



ADVANCING THE
CHRISTIAN TRADITION
IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER 1 • 2006

BOOK BRIEFS

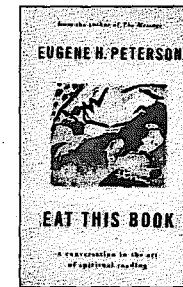
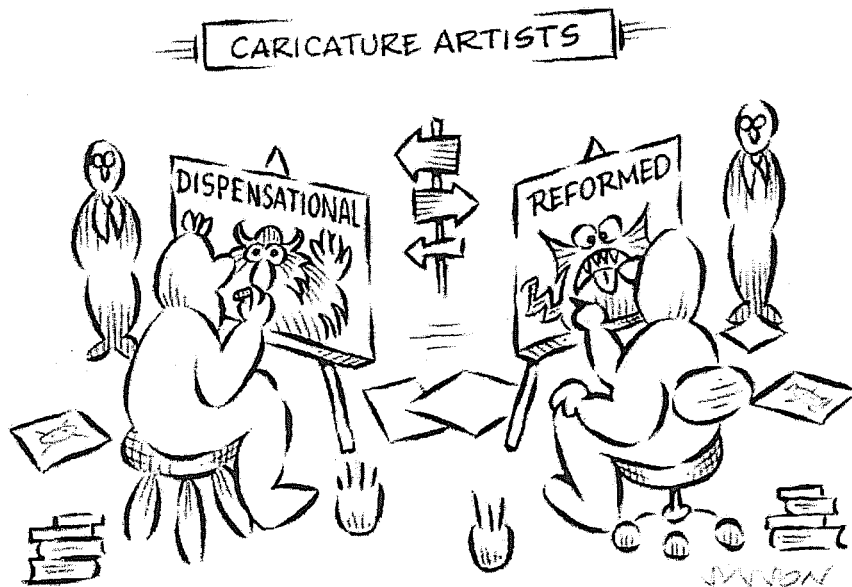
JOHN H. ARMSTRONG

EAT THIS BOOK: A CONVERSATION IN THE ART OF SPIRITUAL READING

Eugene H. Peterson

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2005)

186 pages, cloth, \$20.00

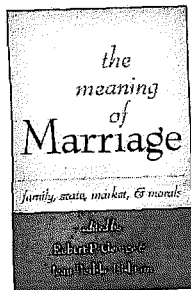


Faithful evangelicals, if they do anything at all, read the Scripture. We have all kinds of plans for reading through the Bible in one year, for memorizing Bible verses, and for having meaningful daily devotions in the Scripture. We even have “One Year Bibles” offered as systematic devotional aids by major publishing houses. We read the Bible. But we rarely ask *how* we should read it.

In this second volume of Peterson’s *magnum opus* on spiritual theology, he urges us to be reading the Bible for much more than information. Drawing from his own patterns and practices developed over a lifetime, Peterson follows what was called the *lectio divina* in ancient practice. In the Christian tradition this includes hearing (*lectio*), pondering (*meditatio*), dialogue (*oratio*), contemplation (*contemplatio*), and incarnation (*incarnatio*), all of which inform Peterson’s practice and thought very clearly. This is a highly recommended treatment that both pastors and non-pastors will profit from immensely.

**THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE:
FAMILY, STATE, MARKET & MORALS**

Robert P. George and Jean Bethke Elshtain, editors
Dallas: Spence Publishing (2006)
316 pages, cloth, \$29.95

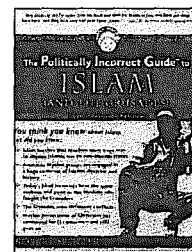


A national discussion on the meaning of marriage, filled with great passion and polarizing debate, threatens both the culture and the church in our time. One thing is for sure, the debate will not go away anytime soon. If Christians are to make a strong case for the institution of marriage, as they must, then books like this one will surely play a very important role in that case.

The editors, both highly respected Christian scholars, have brought together in this attractively designed volume essays on a variety of disciplines touching on the current marriage debate—history, ethics, economics, philosophy, sociology, psychiatry, political science, and public policy—that seek to inform and reform the present public debate. This volume powerfully serves the aim of demonstrating that marriage is an institution that serves the public good and thus should not be radically altered by social engineering that will impact our culture for generations to come. The contributors are all respected authorities in their respective fields.

THE POLITICALLY INCORRECT GUIDE TO ISLAM

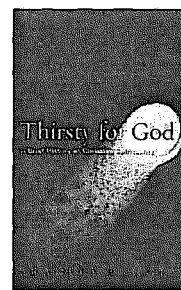
Robert Spencer
Washington: Regnery (2005)
270 pages, paper, \$19.95



With the present international unrest in the Middle East I am struck by one question again and again: How shall we wage the war on terror if we do not understand the beliefs and philosophies of our enemies? Spencer, the director of Jihad Watch and an Adjunct Fellow with the Free Congress Foundation, is the controversial author of four previous books on Islam, including *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions About the World's Fastest Growing Faith*. Spencer's treatment of Islam is anything but politically correct. He firmly believes we are engaged in a battle for the heart and soul of the West and few realize it. His research is impressive and his arguments, though inflammatory to some, are compelling. This is a clearly written and challenging work that needs to be read by all who are involved in this debate.

**THIRSTY FOR GOD: A BRIEF HISTORY
OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

Bradley P. Holt
Minneapolis: Fortress (2005)
226 pages, paper, \$18.00



More and more Protestants are trying to understand the historic church's teaching on spirituality. The term itself is culturally hot, though clear understanding of what spirituality actually means in the Christian tradition is often quite limited. Holt, in a second edition of an earlier popular work, gives the reader a primer that will serve both pastors and non-pastors alike. Included are short excerpts from primary source material as well as time lines, maps and a very good bibliography. Bradley P. Holt is a professor at Augsburg College, Minneapolis,

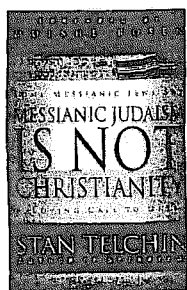
Minnesota. His grasp of his subject is impressive. His ability to relate the subject to the modern reader is even more impressive.

**MESSIANIC JUDAISM IS NOT CHRISTIANITY:
A LOVING CALL TO UNITY**

Stan Telchin

Grand Rapids: Revell (2004)

169 pages, paper, \$12.99



Stan Telchin is a Jew who came to faith after age fifty. He has been busy serving Christ very actively ever since. He served as a pastor of a Jewish-Gentile congregation in Maryland for fourteen years. He has been a popular writer and teacher for more than three decades. Out of personal experience with the Messianic movement, Telchin explores the heart and soul of Messianic Judaism, suggesting that it has created a basic disunity in the Christian church. This alone makes his book both controversial and important. He challenges the motives behind this movement, its controversial doctrinal emphases, and its basic ineffectiveness in Jewish evangelism, something infrequently talked about in the literature promoting the movement.

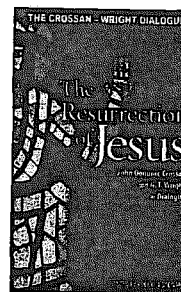
Telchin is passionate about evangelizing Jews. He is also courageous and bold. His counsel will offend some. He argues, in short, that there is a tremendous difference between Jewish culture and rabbinic Judaism. He also concludes that while Messianic congregations can be a bridge between the synagogue and the church, no one should build a home on the bridge. His most pressing concern, which comes out again and again in this important little book, is that God's will is that Jew and Gentile be "one new man," not divided by rabbinic forms. Several writers have taken up these issues but none so simply and clearly as Stan Telchin. Every interested Jew and Gentile should read this book.

**THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS: JOHN DOMINIC
CROSSAN AND N. T. WRIGHT IN DIALOGUE**

Robert B. Stewart, editor

Minneapolis: Fortress (2006)

220 pages, paper, \$18.00



Christians have always believed in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, this faith has been at the very heart of the Christian truth claim. But what exactly does it mean to confess faith in the resurrection? The answer to this question has brought several answers over the years, some in keeping with the faith of the historic church and some seeking to engage critical scholarship in ways that allow for newer readings of Scripture and theology. The two most engaging writers and speakers on this subject are N. T. Wright, whose book, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Fortress, 2003), is a massive argument for the historic faith. The other is John Dominic Crossan, whose book, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Harper, 1991), is considered the best of the radical approaches in contemporary Jesus scholarship.

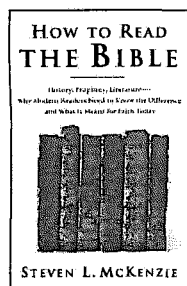
This volume grew out of a two-day event (March 11–12 2005) at New Orleans Baptist Seminary in which the two famous scholars, Wright and Crossan, engaged one another in a friendly disagreement. Their words are presented here in a warm and easy to follow way. The second day of the event included the presentation of six papers that interacted with the two scholars and their views. Each of these is also included in this extremely helpful book. Essayists include scholars such as William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, Ted Peters, and Craig Evans. Both Wright and Crossan responded to each essay, making the entire presentation of this book even more useful for the reader. If you want to really get into this important issue, no book will better meet your need than this one.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

Steven L. McKenzie

New York: Oxford University Press (2005)

204 pages, cloth, \$26.00



McKenzie believes fundamentalist, as well as exceedingly liberal, approaches to the Bible are inherently problematic and quite often wrong. While literalists have insisted on “flood geology” and “creation science,” liberals have treated the Bible as untrustworthy. Both misunderstand the nature of Hebrew texts and how they work in the Old Testament. What is the solution to this problem? Do not force the Bible

into modern categories, but rather allow biblical authors to be understood on their own terms.

McKenzie, a professor of Hebrew Bible (a modern description I am not personally fond of) at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, explains why it is essential to know what sorts of texts the biblical writers actually believed they were writing. His conclusions will not please some evangelicals (like me) when he argues, for example, that Jonah is not to be understood historically nor should Adam and Eve be understood as actual historical persons. But his argument that ancient history was not always concerned with precise details in how stories were told is undoubtedly true even if McKenzie’s application is canonically unsound. There is much here to argue against, but serious scholars will profit by the challenges even as they disagree with the opinions offered.

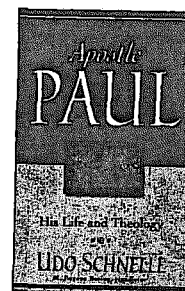
APOSTLE PAUL: HIS LIFE AND THEOLOGY

Udo Schnelle

M. Eugene Boring, translator

Grand Rapids: Baker (2005)

695 pages, cloth, \$49.99



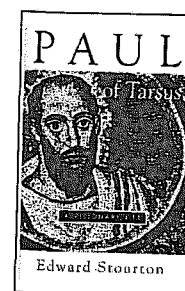
This sturdy, academic tome is a major work that should be read and discussed by teachers and writers alike. It presents a compelling comprehensive introduction by a leading European scholar on the historical context of Paul’s New Testament correspondence. The result is a well-written and well-conceived theology of Paul. This is designed to be a textbook for graduate students and a reference work for scholars. Professor Hans Dieter Betz, a leading American New Testament scholar, calls this “a richly documented and well-argued work . . . a useful guide. It is to be recommended as indispensable to serious students.”

PAUL OF TARSUS: A VISIONARY LIFE

Edward Stourton

Mahwah, New Jersey: Hidden Spring (2004)

215 pages, cloth, \$24.00



The author of this volume is *not* a biblical scholar, but rather a broadcast journalist in the United Kingdom. This may be precisely why this engaging volume is so valuable for the ordinary reader—it connects in simple human ways. His research and lively writing allow his look at Paul’s experiences, education, and background to become sharp in the reader’s eyes. His clear and clean style makes this little book a great read, even if you disagree with some of Stourton’s conjectures about Paul. He successfully moves Paul from a figure often lost in the debates of scholarship and homiletics to a man who was profoundly influential in shaping both ancient and modern culture and

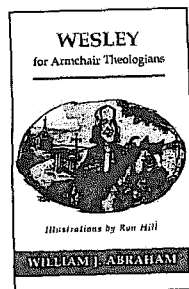
political thought. The reader should not read this book for Pauline theology but rather to get a glimpse of the man himself.

WESLEY FOR ARMCHAIR THEOLOGIANS

William J. Abraham

Louisville: Westminster John Knox (2005)

194 pages, paper, \$12.95



This clear, even playful, overview of John Wesley as a theologian gives the ordinary reader about as reliable an introduction as one could find. Though there is much here to discuss and disagree with, there is also much here to stimulate solid conversation and insight into a Wesleyan perspective in theology. Sturdy Reformed sorts would benefit from this guide, as would committed Wesleyans who will also find their assumptions stretched by Professor Abraham.

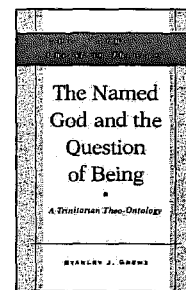
One of the finest ongoing "lay-friendly" series appearing in religious publishing is the "Armchair Theologians" series, which already includes volumes on Aquinas, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, as well as a helpful introduction to the Reformation. Other volumes will appear in the next few years. I strongly encourage the use of these helpful, well-written, and well-designed books. They can be used personally or even in small group studies.

THE NAMED GOD AND THE QUESTION OF BEING: A TRINITARIAN THEO-ONTOLOGY

Stanley J. Grenz

Louisville: Westminster John Knox (2005)

386 pages, cloth, \$39.95



A renewal of Trinitarian theology among evangelicals is a most welcome development in modern theological reformation. A major question to be faced by any such development is: How does contemporary philosophy, especially non-foundationalist epistemology, enter into real dialogue with Christian tradition? This question is not only profoundly important for the recovery of Christ-centered thought and practice but seems central to a truly missional theology in the twenty-first century. Stan Grenz provides, in this second volume of a contemporary systematic theology, an erudite work that will be a rich and insightful resource for both pastors and theologians.

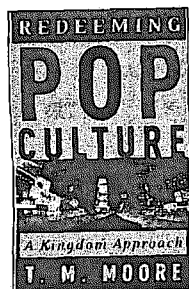
Sadly, this volume was Stanley Grenz' last published work before his untimely death in 2005. Grenz, controversial in some evangelical circles, had a sense of mission regarding our postmodern condition. He believed that postmodernity was not so much a threat as a unique moment of opportunity for the gospel. I am quite convinced he was right, even though I did not always agree with the contours of his thought. I had several opportunities to converse with Stanley Grenz over the past fourteen years and always found him a gentle and encouraging voice for reformation that I will miss. Rather than react to what people have said about Stanley Grenz, many readers would find this work immensely profitable, like so much else he wrote, if they gave it a fair and careful reading. The exegesis of the "I AM" statements of Scripture will alone make this a solid addition to serious libraries.

REDEEMING POP CULTURE: A KINGDOM APPROACH

T. M. Moore

Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed (2003)

168 pages, paper, \$11.99



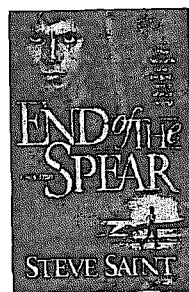
It is admittedly hard to be unbiased about the work of a friend, in this case a friend who serves as an associate editor of this quarterly journal. T. M. Moore provides in this little book a readable and balanced treatment of how to respond to popular culture, both critically and helpfully. In short, he urges us to neither flee pop culture nor follow it blindly, an approach pursued in this journal editorially. Moore believes thinking Christians need to learn how to respond thoughtfully to the countless opportunities for personal and corporate witness that surround them in their everyday world. He has a well-thought-out kingdom theology and thus understands how to make solid judgments that will advance the Christian mission in the modern age.

END OF THE SPEAR

Steve Saint

Wheaton: Salt River (2005)

338 pages, cloth, \$22.99



By now most readers of this publication will have heard of the movie release *The End of the Spear*. The widely viewed movie, to a large degree, is based upon this written account by Steve Saint, the son of Nate Saint, one of the five martyrs who died in 1956. The missionaries were trying to reach the Waodani tribal people, of Ecuador, with the gospel of Christ. In the 1990s, Steve Saint was asked by the Waodani to teach them how to interact with the encroaching outside world. Eventually, he moved his family to Ecuador. There he got in touch with his past and his future, which is remarkably told in this thrilling

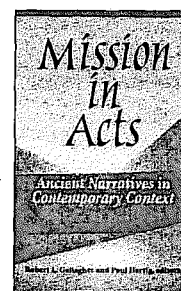
book. The story fills in large gaps left by the body of literature written about the tragedies of 1956. It also fills in parts of the story that could not be told by the movie version, which in itself was a marvelous witness to the ongoing story of gospel reconciliation.

MISSION IN ACTS: ANCIENT NARRATIVES IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, editors

Maryknoll, New York: Orbis (2004)

332 pages, paper, \$30.00



This commentary on the Acts of the Apostles applies the biblical text, in a most effective way, to the challenges of mission and ministry in today's multicultural context. What makes it unique is the way it combines serious New Testament scholarship with modern missiology. Twenty-three denominationally diverse experts write the chapters with a genuine respect for evangelical missional concerns.

Every missionary, pastor, and professor who teaches Acts, or missions, should read and use this book. Though it surely is serious scholarship, it is also a readable and accessible work. The opening chapter, on the background to the book of Acts, is worth its weight in gold. Every missional Christian who teaches the Word of God, with a goal to obey the Lord's Great Commission, would do well to own and read this superb treatment. This is one of a number of books sponsored by the American Society of Missiology, an important vehicle for scholarship.

BONHOEFFER & KING: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

J. Deotis Roberts

Louisville: Westminster John Knox (2005)

160 pages, paper, \$19.95



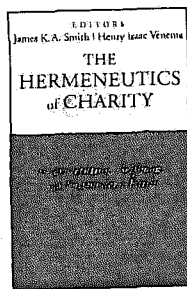
Roberts, an esteemed theologian and founder of the “Black Theology” movement, seeks to show how two twentieth-century figures acted as prophetic voices in different contexts and different, but similar, circumstances. With an engaging style, Roberts shows the connections between theology and social activism in ways that evangelicals will not easily accept. That being said, evangelicals would profit from much in this work on theological ethics. Evil is both personal and corporate. The latter is rarely understood by evangelicals. Roberts helps to make this point powerfully.

THE HERMENEUTICS OF CHARITY: INTERPRETATION, SELFHOOD, AND POSTMODERN FAITH

James K. A. Smith and Henry Isaac Venema, editors

Grand Rapids: Brazos (2004)

272 pages, cloth, \$34.99



The label “postmodern” is feared in many evangelical circles, especially where the definition assigned to the term relates it almost completely to the even more problematic term “relativism.” The contributors to this impressive volume do not think that postmodernism is “a kind of Frankenstein created in the laboratories of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Jean Francois Lyotard.”

Is humanism the “devil in disguise” or just the devil open and direct? The contributors to this edited book do not think either to be true. Some of my own favorite modern thinkers appear in this marvelous collection—Merold Westphal, Brian J. Walsh, J. Richard Middleton, and James K. A. Smith, along with James Olthuis. This

collection of essays was written to interact with the work of teacher and philosopher James H. Olthuis, who has spent a lifetime promoting the integration of Christian scholarship with serious modern philosophy. I recommend that anyone who wants to trash postmodernism’s impact on the church read this volume carefully before proceeding to confuse the issue further.

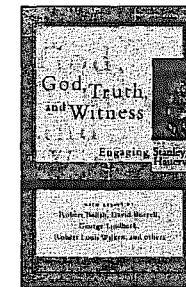
GOD, TRUTH, AND WITNESS: ENGAGING STANLEY HAUERWAS

L. Gregory Jones, Reinhard Hutter and

C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, editors

Grand Rapids: Brazos (2005)

336 pages, cloth, \$39.99



On the occasion of the sixty-fifth birthday of Professor Stanley Hauerwas, a number of his friends and former students decided to honor his work as a scholar and writer. There are fifteen contributors to the volume, including such well-known luminaries as Rowan A. Greer, George Lindbeck, Nicholas Lash, Robert Louis Wilken, Robert N. Bellah, and Robert W. Jenson. The topics included are as diverse as Hauerwas’ own writing—church, civil religion, and Jewish-Christian relationships. The writers engage Hauerwas’ impact upon important subjects like narrative theology, virtue, medical ethics, Christian pacifism, and ecclesiology. Readers do not necessarily need to agree with Hauerwas to profit from this insightful study of his work. I often disagree with Hauerwas’ public and political philosophy, but he always forces me to reckon with things I find both profitable and important. This volume is a good place to gain an overview of his impressive career.