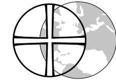
Reviews



EZEKIEL, by Robert W. Jenson. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009. Pp. 374. $32.99 (cloth).

For those used to working with the standard critical commentaries of the past century, Robert Jenson's new volume on Ezekiel will be both surprising and familiar. While Jenson deals with many of the issues addressed in a standard critical commentary (historical context, textual criticism, and genre analysis), his task is primarily theological. In accordance with the series' goals, Jenson attempts to read Ezekiel using a "Nicene theory" (25). A "Nicene theory" amounts to discerning "a 'christological plain sense'" (24), and taking seriously the church's claims that the God present in the Old Testament is a Trinitarian God. A fundamental conviction shared by the authors in this series, therefore, is that "dogma clarifies rather than obscures" (11).

Those familiar with the history of interpretation may recognize the ideological tug-of-war in which the aforementioned statement openly engages. This commentary series, at least according to the series general editor, R. R. Reno, represents an attempt to relocate the locus of interpretive authority away from biblical scholarship and back to Christian communities: "The Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible advances upon the assumption that the Nicene tradition, in all its diversity and controversy, provides *the proper* basis for the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture" (12; emphasis mine). In an interesting use of bellic imagery, Reno compares Christian theology to war, noting that, "war is too important to leave to the generals" (12). The generals, apparently, are biblical scholars. Thankfully, Jenson's commentary does not appear to share such a polemical (and frankly, short-sighted) view on the relationship between biblical criticism and theological interpretation, a fact attested to by the many references Jenson makes to biblical scholars (esp. W. Eichrodt, M. Greenberg, G. von Rad, C. Westermann, W. Zimmerli, etc.). Apparently, the "generals" are not so useless to Christian theology after all!

One of the most powerful trajectories in Jenson's commentary is his use of law and gospel as an interpretive framework. Law and gospel, for Jenson, are not just hermeneutical strategies or lenses, but are manifestations of "the Lord's internal conflict" (188). For example, in his reflections on Ezek 22:30, a verse in which God seeks someone to "stand in the breach," Jenson notes that "we find the Lord on both sides of Jerusalem's walls: assaulting the city for its evils and seeking someone to fend off his own attack" (188). God is hoping for "a savior from his own wrath" (188). Unfortunately, however, Jenson's stunning use of dialectical hermeneutics ceases when he deals with God's relationship to the poor and the rich. Following a trend in contemporary theology, Jenson asserts (albeit subtly and qualifiedly) that God "has a preferential option for the poor" (187, 225). I would want to ask Jenson why God can be on both sides of Jerusalem's walls and not on both sides of the economic divide (rich/poor). Why must dialectic stop here?

Another consistent thread running through Jenson's commentary is his pervasive polemic against the "omni-God" of Western Christian theology (e.g., God is omniscient, omnipotent, etc.). He notes that God is deeply and emotion-

 Copyright © 2010 by Word & World, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota. All rights reserved.

ally involved in the history of God's people (see 61, 63, 201) because it is God's own history (72, 188, 190, 287; see especially his comments on 30:20–26). Jenson notes further that "the word of God that determines history is itself fully involved amid the clashing and joining bodies that make history….God does not rule only from without the rough and tumble of history but also from within it" (49). The Ezekelian God, in other words, bursts the philosophical assumptions of much of Western Christianity. While commenting on the category of election in Ezek 20:1–31, he writes, "We are not to think of a God sitting before and above all time, sorting fates….The church's Christology, in which the temporal person of Christ is eternal God, suggests a way to a different construal: the day of encountering Jesus is the moment of divine decision" (156). Jenson's comments represent, to my mind, the best of what the Brazos series can offer, namely, critical reflection on how textual claims can positively interact with dogmatic formulations. On this point, Jenson beautifully demonstrates that dogma can in fact clarify Scripture—though, I would add, that is not always the case.

Although writing as a Protestant theologian to a Christian audience, Jenson is remarkably sensitive to Jewish interpreters. Jenson frequently quotes Targumic literature related to Ezekiel (e.g., 98, 113, 171, 270, 282), Rashi (e.g., 24, 28, 211, 266), and contemporary Jewish interpreters like Jon Levenson (158, 272). While I cannot speak for Jenson, I suspect that this decision to include significant numbers of Jewish sources was purposeful, and reflects his belief (articulated provocatively in a different work: "Toward a Christian Theology of Judaism," in *Jews and Christians*, ed. C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson, 1–13) that Christ is not fully present in the world without the presence of both the synagogue and the church. While I am not certain that Jewish readers would appreciate his Trinitarian take on Rashi (306), his sensitivity to Jewish interpretation is commendable.

The result of Jenson's study is a creative and rich Christian reading of Ezekiel that exemplifies the theological aims of the Brazos commentary series. Jenson's work should find a home on the desk of any pastor, minister, or lay person who is interested in serious theological engagement with Ezekiel. While the finer points related to history, textual criticism, and cultural background must be sought elsewhere, Jenson's work brings clarity to this often confusing and under-preached prophetic book.

Michael Jay Chan
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

THE WORD OF LIFE: A THEOLOGY OF JOHN'S GOSPEL, by Craig R. Koester. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. Pp. 245. $21.00 (paper).

The introductory chapter sets the context in which the Gospel of John is to be heard and read today. Writers on the Gospel have often focused on the literary complexity and not emphasized its theological integrity in presenting the story of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. In contrast, Koester's response states that "the present text coheres very well, and we will interpret the Gospel in its present form" (3).

This chapter also includes a comprehensive survey of the history of theological questions that have faced the interpretation of the Gospel from the early church to the present. This survey provides a way forward from which Koester will develop his response to a theology of John's Gospel in the following chapters: God; The World and Its People; Jesus; Crucifixion and Resurrection; The Spirit; Faith, Present and Future; Discipleship in Community and World.

At the outset, Koester identifies theological presuppositions that will guide this volume. From the opening prologue of the Gospel, the

Word (*logos*) is the means of engagement and is God's act of communication to make the unknown God known (John 1:18). The evangelist assumes that God is known through Israel's Scriptures and that this communication takes place through Jesus of Nazareth. This communication continues through the Holy Spirit after Jesus' earthly ministry has ended: "The Spirit does not bring new revelation but conveys the meaning of what God revealed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus" (30).

This order serves well the explication of a theology of the Gospel, and moves in a Trinitarian progression covering the central themes and their interrelatedness. Each chapter is comprehensive, drawing upon the applicable biblical texts and the author's careful exegetical and interpretive work. Attention and engagement with the scholarly conversation is always present, either in the text itself or in the carefully annotated references to articles and secondary literature in the endnotes.

Within the New Testament, John's Gospel has long been recognized for its uniqueness, and because of this the Gospel has always been an interpretive challenge. The early church gave it the symbol of the eagle among the gospels; it is a gospel that soars to the loftiest heights among the Canonical Gospels. The interpretive challenge has been to interpret how its talons reach into the earthly story of Jesus of Nazareth. Koester's chapter on Jesus is a gem, drawing upon all the various identities throughout the Gospel that present the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

The chapter on "The World and Its People," centered between the chapters on "God" and "Jesus," begins with the theme of life, stated as the purpose of the Gospel (John 20:31). The chapter identifies problems that threaten life: suffering and death, sin, evil. Each of these themes takes the reader into the texts of the Gospel set in "the world" that God loves and for which God "gives his Son for the world that rejects him" (81).

The chapter on "The Spirit" serves as the link between the chapters on "Crucifixion and Resurrection" and "Faith, Present and Future," that lead into the theme of "Discipleship in Community and World." Koester unfolds the relationship between these themes, developing how they complement one another. The theological integrity of the Gospel becomes evident in the ongoing work of the Spirit that makes Jesus known, that is the source of faith and life, and that is the abiding presence and future hope of discipleship and Christian community in a pluralistic world.

The breadth of coverage in each of these chapters is reflective of the author's commitment to the teaching and proclamation of John's Gospel. The volume is written for both the teaching ministry of the academic classroom and the proclamation and teaching ministry within the Christian community. This volume represents the maturity of one who has given his life of study to a faithful exegesis, interpretation, and proclamation of the Gospel. In this volume, Koester is attentive throughout to the theological intention and purpose of the evangelist: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

As Koester moves through each chapter, he invites the reader to see the unitary way in which a theology of John's Gospel unfolds in a majestic and artistic way. The interrelatedness of the chapters is seen in references to other chapters and to where a theme might be covered in a more comprehensive way. A subject index that holds this cross-referencing together concludes the volume, but one does miss a comprehensive verse index that would identify the exegetical and interpretive work on specific verses throughout the volume.

In our pluralistic world of the twenty-first century, how can the particularity of John's words of Jesus, "I am *the* way, and *the* truth, and *the* life" (John 14:6), enter into a world that the Gospel proclaims is the object of God's love? The interpretive perspective that Koester

brings to this question is an eloquent word of life for the witness of the Christian community and life in the world:

> John can speak to the pluralistic world in which his readers live because he has something particular to offer. To make the message less particular would mean making the love of God less radical, since the evangelist understands that divine love is definitively conveyed through the crucified and risen Messiah. At the same time, John understands that God's love is given in this particular way for the sake of the world (3:16). (214).

Koester's writing represents a significant publication and is a unique and comprehensive contribution to the Gospel of John for our time. This volume will also provide an excellent resource for years to come. His contribution will lead readers of the Gospel into a fuller understanding of the inspiration and literary genius of the evangelist, who has fashioned a Gospel that presents the story of Jesus of Nazareth in an engaging way. Koester brings the Gospel of John into our world in a way that is faithful to the evangelist's intention and purpose and leads the reader into a faithful encounter of the Gospel in our world.

Paul S. Berge
Luther Seminary
Saint Paul, Minnesota

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES WITH PHILEMON & JUDE, by Risto Saarinen. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008. Pp. 272. $29.99 (cloth).

The Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible is a grand experiment in theological hermeneutics. A series of commentaries written by theologians rather than biblical scholars, it "advances upon the assumption that the Nicene tradition, in all its diversity and controversy, provides the proper basis for the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture" (11). All authors in the series assume, in one way or another, that doctrine is a clarifying agent that amplifies the living voice of Scripture.

Risto Saarinen's contribution is salutary. He makes two opening moves in his reading of these texts that, like the opening moves in a chess match, set the board for how his theological commentary will play out. The first move is a standard opening. He does not "set any hermeneutical method or agenda in advance, but simply expound[s] the text with the help of available means" (225). Saarinen terms this form of close reading "catch-as-catch-can." Instead of reading the text while intentionally employing certain hermeneutical constructs, Saarinen takes a grammatical-linguistic approach. He identifies certain subject and predicate pairings, and elucidates them. This grammatical approach allows Saarinen to identify certain subjects (akin to doctrines) and the predicates that describe the subject. The predicate in each case has a mediating role, navigating as it does the distance between the subject under consideration and the conceptual world of the reader.

Saarinen's commentary is peppered with illustrations of this approach. For example, in his commentary on 1 Tim 1:8–11, Saarinen takes as the "subject" the uses of the law (*usus legis*). The "predicates" that mediate this doctrinal category or "subject" (what might also be called a locus or topos) include the distinction between law and gospel, close readings of each individual sentence in the section under consideration, reading of the text in comparison with other uses of the law in Romans and Galatians, as well as contextual issues that differentiate the community that is reading 1 Timothy from other communities reading Paul's reflections on the uses of the law. All of these considerations lead Saarinen to argue that, in light of 1 Tim 1:8–11, "the Lutheran distinction between law and gospel should not be interpreted in terms of radical separation" (38). Instead, 1 Tim 1:8 and other

texts make room for a positive understanding of "good law," and an understanding of the gospel that encompasses something like the notion of "healthy" or "sound" doctrine, that is, doctrine that issues in right, moral conduct rather than a set of verbal sentences per se.

Saarinen's commentary is a lively interplay of theological reflection and biblical exegesis. He may be reading the Pastoral Epistles "catch-as-catch-can"—but he catches a lot, and he is clearly going somewhere as he moves along. Saarinen knows his endgame strategy as well as his opening gambits.

The endgame, in this case, involves a few theoretical novelties. These are summarized in three important appendixes, which readers would do well to read first before reading the commentary itself. Saarinen continually refers to these appendixes in the course of writing his commentary. Although the book is verse by verse commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Jude, and Philemon, Saarinen cannot help but discern certain leitmotifs that course throughout these epistles.

Appendix A offers reflections on the "moderation of emotion." This is, essentially, a middle way between excessive radicalism and lazy accommodation. We are called neither to eradicate emotions nor to completely give in to them. In the appendix, Saarinen traces the development of the term *metriopatheia* in philosophical and Christian tradition, and suggests that the Pastoral Epistles encourage the use of right judgment in order to moderate the emotions. Self-control, which might also be termed "gentleness," is, in the Pastoral Epistles, not the complete eradication of emotion (contrary to much of monastic and patristic tradition), but rather the moderation of emotion and the "proper display of positive emotions" (241).

Appendix B fascinates, for it examines the theme of "mental disorders." Again, Saarinen traces the development of the concepts in philosophical tradition, this time in order to show that Paul is not simply being argumentative or polemical in these epistles. Instead, "he is presenting a portrayal of healthy and sick minds" (243). His presentation of this topic is compelling, especially because it encourages readers to think of mental disorders from a doctrinal, and not simply a psychological, point of view. Given the close connection between extreme doctrines and mental disorder in the modern world, Saarinen's reflections on the topic are worthy of sustained attention.

For those hoping to read more of Saarinen on giving and the gift, Appendix C does not disappoint. Saarinen reads these epistles in light of contemporary reflection (his and others) on theories of inalienable and alienable gifts, and the phenomenology of giving. The commentary may whet readers' appetites for further reading in contemporary phenomenology and theology of the gift.

Finally, since many preachers and teachers are looking for exemplary expositions of "difficult" texts in the Scriptures, it is worth noting that Saarinen offers one of the most exemplary readings of 1 Tim 2:8–15 (How Men and Women Should Behave) this reviewer has ever read.

Clint Schnekloth
East Koshkonong Lutheran Church
Cambridge, Wisconsin

THE KINGS AND THEIR GODS: THE PATHOLOGY OF POWER, by Daniel Berrigan. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. Pp. 202. $20.00 (paper).

Father Daniel Berrigan has provided us with a brilliantly wrought midrash on the books of Kings. Though critical, Berrigan's work here is not damning, but is a highly readable, winsome, and accessible pastoral offering. It provides a way for important, serious, and overdue rethinking of the meaning of "religious history" in the Old Testament. This eloquent, yet unconventional book breaks all the rules of a traditional biblical commentary. There is no eager whitewash of kingly sins,

past or present. On the contrary, Berrigan retells the story of the "kings" in a way that hits disturbingly close to home. Saul, David, Solomon—none are spared by Berrigan's uncompromising pen. His inquisition exempts none from interrogation—prophet, priest, king, or citizen. Throughout this imaginative, choleric exploration, Berrigan does not exonerate past or present leaders, nor offer an apologia for empire, but provides the reader with a valuable glimpse at the *under*-told story of the "kings," and subsequently gives new meaning to the "American Way."

Berrigan sets the stage for his book by calling into question the celebration of the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Maccabees as "religious" or "biblical" or "divinely inspired" history. The opening paragraphs of his book pen a resounding no to this seemingly oxymoronic tradition:

> A question has lingered for centuries. What instruction from Yahweh may be conveyed in these accounts, steeped as they are in mayhem, slaughter, betrayal, intrigue, and bravado; rife as they are with fractious sons and foolish fathers, brothers betraying and killing brothers, women deprived of status as dignity, predatory enmities periodically erupting, and wars breeding wars that breed wars? "Religious history," this brimstone brew? (1)

Berrigan's work has a tripartite manifestation: commentary on Kings, apt prose and poetry, and prophecy about the "American Empire." He spells out his message loud and clear: the lines between past and present are closer than we would like to think. The reader, moreover, begins to question whether or not such lines are mere fiction in the first place. In the initial pages, he invites the reader to connect present "kings" and empire with the words spoken by prophets past:

> Let us pause in wonderment as the kings contrive an image of their god. They make of the deity a king of glorified ventriloquist's dummy, placing in his mouth words by turns cunning, ferocious, calamitous, and vengeful, words that proceed from the darkness of their own hearts. (4)

His own words, not unlike those of the prophets, reach across the centuries to help us to connect past and present reality. Berrigan's interpretation is frighteningly real, disturbingly true. Most readers will find this encounter too close for comfort, yet that distance echoes the reception of the prophet in his own time by his own contemporaries. Therefore, Berrigan begins his commentary with a desperate, guiding prayer:

> Grant us knowledge of our crimes. Help us take our true bearing in the world, to confess how rarely, in public life and private, in religion and statecraft, in temple and marketplace and home—how rarely authority is joined with virtue. Grant us knowledge of our plight, that we may cry out for relief, and be drawn forth. (5)

Through this masterfully written exploration of Kings, Berrigan places both past and present under a scrutinizing, fiery lens. The reader finds immediately that there is no distant, disconnected autopsy on a dead Scripture, but rather a conversation with living, breathing word. Through an investigation of the Deuteronomistic history and the biblical "kings" of yore, we find ourselves engrossed in a world not much different from our own. For Berrigan, we are all held accountable for today's "kings"—our intrepid leaders. The blood on our leaders' hands is also on ours. Ours is a tradition of inherited violence: a legacy of blood. Passivity is not an option—nor has it ever been; never before has this been manifested so clearly in writing. This "religious history" is an ever-percolating, brimstone brew—it is our past, present, and future.

Though Berrigan's book is a highly readable glimpse at "religious history," it is by no means an easy one. If you've read Berrigan before, you know what to expect. Read it with Scripture. Read it with a newspaper. Read it

with a dictionary. Though Berrigan's "shame on you" rhetoric is at times laid on a little thick, it is refreshingly different from the apologetic tendencies of traditional biblical commentaries. Prepare to be humbled, and to do some important and serious rethinking of the meaning of "religious history." Once you do, you'll come to realize how far from mere "history" these books are and how close past and present can be.

Berrigan's poetry is knotty and at times difficult to decipher, but his message is clear from beginning to end: our world is not unlike that of yesteryear, our leaders are not unlike the biblical kings of yore, and we, not unlike the communities in the books of Kings, are in serious trouble with God and neighbor alike. Whether we like it or not, Berrigan's pen speaks of terrible things. And we, like the prophet's contemporaries, are likely not prepared for this word. But ready or not, it comes, and through it, the grace of God.

Daniel J. Stark
Luther Seminary
Saint Paul, Minnesota

THE CHILD IN THE BIBLE, edited by Marcia Bunge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. Pp. 493. $30.00 (paper).

References to children occur all through the pages of the Bible. Sometimes these children hold prominent places in plot and metaphor, but just as often, children in the Bible are overlooked or relegated to token status. In *The Child in the Bible*, an array of authors offer a look at Scripture through a lens that focuses on children. According to general editor Marcia J. Bunge, the bulk of previous work in this area has been done with an emphasis on children's ministry or Christian education, with academic work largely treating the theme of children as a side issue (xv). The denominationally diverse group of authors who have contributed to *The Child in the Bible* lift up the theme of children without giving short shrift to other important details in the biblical text or ignoring previous work in their particular area.

While the editors do not seek for this book to be an exhaustive study of children in the Bible, the three sections of the book—Old Testament, New Testament, and Thematic Essays—cover a wide array of biblical content. This broad survey serves as a beginning point for the field. With this in mind, many of the contributors offer suggestions for further study.

The authors were asked to contemplate six specific questions as they addressed their particular topic. The first was that of terminology and metaphor. How is it that a specific author or genre refers to children? Secondly, the authors were asked to comment on the status of children within the book or genre that they studied, and how that status compared to the roles of children in other communities within the Ancient Near East. A third question centered on the responsibilities that adults held with respect to children in their midst. Fourthly, the authors were asked to pay attention to any mention of education or passing on faith to the children of a new generation. A fifth question asked what responsibilities and roles children themselves held within the community. Finally, the authors were asked to comment on ways that this study, with the lens focused on children, might impact broader biblical scholarship. Understandably, some texts lent themselves more easily to some of these questions than others, and the various essays reflect this.

The majority of the chapters address a book or genre, using broad strokes to generalize the role of children within that specific area before focusing on one or two specific texts. For instance, Terence E. Fretheim offers an overview of children in Gen 1–11 and 12–50 before spending significant time addressing the endangerment of Ishmael in Gen 16 and 21, and the near-sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22.

The book includes articles concerning

nearly every part of the Bible. The Old Testament section includes three essays on the Pentateuch as well as selections on Proverbs, Isaiah, and the biblical metaphor "Israel, my child," a phrase often found in the prophetic books. In the New Testament section, authors contribute essays on Mark, Luke, John, and Acts, two on the Pauline epistles, and one on the disputed Pauline books of Ephesians and Colossians.

In the Thematic Essays section of the book, Keith J. White addresses the gospel of Matthew, a noticeable omission from the New Testament section, in the essay "He Placed a Little Child in the Midst: Jesus, the Kingdom and Children." Esther M. Menn's essay on the young David as depicted in 1 Sam 16–17, and the young servant girl who advises Naaman the leader of the army in 2 Kings 5, addresses the Old Testament historical books that were skipped over in the Old Testament section. Other themes addressed in this section of the book are adoption in the Bible, children and the image of God, and human obligation toward vulnerable children.

One may question whether every genre within Scripture bears study concerning children. In fact, several authors noted that children were not often specifically mentioned in a particular book. Just as often, however, these authors commented that children were included in metaphors or imagery within the book. Jacqueline E. Lapsley, for instance, in her chapter on Isaiah, notes that children in that book "are signs of and, in an important way, constitutive of the flourishing that God would have for Israel, and by extension, for all humanity" (82). Reider Aasgaard, in a discussion of Paul, notes that Paul uses metaphors from the world of childhood as a rhetorical device and even at points puts himself in the place of a child. Through these devices, Paul both mirrors a typical attitude toward children in his context and challenges that attitude by proclaiming the power inherent in vulnerability, one of the characteristics of childhood.

The Child in the Bible is an excellent beginning to a burgeoning topic in biblical study. As with any book of essays, the chapters vary in style and readability. The book as a whole, however, is accessible to one familiar with the text of the Bible and with a modicum of knowledge of biblical criticism. It will be especially helpful for those serving in the area of children's ministry and for those who care about the role of children in the church and the world.

Kristin J. Wendland
Living Hope Lutheran Church
Ettrick, Wisconsin

INHABITING THE CRUCIFORM GOD: KENOSIS, JUSTIFICATION, AND THEOSIS IN PAUL'S NARRATIVE SOTERIOLOGY, by Michael J. Gorman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. Pp. 194. $24.00 (paper).

There is a debate today amongst biblical scholars and theologians over the doctrine of justification. The dividing line in this debate is drawn between those who profess that humans are justified solely by God's grace through God's declaration of their righteousness for Christ's sake alone and those who see humans as somehow participating in God's grace in justification. In *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, Michael Gorman enters the fray distinctly on the side of the latter, and presents a constructive, systematic understanding of justification as participation in which he draws on many sources, but particularly upon the work of Richard Hayes. Gorman's intent in this book is to use the thought of the Apostle Paul to interpret justification as consisting of kenosis and theosis and leading to a new, nonviolent existence among humans (1–2).

Gorman begins this project by relating how his understanding of justification as kenotic, participatory theosis is rooted in his interpretation of what he sees as the heart of Paul's theology. He approaches all of Paul's theological

writings—indeed, all of Scripture—through the lens of the Christ hymn in Phil 2:6–11. In this passage, which he calls "Paul's master story" (9), Gorman sees the apostle here not only as describing human humility that emulates Christ's humility, but as defining the very essence of God's being. Paul, according to Gorman, understands God in terms of kenosis. God is the one who is God (almighty, all-powerful, etc.), but who chooses to give up the prerogative of being God. Such divine humility is displayed in the cross of Christ, which is to be understood as the communal, kenotic action of the Triune God advancing the kenotic mission of God. God's mission in the world, according to Gorman's interpretation of Paul, is to foster communal, counter-imperial, nonviolent living amongst humans. This is what Gorman means when he says that God is cruciform (32–39). Gorman claims that any different understanding of God or God's mission is idolatry (34–35).

Gorman understands the work of Jesus Christ as God's display to humans of the example of kenosis that they are to emulate, and in which they must participate if they wish to be saved. Paul's call to imitate Christ in 1 Cor 11:1 is "not an option" for those who wish to be saved, but "a mandate" that must be fulfilled by imitating Christ's humility, which leads to a person's transformation into the divine (23). Combining Hayes's understanding of Paul's concept of saving faith as imitation of Christ's faithfulness to God with his own view of Paul's theology, Gorman describes faith as humans conforming themselves to the cruciform God through obedience to the command to imitate Christ's humility, given by Paul in the Christ hymn of Philippians (23, 58, 60–62, 71, 124, 167). Saving faith is thus not, as the Reformational view states, the passive reliance upon God's promises and Christ's work for salvation, but the active emulation of Christ's humility through the ethics of nonviolence,

which Gorman describes as participatory "co-crucifixion" with Christ and "inhabiting the cruciform God" (60–63, 67), and which he sees in the believer's public act of faith in baptism (79). In defining justification and faith in this way, Gorman combines command and gospel, justification and sanctification, salvation and ethics, into a narrative whole of kenotic theosis—the human's imitation of Christ's humility through the ethics of nonviolence, which brings the human into conformity with the divine (126–128).

There are certainly aspects of Gorman's argument that many readers from various theological and ecclesiological backgrounds will appreciate. Some of these aspects include that he seeks to derive his view of justification from the writings of St. Paul, his attempt to link baptism and faith in Paul's theology, and his emphasis on nonviolence as a mark of the Christian community. Most notable, however, is Gorman's attempt to construct an understanding of justification from Paul's writings that seeks to interpret salvation through a Trinitarian understanding of the cross.

Yet, the final product of Gorman's work is one that is impossible for those who believe in the Reformational view of justification to share. Although he begins his theory of justification with the act of God in the humility of the cross, he ends with the human's activity of imitating Christ as the means by which the human comes into justification. Even baptism, which the Reformational view emphasizes as God's gracious and saving activity, is seen by Gorman as an act of humility performed by the human (79).

Gorman is not ignorant of the fact that those of the Reformational viewpoint will not agree with him, and admits as much, acknowledging that his proposal is "controversial" to those who embrace a more traditional view of justification than he does (2). Moreover, though Gorman expresses that his project is an ecumenical endeavor, and even though he gives some mention of the New Finnish school's understanding of Luther's doctrine of justification, it is apparent from his book that Lutherans are not to share in this work, and Lutherans are markedly absent from the list of those Christians who he feels can contribute to the project (8). Moreover, Gorman actually expresses hostility to the Reformational viewpoint. Such hostility is particularly acute when he expresses his hope that his work will help lead Protestants into a reunion with Roman Catholicism (8), as well as when he describes the Reformational tradition's understanding of justification as "legal fiction" (82). Thus, while many Christian theologians and pastors may gain certain beneficial insights from Gorman's work, it is unlikely that those of the Reformational tradition will be able to embrace his overall proposal.

Joshua C. Miller
Luther Seminary
Saint Paul, Minnesota

TRANSLATING THE MESSAGE: THE MISSIONARY IMPACT ON CULTURE, revised and expanded second edition, by Lamin Sanneh. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2009. Pp. 324. $30.00 (paper).

"No Christian worships and prays in the language of Jesus" (4). On one level, this fact seems mundane. However, the central thesis of Lamin Sanneh's book, *Translating the Message*, first published over twenty years ago, is that "translation," i.e., where local language is the locus of proclamation (33), is at the heart of the Christian message and mission. Simply put, *Translating the Message* is a rare classic of mission history; and Sanneh just improved it! After sixteen printings of the first edition, this second edition represents more than mere cosmetic changes to the original. As professor of missions and world Christianity and professor of history at Yale Divinity School, Sanneh both repacked and revised this second edition to strengthen his original argument. Every

chapter has been revised. Most striking, a new chapter on the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) has been added. The King James Version, in Sanneh's understanding, is a translation project that instructs us about what happened to Christianity in a northern European vernacular cut loose from the Roman imperial legacy. From its origins, Christianity identified itself with the need to translate out of Aramaic and Hebrew, and to contextualize its message in the vernacular of the people. Understood in this way, missionary translation into other languages characterizes the spread of Christianity. One major consequence of this book is to reopen the subjects of mission and colonialism, Christianity and Islam, and mission history from the side of those who received the faith.

Sanneh's argument about the relationship between Christianity and colonialism is a real surprise and contrasts to secular versions of mission history. Protestant missions made local tongues the centerpiece of mission. This involved the abandonment of European languages vis-à-vis the language of faith. It also resulted in the bifurcated impact of the West in its secular and religious thrust. Coastal areas formed the secure rim of the Western colonial advance, with their port cities as seats of traditional learning and culture. Meanwhile, hinterland regions became the heart of Christian expansion. The seeds of vernacular renewal were sown in hinterland and rural areas, with missionaries recasting classical idioms into mother-tongue ideas. As a result, popular religious movements arose and thrived. A pivotal difference soon emerged between the logic of colonial rule and the interest of the emerging churches. Whatever their motives, missionaries empowered mother-tongue speakers by undertaking the systemic documentation of their languages. Language was critical to the outcome of the missionary encounter with the world, and Bible translation favored local languages.

Thus the seeds of mission undercutting colonialism were sown with the translation enterprise. While the colonial system represented a worldwide order, mission represented the commissioning of local agents and agency. Local Christians apprehended the significance of world events, and as such the purposes of God, through the validation and familiar medium of their mother tongue.

Sanneh also uses "translation" as a hermeneutic guide for contrasting the missionary dynamic of Christianity and Islam. In spite of their common missionary ambition, there are striking differences between Islam and Christianity, but none is more revealing for Sanneh than their contrasting attitudes to the translatability of their respective Scriptures. Scriptural translation marks Christianity. In contrast, Islam remains distinctive for its universal adherence to the non-translatable Arabic Qur'an. This fact alone helps to define how both religions view mission and pluralism, as well as the nature and purpose of conversion. Christianity has no single revealed language, and historical experience traces this fact to the Pentecost event, when the believers testified of God in their natural tongues.

Bible translators are changing the world. Once they introduced vernacular literacy, translators could not turn back the clock. Translatability ushered in a revolution in both religious and cultural spheres. The history of missions, therefore, is more than the account of missionary efforts from Europe and North America. It is also about the actual reception in the field. If one accepts this shift of focus, as Sanneh suggests, then it makes sense that scholars who propose to study the missionary movement should pay attention to the forces on the ground. For example, although scriptural translation has been undertaken in 2,426 languages, nearly 1,400 languages are currently being developed in over 97 different countries. Furthermore, Sanneh points out that cultural creativity in much of Africa and elsewhere coincides almost exactly with developed interest in vernacular translations. As a

force, translatability endows persons and societies with the reason and language for change.

Sanneh's argument is unique and compelling. The erudition is impressive, even if, at times, overwhelming. Furthermore, the language of the text is beautiful. When does one read a theological book with such gorgeous prose? But Sanneh's argument is the key. The fact that Christianity has continued to surge beyond its Western colonial phase suggests a deeper force at play. What we see revealed in Christianity's postcolonial and post-secular awakening is a religion of unprecedented diversity and vigorous expansion, in spite of nationalist reaction against vestiges of colonial rule. Thanks to its vernacular transformation, Christianity has become, in effect, "too local to consign it to the colonial limbo" (251).

The idea of the church, rooted in a culture's soil, that is self-propagating, self-reliant, and, furthermore, reared on the vernacular Scriptures, diverges sharply from the idea of a local Christian society sustained by Western cultural transfusion. In light of *Translating the Message*, history books may have to take another look at the missionary impact on world culture.

Richard Bliese
Luther Seminary
Saint Paul, Minnesota

LOVE: A BRIEF HISTORY THROUGH WESTERN CHRISTIANITY, by Carter Lindberg. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008. Pp. 195. $23.95 (paper).

To heaven, to earth, or to the neighbor: which direction does Christian love flow? This is the question that Carter Lindberg's book tackles. Lindberg runs readers through a fast-paced historical survey of the concept of love as it has been experienced, discussed, and taught for the last twenty-five hundred or so years. Love, in both its divine and human experiences, is repeatedly discussed in terms of God's descending love for us, our ascending love for God, concern or care for the neighbor, and sexual love between humans.

For the Christian in particular, say Lindberg and the historical figures he references, love is multidirectional, flowing from God to us, us to God, and between each other. Love is both a matter of faith and an ethic to be lived out. Lindberg is more than willing to view love through Martin Luther's lenses, calling God's love a freedom. Basing his assertion on Paul's letters in the New Testament, Lindberg declares that "Love is at the same time God's action toward humankind and the human answer to it" (33).

Related to this question of direction, the other most evident thread tying this work together is the relationship between agape (compassionate) and eros (sexual) love, counting the question of love as not only a question of direction but also of language. On this topic, Lindberg is heavily influenced by Anders Nygren and his significant text on this comparison between rival types of love, *Agape and Eros*. This influence comes out as Lindberg is examining thinkers throughout history, and he shapes his own writing with a good number of quotes and ideas from Nygren. Weaving in the dichotomy of agape and eros throughout the conversation, Lindberg's book goes back and forth in portraying love as a matter of charity and love as a matter of sexuality.

Centering on these topics of ascending and descending love, as well as agape and eros, the book is arranged in chronological order, each chapter dealing with how love is understood during a specific era or historical movement, with the addition of an important and helpful strictly biblical chapter as well. In this biblical chapter there is, naturally, an emphasis on Song of Songs, and certainly many of the theologians and Christians he features in other chapters wrote commentaries on this portion of Scripture.

Particularly in his exploration of love in the

Greco-Roman and pre-Christian eras, Lindberg focuses on the violence and struggle of love. Giving much attention to Ovid's understandings of love, Lindberg quotes him, declaring, "Love is a kind of war, and no assignments for cowards" (12). Lindberg's telling of love wanders from the classical understanding of love as a relationship, with the Greek and Roman gods, to love in the early church (he declares that love for neighbor was instrumental in the spread of early Christianity), to Augustine's reflections on love. Lindberg gives a quite touching portrayal of Augustine, and one may find that the chapter centered on this giant of the church is the most accessible and devotional of the book.

The hunt for love in the Medieval Era turns up sexual love, with many having relationships outside of marriage. Lindberg credits Augustine with injecting a sense of shame around sexual forms of love, with his emphasis on original sin as passed down though procreation, and credits Luther with pushing love itself back into marriage.

Lindberg readily wanders into the territory of sexuality, unafraid to quote quite sensual mystics, and even those Christians that challenged the institution of marriage, such as Abelard and Heloise. There is a real sense that throughout history the topics of love and marriage have undergone changes in their relationship. Along these same lines, there seems

to be a link that grows up between passion and suffering, that is, moments of love can often also be moments of torment, self-sacrifice, or the suffering of unrealized passion.

Moving into the Reformation Era, Lindberg gives special attention to Luther; the entire chapter centers on Luther's view of love as first and foremost descending from God to humans and then upon Luther's work in the area of social welfare and love as caring for the neighbor. While the Reformation chapter is an homage to Luther, the Pietism chapter contains a strong survey of a variety of influential figures.

In these pages, it is fascinating to have all the favorites of Western history strung together not by geography, era, theology, or influence, but rather by their musings on such a common topic as love. The author also links his historical and scholarly treatment of love with the many appearances it makes in our more mainstream culture. References to Shakespeare, *Carmina Burana*, *Anna Karenina*, and even modern soap operas all make his work a bit more accessible to a wider readership.

Filled with layers of differing voices, Lindberg's book can get a bit confusing at times, with his extensive use of not only primary, but also secondary source quotations. One gets the feeling that this text is better read as a conversation among theologians and historical figures, or at least a lecture series featuring the best of the best. *Love: A Brief History through Western Christianity* is a delightful refresher in the basics of Western Christian history. It is a quick read, with many historical illustrations to inspire the parish pastor, casual theologian, or thoughtful Christian.

Katie Koch
United and Our Savior's Lutheran Churches
Gatzke, Minnesota