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## Resource Reviews

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**What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times**, by Nathan MacDonald. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008. 156 pp. \$16.00 paperback. ISBN 9780802862983.

*Reviewed by Mary Ann Buhler, Director of Library Services, Manhattan Christian College, Manhattan, KS.*

If you were to go to Amazon.com, you would find several books for diets that were based on their authors' interpretation of the Bible. According to Mr. MacDonald, such books "contain examples of biblical interpretation that are misinformed, whimsical, confused, and dominated by agendas that are alien to the Bible" (p. 98). His book is the result of much scholarly research in the Old Testament and archaeological resources in Israel.

Actually, this book was originally to be a brief introductory chapter to a book about the ways food is used as a symbol in the Old Testament (*Not Bread Alone: the Uses of Food in the Old Testament*, published by Oxford University Press,

2008). He soon discovered that what he had written was not only too much for an introductory chapter, but also too extensive for a journal article. After some consideration, he determined that his research would be more appropriate for an entire book.

Written with the general public in mind, yet wanting to satisfy those looking for a scholarly work, the author wrote in a style more accessible to the average person, yet included fifteen pages of bibliography, in addition to 31 pages of notes.

This well-researched book would be appropriate not only for a public or church library, but also for an academic library. It would help the reader to understand how interpretation of a biblical diet can be confusing at times, and how an Old Testament person's diet depended a lot upon his economic situation. I highly recommend it, particularly for libraries serving those who desire information on the eating habits (healthy and unhealthy) of the people in the Old Testament.

**Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies**, by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009. 254 pp. ISBN 978-0-8028-4864-2.

*Reviewed by Sallie J. Alger, Head of Bibliographic Services, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

When we speak, do we consciously think about where our words came from, how they have changed, how they may have been “depleted, polluted, contaminated, eroded, and filled with artificial stimulants?” According to the author, this is what has happened to the English language as we know it today. Her premise is that we need not bow to the current standards in much of today’s journalism and political discourse – which very much “dumb downs” its writing to that of fourth to seventh grade reading levels.

McIntyre’s work is a thoughtful reflection on our use of words, using twelve constructive ways to counteract this downward spiral of language misuse and laxity, with chapter titles such as: “Why Worry about Words,” “Love Words,” “Tell the Truth,” “Read Well,” “Love the Long Sentence,” etc. Further quoting McIntyre, “To maintain usable and reliable language – to be good stewards of words – we have at least to do these three things: (1) to deepen and sharpen our reading skills, (2) to cultivate habits of speaking and listening that foster precision and clarity, and (3) to practice *poesis* – to be makers and doers of the word.” She goes on to say that “we need regularly to exercise the tongue and the ear: to indulge in word play, to delight in metaphor, to practice specificity and accuracy, to listen critically and refuse clichés and soundbites...”

I would highly recommend this book for any college or university library, and especially for inclusion in the libraries of campus reading and writing clinics!

**Out of My Bone: the Letters of Joy Davidman**, by Don W. King. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009. 387 pp. \$28.00. ISBN 978-0-8028-6399-7.

*Reviewed by Elizabeth Pearson, Library Director, Montreat College Library, Montreat, NC*

*Out of My Bone* tells Joy Davidman’s life story as seen through her letters, most of which are published here for the first time. Although Davidman is best known as the wife of C.S. Lewis, she was an award-winning poet as well as an author and literary critic. Approximately 170 letters written by Davidman from 1936 until her death in 1960 are included; however, very little correspondence between Davidman and Lewis is included, as most of those letters do not survive. King, a noted authority on C.S. Lewis and editor of *Christian Scholar’s Review*, presents a work of solid scholarship that makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of Joy

Davidman’s life and work. As stated in the Introduction, this book will hold particular interest because the letters reveal Davidman’s distinctive voice and penetrating mind, describe her transformation from atheism and Communism to Christianity, portray her struggles in her first marriage and in balancing family life and career interests, offer insights into her relationship with C.S. Lewis, and reveal her thoughts as she battled cancer. The publication of these letters is also intended to help correct misperceptions about Davidman’s influence on Lewis and to bring more critical attention to her accomplishments as a writer.

*Out of My Bone* makes a unique contribution to a full understanding of Joy Davidman and her influence on the work of C.S. Lewis. Her letters are well-edited and indexed, and the book includes both a chronological bibliography of her work and a critical bibliography covering book reviews, articles, and books. This book is highly recommended for academic libraries and will be an excellent addition for those with C.S. Lewis collections.

**Calvin**, by George W. Stroup. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 2009. 85 pp. \$12.00 ISBN 9780687659135.

*Reviewed by Garrett Trott, Instruction-Reference Librarian, Corban College, Salem, OR.*

John Calvin: respected by some, maligned by others, reputed by all. George W. Stroup provides a brief overview of Calvin as part of a series entitled, “Abingdon Pillars of Theology.” This series, intended for students, assists in grasping the basic facts, influences, and significance of major theologians.

Calvin’s ideas impacted theology and many other facets of American culture. Thus, when hearing of a new title about John Calvin, many think of a work that is several hundreds of pages in length. A work about Calvin that is less than this is either quite remarkable or severely lacking.

Stroup’s work is the former. This work has eight chapters: Life; The Knowledge of God; A Lamp and a Mirror; God’s Good Will; The Mediator as Prophet, Priest, and King; The Efficacious Spirit; Mother Church; and Calvin and His Children. Each chapter gives a brief overview of Calvin’s life and doctrine and their impact.

Looking at these chapters begs the question: how does Stroup cover all this content in less than 100 pages? The brevity of this work does not allow Stroup to go into the various interpretations scholars have on Calvin’s concepts. However, Stroup provides an overview of these issues by using Calvin’s primary works: the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and his commentaries.

Calvin greatly influenced western civilization. The last chapter of this book touches upon three areas of influence: theology, ecclesiology, and politics. Those involved with the Association of Christian Librarians are likely aware of his impacts upon theology and ecclesiology. However, they may not be aware of how Calvin's ideas influenced politics. This brief overview will assist many readers in understanding Calvin as a thinker who influenced many facets of culture, not just as a theologian.

This book would fit any undergraduate library. The only concern is that students will like it because it is short. This series is not intended to replace larger works that delve more deeply into Calvin and his ideas. It is intended to be a brief introduction; leading students to other resources that fully develop Calvin's concepts. If Stroup's book is used for that purpose, it will be a great resource.

**Politics for the Greatest Good: The Case for Prudence in the Public Square**, by Clarke D. Forsythe. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2009. 319 pp. \$23.00 ISBN 9780830829224.

*Reviewed by Garrett Trott, Instruction-Reference Librarian, Corban College, Salem, OR.*

Prudence is the exercise of sound judgment in practical affairs. In a culture focused on timely results, prudence has lost much of its value. In this book, Forsythe argues that prudence is necessary in order to understand the role of Christians in the public square.

Forsythe uses two exemplars of prudence to illustrate his point: William Wilberforce and Abraham Lincoln. Both of these men played critical but different roles in the abolition movement. In England, slavery was abolished through a long legislative process led by William Wilberforce. Prudence was critical because this transition involved many changes on many different levels. If one had approached abolition without prudence, asking for slaves to be freed and the slave trade stopped instantly, English lawmakers would have likely refuted the concept because of the dramatic economic impact it would have had upon England. However, with prudence, William Wilberforce, step by step, passed laws that regulated the slave trade, making it a "lesser evil." Shortly before his death, the successful attempts to regulate the slave trade led to the abolition of slavery in England.

The United States handled the situation differently. Abraham Lincoln, who led the United States through the civil war, was politically prudent. One controversial example is Lincoln's suspension of the *writ of habeas corpus*. The *writ of habeas corpus* is a longstanding legal procedure that tests the legality of

someone's arrest and detention. Lincoln suspended this for the first time on April 27th, 1861 along the military line between Washington and Philadelphia. Forsythe, agreeing with many legal scholars, argues that this was a prudent move supporting Lincoln's lawful discretionary power to arrest and hold in custody individuals known to have criminal intercourse with the insurgents.

After arguing for the importance of prudence, Forsythe discusses how it could impact the political disarray caused by the legalization of abortion. He acknowledges that *Roe vs. Wade* will not be overturned anytime soon. However, an issue that is often overlooked with abortion is the health risks to the woman receiving them. Prudence, Forsythe argues, would look at this element of abortion, plus several others and begin encouraging legislators to pass bills regulating abortion, not on behalf of the unborn child, which lawmakers disagree, but on behalf of women's health, which lawmakers will typically agree.

Forsythe's book is recommended for any library. It is an excellent example of thinking redemptively about politics.

**The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts that Shaped Our World**, by R. C. Sproul. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2009. 224 pp. \$15.99 ISBN 9781433503146.

*Reviewed by Garrett Trott, Instruction-Reference Librarian, Corban College, Salem, OR.*

Philosophy impacts everything: from education to government, from public policy to theology. In this book, Sproul provides an introduction to philosophers and their impacts of daily life. Beginning with Plato, Sproul takes between ten to fifteen pages to explain these philosopher's concepts, the context in which they were developed, and the impact they have upon the twenty-first century.

When a book is about philosophy, many readers think that the content will be over their heads. However, Sproul does an outstanding job of taking philosophical concepts, and making them understandable to a lay audience.

Sproul covers twelve philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Rene Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre. In the last chapter, he discusses Darwin and Freud. While neither of these men were philosophers, it is difficult to go far in twenty-first century western thought without eventually running ground with them. Their ideas tremendously impacted thought, culture, and philosophy.

This book is an introduction to philosophy. If one is familiar with these philosophers' theories and works, much of Sproul's writing will be redundant. However, Sproul's work contains a list for further reading. This list will assist those interested in reading more about a particular philosopher or idea.

It is noteworthy that this title was originally published in 2000. This edition is a paperback edition of the 2000 edition. If a library already has the 2000 edition, this book is simply a reprint of it.

Overall, this is an excellent book. Any library would find this useful. Sproul's strength, which is very evident in this book, is making complex philosophical concepts understandable to the average lay person. This strength makes his book all the more valuable to a library.

**A Different Kind of Wild: Is Your Faith Too Tame**, by Debbie Alsdorf. Grand Rapids, Mich: Revell, c2009. 207pp. \$12.99. ISBN-13: 978-0-8007-3366-7.

*Reviewed by Noelle C. Keller, Technical Services Librarian, Shipman Library, Adrian College, Adrian, MI.*

Debbie Alsdorf is founder and speaker of Design4Living Ministries and Director of Women's ministries and a lay counselor at Cornerstone Fellowship. She follows her 2008 book, *Deeper*, with *A Different Kind of Wild*.

*A Different Kind of Wild* is Alsdorf's call for women to look at the application of their faith and encourage them to become W.I.L.D. or Women in Lifelong Development. The book is divided into three parts: Part One – Developing: Growing Up Spiritually; Part Two – Daring: Living by a Different Standard; and Part Three – Determined: Finding Courage to Follow a New Path. This twelve chapter book each ending with study questions is suitable for individual or small group use. There is an expanded study guide at the back of the book.

Alsdorf's message is to change your orientation, direction, focus, and attitude. She describes a life focused on God and directed by the Holy Spirit as "living up". Courageous and passionate should describe women of faith engaged in the lifelong process of becoming the women God created us to be. Setting aside others' expectations, personal perfectionism, and their attendant emotions, is the radical change of mind and heart advocated for a life surrendered to living God's way. Using personal examples, inspirational quotes, and biblical passages, Alsdorf presents a dynamic book to encourage women to go beyond a tame faith.

I would recommend this book for personal study or a women's group study or for church and public libraries collecting women's and/or Christian living works.

**The Mystery of the Rosary: Marian Devotion and the Reinvention of Catholicism**, by Nathan D. Mitchell. New York and London: New York University Press, 2009. 325 pp. \$37.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780814795910.

*Reviewed by Mary Ann Buhler, Director of Library Services, Manhattan Christian College, Manhattan, KS.*

Why should an evangelical Protestant read a book about the rosary? It helps us understand why Roman Catholics, as well as some Protestants, pray the rosary. Nathan D. Mitchell is Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. To explain the use of the rosary, he delves into its history, often referring to famous paintings to illustrate his point. The rosary became quite popular with all classes of people for several reasons, one of which was the fact that people did not need to read in order to use it. In addition, the use of a rosary "allowed the devout to focus on more peaceful aspects of faith and religious practice" (p. 188).

The Virgin Mary is often associated with the use of the rosary, so the author spends much of the book discussing her relationship with it. He is quick to point out (as did my Catholic daughter-in-law) that Mary is *not* worshiped. He states that if you look at the phrases used in reference to Mary, they come straight from the Bible, such "From now on will all ages call me blessed" (Luke 1:48.)

One thing that I found frustrating was that while the author referred so many times to paintings, pictures of them were not included in the book. Doing so would have helped tremendously to understand his point. In addition, he quotes a number of sources, many in Old English. While at first it was tedious reading, after a while I found I could read it almost as easily as I did the rest of the book.

Whether or not you agree with the author, this thought-provoking book will certainly help the reader understand why the rosary is used so extensively. It is appropriate for a public or church library, but particularly for a faith-based college library.

**When God Goes to Starbucks: A Guide to Everyday Apologetics**, by Paul Copan, Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2008. 221 pp. \$14.99 ISBN 978-0-010-6743-3.

*Reviewed by Amy VanHuisen, Fort Wayne, IN*

Do not be misled by the trendy title or by the use of the word "everyday" in it. True to other apologetic works by Paul Copan (PhD, Marquette University), this is not a book for intellectual slackers. On the other hand, the ideas with which it grapples are completely accessible to seriously inquiring minds. The title is a metaphor for the conversations

that happen when people wrestle with questions about what really matters in life; this book deals with a collection of some of the most cutting edge of those.

Readers of Copan's previous apologetics titles will recognize the structure of this book. The first of three parts addresses "Slogans Related to Truth and Reality", followed in succeeding sections by examination of "Slogans Related to Worldviews" and "Slogans Related to Christianity". Topics the author invites readers to think through include egoism, absolute autonomy, deception, miracles, religious experience, homosexuality, moral outrage, "holy war", Jesus' second coming, and denominations.

The words "relevant" and "logical" characterize Copan's approach. While not in the more journalistic style of a Lee Strobel (*The Case for Christ, The Case for the Real Jesus*), Copan is not unreadable. What keeps this book from being dry and totally "in one's head" is the sharp interplay between ideas and real life that Copan so masterfully demonstrates throughout.

Each chapter ends with a summary of main points and a select bibliography for further reading. Many works listed in the latter are not the most recent publications, but it is clear that the authors and titles that do appear have been deliberately and carefully chosen. Extensive, detailed end notes will allow the reader to connect with more contemporary resources, including some websites.

This volume is an essential addition to the Copan titles or other apologetics classics that may already exist in any personal, church, or college library collection.

**The Attentive Life: Discovering God's Presence in All Things**, by Leighton Ford. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 225 pp. \$18.00. ISBN 978-0-8308-3516-4.

*Reviewed by Amy VanHuisen, Fort Wayne, IN*

"This book is about attentiveness, not simply as a path to self-fulfillment but as the very essence of our journey to the Center – as the way home to our own heart, the way of making our heart a home for God." (p. 12) With that stated goal, Leighton Ford (Leighton Ford Ministries, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association) has written a partly biographical, partly devotional, partly theological work that invites readers to "explore ... attentiveness as a special lens through which to look at our lives." (p.13)

The books' structure parallels the classical Benedictine prayer "hours". Within that framework, Ford defines each

particular hour in its classic sense, then goes on to draw meaning, illustration, and application from Scripture and life, much of the latter his own. Liberally sprinkled throughout the text, and adding a haunting quality to it, are poems and prayers spanning a wide swath of history. Each chapter ends with a brief biographical sketch or anecdote of "One Who Paid Attention"; C.S. Lewis, Mother Teresa, and Henri Nouwen walk into the spotlight of these sections along with lesser-known but no-less-significant pilgrims.

If a reader picks up this book expecting to read the Billy Graham evangelist version of Leighton Ford, he will likely be disappointed, perhaps even shocked. Think of watching an artist pouring out his soul and passion as he paints before his easel day after day. At times one would not know whether to look away from such an intimate act or to linger in a long depths-plumbing gaze as the masterpiece rises from the canvas. A reader might well find such ambiguity of spirit in reading this book. Ford has made himself completely vulnerable as he recounts what amounts to almost a rebirth of his spiritual life. Some readers may find the mysticism of his experience a bit off-putting; others will be refreshed and quite possibly overwhelmed.

*The Attentive Life* lacks an index but the end notes, though not extensive, are thorough where they need to be and will lead a serious reader to solid sources and seminal resources. Most Scriptures quoted in the text are given with references. At first blush, this volume would be an excellent addition to a church or personal library. A closer look highlights meatier substance that would give it a deserved place in a college library collection as well. It would definitely provide a fresh look for evangelicals seeking insight on the topic of prayer or spiritual formation.

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#### INTERESTED IN REVIEWING A TITLE?

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