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Reformation
& **REVIVAL**
JOURNAL

JONATHAN EDWARDS:
An Anniversary Celebration

A Quarterly for Church Leadership

VOLUME 12 · NUMBER 3 · SUMMER 2003

BOOK BRIEFS

John H. Armstrong

MESSY SPIRITUALITY

Michael Yaconelli

Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2002)

141 pages, cloth, \$14.99

Mike Yaconelli has spent decades making people think and laugh, a rare combination in the evangelical world. As editor of *The Door*, and founder of Youth Specialties, he has served the Church well. Now he does it again with a great title and an even better book. If you ever feel like you don't measure up, that spirituality does not come easily for you, and that life is filled with messiness, then this is the place to spend a few profitable hours.

Most of us have to admit that we spend far more time thinking about what we haven't done than what we have. We focus on our imperfect performance rather than God's desire to work with people just like us. Yaconelli rightly observes that real Christianity is messy, erratic, lopsided and gloriously liberating. In an evangelical subculture that is often more indebted to Gnosticism than historic Christianity this is a wonderful answer.

THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

Abridged and Made Easy to Read by R. K. Law

John Owen

Edinburgh: Banner of Truth (2002)

196 pages, paper, \$6.99

How do we make any progress in the Christian life at all? John Owen rightly believed that the only answer is the

powerful and gracious work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who guides, assures, teaches, comforts and equips the Church for all the work to which she has been called in Christ.

Puritan writers in general, and John Owen in particular, are wordy and sometimes difficult to read. The next generation, given its loss of the better elements of English grammar and reading, will be unlikely to profit from such classic works unless they are both abridged and modernized. I do not know why more of this kind of work has not been done before, but I am sincerely grateful that the Banner of Truth is doing it now. I hope they will do more. This is a valuable new edition.

THE ILLUSTRATED SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

Derek Tidball, editor
Minneapolis: Bethany House (2001)
256 pages, cloth, \$18.99

This magnificently illustrated survey includes superb articles all written by teachers on the faculty of London Bible College. For each book of the Scripture the writers provide background, an outline, a synopsis of the book's primary message, a survey of key themes, application for life and suggestions for further study. Beautiful maps, photos and charts are also included, giving the book an appearance that is first-rate. If you are looking for a popular, but academically sound, overview of the Bible this volume would be a good choice.

THE CHURCH YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED

E. Glenn Wagner with Steve Halliday
Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2002)
254 pages, cloth, \$16.99

There is clearly a movement to renew the Church within North American Christianity that has emerged with increasing clarity over the past few years. This emphasis, which bears watching, has inherent weaknesses for sure. But it

has great potential for good. In this movement there is a strong call to the Church to become more relational. One can pray that this is not a passing fad. If it isn't then we could see a return to important biblical truths lost on the last several generations. Glenn Wagner has understood this move of God and has provided another book that evangelical pastors need to read. (His earlier, but likewise important, book is *Escape from Church, Inc.* It too is readable and most important!)

Wagner's passion is for shepherd-leadership. He understands how the average evangelical congregation thinks and lives. He also understands what is in the heart of the God-called pastor. His burning desire is to bring this call to fuller expression in "safe" places. Now is the right time to challenge the corporate-CEO model of leadership. Wagner does it as well as any pastor-writer I know.

RECOVERING MOTHER KIRK: THE CASE FOR LITURGY IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

D. G. Hart
Grand Rapids: Baker (2003)
263 pages, paper, \$24.99

Daryl Hart has become a prolific writer on Reformed Christianity in America. He also holds decidedly strong opinions about things like revivals, movements to renew the Church by replacing the wineskins of the past, and evangelism. If you believe in the "regulative principle" of worship and believe you can defend it and support it biblically then you will most likely appreciate this polemical treatment. His arguments are clear and his case is made by appeals to form and content, church and state, and praise and proclamation. In essence Hart wants to show that Presbyterianism has a "high-church" heritage that it has thrown away to its own great loss.

PREACHING CHRIST: THE HEART OF GOSPEL MINISTRY

Charles P. McIlvaine

Edinburgh: Banner of Truth (2003)

86 pages, paper, \$6.00

The New Testament record demonstrates that the apostles preached Christ in all places and at all times. The historical record since the first century is the same. When the Church has preached Christ she has known times of blessing, and when she departed from this great theme the light of the gospel has been progressively lost. How do modern ministers preach Christ? What are the qualifications of mind and heart needed for such ministry? Bishop Charles McIlvaine (1799-1873) answers these questions in a way that is just as helpful in the twenty-first century as in the nineteenth.

McIlvaine was an Episcopalian minister who was converted during a revival. He served as chaplain to the Senate and at West Point Military Academy where he was a divinely-used instrument in revival among the cadet corps. He also served as rector at St. Ann's Church in Brooklyn and the bishop of Ohio. His writing style is simple and his appeal is both warm and useful.

MONEY, POSSESSIONS AND ETERNITY

Randy Alcorn

Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale (2003, revised)

503 pages, paper, \$13.99

Of the production of modern books on making, spending, saving and investing money there is no end. And Christian writers dealing with this subject abound. Ministries, video series, conferences and seminars on Christian stewardship abound. The sad fact is still obvious—multitudes of Christians are not good stewards and don't even have a basic comprehension of the biblical message regarding money and possessions. Randy Alcorn has provided, in this revision of a 1989 book, the best and most comprehensive book on the

subject in print today.

Alcorn's work is encyclopedic. He deals thoroughly with money texts, shows why the prosperity gospel is flatly wrong, addresses materialism wisely, and deals with a myriad of other questions; e.g., gambling, investing, retirement, inheritance, debt, etc. He also demonstrates very plainly how God rewards those who use money for his glory. This comprehensive work is highly recommended.

THE GALATIANS DEBATE

Mark D. Nanos, editor

Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers (2002)

517 pages, cloth, \$34.95

I often hear Christians say the most difficult book in the New Testament is the Revelation. I am not sure I agree. I would argue that Galatians might well be the most often misinterpreted and misunderstood of the twenty-seven books in our Canon. Protestants are quite sure the book is about the dangers of Catholicism and Catholics are equally certain it is not. The way most evangelicals read the letter is clearly impacted by sixteenth-century debates. More recent Pauline scholarship points us in a new direction, by taking the epistle in its rhetorical and historical context.

This collection provides the serious reader of the text with a survey of all the major arguments that surround Paul's correspondence in Galatians. It will stimulate insight into the text and add to a debate that needs to be processed by both scholars and ministers. The book includes essays by some of the most impressive Pauline scholars writing in our time. I commend this highly to serious students of Paul.

IF YOU WANT TO WALK ON WATER, YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THE BOAT

John Ortberg

Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2001)

228 pages, cloth, \$16.99

In this engaging popular book John Ortberg, a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church, uses the image of Peter's walking on the water to Jesus (Matthew 14) to develop an important spiritual lesson. By walking on water Ortberg means facing your personal fears, embracing the unique calling of God upon your life, or experiencing the power of God to do something that you would not be able to do on your own. When I was forty-three years old, enjoying a sixteen-year pastorate and expecting to stay for another sixteen years, the nudge of God's Spirit led me into a new ministry. The analogy that God used in my life was based on Matthew 14 and the thought God worked upon in my heart was the title of this excellent book. I came to a conclusion that I was too comfortable and the only way to see if the Lord would sustain me was to "get out of the boat." I've never regretted that decision.

Ortberg will help you as well to "get out of the boat" if you are desirous of trusting God in a new way. But what if you fail? I faced that and concluded with Ortberg that failing was a real option, but if I failed Jesus was there to pick me up. I wanted to trust him so much I was *willing* to fail. I still face waves and storms, now even more difficult than the ones I faced eleven years ago. But now I have seen the Lord with me and I have experienced his grace lifting me up again and again. Try him. And try Ortberg's lively book. It just might encourage you to get out of the boat!

WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE

Carol Meyers, General Editor

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2001)

592 pages, paper, \$30.00

This one-volume reference explores all the women of the Bible, including those who are well known and those for whom virtually nothing has been previously written, at least in an accessible way. An entire section of the volume includes unnamed women of the Bible. There are more than 800 articles included and most are done by first-rate scholars. Contributors will not be well known to most evangelical ministers and readers but this does not negate the value of a great deal that is included. Some conservative readers will not agree with conclusions reached in this volume but they should still find it a profitable reference work. For those who wish to undertake a serious study of the role and place of women in sacred Scripture this will prove to be an important resource.

THE NIV APPLICATION COMMENTARY: 1 & 2 SAMUEL

Bill T. Arnold

Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2002)

681 pages, cloth, \$32.99

This series of commentaries is of mixed value. Some are incredibly useful to the faithful preacher while others, at times, are too cursory and "cutting edge" for serious textual work that leads to good sermons. Each commentary has three major features: Original Meaning, Bridging Contexts, and Contemporary Significance. This approach can become formulaic but it also means the volumes usually live up to what they aim to do.

Arnold, a professor of Old Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, does a solid job of explaining the background, text and narrative of the two books of Samuel. Here we meet some of the great characters of the Bible—Saul, David, Goliath, Jonathan, Bathsheba and the witch of Endor. But

what do these stories say to us living in the twenty-first century? Arnold does a consistently good job of making that connection.

CHRISTIAN LITURGY: CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL

Frank C. Senn

Minneapolis: Fortress (1997)

748 pages, cloth, \$55.00

When I am asked to name the five best Protestant liturgists of our time I always include Frank Senn, a Lutheran pastor-scholar. His work in the area of worship is prodigious and his pastoral sensitivities are always employed in serving the subject well. This present volume is perhaps his most important, comparing and contrasting Roman Catholic and evangelical (Lutheran) worship. Included in this large volume are two chapters dealing with the early Church—one of over fifty pages on “Early Christian Liturgy” as well as another chapter of sixty-plus pages on “The Patristic Liturgical Synthesis.” These alone are worth the price of this expensive volume.

After surveying the Reformation liturgical traditions Senn demonstrates how the best of this liturgical renewal was lost. This loss in Protestantism is in the process of being recovered and no one does a better job of showing why and how than Frank Senn. Regardless of your views of liturgy this is a magisterial work that should be read and consulted. In the words of Geoffrey Wainwright, “This book provides a trustworthy resource for all who share responsibility for both continuity and renewal of the church in its primary duty and delight—the worship of the Triune God.”

STORY LINES FOR GABRIEL FACKRE

Skye Fackre Gibson, editor

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2002)

263 pages, cloth, \$39.00

One of our America’s finest writing theologians over the course of the last fifty years has been Professor Gabriel Fackre. This collection of essays is not a typical festschrift, but a reflection that looks back and then moves forward. Gabe Fackre has modeled a serious theological pursuit by combining an ecumenical and evangelical orientation with a warm heart and a clear head. His goal has always been to relate Christian thought to modern life. His work takes the whole of Christian tradition seriously and thus Fackre has always been able to tell the Christ “story” through serious theological reflection. In this book Fackre’s friends undertake the three great themes of his life’s work—story, mission and ministry.

The thirty contributors to this volume represent some of the “who’s who” of professional theology in our time. Included are the late Elizabeth Achtemeier and her husband Paul, Donald G. Bloesch, Carl E. Braaten, Elmer M. Colyer, Avery Cardinal Dulles, Jeffrey Gros, Carl F. H. Henry, Robert W. Jensen, George Lindbeck, Martin Marty, Jürgen Moltmann, Alan P. F. Sell, and Max Stackhouse. The breadth and range of the essays make this an extremely interesting and valuable collection. Any one who would like to wrestle with the important theological issues of the past fifty years would profit by this extremely well-written collection.

THE C. S. LEWIS READERS’ ENCYCLOPEDIA

Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West, Jr., editors

Grand Rapids: Zondervan (1998)

464 pages, cloth, \$22.99

For all who appreciate the writing of C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) this will prove to be a practical and highly useful resource tool. Arranged alphabetically the entries include

biographical contributions, discussions of each of Lewis's works, considerations of topics that Lewis dealt with—people, places and ideas, plus scores of things never before addressed in relationship to Lewis—and a timeline of his life and writings. A very helpful cross-referencing system allows the reader to profit even more from the guide.

This is a complete guide to Lewis's 52 published works, 153 essays, and numerous miscellaneous writings, including prefaces, letters, book reviews, and poems. Scholars and ordinary fans of Lewis alike will surely profit from this work.

TRAFFIC IN TRUTH

John R. Polkinghorne

Minneapolis: Fortress Press (2002)

154 pages, paper, \$6.00

Polkinghorne, an Anglican priest who formerly taught mathematical physics, is anything but boring when it comes to renewing the dialogue between science and religion. He is a lucid writer who seeks to correct misunderstandings on both sides of the science and religion debate. For this reason, if not for others, his work will probably not be able to satisfy either side fully. He is convinced that integration is a viable goal for both disciplines. His credentials certainly support his efforts.

Polkinghorne refers to his work as managing the "borders" between religion and science. Ultimately he argues that theology and science do have a great deal to say to one another. He writes: "The border between them must be open and there will be fruitful traffic across it in both directions" (11). I share his optimism so long as the dialogue can be kept from the kinds of presuppositions that tend to make each side suspicious of the other. Polkinghorne is a useful guide but his work will not prove nearly as satisfactory for evangelicals as the similar work of Professor Alister McGrath.