

Reviews



THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICE: TEXTS AND HERMENEUTICS, by Robert A. J. Gagnon. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001. Pp. 520. \$49.00 (cloth).

This thoughtful and well-documented study makes the case that Christians should not endorse homosexual relations. Written in a clear but non-inflammatory style, the author engages a remarkable range of contemporary biblical, theological, and pastoral scholarship. Divergent viewpoints are summarized and critiqued in a balanced way so that readers can understand the various sides of this debate. The care with which Gagnon engages various points of view strengthens his case for maintaining the church's traditional position that sexual relations between persons of the same sex are unacceptable.

Writing about homosexuality in the current academic and ecclesiastical climate entails certain risks. In his introduction Gagnon notes that those who do not endorse homosexual relations may be labeled homophobic, intolerant, and exclusivistic. They may be faulted for taking the Bible uncritically or for failing to take modern science seriously. Despite the risks, however, Gagnon develops a reasoned and respectful case for maintaining heterosexual marriage as the proper sphere for sexual relationships. As the title of his book indicates, he focuses on sexual practice rather than sexual orientation, noting that the issue is not what urges people feel, but what they do with those urges in terms of behavior.

The first section of the book focuses on the Old Testament. The creation stories in Genesis speak of the sexual complementar-

ity of men and women and its role in procreation. At the same time, Gen 2 does not limit sexual relations between a man and woman to procreation, but identifies their becoming one flesh as a positive expression of companionship. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, episodes that involve sexual relations between males and the Levitical regulations against homosexual behavior depict such relationships negatively. Gagnon maintains that the Old Testament's rejection of homosexual relations does not stem from imitation of cultural trends, or from connotations of idolatry, or from the fact that homosexual intercourse does not lead to procreation. Rather, intercourse between people of the same sex is understood to be incompatible with the creation of women and men as anatomically complementary beings. A brief chapter on Jewish writings from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 shows that these authors were unanimous in their rejection of homosexual conduct. The arguments used in these texts typically appeal to the anatomical complementarity of males and females and to the way that heterosexual intercourse can lead to procreation.

Gagnon's discussion of the teaching of Jesus recognizes that the gospels do not include any explicit statements about same-sex intercourse. Nevertheless, Jesus' appeal to Gen 1:27, which speaks of God creating male and female, and to 2:24, which refers to the two becoming one flesh, shows that he understood marriage in terms of heterosexual monogamy (Matt 19:1-9; Mark 10:1-9). The way that Jesus approached the question of divorce and remarriage shows

that he was generally more, not less, rigorous than the Old Testament and surrounding culture in matters of sexual ethics. Jesus insisted that mercy be practiced along with righteousness, but not in a way that led to greater latitude in sexual practice. Gestures of mercy are coupled with calls for repentance.

Paul's references to homosexual relationships receive the most extensive analysis in the book. After detailed notes on Rom 1:26-27, Gagnon considers arguments concerning the nature of Paul's argument and its value for contemporary discussion. Gagnon holds that Paul did not use the expression "contrary to nature" to reinforce cultural convention, but to indicate that the material shape of the created order—the complementarity of male and female—was something that was evident to both Jews and Gentiles. Significantly, Paul did not appeal to the common Jewish and Greco-Roman argument that only heterosexual unions could lead to procreation, and Paul did not think that only idol worshipers were capable of homosexual intercourse. Concerning the disputed words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* that Paul uses in 1 Cor 6:9, Gagnon reviews the various interpretations, concluding that they do pertain to men involved in homosexual behavior and indicate behaviors that Paul rules out for Christians.

So is any of this relevant to the current discussion of homosexual relations? The final chapter offers an extended engagement with contemporary voices in the debate. Many have insisted that biblical passages dealing with homosexual behavior are no longer applicable for various reasons. Some hold that the Bible condemns only exploitative forms of same-sex relations since that is the only type of homosexual behavior they knew. Others propose that biblical authors condemned homosexuality because it threatened male dominance or because same-sex passion was thought to originate in oversexed heterosexuals. These questions and many others, including the possibility of a genetic component

in homosexuality and the interpretation of scientific studies, receive thorough consideration and response.

The breadth and balance in this work make it a valuable guide through the maze of studies on the topic of homosexuality and Christian practice. Gagnon does not make a simplistic appeal to "the Bible says," yet he does maintain that Old and New Testament authors, who wrote at different times and in different cultural contexts, consistently affirm that sexual intercourse has its proper place within heterosexual marriage, and that same-sex intercourse is unacceptable. If one looks for a trajectory of thought within Scripture, the trend is toward more rather than less rigor in sexual relationships. Those who agree with the position taken by Gagnon will welcome the care with which he develops his argument, and those who disagree will find in Gagnon a worthy conversation partner, who takes challenges seriously and responds thoughtfully.

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EXPERIENCES IN THEOLOGY, by Jürgen Moltmann, translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000. Pp. 344. \$29.00 (cloth).

Moltmann's newest book brings his series of volumes labeled *systematic contributions to theology* to a close. This book in many ways combines the questions of method that proper systematicians concern themselves with at the beginning. Moltmann explains in the preface that he busied himself with the content of theology and that "the road emerged only as I walked it" (xiv-xv). This volume, with sections on history, hermeneutics, epistemology, and the Trinity, readily mixes autobiography and methodological discussion and will interest readers of Moltmann from the days of *Theology of Hope* to any of his latest works. It will also aid in thinking through how the

theology of the cross, eschatology, and the Trinity shape and develop how one does theology.

The book follows several questions relating to the method of theology. First, Moltmann asks the question: What is theology? Who does it? It is obvious to Moltmann that theology radically involves oneself: "True theologians must have addressed and worked through their struggles with God, their experiences of God, their fears of God, and their Joy in God" (24). He interweaves the self-involved nature of theology with biblical theology's main feature: its historical particularity. In contrast to 'cosmic' religions whose deity is manifest in the abstract archetypes of life, "this God reveals himself to the people of his choice in contingent events of human history" (29).

This Moltmann considers the central aspect of Abrahamic religion: "[God's presence] is discerned by way of action in history in God's name—action, moreover, that is innovative, without prototype and example" (29). This terse statement shows Moltmann's own development: from theology so driven by the future that the past and present are simply abolished by that same future, to an eschatology that incorporates all three. The future is in the remembrance of past promise, the pattern of Israel's Scriptures.

This amounts to the most fascinating part of the book: the chief contours of biblical faith are determined by exile, time, remembrance, and promise. Remembrance narrates to those in exile the past acts of God and thereby includes those in the present in that narrative. Remembrance extends the history of God's acts in the present and opens the future in promise. History really only becomes "past" when Israel fails to remind herself of the past, when Israel fails to live by the promise of Exodus (35).

For Moltmann, promise denotes not simply a fore-telling, as he calls it, a prophecy, but instead a promise makes God's future present (94). They perform acts and do not provide information. These promises are all arranged under God's own initiative:

"The promise 'I will be your God' is always merely endorsed, for it bears within itself its own 'fulfillment' in the fullness of God's real presence. What it promises happens through its promising..." (98).

Writing this down in remembrance makes faith a "scriptural religion" (33). Even then, the narratives of Scripture are themselves a sort of history. "The very reason that biblical histories of promise and gospel can be called historical is that they point excentrically beyond themselves into God's future" (127). For Moltmann, the biblical histories, as they aim at God's future, perform a critical role in interpretation, no matter whether the interpreter is the church, the scholarly exegete, or the "inspired believer." They have this role because the matter of Scripture is God's history of promise in which God's coming reign is already present (130). This history is further critical by way of its being a "counter-history to the victory parade of the rulers of this world" (131).

There are four chapters following this discussion of hermeneutics, concerning Liberation, feminist, Korean Minjung, and African-American theology. Moltmann's historically-oriented understanding of theology and the highly contextual manner of the liberation that God works binds him together with these and more movements in theology. These very interesting sections elaborate Moltmann's own experience with these approaches, his development of their theology, and criticisms that he sees.

As one of the many contributors to the last century's trinitarian revival, Moltmann closes this volume with a chapter on the Trinity. There he connects it with his doctrine of creation. These bring together his concern about time, the promised future, and the space of creation. Connecting these two makes space more than a matter of the theater where God's time is played out, but God's dwelling with creation is the spatial correlate of God's coming future. However, despite the abstractions, this is the place where Moltmann grounds his understanding of ecclesiology in the communion

shared by Father, Son, and Spirit (328-330). The space and time of creatures is liberated, promised, and given in space and time by the Triune God. This shows that Moltmann's hermeneutics are trinitarian.

Moltmann works through matters of hermeneutics and knowledge of God with much of his prior work on the major doctrines of theology already in place. Unlike some contemporary demands in theology to delineate questions about knowledge and interpretation in advance, Moltmann shows in this volume that it is the doctrines of eschatology, christology, and the Trinity which drive those questions rather than the other way around.

To those familiar with Moltmann's theology, this will be a summation and narration of his own path through the stormy seas of theology and his own development of hermeneutical questions. Not much new is added beyond his other volumes. In that, those interested in beginning with Moltmann will find this a valuable place to start.

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THE STORY OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: TWO THOUSAND YEARS, FROM EAST TO WEST, Gordon Mursell, General Editor. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001. Pp. 384. \$35.00 (cloth).

At one point in Molière's play, "The Bourgeois Gentleman," the central character expresses amazement when he learns that he has been speaking *prose* all his life. Some readers of the encyclopedic *Christian Spirituality*, in a similar way, may discover that what they thought was the history of the Christian church is really a history of Christian spirituality. To put it another way, much of what many of us studied in Williston Walker or Sidney Ahlstrom is here presented as "(the) story of Christian spirituality (which) bears witness to the countless ways in which individuals and communities have felt the presence and heard the call of that God..." (367).

In ten thoughtfully packed chapters (with prologue, introduction, and epilogue) eleven authors list and discuss people, events, movements, doctrines, and writings in church history with an unwavering eye on the spiritual. Recognizing at the outset that the matter of spirituality is multivalent, Gordon Mursell, the general editor of the book, notes that two streams of spirituality feed the broader river of Christian spirituality. The Hebrew tradition has given

spirituality its stress on *integration*; and the Greek tradition has stressed *desire*. “The two together gave, and still give, the Christian spiritual tradition an astonishing vitality and inventiveness, enabling those who make it their own to see life not as a predetermined routine, or even simply as a journey, but as something at once attractive and challenging: an *adventure*” (10).

The adventure unfolds in an almost breathless, but still scholarly manner. The material is so lavishly illustrated that the book might qualify as an art book. Each chapter begins with a detailed timeline to anchor the reader chronologically, though regrettably there are no maps to fix matters geographically. Thereafter the information is presented in bits and boxes rather like *Time* or *People* magazine. Entries are compressed mini-essays, rarely more than three columns in length. This format makes the book more like a text or an encyclopedia which would be better read at intervals rather than in a continuous fashion.

Because each chapter has a different author, the overall structure is episodic rather than connected narrative. This overarching organization is both strength and weakness. For example, discussion on any given topic is confined and clearly discussed within specific chapters. Overall, however, things do not always cohere. The conclusions drawn at the end of chapter 3 on medieval spirituality do not quite connect with the discussion at the beginning of chapter 6 on Protestant spirituality. Moreover, this latter chapter, called “The Protestant Tradition in Europe,” is careful to avoid any substantive reference to Anglican Spirituality, which is discussed two chapters later. As a result, Puritan spirituality and its historical significance are divorced from the impacting issues of the English monarchy.

In spite of this narrative difficulty the book is very informative, dealing with such significant historical figures as Tertullian, Brother Lawrence, and Billy Graham. The various authors also consider less familiar persons (depending on one’s orientation) like Shenoute of Atribe (136), Joseph of

Volokolamsk (159), and Phoebe Palmer (300). The book tries to be as inclusive of women in the history of Christian spirituality as possible. Women from the whole span of Christian church history—from Perpetua and Felicity of the third century all the way to Susan Howatch and Mother Teresa of the twentieth—are discussed in their turn.

This book also has other strengths that might commend it to the diligent reader. The focus on spirituality throughout the book gives a fresh slant to church history. The length, breadth, and focus of the discussion move spirituality from the margin of theological and practical concern and place it closer to the center. As Bradley Holt says near the end of the book, “Certain developments in twentieth-century Christian spirituality call for further comment. Among these is the emergence of spirituality as an academic discipline, from which this book has drawn” (346). Whether or not theological education responds to this claim is another matter.

Many readers will find much to savor and consider in the discussions of Catholic Saints and Reformers as well as the Eastern and Russian Spiritual Traditions. Ecumenical boundaries and spiritual knowledge are likely to be stretched in these chapters. While some of the material is so compressed as to be only suggestive and occasionally confusing, it is nonetheless challenging to encounter so many people and movements. Each chapter has an excellent conclusion that helps to make the disparate details cohere.

Some of the most appealing things about this book, however, tend also to be the most frustrating. The thumbnail sketches, mentioned above, show the breadth of the tradition; but they sometimes read like catalogue entries, and the reader is challenged to keep things in order. Sometimes, as in the chapter on the Early Church Fathers, one gets the impression of reading a comprehensive account of early church history with fetching color pictures. At other times one wonders why some figures are not mentioned—even

at the risk of adding a few paragraphs to an admittedly spacious book. If Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's spirituality is worth including in the discussion, for example, then why not William Shakespeare or Charles Dickens? If Emily Dickinson, why not Walt Whitman? The towering and deeply influential spirituality of Johann Sebastian Bach is missing from the discussion as well.

If not deep, the scope of spirituality is very broad in *Christian Spirituality*. It is as though writers charged their brushes with bright colors and sprayed them over a large canvas: wherever the paint hit, there is spirituality. A whole page is given to Gnostic spirituality (44) and even more space is allotted to Romantic spirituality (188-191). Positive Thinking and self-esteem have a place at the table (353) as do Chicken Soup (354-355) and Gay/Lesbian spiritualities. (355-356). The risk in such a scattershot approach is that whatever spirituality (particularly *Christian* spirituality) really means, it can become greatly diluted—possibly to the point of irrelevance. Arguably, it is possible to consider such pop spiritualities as interest groups (like societies devoted to Sherlock Holmes or vintage cars), aerobics, lodge, even billboard spiritualities, all of which might claim some Christian attention and loyalties nowadays.

Nonetheless, following on the long tradition investigated in this volume, a suggestive thought emerges. Until recent times, spirituality seems to have evolved from *within* the Christian tradition to nurture seekers and to sustain various pieties. Lately, however, it appears that spiritualities arise from *outside* the organized church, which then grafts and adapts them. Such syncretism doubtless widens the pool of spiritual options, but it often produces believers and practitioners who do not affiliate with the church.

These observations and caveats aside, *Christian Spirituality* is a splendid and valuable reference book for pastors and church leaders who want a new take on old material. This richly textured book will supply both historical insight and a rich grammar

for conversations that are changing the way people regard the church and their faith in the twenty-first century. "At the dawn of the new millennium, it is not only the human societies of the world that face an unpredictable and rapidly changing future," Gordon Mursell says in the Epilogue, "these very challenges may serve to send us all back to our roots, and to rediscover, in the inexhaustible riches of the Bible, resources which can sustain and direct us as we look towards so uncertain a future" (366-367). Like the character in Molière's play, we may find ourselves surprised to learn that we have been talking about Christian spirituality when all along we thought we were studying church history.

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**TURN YOUR CHURCH INSIDE OUT:
BUILDING A COMMUNITY FOR
OTHERS**, by Walt Kallestad. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001. Pp. 185. \$17.00 (paper).

Amid a flurry of conversation presently concerning ecclesiology—what the church is and how it should live out its life and mission—Walt Kallestad offers to further that conversation in his newest book, *Turn Your Church Inside Out: Building a Community for Others*. The cornerstone of Kallestad's argument is that "it is clearly time for the followers of Jesus Christ to deconstruct the church for ourselves in order to begin building churches that genuinely exist *for others* in our midst" (11, emphasis mine). Who are the "others" for whom the church exists? Kallestad's answer: "outsiders." Kallestad so passionately believes this that he writes, "Whatever else it might be, the church is not a Jesus community, not truly Christian, if it does not sit down to eat with outsiders" (13). Conversely, "Any Jesus community that exists for others and with others is a community after the heart of God" (13).

With this basic framework in place, Kall-

estad paints a picture of what a true “Jesus community” looks like throughout the rest of this book. The backdrop of this picture is the story of Community Church of Joy and its development. “[T] hat’s what this book is all about—sharing with you some of the things we have learned over the last twenty-two years in our struggle to become and remain a church for others” (15). While this might seem self-serving, Kallestad sets this comment in a wider context. “Are we the only way to be a church in this postmodern world? Of course not. Are we a creative model for a dynamic and faithful way to be a church that is relevant to the realities of our world? Absolutely” (15).

In the remainder of the book, Kallestad paints the foreground: what it looks like to be a “community for others.” In the first chapter, Kallestad shows the reader where Community Church of Joy began its focus on being a “community for others.” Titled “Celebrating Others,” this chapter focuses on the acrostic: “C-E-L-E-B-R-A-T-E,” which represent “nine...behaviors, disciplines if you will, that would begin to turn us into a place where others felt at home” (31-32). The rest of this chapter takes each letter of the acrostic and describes it in detail, with illustrations from Community Church of Joy. As a GenXer, I was most interested in Kallestad’s discussion of “building authentic relationships” (40-42). One of the gifts that Xers bring to the church is a call to authenticity in its relationships. It is more important to an Xer that our identities be based on who we are and not on what we do. Kallestad echoes this concern as he writes, “We want to be wanted for who we are and not just for what we do or give or bring” (41).

In what remains of the book, Kallestad details what a “community for others” looks like in its “worship” (chapter 3); “proclaiming the Gospel” (chapter 4); “programming” (chapter 5); “money” (chapter 6); “staffing” (chapter 7); and “managing change” (chapter 8). Early on in the book, Kallestad invites the reader to “share the book with the leadership of your church

and engage them in the same imaginative, prayerful venture” (7-8). To that end, Kallestad has added a helpful section at the end of each chapter titled, “Questions to ponder, things to do.”

Kallestad concludes his book, in the “Afterword,” by stating,

This book, of course, is a big-picture effort. It is designed to make the case for transforming churches into communities for others, to motivate Christian leaders to commit to the vision, and to lay the foundation for such a transformation with practical advice for getting started. Much more can and needs to be said about all of the topics covered in *Turn Your Church Inside Out*. I am planning several in-depth, workbook-style resources on these and other topics to give Christian leaders a tool kit for transformation as we move into the third millennium. (182)

Kallestad is right: this book does exactly what he hopes it will do.

There is one basic matter that I would hope Kallestad would address at length in those forthcoming materials that he has promised his readers. The matter concerns the presence and work of God in matters of transformation and the church. While there are various Scripture verses scattered throughout this book, a sustained exegetical and theological discussion of where and how God is at work in the church seems lacking. This book falls within a broader category of ecclesiological proposals that suggest that if there be a future for the church, it must largely be at the hands of the people of God, and not through God’s word alone. Whether intentional or not, such a description of how God’s people must usher in their own future by focusing on “others” and not on God’s word seems to be a negation of *sola scriptura*. This is problematic, since only when God’s word stands alone is there true community, true hope, and a true future for the church and its people.

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O JERUSALEM! THE CONTESTED FUTURE OF THE JEWISH COVENANT, by Marc H. Ellis. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999. Pp. 186. \$20.00 (paper).

In this powerful book, an eloquent Jewish theologian, scholar, and writer speaks against the assault on the human rights of the Palestinians by the state of Israel. Ellis believes God's covenant with Israel has been shattered by the policies of the modern state of Israel, a state that was created at the expense of the Palestinians. This covenant can only be renewed by a new ethic that includes and reconciles both the Jews and Palestinians who have become linked together in that land.

Ellis argues that the militarism and oppression of the state of Israel against the Palestinians has been part of Israel's history since 1948, raising the disturbing question of "whether an error of immense magnitude has been made in the creation of the state" (49). Strong supporters of Israel, especially Zionists and ultra-orthodox Jews, have used narratives of innocence, victimization, and redemption to justify any action of the Israeli state. Until the late 1960s or early 1970s, the Holocaust was not a major theme for Israelis. After the 1967 war, the Holocaust became a propaganda tool. "An archetype is added to Jewish history, that of the perpetual innocence of Jews regardless of circumstances, in suffering, and in power" (27).

Israeli mythology has created a false image of the nation as symbolized in the story of Deir Yassin, a Palestinian Arab village, where 100 Palestinian Arabs were massacred in 1948 by the military force Irgun, led by Menachem Begin, who later became Prime Minister. Ellis states that the massacre at Deir Yassin contradicts any claim to Jewish innocence, and "is a black stain on the honor of the Jewish nation" (31). Within weeks of the massacre, Israelis resettled the village and renamed it Givat Shaul Bet. According to Israeli historian Benny Morris, "it was during the time of the massacre at Deir Yassin that Ben-Gurion

explicitly sanctioned the expulsion of Arabs from a whole area of Palestine" (32), forcing 750,000 Palestinians out of their homes and villages. In sad irony, the site of Deir Yassin is within eyesight of Yad Vashem, used by Zionists to perpetuate the myth of Israeli innocence and victimization. Ellis states that for Jews to deny equal rights to Palestinians is unthinkable after the Holocaust. He writes, "the return of Jews to power has mostly been seen as a miracle in light of the Holocaust. Today it may also be recognized as a disaster" (52). Many Jews, including Martin Buber, protested the Deir Yassin massacre; some Israeli soldiers refused Yitzhak Rabin's order to empty Arab villages in 1948; some Israeli soldiers refused to serve in Lebanon in the 1970s and '80s; even today, some Israeli soldiers refuse to serve in the occupied territories. Yet, still today, the many Jews who speak out against the policies of Israel are looked upon as traitors.

In looking ahead, the author fears that Israeli rhetoric will only continue to mask the policies of strengthening their hold on Jerusalem, further illegal settlements, denying Palestinians their rights, and economic strangulation. Ellis wrote hauntingly, "What the future holds is difficult to predict...Palestinian desperation will be matched by the coarsening of the fabric of Israeli society and leadership. With the tension of ideal and reality in Jewish speech and thought depleted, one wonders what kind of military response will be applied in such a scenario" (66).

Since the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada in September, 2000, the military response has been ferocious. I was on sabbatical the fall of 2000 just outside of Bethlehem, and saw firsthand the brutal military punishment Israel has been inflicting on the Palestinians.

Ellis writes with a sense of urgency: the time is late, the wager is great, and circumstances are complex. Yet, healing will never come until Palestinians are included as full and equal citizens of the land. In 1929, Judah Magnes wrote to a friend, "It must be our endeavor first to convince ourselves and then to convince others that Jews and Arabs, Moslems, Christians, and Jews have

each as much right there, no more and no less, than the other: equal rights and equal privileges and equal duties...for without this equality, the quest for a Jewish homeland would turn into a nightmare” (61).

Ellis does have hope for the future and calls for *tikkun* (“healing,” “repair,” “restoration,” “mending”). He hopes that “one day Jews and Palestinians will gather at Yad Vashem and Deir Yassin to honor the dead and later, perhaps midway between the memorials, they will celebrate the path that brings life and a new beginning out of the tragic past” (139). The path to a new beginning lies in what Ellis calls “revolutionary forgiveness,” which is always tied to specific acts of justice, “for without the movement toward justice, forgiveness is simply a piety without substance and leaves the world as it is” (142).

The time is late. It could be a time of squandered opportunity. Yet, even now, “despite the difficulties at hand, the ground is being prepared” (144). “We are like someone in a very dark night over whom lightning flashes from time to time” (171).

This is a hard-hitting book, blunt in its critique of the history, mythology, and current policies of the state of Israel. It is significant that the author is a Jew and that many Israelis and American Jews agree with his call for Israel to return to the true Jewish tradition of justice, peace, and concern for the weak.

This is an important book for four reasons: (1) Many Christians were taught that to criticize the state of Israel was synonymous with anti-Semitism due to the com-

mon assumption that modern Israel is the same as biblical Israel, or that modern Israel is some mystical, spiritual entity that has a role to play in the end times. But there is nothing theologically significant about modern Israel. Just as Christians once spoke out against the apartheid policies of South Africa, so now Christians need to speak out against the apartheid policies of Israel. (2) America enables Israel to continue its oppression and occupation by our immense military and economic aid. It was embarrassing and disgusting to visit Palestinian homes hit by rockets that said “made in USA.” We need to challenge our nation’s leaders and urge an end to military aid that is used to kill innocent people. (3) This book reminds us of the Palestinians’ right to justice and their own land. Many Palestinians are Christian; some are Lutherans. The Palestinians have lived in that land for over 1,300 years. Though they are often pictured in our press as terrorists and fanatics, most Palestinians are peaceful people pushed into acts of desperation after living in conditions that neither you nor I would tolerate. (4) The Middle East plays a key role in world affairs. A recent statement of church leaders called the Middle East violence “a cancer that threatens the health of the whole region.” We need to learn the truth about the Middle East and do what we can to educate others and encourage justice and peace. I heartily recommend this powerful and moving book.

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