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Book Reviews

CALLED AND ORDAINED: LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY. Edited by Todd Nichol and Marc Kolden. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 226 pages.

In the formation of the ELCA the ministerial office was left undefined to accommodate the "high" tradition of the LCA, historically leaning towards the Episcopal Church, and the "low" congregational polity of the ALC. It appeared that the "high" view of the LCA, with its historic roots in the old Pennsylvania Ministerium, was winning. Synod presidents were called bishops, and overtures were made to achieve mutual recognition of the ministries of ELCA and the Angelican communion. *Called and Ordained* provides no support for these initial impressions. Ten of the thirteen contributors are associated with Luther-Northwestern Seminary and thus, although *Called and Ordained* may not be representative of ELCA, it indicates that the "low" church heritage flourishes.

A blanket verdict on a book with various authors is inappropriate, but the *Tendenz* is clearly in the direction of a functional understanding of ministry. Editors Nichol and Kolden focus the direction of the book in two ways. Each of them brings one half of the book to a conclusion with an essay of his own (Nichol concluding the first section and Kolden the second). Then they join together to provide a summarizing essay as the final chapter.

The first seven essays are collected under the title of "Exegetical and Historical Perspectives." Roy Harrisville in "Ministry in the New Testament," accumulates multiple word studies and predictably concludes "that a certain fluidity attaches to the New Testament titles for functions and offices within the primitive church" (p. 7). Separating the Pastoral Epistles from the basic Pauline corpus conveniently removes evidence contradictory to his thesis. Ministry is defined not by office in the New Testament, but by function and goal. The choosing of the twelve, the sending of the seventy, and the three references to ordination do not come into consideration. Picking up the ball from Harrisville, Nestingen in "Ministry in the Early Church" details the precipitous fall of the church into the abyss of sacerdotalism after the apostolic era. "Ministry in the Middle Ages and the Reformation" by Jane Strohl sets forth the views of the Council of Trent, the Reformed, and the radical reformers. As nothing specifically about Middle Ages is said, one can only assume that the Council of Trent is supposed to represent them.

Robert Kolb, one of the two contributors from the LCMS, sets forth the view of Luther and Melanchthon that the ministry is "both the thing and the action that constitutes the thing and gives it purpose" (p. 52). His chapter differs from the tenor of the other essays. Pragman, the other

contributor from the LCMS, in his chapter on Orthodoxy and Pietism, points out that in the latter the distinction between the clergy and the laity is lost. The clergy are obligated to foster the spirituality of the laity so that the clergy become less necessary (p. 75). The resemblance of Pietism to Church Growth is striking! Pragman's is another worthwhile chapter.

Sundberg, writing on nineteenth-century European Lutheran thought, sees Luther as the source of Schleiermacher's teaching on the church (pp. 82-83). This idea must be challenged. The chapter on American Lutheranism offers surprises. For Krauth, the office of the ministry is derived from the universal priesthood of all believers and, quite logically, the call originates in the local congregation (p. 97). Matthias Loy (of the Ohio Synod), working with principles similar to Krauth's, concluded that in emergencies women could serve in the public ministry. Editor Nichol, this chapter's author, correctly notes that the decision to ordain women in the twentieth century was the natural conclusion from this principle (p. 100).

The second section, "Thematic Perspectives," has these chapters: "The Ordained Ministry" by Forde; "An Evangelical Episcopate?" by Burgess (the only contributor from ELCA not on the faculty of Luther-Northwestern Seminary); "The Office of Deacon in the Christian Church" by Rogness; "Getting Women Ordained" by Grindall; "The Pastoral Ministry" by Matinson; and "Ministry and Vocation for Clergy and Laity" by editor Kolden. Forde's contribution speaks of ordination to the office of the ministry neither as an extension of the congregation's authority (p. 125) nor as an infusion of grace, but as a gift which shapes the office (p. 131). Grindall's summary of the movement to ordain women is valuable in reminding us that, as late as 1969, the biblical arguments for the practice were not seen as conclusive (pp. 161-175). Women, then seeking ordination, found support not from biblical data, but from their changing place in society (p. 169). With women now constituting the majority of seminary applicants in ELCA, it is easy to forget that the vote to ordain them in the ALC convention of 1970 was 560 to 414, hardly satisfying the rule of what has been believed everywhere by everyone.

The subtitle of the book, *Lutheran Perspectives on the Ministry*, is misleading if it suggests that the wide variety of past and current Lutheran views is represented in *Called and Ordained*. Editors Nichol and Kolden are seeking "a common ground" for a Lutheran understanding of the ministry, not only in the organization of the essays, but also in the jointly authored concluding chapter. Their four proposals for a unified doctrine

of the ministry (pp. 220-226) require the primacy of the word of God and the theological priority of justification by faith, a variously defined office of oversight (e.g., bishop, president, superintendent), the freedom to establish and structure offices alongside the pastoral one, and flexibility in the definition of offices to fit the ecumenical movement. The goal here is not uncovering a doctrine, but fabricating one. We hope this word is not the last one to be heard on the ministry in the ELCA.

David P. Scaer

MARK. Revised Edition. By R. Alan Cole. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.

GALATIANS. Revised Edition. By R. Alan Cole. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.

With the proliferation of secondary literature in biblical studies we are seeing more publishers updating commentary series by replacing volumes or issuing revisions. These two volumes represent revisions by the original authors of two commentaries in the popular Tyndale New Testament series. R. Alan Cole, a lecturer at Trinity Theological College in Singapore, brings these studies which he originally compiled in 1961 (Mark) and 1965 (Galatians) up to date through completely rewritten introductions and bibliographies which take into account major trends and studies of the past twenty-five years. The revisions of the verse-by-verse commentary are less substantive; they consist mainly of citations of current secondary literature that supports or challenges Cole's previous exegesis.

Those familiar with this series know that its volumes are usually written by evangelical scholars who have a respect for the biblical text and its authority. Cole is no exception. Although he is conversant with critical scholarship, he carefully seeks to avoid many of its pitfalls (especially when it comes to the study of Mark). These two volumes, like the rest of the series, are tersely written exegetical commentaries directed to the informed layman, student, or pastor with a primary focus on the "final form" text, limited dialogue with secondary literature, few technical discussions, and minimal footnotes. Some reference is made to the original Greek with regard to etymology, but all words are transliterated. Lest the concerns below give the reader an unjustly negative perception

of these studies, it must be stated at the outset that both volumes are basically sound treatments of the text that bring many theological insights to light.

Cole's volume on Mark contains an inordinately long introduction (80 pages) for this type of series. In these opening pages he follows a long train of scholarship by espousing Markan priority and the two-document hypothesis without giving the reader nearly enough data to evaluate such a position. Yet he advocates and provides the historical support for traditional Markan authorship with probable Petrine influence. He perceives the historicity of this gospel as he postulates ". . . that Mark is designed to give a simple factual account of such events as were necessary for his purpose, within the loosest possible of chronological and geographic frameworks" (p. 56). Amid all the questioning of miracles by modern scholarship, Cole unwaveringly upholds the factual nature of these events. His understanding of the "gospel of the kingdom" in Mark is nondescript and too law-oriented with its emphasis on obedience (pp. 68-69, 112). The confessional Lutheran will also be disappointed with the author's symbolic interpretation of the Last Supper and lack of depth in discussing the cosmic nature of Jesus' passion in Mark. One of the most helpful parts of the introduction is Cole's discussion of the major motifs in Mark.

A number of positions are worthy of note in the Galatians volume. Cole begins his introduction by arguing for the South Galatian theory in spite of the evidence supporting a northern destination. An intriguing hypothesis is put forth (from Betz) that there was an element of "discouraged charismatics" in Galatia who then turned to heavily structured forms of ceremonial law to give spiritual assurance and to prevent liberty from becoming license. In his discussion of the central message of Galatians Cole downplays the forensic nature of justification in favor of a more subjective emphasis on a transforming faith-relationship: "Yet all of these stem from the new, totally transforming relationship with God in Christ which is enjoyed through faith, and Paul's word for this is 'justification,' which for him is no legal fiction, but a transforming spiritual experience" (p. 43). Although Cole claims that he does not confuse justification and sanctification, he does place emphasis on the "total change in our moral behaviour" that results from a relationship with God through faith in Christ (p. 122) and tends to overemphasize Paul's use of "experience" as support for the argument in Galatians. One glaring problem is Cole's understanding of Paul's use of the title "apostle" in a functional sense of being a missionary instead of as a distinct office; the

whole point of Paul's argument in chapter one is to assert his *formal* authority as "an Apostle of Jesus Christ" sharing the office of the twelve against those who had already undercut his *material* authority. Cole also betrays a lack of sacramental understanding as he claims that there is no clear association of the Spirit with outward ceremony after the early chapters of Acts and that baptism is a symbolic action (pp. 132, 154; his background is the Church Missionary Society of Australia). While Cole is sensitive to the use of Jewish exegesis and the language of the text, many Lutheran pastors will notice the absence of any discussion of the law-gospel distinction and the personal justification by faith that dominate Luther's impassioned treatment of this epistle.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan

THE HASMONEAN REVOLT: REBELLION OR REVOLUTION? By Steven L. Derfler. Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies, Volume 5. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989.

In this book Steven Derfler attempts to interpret the Hasmonean or Maccabean Revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the light of the religious, political, and economic milieu of Palestine in the second century B.C. Derfler distinguishes between a rebellion, in which the participants fight against oppression without designing a coherent plan to remedy the ills which they oppose, and a revolution, where such a plan is formulated. He concludes that the Hasmonean Revolt was a true revolution.

This book, unfortunately, is not substantial enough to cover its topic well. The actual content of the book is not commensurate with the number of pages it has; a rather spacious type font and hefty appendices have expanded what would have amounted to a pamphlet into a book. Derfler's sketch of Palestinian history in the second century B.C. is appropriate for a person desiring initial knowledge of this period, but the fifty-dollar price tag is unlikely to encourage many buyers from this audience. The specialist in the inter-testamental period will find Derfler's thesis interesting, but will be disappointed to see it so undeveloped. His distinction between rebellion and revolution appears only in the final eight pages, and its application to Hasmonean Judea is made only in the last two and a half pages. The numerous typographical errors are also quite unappealing.

James A. Kellerman
Chicago, Illinois

POSTMODERN THEOLOGY: CHRISTIAN FAITH IN A PLURALIST WORLD. Edited by Frederic B. Burnham. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

The essays in this volume were first delivered at a conference on "The Church in a Postmodern Age" in 1987. The six essayists present attempts to analyze the current academic world-view and propose ways for theologians to address our postmodern culture. The term "postmodern" is defined in the first essay (by James B. Miller of Carnegie-Mellon University) as denoting a twentieth-century world-view which has specific points of contrast with the "modern" world-view. The *modern* view of reality accepted the dualism of matter and thought, knowledge of the world as opposed to knowledge of moral principles. In this atmosphere science was generally acknowledged to deal with hard facts while theology was relegated to the realm of faith and myth. The *postmodern* view of reality has altered this dualism significantly. Miller explicates three characteristics of this postmodern outlook. The world is constantly in a process of development (process philosophy). The world is relative, for not even time and space exist absolutely (quantum mechanics). Objectivity in observation is impossible, for the observer is integrally related to the fact. All three of these developments point to a radical indeterminacy in our knowledge of reality. Many scholars are less quick to condemn religion and theology as mere myths and fictions, because they are now aware that the demarcation between "hard facts" and "mere beliefs" is no longer self-evidently clear.

Diogenes Allen (of Princeton Theological Seminary) claims that the "four pillars of the Enlightenment" are crumbling in our century. Until recently the following were assumed: there is no room for God in the universe, the basis for social relations is individual rights, progress is inevitable, and knowledge is inherently good. Allen claims that our society needs to be enriched by the biblical perspective.

George Lindbeck (of Yale University) laments the loss of biblical literacy in our culture. Biblical ignorance has caused an increasing lack of familiarity with the great literature and concepts which have undergirded our culture. Lindbeck believes that our highest service to society would be to raise the level of biblical literacy in our churches.

Sandra Schneiders (of the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley) insists that the message of the Bible must be brought to address contemporary issues by pursuing two correctives. The first, she claims, is the need to recapture the Bible from the historical-critical scholars who treat the Bible

as unintelligible to untrained readers. The second is to pursue feminist hermeneutics.

Robert Bellah (of the University of California in Berkeley) pursues George Lindbeck's thesis and agrees that Christians must remain faithful to their calling as Christians. Otherwise we shall never be able to contribute to the needs of our world. Rowan Williams (of the University of Oxford) also illustrates the profound relevance which the message of the Bible has for Western society.

These essays are well worth reading because they provide an illuminating discussion of our current intellectual climate. Each of these theologians engages contemporary society with an emphasis on the cultural value of restoring the Bible to a position of prominence in schools and churches. For these things we can be grateful to them. These essays are generally following the lead of Lindbeck in focusing on the linguistic dimension of this issue and, as such, are not dealing with contemporary issues on the basis of law and gospel. Such an apologetic, by way of Bible literacy, falls short of confronting our age with its sins and preaching to it the crucified and risen Lord.

Alan Borcherding

WHEN YOU FEEL INSECURE. By John P. Reed. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster-John Knox Press.

This volume is one in a series called "Resources for Living." John Reed is a former pastor who presently serves as the executive director of a counseling center. This volume focuses on the causes and cures of an individual's feelings of insecurity.

Reed writes that insecurity in today's world is based on shifts in the value systems of society and in the roles of the sexes. He believes that these shifts create a world in which important elements of living become ambiguous and uncertain. To create a greater sense of security, albeit a false security, people resort to one of four security blankets: materialism, healthism, addiction, or religious absolutism.

Reed discusses at length the irony that the thing which one needs most for security, "secure relationships with significant others," may be one's greatest source of insecurity. Fear of rejection prevents the real attachments for which one wishes. After an examination of the various defenses one uses to prevent attachments, Reed calls upon the reader to choose faith instead of defense. Reed maps out a "Path to Security" in his

final chapter. This book is written for lay-people seeking security in their lives. However, Reed uses psychoanalysis to explain and illustrate his message. Some may find this course of action confusing and difficult to follow. Even though Reed explains the technical terms in lay language, the reader spends too much time translating the concepts into personal terms. The pastor who is familiar with psychoanalytic theories or object-relation will enjoy this volume on security. Those who view insecurity as a symptom of a larger problem will have a difficult time completing this volume.

Joseph H. Barbour
Ballwin, Missouri

HOW FAITH MATURES. By C. Ellis Nelson. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1989. 252 pages. Paper, $13.95.

C. Ellis Nelson is the well-known Christian educator who penned the classic *Where Faith Begins*. His current work, written after forty years of experience in the field, makes the Christian congregation central to his focus on how the life of faith develops. His key thesis is that the way in which a congregation works and worships together and the way in which members relate to each other form a dynamic situation of teaching and learning (p. 181). The chapter on congregational edification delineates his strategy.

Of particular value to those interested in an overview of current writers in Christian education and its related fields are Nelson's "Notes." His "Index of Names and Topics" and Scripture passages are also helpful resources. In sum, Nelson's book gives an insight into "mainstream" Protestant thinking on Christian education—in contrast to fundamentalism, which, he says, "cannot be thought of as an antidote to modern American culture" because of "its inflexible doctrines, especially its insistence on verbal inerrancy of the Bible" (p. 41).

Donald L. Deffner

UNAPOLOGETIC THEOLOGY: A CHRISTIAN VOICE IN A PLURALISTIC CONVERSATION. By William C. Placher. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1989.

William C. Placher tackles the problem of articulating the Christian message in the context of the university where "the danger that an imperialistic Enlightenment rationalism and liberalism will silence other voices

in the academy" (p. 167) is a reality. It is the aim of the author to move theologians beyond the perceived impasse between "revisionist theology" and "post-liberal theology."

According to Placher, "revisionist theology," represented most ably by David Tracy of the University of Chicago (especially in his *Blessed Rage for Order*), seeks to state the claims of Christian theology in a manner understandable and acceptable to non-Christians. Revisionist methodology begins with human existence. While the revisionist approach dominates most of contemporary academic theology in North America, it is challenged by the "post-liberal theology" represented by the "New Yale School" (in, for example, George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, and Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative*). "Post-liberal theology" sees itself engaged in a descriptive task, namely, the articulation of doctrine as the "rules" for Christian discourse. While Placher is no mere extension of his teacher, Hans Frei, his sympathies are with the "post-liberals."

The value of this volume lies not in its conclusions, even though Placher's critique of revisionist theology is, for the most part, attractive. Rather Placher provides students and pastors with something of a reader's guide to the debates of North American academic theology of the seventies and eighties. However, the "reader's guide" is no substitute for engaging the works of Tracy, Lindbeck, Frei, and others covered in *Unapologetic Theology*.

John T. Pless
Minneapolis, Minnesota

INTRODUCING NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION. Edited by Scot McKnight. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989.

This volume is to introduce a projected seven-volume series. The "ultimate goal of each [volume] is to provide methods and principles for interpreting the New Testament" (p. 7). The series is "not for specialists, but for college religion majors, seminarians, and pastors who have had at least one year of Greek" (p. 7). Most importantly, the series is written by evangelicals for evangelicals. One appreciates the decision to have evangelicals, rather than other academic circles, identify and define pertinent issues. As James D. G. Dunn states in the introductory essay, the challenge for evangelicals is to be both evangelical and scholarly. He points out that evangelical interpretation without scholarship can be self-deceptive, while scholarship that "is not wedded to a recognition that these

words were heard speaking with Word-of-God authority" is merely "an interesting historical exercise, a fascinating antiquarian study" (p. 16).

The publication contains seven chapters, besides Dunn's introductory essay, of between sixteen and thirty pages each. The authors and essays, in order of appearance, are Warren Heard (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), "New Testament Background"; Michael W. Holmes (Bethel College), "New Testament Textual Criticism"; Scot McKnight (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), "New Testament Grammatical Analysis"; Darrell Bock (Dallas Theological Seminary), "New Testament Word Analysis"; Thomas E. Schmidt (Westmont College), "Sociology and New Testament Exegesis"; L. D. Hurst (University of California in Davis), "New Testament Theological Analysis"; and Craig A. Evans (Trinity Western University), "The Function of the Old Testament in the New Testament." The book has a select bibliography (listing only material available in English) but no index.

In general the essays provide valuable information and sound description of techniques necessary for proper interpretation of the New Testament. For example, McKnight's information on diagramming Greek sentences gives practical guidelines useful for more than just the new student of Greek. Bock's essay presents not only the values and techniques of word analysis but also a necessary caveat in regard to eight common fallacies. In this reviewer's opinion, Schmidt's essay on the burgeoning sociological study of the New Testament is the most helpful chapter. Noting the anthropocentric presuppositions in sociological analysis, he asks, "Should conservatives employ this method?" Despite reservations he "suggests that the answer is at least a qualified 'yes'" and then writes to substantiate his cautious answer (p. 117).

Evans' essay, "The Function of the Old Testament in the New," will raise the most theological questions (and objections) among evangelicals. Writing lucidly and forcefully, Evans explains how the New Testament writers often "resignified" (gave different meaning to) Old Testament passages. His conclusion is the following: "NT writers frequently found new meaning in OT passages. This happened, not because of careless exegesis or ignorance, but because of the conviction that Scripture speaks to every significant situation."

In conclusion, the book serves as a good introduction or review of basic issues in New Testament interpretation from an evangelical perspective. Each reader will question some opinions, but such debate will be part of the value of the book. One could also question two editorial decisions.

Why was the work of Joachim Jeremias not included in the select bibliography, even though it was considered one of the four representative approaches to New Testament theology (pp. 144, 197)? And why was "The Function of the Old Testament in the New" made the last essay (chapter 7)? The essay contains factual, theoretical, and theological material that needs evaluation before the preceding essay (chapter 6), "New Testament Theological Analysis."

Robert Holst
St. Paul, Minnesota

GETTING TO KNOW JOHN'S GOSPEL; A FRESH LOOK AT ITS MAIN IDEAS. By Robert A. Peterson. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1989.

The book consists of thirteen chapters, eleven of which analyze the Gospel of John in topics. The first two chapters explain why and how John wrote the gospel. The remaining chapters cover such topics as Jesus' "I Am" sayings, His miraculous "signs," conflicting responses to Him, portraits of His person, His saving work, the Holy Spirit, and "last things." The book includes indices of Scripture and of topics but has no footnotes, bibliography, or, in general, references to scholarly Johannine literature. Each chapter ends with review and discussion questions. Peterson's target is "real people where they live," especially "adult Sunday school classes, home Bible study groups, and individual Christians" (p. ix.).

Peterson introduces his book by comparing the reading of John by people today to the encountering of modern civilization by a child found living with monkeys (p. 1). It is a monumental task to adjust to such an unfamiliar world. In this reviewer's opinion, the introduction illustrates the strength and weakness of the book.

One must appreciate Peterson's desire to explain what is "naturally unfamiliar," since the Gospel of John presents "a world of ideas radically different from our own" (p. 1). Devoutly written, the topical arrangement helps identify topics and group them for discussion. Unfortunately, in an introductory work, it also disrupts the Johannine logic and removes sayings, signs, and titles from important contextual nuances.

Equally serious, in a book designed to promote discussion, illustrations often do not fit the explanation. Often, without transition or little logical connection, an illustrative story from personal experience, the *Reader's*

Digest, or a devotional book follows exposition of Johannine material. From a pastoral point of view, indeed, some of the illustrations are undesirable. For example, it seems strange, as well as insensitive to Native Americans, to illustrate "the Father's protection of the Son" (John 7:30 and 8:20) by citing early American settlers who trusted God as they ventured west in covered wagons. Yet they "carried firearms to protect their families. Such a combination of trust in divine providence and responsibility to God should mark our lives as well" (p. 57).

As another example, the author compares the Paraclete vis-à-vis the disciples to a certain Adam Smithson. In a neighborhood plagued by burglaries, Mr. Smithson stayed up late on Friday nights (the time the burglar usually struck) hoping to catch the thief. One night he almost accidently swung his baseball bat at his oldest son who was sleepwalking. After taking his son to bed, he heard the thief enter the house and knocked him unconscious with one blow. "In a similar way the Holy Spirit is a friend of Christians and an enemy of the unsaved" (p. 119). Admittedly, the comparison will promote discussion.

Robert Holst
St. Paul, Minnesota

PAULINE THEOLOGY: MINISTRY AND SOCIETY. By E. Earle Ellis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.

This volume employs the Pauline letters to address a number of very prominent issues facing the church today: "ministry," spiritual gifts, the role of women in the church, and ecclesial structure. At the conclusion of each portion of this study there is concern to show the continuing relevance of Pauline theology for the present situation of the church. Ellis is a seasoned scholar who is well-qualified to examine the entire Pauline corpus on this topic. He is currently research professor of theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and is widely recognized for his numerous contributions to the study of the New Testament.

Ellis begins his task with an intriguing discussion of Paul's eschatological dimension of ministry: ministry mediates the presence of blessings from the age to come into the present age through the work of the Holy Spirit. This idea is highlighted in the treatment of the corporate nature of the church, which is "in Christ" while the world remains "in Adam." Ellis states: "As a reality of the resurrection age Christian ministry has for Paul an evangelical Christ-imparting relationship to the community of the dying" (pp. 22-23). Furthermore, he affirms that, while the Christian is

not indifferent to societal needs, this obligation grows out of Paul's theology of ethics and not his theology of ministry.

The sections on spiritual gifts and the role of women in the church are not as thought-provoking and convincing. While it is commendable that Ellis argues solidly for the use of the Pastoral Epistles and other disputed epistles, a number of his conclusions from this corpus are troubling. For example, he asserts that Paul often separates the coming of the Spirit from baptism with water (p. 32). Secondly, he does not differentiate between the glossolalia of Acts 2 and that of 1 Corinthians 12-14 (pp. 114-115). Thirdly, he notes the validity of Paul's directives regarding male headship and woman's role in marriage, but sees texts regarding the role of women in the congregation as contextually directed at married women—particularly the wives of prophets—and not women in general. Lastly, Ellis emphasizes the priority that Paul gave to the charismatic basis of ministry and provides too sharp of a contrast between the early and later church. Some confusion about what Paul regards as the public ministry is present in this study and results more in a "functional" view of ministry than in an understanding of public ministry as "office." The conclusion of this book is a very balanced and stimulating treatment of historical questions regarding the early church's place in Greco-Roman society. The roots of the church in the synagogue and its relationship to the Roman *collegium* is perceptively presented.

This volume is eminently readable; Ellis writes in a lucid and terse fashion. The occasional change in type size and spacing, as well as the numerous subtitles, proved to be minor distractions. While this study provides stimulation to the interested reader on many critical issues facing the church today, it surely leaves room for further exposition of this aspect of Pauline theology.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan

FIRST AND SECOND TIMOTHY AND TITUS. By Thomas C. Oden. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989.

Here is a commentary, not to supplant, but to supplement what the reader may already have in his library. It is a commentary that will escape the lash of the criticisms heard most frequently these days. The reference is to such comments as this caustic one by D. W. Cleverly Ford: "For the modern preacher, however, unlike his predecessors of more than a century ago, there is a pressing problem. The likelihood is that he will

have been trained in biblical criticism only to discover as soon as he begins his preaching ministry, how useless is a great deal of this learning in the pulpit he is called to occupy, and how unhelpful are the majority of Bible commentaries that embody it" (*The Ministry of the Word*, p. 200). Another example would be this remark by Michael Quoist: "Again I get the dreadful impression that God's Word is being massacred. I really resent people who insist on dissecting God in their laboratories, performing autopsies and presenting us with the bits and pieces of a cadaver" (*With Open Heart*, p. 219).

Oden's commentary appears in the series entitled "Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching." The "Series Preface" notes: "It is designed to meet the need of students, teachers, ministers, and priests for a contemporary expository commentary." The goal is laudable and one which Oden attains. He himself describes his "fresh approach" as characterized by constant reference to classic Christian interpreters of the Pastoral Epistles and by the topical organization of the material. It is oxymoronic but true, as the book amply demonstrates, that attention to "classic interpreters" of the past (and this includes patristic writers such as Chrysostom and Gregory the Great) makes for a helpful "*contemporary* expository commentary" (emphasis added).

The logical-thematic arrangement of the material, rather than a chapter by chapter treatment, is stimulating. Taking a cue from Oden's arrangement, one can line up the greetings of the three epistles in columns, following the pattern of a synopsis of the gospels. When this procedure was followed in a seminar which the reviewer conducted on the Pastoral Epistles, it proved to be a rewarding one.

It is refreshing to come across another contemporary scholar who accepts the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. It is not so much of a surprise that Gordon Fee, in his recent commentary, defends the Pauline authorship (albeit involving an amanuensis) as it is that Oden should forthrightly state in his introduction: "This commentary will proceed on the assumption that all these epistles come from Paul's hand." Oden's defense of Pauline authorship is remarkable in that it represents a radical change of mind. From his "esteemed teacher" Fred D. Gealy (to whose acumen and erudition the reviewer can personally bear witness, having taken several of his courses at Perkins School of Theology in Southern Methodist University), he learned that a reasonable date for the composition of the Pastorals would be A.D. 130-150. Oden, however, now Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology at Drew University, has

changed his mind.

However, the great merit of the book is not limited to its acceptance and defense of Pauline authorship. The novel topical approach and the nature of the comment itself are the features that make this book a valuable tool. While gathering nuggets from the "classical" commentaries, Oden does not eschew pertinent personal references. He observes, for instance: "The key to the renewal of modern Christianity lies in being unashamed of the apostolic witness . . ." Then he gives a personal testimony: "Academic theology remains ashamed of this apostolic testimony. I teach in a seminary. I know how embarrassed we professors are about the gospel and how hard we work to try to make the gospel conveniently acceptable to the modern mind. We will do almost anything to get wider university applause" (p. 128). It is unusual to read something of that sort in a modern commentary. If this kind of directness appeals to the reader, Oden's commentary is for him. All of this commendation, obviously, is not to say that the reviewer accepts all of Oden's exegetical conclusions or hesitations—as, for instance, in conceding that baptism is being described as a means of grace when it is called "a washing of regeneration" in Titus 3:5 (pp. 36-37). The readers of this journal, however, will be confessionally and exegetically critical in adapting what they read.

H. Armin Moellering
St. Louis, Missouri

ESSENTIALS FOR BIBLICAL PREACHING. AN INTRODUCTION TO BASIC SERMON PREPARATION. By Al Fasol. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989.

Al Fasol, Th.D., of Southwestern Theological Seminary, writes that this book "was planned as a primer to introduce the beginning preacher, whether professional or lay, to basic instruction in biblical preaching" (p. 9). This goal he attempts to achieve in a mere 174 pages, including the index to the book. The result, unfortunately, does not accomplish the task. Instead, one is left with a sense that such a primer can never accomplish what it intends. Preaching, without a solid and extensive theological background, can only descend into synergism and moralism.

Nowhere is this truth more apparent than in the book's omission of any distinction between law and gospel. Fasol suggests (pp. 56-59) that the preacher first prepare the "central idea of the text" (CIT), roughly equivalent to Richard Caemmerer's "central thought" (*Preaching for the*

Church [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959], pp. 84-85). The "CIT" is then developed into the "major objective of the text" (MOT), which is in turn developed into a "thesis" or present-tense application of the "CIT." The "MOT" can have either an "evangelistic objective," intending "to lead people to find Jesus as their Lord and Savior," or a "Christian life objective," defined in terms of consecration, ethics, doctrine, or support. Finally, the preacher develops a "major objective of the sermon" (MOS) or, in Caemmerer's terms, the "goal" of the sermon.

What is missing here? The first thing is the law of God as it applies to the human condition within the context of the sermon text. The second thing is the solution to the hopelessness of human existence. That solution is, of course, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the redeemer of the world. The mechanics of writing a speech are discussed, but the theological content of the proclamation of Jesus as Savior is not. Without this gospel the sermon becomes little more than a moralistic speech.

Characteristic of so-called "evangelical" preaching is the altar call or, in Fasol's terminology, the "invitation." Sermon conclusions "should make a transition to the invitation" (pp. 67-70). If, by chance, salvation by grace through faith should have been preached, it is nullified by this synergistic action. The means of grace are unimportant; the "invitation is the most crucial time of the entire worship service" (p. 69).

Within the context of his theological tradition, Dr. Fasol valiantly attempts to accomplish his stated purpose. For Lutherans, however, such a simplification of the preaching task will always fall short. If law and gospel are to be properly distinguished, substantial theological training must precede and accompany the preacher into the pulpit. Thus, we have rightly said with St. Paul, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

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THE NARRATIVE UNITY OF LUKE-ACTS: A LITERARY INTERPRETATION: VOLUME 1: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. By Robert C. Tannehill. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

LORD OF THE BANQUET: THE LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LUKAN TRAVEL NARRATIVE. By David P. Moessner. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989.

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS: READING LUKE'S GOSPEL. By Jan Wojcik. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1989.

Unbeknownst to many, there has been a shift in Lukan scholarship in the last ten years. Traditional higher-critical approaches are giving way to what is commonly being called literary criticism, which does not engage in questions of Luke's assumed redactional purposes. For literary critics, Luke is not so much historian and theologian, as I. Howard Marshall proclaimed him to be in his book employing those words in its title, but rather he is a literary author writing excellent first-century literature. As a result, Luke the author's literary intentions serve his theological concerns, and the shape of the narrative is an important vehicle for telling the theological story of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The rise of a literary-critical analysis of Luke shows the influence of some of the new hermeneutics being utilized with secular literature. A distinction is made in literary criticism between diachronic analysis, which views the text within time (within history), and synchronic analysis, which attempts to view the text detached from its historical circumstances. Diachronic analysis uses the text as a window to see beyond the text (i.e., the historical progression of the text, its sources, and its forms), whereas synchronic analysis views the text as a mirror that reflects only itself, only its own world view.

Redaction criticism is diachronic analysis. It attempts to comprehend the theological intentions of the evangelist through his use of sources. The evangelist is more editor than author, reworking sources and forms to express his own theological perspective. Redaction critics look through the text to see the editorial hand of the evangelist and the traditional sources that lie behind the text. They focus on the final product, but are primarily interested in the process that brought the text to its final point, paying closest attention to the activity of the author in the final stage of the diachronic process.

An example of synchronic analysis is composition criticism. This approach views the evangelist as creator of his own literary text apart from the influence of other texts. The composition is the creation of a single author who, although utilizing other traditions and sources, conceives of his work literarily as a unified whole. Here the evangelist is more author than editor.

Literary criticism ignores the historical process that brought the text into existence. It is not that literary critics are uninterested in history or that

they reject the historicity of the text. They do not feel, however, that the hermeneutical process is best served by analyzing the historical traditions behind the text. Rather they are interested in a synchronic analysis that focuses on the final product, considering the literary character of the narrative in its thematic and structural unity. It is not structuralism, which sees in the text a-temporal and trans-cultural patterns basic to the human condition, nor is it reader-response criticism, which disregards the intentions of the author, believing that "the meanings of the text are the production of the individual reader" (T. J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible* [New York: Paulist Press, 1985], pp. 170-171).

The three books under review are examples of the new literary criticism as it is applied to the Gospel of Luke. The purest form of this hermeneutical approach is superbly presented by Robert Tannehill in the first volume of *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, dealing with the Gospel of Luke. The very title itself bespeaks the essence of this hermeneutical approach. The gospel is considered a unified narrative by a single purposeful author, and the interpretation that Tannehill offers is based on these assumptions about the gospel. The approach is not redaction criticism, nor is it historical criticism as we have come to know it in the past thirty years. Tannehill goes out of his way to distinguish himself from this hermeneutical tradition (p. 6):

> I am concerned with Luke-Acts in its finished form, not with pre-Lukan tradition. Furthermore, I do not engage in elaborate arguments to distinguish tradition from Lukan redaction of that tradition. Brief comparisons of Luke with Matthew and Mark are useful where there are parallel texts, for these comparisons help us to recognize the distinctiveness of the Lukan version. But detailed analysis of the changes and additions introduced in Luke would lead me away from my main task.

His main task is to engage in what he calls a variation of narrative criticism, but which is, in reality, a literary criticism that focuses on motif or thematic analysis. "It now appears to me," Tannehill writes on the opening page of the introduction, "that the author has carefully provided disclosures of the overarching purpose which unifies the narrative and that literary clues show the importance of these disclosures." He elaborates on page 3: "My concern with Luke-Acts as a unified narrative leads me to note many internal connections among different parts of the narrative. Themes will be developed, dropped, then presented again." That in a nutshell is Tannehill's main purpose, and the "commentary" on Luke

essentially unlocks the mystery of the author's disclosures and shows how the gospel is a series of independent, interlocking, parallel, complementary themes that all assist the reader-hearer to understand the theological significance of Jesus Christ for the life of the world.

Tannehill eschews the technical language of narrative criticism, that is, "author" (the real pen-in-hand writer, Luke the physician, companion of Paul), "implied author" (the "author" as he detaches himself from his own presuppositions and writes in this particular genre "which affirms certain values and beliefs and follows certain norms" [p. 7]), and the "narrator" (the internal voice who tells the story). An illustration could utilize the author of a biography about the founder of a small town in New Hampshire. This author was a real person with a history, family, and so on. He was also the "implied author" as he worked with the genre of biography. The "narrator" is the vehicle by which he told the story; he could have used the voice of the founder's son, or his wife, or a rival in the town. Sometimes the implied author and narrator are not the same, since some narrators may be "unreliable." For literary effect, the implied author may use as the narrator the jaundiced views of a rival to demonstrate the true character of the subject of the biography. A classic example is the use of Salieri as narrator in the movie *Amadeus*; his jealous admiration of Mozart's musical abilities reveals the essence of Mozart's character. For Tannehill, the narrator of Luke's Gospel is "reliable," and he refers to the "implied author" and "narrator" (whom he considers to be one and the same) as "Luke" even though he may not perceive this person to be the historical author. The only "technical" term that Tannehill uses is that of "reader," that is, the recipient of the gospel with his understanding of the literary consequences as the gospel unfolds. The term "reader-hearer" may be more accurate since the gospel was originally heard in the context of the liturgical assembly, and the hearer's understanding of the gospel would be dependent on the reading and interpretation of the gospel by the presbyter or bishop. This notion of reader is significant, for it recognizes that the gospels were written to be heard as well as read and that the literary construction of the gospel was meant to facilitate the understanding of the gospel by the "hearer-reader."

Tannehill is true to the stated purpose of his literary analysis of Luke's narrative. Although this book is essentially a commentary, it does not comment on Luke in a verse-by-verse fashion. Rather, each chapter traces a comprehensive theme in Luke. The titles of the chapters give a clear indication of how Tannehill organizes his commentary: "1. Previews of

Salvation"; "2. John and Jesus Begin Their Mission"; "3. Jesus as Preacher and Healer"; "4. Jesus' Ministry to the Oppressed and Excluded"; "5. Jesus and the Crowd of People"; "6. Jesus and the Authorities"; "7. Jesus and the Disciples"; "8. The Risen Lord's Revelation to His Followers." Tannehill's thematic tour of Luke is fascinating, his observations insightful and thought-provoking, and his linking together of certain passages revealing of Luke's literary purposes. What surprises here is that the methodology is not as objectionable as it is in most commentaries today, and one is able to savor Tannehill's ability to open up Luke's Gospel by tracing themes throughout the gospel. This book is for both the veteran and recent reader of Luke's Gospel, for both will benefit from Tannehill's insights. Of particular importance are his first and last chapters, which give the reader an overall glimpse of Luke's purpose. Tannehill's commentary may be read like a novel, for it is a narrative reading of Luke and flows smoothly from motif to motif. There are very few footnotes and little dialogue with the secondary literature. Instead, Tannehill offers us a delightful presentation of what the text says. We hear Luke speak or, better said, what Tannehill interprets Luke to say (which is often close to what we in our tradition would say Luke is saying). This book is, indeed, a refreshing departure from so much secondary literature today, where we hear what others say about Luke or what others say about what others say about what Luke says. This volume is a major book that will reshape the current understanding of Luke-Acts. Tannehill has a long and respected tradition of significant contributions to the literature in this area, but his place in the history of interpretation of Luke-Acts will be guaranteed by this first of two volumes.

David Moessner's contribution to a literary-critical analysis of Luke is entitled *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative*. Moessner's purpose is similar to Tannehill's, but Moessner is much more critical of the problems of the redactional-critical study of Luke's Gospel initiated by Conzelmann's ground-breaking *The Theology of St. Luke*. Moessner's book is more technical than Tannehill's, more in the genre of a doctoral thesis that engages in extensive dialogue with the secondary literature. (There are some interesting lacunae here; for example, how Moessner could ignore R. J. Dillon's *From Eyewitnesses to Ministers of the Word* is inexplicable, for many of Moessner's major insights were already expertly presented by Dillon). Moessner attempts to explain the theological significance of one large section of Luke's Gospel that has always puzzled Lukan scholars—

the journey to Jerusalem in 9:51-19:44. Most scholars throw up their hands in dismay as they try to discover some underlying structure here and ultimately consider this section aimless and rambling, pointing to the travel notices in 13:22 and 17:11 as the only ostensible structural reference points.

Moessner, however, takes on this difficult section to demonstrate Luke's internal purposes. He brings meaning to this section by discovering Luke's literary intentions. For Moessner, the reason why most have missed the point of the journey narrative is that they have neglected to observe Luke's literary skill in structuring this central section around specific themes. He describes his approach as a "literary-critical study of the relation of the ostensive form (a journey) to the content (primarily sayings of Jesus) in Luke 9:51-19:44" (p. 6). Moessner's interpretation of this section is thorough and erudite. This is his analysis of his procedure (pp. 7-8):

> In Part I we survey critical approaches to the form and content of the Central Section, concentrating on the "tide" produced by the "storm center" in Lukan studies . . . Moving to our own synthesis in Part II, we propose a fourfold Exodus typology based on the calling and fate of Moses in Deuteronomy as a heuristic principle for the plotted story in 9:51-19:44. This hypothesis is grounded on an intrinsic literary investigation of the prophet as the prime character model for the narrative world of Luke-Acts; second, on an extrinsic comparison of the Moses of Deuteronomy to the prophet Jesus of Luke 9:1-50 . . . Part III is the heart of the study, with evidence classified for Jesus as a prophet in 9:51-19:44. In order to provide an extrinsic literary-critical check on our hypothesis of a Deuteronomic-Exodus typology, the popular Deuteronomic notion of the role and fate of Israel's prophets in her history as it is expressed in Palestinian Jewish literature of the intertestamental period will be brought to bear on the text . . . Part IV will then apply the extrinsic literary comparison of the Moses of Deuteronomy to the Jesus of the Central Section. Our hypothesis will be corroborated when the Deuteronomistic popular view and the fourfold typological lines are seen to converge in the plotted story . . . Finally, in Part V we will draw some conclusions, explore the theological implications of these Lukan studies, and suggest some further lines for research.

As is evident, here too is a major work that is conversant with the primary text and the secondary literature, and it offers numerous insights into Luke's Central Section.

There are a number of reasons why this book is important for the Lutheran community. First, it offers a comprehensive typological study that is neither simplistic nor exaggerated in its claims. One may differ with Moessner's exegesis, but one cannot deny that his interpretation is carefully argued from the text and that the presuppositions that affect his exegesis are more literary than higher-critical. Carefully arguing from the text, he claims that the parallels between Jesus and Moses extend beyond their prophetic work of teaching and performing miracles, that Jesus is paralleled to Moses in that both suffer and die for the sake of the people: "'On account of' ([Deuteronomy] 1:37; 3:26) the people's intransigence, Moses must suffer the anger of the Lord, the anguish of being choked off from the land of promise, and thus ultimately die without the promised deliverance—all because of the sin of his people (1:37; 3:26; 4:21-22; cf. 9:18-20, 25-29; 10:10-11; 31:2; 32:49-52; 34:4)" (p. 57). Moessner is not convincing in his argumentation in this point, but he does carry forward the principle that the prophetic tradition is a suffering one, and Jesus the prophet is not only teacher and miracle-worker but also sufferer.

The second reason why this book is important for Lutherans is that it provides tangential support for a christological view of the ministry. Although Moessner does not extend the prophetic typology to the apostles, his argument could easily be carried beyond Jesus to the apostles, who were also teachers and miracle-workers and suffered a violent end. Luke-Acts may provide solid ground to those seeking biblical foundations for a christological view of the pastoral ministry.

Like Tannehill, Moessner offers another significant contribution to Lukan studies. There are provocative insights throughout this book and an amazing range of arguments which touch many of the current areas of debate in Lukan studies. Moessner will not have as major an impact as Tannehill in the popular arena because of the technical complexities of his argumentation, but he is nonetheless an expert witness to the value of literary-criticism in providing insights into one of the mysteries in Luke's Gospel—the structure and purpose of the journey narrative. One may disagree with Moessner's conclusions, but the Central Section is now cast in a whole new light thanks to Moessner's inquiry into its meaning for the gospel.

Finally, there is Wojcik's fascinating little book entitled *The Road to*

Emmaus: Reading Luke's Gospel. The word is "fascinating" because, while Tannehill and Moessner teach within seminary contexts, Wojcik writes as a professor of humanities at Clarkson University. Wojcik's analysis of Luke's Gospel is not bound by any theological presuppositions, and his interpretation applies literary-critical techniques used in the interpretation of English literature to the interpretation of Scripture without being bound in any way to an analogy of faith. It is an attempt not only to offer a fresh interpretation of Luke, but to discredit and, in some sense, ridicule orthodox interpretations through the centuries. The book revolves around the astounding thesis that the entire gospel is influenced by the passive verb *ekratounto* in 24:16. Wojcik says (pp. 2-3):

> This book is more or less about how that mysterious passive verb *ekratounto* has been translated and understood over almost 1,800 years of Christian biblical interpretation. Gnostic interpreters felt free to imagine any number of agents who could have done the holding. Orthodox interpreters in reaction have also imagined certain agents but carefully restrict the possibilities . . . Perhaps the riddle of the passive verb holds a key to interpreting this episode, Luke's Gospel, and the other Christian scriptures. One begins with the premise that many things, even in the orthodox gospels, are intended to remain provocative. "Gnosis," "magic," and "parataxis" refer to the other literary effects Luke uses to fill his narrative with the riddle of the passive verb.

For all intents and purposes, Wojcik's literary-critical analysis of Luke's Gospel is a gnostic one. The Emmaus story becomes his test case for this gnostic interpretation. It is a unique narrative in the gospels, it contains literary elements that suggest gnosticism (such as the theological passive in 24 [16, 31] and parataxis, wherein one communicates without using words), and it serves to "sum up the gnostic learning experience" (p. 7) foreshadowed in the Lukan prologue about certainty in the truth of what Theophilus has been taught. For Wojcik, "Theophilus becomes an idealized, implied reader in imitation of the two initially curious and eventually enthusiastic
disciples" (p. 7).

In actuality, as Wojcik's book carries out this fantastic thesis, there is little exegesis or interpretation. Rather, one sees the results of literary criticism taken to its extreme without an analogy of faith. In chapter one Wojcik explains with clarity and insight what literary critics mean by the "implied author" as it applies to the Emmaus story. He is expertly versed

in literary criticism and provides a perspective on the New Testament that could only come from a secular literary critic, as Wojcik's subsections suggest: "The Real Magician," "The Repertoire of the Implied Author," "Spoken Parataxis," "Written Parataxis," "Spoken versus Written Parataxis," and "A New Narrative Theology." In chapter two Wojcik offers what he calls "Strong New Readings," where he demonstrates how Luke learned his literary methods from the gnostics. Wojcik is not ignorant of the gnostic interpreters or the orthodox ones, as he demonstrates in the third chapter entitled "Critical Responses to Luke's Narrative Gnosticism." Wojcik is critical not only of the orthodox interpreters, but also of the higher critics and their father Schleiermacher. He articulates the key difference between diachronic and synchronic exegesis: higher critics as diachronic exegetes are interested in the composition of the text, whereas literary critics like Wojcik are interested in the text itself, the narrative. As he says of current biblical interpretation, "the narrative syntax does not appear as interesting to the commentator as the underlying or prior history which the surface meaning appears to aspire to reveal" (p. 97). Such observations are to be applauded.

Wojcik even acknowledges that the analogy of faith is important to the interpretation of the text. He says of Joseph Fitzmyer, who wrote the two-volume Anchor Bible commentary on Luke (p. 102):

> The reason why even a most discriminating biblical scholar such as Fitzmyer will also affirm faith is, of course, because he has faith. The reason why he will use the form of modern learned commentary in making his biblical interpretation is because its structure implicitly encourages a faithful affirmation. The minute discrimination of language leads logically to a "general understanding."

However, Wojcik does not write to affirm faith but to observe the hermeneutical process. As was said before, this book offers no real exegesis of the text, for exegesis is not its purpose. Wojcik, like many who are interested in hermeneutics today, is more fascinated with talking about the process of exegesis than actually doing it. This book will introduce the reader to the new hermeneutics of the day and give some very helpful insights into the relationship between the old, not so old, and new hermeneutics. It will also alert the reader to the real dangers of literary criticism outside the context of faith.

In conclusion, Tannehill, Moessner, and even Wojcik have contributed to Lukan studies. They cannot be ignored, and some very significant

insights may be gleaned from their work. Literary criticism has more to offer the orthodox exegete than higher criticism ever did, because it is ultimately concerned with the meaning of the text.

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WORD BIBLICAL THEMES: 1, 2 KINGS. By T. R. Hobbs. Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989.

T. R. Hobbs is professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation in McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. He has a doctorate from the University of London. *Word Biblical Themes: 1, 2 Kings* is a companion to the volumes on 1 and 2 Kings in the Word Biblical Commentary Series. The usefulness of commentaries with their intensive study of the text is obvious. However, there is also great value in examining the book as a whole and studying the major themes found in this examination.

Hobbs has chosen to address six major themes in 1 and 2 Kings: kings, prophets, the people of God, the covenanted land, sin and judgment, hope, and the anger of God. Hobbs is aware that these are by no means the only themes running through Kings, but he sees them as some of the most valuable. The Book of Kings deals with a period of time which was important in the history of the people of Israel. The themes which the author has chosen help reflect the struggles, the growth, and the demise of the nation of Israel during this era. *Word Biblical Themes: 1, 2 Kings* can be a useful resource book for the parish pastor.

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