

Reviews



GOD'S SECRETARIES: THE MAKING OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE, by Adam Nicolson. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2003. Pp. 281. \$24.95 (cloth).

GOD'S BESTSELLER: WILLIAM TYNDALE, THOMAS MORE, AND THE WRITING OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE, A STORY OF MARTYRDOM AND BETRAYAL, by Brian Moynahan. New York: St. Martin's, 2002. Pp. 422. \$27.95 (cloth).

THE BIBLE IN ENGLISH: ITS HISTORY AND INFLUENCE, by David Daniell. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003. Pp. 899. \$40.00 (cloth).

The story of the translating of the Bible into English is one of those stories we all think we know, but really don't. Adam Nicolson's book about the making of the KJV, lost in reverence for a document thought to have been written by James I, King of England, deserves the popular reception it has gotten. Nicolson begins his tale with the accession of the fabled king to the English throne at the death of Queen Elizabeth. This learned and complicated man was no saint, but, like the men of his time, eagerly seeking peace. England, like all of Europe, was embroiled in religious wars and turmoil, something the new king understood from his unhappy engagement with the brawling Scottish Presbyterians, whom he gladly left behind as he made his progress south to England. He wanted a Bible that would be a consensus document for all of England.

Until his time, the translation of the Bible into English appeared to be a sectarian

project: Wycliff, Tyndale, the Geneva Bible. Henry the VIII, and his chancellor, Thomas More, pursued poor William Tyndale all over Europe for his Lutheranism because he had dared to translate the Bible into rollicking good English that ordinary people could understand and use, not surprisingly, against the church. Chief among Tyndale's sins was translating *ecclesia* into "congregation," not "church"—as in "Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my congregation." Neither did it help that he translated *presbyteros* into "senior," rather than "priest," "*agape*" into "love," rather than "charity," *metanoia* into "repentance," rather than "penance." Tyndale's work and its revolutionary take on what Scripture had to say so enraged More that he wrote millions of words against him, calling Tyndale, among other things, "a hell-hound in the kennel of the devil." Because he, through a sleazy henchman named Phillips, made sure Tyndale was martyred, we have lost much of Tyndale's work, which finally would have been the entire Bible. Some part of it was lost in a shipwreck, and other parts destroyed by those pursuing him. Regrettably, we only have his New Testament and the first part of the Old Testament, but Tyndale's skill with Hebrew and Greek, plus his native dialect from the west country of England, gave us a text that still sits well on the English tongue.

Nicolson tells how those preparing the KJV had to use the Bishop's Bible, done by English bishops to counter Tyndale's incendiary text. Their lack of learning in regard to the original languages and their too Latinate English prose produced a flawed version of the Bible for use in the churches. Despite its

efforts to still the voice of Tyndale, one can hear Tyndale's sturdy sentences humming underneath their elaborate prose. While it never became popular, it was more politically suitable for the Jacobean church. Because James had wearied of the Presbyterians' brawling in Scotland, the much superior Geneva Bible, with its erudition and emblematic pictures, could not be used as a source for the KJV either.

After the king and his scholars agreed to the project in 1604, committees were formed to prepare translations of the various parts of the Bible. Their ultimate product has always argued against the notion that committees cannot produce fine writing. Perhaps the greatest talent among the scholars was Lancelot Andrewes, whose ability to see a world in a word during a period of English history simply drenched in words, as Nicolson puts it, augured well for the future of the great translation. Andrewes led the committee that produced the Pentateuch and its magisterial beginning. Nicolson shows how the KJV of the Bible mirrored almost precisely the strange world of the Jacobeans, a world of violent contrasts and paradoxes typified by Lancelot Andrewes, who spent five hours of every day in prayer, weeping over his sins, but whose preaching and writing rose to an almost incomparable grandeur and majesty.

It is hard to argue with Nicolson's conclusion, something of a jeremiad against our modern translations that cannot "encompass the realities which the Jacobeans accepted as normal. Modern religious rhetoric is dilute and ineffectual, and where it isn't, it seems mad and aberrational" (239). The language of most contemporary translations, next to the grand cadences of the KJV, sounds like piffle, hardly able to hold the majesty and terror of God.

Nicolson tells a good story, but one that is difficult to follow for those not steeped in Jacobean history. Moynahan, on the other hand, is almost novelistic in his telling of the tragic story of Tyndale, persecuted for his Lutheran convictions after studying with the Lutherans in Germany in the 1520s.

Tyndale, a sweet and good man whose scholarship was peerless, set about putting the Bible into English because he believed the ploughboy needed to read the word in his own language, and not just any old English, but the kind of language that vigorously matched his own. One sees in this ripping good tale how power will do everything it can to squelch those who threaten it. It is much more accessible than Nicolson's story, and helpful in explaining why Tyndale's language is so accomplished.

Next to Daniell's massive tome, the previous two books are mere chapters. From the very first appearances of the Bible among Roman soldiers in England, maybe only ten years after the resurrection, to the creation of the Revised English Bible of 1989, Daniell tells the story of the translations of the good book as well as its place in the lives of the English around the world. Not only does he tell the stories well, he also settles old scores with English and American historians who are especially ill-informed about the Geneva Bible, and Tyndale. He reveres Tyndale (in fact, he has written his own book on Tyndale) and makes Tyndale's work the red thread in his very long book. The lack of knowledge even church historians, such as Patrick Collinson, have demonstrated on this subject, and their repetition of old canards about the Protestant Bible in England, Daniell shows to be nothing short of scandalous. Roaming through accounts of English and American history where there is nothing said about the good book, he accounts for it by blaming the Anglo-Catholic revival and its disdain for all things Protestant. It's hard not to agree with Daniell.

Daniell reworks old fields and unearths new materials that astonish. I was surprised to read that the first appearance of the English Bible on the North American continent most likely came when Sir Francis Drake, looking for the Northwest Passage, found Indians on the West Coast to whom he read the English Bible, believing that simply reading the English text to the natives would have salutary effects on them.

Daniell regrets, as do many later scholars who like the cadence of the KJV, but not its translation, that the deeply flawed Bishop's Bible was commended as the basic source for the KJV, even as he notes the triumph of Tyndale's sturdy English sounding through it. If the KJV had used the better sources and language of the Geneva Bible, also dependent on Tyndale, the results might have been incomparable. As he concludes his long story, Daniell tells how the efforts to get rid of Jacobean English have all been less than successful, except, perhaps, for his recommendation, at the end of the book of the Revised English Bible (1989), a revision of the New English Bible consciously dependent on Tyndale. His commendation of the New English Bible (1961) gives me pause, although he does admit that it veers toward the pedestrian on many occasions, and is perhaps "not a Bible that can stand alone" (751).

But there's so much more here on the place of the Bible in English life. His chapter on the importance of Calvin's psalmody to the very sinews of American life; the account he gives of daylong Bible studies in England after Tyndale; how the long-hidden theology and writings of Paul entered the English bloodstream through these translations; the power of biblical hymnody in the shaping of England and America; the language of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Thomas Hobbes, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, a genial but really nasty satire of the royal house of the day, "In pious times, e'r Priest-craft did begin,/Before Polygamy was made a sin"; Robinson Crusoe's reading it to Friday; Handel's *Messiah* singing it into the English soul; William Blake's *Job*; the British and American Bible Societies; the power of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; the making of the RSV and the NEB, all bear reading for those of us who want to know more about the making of this book that has shaped our lives.

The secret of this is in Tyndale's syntax. Too many translators since the RSV—for example, the translators of *The Message*—have thought it is simply the diction, or choice of words, that makes a translation

modern, or accurate, or bad or good. This is not true. Memory is in the syntax, not the diction. Tyndale's translation has endured because the syntax is so English, built so deeply out of what makes English the marvelous language it is. That syntax is in the sinews of the English language, and translators who do not observe it assault our memory and shred what we know of the Bible.

With Daniell's advice, I think we could gain much by seeing how fundamental Tyndale is, turn to the REB, and see whether there would be some way we could open up the Bible so people could know, once again, that their God is truly alive in a book and language capable of transmitting, as Nicolson says, "an incredible immediacy from one end of human civilization to another" (243).

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PROVOKING THE GOSPEL: METHODS TO EMBODY BIBLICAL STORYTELLING THROUGH DRAMA, by Richard W. Swanson. New York: Pilgrim, 2004. Pp. 160. \$18.00 (paper).

This book should be a worthwhile read for any pastor or Christian educator or layperson wanting to think about new ways to engage biblical texts. But it is directed specifically toward such people who would like to gather an ensemble of "players" (no professional experience required) as a means to develop improvisational drama for themselves and others around biblical stories. The book functions as a kind of "drama coach" or as an instruction manual for the director of such an ensemble—giving the reasons for doing biblical theater and offering some suggestions and guidelines about how to do it.

The book arose out of Swanson's many years of experience teaching Bible at Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in which he has headed up the Provoking the Gospel Project, a small team of storytellers who do workshops and performances. The

idea is to take some of the more lively—that is, the controversial, puzzling, adversarial, and surprising—biblical stories and to prod/provoke the stories in an improvisational way until they provoke back. By engaging with the stories in a free and open manner, Swanson argues, we will find new life, new meaning, and new relevance in them. The book is divided into four major parts, each part dealing with a different dimension of biblical storytelling in groups and each part containing a section on “why” and a section on “how” to carry out that particular dimension.

Part One emphasizes how acting the story out can get us in touch with the physicality of a story through its embodiment—the movement, gestures, interactions, speech, and emotions of a story. The dramatic experience emphasizes that taking Scripture to heart is not so much about committing a story to memory as it is remembering the story in our physical selves. When this happens in an ensemble, all the

characters, events, and movements become more vivid and intense—often leading to new insights about the meaning and relevance of the story. Swanson recommends some warm-up and stretching exercises, followed by a “read-around” and then the actual dramatization of the story as a means to embody the text.

Part Two emphasizes the way in which drama leads the players and an audience to be aware of the space in the story, not only the landscape but also the space opened up in the relational encounters between characters in the story—the confrontations, the face-to-face encounters, the push and pull, and the transformations. Swanson suggests setting up pairs of partners to do a “mirroring exercise” designed to enable players to be sensitive and responsive to the “other” person. An imaginary tug of war can also be used with the dialogue of a conflict or a problem in the story as a way to experience the tensions in an episode. The experiences engendered by these exercises enable play-

ers to discover the real engine that drives the plot of a story and to get in touch with their own attraction and/or resistance to it.

Part Three is organized around directions on “how to make mistakes.” The idea is that we need permission to “act boldly” by deliberately dramatizing a story in ways that are exaggerated (such as gestures or tone) or just plain wrong (say, in terms of emotions or point of view). The experience enables us to discover the multiple ways these stories can be told and to find the outer limits of what might be faithful interpretations. Sometimes it is necessary to stretch ourselves beyond reasonable limits so that we can expand our comfort level beyond what we might otherwise do. In so doing, we may discover some surprising things about the text—and about ourselves as well.

Part Four talks about our need to find some coherent meaning for each story in its larger context as a means of interpreting the episode and its details. This may require first taking the story apart and seeing it from many angles so that it may be put back together again in such way as to preserve the surprises, the tensions, the conflicts, and the contradictions of a text without collapsing them into some neat totalizing interpretation. The effort to find possible centers of gravity of a story may also affirm the multiple ways each story can be played.

The whole process will surely benefit the group of “players,” and, hopefully, the results will also issue in a public program in which the players perform before an audience and engage them in the experience.

Throughout the book, Swanson deals with some complex theoretical concepts in an accessible manner, gives illuminating analogies from his own life, and connects the biblical stories to our common cultural stories. His hope is that by poking the stories we may “learn to love being poked back” (113), and thereby we may be provoked into becoming different people as a result of our encounters. The book contains endnotes, helpful suggestions for further reading, and an appendix with translations of some good biblical stories to use as experiments.

This is a unique book, written in an engaging style that encourages us to be bold and to try some new approaches to the text. I wish Swanson had given even more specific examples as he takes us through the exercises in order to demonstrate more extensively the payoffs people can get from this approach. I suspect, however, that he wants readers to discover those rewards on their own as they embrace this approach and crack open the biblical stories for themselves. Try it!

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THE COSMOS IN THE LIGHT OF THE CROSS, by George L. Murphy. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003. Pp. 213. \$45.00 (cloth).

What does ministry in the church have to do with science? These days, quite a lot! From the stem cell debate to new versions of natural theology, our culture at large is engaged in serious talk about science, spiritual issues, and morality. Christians in every walk of life are thinking in new ways about natural science, medicine, and biotechnology. Working pastors, Christian educators, and other church leaders need to keep abreast of these developments if they are to help their local congregations think through the issues.

From the pen of physicist, pastor, and Lutheran theologian George L. Murphy comes a book that should be the starting place for evangelicals interested in theology and science. Murphy has a PhD in physics, is ordained in the ELCA, works as a pastor in an Episcopal parish in Ohio, and teaches classes in theology and science at Trinity Lutheran Seminary. His book benefits from years of reading, writing, and participation in theology and science debates, as well as his classroom experience. This clear, reliable, and interesting text provides us with a panorama of the current debates from a specifically Lutheran point

of view, especially in the light of a theology of the cross.

The first chapter is an overview of the issues, and introduces his approach. He then jumps right into the problem of natural theology, an important theme for theologians since the famous Barth-Brunner debate in the 1930s. Murphy, like Barth, rejects an independent natural theology, which would seek to substitute for the revelation of God in Word and the cross. Yet he wants to go further than Barth, and develop what he calls a “dependent natural theology” (16). This is an approach to understanding nature that begins with the light of special revelation, but moves on to engage the teachings of science. Murphy is willing to say (again, moving beyond Barth) that “scientific knowledge of the world can tell us about God and God’s relationship with the universe,” but “only when viewed in the light of revelation” (17). He discusses and rejects the classical and Enlightenment approaches to natural theology. What Murphy calls dependent natural theology, other writers today (including this reviewer) would call a theology of nature.

The third chapter sets forth an excellent overview of the theology of the cross, drawn both from Luther and from contemporary Lutheran scholarship. The theology of the cross is just as much about the nature of revelation (hidden/revealed) as it is about the nature of the God who is made manifest (glory/suffering). Important for his main thesis is the distinction between the “visible and manifest things of God,” on the one hand, and the hidden “backside” (*posteriora*) of God, on the other. Murphy wants us to understand creation from the foot of the cross. This means seeing some aspects of creation as God’s “backside,” i.e., as places where God is hidden rather than plainly manifest.

By contrast, the fourth chapter moves on to a scientific world-picture. Murphy gives us an overview of the world as seen from the natural sciences, including physics, biology, and ecology. This leads to a fifth chapter, which discusses the nature and interrelationships of philosophy, theology, and

natural science. Murphy rejects any attempt to prove the existence of God from scientific discoveries (61–62). Here I think he goes too far, and does not respect the differences between theology and philosophy. No philosophy of religion can ignore such arguments, and many of them are sound. They do not, however, prove that the Christian God exists—only that some creator-god or other probably exists. They do not, therefore, provide a foundation for Christian faith, or a beginning place for Christian theology. Only by confusing theology and philosophy do we get into the trouble Murphy is afraid of, namely, substituting natural theology for special revelation.

The sixth chapter is the heart of the book. Murphy looks at models of divine action in the world, stumping for a “chiastic” or cross-centered, kenotic model of God’s work in creation. This is consistent with the development of life via evolution, for example, as well as the suffering and evil we find in the history of human societies. Murphy rejects any attempt to explain why God has created the world this way. He frankly states, “the only theodicy is the passion of Christ” (87). Murphy now moves to topics typical of theology-and-science, including the origin of the universe, evolution, human nature, ecology, and the end of the universe. He also includes a valuable chapter on technology and ethics, themes that are very important for our daily lives in the modern world but that often get overlooked in books on this topic. The volume ends with an almost mystical chapter on the worship of God by the universe, and our role as human beings in a universe that “lauds the crucified” (201).

While some topics need further work, and certain conclusions seem a bit hasty (e.g., Murphy is rather weak on miracles), overall this is an excellent volume that I recommend to anyone interested in the contemporary debates about theology and science. We can only hope that Murphy’s plea, to place the revelation of God in Christ at the center of any Christian theology (including a theology of nature!), will be taken

up and developed by many more voices in this discussion.

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DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: THE YOUNG BONHOEFFER 1918–1927.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 9.
Wayne Whitson Floyd Jr., General Editor.
Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003. Pp. 695.
\$60.00 (cloth).

Most of us are familiar with the basics about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran pastor who was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler. We also know that he was hanged in Flössenburg concentration camp in April of 1945. His death at 39 is almost 60 years ago, and the centennial anniversary of his birth will occur in February 2006. It is possible that some have managed to digest Bethge's extensive biography (over 1000 pages), but most are acquainted with Bonhoeffer's writings through reading *Letters and Papers from Prison*, *Life Together*, or perhaps *Ethics* and his work *The Cost of Discipleship*.

If you have not read some of his work, it is possible that you have watched one of the two movies that have been released in the past few years: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Agent of Grace* (2000) or, more recently, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (2003). The latest Rhetorical Society of America conference in San Antonio also had a panel on Bonhoeffer. More and more people are learning about Bonhoeffer's amazing life and searching to know more. It matters not why, perhaps, but the fact that it is happening is important for us as pastors, theologians, or scholars. The latest volume of Bonhoeffer's Works, part of a sixteen-volume project, offers substantial insight into "The Young Bonhoeffer." It covers his teenage and university years until the completion of his initial dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, in 1927, when he was only twenty-one years old.

Bonhoeffer scholarship questions whether

there is a radical transformation in Bonhoeffer's theology from the early theologian to the imprisoned Bonhoeffer who wrote, "What is meant by 'telling the truth'?" This volume of Bonhoeffer's works offers incredible insight into the maturing young man from his teenage years through his college career. Through personal correspondence with family and notes and papers written as a student, readers are given a clear picture of the amazing intellectual acumen that characterizes Bonhoeffer's early life. This extensive volume also offers a critical insight into the "strands of thought and influence that continue into...Bonhoeffer's subsequent life as a pastor and theologian" (11). I found his sermons and writings concerning children particularly moving and pastoral. Those writings, above all, demonstrate his extraordinary ability to interpret and share complex theological issues in a clear and simple manner.

The volume is divided into three parts: Part One contains correspondence, a diary, and official papers; Part Two includes papers, essays, notes, and his graduation thesis; and Part Three contains sermons, children's addresses, and catechetical work. I believe Part Three is the most useful and offers an invaluable resource for parish pastors. The other two parts offer substantial insight into how Bonhoeffer developed, especially through his writing for the likes of Adolf von Harnack in studying patristics, Karl Holl in studying Luther, and Reinhold Seeberg in studying biblical interpretation. I believe the seeds of a theology that eventually compels Bonhoeffer to become "the spoke in the wheel," the voice in the church that refuses allegiance to Hitler, are present in this early writing. Likewise, the importance of community and responsibility to the other, central themes in Bonhoeffer's later work, can be found in this nascent theological time.

This volume offers substantial material translated for the first time, including academic papers, diaries, letters, and sermons, providing us with fresh insights previously unavailable to non-German-speakers. As with the earlier volumes published, the edi-

tors have worked tirelessly to maintain an outstanding level of accuracy and integrity, providing a work that “[tries] to match as closely as possible the style that Bonhoeffer chose, without adding to or improving the original text” (13). The volume also includes appendices that provide insight into the dating of the material included, a substantial bibliography of literature used by Bonhoeffer, and three indices enabling productive cross-referencing.

For those curious about Bonhoeffer’s pastoral skill, this volume offers a remarkable resource. For those who might hope to trace, in the words of Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer’s development from a “theologian to a Christian to a Man for his times,” this volume offers a sure guide.

Bonhoeffer’s words for the church remain relevant and timeless, and understanding who he is and how he developed will provide a strong foundation for those who choose to use his themes of community and responsibility to the other. This volume offers that foundation as well as providing the reader with an excellent resource about Bonhoeffer’s views on Scripture, Luther, and the church.

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HOLY GROUND: A LITURGICAL COSMOLOGY, by Gordon W. Lathrop. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003. Pp. 228. \$25.00 (cloth).

Liturgy and daily life, worship and world describe the dialectic for the life of Christian communities and individual believers. Gordon Lathrop addresses these themes in a provocative, poetic, imaginative, critical, and enlarging vision of what can happen for good or for ill when the *ordo* of Christian worship engages us in world-making. *Holy Ground* is a stunning conversation that brings liturgy into dialogue with biblical and ancient authors, people with other worldviews together with postmodern thinkers about science, astronomy,

ecology, and culture. The book reflects Lathrop’s wide-ranging and mature scholarship that opens up new dimensions and resonances for what Christians do together on Festivals and Sundays and what this has to do with our life here and now on this floating blue planet.

Holy Ground is the third volume in Gordon Lathrop’s trilogy. The previous two volumes are *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology*, and *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology*. In all three books, Lathrop makes a major contribution to thinking theologically and ecumenically about worship and its renewal in our present time. As he is a popular speaker and highly regarded seminary professor of liturgy, these books provoke stimulating new metaphors that enlarge our horizons, insights that engage unusual partners in conversation and open up critical and creative dialogue with issues that affect us all.

The strong center for his argument reflects “on the meaning of a few such symbols, proposed as central to biblical promise, central to Christian tradition, and central to current Christian practice” (224). Among these central symbols are bath and table, word and prayer. “These few things may be seen as rooting us in the Scripture, and in the life of Jesus....They can form a strong center around which open doors, a permeable boundary, may be rightly constructed” (224). Further, throughout the book Lathrop points out how these few things have cosmological significance. “We have set the bath next to politics, the word and the table next to economics, and prayers through time next to astrophysics” (225).

Preaching is one of those central events in the liturgy.

Then let the preacher so preach as to make clear that the judgment and the mercy imaged in all of these texts are alive in this place now, holding the world itself into new meaning. From the parables and reversals of the Scriptures, let the preacher propose the cosmology of the holy ground, not a system of any kind but the worldview that arises when the hear-

ers trust the only Holy One, the astonishing triune God, in faith. (142)

Towards the end of the book, Lathrop provides the reader with three sermons based on texts from the Revised Common Lectionary that North American Christians share. Three senses of cosmology that Lathrop has considered are based on biblical readings. He addresses a “shared worldview” in the first sermon, “ecological concerns” in the second, and “location in the universe” in the third. In fact, the reader may want to read those sermons first and then go back to the beginning to engage in the full expansion of these themes.

Lathrop sets one thing next to another to speak a new thing, a new grace. He looks at the flexible liturgical history of the church and says: “in each local place, the bath was remembered next to the words empowered by the Spirit next to the meal held as the taste of the end-time feast. These events side by side, proclaimed the meaning of the death of Jesus and, thus, the meaning of all death and life, of the world itself, in the light of the judgment and mercy of God” (134–135). Rather than liturgy or the Christian faith helping us find a way out of this mess, Lathrop claims that “it is finally the *ordo* itself that reorients us, again and again, toward the real earth where we live, reconceived as ‘world’ held in the love of the triune God” (135). This also challenges any Platonic, romantic, or docetic interpretations of the liturgy or the Christian faith.

“Ritual mapping” (97ff.) is an example of the fertile grids provided to see our worship and liturgies both in their positive and negative dimensions as they provide ways to map this world in which we live and move. These maps can serve as connections between people and the planet or “become tools of uncriticized power” (102). In these examples he provides both promise and warning, and points us to the brokenness of the Christ who breaks open our closed systems to discover a new life-giving way.

Here liturgy and life intersect in what Lathrop calls “ordinary holiness” (70). But it is a profound holiness that is earthy and is

grounded in Jesus Christ: “this human being is God” where indeed “the finite does contain the infinite” (76). In the person of Jesus Christ,

this Trinitarian resonance may be seen as one of the principal ways that talk about Jesus Christ is itself saved from becoming a closed religious system. If the community confesses Jesus Christ, it does so because of the Spirit of God....More: if the community confesses Jesus Christ, it confesses that God has identified with all of the wretched of the earth and that, in Christ, God has begun to knit up all the dualities throughout the cosmos itself. (76–77)

But first, Lathrop proposes among all the views of the world and cosmologies that people construct in ancient rituals and philosophy or in postmodern scientific proposals that the biblical narrative may need to poke a hole in closed systems and even suggest biblical parabolic reversals. Biblical texts are put next to other views to create a helpful, positive dialogue along with radical critique that proposes a new orientation in the universe. It is here that biblical cosmologies are also critiqued so that the biblical message may be heard and heeded in our time and place.

Lathrop’s approach asserts that

liturgical cosmology, as it is conceived here, does its work in a manner analogous to the parables....In fact, it will be the argument of this book that the principal cosmological contribution of the Bible itself is not so much a full-blown cosmology—three-storied and earth-centered, or not—as it is a quiet contrary word, a surprise, a breaking of cosmologies, a reversal toward new possibilities, a subversion of expectations, a reconfiguring of the-self-in-the-world. The Christian liturgy, also in this, is biblical: word and sacrament can be seen as enacting this same subversion. (17–18)

Yes, the title of this book comes from the biblical account of Moses and the burning bush that was not consumed. God’s word to Moses was, “Remove the sandals from your

feet, for the place on which you are standing is *holy ground*" (Exod 3:5). In considering the biblical and liturgical promises and warnings, Lathrop sees them as "inviting us to see the world differently, to keep a wider company than we had thought" (228). In his preface to the book, Lathrop says it "consists of reflections on the ways in which Christian worship may help us to imagine, understand, care for, and live in the world." His intention is "to consider how Christian worship means something in the present time and, most specifically, how such worship says something true about God and so also says something true about both the gathering called 'church' and our context called 'world'" (ix).

As Lathrop fills out this purpose, he suggests many intriguing and innovative insights both about the human enterprise of world-making and about the ways the Christian gospel and its expression in the liturgy convey the grace and judgment of God for the good of this sky-earth and its life. This review can only hint at the wealth of images, biblical insights, and wide-ranging conversation partners to which Lathrop introduces the reader. It is a book to ponder and engage. Liturgy and life, worship and world will be reoriented and seen anew. This is a serious and weighty book that makes necessary and productive connections between worship and this world that God loves.

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MINISTERIAL ETHICS: MORAL FORMATION FOR CHURCH LEADERS, by Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 288. \$19.99 (paper).

Can it be that, while ethics has become a cottage industry in fields like politics, law, business, and medicine, and while many find themselves continually reeling with fresh revelations of clergy misconduct, ethical reflection relating to practical ministry

remains neglected? It is telling that the authors Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, veteran pastors and teachers of ethics from the Baptist tradition, can name only a handful of book-length studies that have appeared on this topic since they published the first edition of this book in 1993. It is also telling that today, as they further point out, many seminaries do not routinely teach ministerial ethics, and, indeed, have cut back on the teaching of Christian ethics in general. Trull and Carter attribute these neglects to an assumption, apparently held by both churches and seminaries, that only ethically sensitive people enter ministry in the first place. Regrettably, experience has tragically shown this supposition to be false.

Given these circumstances, the recently issued second edition of this book is especially welcome. This volume is not intended to be the final word on any of the many ethical issues it addresses that are routinely faced by today's ministers. Rather, it seeks to serve as an introductory survey of the entire field of ministerial ethics. At this it succeeds very well.

The first chapter of the book asks: is ministry a career, vocation, occupation, profession—or what? Some pastors resist thinking of ministry as a "profession" because they believe that their calling is somehow "higher" than that of other professions, an idea that members of the legal, medical, and teaching professions might well dispute on theological as well as social and cultural grounds. Trull and Carter do see that recalling the values, beliefs, and character traits historically (at least since the Middle Ages) associated with the professions in general is insightful in defining the nature of ministry. Indeed, it is a major theme of the book that ministers, like lawyers, doctors, and other professionals, should as a group adopt and enforce a formal code of ethics. They recognize, however, that one significant barrier to such a project, and to any broader effort to define ethical obligation in the context of ministry, is the lack of agreement any longer about the fundamental nature of ministry (what kind of admixture of entrepreneur,

prophet, proclaimer, administrator, shepherd, executive, teacher, etc. is a minister supposed to be in this day and age?). The authors rightly see this confusion of ministerial values and aspirations as virtually inviting moral failure, not to mention burnout.

There follows a very helpful chapter on methodology in ethics, which addresses the question: By what means and processes are we to go about deciding what to do in any given situation? Making good moral decisions, say the authors, depends upon a “trilogy of major components” (58). An ethical agent must have character governed by the appropriate virtues, and actions by the appropriate values. But most of all, these virtues and values must be guided by “moral vision,” or an appropriate way of viewing self and neighbor. Integrity, which results whenever these components fittingly coalesce, is partly the product of a theological point of view (how we view God as creator, provider, and redeemer influences what we do). More importantly, however, it is the product of “the way the events of...[one’s] life embody the gospel story, the life and teachings of Jesus the Messiah” (61). There is certainly much to be said for this biblically based, Jesus-centered conception. But, like other abstract formulations, it leaves plenty of room for ambiguity and disagreement when applied in the concrete. For example, what Christian virtues and values might require, or what Jesus might do, at a crisis point in a twenty-first-century hospital room may sometimes be open to question. Thus moral decision making in ministry as in other areas of life will often

require creative response in a milieu of uncertainty and risk.

Subsequent chapters deal with the full range of ethical issues pertaining to a minister’s relationship to self, congregation, colleagues, and community. Perhaps the biggest difference between the book’s first and second editions is the latter’s expansive treatment of clergy sexual abuse, surely the most notorious locus of clergy misconduct in recent years. Here, one finds extensive information on the incidence of clergy sexual abuse, what constitutes it, its impact, how one should respond to it, and how it may be prevented.

This book could not be expected to do everything, and therefore, understandably, does not. While there is a very short listing of helpful references at the end of every chapter, the book misses the opportunity to provide a reliable, up-to-date, general bibliography of available resources. Also, some of the analysis of legal issues bearing upon ministry in this updated edition still relies on sources sometimes a decade old. This is from the Stone Age in a field as dynamic as the law, especially in an area as rapidly developing as the legal liability of ministers and church bodies for ministerial misconduct. Nevertheless, this worthy book deserves a prominent place in the classrooms of our seminaries and on the reference shelves of our ministers.

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