

Reviews



THE GENEALOGY OF VIOLENCE: REFLECTIONS ON CREATION, FREEDOM, AND EVIL, by Charles K. Bellinger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. 170. \$39.95 (cloth).

Images of violence, from domestic abuse to international warfare, permeate our nightly news reports, not to mention our daily thoughts and fears. Michael Moore's latest documentary film, *Bowling for Columbine*, vividly depicts how violence leads to fear and how fear leads to violence. But at the end of Moore's film, the viewer is left to ask how this vicious circle began, how exactly it perpetuates itself, and—most important for some of us—how it relates to Christian understandings of creation, fall, and redemption.

In *The Genealogy of Violence*, Charles Bellinger insightfully addresses these topics. He uses the theological anthropology of Søren Kierkegaard, as well as René Girard's theory of scapegoating, to understand the origin and perpetuation of violence from a decidedly Christian perspective. On his account, violence begins when individuals anxiously turn from possibilities for spiritual growth within God's continuing creation. Violence continues and intensifies when individuals despairingly resist God's attempts toward renewal and reconciliation. Finally, cycles of violence are unmasked and dismantled when persons courageously live into God's calling toward fullness of life.

In the first chapter, Bellinger critiques the most popular social-scientific understandings of violence. He examines the work of Alice Miller, Ervin Staub, Carl Jung, and Ernest Becker, arguing that each under-

stands violence as a breakdown of relationships (between parent and child, person and society, within dimensions of oneself, or between a person and death, respectively). While he is sympathetic to some of their insights, Bellinger critiques each for overlooking *the* most constitutive relationship: that between a person and God (27).

From chapter two onward, Bellinger then gives his own account of the origin, escalation, and possible elimination of violence according to creation's relationship with its creator. Using Kierkegaard's *Concept of Anxiety*, chapter two suggests that violence originates when human beings try to manage anxiety by resisting God's call to spiritual maturity. Anxiety itself is an appropriate response to God's open future. Only when individuals try to establish false security by resisting spiritual growth does anxiety turn into aggression, vulnerability into violence.

In chapter three, Bellinger develops this genealogy by examining Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death*. Violence proliferates when sinful individuals go to any extent to preserve the illusion that they are in control. (I think that this insight has gained relevance in the two years since Bellinger published this book, where attempts to "eradicate evil" seem to have multiplied fear and warfare.) Here Bellinger implicitly draws on Girard's interpretation of violence as a defense mechanism that, once running, tends to keep running. It becomes so ubiquitous and seemingly normal that people "freely" perpetuate it without ever consciously deciding to do so.

I find Bellinger's description of the persistence of violence especially promising for the church's understandings of sin and evil.

Given Christian theology's complex and sometimes paradoxical language of being "bound to sin," it has been difficult to confess with Paul the "power" of sin (Rom 6) without suggesting that this power is external, and that humanity is powerless in its grip, on one hand, or that sin is inconsequential to human freedom, and that humanity has little need for redemption, on the other. Bellinger and Kierkegaard describe how violence becomes "almost second nature" when sinful individuals try to protect themselves against the transformations sought by God. The author's analysis of "ego-protection" correlates with Luther's diagnosis of being "turned in upon oneself." For Bellinger, societies and nations can turn in upon themselves just as readily as individuals, and the violence they enact to preserve this self-enclosure can be extensive and horrific.

In chapters four and five, Bellinger uses Girard and Kierkegaard to think about the roots of political violence. He then supports his claim that a theological genealogy of violence is more adequate than those of secular social theory (chapter six). Chapters seven and eight apply his theory to concrete cases. In chapter nine, Bellinger surveys Christian theories of atonement in relation to the transforming of violence.

Throughout the book, Bellinger moves creatively between political analysis and Christianity's worldview, finding secular interpretations complemented and finally displaced by Christian understandings of creation and fall. The work is remarkably clear, especially given its breadth and the complexity of its subject matter. Pastors will here find ways to understand the violence of the world through Christianity's word.

While Bellinger's breadth is noteworthy, readers may desire a more detailed account of the person and work of Christ in relation to violence. Bellinger admits that his final chapter on the atonement is cursory, noting that full treatment would require another book. But throughout the book, his attention to God's continuing creation overshadows the novelty and definitiveness that

Christians find in Christ. For example, when Bellinger analyzes the New Testament warning against being scandalized by Christ (a theme central to Girard and Kierkegaard), he writes that such scandal "means to reject the call of creation, the divine pull that seeks to draw the individual forward into fullness of life" (53). At least for Kierkegaard, however, the Christian scandal is intrinsically linked to "the scandal of particularity"—the faith that universal happiness depends on the life and death of one particular Palestinian Jew. Bellinger sees the cure to violence in one's "openness in relation to the future" (132). Others will confess that this "openness" finds its determinate shape in the particular life and promises of Christ.

Despite any shortcomings, this book is readable, powerful, and prophetic. It will challenge Christians to speak not only to the spiritual situation of individuals, but also to the sinful systems of violence in which we find ourselves now more than ever. Bellinger's book may even summon some of the courage necessary to join God's ongoing work of creation.

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THE EVERLASTING HATRED: THE ROOTS OF JIHAD, by Hal Lindsay. Murrieta: Oracle, 2002. Pp. 265. \$19.99.

It has been more than thirty years since Hal Lindsay published his best-seller *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970). Since then, Lindsay has continued to revise and further clarify his dispensational theology, which has sought to explain in literal-futuristic terms the prophecies of Scripture, through numerous other publications such as: *There's a New World Coming* (1973), *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (1981), *The Final Battle* (1995), *Planet Earth—2000 A.D.* (1994), and *The Apocalypse Code* (1997). Throughout his career, Lindsay has attempted to demonstrate how various prophetic and apocryphal books of both the

Old and New Testaments predict the international events that will prepare the way for the return of Christ and his one-thousand-year reign on earth. Although his specific predicted dates for the return of Christ have continually been revised (from 1988 to 1994 to somewhere between 1994 and 2067, a full generation from the time of the return of the Jews to Zion) his works have continued to provide fuel for Christian Zionists, mainline pseudo-dispensationalists, and Hollywood. Thus, Lindsay's latest work, *The Everlasting Hatred*, will certainly follow suit and become a best-seller.

Building upon post-September 11 material dealing with militant Islamic fundamentalism, Lindsay has once again shifted his interpretation of futuristic biblical prophecy that now indicates Islam as the clear enemy predicted in Scripture. Although his original views, during the height of the Cold War, pointed to the Soviet Union as the evil threat positioned to do battle against God's Elect, in *The Everlasting Hatred* Lindsay states that to "those familiar with Bible prophecy...Ezekiel predicted a power from the extreme north of the reborn Israeli state [that] will arm and lead a confederacy of nations....The nations Ezekiel named are all Muslim today—and the first on the list is Persia or Iran" (221).

What is both fascinating, and also dangerous, in this work is Lindsay's exegetical hermeneutic that underlies the premise of Islam as the satanic foe. The crux of the argument rests upon an interesting string of biblical texts in chapter five. He argues that these passages claim all Muslims are descendants, not only of Ishmael (as has been traditionally understood), but of Esau and his descendants, the Edomites. "Edom and the Ishmaelites are the primary Arab people...today these people make up the nations" of the Middle East (81). Just as Esau hated Jacob, so too the Arabs will hate their fraternal cousins, the Jews, and will "live by the sword" (77; see Gen 27:39–41). For Lindsay, it is clear that the cursed Edomites are the violent Bedouin Arabs who attacked the World Trade Center towers. This jump

from Esau to the Arabs rests upon the use of Gen 25:12–18 and Ps 120, which states that the descendants of Ishmael's second son, Kedar, "lived [to the east] in hostility toward all their brothers" and that "they are for war" (85). Lindsay describes "to the east" as "the vast desert of Arabia" (89). He then argues that Islamic historiography itself has defined the warlike temperament of the Arab Bedouin. Thus, the events of September 11 should not surprise us, says Lindsay, as these events are the typical acts of barbaric Arab Bedouin Muslims who have been cursed since the days of Esau to carry on a blood feud with the Elect of God.

There is, needless to say, a huge jump from Esau, to Edom, to Kedar, to "all Arabs," to all Muslims. In addition, there are glaring omissions in the argument. Genesis (as well as the rest of the Old Testament) includes numerous lists of ancient Near Eastern peoples who lived between the Nile and Euphrates rivers. To single out the descendants of Kedar because they "lived east" of Jacob and equate them with all modern day Arabs is a stretch. Ezekiel 27 is a lamentation to Tyre. In the lamentation, Ezekiel makes a clear distinction between the people of Edom, "Arabia and all the princes of Kedar," Sheba, Raamah, Haran, Canneh, Eden, and Tarshish. And yet, Lindsay makes a sweeping claim that the Arabs of the sixth century B.C. can be equated with all of the people living in the twenty-two contemporary nation-states of the Middle East who speak Arabic. Sociologists have long argued that the only cultural commonality between Arabic peoples is the fact that they speak Arabic. And yet, various Arabic dialects are often difficult for other Arabic speakers to understand, thus straining even that linguistic definition of an "Arab." In addition, Lindsay bases his view upon the firm geographical argument that the tribe of Kedar dwelt to the "east" of Jacob. However, the typical heartland of Arab Bedouin historiography is centered around the Hijaz (present Mecca and Medina), south of the contemporary state of Israel, not east.

The most glaring omission in *The Ever-*

lasting Hatred, however, is that of “the Christian Arab.” Nowhere in his book does Lindsay ever posit the existence of the Christian Arab, which is troubling, and most undoubtedly linked to his dispensationalist pro-Israeli understanding of Scripture. For to recognize the existence of faithful Arab Christians is to rub against his categories. Acts 2:11 makes clear that the “Bedouin Arabs” were present on Pentecost, thus becoming some of the first Christians. By the seventh century and the coming of Islam, several prominent Arab Christian tribes (the Lakhmids and Ghasanids) were living “directly east” of ancient Edom. Also, an often overlooked fact is that the communities of the first Christians centered around Jerusalem, Antioch, and Damascus (who now speak Arabic) are the direct ancestors of contemporary Christian communities. Thus, Lindsay’s hermeneutic of tying Esau, Edom, all Bedouin Arabs, and all Muslims together in one neat package, as suffering from the biblical curse of being inherently warlike, flies in the face of geography, history, the social sciences, and Scripture itself.

The Everlasting Hatred will certainly prove to be a highly quoted resource among dispensationalists, and even among main-line American Christians living in a fearful time in which Islam does seem to be a threat. Lindsay’s answers, as in his other best-sellers, are neat and tidy. They provide strong ammunition for anti-Semitic (Arab) rhetoric and support strong government on security from Muslims and in favor of Israeli policies. Pastors and lay leaders would do well to read Lindsay, hopefully not in the attempt to glean hope for the Elect, but in order to be able to provide thoughtful responses against such a dangerous dispensational theology.

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INTRODUCING THE APOCRYPHA: MESSAGE, CONTENT, AND SIGNIFICANCE, by David A. deSilva (Foreword by James H. Charlesworth). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002. Pp. 428. \$29.99 (cloth).

David deSilva seeks to attend to those books called the Apocrypha by Protestant Christians in order to “[see] these books for what they are in and of themselves and to value them on that basis” (15). The books include the following: Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Ben Sira (Sirach), Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Additions to Daniel, I-IV Maccabees, I-II Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, and Psalm 151. These books represent a collection of Jewish literature from the times between the Old and New Testaments (ca. 2nd century B.C.E.–1st century C.E.), a period when Jews were struggling to interpret their scriptures and faith in a very Hellenized world. Many of these books stem from Jewish communities and writers of the Diaspora, where challenges to the practices and beliefs of the minority Jewish group would have been keenly felt.

In a wide variety of genres, the books address major questions of faith: Jewish identity and the limits of adaptation; God’s faithfulness; God’s providence; how to understand the wisdom of other cultures; God’s relationship with non-Jewish peoples; what constitutes human faithfulness to God; how to share the faith with non-believers. Even from this incomplete list of the kinds of questions that arise in the Apocrypha, one can see that our forebears in the faith struggled with many of the same kinds of issues that Christians continue to face in our contemporary world. There is a great witness here for the diligent and informed reader.

While the books of the Apocrypha make it easy to be diligent simply by their delightful variety of genre, imaginative storytelling, and continuous exploration of Scripture, deSilva does his best to create informed readers. He offers an excellent in-

roduction to the Apocrypha as a group. Questions of dates and areas from which the materials come are dealt with right alongside of questions of the value of studying these ancient texts that are acknowledged to be in some way connected with and/or part of Christian Scripture. As suggested above, the books are valuable for helping us see the varieties of witness to faith in God through troubled times of turmoil for Jews. It is also true that knowledge of these books opens to us the world of Jesus in a different way. We can see how rich, lively, and diverse were the theological persuasions and arguments in Jesus' own day. We can sense something of what shaped Paul's thinking and reading of Scripture in connection with his deeply rooted faith in God and his conviction that Jesus was God's Messiah. DeSilva gives many examples of specific connections between Jewish apocryphal literature and the New Testament. He also shows us how the worldviews and chosen means of analysis and expression in both bodies of texts echo each other and the larger Hellenistic world. In a word, deSilva helps us to see mission at work, as believers attempt to express their faith in a way that has integrity, yet speaks intelligibly.

Not only does deSilva do a fine, thorough job of introducing the material in a general way, but he also offers a brief, comprehensive overview of the historical context in which these writings emerged. A sophisticated thinker and writer, deSilva does not minimize the complexities of writing history in the twenty-first century. He offers the "broad contours" of the history of the period and refers readers to an excellent bibliography by means of footnotes. The bibliography is worth the price of the book in putting into the reader's hands some of the best contemporary work by historians, archaeologists, biblical scholars, and anthropologists.

Each work in the Apocrypha is then treated with a chapter of its own. DeSilva treats each work in a regular pattern of topics that give the reader a good framework for reading. He begins with a brief and

detail-filled description of structure and contents, moves to questions of textual transmission and what can be known about author, date, and setting. He looks at the genre of the texts, the formative influences on the texts, main themes of the texts, and the influence of the texts. DeSilva's knowledge and writing is such that these sections of each chapter become a reliable resource, never a dry, repetitive checklist.

DeSilva has written a number of books that demand a high degree of sophisticated knowledge of the culture of the New Testament period. He brings this knowledge to bear very well in reading the Apocrypha. Lessons appear, as called for by the subject matter and/or genre of the various texts, that remind readers of the importance, for instance, of the honor-shame culture of the ancient Mediterranean world; of the centrality of the benefactor-client relationship; of the way people understood their bodies and the need to control and use them for the greater good; of the rhetorical consciousness that was pervasive. These kinds of insights are used to open up the meanings of the apocryphal material.

The book is amply and usefully indexed. Specific references by chapter and verse to the canonical and apocryphal books of the Bible are listed, as well as references to other Jewish and classical (Greek and Roman) writings. There is a list of contemporary authors who are cited in the study, and the pages where one might find them. There is also an index by subjects considered in the book. The indexes, then, give the reader invaluable tools for evaluating claims made in the book as well as for further investigation.

All this, and *Introducing the Apocrypha* is eminently readable, well-informed and serious but not stodgy. It offers a breath of fresh air for some of our stale, non-productive ways of understanding both Jewish life and faith and the early church. The book would be useful for personal study, for help in doing a study of the Apocrypha, and for deepening one's respect and patience in the face of ambiguous, provoca-

tive questions of belief and witness that have engaged God's people over the millennia.

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JUSTIFICATION: THE HEART OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, by Eberhard Jüngel, translated by Jeffrey F. Cayzer. New York: T & T Clark, 2001. Pp. xxxvii+304. \$49.95 (cloth).

Ernst Käsemann, the great New Testament scholar, is reputed to have called justification by faith alone a "fighting doctrine." Eberhard Jüngel presents in this book a very strong case for the centrality of the justification of the ungodly in evangelical theology. Jüngel makes this claim in the face of a maelstrom of criticism of the place that doctrine has held in Protestant theology. These challenges, whether from biblical studies, interpretations of Luther's writings, or the culmination of Roman Catholic and Lutheran dialogue in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, are enormous ones. Jüngel does not confront all his accusers but considers many of those specters that haunt the task of claiming its centrality. This book is one of the most significant recent engagements with the doctrine of justification and is worth much careful consideration.

Jüngel is well known for his exposition of Karl Barth's theology. By stressing the doctrine of justification as central to Christian faith and doctrine, he spurns Barth's lengthy and significant claim that no doctrine may ever be central because only Christ himself may be so. The answer to this problem lies in the role justification has, as Jüngel argues that justification functions in two ways as a critical doctrine. It acts to regulate proper speech *about* God and humankind, and the proper language humanity speaks to God and vice versa. He burdens his book with making this claim.

Given these tasks, readers may note how circumscriptive the actual book is. Jüngel does not so much present a careful, overall

development. In this he departs from the usual analytical structure of his work. His approach first considers the God who justifies, then the untruth of sin, and the heart of his discussion of justification concerns the relationship of the many exclusive articles of the Reformation.

For the author, the gospel is not just information but "an address to me...it is above all a creative address." Thus, Jüngel alters the usual way in which justification's forensic or declarative mode seems to leave us in our sins and is left open to the idea that justification is "legal fiction." Rather, it is in the address that God creates anew. For Jüngel it is not a slight improvement or categorical renovation of the sinner but instead the putting to death of the old and the creation of the new. The gospel gives the law its proper room and place (102). It is not so much that we are made just by external decree; we truly are turned "inside out." It is a constant life outside of one's self, life in friendship with God and with love for one another (196).

In his treatment of the Trinity and its relation to justification, Jüngel belongs to the majority report of modern theology concerning the relationship between God apart from God's dealings with us in God himself, and God's life for us. They are identical and there can be no room in theology for the hidden God. There can be no room for the experience of terror or wrath at the God who confronts us outside of Jesus Christ. This aspect of human experience, of Luther, and of the Bible is anathema to the kind of modern theology to which Jüngel belongs. Therefore, God's mercy and justice are the upside and downside of the same thing. The wrath of God is understood as permission, God allowing humanity to go its own way (67).

Despite this, Jüngel shows that God's righteousness is in his own inner harmony of otherness. This requires an understanding of God's own life as a triune life. God is Father, Son, and Spirit and they live in peace with each other. Most important of all is God the Father's peace with the Son's death,

the death of a criminal. This relationship, which deeply challenges the Father, is also where they are most intimate and defines the very Son as the one crucified. This Jüngel finds as the basis of God's love for the ungodly. God the Son is a sinner and indeed the greatest one. Because of the love the Father has for this Son in this death, the Father likewise justifies not the righteous but the ungodly.

Jüngel understands sin as described by Luther and Karl Barth as sin that is a blurring and sham. Telling lies is indeed deceiving and a "blinding interrelation." We are therefore born into this already deceiving and deceived society (129). It is a dialectical relation: we do not have to sin, because God is the origin and goal of our freedom and being, but we are born into the reality of sin (132–133). In this it is perhaps best to recall that phrase of Martin Luther King's: "none are free until all are free." It is the untruth of human reality as a whole in the human community that leaves human beings victims and perpetrators of the untruth of sin.

Jüngel argues that the exclusive articles not only will settle the centrality of the doctrine of justification but also find the basic differences he thinks the *Joint Declaration* and other ecumenical working groups have obscured. The *solae* concern the actual linkage of how human beings are involved in the justification God gives.

The author takes each *sola* in turn and argues that by linking them, they give the gift of the justification of the ungodly. Christ alone must also mean that God alone has suffered this, become united with human nature in this person, and that God alone has died for us. God identifies Godself so strongly with the hanged man of Golgotha that God incorporates sinful humanity into God's own life (163). Grace alone is that guarantee that it is Christ and not the institution of the church that provides grace. It is only God's compassionate heart that can justify (175). Grace alone shows that God has no starting point in us in justifying us except that of God's own gracious-

ness (175). The other exclusive articles fall into place as God's word alone and faith alone.

Following an exposition of these exclusive articles, the author attempts to show how contemporary theology fails to acknowledge that which these articles actually exclude. The purpose of all the *solae* is to be critical principles that put forward the priority of God's grace in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Despite his exposition of the Council of Trent's view of justification, it is hard not to see in his own exposition what Protestants aim to do: to define themselves as not Roman Catholic. It is most significant that his main Catholic source of theology is Trent and not individual theologians, while for the Lutheran side he favors Luther and some New Testament theologians while not more carefully considering the official teaching on justification in the Augsburg Confession or its Apology, for starters. Do Protestant churches not have official stances on the matter of justification?

Jüngel's view of Paul develops out of his own work in conversation with German New Testament scholarship of a past generation: Bultmann, Bornkamm, and Käsemann. That focus does not automatically disqualify his opinions, but does limit his scope. He concedes this in a preface by stating he intends to avoid extensive exegetical discussion (xxxix) and concludes that newer views of Paul are variations on older ones he and others already have considered.

The strength of this book lies in its stress that it is the ungodly whom God justifies. For example, at the beginning of the book, Jüngel takes a usual example of godliness and godlessness, Cain and Abel, and shows how Cain's murder of his brother, his wandering, and protection by God is truly a biblical sign of the justification of the ungodly. Too often the church is understood as being from Abel alone, marked off from the camp of those who wander on beyond his death. If God is the one who justifies the ungodly and them alone, the church must be understood to be from Abel and from Cain as well.

This book will be valuable as part of the ongoing conversation regarding the place of justification of the ungodly in the future of the Protestant church. Despite its being intended for all interested ministers and lay people, this book does present a complex and tightly wound argument. It will reward careful study.

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NATURE, HUMAN NATURE, AND GOD,
by Ian G. Barbour. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. Pp. 170. \$17.00 (paper).

We are now entering the century of biology. The nineteenth century was dominated by developments in chemistry, and the twentieth century was fascinated and also terrified by the new physics. It is rather easy to predict that our century will be the century of biology. New developments in health and medical technologies, genetics, ecology, and environmental science will all change our lives in many ways. In fact, they already have.

These developments make this new book by Ian Barbour, the *doyen* of religion-and-science scholars, particularly welcome. In it he surveys current developments in biology, including evolution, genetics, neuroscience, and ecology. Barbour has spent his academic career investigating the interconnections between religious wisdom, ethical reflection, and discoveries in natural science. He is particularly famous for his fourfold typology of relationships between religion and science: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. Barbour has given the prestigious Gifford Lectures in Scotland, and was awarded the Templeton Prize for progress in religion (the largest annual financial award on earth). His textbook on religion and science, which is currently published under its third title, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (HarperCollins, 1997), has become over the decades the single most used book in courses on this topic.

This new book from his pen is typical of Barbour's approach. His organized mind and encyclopedic knowledge of the subject provide us with a condensed and competent overview. He summarizes current developments and debates with a deft hand, and will usually provide a comment or two of his own. His dense prose is almost always worth working through, because it provides us with such a helpful introduction to the issues.

The topic of this new book is, broadly speaking, theology and biology. After an introduction that sets forth his fourfold typology, he starts with the most controversial issue: evolution. What is new in this book is that Barbour speaks much more fully of his vision of God. After covering the bases with respect to current evolutionary biology, for example, Barbour focuses on theories of biological organization. He then shows the parallels between these theories and models of the action of God in creation. There is a great deal of talk these days about "self-organization" in pre-biotic evolution. Barbour covers these theories, with references to some of the key literature in the debate, but then goes on to speak of God as "designer of self-organizing processes."

The next chapter is a brief overview of human nature in the light of evolution and genetics. Barbour rejects a simplistic reduction of human existence to our DNA. He accepts evolution, including the evolution of religion, but still finds humans to be unique in some respects. The next chapter is on human nature in the light of neuroscience and artificial intelligence. Barbour follows a number of recent theologians and scientists who opt for a concept of "soul" that is embodied and emergent. Our soul/mind is not an immortal substance, but neither is our spiritual and rational life reduced to chemical reactions in the brain. In chapter five, Barbour devotes several pages to the nature of God, and the relationships between God as Creator and the natural world. This leads to the last chapter, which covers ethics and the environment.

Reading a work like this is challenging. There are all kinds of new ideas, terms, people, and theories that spring forth from the pages of this amazingly brief overview of key issues in biology and theology. In this more theological mood, Barbour develops his process theology more fully. He argues that process philosophy best brought together science and religion into some kind of integration. While Barbour is very much in the tradition of process thinkers like A. N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, he is willing to part ways with them on some key points. To take just one example: because of its scientific basis, Barbour opts for a creation *ex nihilo*, which Whitehead and his followers have denied. Overall, however, Barbour remains in the process camp. He is particularly concerned with the problem of evil and suffering, which he thinks is best solved by a process theology in which God is limited (rather than the voluntary self-limitation more orthodox theologians believe in).

Pastors and church leaders should find this book an excellent guide to the topics, which Barbour covers with impressive brevity. One thing this book demonstrates is the importance of debates in religion and science for the ongoing task of Christian theological reflection. While I myself cannot follow Whitehead, Barbour's theological positions and proposals are worth serious contemplation and debate. The importance of natural science for contemporary theology cannot be denied, and this book is a good example of why that is so. Yet this short text has import for the larger church as well.

The proclamation of the gospel and the mission of the church in the world both demand attention to natural science. The natural sciences tell us about the kind of world that God has created. What is more, we live in a scientific age, where science and technology are part of the warp and woof of cultural life. Many people look to science for meaning and technology for salvation. In such a culture, church leaders dare not ignore (if they are true to their calling) what

science is up to. This short book is an authoritative overview of several key subjects that are important for the contemporary American church. I recommend it to anyone interested in the interplay between biology and theology.

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HEAL THYSELF: SPIRITUALITY, MEDICINE, AND THE DISTORTION OF CHRISTIANITY, by Joel James Shuman and Keith G. Meador. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Pp. xiii + 174. \$25.00 (cloth).

“Whereas religion once taught its adherents to worship God, whether in sickness or in health, and to use medicine to live with the world and with one another in a way that encouraged that worship, religion now teaches its adherents to worship their desire for health and to use God—whomever that may be—to facilitate that desire” (43). This is the unsettling diagnosis of “American religion” (including much of modern American Christianity) in Joel Shuman and Keith Meador’s prophetic and provocative book.

“We have long needed a book like [this],” writes Stanley Hauerwas in the foreword (xii), in which a doctor with theological training (Meador) and a theologian with training in the medical sciences (Shuman) take on the growing rapprochement between religion and medicine that views religion “instrumentally”—especially in the present concern for religion’s role in health and healing—“not so much a good way of life in itself as a means, among others, of helping an individual achieve whatever he or she believes is a good life for him or her” (33). Why does this matter? Because, say the authors, this “generic religion” is not a benign and neutral place that can provide room within itself for subcategories of particular religion (like Christianity or Judaism), but is itself a “particular religion” (40), neither identical to nor compatible with Christian faith and thus, to the degree

that it becomes practiced by Christians, idolatrous.

In chapter one, the authors describe the “new rapprochement between medicine and religion,” providing a very useful introduction to the vast body of literature that now supports (or sometimes questions) the increasingly frequent claims that religion—of whatever kind—is good for you.

The next two chapters take the reader on “a sometimes arduous and convoluted journey” (44), describing first (chapter two) the movements and persons in Western thought that give rise to scientific and theological modernism. This short course in the development of modern liberalism is not new but is used now by the authors to lead us to the origins of the present subjective understanding of religion that will support the consumerist “use” of religion in North America. Chapter three develops further the “consumerism” theme, describing modernism’s individualistic, narcissistic, and therapeutic quest that commodifies both health and religion as two capitalist goods that can be and are used (also by folks who would call themselves Christian) quite apart from participation in the “form of social life peculiar to the Christian community, a form that emerges from and is based in the community’s worship and imitation of the triune God” (91).

Chapter four returns to particular Christianity to provide a proper understanding of suffering and health from the perspective of the cross. Christians may, of course, pray for and seek healing and cure, but never in the sense that “God exists to give us what we want, to extend our lives and increase our vigor and always and everywhere to deliver us now from sickness and suffering” (108). The “Christian struggle against sickness and death never confuses efficacy with faithfulness”; Christians live with eschatological hope, “as if God is present, ‘as Lord and Victor,’ even in the midst of horrible circumstances, including sickness, suffering, and death” (108–109).

In the final chapter, Shuman and Meador describe the “hard work” of Christian

discipleship, the nourishment of “a faith that is learned from attending carefully to the witness of those who have endured the misery of intractable suffering and who still believe and are able and willing to speak of that belief” (117). The goal is neither “tragic despair” nor “a comedic, too-hurried fleeing from this life to the next,” but rather “the joyful-painful embrace of one another in this life, in the assurance that its worth is founded by the God who has experienced and overcome loss in the cross and resurrection” (123). True, Jesus healed, say the authors, but his healings were signs of the messianic kingdom. To “focus on the benefit [of healing] for the individual is potentially distracting from the real focus of the Gospel, the Kingdom of God, and from Jesus, whose life was and is the embodied presence of the Kingdom in a concrete, historical person” (124).

We do indeed need books like this to help us guard against commodification of both healing and gospel and to scream “idolatry” when Christianity is distorted into something useful for the benefit of the consumer—dangers that are very real.

To be sure, the Lutheran tradition may raise a variety of questions to the book’s perspective. A stronger emphasis on the First Article of the creed might include a somewhat more positive (if still cautious) assessment of human religiosity than that allowed by the admittedly Barthian critique of the authors, and a fuller appreciation of the possibility of the church to work toward health and healing of individuals and communities with those who do not share Christian faith but who share an interest in the healing dimensions of religion. Still, Shuman and Meador’s prophetic cry that, in the process, the church not *become* simply another therapeutic institution remains essential.

Similarly, a fuller emphasis on human vocation will perhaps have less need to distinguish between God’s healing through human agency and God’s work of healing “outside what we believe are the normal patterns of cause and effect” (110). A deeper

incarnational insistence on the ability of the finite to bear the infinite might make one less suspicious of religion's distortion "by the languages and practices of the culture(s) in which we live" (99), since the alternative would seem to be religion (or gospel) that remains hopelessly platonic.

With Luther's insistence that the gospel in all of its parts is fundamentally "for me," some readers might find less need to draw a sharp distinction between the immediate healing of the individual and the eschatological healing of all things, since, properly understood, those remain always pointers to one another (see, for example, the fully parallel individual and communal dimensions of the two halves of Ps 66)—a point with which the authors would no doubt agree.

Finally, the understanding that all of us are always at the same time saint and sinner might make one less certain of the ability to distinguish so neatly between desires for healing that are narcissistic and those that properly live in the eschatological hope of the kingdom.

The critiques are real and could result, no doubt, in useful and engaging conversation with the authors. Nevertheless, their primary message remains desperately important—especially to those engaged in the growing varieties of "healing ministries" in and around the church—that "Christian practices associated with sickness and suffering take a form particular to certain of the theological commitments of the Christian tradition" (126). Thus, healing in the name of Christ can never be an individualistic and prudential "use" of religion for personal gain, but will be always and only communal and cruciform.

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TOO DEEP FOR WORDS: A THEOLOGY OF LITURGICAL EXPRESSION, by Clayton J. Schmit. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002. Pp. 160. \$18.95 (paper).

This new book on preaching and worship leadership challenges pastors and worship leaders to consider the art and aesthetics of preaching, praying, and presiding.

In the first half of the book, Schmit helpfully details various models and screens to help organize thinking about what happens in Christian preaching and worship. In the second half of the book, he provides helpful, specific exercises and practical ideas on how to practice excellence in these central and vital areas of pastoral ministry. The theories, resources, and examples will help pastors reflect on what they do week after week.

Schmit recognizes that seminaries teach future pastors the rudiments of preaching and worship as well as techniques and evaluative skills to test their pastoral effectiveness. However, in this book the author wishes to move beyond those basic understandings and skills and provide insights, tools, and perspectives that will help preachers and worship leaders "perform their roles with excellence both for the sake of the faith and for the sake of God's people" (ix).

Schmit reminds us that "people who preach, pray, and lead in public worship are, whether they like to acknowledge it or not, performers....In other words, there is an artistic quality to all that worship leaders and preachers do" (xi). In the book, he sets forth "a theoretical framework for preachers and leaders of public prayer and worship that demonstrates the significance of the aesthetic dimensions of their roles" (79).

This Lutheran pastor, musician, and professor of preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary summarizes the goal of his book like this:

Of central concern to those who engage in such artistic presentations is how to do them well. How can preachers craft their

language in such a way as to give authentic and meaningful expression to the Word of God in the context of the congregation? How can the words of worship leaders draw people into the activity of worshiping together and make the presence of Christ known to them? How can the words of public prayer be crafted in such a way as to unite the assembly's hearts, draw worshipers into conversation with their Creator, and express the deeply felt needs, wants and praise of the people? How to do these things well is the topic of this book. (xi)

In the first half of the book Schmit provides ways to think about worship and preaching from various theological perspectives and aesthetic theories. He notes that pastors and worship leaders give expression to thoughts and feelings "too deep for words." Schmit argues that communication of the gospel needs both discursive and non-discursive or presentational symbols. Preachers and worship leaders will be enriched by his dialogue with artistic and performatory speech theory to show their place in the "affective pattern of human experience." The implication of this is that preachers and worship leaders have "an aesthetic responsibility" in the dialogue of worship that involves all participants as performers in the liturgical dialogue. This means ultimately there is no audience in worship, but only participants. Lest one think that this implies abstract theory, the author seeks to show how this helps those who "wish to see Jesus."

Schmit builds a case for doing preaching and worship leadership with excellence; then he reminds those of us who preach and lead worship:

If our words as preachers and leaders of worship and prayer have such power, then these words need to be handled with care. We need to learn to use these powerful words well if sermons, prayers, and liturgical language are to address us at the soul-deep level of faith, draw us into solidarity with other believers, and aid us in expressing things that are too deep for words. (58)

Schmit suggests that "excellence in preaching, prayer, and worship leadership involves at least seven qualities of authenticity: honesty, simplicity, kerygmatic centeredness, conviction, contextuality, originality and creativity" (72). Here, as throughout the book, the author gives helpful insights about how this is actually expressed.

About the practice of preaching, Schmit argues that "preaching is an art" (84). "In other words, a more adequate rendering of a sermon would not be to make it more conceptually and informationally explicit, but to make it more poetic" (89).

All of this is not art for art's sake, but art for faith's sake. In this regard, he quotes the German reformer Philip Melancthon: "through the Word and the rite God simultaneously moves the heart to believe and take hold of faith" (6).

I believe the preaching and worship leadership of readers will benefit from a conversation with this book. Its stress on excellence and the poetry of preaching, praying, and presiding along with the practical exercises and resources will benefit most readers and ultimately bless the weekly worshipping assembly.

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WAY TO LIVE: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES FOR TEENS, ed. Dorothy C. Bass and Don C. Richter. Nashville: Upper Room, 2002. Pp. 310. \$16.00 (paper).

WAY TO LIVE LEADER'S GUIDE: IDEAS FOR GROWING IN CHRISTIAN PRACTICES WITH TEENS, Dorothy Bass and Don Richter with Lani Wright and Susan Briehl. Nashville: Upper Room, 2002. Pp.133. Free download from www.waytolive.org.

Way to Live is the kind of book your teenage daughter will keep reading after you invite her to try on a couple of chapters. Her father and pastor also found the book en-

riching and fruitful. You could use it as a resource for a youth, or even a young adult, who is interested in preparing to be baptized, longing to grow deeper in their faith, or preparing to affirm their baptism. *Way to Live* reminds you of the issues teenagers have always faced and the challenges teenagers are wrestling through in this time. Reading the book devotionally will provide a rich meal, but the greatest feast will come from reading this text in conversation with your teenage child(ren), grandchildren, godchildren, or the youth in your community of faith.

Way to Live invites youth to deepen their understanding and practice of their faith. Each chapter focuses on one faith practice (such as praying, hospitality, singing your faith, or forgiveness). Through interesting stories, insightful reflections, provocative suggestions for exploring each practice, and helpful connections to the biblical story, *Way to Live* invites youth deeper in their journey of faith. Each beautifully written chapter grows out of a group process driven by Valparaiso's Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith. This book successfully builds on the earlier work of this project (e.g., *Practicing Our Faith* and *Practicing Theology*). Teams of a parent and youth, or a youth and an adult wrote the chapters. The authors represent many different Christian traditions.

As I read the book devotionally, I was struck by the creativity, theological wisdom, and the focus on the issues of youth today. My daughter Laura and another teenager who was preparing to affirm his baptism both appreciated the lively, creative, and engaging writing. Jason was struck by the repeated theme of God's presence in nature and in everyday life. Laura worried that some chapters might intimidate people who are struggling with their faith. The idealism of young people and the authors challenged my middle-life weariness and faith practice. Each chapter seeks to deepen and broaden your understanding of the faith. They point to the connections between

everyday life and the heart of the faith in a challenging and encouraging way.

The book is clear that Christ is the way to life. Faith practices are communal, life-giving gifts from God and our tradition. Yet this book is also honest about the challenges of following Jesus and seeking to practice your faith. It invites the reader to practice. "To really get into this way to live, though, you will need to do more than read. You will need to talk to other people who share your questions and passions so that you can face your doubts and speak your hopes out loud. And you will need to do some of the things you are reading about. We called these practices because they have to be practiced. Practices don't live on the pages of a book but in the bodies, hands, feet, eyes, and compassion of real people, and learning practices means doing them not just once but many times" (9).

The online discussion guide has a great summary of what faith practices are and are not. This guide is full of helpful ideas and thoughts for pastors, teachers, parents, and youth who want to go deeper yet into the practices. It would also serve as a great road map for a small group engaging the book and the practices in a systematic way. The deep strategy of faith practices that drives the book and project is clearly stated in the *Way to Live Leaders Guide*.

Faith practices:

- involves us in God's activities in the world and reflects God's grace and love
- is done together—not alone but with others
- is learned with and from other people
- comes to us from the past and will be shaped by us for the future
- addresses fundamental human needs
- is thought-full; it relies on beliefs and develops in us certain kinds of wisdom
- is done within the church, in the public realm, in daily work, and at home
- shapes the people who participate in the practice, as individuals and as communities

- comes to a focus in worship
- is a strand in a whole way of life (3)

Here are some of my favorite chapters. “The Story” invites youth to read, hear, study, and tell the story. It gives helpful suggestions about how to do that including teaching the Västerås Method (25) and Ignatian Deep Reflection Methods (26–27) while encouraging youth to approach the Bible as our family story, which we are called to explore and discover. “Stuff” tells about how a youth who chooses to give away forty things for forty days during Lent is considered crazy. “Bodies” tells a touching story that sticks in your mind and helps you remember that “all bodies are ‘holy and awesome’ because they are formed in God’s image” (33). The chapter on prayer opens up youths’ definition of what prayer is, gives concrete suggestions about praying,

while anchored by the prayer Jesus taught. “Forgiveness” acknowledges the ongoing process of forgiveness for serious wounds. I can only invite you to explore, reflect, and discuss this text with young people you know and love or those whom you would like to know more deeply.

The danger with lifting up faith practices is that our practice becomes the focus instead of the work of our gracious God. *Way to Live* avoids this danger. It points to a *Way to Live*, but it does not fall into the trap of telling kids what not to do. Instead it invites them and all readers into the “grace of practicing the faith” (292).

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