas the sphere of the flesh is characterized by suffering and death.... Hence, the phrase 'in the Spirit' must refer to the existence in and to which Jesus was raised when the power of God was able to work without the limitation of human existence" (51). She then relates the believer's being

“made alive in the new existence in Christ” to Christ’s own being “made alive again in the Spirit” (51). Skaggs’ gives us something to ponder here. How does the Holy Spirit work in spite of our human limitations to bring us into this newness?

If 1 Peter 3:18 is a reference to the Holy Spirit, we can assume that the very same phrase, “in the spirit,” in 4:6 is also a reference to the Spirit of God. Skaggs does admit that the terms “flesh” and “spirit” are used here in the same sense as they are in 3:18, but she does not comment on what the phrase signifies here in 4:6, save that “in the final time of judgment, God will reverse the negative judgment of humans and these [“the dead” to which “the gospel was preached”] will live in the new resurrection life” (57). But the phrase Peter gives us in 4:6, “they might live in the Spirit like God,” is rich with joyful and hopeful meaning.

Chapter four, verse fourteen is the last reference to the Holy Spirit in Peter’s first epistle; it tells us that the “Spirit of glory and of God” rests upon those who suffer reproach for Christ’s sake. How believers respond to suffering has been the main theme of Skaggs’ commentary and will continue to be the theme she uses to unite all of Peter’s sayings together into one cohesive message. She rightfully comments that “when you are abused, you are blessed, *since* then the spirit comes as support to help you and gives you a share in God’s glory” (65, italics hers). Skaggs further comments of God’s glory, “one of the main characteristics of God is glory...which is revealed in Jesus.... Glory is also a significant theme for Peter” (65). She mentions three times when the Apostle Peter uses the idea of “glory” (1:7, 5:4, and 5:10). Glory, or the Shekinah Glory, is very important to many Pentecostals. It harkens back to the glory of God in the Holy of Holies. It harkens back to the Mount of Transfiguration. It is a wonderful expression Peter gives us: “the Spirit of Glory.” Further comment by Skaggs about the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Glory of God would be most welcome.

The Holy Spirit is only mentioned in 2 Peter once: 1:21. It speaks of OT prophets being “moved by the Holy Spirit.” This reminds the reader of 1 Peter 1:11-12. Because Pentecostals believe that the Spirit still moves people to prophesy, whether interpreting a message of tongues, outright prophesy, or a message of knowledge or wisdom, this verse is very important. Skaggs admits that the Holy Spirit is the source and origin of prophecy, and she makes a clear distinction between human and Holy Spirit (111-112). There are certain keywords that knowledgeable Pentecostals gravitate toward, and prophecy is one of them, and further comment about the relationship of OT prophecy and NT prophets, in the Pentecostal sense (see also Acts 11:27, 13:1, and 15:32; 1 Cor. 12:4-11), would be well received. Further comment about exactly how the OT prophets were “moved by the Holy Spirit” would be most useful as well.

In commentaries, I do not think that mere restatement of the biblical text is very helpful. One generally looks for deeper connections and insights when referring to a commentary. Skaggs has continually fallen short of this type of help concerning obvious Pentecostal themes in 1 and 2 Peter. To her credit, she does include a section entitled “The Holy Spirit in 1 Peter” (14) and “...in 2 Peter” (90) where she summarizes her understanding of the Spirit’s role in the believer’s life according to what Peter has said. She tells us that “the Holy Spirit for 1 Peter is the means by which the relationship

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between the believer and God is made possible" (14-15), and "the Holy Spirit (divine power) is the means by which the godly life is developed and maintained" (91). These are obvious doctrinal understandings that can be derived from most of the NT writers. But I looked for the actual "meat" in the text of the commentary, and I was disappointed. Too many wonderful opportunities for a "Pentecostal Commentary" were not taken advantage of or were missed completely.

We have yet to look at the Holy Spirit in Jude, and a strong Pentecostal distinctive is mentioned by the Apostle Jude in verse 20: praying in the Holy Spirit as well as a reference to those who are "devoid" of the Spirit in verse 19. Skaggs, first, deals with those teachers who Jude must rebuke who do not have the Spirit of God. Again, she merely restates what Jude has said: "Jude himself clarifies his particular use of the word by adding the phrase 'not possessing the Spirit.'" (170). I understand that false teachers do not have the Spirit, but more could be said here about the relationship between the Spirit and truth. Consistently, whenever the Spirit is mentioned, Skaggs misses opportunities to make her commentary truly "Pentecostal."

"Pray in the Holy Spirit" is a phrase that jumps off the page to most Pentecostals because it speaks directly to their experience of praying in tongues. Skaggs merely says, "It is very likely that this phrase refers to the special prayer in the Holy Spirit known as glossolalia. In any case, the readers' prayer in the Holy Spirit contrasts vividly with the claims of the false teachers that they are led by the Spirit" (171). There is a world of distinctly Pentecostal experience, Scripture reference, and opportunity that Skaggs chooses not to include in her comments. It is obvious to most Pentecostals that Jude is talking about glossolalia, it is of no use to merely state this.

In conclusion, I am not sure what makes Skaggs' commentary "Pentecostal." I do not believe she has advanced Pentecostal scholarship. This is regrettable.

Bryan Miller

Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/ Nottingham: Apollos, 2006. xxxii + 348 pp., cloth, \$34.00.

The letters of Jude and 2 Peter have, through much of the history of the church, been the most neglected writings of the New Testament. There are many reasons for this, including Jude's direct reference to the Testament of Moses and 1 Enoch (Jude 9-10, 14), the very real linguistic differences between 1 and 2 Peter, and, in the more tolerant age of the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, an ecumenism that distains harsh words against heresy. Yet, since the early 1980's, a number of useful commentaries on these two letters have appeared, including Bauckham (WBC, 1983), Hillyer (NIBC, 1992); and Neyrey (AB, 1993). Davids's commentary joins this prestigious group. While one may not agree with it in all that it asserts, the work reflects careful and thoughtful scholarship in service of the church.

While his conclusions are rather cautious, Davids demonstrates a familiarity with the controversies surrounding Jude and 2 Peter. He acknowledges that while 2 Peter

follows Jude in the canonical sequence, it is likely that the chronological order of the two letters is the reverse. In particular, the manner in which 2 Peter 2 reflects the argument of Jude indicates an acquaintance of the former with the latter (pp. 136-41). Thus, when he comments on Jude and 2 Peter, Davids reverses the canonical order and begins with Jude..

Unlike many scholars, Davids places both Jude (p. 16) and 2 Peter (pp. 130-31) in the first century, although he is agnostic on with regard to authorship. Davids is open to the possibility that 2 Peter is pseudepigraphic. The testimony to the Transfiguration in 2 Pet. 1:16-18, therefore, is intended less as a verification of Petrine authorship than as a rhetorical element to support the contention made in 1:19-21. As such, it represents a conventional rhetorical proof for the contention that prophecy is God breathed (p. 206 see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1335-36a).

On the other hand, 2 Pet. 3:14-16 is not necessarily evidence that 2 Peter dates from the second century. Davids recognizes that the author may not be acquainted with all of Paul's letters, and that it is unlikely that at an early house church or churches in any particular city had access to a collection of the full Pauline corpus. Davids concludes from the evidence of 2 Peter that the author only knew two or three of Paul's letters. Thus, while we see an early canonization formula, it does not mean that Peter's canon corresponds to that of the later church.

A fourth critical issue is 2 Peter's milieu. Davids recognizes 2 Peter's use of fifty-seven hapax legomena (words found nowhere else in the NT, p. 131), as well as the Hellenistic features of the virtue list of 1 Pet. 1:5-11 (pp. 176-81). Yet, Davids locates the language of 2 Pet. 1:5-11 in the world of Hellenistic Judaism, not stoicism. In this respect, Davids overlooks the fact that, both in its language and its rhetorical style, 2 Peter is one of the most, if not the most, Hellenistic document of the New Testament.

Yet, Davids notes the rhetorical method of both Jude and 2 Peter. He is particularly indebted to D. F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (1988). While neither 2 Peter nor Jude reflect the "educated" rhetoric of represented in the handbooks of Aristotle, Cicero or Quintillian, the two letters do correspond to Asian style of rhetoric (pp. 131-32). It is noted that Jude follows the rhetorical structure of a letter rather closely (pp. 24-25), while Peter's style is more reminiscent of a sermon or speech within a letter structure (pp. 143). This differentiation may be more apparent than real, since both letters would have been read aloud and interpreted in oral performance.

Finally, Davids is not content to understand Jude and 2 Peter as reflections of the Church's past, but as living documents. They address real problems of the twenty-first century. Davids notes, for example, how easy it is for Christians today to compromise, to preach a message that appeals to the conventions popular in society as a whole, neglecting the hard demands of the gospel, including a life of separation and purity (see p. 245). The false teachers of both Jude and 2 Peter also succumbed to this temptation. Thus, the two letters provide a paradigm of encouragement and warning to believers today.. The message of both letters, hard as it is, needs, therefore, to be heeded.

Russell Morton

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Larry Christenson, *Answering Your Questions about Speaking in Tongues*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005. 142 pp., paper, \$7.99.

This book was originally published in 1968. This reprint celebrates the thirty-seventh anniversary of the printing of such a simple, easy to read, and understandable book on such a deep controversial subject – speaking in tongues.

Christenson tackles a difficult subject, yet makes it plain that the scriptures do discuss speaking in tongues and other gifts of the Spirit. Many would acknowledge that Scriptures tell of such gifts, yet not practice, or even agree with such gifts to be used within the body of Christ. Christenson's prayer is that "these chapters will help Christian people come into both an understanding and a personal experience of a beautiful gift of the Holy Spirit" (8).

It is interesting to note that in "1960 classical Pentecostals numbered about 25 million worldwide. Forty-five years later Pentecostals and charismatics numbered 553 million, trending toward 811 million by 2025" (8). While one may argue with the theological meaning of speaking in tongues, or if it was for biblical times only, one cannot argue with the fact of an increased growth of believers who practice the spiritual gift of tongues.

In chapter one, Christenson begins with his personal testimony, which is hard to argue with, as a person's personal experience can speak loud to any reader of the book. Before 1960 it was common to believe that speaking in tongues was simply an "emotional phenomenon" (15). Yet the traditional historic Christian denominations began to experience this phenomenon called speaking in tongues.

A description of speaking in tongues follows, and it declared a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, with references to biblical scriptures to support the statement. "It should be manifested decently and in order" (19). Tongues can be called a gift, but is it truly a language? Christenson gives support by use of the definition of language; "Language is an expression of meaning in terms of feeling or thought" (25). Does this gift have value? The author suggests that the most important value is for private devotion.

Chapter two discusses speaking in tongues as a sign of baptism with the Holy Spirit. Who is the baptizer? Jesus Christ is the one who gives the gift. Christenson uses the word *PILOT* to consider the five aspects of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. These are Power, Instantaneous, Link, Objectivity, and Tongues. What is this gift for? This gift is for exhortation and testimony. He follows with a sermon "You Shall Be My Witnesses."

Chapter three considers tongues as a gift. Christenson offers that tongues can create a new dimension in the worship of God. All Christians commune with God and, even though they may not understand the language of tongues, communion still takes place between the believer and God. Christenson explores questions and problems such as emotionalism, overemphasis, and divisiveness concerning speaking in tongues. There is also consideration of theological and practical aspects of gifts.

Chapter four examines this gift as a ministry. The author considers this gift in relationship with other gifts and ministries within the body of Christ. This gift is not to be used with selfish motives such as showing off or declaring oneself as more spiritual than a brother or sister. It works in union with other gifts “for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12).

Chapter five describes how a believer may receive the blessing of speaking in tongues. A healthy diet of the Word of God and a devotion time set aside with God is of most importance. Christenson closes with the appendix, “How to Have a Daily Quiet Time With God.” Whether one agrees or disagrees on the subject of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, one can definitely agree that all Christians need to have a daily quiet time with God. This book was rightly titled as it does answers questions about speaking in tongues.

Dawn Morton

Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates?* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004. 278 pp., cloth, \$23.00.

There is, perhaps, no Christian doctrine more studied, discussed, and debated than the concept of justification. One might question the need for another book on the subject. But, as the subtitle suggests, there is a minefield of issues involved in the subject including questions of grammatico-historical exegesis, systematic theology, hermeneutics, ecclesiological concerns, and ethical matters. This collection of ten essays, originally a presentation of papers at a conference at Wheaton Graduate School (2003), narrows the discussion to just one question: *is imputed righteousness fictive, forensic or transformative?* What makes this particular collection attractive is that it takes an overtly inter-disciplinary approach. The perspectives from which justification is viewed are four-fold: (1) biblical theology, (2) modern systematic theology (3) historical theology (especially Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, and Wesleyan), and (4) ecumenical considerations.

One quickly observes that various fields of scholarship, though eager to join together in dialogue, struggle to understand the terminology and methodological approaches of each other's disciplines. D.A. Carson underscores this point by noting how the “theologian” studies a subject versus an “exegete.” In Carson's opinion, both have particular methodological tendencies and neither one is safe from blind spots. If it is sometimes the tendency of the theologian to proof-text, the exegete is equally capable of missing a bigger concept that may not necessarily arise from “philology and formulae” (50). But, this attempt at approaching justification from various theological angles is worthy of recognition.

Although the study was clearly concerned with justification and imputation, it was a bit surprising to see no discussion of “the new perspective on Paul” which continues to spark debate and has now become a notable subject in denominations. This criticism notwithstanding, pastors and students alike will find these essays thought-

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provoking and, I think, they succeed in forcing the reader to engage with a well-worn issue from different vantage points.

Nijay K. Gupta

I.H. Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement: Cross and Resurrection in the Reconciling of God and Humanity*. Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007. viii + 139 pp., paper, \$19.99.

This short work on the atonement comes from a man who has been dubbed “the dean of New Testament evangelical scholars,” J. Howard Marshall. In the first two chapters, Marshall sets his sight at defending the doctrinal position “penal substitution” from a number of criticisms. Though Marshall believes that no single metaphor of Christ’s work is completely sufficient to explain his saving action, he finds that the idea of substitution is certainly a primary concept. Some, like S. Chalke, have criticized the penal substitution view because it appears to reason that God could only aid sinners by acting violently against his own Son which would even seem to condone such abhorrent things like child abuse. Marshall responds by surveying the judicial and forensic imagery of the New Testament (e.g., punishment, vengeance, wrath) to show that the language of judgment is a significant biblical theme. But he is keen to point out that it is possible to maintain that God’s attitude towards sin is a “sinless expression of wrath, free from the elements that disfigure human wrath” (pp. 23-4). It is a grave mistake, reasons Marshall, to conclude that the holy character of God does not express itself in “judgement and wrath when [his] creation is spoilt by sin” (p. 24). In response to the idea that a penal substitutionary view sees a God that punishes an innocent son, Marshall cogently argues that this is an unnecessary inference. The New Testament as a whole demonstrates that the Father does not act independently against the Son, but “[t]he death of Jesus is the single action of Father and Son together” (p. 57). The terminology of “penal substitution” may be part of the problem as it appears to be prone to misunderstanding and overextension. Thus, Marshall accepts the equivalent phrase “Substitutionary suffering and death,” though certainly it is not as pithy (pp. 65-6).

Marshall’s third and fourth chapters deal, respectively, with the role of Christ’s resurrection in justification, and the importance of “reconciliation” as an effect of atonement. In the former chapter, based on Romans 4:25, Marshall draws attention to a much neglected issue: *how is it that Jesus was “raised for our justification”?* Scholarship often focuses on the death of Christ as the ultimate act of obedience that brings about justification. Marshall adds that Christ’s resurrection was also necessary as “the death by itself is not sufficient to justify us without the verdict of God expressed in his carrying into effect the result of Christ’s death, namely the pardon and enlivening of the sinner who is now brought into the new life of the justified” (p. 91). The final chapter on reconciliation is an attempt to place this concept as a comprehensive one that demonstrates the effects of justification. The focus here is on the relational aspects of atonement, both between God and sinners, and within humanity itself.

This work on the atonement shows Marshall at his best: clear discussion, irenic interaction, honest with ambiguities, and often raising penetrating questions for further

exploration. Certainly this little book will be referenced much within the ongoing debates regarding the central themes of salvation in the New Testament.

Nijay K. Gupta

Francesca Aran Murphy, *God is Not a Story: Realism Revisited*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 356 pp., cloth, \$120.

This monograph by Francesca Murphy, Reader in Systematic Theology at the University of Aberdeen, is a critical evaluation of narrative theology, at least at the level of its major contributors: Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, Herbert McCabe, and Robert Jensen, and two traditional interlocutors: Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth. On the very first page Murphy expresses her concern: "...the driving force of narrative theology, the method itself, slides into the place of content or subject matter" (1).

Murphy's basic argument begins with a description of the two types of narrative theology: Story Barthianism and Grammatical Thomism. The point of these expressions for Murphy "is not to show that narrative theologies are in or out of line with Thomas' or Barth's writings but that, far from bending theology back to the shape of biblical revelation, they intensify the angular rationalism to which contemporary theology is culturally prone" (6). Murphy provides a historical context for narrative theology and explains its focus on "story." Murphy argues that narrative theology belongs to the genre of melodrama, which she claims is movie-like: "Most Hollywood films aspire to the movie version of melodrama, that is, to closed romantic realism, called closed because these films ... create worlds that do not acknowledge that they are being watched and the actors behave as if the camera isn't there" (4). Using this analogy, Murphy begins to critically reflect on the premises of narrative theology.

Why the movie parallel? Murphy's answer is rooted in image. "Our argument will be that narrative theology does not achieve its own most valuable aim of reinstating the imaginative and biblical basis of theology. It does not obey the curves of the narrative of salvation. In order adequately to respond to the images of this revealed history, one needs to know or understand this image, but also to respond to it in love – because the mystery which the God-given image expresses is love. We will argue that, in place of such loving assent, narrative theologies offer a pre-verbal machine of the reality, providing the materials for an abstraction of essence, not for the concretization of an image. Since such cognitive acts do not set the perceiver free to love another as another, narrative theologies substitute a methodology for the personal love of God" (23). For example, as chapter two argues, narrative theologies have tended toward a monological rather than dialogical notion of the *person*, and thus of the Church. Even more, rather than avoiding the foundationalist game, narrative theologies play by its rules. "Despite its aim of avoiding foundationalism, the hermeneutics of narrative theology misses its own best intentions because it is using a non-relational idea of truth. Instead of turning to the other, this a-historical idea of truth keeps twisting back on itself, generating a fideistic foundationalism" (80). For Murphy, as chapter three argues, the primary objection to

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narrative theology is that the priority of the narrative method entails either that storytelling itself becomes the foundation upon which God stands, or else that story itself is the wider concept which contains the idea of God (93). But God cannot be one of the characters in the story or made lesser than story, nor can God be identified with story (123)!

In the last half of the book, Murphy moves the reader from melodrama to "drama" as a category for dealing with Scripture. Chapter four shows the implicit problems rooted in melodrama concerning the existence of God and the problem of evil. Chapter five moves closer to a dramatic theology where, using the work von Balthasar and others, Murphy argues that the dialogical aspect of life and religion is best understood by the analogy of drama. Chapter six deals more closely with the Trinitarian God, claiming that narrative theology is unable to deal with its Trinitarian complexity. In the end, according to Murphy, narrative theology's descriptive approach to the Trinitarian persons lends itself to the problem of Modalism (24). Murphy concludes in chapter seven by claiming that the truth of Scripture is more dramatic than cinematic. "We have claimed, not only that narrative theologies do not succeed on their own terms, but that what they propose can feasibly be achieved without making God a story. The post-Christian world isn't simply secular or a-religious; its melodramatic imagination expresses a yearning for Christian drama" (315). For Murphy, the reading of Scripture is the reading of a "theo-drama."

God is Not a Story is a needed overview and response to a major aspect of contemporary theology. Murphy responds to some of the most influential theologians in the twentieth century and presents them, and all students of Scripture, with a serious challenge. Though not for the light-hearted, for a complex conversation looms in the background, this book is an important read for all students of Scripture and theology.

Edward W. Klink III, Talbot School of Theology

Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not an Arminian*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004. 215 pp., paper, \$17.00.

The conversations between Calvinists and Arminians have been continuing for the past several hundred years. The book *Why I Am Not an Arminian* and its companion book *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* are two recent additions to this dialogue. However, only *Why I Am Not an Arminian* will be reviewed here.

Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams, both from Covenant Theological Seminary, have collaborated on a very stimulating book. The book's chapters follow what one would more or less expect from a book of this nature. The discussions include such theological topics as: 1) Predestination; 2) Perseverance; 3) Freedom; 4) Inability; 5) Grace; 6) and Atonement. But included as well are two historical chapters: one on Augustine and Pelagius and another on Arminius and the Synod of Dort.

The book's obvious intention is the defense of Calvinistic theology. What makes this book unique is that it brings together both historical evidence and theological evidence to make its point. By using this approach they do not dwell only on favorite

scriptures, yet this book uses scripture extensively. Their writing is broad enough to engage the reader, but specific in certain areas that cause reflection.

In general, this book would be very beneficial to those learning about Calvinism or Calvinists who are looking to reinforce their particular perspective. With this in mind there are two specific issues with the book. First, the chapter on Augustine and Pelagius is the stereotypical argument against Arminianism—namely, the association of Arminius with Pelagius. The authors try to diffuse this by using the term “Semi-Augustine” to describe Arminianians, but the connotation remains obviously biased. However, this reference does not occur until the end of the chapter.

A second major problem is the flow of the book. The book is entitled *Why I Am Not an Arminian*, but the major chapter on Arminius is not until the middle of the book. This chapter is the longest chapter in the book, and its format varies greatly from earlier and later chapters that were devoted only to theological arguments. It appears as if there are actually two books combined into one, the first being a theological book and the second a historical book. This could have been solved by creating two parts, or better integrating the historical perspective within the chapters on theology. This is not to say that the book’s information is in any way lacking. Every chapter is very well written and enlightening. In fact, the fifth chapter alone (Arminius and the Synod of Dort) is worth the purchase of the book.

This book would be very useful as a supplemental text for one studying theology. Pastors who have an interest in theology, will appreciate the brevity of the book.

Larry Sterling, Jr.

Jeffery L. Staley & Richard Walsh, *Jesus, the Gospels and Cinematic Imagination: A Handbook to Jesus on DVD*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007. 208 pp., paper, \$19.95.

From the passion plays performed in medieval Europe up till and beyond Edison’s invention of moving pictures, dramatized depictions of the life of Jesus have captured the imagination of audiences. Indeed, the first ever depiction of Jesus in a film was the 1898 cinematic presentation of the famous passion play in Oberammergau. The twentieth century witnessed numerous Jesus films that ranged from reverent to bordering on derisive. Since the 1960’s there has been a steady stream of these films each presenting viewers with a portrayal of Jesus that is often formed by the social and cultural location of the director and producer. In recent years these films have attracted the attention of New Testament scholars who have begun to study these cinematic Gospels in an attempt to analyze their modern day proclamation. It is in response to this growing interest that Staley and Walsh offer this volume.

Staley and Walsh have provided the reader with a valuable tool for exploring the ‘reel Jesus’. The authors review eighteen different Jesus films that span approximately one hundred years. Each chapter examines a film’s (1) plot summary, (2)

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memorable characters, (3) memorable visuals, (4) key scriptures, (5) cultural location/genre, and (6) the director. Every chapter is concluded with a helpful list of DVD chapters that indicate where the film scenes can be found in the Gospels. Adding to the value of this book is two additional chapters; one that suggests ways for analyzing Jesus films and another that suggests how to teach a class on Jesus and Film.

The result is that Staley and Walsh have created a user friendly manual for scholars and film buffs alike. This volume will be particularly helpful for those who plan to teach a class on the "reel Jesus" or pastors who want to use clips from the films as a way to illustrate a sermon. The publisher has done a fine job with keeping the price within a reasonable range. I highly recommend it.

John Byron

Geza Vermes, *The Resurrection: History and Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 2008. xi + 171 pp., cloth. \$18.95.

The belief in resurrection is central to the Christian faith. It is a religion that celebrates the conquest of death by its deity and looks forward to the day when its adherents will no longer face the same enemy. But rarely do those who profess a hope in the resurrection (Jesus' and their own) have a historical understanding of the origins of the belief in resurrection. Too often we assume wrongly that belief in resurrection has always been in the purview of the biblical authors. In this volume Vermes surveys views of the resurrection and afterlife in the ancient world, the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. In straight forward prose, he traces and analyzes the origin and development of the belief in resurrection that is both which is easily digestible for readers on all levels. The book is broken into two parts.

In part one, Vermes surveys the view of the afterlife and resurrection in the ancient world, the Hebrew Bible and Early Judaism. He demonstrates that with a few exceptions like the Epic of Gilgamesh (p. 5), death and Sheol were considered to be the unavoidable destiny of all humans. Life on earth was a unique experience which afforded no second chance and, therefore, rewards for piety were expected prior to death rather than in an afterworld (p. 18). Yet there is some hint in the Hebrew Bible towards a belief in life beyond death. Both Elijah and Elisha resuscitate the recently dead, which not technically a resurrection, do provide a clue that the ancients held hope for some type of continued form of life (p. 23). Couple with these is the assumption of Enoch and Elijah and Moses in later Jewish tradition (p. 27). More direct statements are in Ezekiel 37:5-6 and Daniel 12:1-2. The most significant development in life-after-death belief comes about during the Maccabean period when Jews who are being martyred look forward to receiving back their body in an afterlife (p. 30). This shift in perception is due, Vermes contends, to the need to explain why righteous individuals suffer without receiving a reward for their piety. The belief in resurrection adds an eschatological element that removes the dissonance the faithful encountered between their belief God's protection of the righteous and the martyrdom of the faithful.

In spite of the above background, Vermes demonstrates that it would be incorrect to conclude that resurrection was the accepted hope of all Jews. A survey of Philo turns up no references to resurrection. In fact, the opposite is true. Philo has a very Platonic view that understands the need for the soul to be free from the body (pp.40-41). The documents among the Dead Sea Scrolls also reveal little information about the afterlife, but there does not seem to be any anticipation of resurrection (p. 43). Evidence from the Josephus and the NT would indicate that the Sadducees also did not hold to a belief in resurrection and an afterlife (p. 41). The only group in the Second Temple era that can be identified as clearly holding a belief in the resurrection is the Pharisees (p. 45). While this is clear in the NT it does add a wrinkle to the investigation. For as Vermes ably points out, Pharisees were only one of a number of religious groups that made up Second Temple Judaism, and they seem to have only represented a small fraction of the population (P. 48). Add to this the evidence that belief in resurrection was absent among Greeks and Romans and the resulting picture is a proportionally small group of people who hoped for the restoration of their bodies after death.

In part two of the volume Vermes examines resurrection and eternal life as presented in the NT. Although the resurrection of Jesus is central to Christianity Vermes discovers some surprising data; there is very little in the way of teaching about resurrection in the synoptic gospels, John and Acts (pp. 64, 68, 111-117). Vermes concludes that "the subject did not play a major role in Jesus' teaching in the Synoptics" (p. 73). And in John, the concept of resurrection, which is tied to eternal life, is only for the believer (p. 74). There is little in the way of a general resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

In the case of Jesus' own predictions about his death and resurrection, Vermes notes that these were totally unexpected by his followers (p. 81-82). Moreover, the gospels themselves do not agree on the details surrounding the resurrection which adds to the difficulty of accessing the veracity of the information (pp. 90-99). In the end, the belief the Jesus had been raised from the dead hangs on the existence of an empty tomb and the visionary experiences of his followers (p. 108).

While there is a dearth of teaching about resurrection in the Gospels, the letters of Paul are replete with the topic. In fact, while there is little about resurrection in the teaching of Jesus, it is the focus of Paul's gospel (p. 119). Vermes demonstrates that in Paul resurrection is enmeshed with the Parousia (1 Thess 4) since Jesus is the firstfruits of a general resurrection of believers (1 Cor 15) a belief that is symbolized by baptism (Romans 6) that mystically unites believers with Christ (Romans 8). Vermes concludes that: Saint Paul turned it [resurrection] in the centerpiece of his mystical and theological vision, which was soon to become quasi-identical with the essence of the Christian message" (p. 128).

In the closing chapter and epilogue of the book Vermes wrestles with the meaning of resurrection. He presents six theories for the resurrection of Jesus and finds none of them to be completely satisfactory (p. 148). In the epilogue he suggests that, while not believing in literal resurrection, the meaning of resurrection is inner transformation. "The conviction in the spiritual presence of the living Jesus accounts for

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the resurgence of the Jesus movement after the crucifixion. However, it was the supreme doctrinal and organizational skill of Saint Paul that allowed nascent Christianity to grow into a viable and powerful Resurrection-centered world religion” (p. 151).

This is an informative and well written volume. Vermes presents a competent survey of a vast amount of information without becoming mired in minutiae. His handling of the evidence is fair and equitable. While those who hold to the bodily resurrection of Jesus will, no doubt, disagree with his conclusion about its significance, they will still benefit from a historical understanding of the origins and development of belief in resurrection. Readers will appreciate, perhaps for the first time, how unusual such a doctrine was in the ancient world, even among Jews. It will be particularly helpful for students since it provides a more abbreviated and accessible consideration of the topic in contrast to more recent and no less important treatments on the subject. Highly recommended!

John Byron

John D. Roth, *Stories: How Mennonites Came to Be*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 2006. 244 pp., paper, \$10.99.

Here is church history from the underside. Persecuted by Protestants as well as by Catholics, and regarded a threat to Christendom, the Anabaptists were treated like heretics and their story neglected or confined to the periphery of European church history. In terms of religious studies, the Anabaptists and their kin are a “Little Tradition” minority in contrast to Christendom’s Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist “Great Tradition” majorities.

Historian John Roth’s *Stories* presents some of the highlights of a tragic history. Roth is a superb storyteller. He is also professor history at Goshen College as well as director of the Mennonite Historical Library and editor of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*. He begins with the assumption that history matters. Christians for 2000 years have told and retold the biblical stories. In them they have found spiritual comfort, guidance, and hope. In telling the Anabaptist story, the author has chosen selectively and carefully. Myths are dispelled, false impressions corrected, blots and blemishes shown. It’s a story that should be told, one with applications and challenges for today’s Christians who also face challenges and are tempted to compromise.

Roth’s history of the church begins in the Book of Acts where the Christian community began as a movement which slowly evolved into an institution. With the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century, Christianity metamorphosed and became Christendom. “Under Constantine and his successors, Christianity went from the persecuted religion of a minority to the state religion of the Roman Empire” (38). The outcome was drastic, and changed the character of the church. Now “the decision to become a Christian was no longer voluntary. Now *everyone* within the territorial boundaries of the empire was compelled to be a Christian” (40). As a result Europe became officially Christian in name, but to a large extent the radical meaning of being a

disciple of Jesus was lost. This is an important part of the story that needs to be told in the non-Western majority world.

A number of points arise. Christendom produced a territorial notion of the church. Infant baptism originated in the fourth century following the establishment of Christianity as a state religion. Monasticism developed as a compromise in an effort to preserve something of the original spirituality of the Jesus movement. With conscription of Christians into the military, just war theory took the place of earlier pacifism and non-violence. The Protestant Reformation should have restored something of the Church's earlier spirituality and simplicity but for the fact that Luther hated the Anabaptists. The shameful persecution of a peace-loving Christian minority by the Catholic and Reformed Churches of Europe is a dark blot on Christian history.

Churches of indigenous origins in Asia, Africa, and Latin America will find points of similarity to their own experiences of exclusion by the mainstream. An alternate telling of history is appropriate in today's expanding nonwestern Christian world. This well-written narrative deserves wide circulation. Laity as well as clergy will benefit.

Roger E. Hedlund

Laurence Harwood, *C.S. Lewis, My Godfather: Letters, Photos and Recollections*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007. 147 pp., cloth, \$16.00.

C.S. Lewis, My Godfather has a great beginning foundation. It is written by Laurence Harwood, whose father was one of Lewis' dearest undergraduate and lifetime friends. Harwood writes of Lewis, his father, and Owen Barfield that they shared a love of, "classics, myths, legends, philosophy and ancient history, Greek and Latin, English literature, opera and walking tours cemented the camaraderie of the three undergraduate friends during their time at Oxford—and for the rest of their lives" (11). Harwood actually was Lewis' godson, but in spite of this promising premise, the book has a difficult time maintaining the reader's attention. The book is a nice testimonial to Lewis' relationship to Harwood and his fulfilling the responsibilities of a godfather. It is also interesting to watch their relationship mature as Harwood grows from a boy into a man and their relationship becomes a friendship. This occurs as Lewis begins to seek his advice on raising his stepsons.

The book is consumed with numerous extensive quotes from letters by Lewis and letters to Lewis. It is amazing how well preserved these letters are. Of course there are some very amusing quotes from Lewis. One I enjoyed most was his description to Laurence of Joy and the boys upon their arrival at the Kilns. Jack Lewis states: "We have an American lady staying in the house with her sons, eldest nine and a half. Whew! But you have had younger brothers so you know what it is like. We didn't: we do now. Very pleasant, but, like surf bathing, leaves one sort of breathless" (127). Some of these letters provide great insight into Lewis while others are minimally significant, especially when Harwood first tells the reader something about Lewis then follows it up with a long

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quote to support his point. This often becomes a bit redundant. In my opinion it would have been better to let the quotes speak for themselves or to edit the letters more extensively. This would have better kept the reader's attention.

The reader gets a strong sense of Lewis' love for walking and for communing with friends at small pubs. The book clearly demonstrates Harwood's obvious love and admiration for Lewis. He writes, "No doubt he (Lewis) would have felt his greatest achievement was to open the windows of Christianity in a way no one else had done in his generation; he has indeed opened windows for us all..." (140).

When I first heard this book's topic and saw the cover with the old photographs on it, I was excited to dig in and read it. However, I found it more tedious than expected. Seldom do I criticize layout or the editing process, but in this case I must because the long quotes in italics were not easy to read. This occasionally distracted me from the content. I would only recommend this book to the most ardent of Lewis fans who know something already about his life and friends.

Mark Hamilton

Colin Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*. Ed. Paul Brazier. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2007. 285 pp., paper, \$39.95.

This is a remarkable book that contains the complexities of a good mind and the casual comments a professor is likely to make in lectures. It was created after Colin Gunton's death in 2003 from tapes made from his lectures. One wishes Gunton might have expanded the discussions in writing the book himself, and added more discussion of other periods of Barth's life, as well as making more technical references, yet what we have is the sort of humanness of a good lecturer tackling the work of a theologian he respected and had himself learned from.

We get perceptive insights into the dialogue partners with whom Karl Barth interacted in shaping his theology, both from history and from among his contemporaries we. The variety of works Barth wrote (Romans, Anselm of Canterbury, the Dogmatics) we meet in a manner not overly technical, but certainly learned.

We are given insights into Barth's theological method: "Read the man himself!" (xxiii); "You must wrestle with the text until the walls that divide you from the first century are broken down and it speaks anew to our century" (25); "That the light shines in the darkness is not open to question, there is, however, grave doubt as to whether it has been seen, even by the church..." (27); "because of the unknowability of God you can never be sure if you have tied God down fully in your concepts" (32); "There are no dead theologians from the past – all theologians are alive today in their works" (55).

Gunton adds to such comments, and the lectures have a number of anecdotes about Barth. He gives the chronological movement of Barth's thought as he is lecturing. He gives brief explanations of movements that help to set them into a framework that clarifies what scholars might understand but students are still learning, like the remark on

p. 55 that “Anselm is pre-Thomas.” Well, sure, but students might not know that, and it is helpful in assessing what Barth has done with Anselm.

And then Gunton will add good continuity questions, like “The influence (of Anselm on Barth) notwithstanding, what are the differences between Barth and Anselm?” (62). A good question, answered in 2 pages of the text.

Or, again, Gunton, after discussing the way into the Dogmatics asks, as he looks at the first paragraph of I.1. “So, what is Barth saying?” I wish the professor I learned theology under had used such questions as I was trying to figure out, what on earth does this mean? And in Gunton’s classes, there it would be! Again, as Gunton approaches the Economic Trinity in I.1, “The crucial question is the first – Who is God?”

Then Gunton will ask questions like, what is the relation between theory and practice in Barth? Answering, “Barth doesn’t think in terms of theory, theology isn’t theory for him... theology is ethics and ethics is theology” (122).

Then Gunton will introduce into the play such actors as Kant and Hegel: “Hegel tried to get away from the static view of the relationship between mind and knowledge.” That comment by itself could save a student hours of time trying to discover what on earth Hegel means. And the lectures are full of such comments.

Sometimes it seems as if Gunton has set himself an impossible task, as when he introduces Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation (CD IV/1-3, pp. 147ff) by showing how Barth sets about to counteract the dualism of seeing Christ as divine and human. Barth weaves them both together, and what a task that would be in the face of creeds and historical figures.

The whole of the lectures weave together strands of theology, historical theology, theologians and meaning in such a helpful way that a theological student might well ask, why didn’t I travel to London and study with Gunton for a time? Now it’s too late, but this book will be helpful.

When I heard Gunton lecture in Oxford in some earlier time, I knew Barth only partially and I came away from the lecture saying, well, Barth can’t be all that difficult after all, can he? And here in *The Barth Lectures* is the evidence of help for another generation of students and pastors.

Robert B. Ives

Timothy George, ed., *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. 175 pp., paper, \$20.00.

God the Creator has forever known himself and in salvation history has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Essays in this collection attest a contemporary revival of Trinitarian theology. Contributors include Roman Catholic and Orthodox as well as Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Holiness theological traditions.

Several writers remind us that a note of *mystery* must always accompany our understanding of deity. Alistair McGrath finds the doctrine of the Trinity “biblically warranted” but also respects John Stott’s caution in discussions with Judaism and Islam.

We must neither inflate the doctrine with socio-political baggage, nor deflate its importance. "Christians do not believe in a generic god" (34), but a God known through his acts in history and identified by Scripture as the One who delivered Israel through the exodus and who raised Jesus from the dead. As Gerald Bray states, "we can never contain the transcendent mystery of deity within the limited horizons of our own hearts" (49). And that makes this book relevant for dialogue in today's pluralistic world. Bray points out that early Christians agreed with Judaism about the nature and character of God, and were able to equate the biblical God with Greek philosophical conceptions of the Supreme Being—but never with Greek deities like Jupiter or Saturn (41). Bray also establishes an important hermeneutical shift in which Judaism is defined by externals of the Mosaic covenant (land, circumcision, tabernacle, ark and temple) whereas Christian marks are internal (spiritual relationship to God) as heirs of the Abrahamic covenant. "In Paul's mind it is not Christians who have rejected Judaism, but Jews who have rejected Christ" and their own heritage (45). Jesus taught his disciples to understand the Father as the God whom they already worshipped (47). One can conceive parallels in contemporary dialogue with Islam in Asia.

An experiential dimension appears in several essays. Bray, for example, concludes, "To confess God as a Trinity is to worship him in our hearts, as those hearts are stirred by the Spirit of the Son, crying, 'Abba, Father!'" James Earl Massey unfolds the experience of the Triune God in the hope and faith expressed in African-American spirituals, an experience which resonates well with oppressed peoples anywhere including India's Dalits. J.I. Packer explains the 'experimental' component of Puritanism centered in communion with God the Trinity as the heart of John Owen's theology: "It is the power of truth in the heart alone that will make us cleave unto it" (94).

Two essays move the reader beyond traditional approaches to the study of theology. Frederica Mathewes-Green utilizes the arts to depict the Old Testament Trinity (Genesis 13), pointedly observing, "There is no such thing as theology that is purely intellectual" (87). Ellen T. Charry begins her essay on the Soteriological Importance of the Divine Perfections by stating, "Western Christian theology is undergoing a great upheaval about how to speak of God" (129). She then proceeds to do just that.

Grappling with issues of Christian unity, Avery Cardinal Dulles reiterating the Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) doctrine of Petrine primacy, nevertheless concedes the validity of a variety of ecclesial types and traditions (81). "Every Christian is marked by special relationships with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (69), and this also is to reflect in the mission of the Church. An eccentric Trinitarian treatment of the question of reunion was attempted by a nineteenth century theologian who identified the Roman Catholic Church with the Father (Petrine), the Orthodox Church with the Son (Johannine), and Protestantism with the Holy Spirit (Pauline). Amusing, but not convincing.

Of particular interest and contemporary relevance is Timothy George's essay on the Trinity and the Challenge of Islam in which the author rightly points out that Islam rejects a *caricature* of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (114). Islam itself must be understood against the background of Arabian polytheism and idolatry prior to the mission of Mohammad (113). Explication of the designation of God is a helpful

observation: "In fact, Allah was a common word of address for God by Arabic Christians centuries before Muhammad was born" (119). The crux of the matter is the place and understanding of Jesus as more than a prophet. "If Jesus was less than fully divine, it would be idolatrous to worship him" (124). The author takes a clue from Paul on Mars Hill: the unknown God is revealed in Jesus Christ. "Only from God's self-revelation in the history of Israel and in the event of Jesus Christ do we learn the nature of the unknown God" (125).

Here, then, is help for articulating the Christian message in our contemporary world. Help, that is, for students and thinkers, as for activists and practitioners.

Roger E. Hedlund

Ernest S. Lyght, Glory E. Dharmaraj and Jacob S. Dharmaraj. *Many Faces, One Church: A Manual for Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 2006. Xiii + 139 pp., paper, \$15.00.

Many Faces, One Church is a work-study manual prepared especially for the United Methodist Church, USA. As such it is specific to the challenges of ministry and mission in the context of urban-rural North America. The major challenge confronted is the pernicious racism which permeates American society and churches. The integration of new immigrant populations is compromised by persistent American racist prejudices. It is to the credit of the United Methodist Church that they have responded simultaneously to both issues through bold and creative action. Other denominations can benefit greatly by the insights and recommendations offered. For instance, pastors in any denomination need a superintendent or other official to whom they can go as a "pastor of pastors;" denominations should provide counseling options and financial assistance for counseling for clergy and clergy families; training should be provided for leaders; sources are needed for salary support for many ethnic-minority clergy; cross-racial appointments require intentional follow-up guidance and encouragement.

Seminary training fails to prepare candidates for ministry in today's multi-ethnic society. Anglo pastors and leaders frequently lack cross-cultural awareness. Few role models exist for ethnic-minority pastors. "Without friendship or support from other minority and ethnic-minority pastors in similar situations, some pastors can become hostile and withdrawn" (41). The writers point out that "ethnic-minority pastors express emotional frustrations differently than their American counterparts" and that this can create misunderstanding, tensions and communication break-downs. Most American denominational leaders are ill-equipped to deal with cultural problems. The authors of this book are themselves minority and ethnic-minority ministers. Out of personal experience they offer valuable guidance: "Allow minority and ethnic-minority pastors time to grow;" visit them occasionally; hold pastors accountable; offer feedback through face-to-face meetings; work at eradicating racial discrimination (60). North American Anglos tend to see only two sides to every concern—a right side and a wrong side—and will defend what they consider *right* and attack what they consider *wrong*, whereas

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“patience and an openness to understanding and accepting another’s perspective is what is needed for an honest and true assessment to occur” (67).

Ernest S. Lyght is Bishop of the West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church. Glory Dharmaraj is executive secretary for justice education for the Women’s Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. Jacob Dharmaraj is pastor of Shrub Oak United Methodist Church in Shrub Oak, New York. Both Glory and Jacob are natives of India. Bishop Lyght is an African American from Maryland who grew up in racially segregated America.

The book concludes with an extensive appendix of helpful resources such as job descriptions, sample forms, suggested personnel policies and procedures, sexual and racial harassment guidelines, and a bibliography.

Roger E. Hedlund

James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 174 pp., paper, \$17.99.

As the title of the book suggests, James W. Thompson (Abilene Christian University) is interested in mediating a discussion between biblical studies and practical ministry. In a sense, Thompson is urging Christian leaders to go back to the basics in order to understand three important questions for ministry: “What is a minister? For what roles do we prepare future ministers? What are the goals of ministry” (11)? Thompson finds that the apostle Paul to be a worthy guide in the quest to understand “the telos of ministry” (10).

Before engaging directly with the core of Paul’s (undisputed) letters (Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans, 1-2 Corinthians), Thompson first divulges some of the missteps that scholars have taken in an attempt to apply Paul’s theology to ministry. In particular, he balks at the traditional focus on “justification by faith” that takes almost a sole interest in saving the soul of the individual. Instead, Thompson promotes a “new perspective on Paul for pastoral ministry” where a more nuanced approach leads to a refined definition of ministry: “*participation in God’s work of transforming the community of faith until it is ‘blameless’ at the coming of Christ*” (20). Thus, Thompson adumbrates early on a number of key themes that are fleshed out in later chapters. A Pauline pastoral theology is theological (i.e., God-centered), eschatological, communal, forensic (i.e., looking towards judgment), and transformation/ethical. Thompson is also influenced by scholarly interest in the narrative features of Paul’s theology as made popular by N.T. Wright and Richard Hays. He argues, therefore, that a grand theological narrative “forms the substructure of Paul’s reflection” (25).

Once Thompson turns to the Pauline letters, each epistle is studied section by section and one question is always at the forefront, *what are the implications for pastors of what Paul writes to his readers?* Though the text is mostly free from footnotes, one can tell that a lot of exegetical work has come before Thompson’s exploration of the Apostle’s pastoral theology. One feature of this book that is particularly thought-provoking is the attention given to Paul’s “pastoral ambition” – the understanding he had

of his own ministry and the regular reference he made to the judgment he will face regarding the operation of his own churches (see 20-23). Thompson challenges ministers to keep in mind that Paul felt responsible not only for the forensic salvation of individuals, but their [trans]formation as well.

Though the brief commentary-like chapters seem to repetitively return to the same main points, he clearly does not lack scriptural evidence for his claim that Paul's vision for ministry is "ecclesial, cruciform, and eschatological" (148) and follows a common theological narrative. Pastors and other church leaders will find many words of wisdom here that can help to plan a ministry or refresh it with an offer to drink deeply from the letters of Paul. As Thompson has demonstrated that much can be gained from a conversation between pastoral and biblical studies, we can hope that more books like this will appear for the benefit of both disciplines and, especially, for the minister and lay leader.

Nijay K. Gupta

Tony Dungy. *Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, and Priorities of a Winning Life*. Forward by Denzel Washington. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 301 pp., cloth, \$26.99.

It seems most Christian sports books are full of fluff, often focusing on athletic success or the powers of the athlete to overcome great odds to achieve success in some miraculous manner. Seldom do they focus on the daily challenges that all normal humans face. This often makes the successful athlete's experience unrealistic and something to which the amateur athlete or non-athlete cannot personally relate. This is not the case with Tony Dungy's autobiography, *Quiet Strength*. This book is different in that it connects the faith journey of Tony Dungy, the coach of the 2007 Super Bowl winning Indianapolis Colts, to the life experiences and challenges many of us encounter. This book is primarily about life and faith, so the person who is looking for a pure sports book might be a bit disappointed. There is plenty about football though, covering Dungy's college days as a quarterback and the lack of opportunity as a professional quarterback because of his race, his emergence as a coach, and exciting football moments in his coaching career. It is also insightful to see how Dungy is connected to many of the great coaches of all-time such as Chuck Noll and Bill Walsh, and current coaches such as Lovie Smith and Herm Edwards (two of Dungy's closest friends). But the book is not primarily about sports.

This book's main character is seemingly Coach Dungy, however the true central character is Jesus Christ. Dungy clarifies how he was raised in a family of faith but found it necessary to learn to trust Christ through the various trials he experienced in daily living. He describes in detail several specific challenges where he experienced the sovereign hand of God directing him, such as his college career, his professional teammates who were a testimony of faith to him, his failures as a professional athlete leading to the discovery of his profession, his failures and firings as a coach, his eventual

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meeting of his future wife, dealing with his son's suicide, and his eventual winning of a Super Bowl.

Dungy's most difficult experience was his son Jamie's suicide. He does not sensationalize the situation, nor does he placate the voyeuristic desires of the readers who want to know the whys and hows of the suicide. Instead he elaborates on the support he found from Christian friends, his Church's care, and on his own words at the funeral service, including some stirring anecdotes about Jamie. Dungy concluded his remarks at the funeral with the following: "The last and most important thing I want to leave you with is this. Despite my having shed a few tears here, this is really a celebration in the midst of tragedy. When Jamie was five years old, he accepted Christ as his Savior. When Lauren and I would talk to him about his identity, about who he was and who he wanted to become, that was one thing we could tell him for sure, for certain—that his identity was in Christ. The apostle Paul wrote that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God that's in Jesus Christ" (255). The one constant through all these experiences is the theme that God is ultimately in control directing the events of life and that faith is the appropriate response to every situation.

Near the end of the book Dungy summarizes: "And so we press on. We press on with our memories, our hearts buoyed by a God who loves us and wants us to know him deeply. We press on with our sense that life's not always fair. And we press on with the knowledge—and—assurance that even though we can't see all of God's plan, He is there, at work and in charge, loving us. We press on with the conviction that even though we don't deserve the gifts and blessings we've been given, He gives them anyway. We press on with the conviction that even though we don't deserve the gifts and blessings we've been given, He gives them anyway. We press on into an abundant life on earth, followed by an eternity with God" (297). Dungy understands the appropriate role of sports, something that all athletes and parents of blooming athletes should understand. He writes, "But football is just a game. It's not family. It's not a way of life. It doesn't provide any sort of intrinsic meaning. It's just football. It lasts for three hours, and when the game is over, it's over" (xiv).

The book is chronologically structured, practical, and well-written. The central theme is the need to put one's priorities in order and to consistently live out these priorities as a role model for others. Often Dungy pauses to raise great questions and usually provides his own answers. At one point, pondering the issue of fame Dungy asks, "What will people remember us for? Are people's lives better because we lived? Did we make a difference? Did we use to the fullest the gifts and abilities that God gave us? Did we give our best effort, and did we do it for the right reasons?" (144). In response he states, "God's definition of success is really one of significance—the significant difference our lives can make in the lives of others. This significance doesn't show up in win-loss records, long resumes, or the trophies gathering on our mantels. It's found in the hearts and lives of those we've come across who are in some way better because of the way we lived" (144).

Mark Hamilton

Paul F. M. Zahl, *Grace in Practice: A Theology of Everyday Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 267 pp., paper, \$18.00.

According to Zahl, *Grace in Practice* is “about how Christianity works” (27), and in it he tries to “bring the gospel of law and grace into direct encounter with the real and tangible stress” (29-30) of living in today’s world. It is an ambitious and worthwhile undertaking that is, to some degree, successful.

While Zahl begins with a description of Old Testament law as “true,” but “impotent and counterproductive” (9), he has more than just OT Law in mind. For instance, law manifests itself in the demands of culture, criminal codes and personal standards of behavior. Though Zahl allows for the necessity of what he calls the “first use of the law” (165), i.e., basic rules for protection, he sees law in all its other uses as the “great depressant” because it “stimulates the opposite thing to which it intends” (32).

Against this bleak picture of the law, Zahl posits a warm and inviting picture of grace. Grace is “one-way love” whose “logic is hidden within the intention of its source” (38). Because it is nonjudgmental, grace is able to produce the behavior that law demands. In addition, grace “neither expects anything in return nor ‘tweaks’ the object of its concern” (129). To enable readers to understand and extend grace, Zahl also describes humankind’s total depravity and the nature of human will, which he insists is “un-free” (103 ff.). Once we see human will as un-free, we are better able to show mercy and compassion to fellow sinners.

After laying this foundation about law, grace and the human condition, Zahl looks at some of life’s difficulties and how grace might be engaged to bring about positive outcomes. He does this most successfully in his third chapter on family relationships, where he provides a number of practical suggestions. From there, he also tries to tackle societal issues such as politics, war and criminal justice. (It is in this chapter where he also attacks shopping malls with surprising vehemence.) Zahl then moves on to examine church-related issues. He finishes up with some general, but insightful conclusions about God’s grace as the only hope of humankind.

The blurb on the back cover of *Grace in Practice* describes it as “conversationally written” and rewarding to “any Christian.” Don’t be misled by these comments into thinking that the book is an easy read. While Zahl fills its pages with many illustrations and references to literature and movies (a few of which he gets wrong), *Grace in Practice* is a challenge. The first chapter on law and grace is a whopping 93 pages long—a full third of the book. There is plenty of room for disagreement with Zahl’s view of law, grace, and human nature. He also makes controversial statements that are sure to provoke, if not anger, then at least a good deal of concern in the minds of readers. His chapter on societal difficulties offers some interesting food for thought, but little in the way of practical application for the individual Christian—particularly with regard to criminal justice.

On balance, *Grace in Practice* is great for serious-minded readers who want to learn more about grace in everyday life, but aren’t afraid to tackle some meaty theological issues along the way. I found Zahl’s description of grace beautiful and

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uplifting, and gleaned many insights from his work. Those points on which I disagree continue to stimulate my curiosity and creativity. *Grace in Practice* would also be an excellent choice for the classroom, as it is sure to provoke lively discussion.

Lori Shire

Dean Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough: A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997. 241 pp., paper, \$12.95.

Borgman declares, "This book is not a theology of youth; it is *a theology of youth ministry* (p. xi)." The author has spoken truthfully as the book engages the reader into the subject of theology as the foundation of youth ministry, yet with a practical spin on it. This book takes the reader deep into thought about theology and how it is related to every aspect of youth ministry.

Chapter one dives right into the subject of the book and discusses theology and the challenges of youth ministry as a foundation to the book.

Chapter two discusses "how to do theology on young people's turf (pp. 18-33)." Borgman considers Peter Ward's writings of the youth ministry's missiological task of youth.

Chapter three considers exegesis with the Word, the World, and oneself (pp. 34-61). Theology begins with awareness of God and "*with the exegesis of Scripture* (p. 34)." Borgman walks the reader through the "how-to's" for exegesis.

Chapter four contemplates youth culture (pp. 62-88). Cultural questions of youth and ministry towards youth are considered (p. 63). Culture, family, individual needs, and faith are explored. Cultures and subcultures are reflected upon along with how Christ can transform the culture.

Chapter five takes into account growth and development of the young person (pp. 89-104). Developmental theorists are taken into account along with the responsibility of the youth leader to assist the youth to spiritual growth.

Chapter six ponders the strong influences of family and peers (pp. 105-125). Understanding the family today and how it has influence on the growing teen brings understanding to some of the complexities of youth ministry. Few role models, latch key children, and divorce have great impact upon the teen. Peers of the youth sometimes has a greater authority over the life of a teen.

Chapter seven reflects on the pop culture and its impact upon the youth (pp. 126-151). Drama, stories, technology, media, and movies speak to the youth. One must ponder these avenues and find ways to incorporate them into the ministry.

Chapter eight mulls over the value of humor (pp. 152-171). Theories and types of humor are exposed. Youth ministry can be enhanced by humor used correctly in teaching, announcements, etc. Humor can be beneficial to youth and to the youth leader.

Chapter nine teaches appreciation of the music of young people (pp. 172-188). Youth communicate through music. It is not merely just listening to sounds, but a voice in the culture. Since youth are using music as a tool of communication, it makes sense

that the youth leader should use music in ministry towards youth. It gives common ground in order to talk with the youth through the language of the youth.

Chapter ten gives respect to sexuality (pp. 189-219). There must be a positive approach to sex, not a judgmental attitude and ridicule. Compassion is needed in order to talk about such a sensitive issue. Practical advice is given for some tough areas of sexuality.

Chapter eleven confers to living out one's theology with their heart and hands (pp. 220-234). "Living out this theology and explaining it to young people calls for theology with a heart, theology that reaches out to real situations, touches deepest hurts, brings freedom to those oppressed, and empowers those deprived of opportunity (pp. 220-221)." The youth leader is called to connect theology in a practical way for the teen. Steps for planning and evaluating youth programs are included in this chapter. Borgman concludes with "More important than an intellectual understanding about God and God's ways is our personal experience of God and the community of faith in which we live, worship, and serve (p. 232)." It is an example to the youth in our culture. It allows leaders to speak into the lives of youth.

Each chapter ends with questions for reflection and discussion, which can aid the reader to consider personal application of the book's principles. No doubt, this solid foundational book is considered a textbook for youth ministry and training of future leaders. A must read for all who work with youth.

Dawn Morton

L. Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell, eds., *The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. 263 pp., paper, \$14.99.

A diverse group of theological teachers investigates a variety of aspects of the vocational calling of theological educators. Included in the topics of discussion are: spiritual formation, religious devotion, teaching techniques and practices, academics, scripture, and sharing personal experiences in the profession and calling of teaching. But it is not merely the discussion of such topics that are valuable in this text, but the integration of such subjects together for the theological educator. Truly, this book could be a foundational resource for all educators as it embraces such basic truths about the practical aspect of teaching.

The book is divided into three sections: Formative Practices of the Theological Teacher's Vocation; Theological Teachers in their Classrooms; and Theological Teachers in their Schools.

The first section includes subjects such as the spiritual formation of the scholar. Writing and reading is considered a spiritual discipline for the theological teacher. Writing alone can bring the theological teacher into a disciplined study that brings fruit to the details in written word. Writing is a skill which all educators must endeavor to pursue and require their students to attain. Reading is an academic skill but also a "transformative spiritual discipline" that can be articulated within the Christian life (p.

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46). Academic demands are high from institutions, but can there be contemplation of theological meaning behind the vocation of teaching? The declaration would be “yes.” Nouwen is a source that is shared declaring that the “goal of our life is not people. It is God” (66). A chapter is devoted to vocational kinship of Georgia Harkness, first female theologian of the United States.

The second section concerns the teacher’s impact within the classroom. The power of conversation is contemplated as the teacher causes the student to interact with the text and with each other. Teaching theology should be a ministry of hope to the students and it can only happen if educators view it as an act of stewardship. Courage is needed for the task of teaching. Wisdom is beyond thinking and it endeavors to reach out into a greater scope beyond ourselves in order to live in a complex world. Ceaseless prayer is described as “one cannot know God without the desire of the whole being to love God and neighbor on a continuous basis” (164). The classroom must be an “environment of prayer” (*ibid*).

The third section discusses subjects that would assist theological teachers within their schools. *The Rule of St. Benedict* is considered in this section as an understanding for theological education. Theological education can either be troublesome and tiresome or it can be a work unto God. Considerations and the value of teaching in “outback” institutions provide a place where one can learn and be in community with one another. Theological education is valued no matter the size or status of institution. One can be called to do great works in a less known institution. What is the sense of our vocation and how does that play out in the picture of life? There are dramas and tensions within life that play into the vocation. What is the relationship of the theological seminary to the educator? Do they have a part in each other’s growth and identity? There is a collective vocation because many are involved in the educational process of an institution. Although many people are involved, each theological educator is still responsible for their own part of the process of education.

These are just a few of the highlights from a collective resource of theological teachers. Each chapter and contribution gives insight to the expertise of the contributors. The educators reveal their own passion of teaching as it relates to the vocation of the educator. It is a fine foundational piece for any professor in a theological institution.

Dawn Morton

Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 390 pp., cloth, \$35.00.

What is the well-lived life? According to psychological theorist Erik Erikson, the well-lived life must include “generativity.” This 7th stage of human development is defined as an adult’s concern for and commitment to promoting the well-being of future generations through involvement in parenting, teaching, mentoring, and other contributions that leave a positive legacy of the self for the future. Dan McAdams, Professor of Psychology and of Human Development and Social Policy and Director of the Foley Center for the Study of Lives at Northwestern University, has written

thoughtfully on this human task of generativity from a unique point of view, where developmental theory meets American cultural history.

Based on ten years of research of caring and productive adults, McAdams proposes that story-telling is the genre by which people tell about their lives. Stories are cultural texts that provide identities. Stories contain images, scenes, plots, and themes that people borrow and rework into their lives. The examination and expression of these stories is the vehicle by which adults create a coherent narrative and achieve a redemptive life. In his research, McAdams found that the more redemptive the story, the better a person's overall psychological well-being.

This book is a fascinating examination of American adult development. Americans hold to a sort of national mythology, i.e. we are the chosen people whose manifest destiny is to grow and improve, move ever upward, go from rags to riches, oppression to enlightenment, and so forth. McAdams shows the influences—both philosophical and religious—that have created this American persona.

According to McAdams, about 80 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christian. Religious thinking in America is based on two contrasting thoughts: Puritan Christianity and European Enlightenment. Our Protestant heritage stresses that Christians are chosen people who are supposed to do good work in the world. He extols the benefit of religion and points out that both medical and psychological research indicate religious people enjoy increased longevity, lower levels of delinquency among youth, better mental health, lower divorce rates, and so forth. Among Americans, research shows a positive correlation between measures of generativity and indices of religious and spiritual involvement.

But he does not cast an uncritical eye on religion. He devotes a chapter to the African American experience in America. Some churches were complicit in condoning slavery. His discussion of slave narratives was particularly poignant. McAdams writes that African-American slaves were the most intrinsically religious and redemptive Americans.

He also explores the fact that generative religious people express themselves within the American cultural suit of rugged individualism, self-reliance, and upward mobility. Americans give high priority to the "I" and the value of personal agency. Plus, over the years, American religion has accommodated itself to a growing commercial culture. This creates tension when joined with communal values of love, friendship, and community. The powerful language of the individual self is always in competition with the language of community.

Furthermore, he writes that Americans tend to think we are distinctive in the world. In history, Americans have used redemptive rhetoric to justify national expansion, imperialism, opportunism, and a range of other violent acts and programs.

In Chapter 9, McAdams poses the question, "Can everything be redeemed?" We live in a society that expects, even demands, happy endings to tough stories. McAdams writes, "I believe there is a kind of tyranny in the never-ending expectation in American life that bad things will and should be redeemed." McAdams adds that tragedy opens people up to each other and sometimes brings them closer. McAdams explains,

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“Americans are known for their pragmatic, can-do, optimistic spirit. But this attitude about life finds it difficult to allow for the possibility that life’s deepest meanings may be found in tragedy, as well as redemption.”

Finally, while McAdams is a research psychologist, his book contains practical insights for clinicians. He writes about the power of language, how episodic memory shapes identity, how literary techniques can be adapted to therapeutic settings, and other narrative-type tools. He explains, “...much of what is interesting in narrative identity flows from the dramatic license we employ in shaping our memories and goals into a compelling narrative form. To a certain extent, we *make* our stories. With limits, we *decide* who we are, who we were, and who we may become.”

Clearly, not every adult is moving toward generativity. People get stuck in contaminated plots and vicious circles, as McAdams discusses in Chapter 8. Erikson wrote that the opposite of generativity is stagnation. People feel stuck, stagnant, immobilized. But life story-telling, viewed within developmental, biographical and cultural contexts, can be a means of helping that facilitates personal empowerment and generativity. Ultimately, McAdams views story-telling as an avenue to meaning. As he concludes, “Living life well, with meaning and purpose, is as much an act of imagination and artistry as anything we ever attempt. Life-story telling is an art. You have the material; now what story are you going to make?”

Sanda Gibson

Pete Ward, *God at the Mall: Youth Ministry that Meets Kids Where They're At*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999. 147 pp., paper, \$12.95.

From the title of this book, one would assume that all youth pastors must meet at the mall in order to have quality ministry for youth. This is not the point of the book; nor should this book be taken lightly, as it is a solid foundation of youth ministry that wrestles with theology, sociology, anthropology, missiology, methodology, and philosophy of youth ministry.

The author declares that “confusion over terminology” is a problem among those who work with youth. Two terms “youth ministry” and “youthwork” are used simultaneously and yet synonymously (10).

The author declares in chapter one that there are two disciplines of youth ministry called outside-in and inside-out. Outside-in is a concept of bringing youth into the group from the outside in order to bring the youth to the church and ultimately to a relationship with Christ. Inside-out is a concept of taking the youth to the outside so that other youth may hear the story of Christ and begin a relationship with the church and with Christ. Inside-out becomes a family concept; we are all related to each other whether through actual blood lines or by friendship and therefore, it can be a safe cocoon within our church as most have been raised within the church. Outside-in may bring youth to Christ, but they look different, have special problems, and most likely will not fit in with the church. Ward declares, “It is fundamental to my argument that both of these traditions

of youthwork have a place in the life of the church (27).” This chapter is the heart and passion of the book.

Chapter two discusses the difference between a theology of youth ministry and a theology of young people, while chapter three discusses the incarnational approach to youth ministry. Relationships are the key to youthwork; whether it is with each other to reach friends for Christ or relationships with adults and youth leaders in our churches and community.

Popular Culture as a relevant subject of youth ministry is the focus of chapter four. The youth minister must learn the language of the culture in order to be effective. Knowing the culture of the church is not enough; one must know the culture of youth. At the same time, the culture of the youth should not stand alone; there must be a marriage of the two cultures.

Ward considers the incarnation of the Word of God and Christ within youth culture in chapter six. A challenge is given to youth ministers to know the gospel story and to have a firm grasp of God’s word in order to translate the gospel story to the youth culture. Two case studies reveal how youth ministries can be shaped by the gospel story and the youth culture. Youth leaders must understand the gospel story through the cultural lens of youth.

Chapter seven discusses that youth ministry cannot be, nor should it be, an entity unto itself. “Youth ministry grows from a partnership in the gospel. Those working with young people and those who support that work . . . are participating in the activity of the body of Christ” (129-130).

This is a missiological book. The church may consider trends and fads regarding youth, however; it still fails to recognize that youth are a culture by themselves. Ward is known for his studies of youth ministry in this type of mindset. Sociological and anthropological dimensions are included. The most valuable part of the book is this: The gospel story is still powerful in today’s youth culture. Now, it is the task of the youth minister to communicate it effectively.

Questions are provided at the end of each chapter. As always, Ward brings clarity to the subject and challenges the reader in thought and process. Ward’s book is worth the time to read and a definite must read for all involved in youth ministry.

Dawn Morton