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## Book Reviews

*What is Mission? Theological Exploration.* By J. Andrew Kirk. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000. 302 pages. \$ 20.00

The author, J. Andrew Kirk, does what the title of his book indicates: he explores and seeks to find an answer to the question: what is mission? Already in the introductory pages he reveals his line of thought and the missionary movement he represents in acknowledging the great opus, *Transforming Mission*, of the ecumenical missiologist, David Bosch. But the author plans to go beyond a mere reprinting of arid issues. He rather hopes to offer new "eye openers" that are, he believes, acutely missing in missiological discussions. In chapters eight through ten this new material is described in great detail right down to solutions and suggestions being offered as how one may overcome violence and build peace, how one could care for the environment and build genuine ecclesial partnership in the mission of God. Depending on his own theological (and political) vantage point, the reader may either regard such issues peripheral or, if he shares the same conviction as the author, may integrate them into his own mission agenda. More important for mission, one could argue, are the preceding chapters in which the author begins to lay important missiological foundations: He defines theology and then uncovers its intrinsic missionary character before he proceeds to his own definition of the theology of mission. In the chapters that follow, the author offers insights that are, theologically speaking, surprisingly conservative. In his discourse on hermeneutics he argues for the supremacy of the biblical text and firmly believes that not all readings of the biblical text are *prima facie* arbitrary: Serious semantics will safeguard one from the pervasive postmodern solipsism (the belief that we can only be certain about our own existence and ideas). And yet, the author argues, one should adopt in one's theological investigation the stance of open enquiry and respond—within a permitted framework—to the issues and challenges of the context as the Protestant ideal *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (the church reformed and always reforming) suggests. The author then proceeds to base the mission of the church in the heart of the triune God, known as the *missio Dei*. Therein the church is the center and agent of salvation and not as contextual theologies claim without any bearing. Mission is also not one activity of the church among others but *the* activity. In addition, mission no longer occurs merely overseas or in another culture but it is to be located there where the missionary line separates belief from unbelief.

What about the mission agenda of the church? "The Christian community needs a standard by which to measure its own performance—a standard which is able to call in question its own policies, programmes and practices" (39). For the Christian church, following in the way of Jesus Christ (discipleship) becomes *the* test of missionary faithfulness. To establish the way of Christ, the author traces the earthly ministry of Christ, from which he derives certain principles for the mission of the church, such as following Christ through witness, the pursuit of justice, compassion, and nonviolence. The reader cannot fail to notice the strong

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ethical thrust in the author's proposal. What remains of the gift bestowed through the mission of God such as the forgiveness of sins, a new life in Christ, and life eternal? The author's strong stress on the *exemplum Christi* ideal makes even the task of evangelization, which to the author is not synonymous with mission, a call to adopt the mind of Christ, and to follow principles for a holistic inner-worldly mission agenda. In the remaining chapters the author broaches the question of culture and defines common cultural terms. He then presents his own ecclesiology, which also includes a critical perspective on a common subject in mission theory: Church Growth. In a postscript the author tentatively attempts to predict future trends and challenges that will in some way or other affect an ecclesiocentric interpretation of mission.

Because of the author's strong amenability to the ecumenical paradigm of missions, the value of the book will depend on the reader's discretion. Nonetheless, with all the issues touched this book will provide a worthwhile read for every student in mission.

Klaus Detlev Schulz

***Preaching Christ Today: The Gospel and Scientific Thinking.* By Thomas F. Torrance. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994. 79 Pages. Paper. \$5.99.**

Moving theologians from debunked to current science could well help scientists—and today's world—appreciate timeless theology. This, essentially, is the thesis which Thomas Torrance, retired professor of dogmatics at Edinburgh, presented in the two lectures which comprise the present short volume.

Though the title might imply so, this is not a book about preaching. It is, nevertheless, Torrance's call for a renewal of Christ-centered, theological preaching in a scientific age, and it offers the preacher encouragement to do that.

The barrier to such preaching, Torrance argues, is dualism, most recently raised by what, in Enlightenment thinking, has passed as scientific method. Much contemporary theology has been shaped by Bultmann's sharp distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, and Bultmann's distinction derives, Torrance says, from science: Isaac Newton's dualism between "absolute mathematical time" and "relative apparent time" (5). However, in this century, Newton has been disproved by Einstein's theories of relativity which showed the fallacy of such radical separation. The result in the scientific community has been a much more open-ended understanding of reality. In other words, what had been seen as "scientific" method is now understood as false, because it superimposed laws or limitations upon nature (7). Proper scientific method now understands the need to examine any field according to its own distinctive nature (8, 45). In dealing with God, that would require allowing for His transcendence beyond imposed limits (47). Ironically, then, Torrance maintains, scientists are open to, even looking for, the singular event of Christ (25, 64-65), but biblical scholars fail to

offer Him because they are "still stuck in old Enlightenment, pre-Einsteinian ways of thinking," which, following Bultmann's *Geschichte*, rejects so much of what Scripture records as history (42).

The early church, Torrance points out, faced a strikingly similar challenge and responded to Greek and Roman dualism with the Nicene Creed. Torrance pleads that today's preacher, too, would proclaim the biblical answers to dualism: the incarnation, which unites God with man and yet does not separate Jesus from God, and the atonement of the cross, which reconciles God with the world.

Preachers who fear these truths may be scientifically naive need this book. Others, who simply desire another useful insight for instructing adults, may benefit, too.

Carl C. Fickenscher II

***Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World.* By Robert E. Webber. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.**

What is happening to the church today? Some churches capitulate to our pluralistic society while others promote a 1950's brand of American Protestantism. The empty pews and empty hearts in these churches bespeak a question that the Bride of Christ has always faced: how can the church maintain her doctrinal integrity and yet effectively present the faith to today's world? Robert Webber seeks to answer that question in his book, *Ancient-Future Faith*.

Webber, an Episcopalian, was raised in the Fundamentalist and American Evangelical traditions, but educated in Lutheran seminaries. He does not want to reinvent the Christian faith, but "to carry forward what the church has affirmed from it's beginning" (17). *Ancient-Future Faith* is intended to be a primer on the basics of the faith, an explanation of what is happening in the church today, and a self-portrait of an individual Christian who has found the relevancy of the doctrine and practice of the early church.

The author begins with the person and work of Christ and then proceeds to the church's worship, spirituality, and mission. He concludes with an appendix about authority in the church. In each of the chapters, Webber explains how Evangelical churches usually present the faith to today's world, usually in paradigms borrowed from the Enlightenment: reason that apprehends facts in the Bible, individual faith over the community, and verbal communication. He contends that the postmodern individual is more interested in mystery, the symbolical language of the liturgy, and living in a community of faith. Since we are in a postmodern world that is similar to the world during the first centuries of the church, he argues that the church should break away from the individualistic, verbose paradigms of the Enlightenment and adapt the christocentric, mystical, and liturgical approach of the early church. Throughout the book, Webber includes many helpful diagrams that show how the formulations and emphases of the faith have indeed changed throughout the history of the church.

While Lutherans will agree with many of the author's premises, one may question some of them. Is the average postmodern person really that naturally interested in the communion of saints or even biblical spirituality? Will such a strong emphasis on Christ as *Christus Victor* obscure the theology of the cross? Are the differences between denominations that trivial as to be overlooked in the quest for catholicity? The appendix, which is on the topic of authority in the church, leaves unanswered many questions about the role of tradition in churches of the Reformation.

*Ancient-Future Faith* is well organized and easy to read. The book is theological, historical, practical, and contemplative. In fact, *Ancient-Future Faith* is not only well worth reading, it is a clarion call to the church to return to her roots: a faith that is primarily a mystery. This mystery is the person of Christ and His continued action in the worship and mission of His body, the church.

John Paul Salay  
Concordia Theological Seminary

***Out of the Saltshaker & into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. By Rebecca Manley Pippert. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1999. Paper. 288 pages. \$11.99.**

First published in 1979, Pippert's book returns in a revised and expanded second edition. By her own admission, this is more a rewrite than a revision, largely due to twenty years of further studies and experiences, as well as the increase of New Age spirituality and postmodern thought.

The book has several things with which to commend itself. The advice on developing conversational skills is helpful, as are the suggestions for discussion with victims of higher criticism and postmodernism. Also useful are Pippert's three chapters in which she discusses apologetics, witnessing to others through philosophical arguments, historical fact, Bible stories, and personal accounts. Rather than push people to confront strangers, she acknowledges that different people communicate in different ways, and applauds those who witness within their vocation.

Pippert is well read, with quotations from Luther, Chesterton, Stott and C. S. Lewis. She maintains that the gospel saves; emotionalism and legalism do not. Evangelism is not to be divorced from the content of the Christian faith, and worship must involve faithful preaching of the word and the presence of God. So-called "lifestyle evangelism" is appropriate, but not a means of grace; and while she advocates the use of personal stories in witnessing, she emphasizes that such stories must remain Christ-centered. Further, she notes that "traditions," of which Christians may be embarrassed, might be exactly that for which the unbelieving neighbor is starving.

The book has one considerable drawback, one that unfortunately permeates the entire text: It is written from an "American Protestant perspective" (9), and

Pippert is faithful to that doctrine. Decision theology governs evangelism, while sacramental theology is not to be found. At times, the consequence is poignant: Pippert relates the tender story of visiting and witnessing to her Alzheimer's-stricken father. On a day when he is lucid, he confesses his sinfulness and faith in Christ, but it is not enough; before he relapses, the daughter still must lead him through a prayer of commitment for him to "close the deal" (194) and be saved. One aches to declare to him that he already is.

Protestant theology virtually negates the usefulness of the book, obscuring the Evangel before evangelism begins. A pastor who attempts to use it with parishioners must confront passages like, "The mystery and paradox of conversion is also seen in the fact that God does all, yet he chooses to save us in and through human decision and obedience" (186). Synergism is veiled in a guise of divine monergism.

Pippert's enthusiasm is appealing, and her stories lead one to give thanks for the felicitous inconsistency and the effectiveness of the word. However, the book suffers a flaw common to many evangelism texts: In speaking *about* the Gospel, it rarely actually proclaims the gospel itself, but instead dwells in law, method, and suggestion. For those seeking to learn about evangelism, they would be better served by books that clearly proclaim the gospel, for example Senkbeil's *Dying to Live* or Veith's *The Spirituality of the Cross*. Such texts evangelize the reader as they read, that their cup of grace might be filled to overflowing for those around them.

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***Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult: How to Interest People Who Aren't Interested.* By Nick Pollard. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997. Paper. 178 pages.**

The title and subtitle are "grabbers." They point in the direction that author Pollard (an evangelist living in Great Britain) would like to take readers, but neither really encapsulates his thrust. Pollard certainly does not oppose hard work in the cause of speaking the gospel. He reports that much time in his evangelistic conversations becomes occupied with various beliefs cherished by his conversation partners. Thus, he ends up discussing not Jesus but Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Madonna, Stephen Hawking, and others.

The basic approach featured in the first half of the book is what Pollard calls "positive deconstruction." He wants to lead people to see the weaknesses of their "worldviews" and to raise doubts about idolatrous beliefs they have embraced. To this end, he encourages Christians to ask unbelievers well-placed questions and employ coherence, correspondence, and pragmatic tests of truth on alternatives to the gospel. He is confident that Christianity will pass the same

tests, provided that it is appropriately understood (for example, people comprehend in what sense the gospel "works").

Pollard's work, in effect, extends and applies Francis Schaeffer's "take the roof off" apologetic, which challenged people to live and work consistently with the presuppositions of unbelief. Such a tack can be useful in a postmodern world where people lack confidence that they should even try to claim that anything is true for anyone beside themselves. (Chapter five exemplifies positive deconstruction by setting it loose on relativism.) It addresses contemporary, affluent Western culture's basic disinclinations to think clearly and to examine the absolute.

Potential down sides come mainly in the form of confusing God's two realms of governance. Helping people to think straight is important, but it is not telling them the good news about Jesus. Pollard acknowledges that his immediate aim often consists not in taking people closer to Jesus but in moving them a bit further away from their current world views (71). However necessary scrutiny of world views may be, though, this book does not make it clear that the gospel is a message fundamentally unlike the law.

Perhaps Pollard's most startling sentence concerns the cross, which he says people find so offensive that they will even leave in the middle of a presentation. "That is why, in most missions, I won't even mention the story of the cross, and certainly not attempt to teach about it, until several days into the week" (117)! Against this stands the apostolic determination to know nothing save Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). Pollard allows that he could lead off by talking about Jesus seeking and saving the lost, saving the world, even giving His life as a ransom (116-117), but such willingness on his part does not help much. How can one treat these themes without touching the cross? Perhaps a "gospel" in principle detachable from Christ's actual atonement would turn out not essentially to differ from what one can find in the kingdom of power.

There are other problems with what is made of the way of salvation in the book's more miscellaneous second half. For example, Pollard asks how he might prove to people that his daughter exists. Beyond objective data (birth certificate, for example) and personal experience, he says: "come over to my house and meet" her. Pollard perceptively adds that people "will be confident of the truth of the gospel only as God opens their eyes and enables them to respond to him." But he does not mention that the only way they can "meet God" is through the means of grace that God Himself has provided (159-160). Nor, finally, does this illustration distinguish between knowing that God exists and being confident of the truth of the gospel.

Pollard realizes that some people conclude that the message of Jesus is true, yet they do not want to be Christians out of a desire to keep their lives as they are (163). Unfortunately, he assumes that it lies within these and other sinners to take the step of faith (159, 168). People dead in sin need nothing short of the miracle



that God works through the gospel, not just “interest.” Still, as Pollard reminds us, interest sets the stage for the gospel to come into our conversations. His insightful and affable approach can help us start talking with others, even if we need to look elsewhere for help after the discussion is underway.

Ken Schurb  
Saint Louis, Missouri

***Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations.* By Walter C. Kaiser Jr. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000. 101 pages. Paper.**

In this short volume, evangelical scholar Walter C. Kaiser Jr. advances the thesis that the Old Testament Israelites were divinely commissioned to engage in active missionary work among the Gentiles, that they might make known the “Man of Promise who was to come,” (9). Israel’s mission was not “*centripetal* (inward-moving, and therefore the people of that time were said to play a passive role in witnessing and spreading the good news)” but “*centrifugal* (outward-moving, and therefore the Old Testament believers were active in sharing their faith)” (9). Having identified the Old Testament “Great Commission” as Genesis 12:3 (“all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you [Abraham]”), Kaiser argues that the “Bible begins with the theme of missions in Genesis and maintains that driving passion” through Revelation (7).

The book is divided into six brief chapters. The first two chapters explain God’s plan and purpose for missions in the Old Testament. Two key arguments are found in these chapters. First, Israel’s call to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:4-6) placed her in a “mediatorial role” are she related to the pagan peoples around her (23). Second, the psalms are “one of the greatest missionary books in the world,” (29). Many of the songs of Israel encourage the worshippers of YHWH to speak of the salvific deeds of their God among the idolaters of the nations, that they might turn in faith to the promised Messiah. In the remaining chapters, Kaiser highlights individual Gentile believers in the Old Testament, Isaiah’s vision of the Messiah and Israel as a light to the Gentiles, and the ministry of various prophets to the nations. In the final chapter, he demonstrates how the apostle Paul argued for the legitimacy of his mission to the Gentiles on the basis of Old Testament texts.

Kaiser is to be commended for highlighting the often-overlooked place of Gentiles in the divine economy of salvation in the Old Testament. The prophetic ministry of Jonah alone is testimony to God’s concern for the conversion of the Gentiles. Numerous other prophets echoed Jonah in calling the nations and their leaders to repentance, and the Scriptures provide several examples of individuals who heeded their cry and became the spiritual sons of Abraham.

In his desire to demonstrate what he calls centrifugal mission, however, Kaiser fails to emphasize that the ultimate goal of such mission was not simply for the Israelites “to share their faith,” but to incorporate the Gentiles into the covenant

life and sacrificial liturgy of God's chosen people. They were not only to know the one true God, but to receive His circumcision and to consume His Passover lamb. By his one-sided approach, Kaiser can easily give the wrong impression. OT or NT mission which does not flow from and lead back to the divine liturgy of the church is not *missio Dei*.

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***Mission at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Vision for the Church.* Edited by Paul Varo Martinson. Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 1999. 400 pages. Paper. \$14.95.**

In June of 1998, the Congress on the World Mission of the Church was held under the auspices of Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota. It drew together some of the most prominent figures in missiological thinking today, including the likes of Roger Hedlund, Alan Neely, Rene Padilla, Lamin Sanneh, James Scherer, Andrew Walls, and J. Dudley Woodbury, among several others. It was an ecumenical and international gathering, with at least seventeen major denominations represented and some twenty-two nationalities. Although the theological perspective of the organizers of the event is decidedly conciliarist and liberal, it is interesting to note, according to the preface of this book, the two issues that shaped the purpose of the congress. The first was the reality that there are still vast numbers of people around the world who have not heard the gospel, or who have not heard it "fully." The second concern was the responsibility of North American Christians in light of that reality. This book contains twenty-nine major papers and presentations of the congress, organized into three parts: Four general papers, twenty-one colloquia papers, and four closing plenary presentations. The colloquia section is divided according to six geographical areas (Africa, China, former Soviet Union, India, Latin America, North America), and five topical concerns (Theology, Service, Structures, Education, and Information Technology). For each geographical or topical area, two studies are offered, one detailing the current status of the world area or topic under study, and the second offering a vision for the future. An accompanying volume, *The Proceedings of the Congress on the World Mission of the Church, St. Paul 1998*, is also available from the same publisher.

Of particular interest to this reviewer was the article by Rene Padilla, "The Future of Christianity in Latin America: Missiological Perspectives and Challenges." Padilla examines the explosion of popular religiosity in Latin America on the basis of two competing forces that impact the culture, society, and religious scene in the region today. One is the "closed, traditional" system (Roman Catholic Church), and the other is the rise of modern "technocracy." The traditional system, which came as a result of the imposition of Christianity

in the region through the power of the sword, and which strives to maintain its privileged place in civil society, is now faced with an increasingly pervasive "technocracy," which is becoming the dominant force. Technocracy is characterized by an "openness to change in every dimension of life," and its vulnerability to the assaults of mass media. The result is that, try as it might to go back to the old days of Roman Catholic hegemony in Latin America, "Latin America has become a shopping mall of religious options" (166). While the old Christendom model is passing away, in which the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed special privileges (including tremendous political power), Padilla warns that the younger protestant and evangelical churches must avoid what he calls the "Constantinian temptation," the temptation to seek those same kinds of privileges and worldly power, a temptation, he says, that is very real. His argument is that the Christian church in Latin America must totally discard the premises of Christendom, with its dependency on the power of this world and the love of power, in favor of seeking its identity on the basis of "the Kingdom of God and the power of love" (176). As he puts it: "Either Christendom or the church" (175).

Padilla's thought-provoking article is accompanied, and one could even say contrasted, by the article of Rafael Malpica, program director for Latin America of the ELCA's Division of Global Mission. Malpica focuses on the evils of the "neo-liberal economic model" in Latin America, and advocates greater responsibility on the part of Christians to change "the way we use the market and its products" (152). He criticizes the political systems that are being established throughout the region (many based on democratic principles), as being wholly inadequate. Indeed, he makes the sweeping generalization: "The political climate is . . . deteriorating" (158). In contrast to Lamin Sanneh, who postulates that Christianity has done much to preserve the cultures to which it has been brought, Malpica seems to blame Christian missions for the devastation of indigenous cultures.

The two articles on Latin America are merely an example of the variety of positions and perspectives on world mission found in this collection of essays. Interestingly, the presenters who came from outside of the United States often were more ready to unequivocally admit to the fundamental truth and exclusivity of Christianity over against the pluralist and relativistic value system that pervades North American culture today. While most readers of this journal would have a difficult time accepting much of what the various missiologists presented, it is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in contemporary issues in missions as seen from the ecumenical perspective, especially given the relatively modest price.

Douglas L. Rutt

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*Beside Still Waters: Searching for Meaning in an Age of Doubt.* By Gregg Easterbrook. New York: William Morrow, 1998, 381 pages, \$25.00 (Canada \$34.00).

The cover and title are beautiful and the subtitle is tantalizing. Easterbrook is an editor for *The Atlantic Monthly* magazine and is frequently published by other heavy weights *The New York Times*, *The New Republic*, *The New Yorker*). He reads widely and writes well.

Credit Easterbrook for genuinely wanting to offer some defense for faith in the age of doubt. He affirms the value of "spirituality" in a world where many believe nothing beyond the material and no longer see any ultimate meaning for life. He spots the erosion in purpose that has wormed its way ever more effectively into the Western world via existentialism. He pointedly contrasts its results with the Marxist charge that Christianity is an opiate: "If faith sedates some of its adherents against the world, existentialism can represent a complete anesthesia" (57). There is some recognition that "spirituality" has been a significant force for positive social change in American history at least since the Abolitionist Movement.

Easterbrook is also worth reading on the issue of science and religion. He is fully supportive of the work of science, but also sees limits to what it can offer regarding the meaning of human life. He points out the inconsistency of the modern world in the way it treats scientific theory: "today's rational, skeptical scientists believe a range of things that can sound notably less plausible than a sacred tree in a perfect Garden" (61).

Don't assume from such positives, however, that *Beside Still Waters* is a brief for orthodox faith. On balance the book is far more critical than favorable toward what Christianity has to offer. (He takes only occasional swipes at other religions.) Easterbrook wants to have his faith and beat it, too, so he attacks an "All-or-Nothing" approach to the question of spirituality. While he fights skepticism's assessment regarding faith, he even more vigorously beats up on "traditionalism" (he usually means Christianity) for demanding adherence to the "All" of Christian dogma.

Easterbrook's assaults on traditionalism are not new. In effect he offers "Process Theology Lite" introducing Charles Hartshorne (*Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*) to Karen Armstrong (*A History of God*). Theodicy asks: If God is both good and all-powerful, why does he/she/it allow pain and suffering? Thanks to Hartshorne, Easterbrook answers: *God isn't almighty, he's just doing the best he can.*

That's not all. Easterbrook *a la* Armstrong pounds on the other half of the theodicy question—that God is good. God was not good at all until He started to see the light in the second half of the Old Testament. Luckily, God's own

“spiritual journey” finally led Him to repent of His sins, stop punishing (or getting angry), and start being nice.

So here we are: while God has more power than you or I do and is almost as good as Easterbrook is, God is not powerful or wise enough to do much good for anyone other than teach us enlightenment via His own journey to the truth. The culmination of that journey is when God sacrifices His own son because of God’s own sin. Belief in God and Christ and even the cross has been salvaged.

As Easterbrook hammers Christian doctrine he makes use of innumerable questionable “facts” such as his assertion that the Bible knows nothing of original sin (119) or of salvation by grace (267); that it moves from portraying a demanding God of wrath toward an embrace of “nonstructured notions of faith” (262); that Jesus opposed all particular doctrines and urged only “virtue and faith” (277); that Christ eschews any obligation toward God and affirms only our need to be loved (311-312) and so forth. The whopper of all these examples, however, is his claim that the Bible does not affirm God’s omnipotence. In all these arguments Easterbrook is either being disingenuous or ignorant. His marshalling of evidence is laughable. For instance, references to “almighty” for God don’t count because they are flattery. Passages that affirm that with God “nothing is impossible” are ignored. References to God’s omnipotence (*pantokrator*) in 2 Corinthians can be nuanced away and the same claim in Revelation can be ignored.

This is indicative of Easterbrook the theologian: he acknowledges traditional Christian truths about God only when they are stated in the specific words he demands and endorse the (single) truth he wants to affirm. If, in spite of all that, he find the exact wording to refute his argument, he can always ignore it.

Easterbrook the historian is not a lot better. His caricatured religious history makes the events of the Old Testament and Christian history from Nicea to the nineteenth century perfect evidence to reject faith as an evil. The only conundrum is how, if Biblical faith led to so much unrelentingly miserable conduct, it could all turn nice beginning with the Abolitionist Movement. Then again, Easterbrook’s God does pretty much the same thing.

The tendency to play fast and loose with evidence is even there in his documentation. Easterbrook loves to pontificate without sources. For instance, he inaccurately describes Anselm’s ontological argument but doesn’t give a source for his twist (106). This is not for lack of endnotes. With forty-four pages of endnotes, it is interesting to note that he spends more time speaking parenthetically than citing and never gives page numbers in the works cited.

The underlying fault of this book is one which is prevalent not only in cultured despisers of Christianity, but within the church itself: an inability to take seriously the wrath of God as an aspect of His character and, therefore, His love. “Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no

good?"—Isaiah 44:10. Easterbrook's god can do no good: his "Maker" is anemic and, even worse, does not care enough about people to mind that we fail to worship our Maker and so to see the true worth of our lives and the lives of those around us.

Easterbrook claims to be planted firmly in the middle of two extremes, advocating spirituality and a meaning for life against the skeptics and undogmatic belief in "faith" against traditionalists. In the end, however, his feeble spirituality offers only his insistence that people *should* believe their lives have meaning without any real reason to do so.

Having said that, there is good reason for a pastor to get this book (try a library). It shows the vacuity of "spirituality" when it is separated from content. It reveals the need for the church to deal openly and emphatically with the wrath of God and the whole of Christian truth.

Larry M. Vogel  
Martin Luther Chapel  
Pennsauken, New Jersey

***Handbook for William: A Carolingian Woman's Counsel for Her Son.* By Dhouda. Translated with an introduction by Carol Neel. Washington, District of Columbia: Catholic University of America Press, 1991, 1999. 163 Pages.**

This translation first appeared in 1991. Neel has supplied an afterword to update current textual scholarship and additional studies on the years since the first edition. The book itself is a ninth-century mother's handbook of instruction to her eldest son. In the introduction, Neel provides a fine historical survey to place the writing in context.

Dhouda was a Frankish noblewoman and demonstrates a deep piety in this writing to her son. Indeed, it is a piety that focuses on morality, but it also reveals a deep faith grounded in the Psalms. Trained in the palace schools, she knew her psalter well. The handbook is filled with a constant stream of biblical imagery. She begins with a confession of the Trinity and instructs her son to ponder this mystery. She teaches him to pray and tells him to make the sign of the cross while gazing upon the crucifix over his bed. At the end of her writing she returns to this theme as she gives advice on the praying of specific psalms in connections with certain trials and needs.

Having addressed the primary questions of salvation, Dhouda instructs her son about his role in society and sets it in the context of the history of David's household. There is a lengthy instruction regarding obedience to his father and to his ruler.

The book provides a valuable insight into the piety of the medieval wife and mother. However, it is also a reminder of the importance of grounding our

members in the knowledge of the biblical history, not as an unrelated example of the past, but so that they might see themselves and their lives in view of that history.

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*Perspectives on War in the Bible.* By John A. Wood. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998.

John A. Wood, professor of religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, attempts in this volume to document, systematize, and analyze the various (and often contradictory) perspectives on war that he hears voiced in the Old and New Testaments. The presuppositions of the author, which are confessed in the Introduction, indicate that, for Wood, the Scriptures contain not only God's word, but also "human viewpoints incompatible with the overwhelming picture of Yahweh that shines through its pages" (5). The "human viewpoints" against which Wood most vehemently protests are those that claim divine sanction for the exhaustive slaughter of the enemies of God (as, for example, in the Apocalypse of Saint John [91-96]).

Wood traces the biblical development of three primary perspectives on war: the Holy War, pacifism, and the "just war." Under Holy War, he distinguishes those conflicts in which Israel actively engages the enemy, those in which Israel passively observes Yahweh battling on her behalf, wars that are vengeful and total, and wars that are redemptive and inclusive. Since, as Wood confesses, he is "strongly attracted to the power and beauty of the pacifistic tradition" (7), it comes as no surprise to hear him assert at the beginning of the chapter on pacifism that "a strong pacifistic orientation . . . thrived throughout Israelite history" (104). The evidence he presents to support this assertion, however, contradicts his argument. For example, Wood states that Abraham reveals a penchant for pacifism in his refusal to fight with his nephew, Lot, over land (Genesis 13:5-17; but compare Genesis 14:1-16!). Furthermore, "the people of Israel initially reject Moses as leader because he has killed an Egyptian guard (Exodus 2:11-15), indicating that a violent leader is unacceptable" (107). Examples of such tendentious exegesis abound in this chapter. The third perspective on war, the "just war," suggests that some of Israel's conflicts were waged not as a result of a direct mandate from God, but "on the basis of a universal sense of justice" (140). After his analysis of these three perspectives on war, Wood concludes that "great diversities of opinion [about war] existed simultaneously throughout most of the biblical period" (5). Because Wood himself is avowedly ambivalent about war, the "biblical ambivalence" he discovers is of some comfort to him (7).

An understanding and embrace of the doctrine of the two kingdoms would have obviated much of Wood's hand wringing over seemingly contradictory views on war in the biblical record. With this hermeneutical guide missing,

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however, the reader is left only with question marks, dead ends, and bitter ambiguity about what God would have us think of war.

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