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BOOK BRIEFS

John H. Armstrong

MARTIN LUTHER: A GUIDED TOUR OF HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT

Stephen J. Nichols

Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed (2002)

240 pages, paper, \$13.99

Roland Bainton's famous classic story of Martin Luther, *Here I Stand*, deeply impressed me as a young minister. I confess that when I picked up this new volume I felt the task was too large for such a small book. My mind has been changed. I will now recommend that people who wish to get into the life and thought of Luther read Bainton and then Nichols, or maybe Nichols and then Bainton. This is a superb little book.

The author knows his subject and has the rare ability to write of it in a way that is both understandable and engaging. Pastors and lay readers will both profit from this "guided tour." I heartily recommend it to all readers.

LIVING IN THE HOPE OF GLORY

Adolphe Monod

Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed (2002)

181 pages, paper, \$12.99.

Adolphe Monod (1802-1856) was a well-known preacher in the French Reformed church. He pastored the prominent Reformed Church of Paris and was a professor at the Reformed Seminary in Montauban. Some of his sermons have been available in English in the past but this French spiritual classic (*Lex Adieu*, or earlier English translations, *Adolphe*

Monod's Farewell), written from his death-bed over the last six months of his life, is now available in a modern and very readable English edition.

The book is really not about dying but about living—living in a way that prepares one to face death without regrets. Monod lists his “deepest convictions” as—rescue from the depths of sin, the two natures of Christ, the two voices of Scripture, all by the Holy Spirit, and all in Jesus Christ and the blessed Trinity. Perhaps the very best part of the book is the section dealing with “avoiding regrets.” Here he labors to show that we should live holy, active, peaceful lives, feeding upon the Word of God, using time wisely, being fervent in prayer and always focusing upon what is truly important. This is a wonderful book worthy of all serious believers.

FLAME IN THE MIND: A JOURNEY OF SPIRITUAL PASSION

Michael Marshall

Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2002)

217 pages, paper, \$12.99

Bishop Michael Marshall, rector of Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street in London, is the author of several previous books but is a new name to me. In this volume, chosen by the retiring Archbishop George Carey as his Lenten book for 2003, Marshall uses the great prayers of St. Augustine in the *Confessions* to challenge us to deeper fervor in our love for Christ.

Marshall believes that with Augustine we need to have our heart's response to Christ fanned into a flame by the love of Christ. Lifestyle is only changed when duty becomes desire, legalism becomes spontaneity, and obligation overflows into a life of deep gratitude. This happens when we have a right view of God and of ourselves, a truth Augustine understood so profoundly. Marshall's introduction to Augustine is well done and will help the novice get into his life and thought at the outset of the book.

COVENANTAL WORSHIP: RECONSIDERING THE PURITAN REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE

R. J. Gore, Jr.

Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed (2002)

199 pages, paper, \$14.99

This is a long overdue book that could go a long way toward ending the “worship wars” in Reformed circles if readers would carefully consider the insights of R. J. Gore. Gore properly roots the “regulative principle” (at least historically) in Puritanism. His desire is to neither condemn nor defend the Puritans but to root worship in the teaching of Scripture.

Gore originally did the research for this book for the purpose of writing his doctoral dissertation in historical theology at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. He is a careful scholar but also a readable one. I recommend this to Reformed people in particular, but all thoughtful evangelicals will profit by Gore's even-handed and well-written treatment of an oft-presented and infrequently understood principle.

CHURCH: AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT HOW WE DO IT

John G. Stackhouse, Jr.

Grand Rapids: Baker (2002)

191 pages, paper, \$12.99

This is a racy, candid, and insightful look at the modern Church through forty aspects of congregational life, ranging from money and literacy to membership and renewal. The author writes that these observations are “the commendations and provocations of a loyal church member . . . in the hopes that the Church somewhere, somehow, will be better for them.” This is a very good book for pastors and Church leaders to read and discuss together.

John G. Stackhouse, the Sangwoo Youtong Chee professor of theology and culture at Regent College (a position previously held by J. I. Packer) in Vancouver, British Columbia, is

clearly becoming one of the most prolific writing evangelical theologians in North America. His work includes both academic and popular theology.

ICHABOD TOWARD HOME: THE JOURNEY OF GOD'S GLORY

Walter Brueggemann

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2002)

150 pages, paper, \$15.00

Walter Brueggemann may well be our generation's best-known Old Testament scholar and writer. Thankfully his work is not only written for the academic community alone. In this work he explores themes from his *Old Testament Theology* (1997) by leading us to look at the nature of God's glory, using the story of the ark of the covenant to illuminate the meaning of the presence of God. What results is a powerful look at the sovereignty of God rooted in the narrative of the Old Testament text itself.

Brueggemann believes that the ancient story of the ark has profound relevance for us today. He argues that the three-day story of the ark's capture, detention, and return is transposed, first, into the three-day Christian story of Easter, and then into the three days of the modern consumer weekend. This is theology at its best, used to challenge the dominant motifs of modern life and idolatry.

MARK: BELIEVERS CHURCH BIBLE COMMENTARY

Timothy J. Geddert

Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press (2002)

454 pages, paper, \$24.99

In previous issues of this journal I have made reference to this series of commentaries produced by scholars from the Anabaptist community. The great strength of Anabaptist theology is its emphasis upon lifestyle and obedience as essential to discipleship. Those more influenced by the magisterial

Reformed and Lutheran tradition should take the time to read such works and allow their own paradigms to be weighed by those from a different part of the Reformation.

Geddert, who teaches New Testament at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, views Mark's Gospel as being rooted in hope and thus he believes it calls readers to follow Jesus *on the way*. His style is readable. His content is rooted in the text. This is a volume that preachers of the text should add to their standard volumes on Mark.

AUTHENTIC WORSHIP: HEARING SCRIPTURE'S VOICE, APPLYING ITS TRUTHS

Herbert W. Bateman, IV, general editor

Grand Rapids: Kregel (2002)

318 pages, paper, \$15.99

Of the making of evangelical books on worship there is no end. Some have special agendas to plead, while others are virtually useless to the average pastor. This book is neither. It is an irenic treatment that connects worship discussion to three key components: God as the object of our worship; music as the expression of our worship; and symbols as the images of our worship. Contributors include Robert E. Weber, who provides essays on both baptismal and eucharistic spirituality, as well as a collection of lesser-known writers.

As with all collections of essays by various authors, this book is uneven. Some chapters are quite disappointing, even trendy to a point. Most are worth the time of pastors, worship leaders and worship committees.

JESUS ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE: RESTORING THE PORTRAIT FROM THE GOSPELS

Darrell L. Bock
Grand Rapids: Baker (2002)
704 pages, cloth, \$39.99

This is a cogent, clearly written, and well-conceived portrait of Jesus that emerges from the Gospels themselves. After the reader gets an overview of each of the four Gospels, Darrell Bock then gives a unit-by-unit examination of Jesus in the Synoptic accounts and then in John. He concludes with a summary of the various themes uncovered in the Gospels.

Bruce Chilton writes:

In this book Darrell Bock has accomplished for evangelical theology what the late Raymond Brown achieved for its Catholic counterpart; a judicious synthesis of the scholarship of his colleagues with the concerns of a canonical reading of Scripture. The result is a readable textbook that respects the exegetical diversity of the Gospels while emphasizing the unity of their underlying witness.

The only problem with Chilton's high-praise is that it might put off many pastors who most certainly should use this very overview of the Gospels.

NOT AS THE SCRIBES: JESUS AS A MODEL FOR PROPHETIC PREACHING

Ryan Ahlgrim
Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press (2002)
152 pages, paper, \$16.99

The author, pastor of the First Mennonite Church of Indianapolis, Indiana, seeks to show how the contemporary minister can faithfully preach the words of Jesus as prophetic preaching. The title, based on the familiar words of how the people heard Jesus (the people "were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as

the scribes"), is well chosen. Most preaching today, Ahlgrim argues, is much more like the teaching of the scribes, being content to explain the meaning and application of the text. This might sound outrageous at first glance, but the truth is not far below the surface of the discussion.

You do not have to agree with all of Ahlgrim's insights to profit from this little book. His goal, and one we all need to hear, is to recover for our age the truly transforming power of preaching that is biblically prophetic. Every minister should honestly ask: "Do I preach as one who has authority, or do I talk a lot about God?"

SOUNDS OF THE ETERNAL: A CELTIC PSALTER

J. Philip Newell
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2002)
86 pages, cloth, \$18.00

Newell draws on the spiritual insights of an ancient tradition to demonstrate how ancient prayers can be used profitably by modern worshipers. This richly-illustrated volume is a delight to hold and to read. It would make a great gift book and could also put some fire into the heart of God's servants.

DIMENSIONS OF TIME: THE STRUCTURES OF THE TIME OF HUMANS, OF THE WORLD, AND OF GOD

Wolfgang Achtner, Stefan Kunz, and Thomas Walter
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2002)
196 pages, paper, \$30.00

This is an interdisciplinary look at various theories of the nature of time provided by anthropology, science and religious faith. Because it attempts to do so much it is both exasperating and rewarding. It is not a book that you can pick up and easily read in one or two sittings. Here you will be encouraged to learn from general theories of relativity, quan-

tum mechanics, thermodynamics and chaos theory.

The conclusion of the discussion argues (back cover) that an "unhealthy acceleration of life in contemporary society needs to be balanced by a rediscovery of the mystical experience of time, leading to a greater, deeper sense of human fulfillment." Interestingly Achnitzer is a campus minister (Germany) and a part-time lecturer on the dialogue between science and religion. Kunz is a German pastor serving a parish ministry and Walter is a professor of information technology. They make for an unusual team and an intriguing project. For the life of me I cannot understand how a paperback of less than two-hundred pages could retail for \$30.00!

NEW CREATION: A LITURGICAL WORLDVIEW

Frank C. Senn

Minneapolis: Fortress (2000)

195 pages, paper, \$17.00

If you asked me to suggest one theologically serious critique of what is wrong with trying to fit worship into the forms of a popular consumer culture this would be it. Senn believes, correctly I think, that worship generates its own culture and worshipers fit into this culture rather than the other way round. Liturgy, he argues, celebrates a reality or a worldview—a new creation—that must inform all revision of worship practice.

Frank Senn, a Lutheran minister in Evanston, Illinois, has given the Church some of the best liturgical resources in print today, proving again that parish ministers can also do solid academic work. Every minister who wants to think about reforming worship practice should wrestle with Senn's voluminous work. This little book would actually be a great place to start the journey.

SPIRITUAL MATURITY: PRESERVING CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH AND BALANCE

Frank A. Thomas

Minneapolis: Fortress (2002)

98 pages, paper, \$10.00

How can a local church handle internal disagreements, polarizing debates, and potential church splits? Thomas seeks to answer this question by developing a model of maturity that could help many. This is a practical little book that evangelicals in particular could benefit by if they loved the Church enough to try to solve old problems with new solutions rooted in ancient pastoral wisdom.

LEARNING THEOLOGY WITH THE CHURCH FATHERS

Christopher A. Hall

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (2002)

307 pages, paper, \$15.00

Christopher Hall, who previously gave us the excellent book, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, now does it again—this time dealing with theological subjects in a helpful way. Patristic theology was of no consequence in the training of evangelical pastors in my generation. Thankfully, this is changing. Frankly, Hall's two books would be first-rate resource material for ministers, discussion groups and Sunday school classes that really wanted to get serious about historic Christian faith and practice.

The modern interest in the early Church Fathers bodes well for reformation and revival in the Church at large. Christopher Hall, associate professor of biblical and theological studies at Eastern University (Pennsylvania), has had a major part in helping evangelicals restore the Fathers to their place of importance in the Church's life and faith.

*THE UNEXPECTED TEACHING OF JESUS: ENCOUNTERING
THE GOSPELS ALL OVER AGAIN*

John Coleman

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (2002)

239 pages, cloth, \$18.95

Since the Reformation, Protestants have had a tendency to read the Gospels as solutions to problems or wisdom sayings for life. Serious New Testament scholarship, in our generation, has correctly come to question this whole approach. John Coleman, a Lutheran pastor, approaches the Gospels as a collection of stories (sacred for sure) that teach us how to live in today's world. The stories are wise, wonderful and even strange at times, but they always grip your soul profoundly if you allow them to do so. Coleman allows the reader to put on a new pair of glasses and to take in familiar stories in a richer, more nuanced and truly beneficial way. One does not have to agree with all the interpretive conclusions the author draws to profit from this extremely useful book.

THE DIFFICULT BUT INDISPENSABLE CHURCH

Norma Cook Everist, editor

Minneapolis: Fortress (2002)

263 pages, paper, \$25.00

How can the Church develop a fresh and compelling vision for unity in the midst of diversity? This book is a collection of essays that seeks an answer to that question. The reader will soon discover a wide variety of approaches within the book, reflecting both a diversity that many evangelicals will be uneasy with, as well as a call to unity that we all need to hear. The attempt is to provide a study resource for congregational renewal. The danger is to seek the renewal of the Church without a renewal of serious orthodoxy.

This volume includes essays written by the members of the faculty of Wartburg Theological Seminary (ELCA) in Dubuque, Iowa. It has some excellent contributions and some

that are quite unfruitful for thoughtful evangelical ministers, mainline or otherwise.

*THAT I MAY BE HIS OWN: AN OVERVIEW OF LUTHER'S
CATECHISMS*

Charles P. Arand

St. Louis: Concordia (2002)

220 pages, paper, \$20.99

No book so profoundly shaped Lutheranism as Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*. Most of the readers of this journal may have never read it, much less used it in Christian instruction. If you want to understand the best of current scholarship on Luther's catechetical method and practice, this work is indispensable. It is so genuinely readable that both concerned lay leaders and ministers can profit by it.

Charles P. Arand, professor of systematic theology and chairman of the department, teaches at Concordia Theological Seminary (St. Louis). He has contributed to this journal on several occasions, and is a first-rate Luther scholar who believes the time is right for recovering the use of catechesis in the Church. Whether you are Lutheran or not you would benefit from such a study. Whatever tradition you respect, catechesis should be a part of your Christian educational approach in the local church.