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Lang, O'Driscoll, and Williams' "Just War: Authority, Tradition and Practice" (Book Review)

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Jesting Angels: God's Lighter Side,

by Ken Bazyn. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015. 73 pp. \$13.00.

ISBN 9781498220576

Reviewed by Gary Fittsimmons, Director of Library Services, Bryan College, Dayton, TN

Despite the title and the introduction, this short book fails to deliver on its promise of treating us to "God's lighter side." It is a book of nonsensical images masquerading as poetry, written apparently for the shock value of the comparisons made between the realities alluded to and the mental pictures that the author forces upon them. The art of poetry is lost in a mad rush to see how many incongruent images he can ignite in the reader's consciousness with as little support for the comparisons as possible. In the introduction (p. xii), Bazyn compared his use of outlandish images to Christ's use of imagery in His parables, but unlike Jesus' parables, Bazyn fails to teach anything of substance by his use of such mental pictures. God does have a sense of humor as Bazyn claims (again in the introduction, p. xi), but there is very little funny in what appears here. Aside from the questionable theology in many of his allusions, there is little even distinctly Christian in this book either. In short, the book is not recommended. Bazyn has been a long-time Editorial Director of Religious Book Club, written *The Seven Perennial Sins and Their Offspring*, *Soul-Wrestling: Meditations in Monochrome*, and published articles and photographs in 40 periodicals. He has written a previous poetry collection entitled *Gospel Midrashim: Poems on the Life of Jesus*.

Just War: Authority, Tradition and Practice,

edited by Anthony F. Lang, Jr., Cian O'Driscoll, and John Williams. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013. 328 pp. \$35.00. ISBN 9781589019966

Reviewed by Lisa Cutforth-Anderson, Learning Resource Coordinator and Old Testament professor, Alberta Bible College, Calgary, AB

This book came into being as a result of an interdisciplinary workshop on the just war tradition sponsored by the US Institute of Peace in the summer of 2010. Its ultimate goal of peace shines through the presenters' offerings compiled in this volume. The editors offer numerous essays that discuss the Western concept and tradition of just war and proper conduct in warfare. They do not leave their readers, there, though. The conference attendees also question whether these rules can and should apply in the fight against terrorism. Terrorists, as a rule, do not follow the

accepted conventions of war, which make a proper response following traditional war conventions difficult for governments. Possible solutions are suggested and previous combat responses and policies of the United States are analyzed in-depth. Most examples referred to in the book are from the Gulf War in 1991 and other American-involved conflicts since then. As is expected, these offerings from a peace conference strive for peaceful solutions; sometimes warfare is unavoidable, but it should not be the first response. In order to analyze the cause and effect of possible responses to terrorism, the editors arranged these essays around the questions of the practice of authority, authority in practice and the possibility of real triumph through warfare.

As the conference was interdisciplinary, it is not surprising that the contributors come from varied backgrounds. The contributors include professors of theology, ethics, philosophy, international and military law, political science, and Islam: all proper authorities to write and speak on the ideals of just war and at what point it crosses the line in an excess of force and becomes revenge. Just war stands on the foundation of just-enough force, not an excess of force. Because these authors discuss the legality of warfare, this volume reads as a legal document complete with complicated legal jargon and philosophies. However, the contributors, for the most part, take care to explain difficult ideas in everyday language. This book gives readers an appreciation of the multitude of decisions that governments must make before, during, and after any act of warfare. The editors conclude with the suggestion that new types of terrorism may require new twists and applications of just war.

Each chapter in this volume includes extensive endnotes, as well as access to main ideas through a combined index of names and subjects. The writing styles of the authors are not extremely complex, but this book is a slow read as there are so many legal and philosophical ideas readers must learn and understand. However, this book is recommended for public libraries, and secular and theological post-secondary institutions. It explains the Western view of war and suggestions for warfare based on the Christian ethics upon which much of the Western world was founded.