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Book Reviews

***Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony.* By Richard Bauckham. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 537 Pages. Hardcover. $32.00.**

Missouri Synod theology has tended to draw a straight line from the Spirit's inspiration of the Scriptures to the Confessions and then to the synodical resolutions. The synod's positions were viewed as what the Spirit had in mind in inspiring the Bible. Historical contexts of the documents did not play a significant role in theology. Outside the synod, theology was taking another route. Beginning at the end of the sixteenth century and coming into full bloom in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, New Testament scholarship saw its task in locating the lines leading from the man Jesus to the New Testament documents. The task was to trace the development of what Jesus had said and done through various stages into written form. To rephrase a biblical citation, "between [Jesus] and [the Gospels] a great chasm has been fixed, in order that [anyone] who would pass from [the documents] to [the written accounts] may not be able." Since one scholar came up with a Jesus different from what another did, no certain picture of Jesus could emerge. Faced with the frustration of never uncovering the real Jesus, literary, redaction, canon, and narrative criticisms took the Gospels at face value and created a fundamentalism that was not unlike the older one in circumventing the historical nitty-gritty of the who, what, when, and where of Jesus. These approaches were more than a bit tinged with anti-incarnationalism, because they turned the biblical papyri (pages) into insurmountable walls preventing access to the man Jesus.

An antidote to these approaches has now been provided by Richard Bauckham in his *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. It turns the once popular form criticism on its head. At the outset it should be stated that all past historical events remain at arm's length from us because we cannot reconstruct a past occurrence. We can do no more than compare historical reports, which are our only paths into the past. Ideally these accounts come from the eyewitnesses, those who knew the eyewitnesses, or those who had access to credible documents. On the basis of these principles, Bauckham tests the New Testament Gospels for their credibility. Through this approach he breaks rank with the majority of New Testament scholars who have assumed that what the Gospels preserved circulated anonymously through communities before it became settled on the written page (1–8). The operating word is *anonymously*. Foundational for Bauckham is the work of Samuel Byrskog, who showed that good historians in the ancient world depended more on the eyewitnesses to an event than stories from anonymous sources. Byrskog summarizes his position in this way: "The gospel narratives . . . are thus syntheses of history and story, of the oral history of an eyewitness and interpretative and narrativizing

procedures of an author" (10). This should be compared with the older historical-grammatical approach, which properly assumed that the events reported in the biblical texts actually happened but did not take into account how the events were interpreted by those who saw them, heard other accounts, and finally wrote them down. Examining the historical character of a biblical text did not belong to its interpretation or the theological task.

Papias, the first century bishop of Hierapolis, a city in southwest Asia Minor (in the area where John, Paul, and Peter were active), provides a test case for Bauckham. In his *Exposition of the Logia of the Lord,* Papias made use of written Gospels alongside of the recollections of those who knew those who accompanied Jesus (12–38). To advance his argument about locating credible witnesses, Bauckham takes the up-to-this-time unknown approach of comparing the personal names found in the Gospels with names common at the time of Jesus (39–66). Should the names found in the Gospels not match those found at that time, then it could be assumed that the documents come from a later period. They match (67–92). In classical form critical scholarship, oral tradition is unharnessed until it is set down in documents. Names in the Gospel accounts anchor them down to real persons. Eyewitnesses to Jesus were not anonymous. Bauckham demonstrates that the Twelve were "the authoritative guarantors of the stories they continued to tell" (93). Challenged again is form criticism which saw bits and pieces of Jesus floating around from his death to their being written down more or less a half century later. The Book of Acts, along with Matthew, Mark, and Luke, shows how the Twelve were factors in monitoring the oral tradition (93–113). Names in Mark, Luke, and John were not chosen at random, but they are those of the participants in the events in Jesus' life. As eyewitnesses they are the source of Gospels' contents (114–154). Mark is written from Peter's perspective but is not a mere transcript of his recollections. Bauckham supports this by showing that the pronoun "we" in this Gospel provides Peter's perspective as one of the Twelve, and "I" reflects his personal relation to Jesus. Peter's perspectives are not strictly private but were part of the public proclamation (155–182). A chapter on anonymous persons in Mark's passion narrative takes up the problem of how sleeping disciples heard Jesus' prayers in the garden. One solution is that the naked young man may have been close enough to hear Jesus. Borrowing a solution from Barbara Saunderson, the disciples may have not fallen asleep immediately and may have dosed on and off (183–201). Characteristically Bauckham allows for more than one explanation of these events that came to be recorded in the Gospels.

Another chapter dissects Papias' references to Mark and Matthew (202–239) and challenges a widespread view that this bishop said that Mark's Gospel was disorderly. Bauckham argues that Papias regarded Mark as a reliable historical source (227–228). In the chapter "Models of Oral Tradition," he outlines how oral tradition was transmitted. As mentioned above, according to classical form criticism, tidbits from the life of Jesus were passed

on in an almost haphazard way. In contrast, the Swedish scholars Harald Riesenfeld and Birger Gerhardsson have argued that Jesus used the rabbinic method so that each word was preserved as it was first spoken (249–252). Bauckham takes a middle position (252–257). Oral traditions remain intact but are adjusted for the different situation. Another factor is that various traditions converged with and informed each other (285). Oral tradition already began in the lifetime of Jesus; a view so obvious that it is remarkable that it has not played a more prominent role in Gospel criticism. This means that during the lifetime of Jesus his sayings and his deeds were being shared and passed on by others. As the church spread out from Palestine, oral tradition was supervised by the mother church in Jerusalem under the leadership of Peter and John who could distinguish authentic materials from disputable ones (240–263). Bauckham adopts Hengel's position that the Gospels were not anonymous in the strictest sense because their recipients knew their authors. The author of a dedicated writing such as Luke-Acts would hardly have been unknown to its patron. Whoever the author of the Fourth Gospel may have been, he was known to the first readers (300–305).

Bauckham also introduces the concept of collective memory alongside individual eyewitness reports. Collective or shared memory is defined as traditions held by entire communities which were derived from the eyewitnesses themselves (314–318). In chapter twelve, "Eyewitness and Memory" (319–357), Bauckham tests his eyewitness theory on non-biblical accounts, another novel methodology. Memories can be affected by emotions and hence multiple meanings, but for the most part they are reliable. One chapter is devoted to "The Gospel of John as Eyewitness Testimony" (358–383) and another to "The Witness of the Beloved Disciple" (384–411). In the latter, Bauckham argues that the author's interpretation of the reported events does not detract from but lends to this Gospel's credibility. For the record, Bauckham does not hold that the author of the Fourth Gospel is John, the son of Zebedee (452, 458–463).

Even with such a marvelous book as *Jesus and the Eyewitness*, one must break rank at several places with Bauckham. Along with most practitioners of his profession, he places the writing of the Gospels between the mid 60s to the death of the beloved disciple, probably circa 90, though no specific date is given. Nothing startling here, but this is asserted rather than argued: "So the Gospels were written over the period from the death of Peter to that of the Beloved Disciples, when the eyewitness were ceasing to be available" (310). This fits in with Bauckham's thesis that the gospels "were written . . . to maintain this accessibility and function of the eyewitnesses beyond their lifetimes" (308). Agreed, but death was not the only reason to make the eyewitness accounts accessible in written documents like Gospels. Another, perhaps even more pressing, reason for encoding the eyewitness accounts was the expansion of the church from Jerusalem to Rome with stops in between in Asia Minor, Greece, and North Africa. The further oral tradition moved from

the apostolic center in Jerusalem, the weaker the signal of its oral message became. Oral tradition may have flourished in the world in which Jesus and the apostles lived, but it was easily susceptible to corruption in the pagan world of the Gentiles. There were simply not enough apostles to supervise that oral tradition, especially if it was carried by those who had second- and third-hand knowledge of it.

Thus, if a Gospel like Mark could have taken form in the late 60s following the death of Peter, as Bauckham argues, could not another Gospel have been created for the stumbling Gentile communities that would have been in dire need of one? The Pauline corpus came into existence because this apostle found written documents more useful in nailing down basic points in the Christian proclamation and in addressing aberrations. Paul knew that whatever oral tradition arose from his preaching in the Gentile churches was not doing the job for which it was intended. It had to be written down. A need for a written Gospel for former pagans would have been equally pressing, if not even greater. An earlier date for a Gospel, say in the 40s and 50s, would fit into Bauckham's view that written documents about Jesus coexisted with the oral tradition.

For a moment let us return to Bauckham's argument that the Gospels took the place of the eyewitnesses themselves. The Gospels would survive after their writers had died. This is not only a plausible but a necessary view in the light of John 21:23, where the author claims that he will not be immune to death. Peter was martyred around 64; however, martyrdom for all the surviving Twelve was a real possibility from the very beginning (Acts 12:2). The impending death of the Lord's premier disciple might have been the impetus to preserve in writing his recollections (hence Mark), but this impetus was present long before Peter's martyrdom. Acts makes it clear that the Twelve and Paul were open targets from the very beginning. Today dying without a will is unconscionable. Dying without arranging to record their recollections would have been equally irresponsible.

Seeing the Gospels as dependent on the eyewitnesses brings up the question of authorship. Bauckham holds that the author of the Fourth Gospel is an eyewitness, even if this John is not the son of Zebedee. He will get some flack on this one. No one will argue that Luke was an eyewitness, because according to his own testimony he consulted with the eyewitnesses. Mark is a half-and-half situation. Most of it comes from the testimony of Peter, but that young man with the loose and lost garment is part of the mix, at least to the Garden of Gethsemane. In the catalog of names recorded in his Gospel, he compares favorably with his co-evangelists (56–66). For Bauckham, Matthew's origins lie in mist. The feast in Matthew's house might be taken as a self-reference by the first evangelist, but Bauckham holds that the evangelist took the account from Mark and substituted the name of Matthew for Levi (108–112). This undermines Bauckham's arguments that Gospels were not strictly

anonymous because the recipients knew their authors and that the Gospels contain credible accounts. This shell game of substituting Matthew for Levi would have hardly gone unnoticed, especially for a Gospel which soon came to occupy the premier position in the early church almost to the exclusion of the other Gospels. Bauckham assumes—but does not argue—that Mark is the first Gospel (110), perhaps as the necessary price to remain in the guild of New Testament scholars. An added tax for membership requires that Matthew existed first as a Hebrew document, which later was translated into Greek (223–224). There are several reasons for disputing this, not the least of which is that a Hebrew document does not exist today and Papias' reference to Matthew having written in *hebraidi dialecto* can be the evangelist's style, which with negative remarks about Jews and Gentiles is still offensive. Had Jesus preached chiefly in Hebrew, documents preserving his words would have been treasured. By the first century Hebrew had become an archaic, liturgical language and had been replaced by Aramaic. This raises the question of whether an Aramaic document would have served a church which was conceived in a Hellenistic world to which it would have spread its message. A document written either in Hebrew or Aramaic of which only Greek copies remain would leave us at the mercy of the translator. In any event, if Jesus preached to crowds, he did not preach in Hebrew.

While Bauckham advances his theory of the eyewitness on all the Gospels, Acts, and 1 Corinthians, Matthew receives the least attention, simply because this Gospel is presented as being the farthest removed from the life of Jesus. Now if Jesus preached chiefly in Aramaic, which seems likely, the transmission of his teaching in the Greek text of Matthew's Gospel would deserve the most attention. Bauckham holds that the Twelve in the early church were the guarantors of what Jesus did and said (93–112). In Matthew an entire discourse is devoted to them; their names being listed as "disciples" and "apostles" almost in the same breath (10:1–2) would suggest that what they preached came from what they heard and saw Jesus say and do.

Bauckham sees no clue to this Gospel's author in the similarity of the name Matthew (*Matthaios)* to the word disciple (*mathete*) in his call (9:9–10). This possible and dismissed allusion was new to me. More significantly, Bauckham skips over 13:51–52 where the Greek for "having been discipled," *matheteutheis*, would have immediately recalled *Matthaios*, since this name had been introduced in 10:2 accompanied with the pejorative reminder that he was a tax collector. In 10:51 "the one who was discipled" is called a "scribe," also an unfavorable designation in all the Gospels (e.g., 23:13, 15), except here and in 23:24. The scribe in 13:51–52 might be described as eyewitness, but the picture here is of one who actually hears and writes. He does not depend on eyewitnesses.

In challenging form criticism, Bauckham has knocked over a house of cards. His writing style makes the most profound and complex ideas accessible

even to the uninitiated. Those using the Three Year Lectionary will be able to add a few new twists to their preaching of the Gospel readings. This book should be considered one of the most valuable biblical works of our time.

David P. Scaer

***Understanding the Bible: A Basic Introduction to Biblical Interpretation.* By George T. Montague. Revised and expanded edition. New York: Paulist Press, 2007. 274 pages. Paperback. $19.95.**

At times the Bible's message seems clear, while at other times it seems maddeningly opaque. So it is that a child easily grasps the message of salvation, while the learned pull out their hair trying to decipher what a given passage actually means. We often feel like the Ethiopian eunuch, who, when asked if he understood a passage from Isaiah, answered, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" (Acts 8:31).

Montague, a seasoned Roman Catholic scholar, steps into the interpretative confusion and offers here a sturdy and helpful introduction to biblical hermeneutics. He divides the work into two main sections. In part one he addresses "the road already traveled, which discusses how our predecessors have struggled with the question of biblical interpretation" (vii). This, I believe, is the most helpful and instructive part of the book. Along the way, Montague speaks about how the Bible interprets the Bible, and how it has been interpreted throughout church history. Those who are looking for *the* answer or *the* key to Biblical interpretation may be frustrated by a survey of the past. History is long on guidance but short on specific guidelines. There are, however, some things we should note. First of all, the Bible, though diverse, has a certain unity, and that unity is to be found in Christ. As Montague notes, "To New Testament Christians, Jesus is the key to the puzzle of the Old Testament. It's as if suddenly everything that was dreamed of is realized and everything that was obscure becomes clear" (16). The entire Bible is, in fact, a Christian book in which Christ is the fulfillment not only of specific prophecies but also of "institutions, images, and events" (16). Since there is one God, the biblical narrative follows certain patterns. Though the Bible is composed of many books, the story moves forward as if in chapters and finds its culmination in the person and work of Christ.

The author's discussion of the church fathers is succinct and illustrative. He focuses particularly on Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine. To be sure, Montague notes the distinctive approach taken by each of these fathers. He shows how Clement attempted "to construct a systematic bridge between the Christian faith and the Greek world" (31). He also examines Origen's use of allegorical interpretation, and Chrysostom's more intentional literalism. He also notes Jerome's insistence on the presence of the Spirit in interpretation, as well as his belief that the "truth of the text—

that is, its *spirit*—is to be found deeper within the text, not outside it" (43). Finally, he shows how Augustine saw the integrity of the biblical witness and understood all of Scripture to teach the charity and love of God.

Those looking for a reader's manual on how to understand the Scriptures may be disappointed. The fathers, however, do exhibit some marked tendencies. As Montague writes, "They knew that the Christ-event threw a new light on the Old Testament, and their solution was to use the Old to illustrate the New" (48). In other words, the fathers interpreted all of the Scriptures christologically.

Montague's discussion of medieval exegesis is well worth reading, as is his assessment of the Reformation. He notes that, like the fathers, Luther held that "Christ is the Bible's central theme" (69). Further, the Bible is a book for preaching. He then proceeds, interestingly, to show how Calvin differed from Luther. For Luther, as previously for Jerome, the Spirit came from within the biblical text. In contrast, he claims that for Calvin, "the text only communicates and informs. It is the reader who is inspired to discern the written word to be God's word" (71).

As Montague moves forward historically, he shows how biblical interpretation became increasingly individual instead of communal and how the Bible became the target of skeptics and the subject of scholars. Finally, he surveys nineteenth- and twentieth-century hermeneutics more generally, that is "the theory or philosophy of how human beings derive understanding and meaning from any text or communication" (96). He bounces along from Schleiermacher to Dilthey, and from Heidegger to Ricoeur. The best section is where he criticizes Ricoeur's theory of deconstruction and the claim that language, finally, has no meaning. As he colorfully describes the situation,

> Interpretation becomes a kind of linguistic Marxism, a struggle to level all distinctions linguistically, or at least to say that one interpretation is as good as another. If the modern period is identified with the Enlightenment and its rationalistic approach to the Bible, the postmodern period is identified with the decentered relativism, a new kind of agnosticism, of which deconstruction is one example. (143)

In the end, Montague argues, words mean things.

The second part of the book is a standard survey of the various "criticisms," including historical, rhetorical, narrative, social-scientific, and canonical criticisms. For the most part, Montague writes in a measured, even-handed way, and with a healthy dose of skepticism. Underlying his discussion is the helpful notion that ultimately the Scriptures belong not to the academy but to the church. One wishes Montague were a little more insistent on the historicity of the Scriptures, which in too facile a manner he describes as a "mixture of history and theology" (149). We could agree if he meant that the two categories were coterminous, but Montague seems all too willing to cede

history to the scholars. Instead, Montague finds truth in the continuing work of the Holy Spirit within the church.

Thus, for example, Montague seems to concede that the New Testament documents may not point directly to Christ's divinity, but that, nonetheless, Christ's divinity is established in the ongoing life of the church. Or, as he puts it, "Development need not be deviation" (157). On the plus side, he ably presents the views of N. T. Wright, who generally asserts the historical character and reliability of the Scriptures.

So, will this book change your life? Probably not. But, if you are looking for a good, fairly conservative reference book for hermeneutics, this is not a bad place to start. If the second half of the book seems to be off here and there, simply reread the first half and be refreshed by the christological hermeneutic of the church fathers. That is a good enough reason to buy the book.

Peter J. Scaer

***The Rights of God: Islam, Human Rights, and Comparative Ethics.* By Irene Oh. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007. 158 pages. Paperback. $24.95.**

Irene Oh begins this rather peculiar book by stating what seems like the obvious: "Promoting Islam as a defender of human rights is fraught with difficulties." However, she insists this should not be the case and argues that Islam can make valuable contributions to human rights dialogue. The problem, she believes, is that Islam has not been given a fair hearing. So she takes a closer look. Examining the writings of three Muslim intellectuals, she alleges to have found a deep concern for democracy, toleration, and freedom of conscience within the tradition of Islam.

The most promising of the three authors she highlights is the contemporary Iranian intellectual 'Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945). He is one of a growing number of Muslim scholars seeking to make Islamic culture more amenable to modern secular values. It is no wonder, then, that Oh sees him, as well as those who take his approach, as potential contributors to ethical discourse. It is a wonder, though, why she chose the Indian Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979) and Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) as her other two examples. Indeed, both were prolific writers; their commentaries on the Qur'ān were and still are widely read by Muslims across the globe. But those acquainted with their work knows that they were extremely hostile towards and advocated open *jihād* against non-Muslims. At best, they argued for democracy, toleration, and freedom of conscience in accordance with Islamic *sharī'a*, where full human rights are only awarded to Muslims. Oh even admits as much. But she argues throughout her book—almost *ad nauseum*—that they only did so as a reaction against western colonialism. In other words, it was not Islam that led Maududi and Qutb to their extreme conclusions; rather, the

fault lies with the west and their constant mingling in the affairs of the Muslim world.

This book is typical of much of the literature on Islam produced by western academics. It champions modern liberal Muslims as the real representative of Islam and considers adherents to traditional Islam as the poor, misunderstood victims of western colonialism. Soroush and liberal Muslims like him could, in fact, contribute in many ways to ethics and international politics. But failing to comprehend the strident political and legal exclusivism of traditional Islam as espoused by Maududi and Qutb (and much of the contemporary Muslim world) is sheer foolishness.

Adam S. Francisco

***Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace.* By David P. Scaer. Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics 8. Edited by John Stephenson. St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2008. 238 pages. Hardcover. $25.95.**

In this magisterial study, outlining the dogmatic foci of the proper distinction between law and gospel and the gospel's action in the means of grace, David Scaer proves himself to be a worthy heir of Franz Pieper. He deftly intertwines the doctrine of law and gospel, the most important loci for the pastoral dimension of the doctrine of justification, with Christology, the heart of all genuine theology, as grounded in the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. The law, he notes, confronts sinners with "eternal death for which there is no relief," breaking down sinners' defenses so that they can experience contrition for sin (4). As a remedy to the sinner's entrapment, "the gospel creates faith, which in turn lays hold of Christ who is present in this proclamation, and by this faith the believer accepts the promises of eternal bliss with Him" (4–5). The proper distinction of law and gospel, so central for Lutherans descended from the heritage of C. F. W. Walther, renders the Christian life as inescapably characterized by the *simul iustus et peccator.* Indeed, "only death relieves Christians from the agonizing contradiction that they find within themselves"—in this life, Christians are at once and always condemned and saved (5).

Throughout this volume, Scaer steers this dogmatic *locus* away from the twin evils of legalism and libertinism, a feat not well accomplished by most Christians throughout history. Scaer contends that "wherever the gospels are read and the traditional liturgy, especially with the creeds, remains in place in the church, there Jesus is proclaiming Himself as the gospel" (12). Each word of Scaer's work is carefully chosen to counterbalance what he perceives as dangers when articulating this doctrine. When he claims that "the newness of the New Testament is not a creation *ex nihilo* but a completion of what was begun in the Old Testament, so that the New Testament is nothing other than the fulfilled Old Testament" (17), one cannot help but think that he is

addressing some Erlangen theologians and late-twentieth century interpreters of Luther who "existentialized" the doctrine. Scaer is unquestioningly right that the new fulfills the old. New creation, however, does hearken back to the original creation.

Honoring an "existentialist" or experiential dimension to law and gospel, he steers away from modern Existentialist misreadings of Luther, which tend to construe the Lutheran tradition as libertine. As right as Scaer is in that regard, he tends to downplay the theme of death and resurrection, which is so central for God's work in the means of grace (Baptism as *dying and rising* with Christ; the Eucharist as the *last* supper). That theme is crucial, though, to both Paul's ("if any man is in Christ he is a new creation," 2 Cor 5:17) and Luther's sacramental theologies.

Scaer affirms that while law and gospel seem to contradict one another, there is no contradiction in God. Again, his move is salutary, since even Luther's phrase "God against God" (*"Gott gegen Gott"* in WA 5:204,26f.) should not be read as a sectarian position in opposition to the classical view of God's oneness and *apatheia* but rather as the experience of the anxious sinner in relation to God and his mercy. Here, again, the drama of death and resurrection pregnant in the absolving word of imputation which acquits, forgives, and unites us to Christ could be accentuated more.

Scaer is most masterful and creative in his anti-Elertian polemic, when dealing with the third use of the law. He notes that "the principle of law and gospel has to do not only with applying the Scriptures in preaching, but also with how one conducts himself with other people. This principle is the foundation of the Christian ethic set down by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, according to which the Christian loves his enemies and does good to all men" (57). Most helpfully, Scaer claims that "all positive descriptions of the law in the Christian's life are Christological statements, things which Jesus did and which reached their perfection in Him. No Christian can achieve this in himself but only as he is in Christ. Fulfilled law is Christology as it describes the life and death of Jesus. He loved God with his whole heart . . . " (69). Likewise, Scaer contends that "in fulfilling the law according to its third use, the Christian does what he really believes. His works correspond with his faith" (70). The third use acknowledges that "the law has lost its prohibitions or threats and resembles how Adam and Eve knew it in Paradise. Significantly different now is the Christological dimension. In fulfilling the law, believers not only do the good works of which our first parents were once capable, but like Christ they live for others" (81), a "description of the reality of Christ's life taking form and shape in the life of the Christian. In grammatical terms, the imperative of command becomes the indicative, describing what already exists" (83). This is a helpful way of understanding how the gospel restores us to creation as God intended it. Additionally, this insight is supplemented with the view, held with Luther, that the new man is able to do good works

"spontaneously," within his calling, a truth which Scaer identifies as in opposition to the Reformed (64).

Scaer carries on important polemics with Karl Barth, for whom the law is the form of the gospel and the gospel is the content of the law, and Werner Elert (as mentioned), who denied the third use of the law altogether, especially as Elert's work was appropriated by theologians of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the 1960s and 1970s. Scaer's point is that law and gospel do not replace the role and authority of Scripture since both belong to a larger christological core (98).

Scaer's treatise on the means of grace states the Lutheran position in relation to the Roman Catholics, who make grace a substance initiating and encouraging our growth in deification, as opposed to a forensic relationship with God, and the Reformed, who divest God's promise from its tangible, earthly mediators (water, bread and wine, and spoken word). Scaer highlights the agency of the Holy Spirit, who "reveals Himself as the giver of life, the one who makes alive, *vivificans*, to bring life out of death" (159). The book furthers Pieper's work by addressing issues less important in Pieper's day, such as Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement, libertinism, and the authority of Scripture.

This volume, a clear and judicious guide, will serve pastoral candidates well for many decades to come.

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***Preaching to the Converted: On Sundays and Feast Days Throughout the Year.* By Richard Leonard. New York: Paulist Press, 2006. 389 pages. Paperback. $24.95.**

Richard Leonard, SJ, (Ph.D. in cinema studies) has written *Preaching to the Converted* as his remedy to three prevailing problems that he sees in modern preaching: 1) sermons are too long; 2) sermons are over the heads of the congregation; and 3) sermons do not intersect with the assembly's daily lives. Leonard contends that these homiletical dilemmas result from the Western media's re-shaping of how people listen and respond to aural and visual communications. Leonard's present work was written for an international liturgy website to offer short, story-based solutions to the supposed dilemma facing hearers.

The introduction to Leonard's book is a fairly accurate synopsis of modern hearers. Leonard may be correct that media has shortened hearer's attentions spans and made modern people overly prone to visual stimuli. However, his antidote to counter this supposed problem is lacking when it comes to the act

of preaching. Leonard's "reflections" run in a predictable pattern of offering an opening tale, popular anecdote, or commentary on a current film and then making a leap into some nebulous connection with a scriptural (more often moral) point. In practice, Leonard's reflections rarely connect with the theme, content, or intent of the scriptural passage the reflections were meant to illustrate. Leonard's work highlights one of the dangers in using illustrative materials incorrectly—the illustrations take on lives of their own and often reflect what was not intended to be reflected.

It is very easy for preachers to believe that media is a demonic enemy to their preaching. A common reaction is a tendency to incorporate characteristics of the media into the preached word. When preachers try to combat media by using media driven characteristics in their preaching, the end result is often a slurry of anthropocentric sentimentalities. God tends to be seen as a divine bobble-head doll whom the preacher maneuvers to meet the desires of man rather than the desires of God. Leonard's work lacks any discussion of the truly refreshing word of the gospel spoken to hurting souls. When it comes down to it, the supposed influence of media on preaching is irrelevant. What matters in preaching is speaking the unique word of the gospel to hurting sinners. It is this uniqueness of Christ's gospel, rather than illustrative strobe lights that dazzle the senses but bring no satisfaction for the soul, that provides "interest" in preaching.

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