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Coppenger's "Moral Apologetics for Contemporary Christians: Pushing Back Against Cultural and Religious Critics" (Book Review)

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**The Mission of Jesus: Second Nordic Symposium on the Historical Jesus,
Lund University, 7-10 October 2012,**

edited by Samuel Byrskog and Tobias Hägerland. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr
Siebeck, 2015. 255 pp. \$72.43. ISBN 9783161533358

*Reviewed by John M. Hunter, Library Director, Seth Wilson Library,
Ozark Christian College, Joplin, MO*

This uniquely Nordic work began in 2010, culminating in its 2015 publication. The back cover summarizes its content:

This volume deals with the mission of the historical Jesus, that is, Jesus' notion of being commissioned by God to carry out a specific task, and his ideas of how to perform that task. Eleven scholars discuss how the mission of Jesus was understood in earlier research and present their own views.

The book has three parts: "Research History," "Historical Context," and "Its Various Aspects." Valuable indexes provide the reader with ancient and modern authors, subjects and the first two WUNT series. Contributors thoroughly documented their findings.

Only academic libraries and graduate schools should consider adopting this volume for the sake of balance. The life of Christ has captured the imaginations of many scholars. The cycles of historical Jesus quests challenge those content with common sense and respect of history at face value. Conservative scholars would point to Festus's accusation that Paul had gone mad through his great learning. How much more those who have specialized in proving fiction fact, and fact fiction? Nevertheless, we contend with the necessity of chasing rabbits.

**Moral Apologetics for Contemporary Christians:
Pushing Back Against Cultural and Religious Critics,**
by M. Coppenger. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011. 286 pp. \$24.99.
ISBN 9780805464207

Reviewed by Paul B. Drake, Library Director, Pacific Islands University, Mangilao, Guam

Moral Apologetics for Contemporary Christians: Pushing Back Against Cultural and Religious Critics is written by academic and apologist Mark Coppenger as part of the *B&H Studies in Christian Ethics* series. Coppenger is professor of Christian apologetics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and director of the seminary's extension in Nashville, Tennessee. He has written two previous books on Christian ethics. Coppenger advances the belief that Christians should

not attempt to defend moral and ethical beliefs in the face of attack or criticism but rather should shift the conversation to promoting Christian values and ethics. He advocates not apologizing but promoting positive Christian values worldwide because “Christianity is morally superior as well as true” (p. 1).

The book has multiple chapters in areas of faulty secular systems, the irreducible complexity and splendor of the Christian ethic, immoral ethicists, moral authority of Christian teachers, the fruit of false systems of belief, the cultural fruit of Christianity, irresponsible or infelicitous argument and virtuous apologetics. Each chapter cites numerous sources to illustrate its focus. These sources range from academic heavyweights such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Karl Marx, to historical figures such as Aquinas, Jonathan Edwards, and Billy Sunday. A valuable aspect of the book is its ability to incorporate cultural figures such as Bill Maher, Lebron James and Mel Gibson. This approach presents through short entries a well-rounded apologetic and a fast-paced read. Each chapter ends with a lengthy reference list of the sources used. The organization and layout of the book make it valuable for professional reading and personal learning, but it also works well as a textbook.

Moral Apologetics for Contemporary Christians does not shy away from uncomfortable topics for evangelical Christians. Coppenger provides a platform for advancing the Christian faith and presents evidence that Christian ethics interact with Christian apologetics.

A Naked Tree: Love Sonnets to C.S. Lewis and Other Poems,
by Joy Davidman, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015.
320 pp. \$30.00; ISBN 9780802872883

*Reviewed by Tiffany Norris, Public Services Librarian,
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX*

More than 230 of Joy Davidman’s conversational, honest, and passionate poems are arranged chronologically into five main sections, culminating with her 45 love sonnets to C.S. Lewis. Editor Don King purposefully organized her work in order to allow readers “to be able to chart Davidman’s development and growth as a poet (p. xv).” The book includes indices of titles and first lines and would work well for a general humanities collection as an example of modern poetry, given Davidman’s commentary on social issues. It would also supplement any worthy C.S. Lewis collection as her poems to him offer another perspective on and better understanding of his personal life (even including an acrostic of his name).