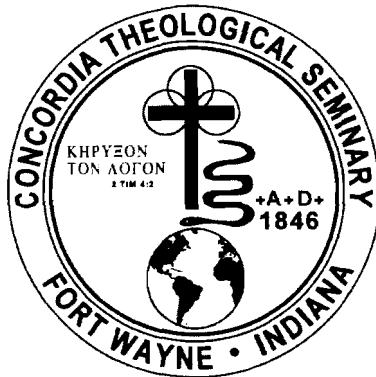


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Book Reviews

Pastoral Ministry according to Paul: A Biblical Vision. By James W. Thompson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2006. 174 pages. \$17.99.

A precise definition of the "New Perspective on Paul" eludes consensus, thereby allowing diverse theological opinions to vie for inclusion under this popular moniker. While agreement on every detail of the New Perspective remains a challenge, all agree on what the New Perspective is *not*—namely, Luther's reading of Paul's justification *sola fide* as a polemic against legalistic forms of works righteousness. James Thompson argues that this denial of the Reformation perspective on Paul has direct implications for pastoral ministry. In lieu of *sola fide*, Paul's central thought is "a theology of transformation which provides the basis for Paul's pastoral theology" (19).

In Thompson's view, Philippians and 1 Thessalonians provide the key to understanding Paul. These epistles reflect upon a "community that lives in the 'now' between God's creative act of establishing the community and the 'day of Christ'" (59). In this "now," "the ethical progression by which the community abounds in love will result in the community's blamelessness on the day of Christ" (44). Blamelessness through love, rather than justification through faith, becomes Paul's ultimate desire. Justification is necessary to achieve blamelessness, though it merely provides the pretext for transformation or sanctification. "Although God's righteousness includes the forgiveness of the sinner . . . it includes significantly more. God's righteousness cannot be separated sharply from sanctification" (96–97). Moreover, "the ultimate result of sanctification is 'eternal life'" (104).

Yet many passages in these two epistles remain unaddressed. For instance, Thompson is silent on Paul's treatment of faith versus blamelessness in Philippians 3. Paul counts his blamelessness as "rubbish" and "suffers its loss" in order that he might obtain that "which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (3:6, 8–9).

A hypothesis that presumes Pauline support for progressive sanctification must inevitably reconcile with Romans 7. In place of detailed exegesis, Thompson simply claims that "Paul is not speaking autobiographically" (106) even though Paul speaks in the first person singular, "I." Paul's confession, "I do the very thing I hate" because of "sin that dwells in me" (7:15, 17), simply becomes a warning to the sanctified about the potential threat of sinning. This leaves the author free to conclude, "Paul does not build a pastoral theology on the basis of our acceptance that we each remain 'simul justus et peccator.' . . . Paul argues that transformation is already occurring and that the community now 'fulfills the just requirement of the law' through the Spirit" (117). With salvation dependent upon the perfection of the community, the traditional role of the minister as "the evangelist who offers God's grace to individuals" is "no longer tenable" (15, 149). Instead, ministry is the "*participation in God's work of*

transforming the community of faith until it is 'blameless' at the coming of Christ" (20; Thompson's italics).

By denying the doctrines of justification *sola fide* and *simul iustus et peccator*, Thompson succeeds in articulating a theology opposed to that of Luther. While he takes much from the New Perspective, Thompson's conclusions extend well beyond New Perspective exegesis and more accurately reflect his Church of Christ tradition. Since Thompson fails to address the specific passages that pose the greatest stumbling blocks to his transformation-based soteriology, the reader is left with serious doubts as to whether Thompson's viewpoint is indeed faithful to Paul.

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***Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary In Your Community.* By Ed Stetzer and David Putnam. Nashville: Broadman, 2006. 244 pages. Hardcover.**

This book raises the missiological questions of indigenization and contextualization: How does the church communicate the Gospel and give expression to the Christian faith in a way that is relevant and meaningful to the culture and people who surround her? How does the church serve as a transforming agent in the very culture that sustains her?

A second assumption of the authors, that North America is one of the world's largest mission fields and most unchurched global populations, defines the content and urgency of this text.

The purpose of the book is to challenge church leaders in North America to think like missionaries and to break the missional code that enables individual congregations to communicate the gospel in work and witness with clarity to those who are unchurched. Breaking the code is seeing the unchurched as people groups with ethnicity and other demographic specifics, as population segments with particular lifestyles and values, and as cultural environments with geographic, language, education, and other interests that give people common identity. Breaking the missional code implies loving people like Jesus—incarnationally. It means being among them with understanding, compassion, commitment to action, and proclamation of the gospel.

Although the authors' theological language is evangelical, the fresh challenge to break the missional code is valuable. While they do not engage in broad theological reflection of the church, they are most helpful in bringing insight to the mission purpose and challenge of the church today in North America. While they could have written of single missional examples of growing churches, they are honest to call readers to the reality that one size

does not fit all who desire to be missionally effective. While the authors do not spend extensive time speaking to the issue of the Holy Spirit's primary role of winning the lost and building the church through the proclamation of the gospel, they certainly include it, and their sociology of "best practices" in mission is valuable.

Readers who want to thoughtfully engage the challenge of breaking the missional code in order to be Christ's witnesses, especially to their Jerusalem (Acts 1:8), will find this book to be a very fine resource. With a North American population that is transitioning from a modern world view to a postmodern world view, Christian to post-Christian culture, and, now, surpassing 100 million unchurched, the Christian church cannot ignore the call to mission nor can it be comfortable in isolation from the population that surrounds it.

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***Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study.* By Markus Bockmuehl. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2006. 297 pages. Paperback. \$21.99**

This volume, the first in Baker Academic's new *Studies in Theological Interpretation* series, charts some of the directions that New Testament scholarship has traveled—or shall we say stumbled—over the past several decades, but primarily issues challenges for the discipline to recapture its task (thus the subtitle). Markus Bockmuehl, who recently moved from a professorship in biblical studies at the University of Cambridge to one at the University of St. Andrews, is among a growing number of significant New Testament scholars who are showing the poverty of purely literary approaches to the Scriptures and who are calling for truly theological interpretation. (Richard Hays and Francis Watson are two other examples.) Although this volume serves up much that is helpful, I will highlight two primary contributions.

First, Bockmuehl emphasizes that the study of New Testament texts as a sympathetic implied exegete is central to the interpretative task. Sharing the world view and convictions of those who were expected to read and understand the original text puts one in a much better position to understand the text than taking the posture of a detached scholar or a critical scoffer. He explains this by using a powerful analogy from his time at Cambridge: "there are limits to how much you can usefully say about the stained glass windows of King's College Chapel without actually going in to see them from the inside" (75).

Second, Bockmuehl offers a very intriguing *apologia* for living memory as the basis for the history communicated about Jesus in the Gospels. Against the

historical skepticism that has plagued the study of Jesus in the past century, Bockmuehl joins his seasoned voice to a growing chorus refocusing our attention on how texts communicate historical and theological reality, a chorus that includes Samuel Byrskog (*Story as History—History as Story: Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient and Oral History*, 2000) and Richard Bauckham (*Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2006). Readers will not find much in this book about the interpretation of particular New Testament texts, but they will definitely learn about the art of interpreting the New Testament.

Charles A. Gieschen

***Lively Stone: The Autobiography of Berthold von Schenk*. Edited by C. George Fry and Joel R. Kurz. Forward by John Hannah. Delhi, NY: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 2006. Paper. 152 pages. \$12.50.**

Berthold von Schenk (1895–1974), long time pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in the Bronx, was controversial in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for such liturgical innovations as sung eucharists and chasubles. With the discovery of his handwritten autobiography, he tells his own captivating story. Handwritten manuscripts retain an authenticity that computer-composed documents lack because they allow for a constant re-writing. Authenticity is sacrificed for the sake of precision. Have no fear—the editors put corrections alongside of the original text. Discovery of the handwritten manuscript reads like finding the temple scrolls during Hezekiah’s reign. Charles Evanson, deployed by our seminary to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania, knew that such a manuscript existed. With the aid of Concordia Historical Institute director Martin Noland, it was found in its archives. The editors are C. George Fry, a former faculty member, and seminary alumnus Joel R. Kurz.

As a younger pastor I was fascinated by the autobiographies of pastors, Lutheran or not. This one is “a must” for Missourians, especially for those who are interested in knowing how we evolved as a church body between the 1920s and the 1970s. As a twenty-two year old seminary student, I met Schenk in his dark, paneled office at Our Savior’s in the Bronx. He was chomping on a cigar, although photos show him with a pipe. At that time one could smoke a cigar and still be a Christian. There was also a personal connection. He grew up in the parsonage of Trinity Lutheran Church in Rockville, Connecticut, the same church where forty years later I would be pastor. The dedication of a new edifice provided the second and last time that I met him. Sadly, Trinity belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

In his lifetime von Schenk was not without his detractors, and *Lively Stone* has stirred up others, but few can match his record, from seminary days into his retirement, of turning around impossible situations. He built a parochial

grade school and high school with a congregation of little over 200 members in the Bronx. His was a life of beating the odds. Down-on-their-heels congregations in St. Louis and Newark were challenges that he wanted.

There is a note of personal tragedy—or is it insult? After World War II he was approached by the assistant to the LCMS president to head the relief effort among the independent German Lutheran churches. After everyone agreed to this, the LCMS found that von Schenk was not the one for job. He then offered his services to aid the territorial churches. (Why not?) For this he was named a Knight of St. John and received a doctor of theology degree from the University of Marburg, where Rudolph Bultmann was formulating his hermeneutic of demythologizing and ushering in the town church. Schenk has some nice things to say about the method, but then goes into reverse. (Computer generated manuscripts lose the back and forth that goes on in the human mind.)

Somehow von Schenk was able to become friends with anybody who was anybody. He accomplished the impossible by being elected to the Board of Education of the City of New York and then became chairman—a Protestant clergyman in a city which had more Jews than any other city and with so many Italian and Irish Catholics that Archbishop Cardinal Spellman was a virtual city official. On these pages Schenk spills everything out regarding what he thinks about other pastors and what he thinks about their preaching. Since I grew up in that era in New York, there is a bit of nostalgia to it all.

The editors guide the readers through von Schenk's teaching on the Lord's Supper, which may not be as fully developed as most would like. Two years after his founding of the St. James Society (circa 1933), he dissociated himself from it because it had become devoted to liturgical formalism. After leaving the Bronx, he moved to his farm near Albany and obtained use of an Episcopal church building to found a Lutheran congregation. He did not get the support of the district president because he favored communion every Sunday. (Imagine that!) Explanatory footnotes supplied by the editors provide a running and really a separate narrative along with the autobiography itself.

Stories of other ministers are waiting to be told. Until they are, this one holds first place. Readers will be informed, annoyed, and delighted. All this makes for a good read.

David P. Scaer

Books Received

- Anderson, Ray S. *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006. 236 Pages. Paperback. \$17.00.
- Bailey, Wilma Ann. *"You Shall Not Kill" or "You Shall Not Murder": The Assault on a Biblical Text*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005. 94 Pages. Paperback. \$10.95.
- Balswick, Jack O., and Judith K. Balswick. *A Model for Marriage: Covenant, Grace, Empowerment and Intimacy*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006. 240 Pages. Paperback. \$19.00.
- Baukhham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006. 538 Pages. Hardcover. \$32.00.
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- Bratt, James D., ed. *Antirevivalism in Antebellum America: A Collection of Religious Voices*. Chapel Hill, NC: Rutgers University Press, 2006. 278 Pages. Paperback. \$25.95.
- Boda, Mark J., and Gordon T. Smith, eds. *Repentance in Christian Theology*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006. 425 Pages. Paperback. \$39.95.
- Bond, Edward L. *Spreading the Gospel in Colonial Virginia: Preaching Religion and Community with Selected Sermons and Other Primary Documents*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005. 271 Pages. Paperback. \$24.95.
- Boyle, Elizabeth M. *Science as Sacred Metaphor: An Evolving Revelation*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006. 138 Pages. Paperback. \$14.95.
- Buel Jr., Richard. *America on the Brink: How the Political Struggle of the War of 1812 Almost Destroyed the Young Republic*. New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2005. 302 Pages. Hardcover. \$29.95.
- Burkhard, John J. *Apostolicity Then and Now: An Ecumenical Church in a Postmodern World*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004. 250 Pages. Paperback. \$27.95.
- Burnell, Peter. *The Augustinian Person*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005. 218 Pages. Paperback. \$24.95.
- Butler, Rex D. *The New Prophecy and "New Visions": Evidence of Montanism in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*. Patristic Monograph Series 18. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006. 211 Pages. Hardcover. \$44.95.
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- Chadwick, Henry. *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 134 Pages. Paperback. \$9.95.
- Chan, Simon. *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006. 208 Pages. Paperback. \$22.00.
- Cook, Joan E. *Hear, O Heavens and Listen, O Earth: An Introduction to the Prophets*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006. 323 Pages. Paperback. \$24.95.

- Crisp, Oliver D. *Jonathan Edwards and the Metaphysics of Sin*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005. 146 Pages. Paperback. \$89.98.
- Crouter, Richard. *Friedrich Schleiermacher between Enlightenment and Romanticism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 277 Pages. Hardcover. \$80.00.
- Cummings, Owen F. *Eucharistic Doctors: A Theological History*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005. 274 Pages. Paperback. \$19.95.
- Curran, Charles E. *Loyal Dissent: Memoir of a Catholic Theologian*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006. 297 Pages. Paperback. \$26.95.
- Daley, Brian E. *Gregory of Nazianzus*. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006. 282 Pages. Paperback. \$35.95.
- Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2006. 348 Pages. Paperback. \$34.00.
- Demacopoulos, George E. *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006. 288 Pages. Paperback. \$30.00.
- Dever, Mark. *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005. 544 Pages. Hardcover. \$29.99.
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- Duncan, J. Ligon, and Susan Hunt. *Women's Ministry in the Local Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006. 176 Pages. Paperback. \$14.99.
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