

Reviews



THE THEOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH, by John Goldingay. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2014. Pp. 160. \$18.00 (paper).

John Goldingay (David Allan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary) is one of the most distinguished Isaiah scholars of his generation. Not only has he written several major academic and theological commentaries on Isaiah, but he has also consistently demonstrated a deep concern for the church and for theological interpretation. Ultimately, I hope to convince the reader that *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* can be used with great benefit in a number of Christian settings.

The Theology of the Book of Isaiah is a highly accessible, relatively short (149 pages) volume that provides the reader with an excellent introductory guide to the book of Isaiah. And when venturing into the literary world of Isaiah, a guide is precisely what is needed, because reading prophetic books is rarely ever easy. Goldingay quotes from Martin Luther: the prophets “have a queer way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next, so that you cannot make head or tail of them” (11). Goldingay attempts to honor the book’s complexity, while at the same time communicating the book’s main theological commitments. His goals are as follows: “My aim in this book is, first, to articulate the theology in the book called Isaiah—that is, to consider the theology expressed or implied by the different sections of Isaiah. I then aim to articulate the theology of the book called Isaiah as a

whole, the theology that can be constructed from the book when one stands back and considers the whole” (11). Isaiah, like many biblical books, was stitched together over hundreds of years in response to numerous crises, victories, and circumstances, and the result of these processes is a literary work that memorializes numerous and sometimes conflicting voices.

The book is divided into two parts: part 1, *The Theologies in Isaiah*, and part 2, *The Theology That Emerges from Isaiah*. While the second title is a bit clunky and not entirely descriptive of the contents, it nonetheless reflects Goldingay’s stated aim, to deal with Isaiah as a witness to multiple theologies and then to deal with Isaiah as a whole.

Part 1 is divided into 5 chapters, which correspond to the literary divisions of Isaiah: Isaiah 1–12, 13–27, 28–39, 40–55, and 56–66. Goldingay refers to each of these units as “collages” (12), each of which is united by similar themes, generic profiles, or content. The individual chapters in part 1 are expository essays that illuminate important theological and literary themes. For instance, chapter 1 covers Isaiah 1–12, which Goldingay divides into subunits, often three to four pages in length: Isa 1:1–5:30 (“Faithfulness in the Exercise of Power”), Isa 6:1–9:7 (“Holiness”), Isaiah 7 (“Trust”), etc. In accordance with his stated goals, Goldingay treats each of these collages more or less independently, allowing their distinct theological voices to emerge.

Goldingay does pay some attention to the historical circumstances that gave rise to the book of Isaiah’s five “collages” (see pp. 14–16). But he does this in a way that is clear, con-

cise, and unthreatening. He makes reference to important interpretive figures such as Abraham Ibn Ezra and Bernhard Duhm, but without lingering over unnecessary and cumbersome details.

Part 2 (“The Theology that Emerges from Isaiah”) attempts to analyze the book of Isaiah from a more holistic perspective, asking the question, “What theology emerges from this book as a whole?” (89) To that end, Goldingay isolates twelve themes, which function as separate chapters: Revelation, The God of Israel the Holy One, Holy and Upright and Merciful, Israel and Judah, Jerusalem and Zion Chastised and Restored, The Remains, The Empires and Their Kings, Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility, Divine Planning and Human Planning, David, Yahweh’s Day. Space does not allow for a detailed discussion of each chapter, but a sample of one chapter may prove useful to the reader.

Part 2, chapter 1 is titled, “Revelation:

Words from Yahweh Mediated through Human Agents” (91–96). Revelation is a very important idea in the book of Isaiah, and indeed in Christian theology more generally. From the outset, the book of Isaiah claims to be revelatory (“The *vision* of Isaiah ben Amoz,” Isa 1:1, emphasis mine), and Goldingay takes this claim seriously. To claim that Isaiah is revelatory is to assume that it is not “something that the prophet thought up...but something that presented itself to him. He did not devise the words; they came to him” (91). But for Goldingay, revelation does not override human agency; revelation happens “via the human person” (92), and includes that person’s specific “angle of vision.” Revelation even includes Isaiah’s interpretations of what he heard/saw (92–93). These two ideas—human interpretation and divine revelation—are not mutually exclusive. For the leader hoping to use Goldingay’s book as part of a study or

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class, his understanding of revelation would make for fascinating and fruitful conversation.

This book could be useful for Christians in a number of ways. For the pastor or ministry leader preparing a talk or sermon on Isaiah, Goldingay will provide broad-stroke and expert commentary on the larger units of the book. Goldingay's work, however, is less useful if one is looking for information on specific passages. The book excels at overview, but is weak at detailed commentary. Where this volume would shine is in a weekly Bible study, or as a congregational supplement to a sermon series on the book of Isaiah, perhaps during Advent when a significant number of Isaianic passages emerge in the lectionary. At 149 pages and roughly \$15, the book is manageable, accessible, and affordable.

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HANGING ON BY A PROMISE: THE HIDDEN GOD IN THE THEOLOGY OF OSWALD BAYER, by Joshua C. Miller. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015. Pp. 354 + xix. \$32.80 (paper).

Though a central aspect of Martin Luther's theology—described most prominently in his *Bondage of the Will*—Luther's doctrine of the hidden God has received mixed reception in the history of doctrine since the sixteenth century, with few theologians choosing to adopt Luther's view of divine hiddenness. Oswald Bayer is a notable exception to this, having actually integrated Luther's view of the hidden God into his own theology. In this comprehensive and probing analysis, Joshua Miller has produced a detailed examination of the doctrine of divine hiddenness in Bayer's theology.

After providing initial remarks about Bayer's life and work, Miller contextualizes his study in terms of Luther's own doctrine of the hidden God, helpfully nuancing the more fa-

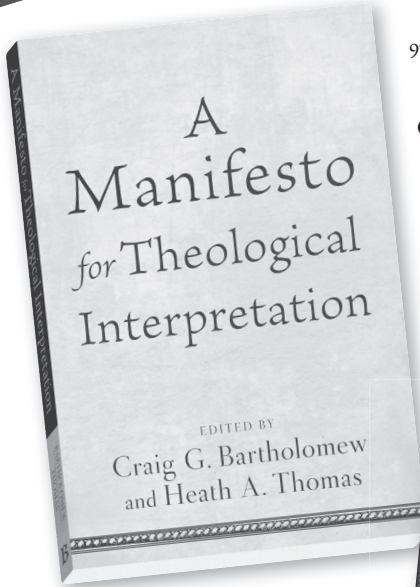
miliar portrait of Luther's doctrine, drawn primarily from *Bondage of the Will*, by exploring other texts in Luther's corpus and reflecting systematically on the doctrine's role in Luther's broader theological work. Miller's third chapter stands out as an impressive account of the reception of Luther's doctrine of the hidden God. According to Miller's analysis, Luther's doctrine of the hidden God has remained substantially misunderstood in the history of Protestant theology, with only a few exceptions. Moreover, even while some theologians have noted Luther's doctrine with approval, few have ever incorporated it as an essential component of their own theologies.

It is here that Miller commences his sustained engagement with Bayer. Because it is Miller's thesis that Bayer not only presents an accurate representation of Luther's understanding of the hidden God, but that he also makes it a prominent feature of his own theology, Miller provides helpful remarks about Bayer's theological method. Most important here is that Bayer views theology as irreducibly connected to the theologian's experience in *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio*, and therefore with the God who encounters us both in the word as well as apart from it.

Proceeding on this basis, Miller approaches the question of the hidden God in Bayer's theology from four angles. The first is a detailed description of Bayer's understanding of justification by God's word of promise. By justifying sinners through a performative speech act, God encounters the sinner in his or her creatureliness and makes him or her a new creation thereby. This reality not only forms the procedural center of Bayer's theology, but is the contradictory counterpoint to God's operation apart from the word in divine hiddenness.

Before exploring this contradiction between the justifying word of promise and God's terrifying, mysterious operation apart from that word, Miller investigates how the hidden God fits with Bayer's theological

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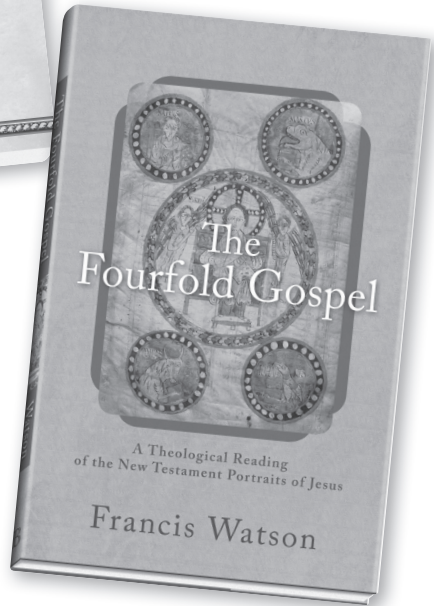
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method. This is important because Bayer maintains that God's speech act justifying sinners in the preached word is not the only datum that informs the doing of theology. Indeed, the theologian's experience of God's hiddenness also, according to Miller's interpretation, factors prominently into Bayer's understanding of how theology is done.

Since the word of promise in justification contradicts the experience of God's hiddenness, Miller provides helpful elucidation of how Bayer understands the hidden God in relation to justification. Ultimately, according to Miller's exposition of Bayer, the believer must take refuge in this word of promise even while its disclosure of God's mercy and grace in Christ contradicts God's wrath and mystery apart from the word. Nevertheless, Miller connects this to Bayer's theology of lament, in which believers cry out to God in light of the tension between the word and God's operation apart from it. The only resolution of this tension is eschatological, in which God brings about the full renewal and restoration of all creation. Until then, believers must place their trust in the justifying word, as well as God's promise to answer the cries of those who lament.

Finally, Miller launches an evaluation of Bayer's interpretation of Luther. Since the doctrine of the hidden God in Bayer's work is not merely description but appropriation, Miller helpfully compares and contrasts the respective positions of Luther and Bayer. Even while Bayer advances Luther's understanding of the hidden God as a part of his own theology, Miller's comparisons to other modern interpreters reveal a very close proximity between Bayer and Luther on the question of God's hiddenness. Miller's closing chapter includes rich reflections on the relevance and applicability of Bayer's understanding of the hidden God in the contemporary context for Lutherans.

Overall, this text is an excellent introduction to the doctrine of the hidden God and to

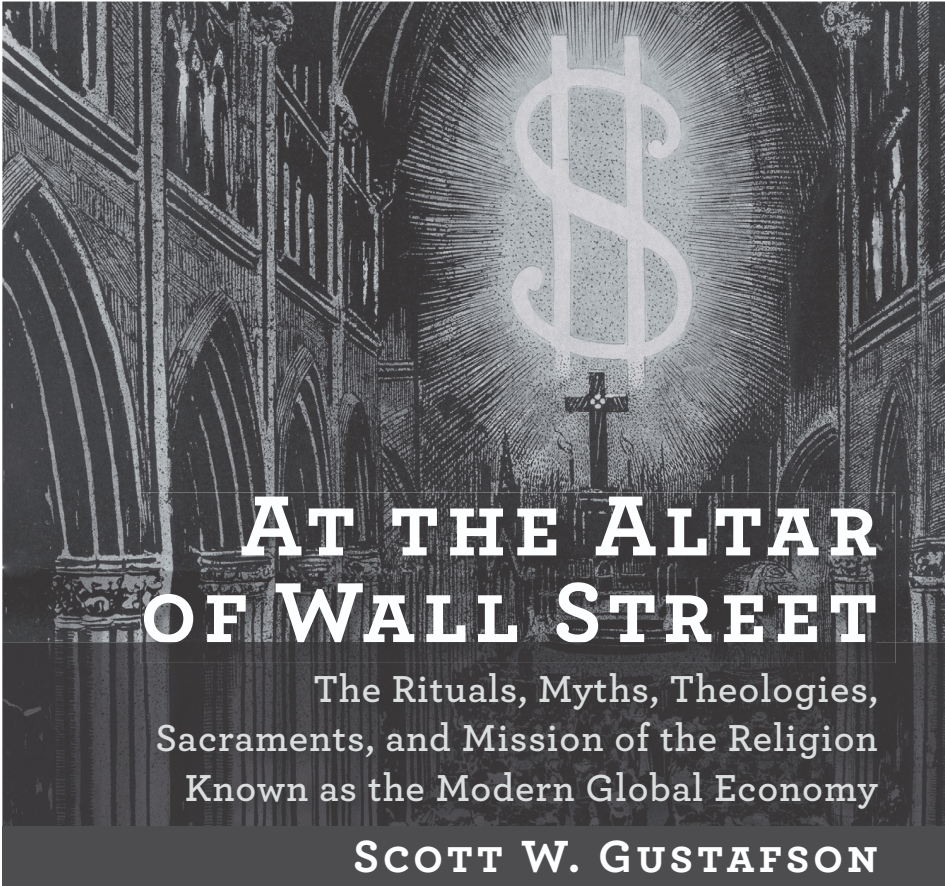
the theology of Oswald Bayer. Especially fascinating and helpful is Miller's conscientious contextualization, which is not only judicious as scholarship but very helpful for the reader. Another benefit of Miller's work is the clarity he provides to contemporary discussions of the hidden God, especially in his evaluation of the doctrine's reception by theologians such as Karl Barth, Werner Elert, Eberhard Jüngel, and others. Most importantly, however, Miller's meticulous exploration of Bayer's doctrine of the hidden God provides resources for Christians who await the full eschatological renewal of all things in Jesus Christ.

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THE POLITICS OF JESÚS, by Miguel A. de la Torre. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2015. Pp. 218. \$22.00 (paper).

The Politics of Jesús stands as the latest, and most accessible, entry in Miguel A. de la Torre's project of doing the work of Christian ethics from the margins. De la Torre focuses this book as a theological biography in the tradition of liberation, tracing the life of Jesús through his life on the margins of the Roman Empire, particularly the history of the holy family as refugees and as immigrants seeking sanctuary and asylum. The theological center of the book is in de la Torre's proposal that "Jesus" is a Eurocentric phenomenon that was largely created as a religious justification for racism, colonialism, and most importantly, neoliberalism: "Could it be that the Jesus who supports 'the American way' is in reality an anti-Christ?" (5).

The book itself supports this proposal by tracing the narrative of the life of Jesus, and utilizing liberationist philosophy, recreating Jesus by locating the Hispanic Jesús in the biblical narrative that "resonates with the



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Latino/a existential experience of disenfranchisement and commits, in solidarity, to walk towards a more just social order” (8). Chapter 1 begins with reframing the Lucan birth narrative of Jesús, as well as his parents María and José, in an attempt to draw out the narratives as “anticolonial literature about a native resident displaced by the invading colonial power” (27). De la Torre draws on the Mexican celebration of *las posadas*, which literally means the inns, to bring a vivid image in which the life-seeking migrations of migrants and radical hospitality of hosts is celebrated. Chapter two continues the narrative, tracing the life of Jesús as “a street rat, a barrio kid, a spic from the wrong side of the tracks,” in which one wonders “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (59). De la Torre’s imagery helps not only to unwind imagery for those of us who inherit Northern European traditions, but also helps bring Jesús to bear on our current political climate which is filled with rhetoric around immigrants. It is in this light that de la Torre proposes that the *barrio* life of Jesús is best characterized by his status as a *mestizaje*, as one who is bilingual in both language and culture, drawing on the ancient creedal tradition of the two natures of Christ.

In chapter 3, de la Torre turns his attention to the contextual similarities between the economies of Jesús’ time and ours, eventually leading to a renewed focus in the second half of the book towards an old Marxist turn towards praxis and revolutionary justice. While the critiques of laissez-faire capitalism and CEO pay that de la Torre draws are useful, the overall helpfulness, and newness, of a turn to Marxist epistemology and soteriology through praxis is much more debatable.

Chapter 4, I suspect for many readers, will provide the most challenge and reflection as de la Torre draws forth his two most interesting and challenging proposals: a theology of hopelessness and Jesús as the *holy joderon*. De la Torre argues, convincingly, that hope for many Christians in North America functions

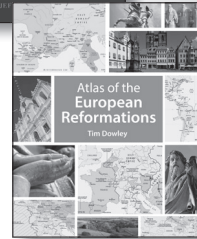
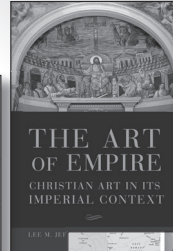
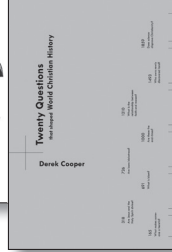
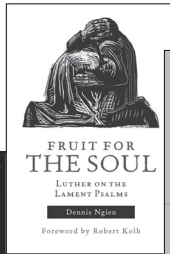
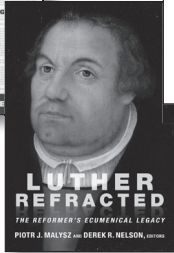
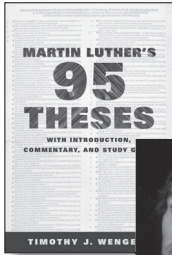
as a middle-class opiate, “[soothing] the conscious of the privileged” (138). De la Torre’s insight is helpful, as one can think of all the places where hope functions this way: in hospital rooms, in systems of oppression, and in our own avoidance of places and people that feel hopeless. While de la Torre suggests that a theology of hopelessness is the place where implementing justice-based praxis is the center of its life, it is difficult to see what sort of sustainability the proposal might have, particularly given the very real and life-sustaining tradition of robust hope in the face of nothingness, in this country through black spirituals, jazz, and the blues.

While one can’t help but be troubled with de la Torre’s proposal for a theology of hopelessness, and that seems to be part of the point, it is undoubtedly most powerful when it leaves aside the focus on praxis, and instead pinpoints an underutilized portion of the Christian story: Holy Saturday. De la Torre writes: “Perhaps this is the sad paradox: that hope might be found after it is crucified and then may be resurrected in the shards of life” (139).

Finally, in a moment of searing humor and insight, de la Torre’s idea of Jesús as the *holy joderon*, which in Spanish means something along the lines of the holy one who “screws with,” serves as a sort of closing statement in *The Politics of Jesús*. *Joder* in Spanish, which is a vulgarity, is useful for de la Torre in that it serves to show a Jesus who is able to “screw with” systems of oppression and those who are religiously uptight. The idea of Jesús as the *holy joderon* is a novel turn that might be just what Christology needs in this day and age. And it is a proposal that allows a further distinction between a white Jesus, and a Jesús of black and brown bodies, something ever more important in these days. And it is in this way that de la Torre gives his greatest contribution, as a Latino voice, in a white academia and a largely white church—allows for a deep breath for black and brown lives, a breath that allows us to ponder the Jesús who messes with op-

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NUESTRA FE: A LATIN AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY SOURCE-BOOK, by Ondina E. and Justo L. Gonzáles. Nashville: Abingdon, 2014. Pp. xv + 239. \$44.99 (paper).

If seminarians (and thus pastors) ever did read much about the history of Christianity in Latin America, it came in a general survey of the history of Christianity. Usually this means some reference to the sixteenth-century European conquest of Central and South America, and then a jump to the twentieth century, with a quick nod to Liberation theology and perhaps Protestant Pentecostalism in the region. Not much else, really, as though 400 years of Christianity among hundreds of millions of Christians can be easily ignored. But with the growing influence of Latin American Christianity in North America and around the world (Pope Francis, as an example), it is important to know more about all the history and theology of this region over the centuries. One problem has been, of course, that not much of this history has been translated into English, at least until now. Thanks to the efforts of Ondina and Justo Gonzáles, we have a fine volume of sources to cover over 500 years of Christianity in Latin America.

This volume does contain some of the selections one might expect. The famous (or infamous) chronicles of the European conquest of this territory in the sixteenth century and the subsequent Christianization of the population are included, although the volume also does include the protest of some Europeans against the brutality of these campaigns, as well as the clerical histories that describe the

pre-Columbian religions. The final three chapters (out of nine) focus on the twentieth century, with separate chapters on contemporary Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, and a final chapter on recent religious conditions in Latin America. The center of the volume contains several chapters on the growth and development of Christianity in the region in the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, which are really very fascinating; they describe how Christianity took hold in Latin America and was transformed into a genuine religion of the people, all the while the winds of revolution, independence, dictatorships, and anticlericalism were blowing through the region.

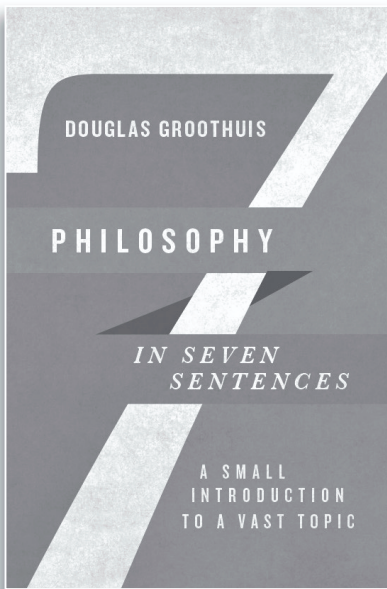
Another factor that is helpful in this volume is its diversity in kinds of entries. Yes, there are the important papal pronouncements and records of decisions of synods of bishops, as might be expected. But for a fuller picture, this volume also includes other voices and other perspectives: the accounts of everyday life and everyday persons, such as housewives and travelers, mixed-race proto-saints, and Yankee missionaries. The entries also deal with elements of popular religion, the religion that the people made for themselves out of a combination of their original religions and the Christianity that was brought to them. This combination of sources makes the book even more interesting, and shows a vibrant and multi-sided religious life.

In short, this book is an interesting and thoughtful read, and one that does a great deal to open up for English-readers an important area of the history of Christianity; it is well worth reading.

Mark Granquist
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**THE SERPENT AND THE LAMB:
CRANACH, LUTHER, AND THE
MAKING OF THE REFORMATION,**
by Steven Ozment. New Haven and London:
Yale University Press, 2013. Pp. 325. \$25.00
(paper).

Once upon a time it was assumed that Reformation Protestantism was indifferent or hostile to art in the church. Steven Ozment in *The Serpent and the Lamb* challenges that assumption. His book advances the thesis that not only was there an abundance of art in the church, but that much of it was created by Lucas Cranach the Elder. (There are more than 1000 surviving prints and paintings by Cranach, and many more have been lost.) Cranach, Ozment claims, played an indispensable role in advancing the cause of the Reformation. Ozment asserts that Cranach (who is not well known in America) left a lasting mark on European history and art. “Without him, German Renaissance art might well have remained a pale imitation of High Italian, and the German Reformation [might] have died aborning in the 1520s, so vital was Cranach to both” (7).

Martin Luther nailed his theses to the door at Wittenberg in 1517. Cranach had been won over to Luther’s thinking in the early 1500s; and he and Luther remained fast friends for the rest of their lives. Many of Cranach’s paintings illustrated themes and personalities that gave visual impulse to the spoken and written words of the Reformer. Ozment demonstrates this double momentum with dozens of illustrations, in black and white and color. It is beyond question that we know what Luther looked like at various stages of his life because of the many painting and prints that Cranach created.

One of the most significant works visually to summarize and advance the impact of the Reformation is *The Wittenberg Altarpiece*. Not only is Luther depicted seated with the disciples at the Last Supper, but in the predella of this work Luther is dramatically pointing to

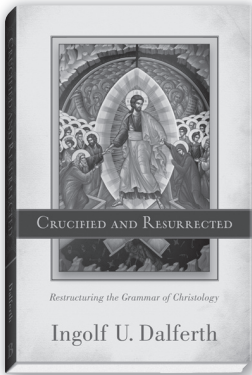
the crucified Christ, thus preaching the theology of the cross. We see a rapt congregation listening to the sermon; and in that gathering we can see Katherine von Bora, Luther’s wife, and gray-bearded Cranach, Luther’s best friend.

Early in their friendship Cranach and Luther each adopted a coat of arms. Cranach wanted his image to survive time and outlive posterity, so he chose a kind of biblical “serpent venom” that saved life as well as took it away (3). Luther, for his part, developed a coat of arms that depicted a lamb. He wanted a symbol of salvation and redemption, a washing of the sinner in the blood of the self-sacrificial Lamb of God. Luther’s emblem, adopted in 1524, antedated his better known seal with the cross in the white rose, which he preferred in and following 1530.

Another artist of the Reformation period who is still well-known worldwide is Albrecht Dürer. Dürer’s series of the Apocalypse and such prints as *Melancholia* and *St. Jerome in His Study* hang in many church libraries and peoples’ studies today. Ozment points out, however, that Cranach was as well-known as Dürer in his time and was a close second in popularity in northern Europe. Ozment’s account of their close friendship and friendly rivalry gives a fresh understanding and appreciation of the art and theology of the early sixteenth century. These two geniuses stand out as the artistic Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig of their time.

In addition to biblical scenes and portraits, Cranach depicted many scenes of nude women. Two chapters in Ozment’s book examine this phenomenon. One is tempted to see some of these luscious images as soft porn; yet the figures, Ozment assures the reader, realistically depict biblical and mythological figures like David and Bathsheba, Samson and Delilah, Salome, the Judgment of Paris, Venus, and many others. Such depictions of the human body were intended to be, Ozment insists, moral lessons for the viewer, forcing

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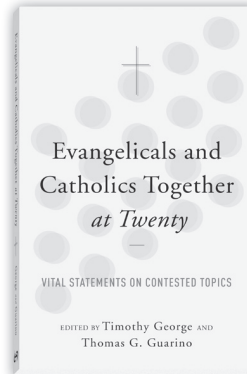
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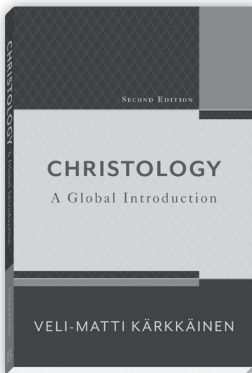
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self-examination in the light of one's sinful nature. It was supposed to be morally uplifting to look at Cranach's revealing print of *Adam and Eve* and ponder the nature of sin and the fall. Dürer also created a portrayal of a nude Adam and Eve that bears comparison to Cranach's treatment of the same subject.

Cranach, in addition to being a successful artist, accumulated great wealth in Wittenberg. He founded and managed a pharmacy; he made a fortune in real estate; and he played a major role in Wittenberg politics. He was also an extremely adroit fence-sitter. That is, although he was close to Luther and his coterie, Cranach was able to remain on friendly terms with Roman Catholic notables such as Cardinal Albrecht (who was no friend of Luther).

Ozment's book is full of information about art, politics, and life in the early days of the Reformation. Ozment gives a good account of the relationship between Luther and Cranach, though, admittedly, this is more Cranach's book than Luther's. The narrative favors the artist more than it does the Reformer, though both stroll arm in arm through the dense foliage of reform in church and society. This book is an instructive prelude to the Reformation observances coming in the next few years.

While the book is rich in narrative content, one might wish that Ozment had included more information on Cranach the younger, who was a significant artist in his own right but is hardly mentioned in this book. Furthermore, the elder Cranach's great work *Law and Grace* of 1529 is not mentioned at all. This provocative work is Cranach's masterpiece; it visually summarizes what the Reformation is all about: the devil pursues the sinner on the left side, and Christ crucified and risen is on the right.

On the whole, though, the book carries the reader and the viewer through what Cranach and Luther were about, each in his own way and together. They wanted believers to see through the image and the spoken word to take the Word to heart. "Working in tandem,

Cranach's images and Luther's sermons conveyed the gospel message with immediacy, transparency, and power" (134). The gospel is certainly more than wood or canvas, words or gestures. But we see and hear through means; and the joint labors of the serpent and the lamb not only made the Reformation, but they also gave believers a visual and visceral vocabulary for grace, gospel, and God's presence in their lives.

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AFFLICTING THE COMFORTABLE, COMFORTING THE AFFLICTED: A GUIDE TO LAW AND GOSPEL PREACHING, by Glenn L. Monson. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015. Pp. 118. \$15.00 (paper).

Google research reveals that one of the most memorable quotes about the press (and preaching!) is attributed to a fictional nineteenth-century Irish bartender named *Mr. Dooley*, whose journalism citation is remembered: "The job of the newspaper is to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted." Reinhold Niebuhr is similarly quoted, "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Wherever he sourced it, Pastor Glenn L. Monson aptly titles his 100-page contribution to contemporary law/gospel preaching *Afflicting the Comfortable, Comforting the Afflicted*.

Pastor Monson clearly states his aim and point of view. "My goal in this book is to bring together both of these concerns: the concern that we must connect with the listener *and* the concern that we must be grounded theologically. Particularly, I am concerned that we are firmly grounded in our treasured Lutheran imperative—rightly distinguishing law and gospel. I believe that by taking fully into account the treasures of Law and Gospel thinking and combining them with the insights of



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the New Homiletic school, we can be preachers who are not only artful, but also ones who, while being true to the words, can facilitate an authentic encounter with the living God” (xvi).

Monson gleans insights from an impressive pantheon of preachers (“pioneers of the New Hermeneutic”): Fred Craddock, Charles Rice, Eugene Lowry, David Buttrick, and Henry Mitchell. He references their renowned “disciples”: Charles Campbell, Barbara Brown Taylor, Tom Long, James Forbes and others, including professors Grindal, Ong, and Jensen in his formation as a preacher and as a preaching researcher. Synthesizing their insights and intuitions with his own able scholarship, Monson delivers a respectable and accessible guide to contemporary law and gospel preaching.

Monson leads off tracing the origin and history of “Law and Gospel *Thinking*.” He acknowledges that the terms *law and gospel* (like the Trinity) are implied though not identified as such in Scripture. The Apostle Paul in Galatians provides the closest thing to an argument concerning law and gospel. Augustine is identified as the first theologian to actually tackle the subject. It is left to Martin Luther to fully articulate his insistence on the need for believers—especially preachers and teachers—to “rightly distinguish” law and gospel.

Monson credits beloved Professor Gerhard Forde with the notion that “believing the gospel is not just an intellectual assent to a ‘formula,’ but rather a life-changing event” (5). To which those of us preachers reporting scarce evidence of such events might reply, *if only it were so!*

Monson proceeds with a chapter devoted to “Law and Gospel Exegesis” followed by a summary of “Law and Gospel Design,” which highlights a series of law and gospel correlates (in chart form, as especially useful elements in his book). Take particular note of “The Crossings Method” developed by former Concordia Seminary Professors Bertram and Schroeder, who developed and charted an approach to de-

signing a sermon that leads a preacher through various “stages” of law and gospel.

Next comes a chapter devoted to “Law and Gospel Manuscript Writing,” the goal of which, seasoned preacher Fred Craddock famously said, “is not to get something *said*, but to get something *heard*.” A penultimate chapter, “Law and Gospel: A Methodology,” includes three sample sermons.

Although the book reads mostly formulaic in methodology, the concluding “Final Thoughts” chapter rehearses Forde’s caveat against forcing sermon preparation into a formula. Monson posits the image of the sermon as “mystery” akin to the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The reader can decide if this attempt at softening rigid formulae appears as too little, too late. The appendix provides a worksheet for sermon design.

I heartily recommend this book to fellow preachers, accompanied by my confession: If one assumes this dialectic needs be taken as a defining standard in biblical exegesis and sermon application, I must plead *mea culpa* in acknowledging occasional inattention, even blatant disregard, when it comes to intentionally/rightly dividing law and gospel. I am grateful for the encouragement Monson provides; however, after 40-plus years of “doing time in the pulpit,” this preacher will likely, and with scant remorse, continue to paint outside the lines.

The 2015 arrival of Glenn Monson’s *Guide to Law and Gospel Preaching* occurs within the centenary celebration of Thomas Merton, renowned Trappist monk. Beyond rediscovering and popularizing the contemplative life, and not lost within his massive scholarly output, Merton is properly honored for his apophatic/contemplative interpretation and exposition of Scripture. “In the long run, every attempt to find in the Bible what is not clearly there leads to a one-sided reading of sacred books and ultimately to distorted and erroneous vision. . . . To accept the Bible in its wholeness is not easy. . . . We must not therefore open the Bible

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with any set determination to reduce it to the limits of a preconceived pattern of our own” (Merton, *Opening the Bible* [Liturgical Press, 1970] 69).

Suppose, along with invoking the Holy Spirit, we intentionally channel Thomas Merton to serve as our maven in the *mystery* of biblical preaching? Consider mining the dialectic tension between a steadfastly *kataphatic* (knowing/certainty) emphasis in preparation and preaching with Merton’s *apophatic* (uncertainty/questioning) approach in exegesis and exposition.

Why? Millennials and other postmoderns who risk showing up in our churches appear to be seeking an unencumbered authenticity in preaching that often negates the most carefully crafted clarity in law and gospel preaching. At a time when all institutions are suspect and the flood of digitally-driven ideas arrive as equally authoritative (or uniformly vapid), the preacher may discover renewed traction by admitting uncertainty, acknowledging there are aspects of God, law, gospel, and real life beyond our ability to know or understand. Mining deep questions that arise from *uncertainty* may attract even the most cynical of seekers toward a path that begins not with certainty but *uncertainty*, leading to the realm of imagination, creativity, options, perhaps fear, and then possibly to a new awareness of knowing, answers, comfort... Who knows?

Entering Merton’s (Meister Eckhart’s) open cloud of *unknowing* offers attractive, authentic options for preachers and hearers that can include but will not be confined in a law/gospel dialectic. In becoming authentic and effective, preachers consider this *afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted*.

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**BONHOEFFER AS YOUTH WORKER:
A THEOLOGICAL VISION FOR
DISCIPLESHIP AND LIFE TO-
GETHER**, by Andrew Root. Grand Rapids:
Baker Academic, 2015. Pp. 224. \$19.99 (pa-
per).

One of the most intriguing things about the theological legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is that it has been employed by such a wide variety of special interests. From Hanfried Müller, an East German-socialist theologian drawing inspiration in 1961 for his doctoral dissertation, *Von der Kirche zur Welt* from Bonhoeffer’s notion of “worldliness,” to the “death of God” theologians (e.g., Altizer, Hamilton, and Van Buren) using his cryptic phrases like “living in the world with God, without God” to support their particular 1960s “radical” agenda, to conservatives like Eric Metaxas and George Huntemann drawing heavily on the “early” Bonhoeffer to create an evangelically shaped Bonhoeffer; from Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez and Spaniard Jon Sobrino finding inspiration in him for liberation theology to Mennonites like Mark Nation finding ample evidence in Bonhoeffer to use him as a poster child for Christian pacifism, all these and many more persons from widely diverse backgrounds have found in Dietrich Bonhoeffer a voice to stimulate their reflection and offer support for their causes. This multifarious use—and abuse—is well known, and understandable when dealing with a person whose life-and-death witness engenders deep respect and even imitation.

In *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, Andrew Root goes much further than simply employing Dietrich Bonhoeffer to legitimize and buttress his own philosophy of youth ministry; Root argues convincingly not only that parts of Bonhoeffer’s theology can be seen as relevant for youth ministry, but that Bonhoeffer’s experience with young people significantly shaped his entire theological orientation: “a central way to understand Bonhoeffer is as a pastor to

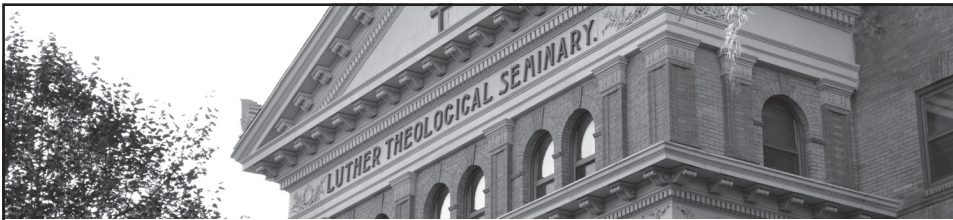
youth...who constructed some of the most creative theological perspectives of the early twentieth century with young people on his mind" (3).

While Root is widely recognized as a significant voice in today's field of youth ministry, it is well to remember that he has also done his homework and paid his dues when it comes to knowing the Bonhoeffer legacy. He does a very effective job of sharing the contours and complexities of Bonhoeffer's biography, with a "lens often glossed over in other historical accounts," namely, "Bonhoeffer doing youth ministry and doing it theologically" (18–19).

Andrew Root, with Kenda Dean, have observed for some time a "theological turn in youth ministry." This turn involves a shift from doing ministry with youth in a "technological" way, where outcome and function demand certain techniques, to a "theological" understanding of church, gospel, and ministry in which young people—even children—are

of intrinsic, eschatological value, not simply instrumental for church growth or maintenance. Using Bonhoeffer's concept of "*Stellvertreter*" (place-sharer) as a key interpretive concept, Root traces Bonhoeffer's youth ministry experience, showing in virtually every chapter of his life that Bonhoeffer learned significant things from children about Christian ministry. Root, like Bonhoeffer, argues for a concrete, experiential, theological/christological understanding of ministry with youth, never confusing such authentic *Stellvertretung* with simply teaching theology to young people. He nicely summarizes his reason for connecting this theological turn with Bonhoeffer's insights: "Dietrich Bonhoeffer is the forefather to the theological turn because he incomparably weaves together youth work, attention to concrete experience, and commitment to the revelatory nature of God's continued action in the world through Jesus Christ" (8).

Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker is first and



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foremost a significant contribution to the field of youth ministry. Andrew Root offers persons in this pastoral field some wonderful insights to deepen their faith and, hopefully, feel affirmed in their vocation. Secondly, he gifts Bonhoeffer scholars with a lens for seeing an aspect of Bonhoeffer “often glossed over” or completely missed: the significance of young people in shaping Bonhoeffer’s theological orientation.

Has Andrew Root overstated the importance and influence of children/youth in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s experience and thought? Perhaps, slightly. But then, such an overstatement might, at least, occasion a curiosity about this particular dimension. For that opportunity to see a different side of Bonhoeffer I am most grateful, and I believe those involved in youth ministry will benefit immensely from a deeper theological approach to their work, which is often spent with “how to” manuals and programmatic seminars. If there is a practical application in all of this for those involved in youth ministry, it comes in the final two chapters (part 2) of the book. There the author offers interesting detail about Bonhoeffer’s most popular writings, *Discipleship* and *Life Together*. He writes, “In this part, I will explore

the central themes of these two works for their relevance to contemporary youth ministry” (171). In these final pages, Root hopefully interests the reader in digging deeper into the primary material that has lured many a person into the heart and ministry of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Finally, Andrew Root, like Bonhoeffer himself, seems less anxious about the loss in numbers and lack of growth evident in the church, and is much more concerned that disciples of Jesus Christ be/remain authentic and faithful, leaving the final outcome to God and the future. Such confidence is a breath of fresh air in an otherwise competitive, and—too often—depressing, church environment. *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker* would be a wonderful gift for any youth director or person committed to youth ministry. While not light reading, this book is well worth any commitment of time and energy, as Root’s labors of love—for youth and for Bonhoeffer—are here combined.

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