



Volume 49 | Issue 1

Article 7

2006

Resource Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Fox, Phyllis (2006) "Resource Reviews," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 49 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol49/iss1/7>

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Resource Reviews

Authentic Relationships: Discover the Lost Art of “One Anothering”, by Wayne Jacobsen and Clay Jacobsen. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. 155 pp. \$11.99. ISBN 0-8010-6451-1

Reviewed by Grace Veach, Director of Library Services, Southeastern University, Lakeland, FL

Small groups are one of the more successful tools of today’s church growth movement, and this book appears to be written for the small group market. Appealing to the Christian who finds close relationships within the church to be difficult or nonexistent to find and deepen, *Authentic Relationships* examines some of the “one another” statements of the New Testament. Starting from the “easier” commands (“love one another,” “forgive one another”), the authors move toward increasingly difficult instructions (“confess to one another” and “submit to one another” conclude the book). Designed to be used with small groups (discussion questions follow each chapter and a short guide to starting a small group is at the end of the book), the book will also be useful to the individual Christian who is seeking deeper community. The book appears to be intended for individual and group spiritual growth rather than any scholarly study; there is no bibliography, and personal illustrations and practical examples are employed throughout. The Jacobsens are brothers who have each authored other books.

The American Church Experience: A Concise History, By Thomas A. Askew and Richard V. Pierard. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. 288 pp. ISBN 0-8308-3201-7.

Reviewed by John E. Shaffett, Library Director, Baptist College of Florida Library, Graceville, Florida.

Thomas A. Askew (Ph.D., Northwestern University) is Stephen Phillips Professor of History emeritus and executive director of the East-West Institute of International Studies at Gordon College. He is coauthor or editor of five books relating to religious, educational, and political themes. Richard V. Pierard (Ph.D., University of Iowa) is professor of history emeritus at Indiana State University and scholar in residence at Gordon College. He is a board member of the American Baptist Historical Society and the author of numerous books and articles relating to the history of Christianity.

The book is divided into five parts: The Old World Heritage (2 chapters), Colonial Foundations (1607-1783) (3 chapters); The Nationalization and Expansion of the Churches (1784-1860) (4 chapters); Disruption, Devotion, and Debate (1861-1916) (5 chapters); The Churches in a pluralistic Society (1917- Present) (6 chapters). The authors in the preface tell the reader that as they paint the picture of American Church history in five parts, they will “pay particular attention to the evangelical tradition”. The authors do cover other groups in the narrative.

Some of the people covered in this book are: John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Anabaptists, Pilgrims, John Winthrop, Roger Williams, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Francis Asbury, Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Phoebe Palmer, Fanny J. Crosby, Henry Ward Beecher, Walter Rauschenbusch, and many more. Some of the major events covered: English Reformation, Great Awakening, American Revolution, Church-State relations, missions, education, and diversity in religious life, slavery, Darwinism, fundamentalism, social gospel, and others. It describes all these topics in an even-handed manner.

The *American Church Experience* includes over forty illustrations, an extensive bibliography of important recent literature in the field of American church history, an index, and a well-written narrative of the history of American Christianity. Its prose is intelligible, interesting, and balanced. It provides a good overview of American churches in 240 pages. It is highly recommended for church, public, and academic libraries.

Gathered Before God: Worship-Centered Church Renewal, by Jane Rogers Vann. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. viii, 192 pp. ISBN 0-664-22630-2.

Reviewed by David Anderson, Retired, Carlson Health Sciences Library, University of California, Davis, Davis, California.

Jane Rogers Vann is Professor of Christian Education at Union Theology Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, and an ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In part, to answer the author’s questions about renewal – effective,

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positive change – in congregational life, *Gathered Before God* focuses on seven Presbyterian, two Methodist, and one each Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches. The congregations were chosen for their understanding of “worship as the community’s encounter with God (page 21).” They are small, medium, and large churches. Vann obviously visited each of them for some time, interviewing both leaders and lay persons. She first discusses worship at the center of congregational life by presenting a portrait of community life in West Raleigh Presbyterian, and then focuses on worship as “the pattern for the Christian life and for congregational life.” Worship is communal ritual, involving prayer and sharing. It shapes the overall culture of the congregation. It is a series of human experience which for effective learning requires reflection on those experiences.

The book then discusses experiential learning in congregational life, using stories from the different churches Vann visited. Such learning depends on a congregational culture that develops relationships of intimacy, commitment, endurance and honesty. These congregations “know how to talk about encounters with God with some precision and specificity (page 87).” Vann then discusses how to the “spiritual disciplines offer abundant opportunities to remember and explore our experiences in the light of the gospel ...” (page 89). Study and Instruction, Ministry and Mission, and Leadership in Worship-Centered Congregational Life, titles of the following chapters, present both discussions and stories. The latter chapter discusses cultural change and adaptation in congregations, and how they were affected. Vann was often asked “How do congregations center their life together on worship and open themselves to continual formation into the life of Christ?” She says that, in her “opinion, it takes no fewer than ten years.” Some of the leaders recognize that “gradual but deep reorientation is in harmony with the shape of the Christian spiritual life: and take the “prospect of broadening and deepening of the worship of God (pages 179-80)” as a gift.

What Jesus Meant: The Beatitudes and a Meaningful Life, by Erik Kolbell. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. 140 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 0-664-22292-7.

Reviewed by Dr. Donald L. Tucker, Professor of Christian Education and Preaching, Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, PA.

Erik Kolbell is a graduate of Yale Divinity School and former minister of social justice at Riverside Church in New York City. He is a writer, psychotherapist and minister. He has authored numerous articles and books on everyday spiritual life and appeared on the Today Show, the Early Show on CBS, the Charlie Rose Show on PBS, the Jane Pauley Show, and numerous radio and local television programs. *What Jesus Meant: the Beatitudes and a Meaningful Life* was chosen as one of “Best Spiritual Books of 2003” by Spirituality and Health magazine.

After a brief introductory chapter focusing on the fundamental intent of the beatitudes in examining individual (and corporate) attitudes and actions, Kolbell divides the book into eight chapters, one for each beatitude: surrender, empathy, patience, self-denial, contrition, sanctification, wholeness, and courage. Kolbell’s overall emphasis concentrates on the beatitudes as a picture of what perfect love looks like, a portrayal of fundamental social values as intended by God.

Kolbell is an exceptional wordsmith and has an uncanny knack for selecting just the right image, metaphor, example, or phrase to reinforce the message. On occasion, the clever phrases seemed strained and overdone, but overall, Kolbell packs a down-to-earth message with deep emotional response. Illustrative vignettes and sayings from a broad spectrum of sources (scripture, mystics, writers and others) are sprinkled throughout each chapter. The book’s perspective is theologically liberal and the application to select social issues reflects this.

For an interpretive focus oriented to the layperson from a conservative perspective, works such as John Stott’s *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (InterVarsity Press, 1985) or D.A. Carson’s *Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* (Baker, 1982) may be more suitable.

What Jesus Meant is not an exegetical commentary analyzing subtle interpretive differences or various perspectives on the beatitudes. It does not interact with alternatives or summarize current debates on source, structure, or textual difficulties. For this, consult the standard scholarly commentaries on Matthew. As a catalyst confronting the complacent reader with personal responsibility and ideas for living a life of faith in a complex world, it serves its purpose well.

Turning to Jesus: the Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels, by Scot McKnight. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002. 214 p. \$18.95. ISBN 0664225144

Reviewed by Michael H. Windsor, Director of Library Services, Central Baptist Seminary, Virginia Beach, VA

Thought provoking and challenging – but not necessarily convincing! The author is a noteworthy New Testament scholar. In this work he examines the sociology of conversion and uses both New Testament persons (e.g. Peter and Zacchaeus) and contemporary persons to illustrate his arguments. He suggested that a conversion experience may be drawn from three realms, “In abstract terms there are three orientations to conversion: socialization, liturgical acts, and personal decision” (p. 1). He appeals to his readers, “I am asking each of us to pause long enough to hear the stories of all Christians and not just those who frame their stories as do we” (p. 2). He recognizes that numerous elements, such as ethnicity, sexual differences, psychology, age, and culture, that may influence a person in the process of conversion.

The book focuses on the process of conversion as a sociological event. “In Christianity, many converts express their commitment (1) in a creedal confession at confirmation, (2) in an adult baptism or a public Eucharist, (3) in joining a church, (4) in taking a public stand, or (5) in a private prayer alone in one’s inner sanctuary” (p. 98). What the reviewer found unsatisfying is that the author never concretely connects the message of the Gospel with the event of conversion.

The book is intended for readers who are interested in the sociology of religion. In the end the author does a good job of outlining what may happen when a person has a religious experience. He has not convinced the reviewer that this is the same thing as turning to Jesus.

100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum: Choosing the Right Curriculum and Approach for Your Child’s Learning Style, by Cathy Duffy. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005. 314 pp. \$21.99 ISBN: 080543138-1.

Reviewed by Jeff Gates, Head Librarian, Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary, Ankeny, IA.

Cathy Duffy is best known for her comprehensive Christian Home Educators’ Curriculum Manual. She has also written many articles for home education magazines and has been a homeschooling mom, writer, curriculum consultant, and conference speaker for over twenty years.

The purpose of 100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum is to help homeschooling parents choose the right curriculum for their child based upon their philosophy of education and the learning style of their child. After a brief introduction in chapter 1, the author provides a test in chapters 2 and 3 to help readers determine their own philosophy of education. In chapter 4, she gives advice to readers to help them determine the learning style of their child. In chapter 5, she shows readers how to write educational goals for their child based upon their philosophy of education and the learning style of the child. In chapter 6, the author gives a helpful chart that analyzes the 100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum based upon learning styles, need for parent/teacher instruction, independent study, amount of writing, prep time, grade level, ease of use for teacher, information about teacher’s manual, philosophy of education, religious content, and where it is reviewed in the book. In the rest of the book, the author gives a very good review from a Christian perspective of each of the 100 Top Picks for various subjects and types of curricula. There is a four page index of subjects, titles, and authors at the end of the book. I found one review of a high school curriculum that we have used very accurate.

This resource can be very helpful to beginning and veteran homeschooling parents in evaluating curricula for their child. It may also be helpful to other educators in evaluating curricula and supportive resources. I highly recommend it.

Worldwide Guide to Homeschooling: Facts and Stats on the Benefits of Homeschool, by Brian D. Ray. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005. 214 pp. \$10.99. ISBN 0805426108.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, TX

This small book is packed with interesting and useful information about homeschooling in various countries around the world. The author, Brian D. Ray, Ph.D., speaks from experience as the father of eight homeschooled children as well as from the standpoint of an international research expert. *Worldwide Guide to Homeschooling: Facts and Stats on the Benefits of Homeschool* gives a brief history and definition of homeschooling. Informative chapters discussing trends and benefits to the student, family, and to society are provided. Of particular interest are the profiles and contact information found throughout the book. Information regarding

homeschooling in multiple countries is discussed and compared. Contact information for homeschool organizations worldwide is provided in the appendix.

This book is appropriate for congregational and academic libraries as well as for libraries and individuals involved in the homeschool movement. I feel that the information provided in this book will prove the most beneficial to media journalists and others who need quick, concise information on trends in homeschooling.

Homeschooling the Challenging Child, by Christine M. Field. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005. 244 pp. \$14.99. ISBN 0805430784.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, TX

Christine Field is a Homeschool mom and former trial lawyer. She has written an encouraging and helpful book filled with advice applicable to all homeschooling parents, but especially informative for homeschooling parents with special-needs children. According to Field, a challenging child is one with learning difficulties regardless of whether the challenge is physical, mental, or personality based. Her discipline strategies are sound and appropriate for various age levels. As a homeschooling mother, I appreciated the authors frank discussion on how to discover if there is a real (physical or mental) problem, or a personality problem. Field's inclusion of personality/temperament types and how to adapt teaching strategies for the various personality types was excellent. Included at the end of the book are multiple resource references for teaching materials, organizations, support groups, and web sites. Also included are chapters on attention disorders and discovering basic disabilities.

This book is written for homeschooling families who are experiencing learning challenges and is appropriate for personal, congregational and academic libraries with homeschooling sections.

Serious Times, by James Emery White. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004. 192 pp. \$17.00. ISBN 0-8308-3211-4.

Reviewed by Leslie Starasta, Information Services Librarian, Lincoln Christian College & Seminary, Lincoln, IL.

Serious Times bridges the divide between worldview thinking and Christian spiritual disciplines showing how they are inextricably intertwined and necessary for impacting the world for Christ. Author James White, a pastor and adjunct

professor in theology and apologetics, writes "We can deepen our awareness of what is happening in our world ... and then explore key areas of our life that need to be developed to live a life of consequence" (p. 13).

In the first section, White takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of history and worldviews demonstrating how society has gradually turned away from Christian values and ideals which he dubs "the second fall". He then gives a brief synopsis of postmodernism. In 67 pages, White succinctly covers centuries of western civilization and whets the reader's appetite for more. Having established that culture has drifted far from Christ, White urges the reader to transform culture by living a transformed life in the second section. He calls Christians to practice spiritual disciplines, become thinking Christians, heed God's call, and be actively involved in a church community. In conclusion, White calls individuals to "humble, deliberate acts of cultural preservation" (p. 158).

In each chapter, White offers a brief biography of a great Christian who exemplifies the concepts presented including William Wilberforce, St. Benedict, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Although the content is not new, White's writing is engaging and well-documented with over 30 pages of endnotes. A corresponding website (<http://www.serious-times.com>) provides links to complementary materials including suggested reading for further study on each topic covered and additional essays by the author. Serious Times, a recommended addition to academic and church libraries, is also suggested for small group study or use as a supplemental text in introductory courses in worldviews or Christian living. Accompanying curriculum for small groups, personal study, and home schoolers is available for purchase.

Why I am a Christian, by John Stott. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003. 140 pp. \$10.00 ISBN 083083205X.

Reviewed by John E. Shaffett, Library Director, Baptist College of Florida, Graceville, Florida.

John Stott was ordained into the ministry of the Church of England in 1945 and has served the church ever since. Billy Graham calls John Stott "the most respected clergyman in the world today." He has written over 40 books. His best known, Basic Christianity, has been translated into more than 40 languages.

Stott, in his new book, Why I am a Christian, answers the question why he is a Christian. This

book is similar to Basic Christianity, but is more direct and personal in its tone. You almost get the feeling that Stott is conversing with you at the kitchen table.

In seven chapters, John Stott offers six reasons why he is a Christian. Christ “pursued, pricked, and prodded me until I surrendered to him,” because he is convinced that the claims of Christ are true, because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, because Christianity explains our identity as human beings, because following Jesus Christ leads to freedom, because Christ provides fulfillment of our aspirations. The book concludes with a simple invitation to the reader to respond to the claims of Christ.

Why I am a Christian is easy to read and presents the essentials of Christianity clearly. The book can be read devotionally by Christians with much profit. It can also be given as a gift to non-Christians interested in learning about Christianity.

Embracing the Mysterious God : Loving the God We Don’t Understand, by James Emery White. Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003. 174pp. ISBN 0-8308-2377-8.

Reviewed by Laurie J. Wolcott, Collection Development and Technical Services Librarian, Taylor University, Upland, IN

James Emery White addresses the difficult issues that humanity faces as we try to relate to a God that we cannot understand. Basing the book on the scriptures he organizes it around Jesus’ command in Matthew 22 as Jesus explains the most important commandments. His helpful arrangement of the book addresses five areas of struggle: our hearts, our souls, our minds, our strength, and our neighbors.

White quotes many well-known Christian authors as he explores both human nature and the nature and character of God. His approach begins with humanity as finite creation and God as infinite creator, clearly beginning with humility as he writes of our struggles to accept, believe, and love a God that we do not understand. The mysterious God that White describes is clearly recognizable as the God of orthodox Christianity.

Addressed to a general Christian audience, the book is well-written and clear. Mature Christians and those wanting to delve deeply into the character of God may do better with the works of C.S. Lewis and Walter Brueggeman, both of whom are quoted in this work. White’s book is a good, solid starting place for college students and others in the beginning stages of theosophical

research and for those entering this research because of circumstances in their lives.

The Gospel Code: Novel Claims About Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Da Vinci, by Ben Witherington III. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004. 208 pp. ISBN 0-8308-3267-X.

Reviewed by Tony Tremblett, Technical Services Assistant, Regent Carey Library, Vancouver, BC

Ben Witherington III, professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, has written an extensive, reasoned critique of Dan Brown’s best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code*. Brown’s fast-paced thriller makes the unorthodox claim that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and sired a daughter who became the ancestress of the Merovingian royal line of France. The novel’s fascinating amalgam of legend and curious theories would have us believe that the true story of Jesus is preserved in Gnostic gospels and the symbols and rituals of the Knights Templar, the Masons, and especially the Priory of Sion – a story the Catholic church has harshly suppressed as a threat to masculine ecclesiastical power. *The Da Vinci Code*’s historical errors, criticism of organized Christianity, and outrageous speculation has generated a firestorm of controversy.

Witherington’s *The Gospel Code* is a welcome response to this runaway phenomenon. In ten clearly written chapters, Witherington shows time and again why Brown’s “novel claims” find so little support in sober scholarship, whether Protestant, Catholic, liberal, or conservative. He takes us through the early centuries after Jesus’ death to show there is nothing in the historical record that would undermine the orthodox understanding of Jesus. Here are superb introductions to the New Testament data and to the Gnostic and other post-Biblical literature. Witherington also does an excellent job of demonstrating the fundamental danger of the Gnosticism Brown champions – the focus on self as the means of escape from this material world of ordinary human experience to the world of the spirit.

Supporting the text are a select bibliography, a glossary, and extensive Subject and Scripture indices. Overall this book is one of the best of the spate of books written in response to the claims of *The Da Vinci Code*. Witherington does an excellent job of clarifying the truth with strong historical and textual support. A varied audience will find the work useful.

Into the Region of Awe, by David C. Downing. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2005. 206 pp. \$17.00. ISBN 0-8308-3284-X.

Reviewed by Amanda M. Flower, Technical Services Librarian, Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Mount Vernon, OH

A hint of mysticism flows through the work and life of C.S. Lewis. David C. Downing, author of the Lewis biography *The Most Reluctant Convert*, argues that Christian mysticism was a central influence in Lewis's faith and writing. Downing explains some of the Christians who had the greatest impact on Lewis's faith were not great apologists but mystics living across the centuries, such as Julian of Norwich and John of the Cross. In their own writings, these Christian mystics spoke of celestial visions and the immediate presence of God.

Christian mystics whom Lewis studied were not those of the occult but those who described personal accounts of the presence of God. Downing asserts that Lewis's conversion as described in *Surprised by Joy* is just such an experience. Sitting atop a London omnibus, Lewis received an image of a door, which he could choose to open. Lewis opened the door and stepped into faith. Downing adds that Lewis never could create a perfect metaphor to describe that monumental experience. After opening the door, Lewis dove into the spiritual and mystical texts of George MacDonald, Dante, and Brother Lawrence. These texts were the building blocks of what Downing calls Lewis's "spiritual apprenticeship" (p.43).

Later in Lewis's own writing, mysticism appears as a theme. Downing states that this is most recognizable in *The Space Trilogy* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* when the Pevensie children meet Aslan for the first time, their fears fall away and they are brave, joyous, and hear beautiful music. They've had an experience like that of Lewis's on the omnibus.

Thought provoking and fascinating, Christian literature and religion scholars will find this book an enjoyable read, and it would be a great addition to any academic library.

Integrating Spirit and Psyche: Using Women's Narratives in Psychotherapy, by Mary Pat Henahan. New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2003. 227 pp. \$24.05. ISBN 0789012103.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, TX.

Integrating Spirit and Psyche is a well written, easy to read text that explores the use of inspiring narratives/stories about women to assist women to rewrite their life story in a positive way. The author states that "the integration of spirit and psyche is vital for change." She does an excellent job of explaining and encouraging this process throughout the book. Part I includes elements that enhance a sense of self. Parts II and III explore destructive messages women receive from others including society. Part IV explores new stories as women discover their presence and internal power. Part V discusses the wisdom and uniqueness of independent women, termed "wildness" by the author, which showcases and encourages personal freedom. Part VI provides spiritual practices to assist in growth.

This is the first book written by Mary Pat Henahan, DMin. She provides workshops on health and spirituality and is a licensed marriage and family therapist. This text is a valuable tool for women and those who work with women. Each chapter begins with quotes and ends with questions for reflection. The sections on women who soar and portraits of wise women are inspiring. The spiritual practices suggested are practical and achievable. Dr. Henahan's book is appropriate for congregational and academic libraries especially those with sections devoted to women's studies. It will also prove helpful for pastoral counselors and others who seek to understand and empower women.

When the Caregiver Becomes the Patient: A Journey from a Mental Disorder to Recovery and Compassionate Insight, by Daniel L. Langford and Emil J. Authelet. New York: Haworth Press, 2002. 196 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 0789012944.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, TX

When the Caregiver Becomes the Patient: A Journey from a Mental Disorder to Recovery and Compassionate Insight is a personal account of author Daniel Langford's experience with and recovery from an anxiety disorder that caused him to experience paralyzing panic attacks. Langford is a minister, social worker, and teacher.

As a healthcare professional who sometimes works with patients suffering from panic attacks, I was impressed with the author's openness in sharing his experience and recovery. Included in the book is extensive information on the cause, explanation of, and treatment of panic attacks. Caregivers will find a wealth of insight regarding

the spiritual aspects and healing processes involved in anxiety disorders. Most importantly, Langford uses scripture references and well explained concepts to assist the reader to understand how he used his experience with anxiety and panic attacks to grow as caregiver who can offer a new and deeper insight to the challenges faced by clients with mental disorders. This book provides a better understanding of the term “wounded healer.” When the Caregiver Becomes the Patient is appropriate for personal, congregational and academic libraries with counseling as well as mental and spiritual health & healing sections.

Transforming Shame: A Pastoral Response, by Jill McNish. New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2004. 251 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0789021536.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, TX

Jill McNish is an Episcopal priest working in parish ministry and is adjunct faculty for a Pastoral Studies Program. *Transforming Shame* discusses theological understanding of the human shame experience and relates to the psychological underpinnings of shame in human life, as proposed by psychological theory. The most outstanding feature of this text is the author's ability to explain and apply theological concepts in relation to present day life. McNish believes that shame is an integral and inevitable part of the human condition and is the core of profound religious conversion experiences. I particularly enjoyed the discussion of shame in the gospel accounts of the life, ministry, and death of Jesus. McNish brings out many positive aspects of the shame experience and differentiates between healthy and toxic shame. This text is appropriate for congregational and academic libraries and will be especially useful to counselors and pastors who seek a deeper understanding of the spirituality of shame.

A Practical Guide to Hospital Ministry, by Junieta Baker McCall, DMin. New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2002. 318pp. \$34.95. ISBN 078901212x.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, and Rural Nurse Resource Training Center, Floydada, TX

This comprehensive resource could very well be considered a textbook for hospital chaplaincy. The author implements her vast knowledge and experience in hospital ministry to provide a practical overview and suggestions for successful interaction with patients. Particularly helpful are

the many samples and templates of necessary forms such as job descriptions, orientation checklists, and scope of practice statements to name a few. By using real-life situations and experiences, the author does an outstanding job of assisting the reader to gain insight into the role of a hospital chaplain. She also provides clear and complete information and advice for the reader to improve or implement spiritual care encompassing health, healing, illness, and recovery. Appropriate for educational and congregational libraries, I would also strongly recommend *A Practical Guide to Hospital Ministry* for readers who work in a hospital setting as well as chaplaincy students.

Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom: Psychological Healing Practices from the World's Religious Traditions, by Sharon G. Mijares. New York: Haworth Press, 2003. 307 pp. \$29.95. ISBN 0789017520.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, TX

Sharon G. Mijares is a Self Relations Psychotherapist and a member of the Sufi Ruhaniat International. She has compiled an excellent reference text for psychological healing. World religions included are Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Goddess spirituality, Native American spirituality, Sufism, Taoism, Yoga and Hinduism, and various derivations of each. This book is very informative and interesting to read not only from an information standpoint, but also as a format for understanding and accepting multi-cultural beliefs. The author makes a strong point as she concludes that “It is time to take the psychological knowledge we've gleaned from the past 100 years and unite it with the thousands of years of wisdom given by the healers, prophets, saints, and mystics.” This book assists the reader to begin such an integration of knowledge. It is appropriate for congregational and academic libraries and would be a top choice for world religion and spiritual healing sections.

Bereavement Counseling: Pastoral Care for Complicated Grieving, by Junieta Baker McCall. New York: Haworth Press, Inc. 2004. 346 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0789017849.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, TX

Junieta Baker McCall is a licensed pastoral psychotherapist and an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. She has provided an in depth text for pastoral counselors working with

complicated, intense grief. Information regarding the universal grief process and response, dysfunctional grieving, spirituality of grief, therapies and treatment priorities, and strategies and interventions are discussed in a clear, concise manner. I especially found the multiple appendix worksheets to be useful for working with a client's grief. This book is appropriate for congregational and academic libraries as well as for pastoral counselors and other professionals working with people experiencing grief.

They Knew How to Pray: 15 Secrets from the Prayer Lives of Bible Heroes, by Tom Carter. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003. 205pp. \$11.99. ISBN 0-82542378-3.

Reviewed by Melissa Moore, Reference Librarian and Team Leader for Public Services, Union University, Jackson, TN.

We are always looking for ways to improve our prayer life, aren't we? Tom Carter has examined the prayer experiences and practices of several individuals (Moses, Samuel, Daniel, and Jonah, among others) from Scripture and on the whole successfully drawn out some principles for our personal prayer lives. For example, in David's prayer life, Carter sees an unconditional surrender to God – a surrender (confession) of sin (both the act itself and the sinful nature), David surrenders his family to God's care after his sin with Bathsheba is exposed. Finally, David surrenders his praise to God, in some of the most beautiful psalms we have. Each chapter/character study has action steps for the reader, challenging him/her to appropriate the prayer example given, and a study guide which makes the volume perfect for small group study.

Through the prayer life of Paul, we learn how to focus on spiritual needs. With Elijah, we learn how to expect results from the Lord. Through Jonah's example, we learn not to give up on God. And with Hannah (the only female represented), we learn how to let the Lord turn our bitterness into blessing. Carter is highly readable, and his insights are both timely and historical grounded. As the book makes a good blend between history, Biblical commentary, and personal application, it would be an appropriate selection for Bible College and church libraries, as well as some public libraries with a demand for materials on prayer.

A Test of Love, by Kathleen Scott. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002. 236 pp. \$9.99. ISBN 0-8254-3664-8.

Reviewed by Melissa Moore, Reference Librarian and Team Leader for Public Services, Union University, Jackson, TN.

This wonderfully introspective first novel relates the story of Juliet Nelson and her marriage to Michael, who is thirteen years her senior and has been her husband for twelve years. Though the marriage began as a romantic and passionate relationship, over time (and after two daughters), the ardor has cooled, at least on Michael's part. Juliet has tried in many ways to bring the passion back into their marriage, but to no avail. She tries to plan family activities (such as a Thanksgiving weekend at Lake Tahoe) but Michael seems to resent the intrusion on his time selling real estate. Indeed, Michael works long days and drops into bed at night too tired to really notice what's for dinner, or what Juliet is wearing. Juliet sees Michael as a workaholic, though many readers may suspect (wrongly) that Michael is having an affair.

Though Michael and Juliet are both Christians, neither really knows how to deal with their struggles and problems in a Biblical way. In a rare twist, the author briefly lets us see Michael's view on the situation, and we discover that the problem is not another woman, but a lack of income. They own a beautiful, large home in Mount Hermon, drive nice cars, and pretty much live like they want to, all the while with Juliet not realizing that Michael has overextended the family's finances and has had to fight off foreclosure on their home more than once. Bottom line? Michael and Juliet need to learn to communicate with one another again. Their love and commitment to each other, and to God, is tested as they try to hold their marriage together.

Scott raises a lot of important relational issues in this novel – communication, parenting, the marital-sexual relationship, and ultimately the need of each one of us to let God satisfy our needs, rather than expect our spouse to be able to do so. It is a beautiful love story, with strong supporting family on both sides, and provides a tearfully hopeful ending. This is to be the first of a series of books set in Mount Hermon, California; the second has already been written (according to the author's website), entitled *Hope Deferred*. This is an excellent choice for romance and fiction collections in all libraries.

Romance Rustlers and Thunderbird Thieves, by Sharon Dunn. Ruby Taylor Mystery Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003. 263 pp. \$18.99. ISBN 1-58743-014-2.

Reviewed by Melissa Moore, Reference Librarian and Team Leader for Public Services, Union University, Jackson, TN.

Ruby Taylor is a thirty-something amateur detective, never married and completely

unimpressed by the Christians around her. However, she is empathetic towards those who have suffered, and when asked to help locate a young man in her mother's church, Brian, who has virtually left his fiancée standing at the altar and vanished into thin air, Ruby feels impressed to help (spurred on, no doubt, by his good-looking friend Wesley). She also wants to help Maryanne locate her ex-husband, who has vanished with her vintage Thunderbird. Ruby confronts most situations with boldness and a dazzling sense of humor, making friends and discovering a faith of her own along the way.

This romantic mystery is fairly transparent and only somewhat suspenseful. We occasionally hear delightful repartee, but by-and-large Ruby's humor relies too heavily on clichés. She has a conversion experience outside the trash dump about halfway through the book, but it's in the form of a dream and lacks real substance. This new-found faith gives her the courage to stare down the barrel of a gun unflinchingly more than once, but this reader finds the transition to "new believer" too easy. The most believable part of the novel was the ending, when Ruby and her love interest decide that, because they cannot remain pure sexually, they must not date. This maturity, combined with occasional glimpses of true humor and character, give me hope that the sequel, *Sassy Cinderella and the Valiant Vigilante*, will live up to the glimpses of promise in this book. A marginal purchase for Christian fiction publications.

Mastering New Testament Greek Vocabulary Through Semantic Domains, by Mark Wilson (with Jason Oden). Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003. 188 pp. \$13.99. ISBN 0825441153.

Reviewed by Scott Lloyd, Information Services Specialist, Cincinnati Christian University, Cincinnati, OH

Many other books have been published to assist students with the task of learning and retaining the vocabulary of the Greek New Testament. The approach of most of these works has been to aid the reader by arranging the words in order of their frequency and/or arranging the words by their basic roots. With the presence of so many helps, one might ask, "why another book about learning Greek vocabulary?"

Mark Wilson has taken a different approach in helping his readers. Building upon a widely-used reference work, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida), Wilson encourages his readers to memorize vocabulary words according

to their semantic relationship with other vocabulary words. Readers of the book are introduced to a total of 3,911 vocabulary words, comprising seventy-two percent of the total number of words used in the Greek New Testament (p. 12).

In addition to its ability to aid students with memorizing vocabulary, there are a couple of other reasons why Wilson's book will be a handy reference for students. First, it acts as a handy condensation of Louw and Nida's two-volume *Lexicon*. While certainly no substitute for the *lexicon* itself, Wilson's book provides the opportunity to view at a glance a list of words with similar meanings. Moreover, it can also show how two words with overlapping meanings differ from one another. Second, it delivers much of what other vocabulary guides provide plus more. It gives the readers the frequency of occurrence of each word, and because so many words that belong in the same semantic domain also have the same root, many words with the same root end up being listed together, as they are in other vocabulary manuals. This is where Wilson's approach will provide its biggest benefit, a benefit that other vocabulary guides do not usually provide.

Wilson's work would be quite beneficial as a supplemental textbook for students enrolled in Greek courses. Any library serving Greek language students should place a copy of *Mastering New Testament Greek Vocabulary* on its shelves. It is an easily accessible and highly useful guide to the vocabulary of the Greek New Testament.

Stories behind 50 Southern Gospel Favorites, Volume 2, by Lindsay Terry. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications. 2005. 207 pp. \$11.99. ISBN 0-8254-3885-3.

Reviewed by Ruth E. Martin, Director of Library Services, San Diego Christian College, El Cajon, CA.

Lindsay Terry writes a heartwarming book with a story behind each song. Terry personally interviewed the majority of the songwriters mentioned in the volume. In Part I, 39 chapters (each song is divided by a chapter) are specific stories of southern gospel songs. In Part II, 11 songs are listed as a "special section of classic hymns and gospel songs often recorded and performed by southern gospel groups."

Mosie Lister, formerly of the Statesmen Quartet, writes the foreword and five of his songs are shared in this volume.

A brief overview of the beginning of southern gospel music, a song index and an author/composer index are included. Each chapter

includes a brief “reflection” for the reader to consider as the chapter is concluded.

This book is recommended for readers with a special interest in this genre, and is beneficial for personal devotions, sermon illustrations or in telling stories to children or adults.

Legacy Lane, by Robin Lee Hatcher. Hart’s Crossing series, 1. Grand Rapids: Revell, 2004. 139pp. \$14.99. ISBN 0-8007-1854-2.

Reviewed by Melissa Moore, Reference Librarian and Team Leader for Public Services, Union University, Jackson, TN.

Robin Lee Hatcher is known for her charming stories of faith, love, and family, and *Legacy Lane* belongs right in the midst of those stories. This novella introduces the reader to the delightful community of Hart’s Crossing, Idaho, with its small-town feel and slower pace. When she was a teenager, Angie Hunter couldn’t wait to get out of town and pursue her dreams of a college degree and quickly climb the ladder at the big-city newspaper. She was also ready to escape her mother’s relentless preaching about following Christ. Now it is seventeen years later, and Angie has agreed to return to Hart’s Crossing for eight weeks in order to care for her widowed mother following knee surgery. The laid-back atmosphere, and the gentle spirit of love and acceptance from the many Christians around her, causes Angie to reconsider all her prior resistance and decide what legacy she will take from her mother.

Hatcher sketches a believably warm and inviting community in Hart’s Crossing. Her characters are well-drawn but not stereotypical. The story itself is gentle and introspective, with an exploration of faith and a budding romance between Angie and the small-town newspaper editor. Hatcher makes it easy to identify with Angie’s desire for success and how it conflicts with coming home to Hart’s Crossing. Believers and unbelievers alike will appreciate the three-dimensional characters of faith who wrestle with less-than-perfect lives yet find refuge in a sovereign God. Fans of the Mitford books and Thomas Kinkade’s *Cape Light* series will enjoy this title.

Light of My Heart, by Ginny Aiken. Grand Rapids: Revell, 2004. Silver Hills Trilogy, Book One. 292pp. \$12.99. ISBN 0-8007-5874-9.

Reviewed by Melissa Moore, Reference Librarian and Team Leader for Public Services, Union University, Jackson, TN.

Letitia Morgan has chosen a hard path for 1892; she has been trained to be a homeopathic physician. Her training and skills are considered unfeminine, which is the reason (her mother

insists) that she is still unmarried. Men in Philadelphia will not allow their wives or children to see her, and she is shunned by many in “proper” circles. Consequently, Letty decides to answer an ad for a female doctor needed in the booming silver town of Hartville, Colorado. The town is prospering, but unfortunately, debauchery and neglect always ride with prosperity, so Letty quickly finds herself drawn to those suffering in the seedier part of town – prostitutes and street children. She is also deeply attracted to the local newspaper editor, Eric Wagner. Living out her faith in Colorado is in some ways just as difficult as it was in Philadelphia.

The historical setting of the novel (first in a proposed trilogy) is well-done – accurate, tangible, visible. The intricacies of grief and guilt are explored through Eric’s character, who lost his wife in childbirth two years before. Believers are challenged by Letty’s determination to reach out to those who have been forced by society to the unclean fringes, and I ended up examining my gut-level reactions to similar acquaintances in my own life, comparing my reactions to those of the local church-goers. The weak part of the book is the sappy romance between Letty and Eric; too often, emotions are visible in each other’s eyes, and feelings are rehashed. The relationship is overdone and would be more powerful if it were more understated. Nevertheless, this is a strong novel from the author of the *Bellamy’s Blossoms* series and would be a solid purchase for any Christian fiction collection.

Song of My Soul, by Ginny Aiken. Grand Rapids: Revell, 2004. Silver Hills Trilogy, Book Two. 276pp. \$12.99. ISBN 0-8007-5875-7.

Reviewed by Melissa Moore, Reference Librarian and Team Leader for Public Services, Union University, Jackson, TN.

Although he acted in the only possible Christian way, Adrian Gamble is grieved by the need to live life as an outlaw after a run-in with train robbers goes badly. He makes his way to Hart’s Crossing, Colorado, and purchases the silver mine and nearby general store. His attempts to live undetected are challenged, though, by his feelings of love awakened by Phoebe Williams (the beautiful young widow who runs his store) and the growing awareness that murder and opium have found their way into the quiet, 1800’s mining town. Phoebe and Adrian continue to be pulled together by their feelings for each other and their connection with the mill, until the unavoidable collision with Adrian’s past happens.

This story has the same setting and some of its characters as in its prequel. Once again, Aiken has created a true sense of place in this little mining town. Her portrayal of character is true-to-life, with the ignorant prejudice of some towards the Orientals who live in deplorable conditions and the gossip-mongering of church members who let jealousy control their tongues. Adrian and Phoebe both make excellent examples of Christians struggling to make sense of a fallen world and to trust in God. Though the mystery is fairly cut-and-dried, readers will want to finish the story to see how the characters resolve their issues of reputation, trust, and faith in God. Aiken is highly readable, and her fans will be looking forward to the final title in this series, *Spring of My Love*.

Surprised by Prayer: The Wonderful Ways God Answers, by Karen Barber. Grand Rapids: Revell, 2001. 253 pp. \$12.99. ISBN 0800759257.

Reviewed by Sharon Hinton RN, BSN, LP, Librarian, First United Methodist Church, Floydada, TX

Karen Barber is a contributing editor with *Guideposts* magazine. She has compiled a collection of short essays highlighting the various aspects of prayer and how God answers. According to the author, "faith would seem to intimate that there should be no surprise whatsoever when prayers are answered yet repeatedly we are surprised not only by the answer, but by the means God uses to answer." The goal of the book is to move the reader beyond saying the right words at the right time with the right attitude. Barber encourages the reader to develop the ability to discover God's answer, however unlikely, to every prayer. The stories are encouraging and potent reminders that God often answers in small ordinary ways instead of by sending flashy responses. This book is appropriate for congregational and academic libraries and would be appropriate for individuals seeking guidance and encouragement through prayer.

Early Methodist Life and Spirituality: A Reader, edited by Lester Ruth. Nashville: Kingswood, 2005. 330 pp. \$34.00 ISBN 0-687-34274-0.

Reviewed by Darcy R. Gullacher, Public Services Librarian, Briercrest College and Seminary, Carleton Place, SK

In this collection of primary source documents Lester Ruth, Professor of Worship and Liturgy at Asbury Theological Seminary, brings to contemporary readers a sample of the spiritual practices of rank-and-file Methodist believers from 1770 to 1820. This very narrow time period

enables Ruth to include a wide variety of material, including hymns, autobiographical writings, sermon outlines, and letters. When determining what to include preference was given to material which had never been published before, or had only been published between 1770 and 1820, and not reprinted since. Also, Ruth gives preference to the spiritual experiences of lesser known early Methodists, including lay members and lay preachers.

The book is divided by topic into nine chapters, and includes sections on Jesus Christ, Conversion and "Experimental Religion", Sanctification, Heaven and Hell, Shouting and Other Ecstatic Experiences, Worship and Preaching, Ethos (meaning holy living), Church Fellowship, and Death. Each section begins with a brief essay outlining some of the theological and practical concerns addressed in the selected material. Included at the end of the volume are short biographical entries of the included authors, as well as a bibliography of primary and secondary material for further reading.

By focusing on the experiences of everyday early American Methodists, this compilation provides a valuable addition to the growing collection of Methodist source readings. It provides a contrast to the recently published *Methodist Experience in America: A Sourcebook*, which focuses more on the official documents of the denominations, as well as Methodism's better known figures. This volume would be of particular interest to those studying or teaching the history of American religious experience, and is recommended for college and seminary libraries.

INTERESTED IN REVIEWING A TITLE?

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