

Book Reviews

Jerry M. Stubblefield. *The Effective Minister of Education: A Comprehensive Handbook* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993, 253 pp., \$17.99) reviewed by Troy Gahman.

The author's purpose in writing this handbook is clearly stated in the preface as fourfold: 1) "to meet the need for a one volume book on the minister of education," 2) "that persons thinking about entering the ministry of education can measure their gifts, abilities, and skills against those needed by a minister of education," 3) "to clarify roles and duties ministers of education are expected to fulfill," 4) "to assist pastors and church personnel committees." The author has clearly structured the book around four divisions, each introduced by a question. These four questions (Who is the minister of education?, What does he/she do?, What are his/her important relationships?, and How does one get started as a minister of education?) have been thoroughly answered and explained by Stubblefield in a manner that is easily followed and readily understood.

The content of the book covers a broad spectrum of issues related to the minister of education—his calling, the history of the profession, necessary character traits, responsibilities, personal and staff relationships, education requirements, and rewards of the profession. Stubblefield seems to subscribe to an Ephesians 4 philosophy of ministry—that the minister's primary tasks are "to equip the people for ministry, to build up the church, and to unify members in the faith." Building on this biblical premise, the author provides thorough insight and instruction concerning

the "who, what, and how" of directing a church's educational ministry.

Stubblefield's book has several evident strengths. First, he has insights from thirty years of experience in the field of Christian education. Second, the book is quite thorough in expounding on its subject, providing a detailed and comprehensive handbook on the ME profession. A third strength is the balance of professional information with practical and personal insight.

The Effective Minister of Education would be valuable for a variety of individuals: pastors looking to better understand the ME position, students learning about the field for the first time, and also lay teachers searching for a practical handbook dealing with the topic of Christian education. This book could be used both as a reference work and as a textbook in an academic setting.

Ed Young. *Been There. Done That. Now What? The Meaning of Life May Surprise You* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994, 263 pp., hardback, \$18.99) reviewed by Charles E. McLain.

Dr. Young approaches the book of Ecclesiastes from a classical, conservative position. Solomonic authorship is unquestioned, Ecclesiastes having been written in Solomon's later years when he "discovered that the things of this world do not satisfy" (p. 2). Solomon at this point of his writings took the view of the philosopher searching for answers to life. It is this search of Solomon (and all men) which Dr. Young allows the reader to take part in. Young's study of Solomon's writings led him to the conclusion that "God gives us enough reasons for our faith to be reasonable, but not enough reasons to live by reason alone" (p. ix). Thus Young states that his book is "written for those who struggle with their faith, as well as those who walk in faith. It is an argument for the *absolute* truth of God, written for the doubter and the skeptic, the agnostic and the atheist" (p. ix).

In the first section of the book ("Been There"), Young explores what he terms "under the sun living." In this section he deals with man's eternal quest to overcome the boredom of "under the sun living." In his search man has five options through which to find meaning in life: hedonism, ethics, wisdom, materialism, and religion. Solomon and modern man have tried them all, but they all are found wanting ("vanity"). The only way to find true meaning for life "is a life-long love affair with the Almighty" (p. 20).

In the second section of the book ("Done That"), Young records what he terms "under the sun searching." He details the five-fold path that man pursues in searching for relief from boredom and for meaning to life. First, he records the path of the hedonist whose answer to life's boredom is to "party" more. The trouble with this path is that the relief of pleasure is only for a season and does not actually deal with the problem, but only its symptoms. Next, he contemplates the path of the philosopher whose answer to life's purpose is to "think deeper." According to Young's evaluation of Solomon's search, life is ordered by chance or choice or "chosen-ness." All three ultimately leave unanswerable voids because the true order of life "is a combination of the last two Life is chosen . . . by God himself. Yet in His chosen-ness, there is personal choice" (p. 68). Thirdly, Young considers the path of the intellectual whose answer to the boredom of life is to "study further." Solomon learned that "no amount of knowledge will make an immoral person moral" (p. 77). He learned that "education does not make something out of nothing" (p. 77). In reality people hide from the meaningful questions of life by "diversion, propaganda, indifference, the pursuit of happiness, and subjectivism" (p. 78). The fourth path which Solomon traveled was that of the materialist whose answer is to "acquire more." Young calls this "the most dangerous love affair any man or woman will ever experience" (p. 92). Solomon on this path learned lessons but found no answers. He learned that "money is power and power

corrupts" (p. 93). He learned that with money it is "increasingly difficult to know who your true friends are" (p. 94). He also learned that as money increases, peace of mind decreases (p. 95). Finally he learned that "hoarding money will break a man's heart" (p. 97). The futility of this path is marked by competitiveness, laziness, and workaholism (p. 101). The final path of pursuit is the path of the religionist whose answer is to "do church." From his search, Solomon learned that "this world was never designed to fill our deepest hunger" (p. 112). The problem is man was created with an innate longing for the eternal but we exist on the plane of the temporal. Nothing on the temporal plane can satisfy his eternal longing. Thus his search usually takes the form of reducing God to a manageable size—his own.

In the final section ("Now What?"), Young approaches the subject "above the sun living." This type of living has six requirements: (1) get perspective; (2) know what is good and what is better; (3) accept life's mysteries; (4) seize the day; (5) dare to lead; and (6) love God. In this final section, Young points out that it is not the circumstances of life that make or break us—it is our reaction to those circumstances. If we react temporally and internally, we will arrive at the same conclusion that haunted Solomon—life is "vanity." If we react spiritually and trust God not only for eternity but for time, we will find meaning and purpose in life. As Young points out, "Solomon eventually did what we should do when we discover we are lost. He went back to where his journey began" (p. 186). Once he redirected his search to "above the sun," the realm of ultimate reality, "he came to a peaceful co-existence with the ambiguities and injustices of life" (p. 186) and embraced God.

Each finds himself overwhelmed by the circumstances and sorrows of life. Although lacking the means and abilities of Solomon to pursue answers, he too often travels down the same paths in search of answers. At those times this commentary on

Ecclesiastes, written with a pastor's practicality, will make beneficial reading.

This reviewer found the applications and contemporary illustrations a definite advantage in making Solomon's message live. This book can help any pastor or laymen who need to be reminded that the answers to life's questions in any age are found, not in the world, but in God.

Mawhinney, Bruce. *Preaching with Freshness* (Eugene, Or.: Harvest House Publishers, 1991, 258 pp., \$12.99) reviewed by Mark Farnham.

Few books on preaching are exciting, even fewer are easy to read. This book on preaching, however, is so interesting that readers will find it hard to put down. It is an amazing book for this one reason: it is a novel about preaching.

The book is primarily written for preachers, but laypersons will also find it fascinating. The purpose of the book is to help preachers "find freshness and new life" for their preaching. It is an encouraging story that will certainly lift the heart of anyone has struggled with 'tired' preaching.

The story begins with a middle-aged pastor, Paul Andrews, facing increasing criticism by his church about his preaching. He spends most of his time on unimportant administrative duties and ends up preparing for his messages late Saturday night. To get away one day, he visits his old seminary and bumps into his former homiletics professor. After sharing his seeming inability to preach anymore, Paul is encouraged when his former professor agrees to tutor him on preaching. Much of the book consists of the two men meeting together and discussing Bible exposition. Over time Paul's preaching dramatically improves, the church notices and begins to grow again and the Andrews family grows closer.

Although this book is fictional, the truths in it are not. Many aspects of preaching are covered including: preparation, meditation, persuasion, illustration and more. *Preaching with Freshness* is a book that will excite every person who preaches or teaches. It will challenge, rebuke, help and instruct anyone who wants to speak the truths of God in a fresh, interesting manner. It is a book every preacher and teacher should own.

Mears, Henrietta. *What the Bible Is All About*, rev. ed., Ronald Youngblood and Merrill C. Tenney, eds., (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1982, 648 pp., paper., \$9.99) reviewed by Mark Farnham.

Hughes, Robert B. and J. Carl Laney. *New Bible Companion* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990, 864 pp., \$19.99) reviewed by Mark Farnham.

These two books represent some of the finest Bible study aids available to believers seeking to gain an understanding of the overall theme of the Bible as well as the individual books contained therein. They are not manuals on how to study the Bible (one will be disappointed if he attempts to use them to that end) but simply books about the Bible. These are 'fact' books that aid the reader in understanding the context and content of Scripture which, in turn, should lead to a more accurate interpretation and ultimately a more specific application.

What the Bible Is All About is a timeless classic recently re-released. First published in 1953, it has undergone several revisions, most recently by Merrill C. Tenney and Ronald Youngblood. Dr. Henrietta Mears was a pioneer in the field of Christian Education and the Director of C.E. at First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, California.

After a light chapter on understanding the Bible, the book plunges into a book-by-book overview through the Old Testament. A break is taken between Nehemiah and Esther to

recap the first eleven books. The same strategy is used with the rest of the Old Testament with minor prophets combined in some chapters. The New Testament continues the book-by-book format with the exception of the smaller books. A brief chapter on teaching suggestions and ten pages of maps and charts conclude the work.

Although Dr. Mears' book is clearly the lightweight of the two, it is no less useful. It is tremendously practical and well formatted, making use simple and enjoyable. It will appeal especially to laymen and students. Pastors will also find it helpful as a non-technical resource.

The *New Bible Companion* combines conservative scholarship with excellent writing to produce a reference work that is sure to be a classic. Its purpose as stated on the jacket is to be "a guide to understanding each book of the Bible and how it relates to Scriptures as a whole." The *Companion* does a commendable job. Each book's historical setting, authorship, date and purpose are covered. Guidelines of interpretation considering genre are discussed, thus shedding light on the book's structure and meaning. Each book is also considered in its relation to the whole and what needs were met by the book for the original audience and for readers today. An outline is given for each book with notes explaining each section.

This volume is especially helpful in that it addresses some difficult issues such as creation theories, translation differences and textual variants. Its greatest strength, however, is its user-friendly format and concise writing. Every student of the Bible should plan to add this book to his library as he or she matures in the faith.