

Book Reviews



Jane Carr
Book Review Editor

In this section 12 books are reviewed, presented in the following general order: children/family ministry, youth ministry, adult ministry, foundations, teaching-learning process, spirituality/spiritual formation, and leadership/administration—although reviews may not appear for each area. A list of each area and responsible editors appears after the last review in this section. We invite readers to consider reviewing a book for CEJ. Guidelines are available in downloadable documents at www.biola.edu/cej under Publications Policy on the drop down menu.



Toddlers to the kingdom: Child theology at work in the church. Edited by John Collier. London, UK: Child Theology Movement. 2009. 256 pp. \$7.50. paper.

Children and the theologians: Clearing the way for grace. By Jerome W. Berryman. New York: Morehouse Publishing. 2009. 276 pp. \$35.00.

Review by Kevin E. Lawson, Director of PhD and EdD programs in Educational Studies, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, La Mirada, CA.

The last 10 years have seen an increase in publications dealing with theological issues regarding children. Marcia Bunge's edited books, *The Child in Christian Thought* (MI: Eerdmans, 2001) and *The Child in the Bible* (MI: Eerdmans, 2008) have provided solid research on both how children are portrayed and understood in Scripture and in the history of theology. This review focuses on two more recent books from two different organizations promoting theological reflection related to children. One focuses on children as an aid to theological work, the other on theological issues about children and childhood.

Toddlers to the Kingdom

The Child Theology Movement is an international organization promoting a way of doing theological work that focuses both on "God in Christ" and the role of the child in helping to bring new perspectives to the theological

endeavor (7–8). They take Matthew 18:1–5, when Jesus placed a child in the midst of the group of disciples and used that child as a model for entering the kingdom of God, as a normative model for the doing of theological inquiry. As such, their work is not specifically focused on theological questions about children, but using children as a lens to look anew at questions considered in the work of theology. This group has several people leading this kind of inquiry, including Keith White, Haddon Willmer, John Collier, Sunny Tan, and Marcia Bunge. The group has held consultations in a wide range of countries, including: Malaysia, Ecuador, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, India, Australia, South Africa, Nepal, Ethiopia, and the Czech Republic. For many years the main publications they put out were the consultation reports from these gatherings and short booklets about Child Theology. *Toddlng to the Kingdom* is their first major publication, collecting together a number of papers in one volume to report on their work so far and to stimulate further theological inquiry. Though the group is not specifically focused on theological issues about children, their work spills over into many ministry concerns with children, especially with those who are “at risk.”

This edited work consists of 29 chapters collected from the consultations held to date organized into four sections. The result is an uneven but helpful patchwork quilt reflecting the diversity of interests of the contributors and the reticence of the movement’s leaders to impose an agenda on those who have been attracted to the movement. Some portions are written by theologians, some by ministry leaders, and the results reflect a varying level of focus either on theological process or on doing theological reflection regarding the needs of children.

The first section serves as an introduction to Child Theology, giving a taste of its guiding principles and how it has been carried out. The book begins with the description of a personal experience ministering to a young new mother and her infants and how God guided. This sets the context for thinking about the role of children in the church and how God uses children as a clue to the kingdom of God. “The child is a clue to the kingdom not because the child gives us information, by example or symbolism, but because the child puts us into a crisis, dissolves our existing certainty and assurances and draws us into unexpected possibilities” (22). Child theology began with reflecting on gospel stories and sayings of Jesus regarding children, including what it means to receive a child as Jesus instructed, and also considering child suffering in the world today and the need to take our stand with and for children, as God does. This section closes with a chapter by Marcia Bunge on what Child Theology is and is not, comparing and contrasting it to theologies of childhood, children’s spirituality, theology for children, and religious education of children. This section provides a helpful orientation to the basics of the movement.

The second section, “Situations Children Face,” provides a number of stories of the needs of children at risk and the kinds of questions these stories

raised for those who participated in the various consultations. These stories cover a range of issues, including neglect, abuse, exploitation, materialism, cultural traditions of transition to adulthood, poverty, and family disintegration. By the time I finished reading this section, it felt a bit overwhelming to consider all these stories of the need and suffering. Fortunately, as a transition before the third section, John Collier provides an uplifting story of hope and ministry regarding Trust Home in Tibet. It is a beautiful true story of the difference that people can make in ministry with children as they attend to God's guidance and that children can make in the lives of others as God works in and through them.

The third section, "Our Resources," focuses on the resources available as Christians respond to the needs of children in the world, including reflective essays on the United Nations Convention and the Rights of the Child (CRC), a typology of children's needs, historical perspectives on children in the church, and selected biblical portions that reveal something of God's view of and valuing of children and how He works with and through them. This section might better be entitled "Foundations for Child Theology," since so much of what is provided are the foundation blocks for the theological work this group is promoting.

The fourth and final section, "Experiments in Child Theology," provides nine brief reflective essays on a variety of theological issues that surface when theology is done with the child "in the midst." Topics of sin, the church, mission, media and eschatology, the family, education, and Christology are explored with an eye on children and the new questions that surface when we consider these important issues with them in mind. This section provides a clearer understand of how various people within the movement approach the task, the theological methods they use, and their results.

I was a participant in the Child Theology consultation held in Houston, TX, in 2004. Since that time I have interacted with Keith White when he spoke at the second triennial Children's Spirituality Conference: Christian Perspectives, in 2006, and have enjoyed working with Marcia Bunge on the planning team for the Society for Christian Spirituality: Christian Perspectives over the years. I have great appreciation for the vision and passion of the people within the movement, and I find much here in this book to stir, rebuke, and motivate my soul to a stronger commitment to join with God in ministry to the needs of children. This is desperately needed in the church around the world. For those with an interest in this movement, this book gives a good taste of the range of things people are doing and some of the key foundations to their efforts. Unfortunately, as an edited collection of papers developed for the more conversational format of a consultation, the book does not provide a clear, systematic orientation to the theological conclusions of the movement. Perhaps it cannot, given the kind of movement that it is

and the ways that the leaders lightly give direction. My greater concern is with the creative kinds of hermeneutical work and theological reflection done within some of the essays that seem to play loosely with the biblical texts or lead off into issues that do not seem to grow naturally out of the texts. This is an important issue for any sustained, serious theological effort and has raised concerns from some I have talked with in both the US and in Africa who feel they cannot accept the theological methods employed by some within the Child Theology movement. But we must not dismiss this movement because of some disagreements over theological process. They are raising important questions and challenging us all in needed ways to expand our theological inquiry and consider the children in our midst as Jesus did in trying to help His disciples better understand the kingdom of God. This book will challenge you, and you may not agree with all that you read, but that is how we begin to give attention to neglected areas and then figure out our own responses to them. While this book is not an ideal choice for a text for a course on issues of ministry with children at risk, selected chapters would be good resources to use with your students.

Children and the Theologians

Jerome Berryman, the founder of Godly Play, has for years also headed up the Center for the Theology of Childhood. His previous publications have explored and described the application of Montessori teaching philosophy and methods in the teaching process used in Godly Play. The publication of *Children and the Theologians* focuses his attention on broader issues of childhood, how different theologians in church history have viewed children, and his proposal for a doctrine of children today. This contrasts with, but complements, the kind of theological work reflected in the Child Theology publication reviewed above. Similar to Bunge's edited book, *The Child in Christian Thought* (MI: Eerdmans, 2001), Berryman provides an historical review of how church leaders have thought about children from New Testament times up through the current scene. However, Berryman takes a different approach from Bunge, bringing together an analysis of the church leader's experience with children as part of his review of their theological writings and conclusions. This is both a strength and a weakness. I will come back to this after a summary of the content of the book.

Berryman begins with a few statements of his own perspective on children and how the church has not always done its best in ministry with them and nurturing their faith. He expresses concern that adults sometimes underestimate children's experience of God and their ability to think deeply about God and their relationship with them. He believes that it is very important that theologians spend time listening to children to better understand how

God is at work in their lives. Their experiences need to be respected, and they need to learn how to identify and express their experiences in appropriate language and to “play deeply” with God and the Scripture (7–8). If we are willing to do this, God will use children as a means of grace for the church. His review of the history of the church’s views of children focuses on selected theologians and leaders who represent the trends of the times, or influenced those trends.

In the first chapter, Berryman reviews and discusses passages from the Synoptic Gospels that reflect both a low view of children (e.g., leaving family for Jesus’ name sake) and a high view (e.g., becoming like children to enter the kingdom of God, welcoming children). He also attributes an indifference to children in John’s gospel due to a lack of mention of them as opposed to a graceful view of children found throughout Jesus’ ministry. As the chapter concludes, he identifies four key threads that he then traces through the rest of the book: ambivalence (conflicting feelings about children, both high and low views), ambiguity (unacknowledged emotional and logical conflicts), indifference (neutral or lack of concern, apathetic), and grace (favor, kindness, service). These are the themes he explores in each subsequent time period covered in the text.

Chapter 2 covers the early church period up to around 500 AD. He reviews the lives and writings of Paul, Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, Pelagius, and Augustine. For each chapter, Berryman begins with a brief historical review of the context of the church and what it was experiencing. In this chapter, emphasis is given to the persecutions of the church, the beginning work in systematic theology, and early church practices with children. He finds both high views of children (Pelagius, Irenaeus), and low views (Paul, Augustine). Regarding Paul, Berryman is concerned about Paul’s portrayal of male authority in teaching children, but blurs the issues when he focuses on children obeying “fathers” in Colossians 3 when the text actually reads “parents.”

Chapter 3 covers the longest period, from 500 to 1500 AD, up to the eve of the Reformation. The four theologians selected to represent this time period are Anselm, Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, and Nicholas of Cusa. It is here that some of the limitations of Berryman’s development of historical vignettes become most apparent. Drawing from fairly limited material about the lives of these theologians and selected writings from them where children are mentioned (even if the writings are not focused on children), he attempts to construct their views of children. For example, the portrayal of Abelard and Heloise as uninterested in the life of their son seems constructed on too little data. In addition, since Berryman does not discuss any theological writings by Abelard relevant to the historical development of a doctrine of children, it seems questionable to include him in this review. The inclusion of

Nicholas of Cusa because of his theological play with words and concepts and combination of opposites also seems unhelpful to the overall discussion. By contrast, the review of Thomas Aquinas's integration of the views of Aristotle and Augustine is well developed and very helpful in understanding how a more optimistic view of children developed. This last case shows more of the potential strengths of Berryman's approach.

Chapter 4 addresses the early Reformation experience, from 1500–1600. He selects Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Richard Hooker for review. He rightly emphasizes the steps Luther took to ensure children were well taught regarding both law and gospel and his valuing them within the church. Calvin's views of inherited sin nature are discussed, but also his views of the inclusion of children within the covenant community. Both high and low views go together recognizing both human sinfulness and God's restorative grace. Berryman's discussion of Hooker focuses on those areas within his *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* where children are discussed, revealing both high and low views (ambivalence).

Chapter 5 covers the 1600s to 1800. It begins with an examination of the lives and writings of Jacob Boehme, John Bunyan, and Blaise Pascal, three lay theologians of this time period. Unfortunately, their major works do not directly address critical questions regarding a theology of children, and the various writings discussed are too few and tangential to see much of their views. Berryman concludes mostly that they were indifferent to children, being mostly focused on adult issues. However, as mentioned before, this seems to be an unjustified conclusion given the limited data he works with. The discussion of the Jesuit missionary efforts in the New World gives greater insight into their views of children (e.g., their need for baptism). Berryman then examines the writings and experience of John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards, discussing their views of children's need for conversion and spiritual holiness. The ambivalence of views of children comes through clearly in this section, but too much speculation regarding the impact of family experiences on these selected theologians clouds the discussion.

Chapter 6 reviews the 19th and 20th centuries, with the development of modern liberalism and a growing optimism regarding human nature. Berryman's review of Schleiermacher's work is very helpful, as is his discussion of Bushnell's views of Christian nurture. More discussion of Bushnell's understanding of baptism within the covenant community in his early writings would help explain his high view of children. Berryman then jumps to Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, and Rowan Williams, not addressing the impact of the early 20th century religious education movement and its theological views of children. The mid-20th-century period with its recovery of theology as a guiding force for the church's ministry with children is an appropriate focus,

but it would have helped to understand more of the context for this renewal mid-century. For those of us with less experience on the Catholic side of the church's history, Berryman's discussion of the Jesuit Karl Rahner's ideas regarding children are quite helpful. His review of the life and ministry of Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, is also helpful, showing a transition to a more positive doctrine of children by century's end.

Chapter 7 reviews the works of six contemporary writers: Marcia Bunge, Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Joyce Ann Mercer, David Hensen, Kristin Herzod, and Martin Marty—all of whom present a fairly high view of children. As Berryman demonstrates, this is a time period where issues of the theology of children are being given more deliberate attention than in most of the past history of the church. The brief overview he gives of the works of these scholars is a helpful introduction to the current discussion.

Chapter 8 reviews what Berryman calls the *de facto* doctrine of children in the church today, with the same historic trends of ambivalence, ambiguity, indifference, and grace that he sees in the earlier time periods reviewed. It is here that he more fully unpacks the evidence for each that he sees in the history of the church, providing a helpful summary of his views. From this historical review he moves into a discussion of attachment theory research and ends up applying it to the historical themes discussed above (e.g., secure attachment goes with a high view of children, indifference goes with avoidant attachment), implying that the childhood experiences theologians had with their own parents impacted how they related to and thought about children. Unfortunately, this kind of "psychologizing" about historical figures is hard to prove or disprove and seems an unwarranted application of the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth. Berryman goes further in relating attachment theory to cultural trends of narcissism and postmodernism—another creative stretch that may be interesting to consider but not supported with enough evidence. He stands on firmer ground when he applies attachment theory to what children experience within the gathered congregation, helping them develop a secure attachment with God and the church community.

Finally, in the 9th chapter, Berryman proposes considering children as a means of grace in the life of the church because of their natural involvement in creative processes. He discusses biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of the creative process and concludes that these are all present in an integrated way within children and that children can stimulate them in adults. The chapter wraps up with consideration of how children, as a means of grace, can be placed more at the center of the seven historic sacraments of the church (or sacramental rites), allowing God's grace to come through them as a blessing to the entire congregation. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of the "sacrament of children" for all within the

church: spending time with them, focusing on and listening to them, and welcoming them as a way of taking their relationship with God seriously, and recognizing God's grace in and through them.

I have integrated some of my critique throughout the above discussion. On the one hand, I appreciate the approach Berryman has taken in trying to give us some of the historical and personal context for the work of various theologians. This review of their lives, including their own interaction or lack of interaction with children and how this might have influenced their work, is interesting and in some cases quite insightful. However, a weakness that overshadows this strength is his reliance upon limited historical sources about the lives and experiences of these leaders, making his psychological analysis and conclusions hard to accept at face value. A second concern is the selection and omission of various figures from church history for this review. Some who are included have little to say to us about children and might rightly be considered "indifferent." Some more contemporary writers with more traditional views of inherited sin nature and the need for spiritual renewal are not included in chapter 7, giving a skewed view of the current theological perspective. In addition, the equating of the historic view of human inherited sinful nature with a low view of children is unfortunate, since many of these same theologians affirm God's great love for and valuing of humanity, including children. To then speculate that these "low" views have arisen from these theologians' own insecure attachments to their parents is unjustified and detrimental to theological discourse. It makes it tempting to dismiss views we may disagree with because of their psychological origin instead of considering the arguments offered.

Though I am concerned about these things I do not want to end on a negative note. I have too much respect for and appreciation of Jerome Berryman to do so. This book raises critical questions that leaders in the church today need to think through and then act upon their conclusions. It is true that our history is characterized by ambivalence, ambiguity, and indifference to issues of children. We have not considered well the gift of children in the life of the church, their needs and ministry with us, and I am thankful that he has called us to more careful theological reflection on these issues. No one I know of has a deeper love and respect for children than Jerome, and he lives this out in the way he treats the children God brings into his life. He believes in God's work in and through the lives of children and rightly views them as a means by which God brings His grace to the church. I am challenged by his example and hope to follow it in both doing more careful theological work regarding children and seeing more clearly the reality of God's work in and through them.



Listening to children on the spiritual journey: Guidance for those who teach and nurture. By Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker. 2010. 150 pp. \$17.99. paper.

Review by La Verne Tolbert, PhD, Adjunct Professor, Azusa Pacific University Graduate School of Theology, Azusa, CA; President, Teaching Like Jesus Ministries, Pasadena, CA; Director, Society for Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives.

This scholarly work, *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey*, is a natural progression from Catherine Stonehouse's *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey* (MI: Baker Academic, 1998) and Scottie May's *Children Matter* (MI: Eerdmans, 2005). Themes from the authors' previous books merge to assure those who nurture children—parents and practitioners—and those who teach others to do so that a thriving spiritual environment where children experience God is reliant upon the co-ministry of the home and church. May and Stonehouse utilize four studies to listen to the voices of children and parents in an attempt to better understand how children experience God. The “conversations” result in the development of an approach Stonehouse and May term Reflective Engagement, a process that allows children to know God. Reflective Engagement entails creating a quiet place for children to hear the biblical account, time devoted to reflection and wonder about God, and the encouragement to listen as God speaks to the child, guiding him or her to grasp biblical truths.

The introduction presents an overview of the four studies. The combined research and analysis of the four studies provided Stonehouse and May with “a glimpse of [children's] spiritual potential, how they were at work putting together pieces of theological understandings” (6). These studies and the information obtained by listening to the children and their parents provide the foundation upon which the book stands.

Stonehouse's Listening to Children Study explores how children experience and imagine (or understand) God through methodology that includes three rounds of interviews with 40 children and their parents over a 7-year period. The study utilized open-ended questions regarding the children's experiences of God, their understanding of God, and their favorite Bible stories. The researchers also employed drawing, specifically the children's drawings of God. Their drawings yield rich insight on their experiences of God. Examples of these intriguing pictures are included as a full-color inset.

The second study referenced is May's Adult Reflections Study. Because children are inarticulate about the effects of their early faith experience, this study, based on May's doctoral research, asks adults how they experienced conversion/baptism as a child. Twenty-seven adults (ages 24–45) from three

different evangelical denominations recall childhood experiences that impacted their faith development.

May's Good Shepherd Research, based on Sofia Cavalletti's reflective approach in helping children experience God, involved 18 preschool children in a 10-week study. In this study, May sought to investigate the effect of a Reflective Engagement learning experience on children who had never before experienced such an event. The preschoolers that participated in the study were introduced to the biblical account of the Good Shepherd and provided opportunities to reflect and wonder about the Good Shepherd.

The fourth study, May's Good Shepherd Family Research, was a follow-up to her original "Good Shepherd Research." In a 6-week series of 90-minute sessions, six families—children and their parents—experienced Reflective Engagement together. Minimal changes were made to the Reflective Engagement normally experienced by the children in an attempt to compare the responses of children in the original Good Shepherd study with the parents in the subsequent study.

An invitation to listen to and learn from children is presented in chapter 1. Stonehouse and May depict listening as crucial to our relationship with children (11) and offer both biblical and historical support for this proposition. They note that in Jewish culture and during the earthly ministry of Jesus, children were taught to know and understand God's laws, assuring the continuance of the faith. Further, children were a core theme in Jesus' ministry and were often used as examples in his teachings. After a brief examination of the role of children in church history, the authors remind us that "we need to take a look at our theology to see how close it comes to Jesus' perspective on children" (19). They note, however, that contemporary society makes difficult this vital listening process, particularly with regard to technological advances that are distractions from family together-time. The authors conclude chapter 1 noting that listening "contributes to the growth of children and adults, and it happens when adults are with children at play, in everyday life, and in worship" (22).

Chapter 2, "Knowing God in Childhood," shares the comments from children about their pictures of God that reveal their understanding of God. May and Stonehouse note that responses are a combination of what children have heard in church from their parents and what they have learned in Sunday school. The themes evident in the children's drawings and comments serve to answer questions of "who is God?" and "what is God like?" The responses and resultant themes led the authors to offer this advice to parents, teachers, and caregivers:

The first and most important thing for a young child to learn is that God loves him or her unconditionally. Knowing a loving God who takes joy in

them provides children with the necessary foundation on which to build a life of spiritual and moral health through a growing relationship with God. (36)

The focus of chapter 3, “Experiencing God in Everyday Life,” is that children love to be with God and can experience God at an early age. Children discuss hearing God and special times where they prefer to meet with God (for example, bedtime and mealtimes). The authors contend that children exhibit potential for experiencing God, but that the openness must be nourished; therefore, family faith practices are essential in children’s spiritual formation. Recommended practices include praying and reading the Bible together, blessing children, teaching them to pray during difficult times, and including grandparents.

Practices that help children meet God at church are discussed in chapter 4. Here, the results from the Good Shepherd Research emphasizing the importance of helping children meet God in congregational worship are evaluated. Welcoming children in the main worship setting, allowing children to pray faith-filled prayers, and providing a sacred, quiet place to come into the presence of God are the focus of this chapter. The authors offer the following insight:

Our team of researchers was fascinated watching young children focus intently upon what they were doing for such long periods of time. Often, we assume four- or five-year-old children have a hard time sitting still, have short attention spans, and are easily distracted. While these children in many ways still acted like preschoolers, we found that this prepared environment enabled them to focus and respond with observable “awe and wonder.” (61–62)

Chapter 5, “The Formative Power of God’s Story,” concentrates on making a place for the biblical story in the life of families, specifically addressing the role of the Bible in formation and the effectiveness of using Scripture sans technology in grasping the attention of technologically savvy children. This chapter presented the findings of the Listening to Children Study, wherein parents were regular participants in church ministry and very engaged in reading the Bible to their children at home. The study utilized research methods that allowed the girls and boys to engage biblical stories, reflect on them, and share their thoughts. Findings from the study reveal that children who engage in Reflective Engagement are more likely to express pleasure and offer meaningful insight from the biblical story. Parents are encouraged to teach the whole Bible and let children retell the account in their own words. “Then, as you patiently listen, you can clarify any misconceptions because you actually heard what they are thinking” (89). The authors contend that children are

drawn into stories when they engage the story via concrete materials and enter the story in a quiet place. They conclude the chapter with an overview of the formative power of story.

Chapter 6, “Let the Children Come,” stresses the importance of creating an environment where children are able to approach their parents for assistance in “coming to Jesus” (94). The authors contend that a relationship with Christ is a process that requires nurturing the child into faith. That the spiritual journey is one of gradually knowing God is affirmed by the Adult Reflections Study, as exemplified by the following quote: “Well, I was born into a Christian family, so I grew up in a Christian lifestyle and ever since I was a little kid I’ve always viewed myself as a Christian” (96). Of the 27 participants, 21 reported that theirs is a growing faith through spiritual nurture. Some respondents reported confusion and pain in conforming to their church’s expectation to make a faith commitment/confession, as illustrated by one man: “Sadly, during the interview, Chuck voiced uncertainty about being born again. He said, ‘I hope I am’” (100).

“Celebrating Compassion,” chapter 7, presents an overview of how children who learn about the compassionate heart of God express empathy and acts of kindness. For example, one child explained that he “drew a black God who would give black people their share of being important” (110). May and Stonehouse offer suggestions for ways that families and churches can nurture children’s emotional intelligence: learning to care in the family; modeling and coaching; developing empathetic emotion via creative play; families serving together; and churches providing opportunities for service.

Partnering with parents is the focus of the final chapter, which stresses the need for the extended network of support and nurture—the church. The authors contend that “expecting the nuclear family to do the work of faith formation on its own is foreign to the principles of Scripture” (138) and that “parents alone were not adequate for the task in biblical times, nor are they today” (124). What is needed for the nurture and formation of both children and adults is a partnership between the home and the church. The church’s responsibility to parents is described as nurturing their faith and providing support and equipping for the tasks of parenting. In summarizing both this chapter and the entire book, it may be said that the whole community plays its part in passing faith to the next generation.

Practitioners, professors, and students will appreciate *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey*—a book that lends fascinating insight into how children view and understand God. Results may reinforce what we intuit about the process of children’s spiritual formation both cognitively and affectively as demonstrated in the children’s and adult’s interviews.

That four studies are combined in this work may present a challenge in following the research and tracking each of the studies; however, the summary of the studies (Appendix A) helps in this endeavor. Because of the small

sample sizes and the nature of qualitative research, results cannot be generalized. The rich interviews resulting from the studies do provide meaningful insight.

Reflective Engagement is a useful construct for Christian education and children's ministries. Churches that emphasize Sunday morning activity may lack balance in the spiritual formation of children without additionally providing a quiet environment where children can experience and wonder about God. The co-ministry of family and church is underscored in this book and offers reassurance to those who nurture children that their ministry in the church is essential but inseparable from that of the family.



Our covenant with kids: Biblical nurture in home and church. By Timothy A. Sisemore. Scotland, UK: Christian Focus. 2008. 208 pp. \$12.99. paper.

Review by Amy Lin, Education Pastor, Evangelical Formosan Church of Irvine, doctoral student, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, La Mirada, CA.

This is a practical book written from a theological perspective. It shows parents and the church how to nurture children to become Christ's disciples. Sisemore believes that "a firm understanding of all the Bible teaches about children, placed into a theological framework, will provide the only sufficient basis upon which to build methods of ministering to our children in our homes and churches" (17–18). The reason he wrote this book is "to examine the entire teaching of the Bible that relates to children, to systematize it, and use this foundation to develop strategies that more adequately enable us to minister effectively to our children" (16). Dr. Tim Sisemore is Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Counseling at the Psychological Studies Institute in Atlanta and Chattanooga. He has a PhD in Clinical Psychology and an MA in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary. This book was previously published in 2003 with the title *Of Such Is the Kingdom* (UK: Christian Focus). He and his wife Ruth had also written another book titled *World-Proof Your Kids* (UK: Christian Focus, 2007). This book consists of 13 chapters that can be divided into three main parts. The first part, chapters 1 to 4, is about the theology of children. The second part, from chapter 5 to 8, is about the biblical nurturing of children at home. The third part, from chapter 9 to 12, is about the biblical nurturing of children in the church. The last chapter is a summary.

Chapter 1 is titled "Christian Parenting in a Hostile World." From a Christian psychologist's point of view, Sisemore claims, "We misunderstood the threats to our children and have offered shallow solutions to very deep problems" (9). He urges Christian parents and church leaders to examine all

that the Bible says about children, place it into a comprehensive theological framework, and use it as a foundation to build our ministry to children. He calls it “a theology of children” (18, 19). In chapter 2, “Blessings, Not Burdens,” Sisemore refers to Psalm 127:3 that children are special gifts from God. We do not want to lose our gifts. Therefore, we should “strengthen our understanding of the Christian attitude toward children” (24). He encourages readers to respond to God’s generosity in giving us precious children. He suggests that we should (a) defend the lives of children, (b) adopt unwanted children, (c) encourage childless couples, (d) care for the sick and dying children, and (e) treasure our children at home and church.

Chapter 3 is titled “Innocents or Devils? The Spiritual Nature of Children.” This chapter leads us to a major theme of this book: “Parenting techniques must flow from a biblical understanding of the nature of children” (39). Children are born in the image of God; however, they are also conceived and born in sin, subject to its penalty of death. Children need to be taught the need for God’s saving grace; thus, they are motivated towards the goal of holiness. Chapter 4 carries an interesting title, “How and When Can Children Be Saved.” This chapter discusses whether children need to be saved, and if so, how it is accomplished. The topics of infant death and how children become Christians are discussed in this chapter. The concept of “children of the covenant” (66) is introduced. Sisemore reminds his readers that covenants are made with families rather than individuals, and children are included in these covenants (Gen 17:7 and Acts 2:39).

In chapter 5, “Cultivating Godly Children: What’s a Parent To Do?” Sisemore uses an analogy to help parents understand how to nurture children effectively. He claims that “children are like the garden: they need constant nurturing if they are to mature spiritually” (72). However, he also stresses that children’s growth in spiritual life is not by the parents’ works, but granted by God’s grace. He emphasizes that parents need to seek biblical wisdom and God’s grace. In addition, he outlines the elements for family worship. Chapter 6, titled “The School of Life: Parents Are Teachers,” shows how clearly the Bible places parents in the role of spiritual teachers. It consists of the content and context of parental teaching. Chapter 7 is titled “Disciplining Disciples.” Sisemore emphasizes the biblical teachings about discipline. He discusses practical principles for managing children’s behavior and options for rewards and punishments. In chapter 8, “Teaching Children to Honor Their Parents,” Sisemore makes reference to John Calvin and discusses the three aspects of honoring parents: (a) to teach children to regard their parents with reverence, (b) to obey their parents, and (c) to have gratitude towards their parents (125). He refers to Adolf Hitler’s thinking in that we may force children’s obedience to parents, but we cannot force children to respect parents from the heart. We need to help children keep the fifth

commandment by honoring their parents. This is the first commandment with a promise and with consequences.

Starting from chapter 9, "Where Do Children Fit in the Church?" Sisemore begins to lead us to the theme of nurturing children in the church. To consider the place children have within the church, he offers two suggestions. First is to look at Jesus' life and teachings in order to understand how Jesus interacted with children and what children's position was in Jesus' earthly ministry. Second is to look into the Bible about the status of children in the worshipping community. Sisemore writes a small section of covenant theology on pages 140–143 explaining the biblical view of "children of the covenant" (140). In his implications for churches, he urges "men of the church to consider teaching children in Sunday school" (143) because the example of godly men is of great worth to children. He also urges pastors and church leadership to know the children in their congregation and pray for them by name.

Chapter 10 is titled "Children and the Sacraments." In this chapter, Sisemore explains circumcision as a sign of the covenant, the relationship of circumcision to baptism, and the significance of baptism. He also explains the reason behind churches' denial of young children at the table of the Lord. The purpose of chapter 11, "From the Mouths of Babes," is to demonstrate biblical references to children in worshipping God and to raise our awareness that God is glorified by the worship of children. In chapter 12, "The Spiritual Nurture of Children in the Church," Sisemore offered suggestions for the church: church leaders are to pray for children, provide mentors for children, teach children to think critically and to guard their hearts from the negative influences of the world, etc. Two important questions—"when should children take communion?" (177) and "who is in charge of the children?" (180)—were discussed in this chapter. The last chapter, chapter 13, titled "Practical Steps Toward Change," provides practical ways for family and church to make changes to nurture children. The end of the book also included endnotes from each chapter. It is Sisemore's hope that this book will serve as a "commence" (192) point for readers to nurture children to be disciples.

I appreciate Sisemore's boldness in directly pointing out our blindness and lack of awareness of our situations; we live in a society like "the frog in the kettle" (10). We face the dangers of lost truth, face the challenge from the newest view of humanity called postmodernism, mistreat children as miniature adults, and fail to protect children as they should be. Sisemore urges us to respond to these contemporary issues. As an education pastor, I agree with Sisemore that we need to go back to the Scripture, to learn from a theological perspective, to gain a more fully biblical worldview, to understand children's nature and nurture them. However, I do not think that we should live like the Puritans, which is the view that Sisemore holds. After all, we are living in the 21st century and need to advance forward. The Puritans' lifestyle is not going

to fit in this society, and our children will not follow that direction. What we can do is to follow the Bible's teaching and equip our children to guard their hearts. When they understand that their true identity is in Christ and treasure biblical values in their lives, they will be able to stand firm to face life's challenges such as abortion, sexuality, violence, and mass media influences, etc.

Sisemore includes the topic of "the goal of parenting" in chapter 5. He proposes that the goal for Christian parenting is "to raise children through guidance and discipline to faith in Christ, so that they glorify him in every area of their lives, eventually passing the faith on to their children" (74, 184). He uses a helpful analogy to discuss how we can "garden" (72) our children effectively. In regard to this parenting topic, I recommend a book titled *Kid CEO: How To Keep Your Children from Running Your Life* written by Ed Young (2004, Warner Faith, New York, NY.). The book is based on God's timeless principles and is filled with practical wisdom on parenting that we all can benefit from.

I like Sisemore's job description, which was defined by a 7-year-old young girl: "You are a doctor who takes people who aren't sick and makes them better" (174). The pastor is like the doctor of the church. I am not only caring for children's physical needs, but, most importantly, I am trying to nurture them spiritually to become Christ's disciples. I appreciate Sisemore's suggestions; however, from a practical point of view, I need to say that Sisemore at times seemed idealistic, and I have some reservations. My church is an Asian-American church in which parents greatly value their children. However, I still face challenges in convincing my church to assign pastors, elders, or deacons to be responsible for the children's ministry, let alone to have them lift up each child by name in prayer or to have individual mentors for them. Although I think that these are great goals for my church to pursue. I agree with Sisemore's emphasis on the catechism. My church had parents and Sunday school children study the kid's catechism at home for 3 years. We all agreed that they truly benefited from this practice.

Last, but not least, I appreciate Sisemore bringing up the importance of a philosophy of ministry to children. Theological differences will cause many unnecessary difficulties in ministering to children in the church. It is important for pastors and church leaders to agree upon the theological view of children. Therefore, for those who are involved in the children's ministry, it is imperative to have the appropriate biblical direction to nurture children.

My overall evaluation of the book is four out of five stars; the reason is that some of Sisemore's suggestions are idealistic. It is my assumption that because of his profession in psychological counseling, he may not have as much hands-on church ministry experience; therefore, he made some suggestions that are hard to implement. I still would recommend this book to parents and church leaders, because this book is addressed to "all the faithful

who are burdened for our children and their nurture in our church and our homes” (20), which includes children’s parents, church leaders, Sunday school teachers, school teachers, physicians, counselors, tutors, care-givers, etc. They would all benefit from reading the book to have a new and biblical view of nurturing children in the home and church.



Theology for a troubled believer: An introduction to the Christian faith. By Diogenes Allen. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 2010. 223 pp. \$19.95. paper.

Review by Eddy F. Carder, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Prairie View A & M University, Prairie View, TX; Resident Fellow, B. H. Carroll Theological Institute, Arlington, TX.

For those who are unfamiliar with the vocabulary, methods, and issues of philosophical inquiry and who view philosophy as an esoteric discipline incompatible with and irreconcilable to Christian faith, Allen’s most recent work emerges as a welcome and helpful companion. Allen demonstrates how it can be done, while maintaining the highest respect for the biblical material. Allen’s work has as its origin the practical concerns of a fellow parishioner exploring the intellectual legitimacy of personal Christian faith. He arranges the work in five parts, addressing questions concerning the nature of God, the problem of suffering, the philosophical/theological implications of the person and work of Christ, dimensions of the Christian life, issues related to the believer’s responsiveness to God, including the Spirit, the church, the sacraments, sin, and Christian hope.

The work begins with Professor Allen’s explanation of the origin of the work in response to a fellow parishioner’s curiosity concerning the intellectual legitimacy of his personal Christian faith. What follows is an intensely pragmatic account of the philosophical questions raised in the midst of the life of faith and the proposed resolutions to these struggles by Christian theology. Allen sets out to address “the troubled reflection which is quite typical of any thinking person” in contemporary culture (x). He strives to provide a theological bridge between what a person “knows as a modern person” and “what he hears said in churches” (x). Allen’s objective “is to supply information that readers need to help them in their own thought and life” and the result is a theological work, which is more personal and intellectually pragmatic than most works of theology (xi).

From the outset, Allen recognizes the authority of the biblical material for theology and proceeds to address interpretative matters in a hermeneutically responsible manner, demonstrating a high regard for the biblical text.

While granting primacy to the role of the biblical material in the foundation of theology, Allen acknowledges the indebtedness of theology as an academic discipline to the intellectual quests of the ancient Greeks.

Part I contains five chapters devoted to an examination of the nature of God. In the first chapter, Allen focuses upon God's holiness, the attribute he considers to be central to God's character. Utilizing the story of the call of Moses (Exod 3), Allen explores the dual characteristics of God as immanent and transcendent. In chapter 2, Allen focuses upon the call of Isaiah (Isa 6) as an interpretive guide in understanding further dimensions of God's holiness, which stands in contradistinction to the call of Moses in that Isaiah's call reflects a God of "power, wisdom and goodness" (21). Through the utilization of selected portions of the biblical material, biographical work of leading theologians and, much to the reader's surprise, secular political theory, as well as examples from secular literature, Allen advocates on behalf of a God who further reveals his holiness as one who strives to give himself to humanity and thereby provide meaning, purpose, and value to personhood in particular, and life in general. In chapter 3, after having given attention to God's revelation of himself in the experience of Moses and Isaiah, Allen presents his understanding of the distinctiveness of the Jewish view of the creation event among their neighbors, stressing the biblical emphasis upon the historicity of the creation event, an event that has its origins in time and space, as well as the distinctiveness of the Jewish understanding of creation in comparison with the Greek understanding of the eternal existence of the cosmos. Chapter 4, "The Limitations of Science," purports that while science devotes attention to the examination of the uniformity and the laws of the universe, it is beyond the scope and capacity of science to focus upon the metaphysical question of the ultimate origins of the cosmos. Chapter 5 is devoted to an examination of what is meant by the designation "God." In contradistinction to the Greek philosophical worldview that understood God as part of the universe stands the biblical perspective of God as the creator and sustainer of the universe.

Part II consists of three chapters and offers a Christian apologetic in response to the philosophical and ever-present existential reality of suffering. In chapter 6, "Nature as a Witness and Innocent Suffering," Allen speaks to the problem of evil and suffering in relationship to the question of human innocence by utilizing material from the story of Job, reframing the debate regarding the issue. Chapter 8 is devoted to "Suffering from Nature and Extreme Human Cruelty." Allen responds to the work of the skeptic David Hume, who alleged that it is impossible to maintain a sustaining belief in God upon examination of the brutality and inconsistency of the natural world. Allen advocates, to the contrary, that evil and suffering must be viewed as "the total event," a perspective borrowed from the work of Julia de Beauvoir.

Part III contains four chapters presenting Allen's understanding of divine sacrifices in the creation, the incarnation, the temptation, and the cross. Chapter 9 is devoted to an examination of what Allen terms "Sacrifices in Creation" in which he argues, "Since God lacks nothing and is not under any other compulsion, God's creative action is one of self-sacrificing love" (88). Chapter 10 focuses upon the concept of "Incarnation as Sacrifice." Allen understands the incarnation to be a reflection of the reality that "the Son is also the agent of the redemption of the human race from sin, evil, and death" (96). He explores with amazing insight the implications of God's self-imposed limitations in the incarnational act of redemption. In chapter 11, Allen turns to the topic of "Temptation in the Wilderness," focusing upon the Matthean account of the temptation (4:1-1). He addresses the reality of the temptation events in the life of Christ and relates the experience in terms of humanity's existential concerns such as the desire for safety, immunity from harm, the human pursuit of security, and the desire to avoid loss. Allen argues that Christ's temptation experience demonstrates to the marred human community how these human anxieties may be addressed through Christian faith. Chapter 12 consists of an examination of the atonement. Allen writes, "Atonement is the restoration of the human capacity to know, love, and obey God—the restoration of the image that God bestowed in his first creation." (127).

The three chapters comprising Part IV focus upon the nature of the Christian life. Chapter 13 is a consideration of "The Resurrection of Jesus and Eternal Life." Professor Allen refuses to define eternal life in terms of quantity. He proposes an alternative view of eternal life, which consists of a qualitative definition for eternal life, understanding eternal life as a life that is free of failure, guilt, sorrow, rivalry, gossip, boasting, envy, jealousy, strife, boredom, and a multiplicity of other existential challenges to human existence. Chapter 14 of the work examines "Jesus as Lord and Jesus as Servant." In a unique perspective, Allen examines the implications of the paradoxical dimension of being a Christ-follower, being set free on the one hand and taking upon self a new master or lord on the other. Allen explores how these two polarities are complementary rather than contradictory in the context of being a follower of Christ. In chapter 15, Allen ponders the relationship of "Revelation and Faith," and argues persuasively that reason is at the core of Christian faith and that "our reason is integrally related to revelation and to faith" (136). He elaborates upon the implications of this conclusion by pointing out that this validation of reason by Christianity has led to the impressive emergence and accomplishments of science in the Western world.

The two chapters comprising Part V address avenues for human response to God in Christian faith. Chapter 16 probes the topic of "The Holy Spirit, the Church and the Sacraments." For Allen, the arrival of the Holy

Spirit gave birth to a new community, the church, in which context barriers of all sorts are transcended as Christ's followers gather together to observe and celebrate this unity through the sacraments. Finally, chapter 17 is given to a consideration of "Sin, Evil, and Hope for the Future." Perhaps one of the most interesting insights provided by Allen in this portion centers upon his concept of sin in the contemporary culture. Allen proposes that the emergence of the Enlightenment mentality, with its optimistic view of human nature and potential, dealt a neutralizing and perhaps devastating blow to the understanding of humanity as marred by sin. Allen counters, however, that the reality of humanity's sin is indisputable, writing, "Sin is the only Christian doctrine that is empirical" (185). Allen concludes the work with an epilogue summarizing the material contained in the previous chapters of the work.

Allen strives to maintain a unifying theme that focuses upon the issue of evil and suffering, but it is questionable as to the extent to which he accomplishes this well-intended objective. Allen's proposed resolution to a proper understanding of the origin of evil and suffering on the basis of the so-called Free Will Defense Argument, in this writer's conclusion, fails to take the problem of evil and suffering seriously.

One of the strengths of Allen's works, his allegiance to the biblical material, is also conversely problematic. While Allen's work is commendably strong in its utilization of the biblical material and while it is apparent that Allen is very comfortable with the texts of Scripture, it is also true that such a dependence creates the appearance of a lack of appreciation for philosophical perspectives on the issues of God's nature, Christological identity, the Christological mission, and evil and suffering. Admittedly, however, Allen's intent is to write a "theology."

Allen's work is strong in its emphasis upon, and utilization of, the biblical material. It is obvious that Allen is very familiar with and comfortable with the biblical narratives and that he possesses an admirable capacity to relate those narratives in creatively and hermeneutically legitimate ways to the contemporary human struggle.

In addition, one has to appreciate Allen's philosophical bent and his ability to couch philosophical content, considerations, and ambiguity in material that is readable and practical. While philosophy of religion has fallen upon hard times in many, if not most, departments of philosophy in the academy, it is refreshing to be exposed to the work of a philosopher such as Allen who is more than capable of bringing both Athens and Jerusalem together in an intellectually credible fashion for the contemporary mind.

An additional strength to the work is its stylistic and substantive appeal to the laity. As previously alluded to, Allen himself attests to the work having as its origin in the questions of a particular church member searching out the intellectual credibility of Christian faith. Further, Allen points out that the

material presented in the book was exposed to the mind of the church members and not just the professional theologians and philosophers through a study group in a local congregation.

Admittedly, portions of the work will be laborious for the non-professional theologian or philosopher, but it is this writer's conclusion that this is due more to the complex nature of the topics under consideration than to authorial flaw.

Those contemporary cerebrally doubting Thomases who find themselves in the midst of questions regarding the intellectual credibility of their faith, and who find themselves caught between the crushing questions of contemporary culture regarding complicated issues and the Christian worldview that may seem antiquated in light of the current human situation, will find Allen's work *Theology for a Trouble Believer: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* to be a helpful, substantive, and readable guide through the maze.

Diogenes Allen is Stuart Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Princeton Theological Seminary and the author of numerous works, including *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989) and *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985), co-written with Eric O. Springstead.



Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults. By Patricia Cranton. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (2nd Edition). 2006. 228 pp. \$45.00.

Review by Hokyung Paul Kang, doctoral student at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, La Mirada, CA.

Thomas Kuhn (1962) introduced the world to the concept of paradigm shift when his seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) was published, and since then, the concept of paradigm and worldview shift has been widely adopted in various disciplines of academia. Adult education is no exception. However, Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory is, perhaps, the most renowned view pertinent to perspective shift. Transformative learning theory deals with the learning experiences of a person as revisions are being made of previously held views and beliefs. Since earning a PhD from the University of Toronto, the primary research interests of the author, Patricia Cranton, have been the areas of teaching and learning in higher education, transformative and self-directed learning, and most recently, authenticity and individuation.

For the initial stages of development of transformative learning theory, we are largely indebted to Jack Mezirow, who focused on the cognitive and ra-

tional domains of the learning process. However, Cranton argues that transformative learning does not have to be entirely cognitive, or rational—there are other domains of human learning that instructors should be mindful of. Cranton explicitly lays out her foundational thesis in the early part of the book (2). This revised edition differs from the original publishing, as it supplements additional chapters dealing with learners' individual differences in learning experience, extrarational knowledge, communal learning, and empowerment.

The book is divided into two sections. The first (chapters 1–5) lays out the contents of transformative learning. The second (chapters 6–10) elaborates on the practicalities and strategies for implementing it in the context of adult education. In the first chapter, Cranton identifies important features of adult learning in relation to transformative learning. Referring to theorists such as Knowles, Dewey, and Mezirow, Cranton identifies some key elements to adult learning, emphasizing the holistic nature of adult learning by appealing to facilitation of critical self-reflection, exploration, and intuition with no further reference to the world outside of the self (7).

Chapter 2 traces the development of transformative learning theory from the beginning to its consequent phases of increasing complexity and comprehensiveness. At the core of transformative learning development, the shift in frames of reference and points of view is evident. The development of transformative learning theory coincides with the way the concept of reference has evolved. The pioneer of the theory, Mezirow, first proposed a three-part reference: epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological. However, Cranton claims the transformative learning theory has developed into stages where three additional domains should be recognized, namely, moral-ethical, philosophical, and aesthetic habits of mind (24–27). Cranton's intention is clear as she expresses, even from the introductory part of the book, that there is more than cognitive and worldview transformation in transformative learning.

Cranton continues to argue in the third chapter that the theory of transformative learning is still in development, illustrating this with several critiques. These critiques propose several learning domains that could possibly complement and bring the theory closer to completion: relational learning, learning that promotes social change, group learning, and ecological learning (56).

Chapter 4 describes the learner's experience during transformative learning. Cranton claims that it is possible to learn more about the learner's experience of transformative learning when critical self-reflection and discourse are employed. She illustrates this with four types of transformative learning experiences: empowerment, disorienting event, questioning assumptions and perspective, and discourse. Although transformative learning

involves both rational and extrarational transformation, Cranton contends that it is more often a gradual accumulation of ordinary experiences that leads to a deep shift in thinking and perspective (77).

In the fifth chapter, the author emphasizes the need to recognize the differing learning styles and learning needs individuals have. In fact, this idea is expanded throughout the last half of the book (116, 134, 158, 180, 199). Utilizing Jung's psychological-type theory, Cranton claims that transformative learning experience varies among learners with different psychological traits (99). Diversity in individual learning is another prominent addition to the second edition.

The strategies for implementing transformative learning theory are detailed from chapter 6 to the end of the book. She lists the qualities of the educator in transformative learning in chapter 6. In general, there are three types of knowledge that an instructor could deliver within the transformative learning context—technical, communicative, and emancipator knowledge—with the instructor's role changing in each of these three contexts. Teachers are to be experts in the instrumental field when teaching technical knowledge, facilitators when delivering communicative knowledge, and reformists when delivering emancipatory knowledge. Cranton mentions additional qualities of transformative teachers, such as balanced use of power between teacher and learner and authenticity (116).

Chapter 7 deals with empowering students. Educators could utilize tools like discourse and decision making to promote the exercise of power by adult learners (119). They would become competent at asking complex questions and inquiring about pre-existing assumptions when they begin to exercise their power appropriately.

Chapter 8 also contains some valuable strategies for promoting critical self-reflection and self-knowledge that are the impetus for transformative learning. Critical questioning, consciousness-rating strategies (role plays, simulation, life histories), keeping a journal, thinking about and discussing critical incidents in participants' lives, and arts-based activities are some of the valuable educational strategies (156).

The importance of community and corporate learning is highlighted in chapter 9. A teacher in a transformative learning context has to realize that she or he cannot become everything for everyone. Student contributions in a communal setting become critical when there are actual transformational experiences. Such experiences can be liberating and joyful for some; however, they could be traumatic for others. Networks and support groups outside the classroom could greatly support learners going through real-life transitions (179).

The last chapter is the author's counsel to the educators who desire to implement transformative learning in their respective teaching contexts. First,

Cranton encourages educators to become aware of themselves as people and practitioners of transformative learning. Articulating their own assumptions and continuous critical reflection on those assumptions are highly encouraged for teachers. Engaging in dialogue with students is central to becoming a transformative learner. Finally, Cranton's advice to educators is for them to experience and model the transformative learning process for themselves.

Cranton does more than just help readers to understand the theory of transformative learning and to promote the theory to educators. Cranton seems to intentionally leave much room for furthering development of somewhat popularized adult learning theories. Rather than inculcating readers with solid, succinct, theories and concepts regarding transformative learning, she encourages readers to be attentive to other possible scenarios and contexts where transformative learning could occur. For instance, Cranton does not conclude that shifts in habits of mind occur only progressively, nor does she confine the process of transformation to epochal. She acknowledges other possibilities for how transformative learning could occur in relation to psychological/personality types and learning types. Also, she remarks that transformative learning could be seen as equivalent to actions and experiences, but warns readers that actions are not necessary indicators of the transformative learning process, as critical reflection and critical self-reflection could function as cumulative elements of the whole learning process. And perhaps this is the strength of the book. It opens up new ground and possibilities for adult educators by encouraging them to consider other possible domains of learning—such as cognitive, affective, spiritual, and communal—as transformation of a learner's frame of reference or point of view cannot be triggered by applying just one type of teaching or by affecting one particular domain of learning.

One of the new trends that Cranton notices, within the current development of transformative learning, is extrarational knowing and learning that impacts the soul. Cranton seems to advocate Dirkx's view as he connects extrarational knowledge with learning that impacts the soul of the person, "We experience soul through art, music, and film." ". . . in nurturing soul, we attend to not only the intellectual aspects of the learning environment, but to the emotional, spiritual, social, and physical aspects as well" (51). Although Cranton and Dirkx's view on spirit and soul may somewhat differ from that of evangelical Christians, promoting learning that transcends the rational realm is certainly a noble goal that appeals to all educators from diverse contexts. How many times do we miss the fact that long lasting learning experiences occur outside the boundary of rational intake? How many times is our lesson preparation aimed at structured learning experiences that leave a long lasting imprint on a students' soul? Cranton's proposition is a welcome challenge for contemporary educators.

Another theme that Cranton deals with within the book is the foundational educational philosophy of the transformative learning theory, that is, constructivism. In fact, the author explicitly states that transformative learning theory is based on constructivism (23). Constructivism by nature emphasizes learning experiences during the learning process. The challenge as Christian educators is to embrace appropriate balance between the text (Scripture) and the learning experiences of the students. The question remains whether the learning experiences for the students are to be elevated to such a level where the text, content, and universal truths are intentionally undermined for the sake of learning experience when transformative learning is practiced. Interestingly, Cranton recognizes this potential problem and briefly confesses the following in the book: "If we were to claim the existence of absolute truths or universal constructs that are independent of our knowledge of them, the goal of learning would be to discover the right answers rather than to reflect on our perspectives of the world" (23). And as was pointed out, the challenge for Christian educators who are attempting to implement transformative learning is to balance the learning experience with discovery of absolute truth. Christian educators must not fall into trap of just promoting learning experiences, but simultaneously realize the magnitude of divine and absolute truths impacting students' worldview and perspective on life. Indeed, a competent educator is the one who promotes transformation in students' worldview by being able to create learning experiences and facilitate students' exposure to divine and absolute truths.

In all, Cranton's book is a great reference for educators in adult education and for those who wish to promote transformative learning in their context. The book does not provide detailed and practical transformative learning strategies, but it does a satisfactory job of motivating readers to consider areas of teaching that they may have overlooked, in order to promote transformative learning. This book is relevant to educators who wish to promote transformative learning strategies in the Christian higher education setting and who are willing to explore and experiment with diverse learning strategies for the purpose of rendering transformation in students' worldviews, value systems, and spiritual lives.



Teaching that transforms: Facilitating life change through adult Bible teaching.

By Rick and Shera Melick. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group. 2010. 337 pp. \$ 29.99.

Review by Denise Moitinho, Adjunct Online Professor of Christian Leadership and Discipleship, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA.

Rick and Shera Melick bring to this book a wealth of knowledge that comes from their diverse academic and ministerial backgrounds. Rick is a dynamic writer in the field of theology and also an experienced minister, professor, and administrator who served as president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, TX. He currently serves as the director of the Academic Graduate Studies program and professor of New Testament Studies at Golden Gate Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, CA. Similarly, Shera Melick's ministry experience ranges from Christian school administration to college and graduate school teaching. She currently serves as a professor of educational leadership at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. Thus, one would be correct in assuming that the Melicks' academic and ministerial life experience provides a rich platform for their unique contribution to the theoretical and practical aspects of this book.

The authors express a conservative evangelical tone throughout *Teaching That Transforms*. They intelligently affirm the authority of the Bible and the need to make it relevant to today's learners. They attempt to incorporate both traditional and contemporary elements, as well as hermeneutical and educational principles, in order to formulate a more comprehensive method of teaching. By doing so, they hope that both teachers and learners will experience spiritual maturity and develop confidence in the Scriptures as they engage in the process of teaching and learning. Moreover, they hope that teachers will be intentional in teaching to change lives by equipping learners to be ready to act on the knowledge they have obtained.

The book is divided into three carefully crafted parts. Part 1 provides information concerning the understanding of the Bible and hermeneutics in chapters 1–5. Building on part 1, part 2 discusses foundational theories of adult learning, which are fully presented in chapters 6 and 7. Finally, part 3 covers chapters 8–13 and introduces the authors' Star Method of Transformational Teaching, which is a practical method of integrating biblical knowledge and teaching principles.

The authors' emphasis on the Bible as the inspired Word of God can be seen clearly in chapter 1 as they discuss theological issues such as revelation, inspiration, and canonization of the Bible. Concerning revelation, the authors explain both general and special revelation. They emphasize that general revelation can be seen in creation and in the fact that God has created people in His own image. Additionally, they list miracles, the incarnation of Jesus, and the Bible as part of the special revelation of God. The Melicks believe that teachers need to be knowledgeable of these topics and that "everything that the Christian teacher considers true must have a biblical foundation" (10).

While chapter 1 focuses on the Bible as God's inspired Word, chapter 2 grows out of a desire to motivate teachers to study the Bible systematically, so

that they are able to understand it and its relevance to today's learners. The authors also believe that the Bible contains "language, style, structure, and meaning" (33) and emphasize that proper interpretation of the biblical texts involves an understanding of language, worldview, and culture. Thus, they acknowledge that the Bible "was inspired by God, but written by men" (40) and that "any interpretation derived by modern readers must correspond to the meaning intended by the author and understood by the ancient reader" (36). Moreover, they contend that conversion coupled with appropriate Bible study tools is a must for the teacher to be successful in studying the Bible systematically.

In order to provide readers with an understanding of the Bible as literature, chapter 3 discusses form and genre and briefly lists examples of genre found in the Bible, such as poetry, parables, miracles, narrative, gospel, history, epistles, apocalyptic, and proverbs. Learning about form and genre promotes the idea that teachers "must be sensitive to how literature works to inform and move the reader" (70). For this reason, the authors end this chapter by addressing the importance of understanding principles obtained throughout Christian history and state that "generations of Christian thinkers developed, agreed on, and followed [these] principles" (70). Furthermore, 21st-century teachers would benefit from developing an understanding of the literary components of Scriptures.

While acknowledging the power of the Holy Spirit to instruct and guide the Christian teacher, chapter 4 discusses the importance of Bible study tools. The authors affirm, "The Holy Spirit has an affinity for the biblically educated mind" (71). And, in order to educate the minds of readers, this chapter provides information on two important theories involved in Bible translation and how to identify outstanding Bible translations. The chapter also acknowledges that the Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, and in various geographical and cultural settings. Thus, Bible study preparation should involve the use of resources, such as Bible concordances, atlases, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, computer resources, and Bible commentaries, to name a few.

Chapter 5 provides teachers with an understanding of spiritual growth patterns and stresses holiness as the goal of growth and conversion as the beginning of transformation. Growing out of this understanding, the writers clearly indicate that the process of transformation involves a practical change at conversion that brings about a change of values, ambitions, and pleasures in the life of the believer. Additionally, they emphasize that knowledge, choices, and power are important elements in Christian growth. Thus, "when proper knowledge, choices, and power work together, knowledge is brought to completion: theoretical becomes actual experience" (98).

Part 2 of the book builds on the previous chapters as the authors introduce two adult learning theories in chapters 6 and 7. They explain andragogy and self-directed theory with the intention of educating teachers on current and influential adult learning theories. Furthermore, the chapters provide background information on these theories which include history, criticism, application, and how they fit into the Christian education model. They further state the rationale for looking into these theories and emphasize that Christian educators should evaluate “all research and every theory in the light of God’s Word, selecting from secularists the truths that are synchronous with the Bible” (114).

Once the authors have covered the foundational elements in adult Bible teaching, they move into the presentation of their own model, the Star Method of Transformational Teaching. From chapters 8–13, they expose the readers to a detailed description of this new method. The star symbol is used to facilitate the understanding of the model. The center of “the star is the goal of Christian life and that of Christian education” (150). On the five points of the star the concepts of *relationship*, *relevance*, *revelation*, *responsibility*, and *results* are listed. Additionally, the 14 principles that stemmed from the authors’ analysis of adult learning theories are presented along with biblical passages for each principle.

As expected, the authors start with the concept of *relationship*. This relationship involves the teacher’s relationship to God, to the Bible, and to the learner. The authors argue that these relationships are possible due to the fact that “the Holy Spirit connects the believer to God the Father through interpreting the truth of Scripture and urging obedience” (154). The results of teachers’ spiritual growth spill into their relationship with their students in the form and expression of agape love. Consequently, the teachers’ positive relationship to learners is demonstrated when they take into account the learners’ preferred styles of learning and engage in positive interactions that foster empowerment and growth. Moreover, the authors introduce four types of learners: *Discerners*, *Constructors*, *Excavators*, and *Activists*.

In chapter 10, the authors contend that *relevance* is crucial in teaching *Discerner*-type learners. They stress that the role of teachers is to make relevance a priority as they provide a positive learning atmosphere, make productive use of technology, and develop effective lesson plans. Thus, the authors want readers to make relevance an active ingredient in their teaching by explaining how relevance fits into the Transformational Teaching Model.

In chapter 11, the authors present *revelation* as another component of the Transformational Model. They believe that this component provides support for the *Constructor*-type learner, and it is understood as that part of the lesson plan that focuses on answering questions related to the original

meaning, audience, and author of the biblical text. Moreover, *revelation* also involves communication skills and techniques. Thus, they assert, “The teacher sharpens skills in oral, visual, and interactive communication so that the learning environment surrounds the learners with sensory learning opportunity” (238).

Responsibility is the main theme of chapter 12. The call for responsibility is expressed as an application of what the learner has learned. The chapter also emphasizes that *Excavator*-type learners need an opportunity to apply what they have learned. Consequently, it is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure that the lesson plan supports the connecting responsibilities proposed by the Transformational Model.

The writers close the book by addressing *results*, the last point of the Star Method of Transformational Teaching. According to the Melicks, teachers must “facilitate learning experiences that bridge the historical and the contemporary” (256) world and guide students into applying “scripture truths to today’s needs” (256). That is accomplished through means of evaluation that moves students to respond to the knowledge they have acquired. Hence, the chapter supports *Activist*-type learners. The authors believe that results are connected to “obeying scripture and making choices that enable [individuals] to be more like Christ” (258).

Undoubtedly, the book contributes to the field of Christian education in many ways. First, all the chapters reflect the idea that “Christian education by definition must be strong in both” hermeneutical and educational principles (ix). Thus, the authors have intentionally attempted to integrate theoretical and practical principles, and from this integration they attempted to formulate a teaching model that is transformational in nature. However, one notices that the book does not discuss whether the Transformational Model has been researched or evaluated to test its effectiveness. Such evaluation would add more credibility to this model.

Second, the book definitely contributes to the continuing education and training of adult Bible teachers. The writers believe that “many who teach adults have little or no exposure to the distinctive characteristics of adult learners” (1), and for this reason they have poured all their energy into the development of this outstanding resource. This is very significant when considering the growing amount of online adult education in the world today and the need to understand the adult learner. However, in this visual generation, the authors might need to consider an inclusion of a DVD or a website presenting the Transformational Model in action, so that readers can have the opportunity to see how the model works in a classroom setting. A visual presentation will influence the adoption of this newly developed teaching model.

Third, although the book is geared towards adult Bible teachers, those involved in teaching and leading adults such as pastors, professors, and prac-

tioners in various Christian ministries can benefit from the reading of this book. The fact that it focuses on hermeneutics and social sciences makes this book a good candidate for becoming a supplemental reading in seminary courses, such as in adult Christian education classes. Overall, the book is both technical and practical, and for this reason it can become a catalyst in helping the teacher gain knowledge about the Bible, the learner, and about himself or herself. Unquestionably, this triad, which is essential in the teaching and learning process, has been eloquently addressed by Rick and Shera Melick.



Teaching in a distant classroom. By Michael H. Romanowski and Teri McCarthy. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books. 2009. 223pp. \$17.00 paper.

Review by Rex E. Johnson, Associate Professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership, Biola University, La Mirada, CA.

Are you planning to teach overseas or take a ministry team to any country outside the US? If so, *Teaching in a Distant Classroom* is a must read for you before you even begin preliminary planning. Dr. Michael Romanowski was a tenured professor of education at Ohio Northern University before taking his family to the Middle East where he is a professor of education. He has also taught short-term in China, Russia, Africa, and Afghanistan. Dr. Teri McCarthy has taught long-term in China and Russia, and short-term in Holland, Nigeria, and Afghanistan. She is writer-in-residence for the International Institute for Christian Studies, and her travel and teaching experiences have taken her to nearly 50 nations.

The authors reveal their target readers in the introduction. They write so that (a) “seasoned veteran educators will better understand teaching overseas as a true Christian mission, with Christ’s lordship over all things” (9) (b) “Sink-or-swim instructors” will have a “starting point for shaping and focusing existing beliefs about the cross cultural classroom and for developing a more comprehensive Christian philosophy of education.” (c) Recent college graduates “will reflect about experiences in education and develop a working philosophy of education for teaching in a cross cultural environment.” It will also “help you consider how faith shapes your teaching and how teaching is a true Christian mission and calling.” (d) Inexperienced English as a Foreign Language instructors have a “vital resource and training manual to equip instructors in grappling with the complexities of teaching in preparation to teach in a distant EFL classroom.” (e) The authors also prescribe their book for other evangelical Christians who find themselves called to teach outside their homelands (10).

Even short-term ministry team leaders involved in cross cultural preaching, teaching, and conversations have in this book a wealth of help in team preparation so that ministry communication can be more sensitive and relevant to the target culture. This reviewer also suggests that anyone planning and developing distant classroom courses should first digest this book. This book is an easy read, especially for anyone who has traveled overseas for ministry or anyone planning to teach overseas.

As a teacher reads each chapter he or she develops an increasing conviction that teaching in a distant classroom involves much more than taking one's notes and experiences overseas and lecturing them. And a ministry leader begins to suspect that to simply transplant sermons, lessons, and witnessing tools may actually do more harm than good. At the very least, we need to know our own worldview and teaching philosophy, what we will include in and leave out of our curriculum, and what learning activities our prospective learners will appreciate. For this, we need a lot more information about our prospective students or our target audience than we normally take the time to acquire before travelling.

In chapter 1, the authors describe overseas teachers who see their teaching as simply what gets them into a country and their real job as evangelism. They show how this approach lacks integrity and often hinders both teaching effectiveness and evangelism. They contrast nonreligious motives with Christian motives for teaching overseas and challenge the readers to think deeply about our motives for going overseas, teaching overseas, and considering the mission organization or agency within which to minister overseas. The "Going Deeper, Going Further" sections at the end of each chapter challenge the reader to deeper consideration of questions, suggest exercises and activities to clarify our answers, and suggest articles, books, and web sites for further information and consideration. Finally, the Reference List at the end of each chapter adds a wealth of background and corollary resources to the preparing teacher or ministry leader.

Chapter 2 challenges the reader to understand and be able to articulate his or her worldview, how scriptural it is, and how it impacts teaching. As essential as this is in one's own culture, it is critically important in another culture in making connections with people, understanding their interpretations of our teaching, and articulating the gospel in behavior and explanation. The authors summarize, "As Christian teachers we must be able to articulate our worldview and understand the relationship between our stated worldview and our behavior. Our instruction, decisions and actions reveal what we really believe" (51).

Chapter 3 demonstrates the importance of working from a robust philosophy of education. Formational questions are listed, epistemological assumptions are compared, and responses to life in classroom and culture are

compared and related to one's philosophy of education. Most importantly, through a series of questions, the reader is challenged to make sure that his or her philosophy of teaching is Christian.

Chapter 4 addresses curricula—formal curriculum, then hidden and null curricula, showing how hidden and null curricula can offend students and colleagues and how they can sabotage a teacher's formal curriculum. The questions on hidden and null curricula are crucial not only for teaching in distant classrooms but also for teaching in American classrooms.

Chapter 5 shows how Jesus is the model teacher in his methods, relationships, and expertise, and how teachers can apply his methods in distant classrooms. Chapter 6 is full of practical applications for teaching, and chapter 7 describes the qualities of excellent teachers. These chapters are relevant to Christian teachers in America, but the authors continue to show how much more important they are in distant teaching.

Near the beginning of chapter 8 the authors write, "We can guarantee that what you expected when you signed up for your cross cultural teaching assignment and what you will actually face will be completely and totally different" (146). They show that expectations about students, classrooms and facilities, living conditions, faculty colleagues, daily life, sharing the gospel, and others will all be disappointed. But they also give the reader many suggestions for adaptation. Chapter 9 describes culture shock, its symptoms, and how to cope.

Chapter 10 deals specifically with teaching English as a Foreign Language including evaluating EFL curriculum, examining teaching methods and strategies through a Christian lens, and getting equipped to go teach. The authors added an interesting conclusion and three helpful appendices.

The book engages the reader immediately and makes sense smoothly. The authors' arguments are supported by reason, anecdotes, and experiences, as well as questions, suggested readings, and abundant references coming from an array of disciplines. The authors articulate their own worldviews and theological perspectives and describe how they dealt with worldview and theological clashes in distant education settings.

Teaching in a Distant Classroom is an essential resource for a far larger audience than the authors intended. Everyone intending to teach and/or minister overseas should have worked through the questions at the end of each chapter in a cross cultural or cross-ethnic context in America before going overseas. Without citing Dr. George Hunter specifically, this book supports his theses on outreach to people who have no previous background in Christianity. It provides ample suggestions for being the people of God who are living witnesses to life in God's kingdom and who demonstrate the gospel that connects people to God and provides an alternative to the slavery of sin. I recommend this book without reservations.



Awakening the quieter virtues. By Gregroy Spencer. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books. 2010. 196pp. \$16.00. paper

Review by Ellen Martin, Master of Arts, *Christian Education (2005)* and Master of Divinity (2010), Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

In *Awakening the Quieter Virtues: Discernment, Innocence, Authenticity, Modesty, Reverence, Contentment, Generosity*, Gregory Spencer offers fresh meaning and insight to this striking list of virtues. Each virtue is defined from a fresh perspective and then followed with a discipline designed to offer a foundation or framework for the practice of the virtue. In a noisy world that shouts down these quieter virtues, Spencer rings the bell in the hope that we might “hear what they have to tell us” (17). From chapter to chapter, Spencer works his way through the list. By the end, the reader stands with a wealth of new considerations about the virtuous life, but even more, an invitation is before the reader to embrace the virtues presented, so we might “imitate Jesus as we walk alongside him, to live in his presence as he would have us live” (183).

Spencer begins in chapter 1 with the noise of life and the invitation to hear the quieter virtues. While our culture “clamors for our attention . . . (with) noises about how to live, what is important, and who we need to be” (12), Spencer invites his audience to “find our way” towards the virtuous life Christ has set before us (17) and “to listen intently to the gentle whisper of God” (19). Before Spencer works through the list of quieter virtues, he briefly addresses the negative connotations of the words *virtue* and *quiet*. Spencer admits the loaded history of *virtue* with candid humor as a thing of the past for some and then presents the sum of his contemporary argument for *virtue*. “(V)irtue is . . . relevant, necessary, and exceedingly practical” (17) to live the life God has for us. It is not about perfect practices (17–18), but practices that lead to greater freedom (18). “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1). These *quiet* virtues “are offshoots of traditional virtues,” the cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance and the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love (18). The quieter virtues are not quiet, timid, or dull. The quieter virtues can make quite the noise, and so Spencer rings the bell for each virtue one chapter at a time.

To offer a summative presentation of the definitions and disciplines of each virtue would be equivalent to duplicating the appendix Spencer provides at the close of his book (187–188). The appendix reflects the critical role of the definitions and disciplines of the quieter virtues. They are the informational sum of the book, and yet alone they are insufficient. The true gift Spencer offers is not a list of new definitions and disciplines, but rather an understanding of these virtues from his shared perspective. Spencer has seen

these worn-out words from a new viewpoint. The gift is to see and hear this new viewpoint for ourselves, so the words become virtues that inform our life of faith.

Take for example innocence in chapter 3. Spencer begins with an illustrative life experience that informed his unique viewpoint on innocence as a virtue. Reflection on his viewing of Ruben's *Massacre of the Innocents* (an artistic interpretation of Matthew 21:1–18, the murder of the young boys in Bethlehem in King Herod's attempt to kill the Messiah) moved Spencer's thoughts "from *innocents* to *innocence*" (44–45). Herod was the ruler of the day who had the innocent slaughtered. As a communication studies professor at a Christian college, it is not a leap for the author to suggest "one of the chief power brokers of our times (who is) slaughtering our innocence" is Hollywood (46). He briefly argues Hollywood must attack innocence for the entertainment industry and media marketing campaigns to thrive (46). The suggestion seems reasonable enough, yet there is not likely to be any reorientation for the reader regarding innocence as a virtue.

At this point, Spencer moves away from his point made and provides an opportunity for the reader to ponder "the quality of innocence itself" with "a few innocent questions" (46–47). Spencer then presents the nature of innocence and virtue of innocence. "Innocence is both a state to be outgrown and a virtue to be maintained" (49). Spencer understands innocence as the virtue born of justice. We possess our innocence when we are without guilt (47). He substantiates the value of innocence for Christian formation with the teaching of Paul: "Be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (Rom 16:19) (49). Almost effortlessly, Spencer moves the reader from his initial point of moving from *innocents* to *innocence* in the face of injustices to a sound presentation of the virtue of innocence. His definition is now natural to embrace: "innocence is our sense of justice that sets good things free and binds up evil" (187).

Like a wise teacher, Spencer returns to his concern with the alluring hand of Hollywood that slaughters not just the innocence of children, but also the innocence of adults. He makes his point plain with three examples of "stories" Hollywood tells, and then moves to the story of hope, when innocence is found. By contrast of the virtue manifest weakly and powerfully, Spencer presents the value of the virtue. A strong virtue of innocence allows for an increased "ability to experience pleasures wholeheartedly" (57–58), "greater freedom" (59–60), and "a heightened sense of justice" (60–61). How do we enjoy these fruits of innocence? The discipline of advocacy allows us to bind up what is evil and set free what is good through prayer and "the exercise of reason" whenever our innocence is tempted or threatened (62–64).

The chapter ends with discussion/reflection questions and exercises. The questions are not easy fill-in-the-blanks that allow the reader to confirm

his/her comprehension and retention of the text. The questions require thought, honest consideration, and self-assessment. They invite the reader to become a child of God who walks more and more in the practice of these quieter virtues, so the reader may be more and more a voice in the world of the One who has gone before us, walks with us, and will come to walk these roads with us once again.

Gregory Spencer is a poet and his poetic flare colors the pages of his book. He is an artist who has used words to paint a picture, to ring a bell. Through illustrations from family life (his wife and three daughters) to life as a college professor, Spencer engages the realities of life, both life in Christ and life apart from Christ, and then offers words for those who long to live as children of God.

Gregory Spencer is a man of quieter virtues. He writes with reverence, innocence, discernment, and authenticity. His motive is at least in part reverence, for he has knelt before the sacred and stood up to the profane as he calls closer to God through the virtuous life (187). His argument for the good in the midst of the noise has been a discipline of advocacy as a man of innocence (187). With discernment, he has chosen words so that we might choose life and not death (187), yet for some his words may now and then create pause. Spencer is not naïve to the realities of the world in which he lives, and he is authentic enough to be honest about these realities (75). For those who are not accustomed to an honest recognition of life and the sin of humanity, this book may be in brief moments difficult to engage. For those who choose to use this book for spiritual formation with a group, some may be offended with his style, but this chance is well worth the risk for all the wisdom and understanding Spencer offers to those who dare to walk with him on this journey of “awakening the quieter virtues.”



The Brazos introduction to Christian spirituality. By Evan B. Howard. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. 2008. 496 pp. \$39.99.

By Linden D. McLaughlin, Chairman, Christian Education Department, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX.

Evan B. Howard covers a lot of terrain, symbolically speaking, regarding spiritual transformation and Christian spirituality in his book by that name. To the newcomer, this book certainly orients one to these subjects. That is an understatement, however, because Christian spirituality seems like more than a mere overview or introduction. Only to the erudite might this work seem to scratch the surface. Rather, for most, Howard successfully combines intro-

duction and substance in a way that acquaints students of spirituality with a breadth of thinking on the subject, yet also provides meaningful depth.

Howard states, “The question we ask in this book is, simply, ‘What does a relationship with God look like for Christians?’” in the book’s introduction (9). He draws from three traditions to answer this question: Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant (9). This multi-traditional approach gives the book a synthetic feel that is refreshing and informative. It requires the reader to see spirituality from familiar and unfamiliar viewpoints. This is another reason for the book’s depth as well as breadth. In regard to his question, Howard answers, “Christian spirituality refers to a relationship with God as lived in practice, as dynamics are formulated, as explored through formal study” (15). In defining spiritual formation, Howard provides the following: “Spiritual formation is a rather general term referring to all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards deepening of the faith and furtherance of spiritual growth. It includes educational endeavors as well as the more intimate and in-depth process of spiritual direction” (23).

Finally, in rounding out the encompassing nature of his work, Howard depicts the exploration of spirituality in schematic form. This schematic sees the person or community at the synthesizing and integrating center of several sources: Scripture, history, informal relationships, personal experience, human sciences, and theology and philosophy (70). A very nuanced, complex, and sophisticated view of spirituality is required in order to synthesize and integrate this much information from such varied traditions. The result, however, is worth it. It is possible for many Christians, having shared differing spiritual experiences and perspectives while being in the same ethnic and faith tradition, to be surprised by the diversity of spirituality journeys—where their spiritual journey diverges and converges. Add to that different but legitimate faith traditions and ethnicities, and you have the makings of an aggregated spirituality that is kaleidoscopic. A holistic and encompassing model is needed to capture this experiential and perceptual expansiveness. Howard provides such a model. It is not for the faint of heart, but rather requires a high level of thinking and circumspection. But, from the perspective of this reviewer, that requirement only reflects the amazingly complex nature of spirituality and spiritual formation. There has been too much of a tendency towards reductionism because people prefer simplicity. That is fine when the reality of a thing is in fact simple. However, when something is complex, variegated, multidimensional, and many-faceted, then a reductionistic approach ends up distorting that thing’s reality. Along these lines, perhaps the nature of spirituality has suffered such reductionism, and thus, a more harmful distortion than any other aspect of the Christian life.

Howard has developed a multifaceted and multidimensional model to

capture human and spiritual complexity. Mere verbal description does not do justice to the numerous schematics and visual organizers he has for these models. However, words will have to suffice. First, there are human operations comprised of the cognitive, affective, and volitional. Correspondingly, each of these operations focuses respectively on the mind, the emotions, and the will (84–86). There is an intertwining of these operations with the processes and stages of human experience: being aware, experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding/acting, and integrating (87–92). All of this can be said to be intrapersonal—within or internal to the person. Furthermore, the person, who houses all of this, exists within a web of concentric relationships that is constituted of nature, self, others, spiritual realities, and the divine—within and without (92–100).

Howard explains this labyrinth of intra- and interfacing elements of existence by stating the following: “Human experience, apart from multiform relatedness, simply does not exist” (93); and “There is a level of mystery to human experience that simply cannot be penetrated by academic reflection” (103).

Howard goes on to discuss some central doctrines or beliefs related to spiritual experience after having described this complex milieu within which the spiritual life unfolds. Broadly, these relate to God, the Christian experience and the divine-human relationship—chapters 4 through 6. Not to minimize Howard’s treatment of these subjects, but this will be more familiar territory for most in the academic audience.

When the author comes next to spiritual transformation in chapter 7, he discusses numerous aspects of the subject from more process-oriented views to multi-stage views. Throughout the book, Howard draws richly from church history, but especially so here. He also provides a cogent analysis of initial and ongoing salvation.

Chapter 8 provides a logical next step to spiritual formation — both what it is and what it is not. With his typical clarity and insight, Howard states that spiritual formation “does not focus on the appearance, the politics, or the particulars of spirituality. Paul calls those imposing regulations on others ‘puffed up’ (Colossians 2:18), and says their actions have the ‘appearance of wisdom’ (Colossians 2:23)” (269).

Spiritual formation is “responding to the gracious work of God and requiring both perseverance and progress, is the intentional and Godward re-orientation and rehabilitation of human experience. It aims at harmony with Christ and is expressed in the concrete realities of everyday life” (269). While the agents of spiritual formation can be individuals or groups, the primary agent is the Holy Spirit (273).

Flowing out of this spiritual transformation and formation are three primary things the author addresses: a life of prayer (chapter 9), a life of care

(chapter 10), and a life of Christian discernment (chapter 11). In Howard's chapter on the "Life of Prayer" (chapter 9), he examines types of prayer—supplication, intercession, aspiration, and lament—as well as a brief history of prayer in three layers (302–306) pertaining to Western mysticism: the first (0–1200), the second (1200–1520), and the third (1520–the present).

The first layer emphasized liturgical prayer, conversational prayer, prophetic utterance, and contemplative prayer. Various groups and figures championed these different modes of prayer such as the Celts, Montanus, the Messalians, Origen, Augustine, etc. (302–303). The use of icons as devotional assists were also controversial during this time

Contemplative and common prayer developed into higher and more complex forms during the second layer with Palamas authoring the Hesychast or silent prayer (302). This flourished among monks along with the hope of some kind of direct, immediate contact with God. Devotionalism was the most prominent development of this layer, and utilized physical objects such as rosaries, relics, woodcuts, and handbooks.

In the final layer, the Reformation led to the rejection of hierarchical prayer and to a more simplified approach to prayer overall: individually, corporately, and denominationally. Prayer also focused on personal and corporate revival as well as one's walk with God.

In chapter 10, the author looks at the life of care. This Howard defines as "intentional, loving, self-giving for the enrichment of others" (339). There are numerous targets of Christian care: individuals, the earth, family, and the community. Moreover, we offer care through prayer, interest, service, and structure (359–361)—vehicles for delivering care.

Christian discernment (chapter 11) challenges Christians to discern what is the work of God and what is not, what comes from God and what does not. This requires us to recognize and distinguish different kinds of discernment such as appreciative discernment (thankfulness for God and His presence), situational discernment (God's place in specific situations related to specific decisions), and life discernment (the ongoing role of God throughout life) (373–374). After considering other sources of defining discernment, Howard defines it as "the evaluation of the inner and outer stuff in light of a relationship with God with a view to response" (375).

Different historical periods saw discernment in different ways: a discrimination between two ways—the way of light and the way of darkness; drawing upon the wisdom of others; response to God's word (374–380). The necessary elements of discernment included the process, the discerner, the contexts, the signs, and the goal (382–384). More is said about discernment in the nature of decision-making in the rest of the chapter.

Finally, the author deals with spiritual renewal in chapter 12. He identifies other words that have been used for renewal such as *awakening*,

reformation, movement, and revival (405). Historical expressions of renewals have been varied: monastic ones—Pachomius in Egypt and St. Patrick in Ireland; the Reformation and its influence on other subgroups; the First and Second Great Awakenings (409–413). Howard identifies six tendencies of God’s ways in a season of renewal: the divine-human dynamic, cycles of renewal, the discerning of renewal, the wonderful/difficult polemic, response of critics and counterfeits, and unions and divisions (418–427). This discussion gives further evidence of the complexity of spirituality noted at the beginning and the author’s nuanced examination of the subject.

In conclusion, many readers will be delighted, especially Christian educators, with this book. Howard begins each chapter with an outline and objectives and ends each chapter with questions, chapter summaries, suggestions for putting concepts into action, and resources for further study.

The structure and contents of the book contain a veritable storehouse of actionable steps that consistently move readers from abstract to realizable, concrete movement. There is no doubt that Howard has mapped spirituality in the most comprehensive manner to date. His work towers over others with the possible exception of Richard Lovelace. Moreover, the monumental accumulation of other references and works from the very old to the more recent makes Howard’s work a masterful repository of links to other areas of similar interest. It is literally a doorway into a vast network of thinking and writing on the spiritual life.



Global awakening: How 20th-century revivals triggered a Christian revolution.

By Mark Shaw. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. 2010. 221 pp. \$20.00. paper.

Review by Rich McLaughlin, Trainer and Networker, Spiritual Overseers Service International, Roselle, IL.

Global Awakening aims to answer questions regarding how Christian spiritual revivals work, whether revivals are a part of normative Christianity, whether they happen just in America or in other parts of the world, and whether they have a future. This book is organized with an introductory chapter that explains the dynamics of global revival, eight chapters of examples from various places in the world, and a closing chapter that summarizes lessons from the story of world Christianity. The example chapters are drawn from Korea, Nigeria, India, Uganda, the USA, Brazil, Ghana, and China. The author’s life and ministry have been rooted in Kenya for the last 25 years. He presently serves as the director of the world Christianity program at Africa International University in Nairobi, Kenya. His academic background includes the study of the history of Christianity at Westminster Theological

Seminary (ThD), the study of world Christianity at the University of Edinburgh (ThM), church history at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (ThM), Biblical Studies at Gordon College, and Pastoral Studies at Moody Bible Institute. Mark Shaw has written the books *10 Great Ideas from Church History* (IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997) and *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity* (MI: Baker Book House, 1997). He is also a contributor to the *Global Dictionary of Theology* (IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

In order to provide background and a grid through which to see the rest of the book, Shaw's main claims are gathered in the first chapter. He considers the 20th century as having been a time of seismic change, and cites Philip Jenkins as support: "I suggest that it is precisely religious changes that are the most significant, and even the most revolutionary, in the contemporary world." (*The next Christendom: The coming of global Christianity*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Then, Shaw provides remarkable statistics and grants that such a global comeback of Christianity can be related to a wide variety of factors. While in general agreement with various explanations for the significant recent growth of global Christianity, the author states that the role of revivals is underemphasized.

For this study, the author recognizes the shoulders on which he stands in studying such movements of the Holy Spirit. As pioneers in the study of global Christian revivals, J. Edwin Orr and Richard F. Lovelace are highlighted. In order to understand the commonly used but frequently misunderstood term *revival*, he begins with Lovelace's definition of revival—"broad-scale movements of the Holy Spirit's work in renewing spiritual vitality in the church and in fostering its expansion in mission and evangelism" (*Dynamics of spiritual life: An evangelical theology of renewal*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979). Furthermore, Lovelace's understanding of these dynamics of spiritual life are credited back to the theological insights of Jonathan Edwards who served in the midst of the First Great Awakening and came to be known as a leading theologian of revival. Building upon these foundational writers, Shaw offers his own definition of "global revivals" and unpacks a diagram of five concentric circles as a way of understanding the dynamics of global revival. According to Shaw's definition, "global revivals are charismatic people movements that transform their world by translating Christian truth and transferring power" (16). Then, the five concentric circles are (a) spiritual dynamics, (b) cultural dynamics, (c) historical dynamics, (d) global dynamics, and (e) group dynamics. Across the remainder of the first chapter, each of these five dynamics is explained in greater detail.

In each case, Shaw sets up one of these five dynamics with a question and adds sub-points that provide description. First, the spiritual dynamics answer the question, "What makes a revival Christian?" and the elements are personal liberation, eschatological vision, radical community, evangelical activism, life in the Spirit, and negative spiritual dynamics. Second, the cultural

dynamics answer the question, “What are the essential elements that make up a local revival?” and are fleshed out through a people factor which transfers power to new leadership, a faith factor that translates Christian truth into worldview, and a justice factor that transforms status, structures, or systems. Third, the historical dynamics answer the question, “How do revivals develop over time?” and are broken down into a problem stage of volatility that destabilizes systems; a paradigm stage involving new light, new leaders, and new movements; and a power stage that includes conflict and conquest. Fourth, the global dynamics answer the question, “How do global trends influence local revivals?” and generally wrestle through globalization, relativization, localization, and glocalization. Fifth and finally, the group dynamics answer the question, “Why are revivals so different in content and character?” and the following variables are discussed: a Lucan variable that revives the evangelical impulse, a Galatian variable that returns to the old ways, the Corinthian variable that breaks radically with the past, and general group conflict of these variables which fight for supremacy. The author provides his global revival definition and the summary of these dynamics in a one-page format in both the first and last chapters (16, 201).

In the subsequent eight chapters, Shaw takes basically a chronological approach and highlights one leading aspect from this list of global revival dynamics found in each one of the 20th-century global revivals. The Korean revival of 1907 is seen in relationship to globalization. The Nigerian Babalola revival in 1930 exemplifies indigenous leadership and the transfer of power. The Indian Dornakel revival of the 1920s and 1930s provides the context for a discussion of the power of conversion or personal liberation. The East African revival of the 1940s presents the importance of radical community. The North American post-war evangelical revival fostered glocalization through international networking. The Brazilian Pentecostal revival since the 1970s shines light on the justice factor. The Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal revival in the 1980s and 1990s points out the importance of eschatological vision and global mission. The Chinese house church movement highlights the importance of conflict resolution. The concluding chapter readdresses his global revivals definition and dynamics, and then also takes a closer look at the diversity, the divine-human interplay, and the future of revivals (31).

Shaw structures this book's presentation well by starting with a global revival definition and an explanation of related dynamics. In fact, without his early framework for understanding global revivals, the subsequent eight stories would create a striking series of testimonies, but would probably be too diverse to retain and process on a deeper level for most readers. Why? Here are two related reasons. First, conceptually, we just do not share a common grid to catch and consider such works. They do not fit cleanly into established categories, cultural understandings, theoretical frameworks, and theological

grids of revival. Second, historically, the church has not experienced a wider, deeper, and related move of the Holy Spirit touching many nations for roughly 100 years. Some works of the Holy Spirit exceed others in their depth and breadth—the 1727 onward Great (or Evangelical) Awakening, the 1792 onward Second Great Awakening, the 1857–1860 Prayer Revival, and what happened in the early 1900s, including the 1904–1905 Welsh revival and the subsequent 1906–1909 Azusa Street revival, which may only be known in part depending on one’s national and theological background.

At this point, one word in Shaw’s global revival definition deserves special comment. The term *charismatic* is completely accurate, but may be challenging for some parts of the body of Christ. Biblically, the Greek word’s meaning is grace gift, which is commonly expressed as a spiritual gift (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Pet 4:10). In these global awakenings, the Christians involved are certainly people endowed with gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is true of all Christians according to the New Testament. However, a common usage of the word *charismatic* today sometimes limits the meaning of this word to the part of the body of Christ related to the charismatic renewal movement from the 1960s and 1970s forward. In light of the significant spiritual impact of these global awakenings, it would be unfortunate to let one word distract anyone in the process of understanding these phenomena. As one alternative, the same basic definition could read, “global revivals are *Holy-Spirit-led* people movements that transform their world by translating Christian truth and transferring power.”

At the same time, while an alternate word may be helpful for communicating widely, the 2001 *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* helps one appreciate just how significant the growth has been in the charismatic or Pentecostal branch of the body of Christ, which does play significantly into the global awakenings in the last century:

By 1980 the classical Pentecostals had grown to be the largest family of Protestants in the world, according to *World Christian Encyclopedia* edited by David Barrett. The 51 million figure attributed to the traditional Pentecostals did not include the 11 million charismatic Pentecostals in the traditional mainline churches. By 1995 the global number of Pentecostals and charismatics had reached 463 million. (Walter A. Elwell, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001, 902)

Three leading contributions of the book *Global Awakenings* include (a) breaking new ground for Christians across the body of Christ for further study of these movements in the last 100 years through a variety of academic lenses—biblical, theological, historical, educational, and intercultural; (b) providing a grid of the five dynamics for discussion of these global movements of the Holy Spirit; and under the group dynamics specifically, (c) offering a biblical way to think about the differences in these awakenings in

content and character through the Lucan variable that reconnects with the essentials of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the Galatian variable that pulls back toward old ways, the Corinthian variable that pushes toward a break from the past, and the ensuing fight for a new supremacy.

Regarding the differences in awakenings' content and character, Shaw triggered for me something that should have jumped out earlier. In Jesus' time, the distance between the established categories and the fresh movement of that revival was far closer. Also, for Western Christianity, the Old Testament revivals and the American historical revivals connect far more familiar territory, because the Judeo-Christian worldview is shared in the context of the Old Testament revivals in Judges and in 2 Chronicles, and the First and Second Great Awakenings. However, these recent movements around the globe occurred in the midst of a wider range of worldviews, structures, and leadership. Consequently, the Holy-Spirit-led movement and Christian truth brought varying levels of seismic shifts to these societies. While we may feel emotionally and categorically unprepared for the flurry of spiritual movements that occurred in the last century, I can now see that the God of the Bible did leave some teaching that leads us up to this unexpected threshold. These words of Isaiah help make sense of these global awakenings: "From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you. They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today. So you cannot say, 'Yes, I knew of them'" (Isa 48:6-7).

This book prompts ideas for further research for Christian educators in at least three ways regarding (a) understanding how much the Lord has moved his kingdom forward in the last century; (b) stretching our faith's dependency, expectancy, and understanding of spiritual formation for what is yet ahead; and (c) wrestling freshly with our roles in equipping students in the midst of such powerful and present divine-human interplays. For instance, in the last century, sufficient examples of other global revivals exist to produce at least one more volume that could chronologically include Wales, Azusa Street, Gazaland, the Hebrides Islands, Congo, Nagaland, Indonesia, Canada, Romania, Argentina, and various US collegiate campuses. While we look forward both to fresh Holy-Spirit-led advances and further research, Shaw now offers this valuable new text, which would be useful for courses in spiritual formation, intercultural studies, or church history, or for any Christian desiring to read more about the coming of God's kingdom in these days.



Grounded in the gospel: Building believers the old-fashioned way. By J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. 2010. 238 pp. \$16.99. paper.

Review by Timothy J. Ralston, Professor of Pastoral Ministries, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX.

Recent evaluations by leading churches reveal a failure to meet the New Testament mandate of discipleship, despite larger congregations, growth in educational strategies, and increasing ministry activities within 21st century evangelical churches in North America. Modern experiments with educational models and priorities promised so much but have not produced a more robust individual faith. Average believers today may know some Bible stories but struggle to define the central truths of the Christian faith, to live their implications, to represent the gospel, or to engage the surrounding culture.

Packer and Parrett, two individuals from different generations and divergent Christian traditions (Anglican and Baptist), suggest that this situation arises from a century-long failure to identify and communicate effectively the central truths of the Christian faith. With a single voice they argue that the paradigms of the catechumenate stretching over Christianity's past two millennia provide the best strategy for addressing the modern discipleship crisis and, therefore, offer a comprehensive model for configuring and implementing catechism in the third millennium.

The argument proceeds methodically by chapter (with helpful endnotes explaining, supplementing, and documenting the discussion). After providing a basic overview and glossary (1), they identify the biblical precedents of catechism (2) and its history with particular reference to its revitalization during the Protestant Reformation and then subsequent loss (3). They identify the basic paradigm of catechetical structure through a comparative survey and offer a thematic means for focusing the catechetical effort (4) and then explore the central content of the Christian catechism (5) and its facets of learning, worship, and action (6) that mark one's progress toward Christian maturity (7) and that facilitate genuine Christian fellowship (8). Finally, they offer suggestions for its organization (9) and for presenting this paradigm within a local congregation (10). Two appendices add examples of catechetical hymns and a bibliography of helpful resources. The authors' extensive use of comparative charts also aids in the appreciation of the various discussions.

No doubt different readers will be attracted to different elements of the discussion. Some aspects of the discussion are more fully treated than others. The biblical defense of catechesis (chapter 2) is helpful, although brief in its

Old Testament discussion of the practice, as is the historical overview (chapter 3). Nevertheless, one will find intriguing and stimulating discussions throughout the work. For example, under their discussion of “The Waxing and Waning of Catechesis” the authors suggest six reasons for the modern decline of the catechumenate. These include (a) the exchange of Reformational Piety for Evangelical Pietism (with a corresponding minimalist approach to the discussion of salvation); (b) the growing particularism in catechism (whereby groups “major on the minors,” focusing on the defense of theological distinctives by pejorative contrasts with other groups rather than a defense of more fundamental Christian and confessional themes); (c) the decline of catechism as a pastoral priority (largely from individual neglect or by its delegation to professional educators lacking sufficient theological acumen); (d) the biblical and theological reductionism of the modern Sunday school movement curricula (created by marketing needs that preclude emphasizing any distinct Christian confessional elements in favor of general Bible knowledge); (e) the church growth emphasis (that focuses on building larger Christian communities through conversion without the holistic concern for effective sanctification); and (f) the proliferation of non-aligned churches that lack historical roots in the ecumenical creeds or confessional statements (and thereby have no reference point nor perceived need to emphasize the historic Christian message). At first glance, the reader may find some of these connections counterintuitive and may reject the reasoning. The cumulative effect of these movements, however, offers a helpful analysis of the modern crisis and should be taken seriously by informed Christian educators and strategists.

Another stimulating discussion is their presentation of the three-fold facets of the gospel message (chapter 6) as learning (*lex credendi*), worship (*lex orandi*), and action (*lex vivendi*) and its resonance with the biblical and historical record of education among God’s people. Perhaps most helpful is their outline of the basic paradigms of the catechumenate (chapter 7) and their subsequent suggestions for the organization of the theological learning within the catechetical process (chapter 9). These chapters provide concrete ways of understanding the stages and organizing a program of discipleship along catechetical lines and should make its adoption easier.

Some discussions are interesting and potentially helpful, but not immediately aiding in the broader argument. For example, the presentation of the “Gospel Alphabet” (one point of the gospel’s centrality for every letter of the English alphabet) seems a bit forced and does not contribute significantly to the discussion. Considering the overall tenor of the work as an aid to the recovery of the catechumenate, however, an astute individual seeking a pedagogical method to communicate such central theological concepts might find this strategy very helpful.

This work challenges modern evangelical definitions of discipleship and Christian maturity. It presents the contemporary church, now struggling with its failure as a disciple-making community, with a better goal and a time-tested strategy for its attainment. Packer and Parrett offer no easy solutions, just hard work with a clear focus. Consequently this book would serve as an excellent resource for pastoral leaders and Christian education committees as they struggle to define educational priorities and select the best from among the available curricula (or even attempt to write their own). Within academic institutions, their cogent argument for the recovery of the catechumenate deserves a place in modern formulations of pastoral theology.

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