

## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Preaching Better: Practical Suggestions for Homilists.** By Ken Untener. New York: Paulist Press, 1999. Pages, 130. Paper, \$10.95.

This book springs from the pastoral experience of Kenneth Untener, bishop of Saginaw, Michigan. In 1975 Father Untener was appointed to teach homiletics part-time at St. John's Seminary near Detroit. To facilitate his teaching, he began to ask people what they liked or did not like about homilies and jotted these remarks in a pocket notebook. Along the way, Untener sorted these comments into twenty-five basic categories. In 1993 Bishop Untener implemented a plan in which he meets with priests, deacons, and lay homilists where their homilies are examined in order to "console, offer tips, and try to figure out how we can preach better" (2). *Preaching Better* reflects his gathered homiletic comments from the people in the pew and insights gleaned from his homiletic program in Saginaw. It is meant as a practical guidebook of what to do and what not to do in the pulpit. The book's title is surprising since the same title was used by Frank J. McNulty for his preaching book in 1985, which was also published by Paulist Press.

There are two features in *Preaching Better* that this reviewer appreciated. First, there is the attention given to the hearer of the homily. In the homiletic triad (preacher, homily, hearer) it is the hearer that is most neglected by homileticians. Normative liturgical documents contain such phrases as "the concrete circumstances of life" or "the special needs of the listeners," but there is never an exploration of such pastoral phrases. That is why Untener's sensitivity to the hearers of the homily is so refreshing. It reminds us of one of the reasons that Gregory was called "the Great." Shortly after his election to the episcopacy of Rome, Gregory wrote his *Pastoral Rule* (591) which also was a guidebook for preachers to pay attention to the heterogeneity of the liturgical assembly.

Untener opens up his old pocket notebook and offers blunt comments from the people of God, e.g., "He's a good speaker. It's just that he's got nothing to say"; "It was an interesting thought. Too bad it got in the way of everything else you were saying"; "He's interesting, even entertaining, but it doesn't come from him. It's all cut-and-paste." The author also does not hesitate to offer his own pastoral tips: "Many a mediocre homily was one step away from greatness: editing"; "No matter how well a homily (or any talk) is going, don't think they're enjoying it as much as you are."

The second feature that makes this book delightful reading is the bishop's pulpy analogies and metaphors, e.g., "The purpose of *writing* is to build a bridge from thought to words. The purpose of *editing* is to inspect the results and make some adjustments"; "the homilist comes into a kitchen that is filled with the smell of something already cooking, and it is the Lord who is doing it." Faith has always depended upon analogies and metaphors. The author not only gives us homiletic tips, but masterfully demonstrates his preaching

through his imaginative writing. The only analogies that this reviewer found overworked were the ones from his golf game.

Readers should not expect to find insights from contemporary homiletic scholarship nor in-depth reflections on normative liturgical documents in *Preaching Better*. For example, in chapter two "What Is a Homily?" Untener never answers the question because "Defining a homily can become abstract, complicated" (11). The ministry of preaching is always larger than what any given group of hearers think it is. The biblical/liturgical homily has a history with a rich tapestry of views, theologies, and theoretical constructs that are vital to the discipline and the praxis of homiletics. Mary Collins, O.S.B., is an astute observer when she notes that "the lack of sound theory may underlie the chronic weakness in liturgical preaching that persists despite the church's conviction that the homily is a constitutive element of our eucharistic praxis."

I recommend that homilists read the practical wisdom from hearers of the homily and the helpful hints of a caring, creative bishop found in *Preaching Better*. It is certainly not a substitute for homiletic theory but a delightful and quotable companion in the dialogue.

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**Companions in Hope: The Art of Christian Caring.** By Robert J. Wicks and Thomas E. Rodgeron. New York: Paulist Press, 1998. Pages, iv + 228. Paper, \$16.95.

An excellent addition to the field of pastoral care and ministry, this practical compendium is for the ordinary person who wants to be available to others in a listening and caring role. The authors' caution at the beginning of the book to watch for and to recognize those special times when helping others is best relegated to a helping professional is well placed. However, the breadth of examples they provide to encourage concerned Christians to engage in the service of caring is perhaps the best feature of the book. Ample case studies and vignettes introduce and explain clear and useful points about caring. The usual tendency toward jargon and oversimplification is avoided in the treatment of listening, being supportive, dealing with developmental crises, and healthy confrontation. Readers of this volume truly get a sense of the enormous number of resources available to them, yet the scope of the book focuses on the everyday, often daily, means of being present to the pain of another.

*Companions in Hope* can be a lay manual for helping others. The two main themes, listening and caring, are presented in successive iterations. The authors employ the scriptural metaphor of "standing on holy ground" as a way to be in relationship with others. This metaphor is extended throughout the section on listening because it implies an association of trust. Other references made to the Scriptures help to identify problems that arise in a caring relationship and explore ways to integrate Christian tradition.

Wicks and Rodgerson describe a careful, almost step-by-step, progression of how to envisage caring in an ordinary helping relationship. They are careful to point out that intentional caring is not a form of psychotherapy which is the process of seeking some change in one's personality. Intentional caring, in fact, is being present to another so that he or she is able to view life in a new way. Having a "conversation with a goal" is the way the authors clarify what they mean about caring in an intentional way. The use of questioning, responding, and knowing when to refer gives the reader a whirlwind tour through a basic introduction to pastoral care.

The image of hope invoked in the title is an apt description for the process of listening and caring. It suggests that God's profound presence can indeed make the most significant difference in the midst of any problem. The underlying theme in this book posits that when our God becomes as big, as real, or as compelling as the crises we face in our daily lives, then we will have the ability to begin the process of healing, conversion, and/or transformation.

The section on caring for the caregiver highlights the dangers of being in a helping relationship. In the words of the authors, there is "a purity and a pathology" in our desire to help others. The tendency to respond to God's action in our lives can be complemented with a desire to "fix" something or "play god" for another. It is helpful to read this section slowly and deliberately as a guide for being in a helping relationship. The authors remind the reader that the intensity which comes from interacting with others in caring sometimes obfuscates the truth that it is truly God's grace that heals. Pastoral attending is but an aid in the process.

The concluding section of the book titled "Common Questions about Caring" offers an excellent sampling of issues that caregivers commonly encounter. Overall, Wicks and Rodgerson provide a cogent arrangement of critical issues in caregiving for the Christian who wants to intentionally be available to others. Likewise, any student beginning a formal education in pastoral care and theology would find this book helpful.

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**The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus: Embracing Change—Maintaining Christian Identity.** By Fredrick C. Holmgren. Foreword by Walter Brueggemann. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. Pages, xviii + 204. Paper, \$16.00.

The author of this book, Fredrick C. Holmgren, is a professor of Old Testament at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. Walter Brueggemann's foreword situates the work against the background of the political domination and the interpretative practices of supersessionism by Christianity against Judaism which have been almost completely unexamined in the Christian community. In response to the failures on the part of Christianity toward Judaism, a direct response is needed. More than that, the close, careful, patient work of

exegesis must address a rereading of texts that have been misread by the light of Christian supersessionism.

Brueggemann identified three important areas of Holmgren's study. (1) Holmgren's concept of "creation/depth" exegesis fits earlier texts to later times. He reviews the ways the New Testament community, the rabbinic community, and the Qumran community legitimately engaged in imaginative interpretation of texts by which the text is opened in order to serve subsequent communal claims. (2) Holmgren provides an extended exegetical reflection on Jer 31:31-34. While the text can be read toward Jesus, it is not necessarily focused in that direction, and thus a mandated move toward Jesus is not tenable. (3) Finally, Holmgren's discussion of "Jesus in the Creeds" opens the way to think back to the Church's formula and back behind those formulations to where there is common ground with the forms of emerging Judaism.

The author's position is, that in the light of modern scholarship, the Church needs to address three concerns in the present Jewish-Christian dialogue: (1) the manner in which Christians approach the Hebrew Scriptures, (2) areas of commonality and differences with Judaism, and (3) New Testament witness concerning Jesus Christ who is the Church's reason for existing (xvi). For him an encouraging aspect of this new emphasis on the part of both conservative/evangelical and mainline scholars is the stance that embraces change while holding to the importance of maintaining Christian identity (xv). Holmgren attempts to have us grasp the concept that a community of Jews who knew the God of their Scriptures came to see in Jesus the same God at work in the same way. The Christian tradition today must come to grips with the theological implications of that event.

Holmgren's approach to the task he undertook is deep, well balanced, and insightful. In dealing with prophetic denunciation, he makes the point that the accusations of the prophets are a case of Israel's ability to practice, endure, and canonize self-criticism, which reflects a remarkable spiritual maturity (1).

In discussing the search of Jewish Christians for Jesus in the depth of the Old Testament, he points out that early Christians did not discover Jesus as the result of an initial study of the Hebrew Scriptures. Rather, from their meeting with Jesus in their time period, they looked back to the Old Testament to gain an understanding of what had happened in their experience. They used a "believer" or "depth" interpretation to give it voice for a new time and a new situation. They knew Jesus by experience, but they needed the words and imagery of Scripture to articulate their knowing (13). He cites texts from the New Testament to explicate his thesis, and shows that depth of creative interpretation arises out of a faith stance; it is believer exegesis. It was the focus on Jesus rather than on Torah that created a significant difference for Christians.

Holmgren cites prominent scholarship from various traditions, thus integrating into the work a wide background of research. Along with indices of names, subjects, and scriptural references, the book is a fine resource for graduate students and professional biblical scholars, as well as for educated readers who engage in the enterprise of exegesis and interfaith understanding.

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**Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men.** By Joan D. Chittister. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. Pages, xii + 187. Paper, \$20.00.

Much has been published in the recent past on the topic of feminist spirituality. However, most of it has been directed to women. Maintaining that feminists come in two genders, Chittister writes for both women and men. She does this under the rubric of feminism which she states “regards the human race as one humanity in two genders and sets out to make the fulness of humanity available to both of them.” Her book rests on three premises: (1) what is feminine is defined by women themselves and not by male-biased society; (2) exclusively male values or norms must be exposed as inadequate; (3) spirituality rides on an understanding of these claims. She maintains that true spirituality will release “the feminine dimension in both women and men.” Those acquainted with Chittister’s ardent commitment to feminism will not be surprised by these fundamental positions. Through the book she contrasts the values and attitudes of feminists and masculinists. She maintains that the first are committed to “peace, freedom, respect, compassion, and mutuality,” and she believes that the hope of the future rests with them. She accuses the second of “power, force, control, and domination,” and she places the responsibility of the various forms of factionalism at their doorstep.

The topics that she treats in her chapters reveal both her social consciousness and her critique of the currently reigning dominant worldview; Feminism—a cornerstone of spirituality; Culture—the foundation of Spirituality; Patriarchy—the old worldview; Feminism—the new worldview; Christianity and Feminism—a mirror image; Reason and Feeling—a new way of thinking; Power and Empowerment—a new strength; Aggression and Nonviolence—a new road to peace; Pride and Humility—a new self-acceptance; Universalism and Otherness—a new focus on the subject; Authoritarianism and Dialogue—a new level of consensus; Competition and Compassion—a new game of winner gives all; Vulnerability and Strength—a new paradox; The Patriarchal Woman—internalized oppression; The Cosmic Vision of Creation—a circle not a pyramid; Feminism—a revolution of the heart. The perspective of each chapter is captured in the introductory artwork of Nancy Earle, an illustrator whose lines are forthright and whose colors are brilliant, a style that suits the book perfectly.

The book is vintage Chittister. That is both its strength and its weakness. The reader will find here a critical eye that can pierce through “the way we’ve always done it,” revealing the biases in that point of view, along with a creative spirit that suggests a new and inclusive way of living in the world. She is fearless in her challenge of a world where some are relegated to silence, abuse and marginality, and insightful in her suggestions for transformation. She situates spirituality squarely in the historical, sociopolitical world of real women and men, not in some ethereal realm of transcendent spiritual concepts. She does not deal with external rituals of performance but with interior attitudes of the mind and heart.

Those who have read Chittister through the years will appreciate her insights, but will find very little that is new. Furthermore, her use of “masculin-

ist" and "feminist" is somewhat problematic. In several places in this book, one can get the idea that the criticism is of men rather than a male-preferred attitude, which can be held by both men and women. In the earlier years of this third wave of feminism, the terms offered a very clear distinction between patriarchy and the alternative that was being proposed. However, they were explicitly associated with male and female and, though Chittister uses them to mean exclusive and inclusive respectively, the earlier meaning survives. This makes their continued use problematic today, when we have become more nuanced in our critique. Admittedly, our vocabulary has not kept pace with our insights. Perhaps in her next book, Chittister can help us in this venture.

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**Balm for Gilead: Pastoral Care for African American Families Experiencing Abuse.** By Toinette M. Eugene and James Newton Poling. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998. Pages, 226. Paper, \$16.00.

Domestic violence and abuse in mainstream American society is a difficult subject to discuss openly and practically. It is even more difficult among cultural minorities, especially African Americans, because of the pressure of racial loyalty. Toinette Eugene and James Poling face this difficulty head on in their frank, scientific, and pastoral book.

The authors bring an unusual set of credentials to this troubling issue. Toinette Eugene is a Roman Catholic, womanist ethicist and cross-cultural consultant; James Poling is a Presbyterian, a professor of pastoral care and a pastoral counselor.

Their book follows the basic format of practical theology. First, they describe the current condition of domestic abuse in black families. Then they examine its historical roots, offer a pastoral (womanist) analysis, and make specific suggestions for the praxis of individuals and churches.

At the heart of their analysis is an appreciation for the distinct role the black church has played in African-American life. On the other hand, the black church has not adequately faced the fact of family and child abuse within the African-American community. Eugene and Poling acknowledge this shortcoming and draw upon the relatively few scientific studies available to analyze both historical and contemporary causes. Not surprisingly the twin evils of racism and sexism, set within the context of class discrimination, are at the core of the problem.

This generic assessment is personalized through six graphic vignettes which become the reference point for pastoral analysis and suggestions for pastoral intervention with the victims and survivors as well as the perpetrators of abuse.

The governing pastoral principle with victims is to believe persons who claim to be abused, and provide for their safety until a full assessment can be made. Too often church leaders tend to dismiss accusations or excuse the

accused, leaving the victims feeling even more alone and unwilling to trust anyone in authority. Ongoing support for victims should include time and opportunities to mourn the broken relationship with a domestic abuser, to heal the damage which has been done, and to reconnect in relationships without violence.

The primary principle with perpetrators is accountability. Since perpetrators are highly manipulative, they will appeal to the forgiving instincts of family members and pastoral leaders. What is needed is a firm and fair application of justice ranging from cooperation with the legal system to support for treatment.

Drawing on the role of the black church and recognizing the need of victims for support, the authors suggest eight ways that congregations can provide safety and healing. One of the most important is to avoid misusing the Bible, e.g., by preaching a false sense of forgiveness, a superficial reconciliation which endangers the victim, and an unqualified doctrine of honoring (abusive) parents and accepting the male as head of the family.

Although this book is written in the context of black family life, its analyses and pastoral recommendations are applicable to any situation of domestic abuse and violence. Similarly, although the book is written for pastors and church ministers, its clear, non-technical style of presentation makes it appropriate reading for anyone who may face this problem. Finally, the honesty and courage of the authors in confronting this issue offers perhaps the most valuable pastoral lesson of the book: nothing is gained by hiding the truth.

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**For This Land: Writings on Religion.** By Vine Deloria, Jr., with an introduction by James Treat. New York and London: Routledge, 1998. Pages, 311. Paper, \$19.99.

*For This Land* brings together twenty-nine essays written over the past thirty years by prominent American Indian activist, lawyer and educator Vine Deloria, Jr. Arranged by American Studies scholar James Treat into five thematic sections and rough chronological order, these essays offer a somewhat disjointed but nevertheless trenchant critique of religion in America. Deloria's periodic analysis of the religious dimension of public life argues authoritatively for "tribal wisdom" in a reformation of mainstream culture.

Deloria is uniquely suited for the kind of cross-cultural criticism he provides. In a retrospective essay, he recounts his own religious history (an account that is developed further in Treat's helpful introduction), indicating the personal ground for his public life. Raised in a mixed-blood community on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, the son and grandson of priests in the Sioux Episcopal Church, the great-grandson of a Yanktonais medicine man,

and graduate of a Lutheran Seminary, Deloria eventually became both a leader in the movement for tribal self-determination and an insider-critic of Protestant missionary activities. His essays powerfully reflect this dual heritage, producing an often biting critique of institutional Christianity while championing "the Indian way."

The usefulness of the book for students of religion and culture or theology and church history largely depends upon the thrust of each section. Section One, "White Church, Red Power," brings together some of Deloria's earliest commentary on religion and social reform. Writing in the midst of the Indian protests of the 1970s, Deloria criticizes the failures of denominational Christianity, points to the deleterious effects of a secularized Christian worldview in the West, and examines the misunderstood role of tribal religion in social protest. At times measured and thoughtful, at times harsh and direct, these essays set an activist tone for the entire book.

Section Two, "Liberating Theology," introduces the philosophical core and theological direction of Deloria's work. His Native American critique of liberation theology and his analysis of religion and law both stress the shortcomings of the Western way of interpreting experience. His proposal for a truly "liberating theology" involves one freed of secularized religious concepts of a lawful universe and open to non-Western ways of envisioning reality.

"Worldviews in Collision" takes us deeper into the metaphysical ground of Deloria's cross-cultural criticism. In several essays he examines the relation of traditional religious views of reality to post-traditional secular ones. Deloria's combined Christian and Indian background becomes evident in a Tillichian-style analysis of the religious situation which sees Native American spirituality as conducive to a revitalized public theology.

"Habits of the State" offers a uniquely Native American critique of "civil religion" in the U.S. Here Deloria examines the deleterious impact of recent court cases on tribal religious practices and points to the ineffectiveness of recent legislation to protect tribal religious freedoms. In his final essay, written in 1992, Deloria expresses the overall thrust of his writings on religion. "Traditional religions," he observes, "are under attack not because they are Indian but because they are fundamentally religious."

In the last section, "Old Ways in A New World," Deloria most clearly lays out the positive role tribal wisdom can play in renewing religious values. Commenting on the "religious classic" *Black Elk Speaks*, and assessing the religious significance of the American Indian experience of exile, Deloria describes the relevance of the traditional Native American sense of the sacredness of time and holiness of place.

In general, Deloria's double-edged criticism of American culture can profitably be read with the religious criticism of Stephen Carter or the black theology of James Cone. His insider-outsider position, and his forceful and knowledgeable advocacy of tribal religion, create a prophetic voice in the current analysis of religion in the public square. The segmented nature of this particular work calls out for a more cohesive, systematic treatment.

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**Formation of the Moral Self.** By Johannes A. Van der Ven. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. Pages, xiii + 410. Paper, \$45.00.

This welcome book is a magisterial assessment of the many factors and dynamics that contribute to moral education and formation. It grew out of a course given by the author at the University of Chicago in 1994 and was refined subsequently in dialogue with colleagues. Van der Ven teaches in the department of empirical theology at the Divinity School of Nijmegen University in the Netherlands and is a key expositor of the developing discipline of practical theology. As such, he sees as his role to provide an exhaustive examination of all areas of cultural study that contribute to an empirical description of and a critical theory for understanding the genesis of the moral life.

Twenty years ago, when the moral development theories of Lawrence Kohlberg were widely examined and discussed, the complaint often arose that moral stage theories were too thin. Kohlberg's attempt to explain the evolution of moral cognition in terms of the effect of cognitive dissonance was not persuasive for many. However, Kohlberg did largely shape the emerging quest for a clear and comprehensive account of the genesis of morality: he persuaded most scholars that a developmental account was feasible, and he motivated certain colleagues to undertake steps to elaborate fuller and more sensitive descriptions of this development.

Now *Formation of the Moral Self* appears, offering a comprehensive overview of the multiple dimensions of moral education. It will be difficult to convey briefly the scope and organization of this complex work. It strikes me as being more a handbook or encyclopedia than a classroom text. Striving for completeness, the author introduces almost more detail than even a conscientious reader can assimilate without sustained and repeated study. In any case, here is an overview of the volume and a few highlights of special interest to this reviewer.

The author situates moral education within what he calls the paradigm of interactionism, meaning education structured by the interdependence of personal and environmental factors. Within this interactive context, there arise seven modes or types of moral education, all alike interpreted as forms of moral communication. Two modes of moral education that are called "informal" (meaning contextually induced) are discipline and socialization. Four other modes are "formal" (meaning the object of explicit educational processes); these are transmission, development, clarification, and emotional formation. The final chapter addresses education for character and reviews the major themes of contemporary virtue studies and character ethics.

Some of the flavor of the author's treatment of these seven modes of moral education can be evoked by noticing that in the first chapter he examines communitarian theory (Etzioni) as a way to shape his understanding of meaningful discipline; in treating socialization, he summarizes and develops Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory. The chapter on transmission is shaped (in part) by following Ricoeur's thoughts about what is good, just, and wise. In the chapter on development, the author engages in an extended philosophical critique of Rawls's conception of justice which provides the conceptual context for Kohlberg's moral stages, and he proceeds to reimagine the nature of moral

stages in consequence. In treating emotional formation, Aquinas's theory of the passions plays a major role, even though the author finds this perspective wanting in the light of phenomenological and behaviorist critiques. In this same chapter are rich and provocative discussions of shame and guilt and of sex and love that promote deep and critical reflection even as they take some distance from the Church's traditional teaching on these points.

The concluding chapter on education for character is in certain ways a summary of the author's central concern. Interestingly, he is greatly influenced by Aristotle's solution that the good life entails the pursuit of happiness. His discussion of practical reason, as the faculty that links desires and passions with authentic human goals, leads to an examination of the virtues. Another major theme in character formation is narrative: society's stories provide models for the moral life that mirror, inform, and shape character.

The product of this lengthy exercise is a marshalling of resources for critical perspectives on moral formation that no one seriously interested in this area of study can afford to overlook. The author's erudition and breadth of interest, his fine capacity to summarize large swaths of social and philosophical theory, and his confidence in moving through complex issues are most impressive. On the other hand, his vision is eclectic and he draws upon sources that seemed to me occasionally arbitrary and of dubious authority. His penchant for dividing and subdividing aspects of his seven modes of moral education leads in places to a diffusiveness that can dishearten the reader.

In sum, though, here is the work of a pioneer. This is a serious and valuable synthesis of the dynamics of moral education from a theologian who is competent and erudite in both the social sciences and philosophy. Others may pave the road more smoothly, but Van der Ven has the distinction of having blazed the trail.

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**With Hearts on Fire: Reflections on the Weekday Readings of the Liturgical Year.** Joseph G. Donders. Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999. Pages, 340. Paper, \$19.95.

In the book of Isaiah, Yahweh promises that just as the rain and snow which come down from the heavens do not return without watering the earth, bringing growth of the seed and bread for the eating, so too "the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do." However, as every gardener knows, when the soil is tended, the rain can penetrate it more readily. This book is skillfully designed to help our minds and hearts be better able to receive the message of the Scriptures, so that we may be part of the carrying out of Yahweh's will.

Although there are numerous commentaries on the Scriptures, and many others that reflect on the Sunday readings, this volume is unique. It offers reflections on the weekday gospel readings for each of the liturgical seasons,

Advent-Christmas, Lent-Triduum-Easter, and Ordinary Time. (Some of the Easter reflections focus on the readings from the Acts of the Apostles.) Each reflection is presented on a single page, with information about the liturgical time of the reading and the relevant scripture passage. The reflections are pithy, clear, and thought-provoking. They are intended for use by homilists and daily Mass participants, and certainly could be used for meditation by anyone seeking to grow in faith, especially catechumens.

In his introduction Joseph Donders describes the lens through which he approaches his work. "In the weekday readings we see Jesus busy evangelizing, healing, and reordering the world around him. . . . During weekdays we are asked to join him in completing his work." In these reflections the theme of preaching the coming reign of God is dominant; Donders continually invites us to see how this preaching calls for our participation in a more just reordering of our world. However, this is not done in a moralistic way. A deep humanity informs the text, a knowledge and appreciation of human nature which helps to highlight characteristics of a very human Jesus, while asking us to look at our own experience, and, to use it, too, as a key to the readings.

Donders's scriptural scholarship subtly informs the text, bringing fresh insight to well-known passages. For example, the admonition to the Syrophenician woman, that the children's bread not be given to the dogs, is understood quite differently when one realizes that the translation calls for the diminutive, "little dogs" or "puppies." Donders envisions Jesus speaking here with a smile—which invited the woman's response. So, too, thinking of the "pure of heart" as those especially working toward a just world order opens new dimensions to this Beatitude.

Professor of mission and cross-cultural studies at Washington Theological Union, Donders understands the need for inculturation invites us to evaluate the American culture in light of the gospel, always keeping in mind our own younger generation. His use of poetry, personal stories, survey findings, and quotations are all examples of such inculturation.

Daily use of this volume would deepen understanding of the Scriptures and draw one's mind and heart toward sharing in the work which Jesus began.

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**Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology.** By Gordon W. Lathrop. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999. Pages, ix + 236. Cloth, \$29.00.

In his earlier work *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), Gordon W. Lathrop, Lutheran theologian and liturgical scholar, examines "both the *use* of strong symbols for the sake of communal orientation in the world and the *strong critique* of symbols for the sake of Jesus Christ" (vii). In *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* he concentrates on the symbol "assembly." This work is among many others that explore inculturation of the gospel message within the social context of believers in liturgical assembly. Lathrop's

purpose is the renewal of congregational life for the visible unity and healthy mission of the churches. His method is to do liturgical theology from what is done in actual worship. Hence, if primary liturgical theology is what the actual experience of worship says of God, secondary liturgical theology is reflection upon this *thing* that liturgy *says*. Pastoral liturgical theology, Lathrop's project here, is turned especially toward the continuing reform of worship.

The issues of the identity of the One Church of Christ, unity of the churches, and mission of the Church shape the contents of the three parts of this work, each concluding with suggestions for pastoral practice. Part One, *A People: Church in Liturgical Perspective*, explores the meaning of "assembly" in the actual practice of worship, and the relationship of diverse Christian assemblies. Lathrop asserts that the localization of the liturgy sets the politics of baptism in dialogue with local politics, the story of the scriptural Word, its judgment and its forgiveness, in dialogue with local memory, the economy of the Eucharist in dialogue with the local economy. Such dialogue transforms, reorients, inverts and sometimes rejects certain elements of local culture. Regarding practice, Lathrop negatively critiques "staged" alternative, friendly and non-threatening worship experiences for an "audience," rather than those that recognize the function of worship to transform culture.

Part Two, *One People: Liturgy and Church Unity*, sets forth the ecumenical rule of prayer, the teaching and the worshipping that constitute baptism in all our churches. Lathrop emphasizes the work of the World Council of Churches' Lima Document, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, by asserting that the norm for ecumenical dialogue around Eucharist is (1) the gathering, reading of Scripture, preaching, and interceding, (2) setting out bread and wine together with *eucharistia*, and (3) eating and drinking, and collecting for the poor (in most churches). This common pattern or *ordo* critiques both sacramental and non-sacramental churches. Lathrop rightly maintains that this ancient pattern provides the concrete ambient for mutual encouragement to see these things as more central than any local tradition (such as Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, etc.), precisely because these things enable our common participation in Christ. Regarding practice, Lathrop intriguingly wonders about the possibility of several churches using a common baptismal font.

Part Three, *Holy People: Liturgical Assemblies amid Earth's Peoples*, provides a "method of juxtaposition" by which the churches might evaluate the myriad cultural symbols and "break" them on the gospel by measuring them against the ancient patterns of Baptism and Eucharist. The "method" provides lucid, penetrating questions by which cultural symbols might be "broken" for the sake of Christ, that is, transformed, subverted, or possibly rejected (203).

Both *Holy Things* and *Holy People* will be among the texts in my courses that explore inculturation, the visible unity of the churches, liturgical theology, and the function of symbols to recreate our world in Christ. Lathrop's scholarship reveals a broad grasp of the issues and literature, as well as of the catholicity and force of the liturgy for the peace and salvation of the world. Readers can find here a case for the liturgy as source of moral knowledge and ethical behavior.

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Washington Theological Union

**Affirmations and Admonitions: Lutheran Decisions and Dialogue with Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic Churches.** By Gabriel Fackre and Michael Root. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. Pages, xi + 124. Paper, \$16.00.

This book is a collection of six essays which were originally delivered as the 1997 Hein-Fry Lectures at eight Lutheran theological seminaries. Fackre, a member of the United Church of Christ, provides the first three essays and Root, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), offers the second trio along with an informative afterword.

Fackre begins by proposing that in the ecumenical dialogue Lutherans offer a unique contribution to other churches in their understanding of justification which links both the “haveability” of the infinite by the finite and the “simultaneity” of being both righteous and sinner at the same time. If this is what Lutherans can tell others, Fackre next acknowledges that Lutherans can hear from other traditions that justification by faith must also be viewed “in the context of the majesty of God *over us*, and the effects of the justifying grace of God imparted *to us*” (21). In his third lecture Fackre reflects on the role of the local congregation in reaching ecumenical unity. Beyond formal ratification of statements, there must be implementation of agreements in the local context. This is a worthy concern for pastoral ministers to acknowledge and seek to implement its challenges.

A pleasing contrast to Fackre’s mostly reflective presentations are the more systematized essays by Root which directly discuss three ecumenical proposals which were later voted on at the Churchwide Assembly in the summer of 1997. In the afterword, Root provides us with the outcome of the voting. The first is the Formula of Agreement which, having passed, declares full communion between the ELCA and the three Reformed Churches—Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA), Reformed Church in America (RCA), and United Church of Christ (UCC). This unity is not a merger, but communion, and the long road begins for this to be realized in the lives of local churches. The second proposal is the Concordat of Agreement which sought to establish full communion between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church. This Concordat missed the required two-thirds majority for acceptance by six votes. Two resolutions did pass, which pledge to continue conversations to bring a new proposal to the 1999 assembly. The third is the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification seeking to affirm a consensus in the basic truths of the doctrine of justification between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church. The book went to press before the Vatican called for clarifications, which have now been added to the Declaration in an Annex which was signed on October 31, 1999. The Declaration does not lead directly to communion but only to agreement on the basic points of justification.

In his three essays on these proposals, Root develops significant points for all ecumenical dialogue. He explains that far from being static, unity arises within a movement. It is “the movement of Christ and the Spirit through word and sacrament, received by faith and at work in the common life and mission of the one church they create” (74). Root insists that ecumenical proposals not be judged as to whether there is consensus on every theological detail, but “only

that consensus needed for the common life to which we are called" (82). Root formulates his criterion to judge ecumenical proposals in the form of a question: "Will a proposal allow the churches regularly and in a comprehensive range of situations to carry out together all those activities they believe are essential to the identity of the church as church without violating their understanding of the identity of the church?" (99).

My biggest difficulty with this book is that it is immediately dated, given its focus on specific proposals. Yet, this series of lectures adds insight and clarity to the ecumenical enterprise. Those interested in keeping current on these and other ecumenical proposals of the ELCA will find up-to-date information on the Internet at [www.elca.org/ea/](http://www.elca.org/ea/).

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**Whispers of Liberation. Feminist Perspectives on the New Testament.** By Nicholas King, S.J. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1998. Pages, 189. Paper, \$15.95.

The author, the dean of studies at St. John Vianney in Pretoria, South Africa, wrote this piece during a sabbatical leave at the Jesuit seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts. While there he audited classes in feminist theology given by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza at Harvard. Presumably the context explains the peculiar deference to radical feminist critics by an author whose readings of the New Testament reject the challenge posed by their methodologies. The first section presents the author's explanations of feminist theology. Chapter 1 describes feminist hermeneutics and concludes with a plea not to be afraid of feminism. Chapter 2 treats the issue of using inclusive language for God. Chapter 3 introduces a gallery of feminist critics and theologians, most of whom never appear in the book again. The summaries of their work read like weak lecture notes aimed at persuading students to read the syllabus, in this case, the bibliography.

The second section of the book consists of six chapters in which the author reads his way through the typical collection of women in the New Testament passages and a conclusion. Chapters are devoted to each Gospel with Luke-Acts treated as a single work, to Paul's letters and to the conventional Household Code material in the post-Pauline epistles. The reader quickly discovers that the author's point of view is not feminist analysis or criticism. It is an apology for the New Testament as a text addressed to women. King comments in the conclusion, "my tendency throughout this book [is] to 'defend' or 'save' the New Testament text as not inherently hostile to women, it is the 'word of life' for all" (185). At the same time, he alludes to Schüssler Fiorenza's view that the Church should be the "fellowship" of equals exhibited in the ministry of Jesus (186) but does not address its consequences for ecclesiology.

The heart of the book lies in the chapters devoted to the New Testament. The author provides his own translations of the text, which are often tendentious. He defends his policy of translating words from the stem *diakon*—"to serve, aid, support, to wait at table" as "deacon"/"deaconing" with a claim that it

“was certainly at this stage in the history of the church well on the way to becoming a technical term for a hierarch” (98). To have Jesus’ mother addressing “the deacons” in John 2:5 is particularly jarring. The author defends it on pious grounds as well: “‘Do whatever he tells you’ is not a bad motto for disciples, and we have already seen reason to suppose that the disciples are invited to be ‘deacons’ or ‘servants’” (98). Bad linguistics, bad exegesis and weak ecclesiology. Exegetes will find similar problems with almost every passage. Some insights are grounded in scholarly discussion; other statements ride roughshod over the complexities of the text or seem unaware of debates between feminist critics.

Of course, the author states that he does not intend to write for theologians or exegetes. The aim of his translations and comments is “to hint at how one might pray or preach these passages with sensitivity to women” (53). In other words, this is really a book for pastors, retreat directors, or others working with the New Testament stories in a pastoral context. As such, its clear, unencumbered and apologetic style makes easy reading. The focus on individual gospels and passages makes it possible to pick up any one of the chapters without reading the rest. For such an audience, particularly those afraid of feminism, this book provides a useful resource.

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**The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation.** By Maxwell E. Johnson. Collegeville: Pueblo Books/The Liturgical Press, 1999. Pages, xxii + 414. Paper, \$39.95.

With grace of style and clarity of argument Johnson achieves his objectives in writing this sizable tome: a comprehensive textbook on Christian initiation, featuring extensive extracts from primary and secondary sources along with critical evaluation of the rites and their theological interpretations. Formerly a professor at St. John’s University, Collegeville, and now at the University of Notre Dame, Johnson explains the origins of the book in his teaching a course on Christian initiation to undergraduate theology majors. This occasioned the annual problem of having to require the students to obtain a burdensome number of books to integrate the ritual texts, history, and pastoral practices that together comprise the theology of the rites. Those three sources—textual, historical, and theological—solidly structure Johnson’s approach to teaching an intended audience of not only undergraduates but also masters level theology students and pastoral ministers. All of these constituencies will be challenged by the breadth and depth of Johnson’s work but, I suspect, also grateful to stick with him, as are any students who come to realize they are being instructed by a dedicated, competent, but demanding professor.

Johnson thoroughly, but not ploddingly, moves from the origins of Christian initiation in the person and ministry of Jesus and the early Church, through the pre- and post-Nicene developments in both East and West (wisely addressing

the former first), on to medieval and Reformation (Protestant and Catholic) developments, to arrive finally at the contemporary initiatory practices in the churches, attending both to their achievements and remaining problems. In so doing, he provides a valuable service not only to his student-readers but to his fellow liturgical theologians by both marshaling the most recent scholarship (appending an extensive bibliography) and proffering numerous astute and suggestive insights into the material. Examples would include his demonstration of the importance of Jesus' practices of table fellowship and foot-washing, as well as his baptism in the Jordan, not only to the origins but the present reform of Christian initiation; an exceptionally clear and persuasive tracking of the implications inherent in the Roman practice of a second (episcopal) post-baptismal anointing and its problematic relation to hand-laying; seemingly original insight into the mystagogical element in Luther's approach to initiation and catechesis; a lucid stating of the question concerning the extent of initiation appropriate for infants and the implications for other rites that follow therefrom; and, indeed, much more.

A commendable and generally successful feature of the book is its ecumenical perspective. Johnson shows Christians in the various churches of the West and East how they can learn from each others' rituals and theological interpretations of initiation, in both their strengths and weaknesses. One aspect of Johnson's own analysis of current ecumenical problems could stand strengthening. In his discussion of such questions as the confirmation of Christians who join other churches and inter-communion among Christians in general, greater attention to issues of apostolic succession and authority would be pertinent.

By guiding readers through the history and theology of the Christian rites of initiation—and doing so in a way that sustains crucial pastoral questions throughout—the book functions as a companion to the collection of readings on Christian initiation that Johnson previously edited, *Living Water, Sealing Spirit* (The Liturgical Press, 1995). Both volumes, of course, do not address all methodological approaches and possible issues concerning Christian initiation; that would make them not only conceptually but physically unwieldy. Johnson only acknowledges, for example, the burgeoning field of ritual studies. Others might introduce criticisms of Christian initiation being raised by feminist liturgists. Johnson has, nonetheless, appropriately mapped out the extent of his study and provided an enlightening exploration of the ritual and interpretative sources of Christian initiation that will undoubtedly serve a full generation of students, as well as scholars of the literature thereafter.

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**Preaching Basics: A Model and a Method.** By Edward Foley. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998. Pages, iv + 44. Paper, \$12.00.

Much like a young preacher earnestly determined to communicate the depth of his passion, Edward Foley allows his rhetoric to get in the way of a valuable

message in *Preaching Basics*, a work that is explicitly passionate about “improving the quality and consistency of liturgical preaching, especially in the Sunday assembly.”

Published as a workbook, complete with twelve pages of reproducible exercises at the end, *Preaching Basics* is designed to develop the model and methods of liturgical preaching outlined in *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, the American bishops’ landmark document on preaching, a document that Foley claims was never fully embraced either by bishops or preachers. Thus he begins by arguing for the passion that the preacher needs to have: for the Word of God, for the liturgy and for the baptized assembly. Distinguishing liturgical preaching from other types of preaching (evangelization, catechesis, and *didascalia*—the type of preaching one would hear on a retreat or day of recollection), the author also characterizes various “non-forms” of liturgical preaching that too often make their way into a Sunday homily. In this category he unfortunately lumps together such obvious anomalies as public exegesis, local ecclesial news broadcasts, and political lobbying, with caricatures of preaching on the feast being celebrated, explanation of church doctrine and moral exhortation. Although he goes on to acknowledge that each of these concerns, even while failing to take the liturgical event as its starting point, nonetheless has its validity, Foley might have done better to illustrate, somewhere in the book, how some of these topics could validly be an integral part of a homily that is authentically liturgical.

In the core of his book, Foley presents a model for homily preparation in which he describes five “conversation partners” with whom the homilist must interact: the lectionary, the “liturgical bible” (i.e., non-scriptural texts, ritual actions, and objects, spaces and the liturgical calendar itself), world events, the arts, and the human story. What is most striking and most important is the attention he pays to the liturgical bible, an attention which, as he points out, is called for in both the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the General Instruction on the Roman Liturgy, but which many homilists have tended to overlook. Building on this model, the author presents a method of homily preparation that calls for an extended period (five to six weeks before a liturgical season or group of Sundays) of collaborative preparation among all the homilists of the parish, a few “thoughtful articulate parishioners” and perhaps some members of the parish council and staff. Although Foley acknowledges the need for adaptation to individual circumstances, his language and style grow significantly prescriptive in this section: preachers “need” to undergo “conversions” to method, to time, and collaboration; collaboration is a “non-negotiable” in the preparatory process; the preparation group “must choose a single direction” for preaching strategies; and each preacher in a parish is expected to follow the broad parameters decided upon by the group. Foley uses the simile of a recipe to describe how his model (the “ingredients”) and method (the “directions”) are related; he goes so far as to include an example of an actual recipe (for Hilde’s Chocolate Mousse) to illustrate his point! One wonders, however, whether homiletic method can be reduced to the instructions in a recipe. When one looks at the various methods of homily preparation that are proposed in other books with a similar purpose, such as Alvin Rueter’s *Making Good Preaching Better* and Bishop Ken Untener’s *Preaching Better*, as well as *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* itself, one is struck by the different ways in which

homilists can successfully combine the various elements that are necessary to create an effective liturgical homily. Similarly, while collaboration is clearly important and desirable, is it really a “non-negotiable,” without which a homilist cannot possibly give an effective liturgical homily? Finally, the proof of any recipe is how it tastes, not how it reads in the cookbook. Both Untener and Rueter, for example, clearly based their work and their suggestions on real-life pastoral experiences; one would presume that *Preaching Basics*’ method has been field tested in a number of parishes and by a number of different personalities; however, if that is true, we are not told so, nor are we told how well it worked.

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**Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II’s Moral Encyclicals.** Edited by Reinhard Hutter and Theodor Dieter. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1998. Pages, viii + 295. \$26.00.

This collection of 11 original essays and one response is an interesting example of both international (Hutter at The Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and Dieter at the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in France) and ecumenical cooperation and reflection from both American and European scholars, predominantly from the Reformation/ Lutheran tradition. The editors note three explicit agenda for such an ecumenical dialogue: 1) to learn and appreciate each other’s strongest and weakest points; 2) to be challenged by the other’s strengths and to address one’s own weaknesses; 3) to identify and engage in the other’s problems. The focus of engagement for this dialogue are two recent and critical encyclicals of John Paul II: *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae*. The articles address several common themes: use of Scripture, philosophical and theological issues, ethical method, as well as addressing some specific problems, e.g., capital punishment. Overall, the authors give clear exposition of a particular facet of one of the encyclicals, analyze and evaluate it from their own perspective and occasionally from various Catholic sources, and then clearly lay out their conclusions. The Foreword provides concise statements about each essay that identifies its main point and the concluding essay by Catholic ethicist James Keenan, S.J. provides a very helpful evaluation and response to the essays. For those not that familiar with Reformation or Lutheran theology, both of these essays should be read first to help situate one’s self.

Each of the essays is a model of a carefully crafted analysis and sympathetic critique of the Pope’s thought. Of particular interest in several of the essays is the thematic analysis of the Pope’s use of Scripture. While all are heartened by his use of Scripture, some are less than happy with how he employs it and his approach to the hermeneutics of Scripture. Additionally the use of natural law provides a traditional bone of contention for several to gnaw. But the critical point made by many is the tension (abrupt shift?) between Scripture and natural

law in various arguments by the Pope. While some essays rehearse familiar argument about Protestant and Catholic ethical methods, these essays in general take several helpful steps beyond the status quo and engage in a helpful analysis. There is also a very interesting discussion over the concept of intrinsically evil acts and the role of teleology in ethics, familial nubs of contention in Catholic ethics, but given a broader perspective when viewed through Reformation lenses. The themes of freedom and personalism also receive extended commentary in several essays and again present different and helpful perspectives in teasing out various nuances of papal thought.

Thematically the essays also help locate the encyclicals, as well as other ideas of John Paul, in a broader historical, philosophical, and theological framework. For example, Risto Saarinen critiques the Pope's understanding of individuality and the unity between the individual human person and human nature as Averroistic in nature. I have not heard that particular critique of papal thought before, but the argument is exceptionally well made and shows the necessity of recognizing that contemporary solutions to problems do have historical roots that must be acknowledged. Another particularly deft piece of analysis comes from the Anglican Oliver O'Donovan who notes that "Whatever conservative social and moral norms he [John Paul II] defends, he accepts the deconstruction of the nexus of ideal and symbols that once made them intelligible" (236). O'Donovan then queries whether the Pope's moral policies are compromised by such an ambiguity in this thought.

This collection is a very thorough, careful, and extremely helpful analysis and evaluation of John Paul's thought. Seeing this from another perspective allows one to develop a much more adequate evaluative perspective of one's own. The book is clearly for use in graduate schools and may benefit professionals with ecumenical interests. Some of the translations seem a little awkward but when there is a difficulty in translation, the original is provided in a footnote. On the other hand, some lengthy footnotes are not translated. The book generally reads well and is important both to ecumenical ethics as well as the continuing study of the thought of John Paul II.

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