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Resource Reviews

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The Christian Librarian **TCL** R E V I E W S

Drama for the Dramatically Challenged: Church Plays Made Easy, by Laura L. Martinez. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2000. 125 pp. \$12.00. ISBN 0-8170-1356-3. Includes sound CD.

Reviewed by Douglas L. Fruehling, Instructional Services Librarian, Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, California.

Do you know your down stage left from your down stage right? Do you wonder what should take place during rehearsals besides rehearsal? "Does Jesus need a beard?" Martinez covers these questions and many others. This book is not just for beginners, but will benefit any church with an active Sunday morning drama ministry and provide inspiration. This book is a needed resource for those who are at square one in their church's drama presentations.

The author covers basic directorial insights in her 25-page introduction; 16 sketches follow. Preceding each individual sketch are insights on theme, setting, characters, costumes, and props. At the conclusion of each sketch Martinez provides discussion questions. The director can use these questions to prompt actors in their performances as well start discussion regarding the sketch's theme. Pastors can use these same questions in the sermon.

A glossary of stage terms follows the sketches. The skit subject list includes General Topics, Advent/Christmas, Good Friday/Easter, International Day of Prayer, Mother's Day, and Valentine's Day.

The CD provides sound effects and background music. The indexed tracks make for easy pinpointing of a particular sound bite.

Picture icons in the text indicate tips and training for directors. Another numbered icon in the script indicates where to insert the sound effects. The

author grants the book purchaser photocopying reproduction of the skits for congregational or small-group use only.

Martinez's book makes a fine addition to church libraries as well as libraries serving the Christian community at large.

Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity, by Mark A. Noll. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000. 352 pp. \$18.99. ISBN 0-8010-6211-X.

Reviewed by Melissa R. Moore, Information Services Librarian, Union University, Jackson, Tennessee.

Turning Points is a well-written survey of the history of Christianity for the layman or student. Mark Noll, the McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College, has written several books on aspects of Christian history as well as the groundbreaking work *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, which Publisher's Weekly called "a brilliant study by a first-rate Evangelical mind." Noll is thus particularly qualified to write this text, which arose out of his teaching a survey course at Wheaton and an adult education course at his church.

Rather than trying to cover two thousand years of history, Noll has written a highly readable and accessible book that focuses on twelve turning points in the history of the church. Noll readily admits that the selection of these twelve moments is highly subjective and even lists in the introduction events that could have been included but were not. Among the chosen moments are the fall of Jerusalem, the Council of Chalcedon, the Diet of Worms, and the French Revolution. Noll argues that this concentration on specific events allows for "interpretive reflection" that typically doesn't occur in a larger, more general survey (12). He has included photographs, copies of

documents, and maps to make the text more visually stimulating. Each chapter begins with a hymn, and ends with a prayer, from the focal time period, adding to the completeness of the picture. The end result is an accurate, multi-faceted picture of a crucial turning point in the life of the church.

This is a second edition of the text, which was first published in 1997. The text is the same in both works, but Robert H. Lackie has added to the second edition a lengthy (17 pages) list of overview and study questions for each of the chapters. If you anticipate the book being used in a study group, or by students who are not theology majors, the second edition is worth having for those study questions. If you already own the first edition, the second edition is probably not a necessary purchase. Both editions have a thorough index, but the text is at its best read through as a book rather than used as a reference tool.

Meet Bathsheba: Dramatic Portraits of Biblical Women, by Rosanne Gartner. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000. 145 pp. \$16.00. ISBN 0-8170-1355-5.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Pearson, Library Director, Montreat College, Montreat, North Carolina.

Meet Bathsheba portrays the lives of women who played significant roles in the biblical world. Through dramatic, first-person narratives, the author, Rosanne Gartner, introduces ten women of the Bible: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, Bathsheba, Naomi, Mary, the woman at the well, Martha, and Priscilla. The book will appeal to a wide range of readers with its lively, conversational style.

Gartner is a professional storyteller who has written and performed Bible monologues since 1994. She is a member of The Village Church of

Northbrook, Illinois, where she began her dramatic monologues on Bible women. She has since presented "Women of the Bible" in many settings, from sanctuaries to country clubs. Her most recent work is *Meet the Queen of Sheba: More Dramatic Portraits of Biblical Women*.

Each chapter in *Meet Bathsheba* began as a presentation to a church group. Therefore, the narratives provide an abundance of material for dramatic monologues, and practical "Hints for Presenters" are offered. The author has enlivened the Bible stories with an immediacy that makes the characters come alive for contemporary readers, thus promoting an awareness and understanding of some of the lesser-known people of the Bible. In addition to telling these stories from a feminine perspective, the author hopes that the testimonies of these women will serve as a source of inspiration for the reader's own spiritual development.

The book is an introductory treatment that is accessible to readers of all levels. Although non-scholarly in its approach, the book is sufficiently researched and detailed to give a sense of the cultural and historical milieu in which these women lived. It provides a good starting point for those who are unfamiliar with the women of the Bible or who are seeking a fresh approach to the subject.

Throughout the book, Gartner paraphrases passages from the Bible stories to support her narrative. Explanatory notes and specific references to the Bible follow each chapter. The content of each monologue is solidly based on the biblical text. The personal testimonies of the women covered in the book are true to the Old and New Testament stories.

Meet Bathsheba is written in a style geared to the general reader, rather than the researcher. It is an ideal resource for church groups, Sunday School classes, church dramas, women's groups, and anyone interested in learning more about biblical women and deepening their own faith. The book's strength lies

in its engaging, refreshing approach. Writing from the first-person point of view, the author succeeds in making each narrative easy and enjoyable reading while still stimulating and spiritually challenging. This book is recommended for church libraries and for undergraduate libraries needing introductory works to complement more scholarly treatments of the subject. It would also be a good choice for women's studies collections and for public libraries that provide inspirational works.

Praying the Movies: Daily Meditations from Classic Films, by Edward McNulty. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2001. 167 p. ISBN 0-664-50155-9.

Reviewed by Douglas L. Fruehling, Information Services Librarian, Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, California.

Christians' attitudes have changed regarding motion pictures. Periodicals like *Books & Culture*, *Christianity Today*, and *Commonweal* now provide film reviews. Online sites such as Focus on the Family <http://www.family.org/pplace/pi/films/>, as well as <http://www.gospelcom.net/preview/> and <http://www.hollywoodjesus.com/> explore cinema's spiritual impact. In the same vein McNulty provides meditations on thirty-one domestic and foreign films.

McNulty is the founder of *Visual Parables* a monthly film review newsletter. The United Presbyterian pastor was also co-editor of a film quarterly for youth entitled *Real to Real*. *Praying the Movies* is a compilation of his revised writings from these publications.

The introduction provides aids as to how to use the book for either individual or group meditation on the theme of Grace.

For each meditation the author provides apropos scriptures. Next follows the Introduction to the film and a description of key scenes. Then McNulty gives his Reflection on the

Scene. With his section For Further Reflection are listed discussion questions and a hymn title in keeping with the theme. The additional questions work well with the group setting. The meditation ends with a written prayer.

The film selection includes G through R rated titles. Babe: Pig in the City shares equal space with Pulp Fiction. McNulty notes: "...Jesus didn't turn away from R-rated and even X-rated people whom he met, so we should not back away from an R-rated film. Such films contain elements that we deplore alongside nuggets of gospel gold, scenes of beauty and inspiration that can enrich our understanding of faith and life." (xviii)

The book is appropriate for collections serving mass communication studies, drama, and yes, ministry. As the author says, "The power of a well-told story acted out by flesh-and-blood people is greater than an empty stone building, no matter how hallowed." (xiv)

What Christians Really Believe and Why, by Stanley Grenz. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. 1579 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 0664257321.

Reviewed by Scott Lloyd, Information Services Librarian, Cincinnati Bible College & Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio.

"Lying at the depth of our being is an aching for inner peace and a craving for a sense of purpose." Stanley Grenz begins his book in this way, pointing out a widely attested observation. Many people in North America are on spiritual quests. They chase the latest fad, seeking fulfillment and hoping to find answers to the crucial questions of existence. However, Grenz maintains that their quests are futile; these "seekers" do not find what they're looking for, and they simply move on to the next experience. By restating the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith, Grenz hopes to demonstrate that Christianity can provide the answers for

which people are longing. By presenting what Christians really believe and why they believe it, the author seeks to bring clarity to this state of spiritual confusion.

On the one hand, Grenz gives his readers a restatement of the fundamentals of Christian faith. However, the arrangement and presentation of the material does not follow the traditional pattern of a systematic theology. Instead Grenz identifies seven crucial existential questions and uses these to organize his presentation of basic bible doctrines.

Grenz is in touch with the postmodern climate in which we live, which is of great benefit to his readers. For example, he informs his readers that atheism is no longer the dominant threat to Christianity in our postmodern culture. Instead, religious pluralism increasingly poses a greater threat to evangelical Christianity. Many people are no longer asking the question, "Is there a God?" instead they're asking the question, "Which God?" While interacting with postmodern culture, Grenz nevertheless commendably holds to the convictions of his Christian faith against the tide of religious pluralism.

Several features of the book will appeal to a wide audience. Grenz proves quite capable of writing clearly and concisely on each theological topic. He references several scripture passages throughout the book, equipping the reader to make his own investigation of the Bible. Perhaps the book's most appealing feature is the author's ability to relate his presentation of theology to various aspects of popular culture. He cites examples from magazines, television shows and top 40 music hits to demonstrate the spiritual and philosophical confusion prevalent in both the United States and Canada (the author lives in British Columbia). By means of these illustrations, Grenz successfully demonstrates that contrary to popular belief, theology is practical and relevant. Nor is orthodox Christianity hopelessly outdated. The author effectively shows that the Christian worldview is viable and is quite capable of providing satisfying answers to the

perennial questions human beings face.

Grenz has provided his readers with a contemporary presentation of the core doctrines of Christian faith that is both biblically sound and interesting. This book will appeal to laypersons and clergy, and thus would make a good addition to church libraries. Also, it might be useful as a supplementary text in a basic theology class for undergraduate students, and thus would make a good addition to college libraries.

Shattering the Myth of Race: Genetic Realities and Biblical Truths, by Dave Unander. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000. 127 pp. \$14.00 ISBN 0817013172.

Reviewed by Deborah M. Powell, Library Director, Saint Louis Christian College, St. Louis, Missouri.

Dave Unander takes an in-depth look at the historical and scientific presuppositions used to justify ethnic bias. Using stories from personal accounts, writings that support racial differences, Biblical text, and genetic insight Unander intertwines a number of sources together as a means for getting his message across. Unander's attempt to confront the issue of race stems from the belief that "racial identity has been such an established part of culture in the United States and many other countries that it can't be ignored."

Shattering the Myth of Race attempts to expose and defuse the falsifications of an inferior race through genetic and Biblical explanations of how "today hundreds of millions of people no longer fit in one category. Entire nations and ethnic identities are increasingly blends of the races."

Shattering the Myth of Race gives the reader an innovative approach on the historical background of race. Chapters on "slavery and abolition in the United States", "evolutionary genetics as an argument for racial superiority", and a "Christian perspective on race" are a few highlights of this

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AVAILABLE TITLES

Carson, D. A. *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*. Crossway Books, 2000.

Conte, Jeanne. *Advent Anticipation: Drawing Nearer to the Christ-Child*. Troista Books, 2000.

Conte, Jeanne. *Lenten Reflections: A Closer Walk*. Troista Books, 2001.

Crist, Terry. *The Image Maker*. Creation House, 2000.

Davis, Dorothy. *Climbing Higher: Overcoming Spiritual Obstacles*. Regular Baptist Press, 2001.

Dotan, ed., Aron. *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.

Fraser, Peter. *Reviewing the Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film*. Crossway Books, 2000.

Greening, John. *Real Men are Godly*. Regular Baptist Press, 2001.

Holderness, Ginny. *Career and Calling: A Guide for counselors, youth, and young adults*. Geneva Press, 2001.

Horton, Michael S. *Confessing Theology for Postmodern Times*. Crossway Books, 2000.

For more titles, see "Resources Received", p.117.

find out how:

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resource. Readers will find Unander's book filled with thought-provoking discussions on how science distorts and validates inferiority between the races and how Biblical and genetic evidence discredits such claims.

Dave Unander received a doctorate degree from the University of Minnesota. He is a biology and economic development instructor at Eastern College. For those interested in further study on the myth of race, Unander's book is a superb resource to add to one's collection.

Mission Handbook: U.S. and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas 2001-2003. (18th edition), Edited by John A. Siewert and Dotsey Welliver. Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2000. 504pp. \$49.95 ISBN 0-9617751-5-7 <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/emis>

*Reviewed by Armand T. Ternak,
Director of Library Services, Hope
International University.*

The stated purpose of this *Mission Handbook* is "to provide the reader with ready access to vital and current information about Christian mission agencies based in the U.S. and Canada that are engaged in overseas ministries" (introduction page 1). It also purports to provide the user with "the most complete information available in a single publication" (intro. pg. 1). In both cases this handbook achieves its purpose. The data was gathered by using a four page survey that was sent to mission agency administrators. The information for each agency includes: names of administrators, phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses, postal addresses, web site URLs, types of mission activities, and geographical areas of involvement.

This volume is a reference work intended for educational institutions, mission agencies, and churches. It is helpful for students planning to go to specific mission fields, for mission agencies comparing field saturation, and for churches seeking to reach

various geographical or political areas. It also includes useful information about the role of the church in missions, missions agency cooperation, missions personnel placement, missions funding, and current mission trends.

This volume is the 18th edition of the "handbook" first published in 1953. Through the years the title has changed somewhat, along with the editors and publishers. It is now published under the auspices of the Evangelism and Missions Information Service (EMIS) that is headquartered at the Billy Graham Center for World Evangelism in Wheaton, IL. The editors, John A. Siewert (World Vision) and Dotsey Welliver are also the editors of *The Directory of Schools and Professors of Mission and Evangelism in the USA and Canada 1999-2001*. John A. Siewert has worked on the Handbook in some capacity for at least 18 years. During that time he was employed by MARC at World Vision in Monrovia, CA. Dotsey Welliver has worked for the Billy Graham Center for seventeen years as editorial coordinator and she is the editor of the Billy Graham Center Missionary Scholar Monograph series. Both have exemplary qualifications for this type of publication.

This volume is a welcome update of the most useful and comprehensive "U.S. and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas" directory available. It contains contact information, as well as personnel and financial data for all the major mission organizations in the U.S. (693) and Canada (121). These mission agencies collectively supervise approximately 120,000 full-time missionaries and approximately 320,000 part-time workers. The preface contains a reasonable word of caution about making assumptions concerning the comparability of the survey data. Also, Table 4.19 on page 73, shows the mission agencies that are no longer listed in the directory along with the various reasons for their non-listing. The mission agency ads would be better appreciated if they were all placed in one location rather than spread throughout the volume.

This work also contains four interesting and useful chapters by guest

authors. The first chapter, by Paul Borthwick contains ten pages on "Improving Local (church) Ownership of Global Vision". Church mission committee members will benefit from reading this chapter. The second chapter, by John Orme contains four pages on "Cooperation (between mission agencies): Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow". Mission agency personnel will benefit from reading this chapter. The third chapter, by Luis Bush (editor of *The AD 200 & Beyond Handbook*) contains thirteen pages entitled "Where Do We Go from Here?" This chapter addresses current mission trends, core values in missions, and the future challenges of training Christian leaders in missions. Missions educators and students will greatly benefit from reading this chapter. The fourth guest chapter entitled, "Putting the Survey in Perspective" is written by A. Scott Moreau, (editor of the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* and missions faculty member of the Wheaton College Graduate School) and contains a statistical analysis covering: the numerical distributions of missionary personnel, the locations of mission agency headquarters, the date of founding of agencies, various denominational affiliations, types of missionary activities, agency, and geographic areas of missionary activity. It is interesting to note that total annual missions income is now nearing \$3,000,000,000, with 4 agencies receiving over \$100,000,000 each. These guest authored chapters would make useful additions to any "missions reading" compilation.

The eight page "selective bibliography" is very up-to-date. It is partially-annotated and includes: General reference works, *Mission & Church Directories* beyond the U.S. & Canada, *Books on Mission in the 21st Century*, and *Mission Journals & Newsletters*. Of course, full annotations would be better, but these are still very helpful. The EMIS Website www.wheaton.edu/bgc/emis also contains an "update page" for the handbook.

This volume is highly recommended for Bible College, Seminary, and Christian University Reference Collections, especially those with a Missions Major or Minor. *