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## Book Reviews

*A Formula for Parish Practice: Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations.* By Timothy J. Wengert. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 234 pages. Paperback. \$26.00.

Written to settle internal disputes that had erupted among Lutherans after Luther's death, the Formula of Concord has seldom been seen as a text for pastoral theology. Timothy J. Wengert demonstrates how the theology of the Formula serves proclamation and pastoral care. Given his own competence as a Reformation historian, Wengert treats readers to a concise but careful rehearsal of the events leading up to the writing of the Formula in 1577, including biographical portraits of the major players. Drawing on his own work as a parish pastor, Wengert illustrates how the doctrinal themes of classical Lutheranism serve to illumine and deepen church life today. Each section of the book contains a historical introduction, theological overview ("the heart of the matter"), the text of the Epitome, commentary, "a formula for parish practice," and discussion questions. The book was obviously designed for use with laity in an adult education setting. In terms of organization and content it nicely achieves this goal.

The strength of the book is the author's ability to uncover and articulate the pastoral implications of the Formula's theology. For example, after summarizing the controversy surrounding Andreas Osiander's teaching that justification is about union with Christ, Wengert observes, "If justification meant an infusion or union with Christ's divine righteousness, the believer could easily despair in the face of continuing sins, doubts, and anxieties, and could imagine that God's righteousness was completely absent. The only certain thing is the promise of God's forgiveness, which comes from outside the sinner and to which faith clings" (50). Likewise, Wengert's treatment of Article Six on the much disputed "third use of the law" strives to show that "for the concordists the third use of the law was nothing but the first and second uses applied to Christians" (91). Then Wengert makes some concrete suggestions as to what a congregation's stewardship program might look like where the law/gospel distinction is actually made. Equally helpful is Wengert's work with Article Two on the freedom of the will. The author argues that "We need to develop the theological skill of 'turning the verbs', as one Lutheran theologian put it, that is making God the subject of the theological sentence and not the object of our works and resolutions" (34). Any pastor who has struggled with parishioners' questions concerning election and predestination will benefit from Wengert's parsing of Article Eleven as he demonstrates the evangelical potency of this teaching to provide consolation to terrified consciences.

In many ways, the book reflects the legacy of Wengert's teacher, Gerhard Forde. What Forde did for Luther in his little book, *Where God Meets Man*:

*Luther's Down to Earth Approach to the Gospel*, is now done by his student for the Lutheran Confessions.

There is much that makes this volume commendable. There are also some flaws. Wengert assumes an ELCA audience. His writing is reflective of that context. Thus he assumes that women should be ordained to the pastoral office. He regularly speaks of pastors as male and female. He does not do justice to the Formula's assertions to the normative character of Holy Scriptures. Although Wengert devotes two chapters to the Lord's Supper (Article Seven), this section is not as tightly written or theologically rich as the remainder of the book.

In spite of these caveats, *A Formula for Parish Practice: Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations* is a welcome addition to the resources available for pastors who desire to help their congregations appreciate and utilize the Lutheran Confessions as normative for pastoral care, preaching, church life, and mission.

John T. Pless

***An Introduction to the Psalms.* By Alastair G. Hunter. New York: T&T Clark International, 2008. 168 pages. Paperback. \$19.95.**

An introduction to the Psalms is a difficult undertaking that has been repeatedly attempted with greater or lesser degrees of success. This is understandable when one considers the enormity of the task. Alastair Hunter, a Senior Lecturer in Hebrew and Old Testament Studies at the University of Glasgow, realizes the size of challenge and even asks the question, "Why study the Psalms?" After all, for thousands of years the Psalms have provided a prayer book for both Judaism and Christianity. They have been used as literature, in liturgies, in theological, philosophical and anthropological ways. Can a study of their structure or a critical look into their depth cause anything but contention? "They sing them or chant them or take comfort from them, and their familiar yet haunting phrases loom large in many people's personal life without benefit of source, form, or redaction criticism, textual study, or modern and postmodern reinterpretation" (1).

Nevertheless, Hunter takes on the assignment, but does not follow the traditional commentary or introduction approach. Rather, he examines "The Diversity of Collections of Psalms" (ch. 2), "Historical-Critical Approaches" (ch. 3), "The Psalms as Literature and Liturgical Approaches" (ch. 4, 5), and "Theological, Philosophical, and Anthropological Reflections" (ch. 6). Hunter focuses on the current state of academic study of the Psalms and the root of these approaches. However, while he claims a historical approach, his research is imbued with agenda and pre-conceived notions. He seeks to provide a historical introduction even as he approaches the Psalms hand in hand with modern, a-christological scholars. As an example: "I am as convinced as I can

be, without finally irrefutable proof, that David had nothing to do with writing any psalms, and I am equally convinced that the collection as we have it is largely and in essence a post-exilic production" (136).

This bias, which appears throughout the book, limits the usefulness of Hunter's work. He does make mention of messianic interpretations of the Psalms, specifically as discovered at Qumran and existing among Jews even today, but he sees them as problematic as they fail to fit his agenda and approach. Still, despite these limitations, the book does have some redeeming qualities. It provides some good historical evidence in the literature and liturgical usage, along with some interesting philosophical reflections. If one is able to read with a discerning eye, this book may provide a decent addition to one's library.

Jeffrey H. Pulse

*An Introduction to Quakerism.* By Pink Dandelion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 294 pages. Hardcover. \$85.00. Paperback. \$19.99.

If the genius of Anglicanism is its comprehensiveness, then Quakerism far surpasses Anglicanism in this respect. Some Quaker groups today fit well into the Evangelical camp, while others are inclusive enough to allow for Hindu Quakers, Muslim Quakers, or even atheist Quakers. In *An Introduction to Quakerism*, Pink Dandelion traces the history of Quakerism and describes the approach and beliefs of the six principal strains of the movement today. Along the way he also explains how such diversity is possible.

In the historical section, the author identifies three theoretical threads of Quaker thought—time, spiritual intimacy, and the world's people—and examines their development from Quakerism's mid-seventeenth century beginnings to the present. Early on, Quakers took an eschatological outlook, "an unfolding endtime experienced inwardly" (31). The endtime view slowly gave way to what Dandelion calls a "meantime" view. As endtime evolved into meantime, Quakers' experience of the divine and their identity vis-à-vis the world also changed.

Having detailed the origins of the main Quaker traditions of today, Dandelion embarks upon a comparison of these bodies' views on a variety of topics such as authority, sin, Christ, worship and practice, and mission. He draws on Books of Discipline and other publications of Yearly Meetings, representing the full geographic and ideological range of Quakerism.

Can such great diversity exist within Quakerism apart from a fall into utter inconsistency? Dandelion answers affirmatively, giving three areas of commonality among its branches, centripetal forces that hold Quakerism together: "the emphasis on inward encounter, business method, and testimony [against war]" (245). These three factors reflect "more on the distinctive form

of Quaker worship and its outcomes rather than on doctrine" (246). By emphasizing form over content, Quakers have opened their sails to every wind of doctrine, a result that does not seem to disturb them.

The author concludes his work outlining Quakerism's prospects for the future. Interestingly, Dandelion sees East Africa as one source of new leadership. This leadership, he contends, would likely be in a more conservative direction, mirroring trends in world Lutheranism and Anglicanism.

Dandelion gives further information in excurses set off in boxes from the main text. Particularly interesting are the boxes entitled "Quakers and industry" and "Quakers and science." In these we read that confectioner Cadburys had Quaker roots; that a Quaker-run factory introduced the shift system of employment; and that atomic theorist John Dalton was a Quaker (79). Other helpful inclusions to the book are a detailed chronology of Quakerism and an annotated bibliography.

*An Introduction to Quakerism* provides a detailed history of Quakerism and an overview of the beliefs and practices of its several traditions. The wealth of information contained in this volume and the readily accessible price of the paperback edition make for a solid introduction to the Quaker movement.

Stephen R. Manz  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
Anna, IL

***Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church.* By George E. Demacopoulos. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. 288 pages. Paperback. \$30.00.**

George Demacopoulos offers five sketches of figures from the early church who supervised others, both clergy and laity. He focuses on the goal that became increasingly common in the early centuries of the church, that the clergy, to be ascetically minded, lead the Christians under their care into ascetic practices. This desire clashed with the reality of the lives that the laity actually led and the demands of the pastoral duties with which the clergy were faced. All the figures under consideration (Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine, John Cassian, and Gregory the Great) expected and encouraged the laity also to practice some type of asceticism. Yet there was a persistent gap between the ideals and practice among the clergy and especially among the laity. A tension also existed in how the responsibility of the office of the clergy was viewed: was it a pastoral, episcopal one, involving supervision of doctrine and the sacramental life of the church, or one more strictly focused on asceticism and flight from the world towards prayer and the life of the soul? In the matters of contemplation and an active Christian life, how was a pastor to

view his own behavior and how was he to direct the behavior of others? Involved in all of this is the late antique flood of monastics and monastic ideals into the clerical offices of the church. Implicit also is the matter of power: Where does authority in the church reside, in the ascetic holy man or in the office of the bishop?

Demacopoulos sees different paradigms in each of the characters. Athanasius presents in his advice to pastors a contradictory pattern of admiration for a figure such as Antony but a strong episcopal model of doctrinal supervision and sacramental oversight residing not in the ascetic but in the bishop. Gregory of Nazianzus was able to synthesize these two models and tried to merge the figure of the bishop with the figure of the ascetic. By his time the monastic community had made great inroads into the wider church so that asceticism was more and more an accepted pattern for churchly leadership. Augustine, though, had serious misgivings about the ascetic movement and did not incorporate it wholeheartedly in his own spiritual direction of others or his advice to others who were themselves engaged in pastoral ministry. By the time of Gregory the Great, Demacopoulos is able to see all of pastoral direction, lay and cleric, in terms of asceticism. Ascetic ideals have triumphed. For Gregory, the Christian life itself is one of ascetic self denial. The pastor of the laity has the same role as a monastic spiritual director. He is a spiritual father to those under his care and uses the same techniques as those in the monastery. The bishop and the holy man are one.

One may well wonder what practical value this little book has for the parish pastor. More than appears at first glance. All pastors struggle with similar issues in their own lives and ministries. Is the pastoral office primarily one of activity, administration, and busyness? Or is it one of contemplation, quietness, and prayer? Which of these ideals should predominate in the life of a parish pastor? Which ideal should predominate in the lives of his flock? These are issues and struggles which permeate the work of pastors. Demacopoulos' book gives the opportunity to view that struggle in another time and place with perspectives and answers different than more current and familiar responses.

Paul Gregory Alms  
Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Catawba, NC