

Book Reviews

Bimson, John, **The Compact Handbook of Old Testament Life** (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1988, 172 pp, paper, \$5.95) reviewed by Gordon H Lovik

This volume, written by an evangelical OT scholar from England, meets a real need and is for a wide audience. The subject matter covers the basic areas of common life in biblical times. The topics cover the land, empires, agriculture, cities, water, warfare, family, and Israel's civil and religious institutions.

The chapters are very well written with sufficient illustrations to clarify and teach the main emphases of each chapter. Having travelled to Israel several times to study the land and customs, I can recommend this as the book to read for those desiring pre-acquaintance with the land. It is an excellent tool for anyone desiring a better understanding of daily life in Palestine. It would have been helpful if the author had included recommended reading lists at the end of each chapter.

Clark, Chap, **Next Time I Fall in Love: How to Handle Sex, Intimacy, and Feelings in Dating Relationships** (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, distributed by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1987, 144 pp, paper) reviewed by Charles E McLain

According to the author, this book began "as an hour-long seminar designed to help high schoolers understand the many aspects of dating relationships" (p 5). However, the book was written only after several years of seminar presentations, continued study, and experience in teaching similar courses on the high school level. The author's motivation for writing was the desperate "need to understand how to develop and maintain healthy relationships"; that is, "to help all the Anns and Jeffs to stop hurting each other in selfish relationships" (p 5). Although the author states that his book is aimed at those "from junior highers to single adults" (p 5), the majority of his illustrations and much of his discussion focuses on teenagers.

The chapter format is clear containing a large section of discussion followed by a 2-3 sentence summary and 2 or 3 questions designed to stimulate further thought. In chapters 2 through 4 the author attempts to define love and its connection in a dating relationship. In chapter 2 he defines *eros* type love as "originally and simply a passionate love for a thing" (p 18). It is characterized according to him as temporary, conditional, and self-centered (pp 20-22). On the other hand, *agape* type

love is love for a person (p 35). This love is characterized by giving, commitment, deliberate choice, and endurance (p 26f). According to the author, the difference between love in a high school dating relationship and love in a marriage is not its quality (*eros* versus *agape*) but its quantity (that is, the amount of *agape* love) (p 28). He also states that "a happy and fulfilling dating relationship" can be maintained if the balance between *eros* and *agape* "at least be tipped toward the *Agape* end" (p 34).

In chapter 5 he deals with self esteem. He observes that "only when you get a good, healthy handle on your self-image can you be freed up to enter a relationship for what you can give" (p 42). Part of developing this proper self-image is by seeing "yourself as valuable and worthy of affection" (p 45).

In Chapter 6 he deals with feelings, their intensity and their untrustworthiness. In chapter 7 he covers the subject of time. He points out how relationships are smothered by excessive time together. He also considers the need to plan and to limit dating. In chapter 8 he treats the subject of sex. This is one of the few discussions where the author makes any reference to Scripture. He states, "Despite how modern life has changed, God still says no to sexual intercourse outside the boundaries of marriage. . . . He wants us to 'save ourselves for marriage' not only because it's better and more rewarding in marriage . . . but because he loves us" (p 63). He also warns against being fooled about false intimacy and the physical and emotional dangers of "heavy sexual involvement" without commitment.

Chapter 9 deals with intimacy. In teenagers he likens premature intimacy to being "all grown up and no place to go" (p 73). Chapters 11 and 12 deal with breaking up and healing after a break up.

Chapters 14 through 16 consider how to determine the health of a relationship. The author offers a "relationship graph" designed to chart the emotional, physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of a relationship along with the degree of commitment in the relationship. Basically the emotional, physical, and social aspects measure *eros* type love; while the intellectual and spiritual aspects along with commitment measure *agape* type love. His basic thesis is that "when any area . . . exceeds the commitment, you have the potential of pain in that relationship" (p 133). Thus he points out that even relationships that have a predominance of *agape* type love (the intellectual and spiritual areas) can be eroded and destroyed if the degree of commitment does not equal the spiritual and intellectual levels of the relationship (pp 131-133).

The author's aim is commendable. We do live in a society that does not know how to develop relationships. We take our relationships for granted. We assume that relationships just naturally grow and develop with no thought and little effort. Worse than that we do not know how to break off relationships with minimal damage to either party. Consequently, a book on the subject is welcomed. Some of what is said

in this book is good and helpful. For instance he notes that "the couple's degree of commitment is no higher than the lesser of the two partners' commitment" (p 110) and that "once you take your eyes off your partner's needs and desires and begin to focus on your own, you lose the ability to fully and freely give to your partner" (p 129).

However, this book does contain conspicuous weaknesses and requires great caution in its use. First, other than a few passing comments little is said about a couple's relationship to God in their relationship to each other. There are no references to considering God's will in a relationship. Second, there are very few references to Scripture. Most of the Scripture that is referred to is simply a passing reference. The only Scripture that is discussed in any length to support the author's views is I Thessalonians 4:2-6 in chapter 8 on sex (pp 68f). Thirdly, in his dealing with restoring a relationship or with healing after a breakup, he makes no reference to the need for confession and repentance to either God or the partner involved. Since most of his illustrations of damaged and destroyed relationships were the result of pre-marital sexual involvement, dealing with sin would seem to be an indispensable aspect of healing. However, the author never mentions it as part of healing. Without repentance and confession there can be no healing or restoration (I John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13).

This is not a book I would hand my teenagers to read. There may be some good points in the book but they can only be discovered with careful discernment and must be assimilated in light of God's Word. This book may be useful as a resource or idea book for pastors, parents and youth workers but not as a first choice. I would not recommend it for teenage readers.

Dumbrell, William J, **The Faith of Israel** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988, 286 pp, paper, \$12.95) reviewed by Jack Brown.

The author states very clearly in the introduction that his purpose is "to bring the theological purpose of the respective OT books into clear focus" (p 9). Specifically the book is designed to summarize the OT books as to their progressive theological development of faith in the nation of Israel.

The book is divided according to the division of the Hebrew Bible. The first three sections, Pentateuch, Former and Latter Prophets, are developed more as historical reviews with comments and implications. The fourth section, Writings, is developed more analytically according to its content.

The author concisely summarizes each book of the OT including an outline and analysis. This book has great value in providing an understandable and functional abstract of each OT book.

One might be disappointed by the author's acceptance of critical interpretations (p 210) or his failure to offer definitive answers to critical theories he finds to be too extreme (pp 98-99) or his brushing over of difficult issues (p 171). Still the book is recommended to the serious but discerning student of God's Word.

Elwell, Walter A, ed, **Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988, 2 volumes, 2210 pp, cloth, \$69.95 until 7-31-89 \$79.95 thereafter) reviewed by Gordon H Lovik

These two volumes provide a broad spectrum of twentieth century scholarship most often but not exclusively from evangelical writers. Over 5700 new articles from more than 175 authors cover the twelve broad areas of biblical studies. Mini-commentaries are given in the discussion of each book. While it is impossible to review each entry, several observations can be made.

The value of the articles varies considerably. Numerous articles are helpful and solid scholarship. Occasionally a limited bibliography and the author of the article are given but this is not usually done. This is definitely a weakness. Correction of this lapse will be made in the second printing according to the publisher.

However, the value of the articles will be discernable to the reader. For example the entry on "tribulation" contains no discussion of the eschatological tribulation. However, the article on eschatology does mention the subject with a presentation of the various views. In the article on "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" the article states that in eating of the fruit "eating conferred sexual knowledge and shame, but not death." Without further clarification the author appears to imply that God's Word is not correct (Gen 2:17). In the article on "hell" (p 954) it is archaeologically unproven that "a fire burned continuously in this valley" (Hinnom). Some articles are dated, such as "Beth-shan," since much has been excavated in the last few years. In the article on "Daniel" no mention is made of the Roman empire, the seventy weeks of Daniel and other pertinent subjects. Other weaknesses of this nature could be cited.

The articles are easy to read and only a few are lengthy. Unfortunately, few consider a dispensational viewpoint as worthy of inclusion. This hinders its value to those who desire to consider all the reasonable possibilities of an issue. If the volume is used for basic information or at the beginning of one's study, the reader will find help. Since the cost of a college education has gone up about nine-fold in the past 37 years, the price of the volumes is not out of line.

Gangel, Kenneth O, and Hendricks, Howard G, ed, **The Christian Educator's Handbook on Teaching** (Wheaton, ILL: Victor Books, 1988, 358 pp, hard); reviewed by Patrick J Casey

The Handbook's twenty-one chapters were written by nine Dallas Theological Seminary professors and are indeed "a gold mine of information on all phases and places of teaching God's truth." The book is divided into four main sections. Part One, "Foundations for Christian Training," should be required reading for Christian teachers of every level. Chapter one "Following the Master Teacher" provides a dynamic challenge to evaluate and imitate the example of Christ in His teaching ministry. "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Teaching" and "Biblical Integration: The Process of Thinking Like A Christian" give practical instruction in areas often unconsidered by the Christian educator.

The second major section is "Patterns and Process of Christian Teaching." Although this title may at first appear academic and uninteresting the practical benefit of the following chapters will be quickly recognized. The foundational premise of chapters 7-9 is that children, youth, and adults are fundamentally different and must be taught in light of their unique needs and abilities. This section provides valuable information for those who minister to these age groups. Some topics discussed include age group needs and characteristics, goals and objectives, program and curriculum, methods and materials, administration and evaluation. Chapter 9, "Teaching Adults in the Church," discusses different adult age-groupings and the way adults learn. Additional chapters are devoted to creative teaching methods, using personal computers, audio-visual support, and measurement and evaluation.

Part three, "Crucial Roles in Christian Teaching," challenges Christian teachers with their individual responsibility to be leaders, disciplers, and Bible students. Hendricks' statement "God is into character not credentials" (p 245) summarizes an important emphasis found in other sections of the book. Chapter 15, "The Teacher as a Disciplex," provides a unique perspective of teaching in light of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. The final division is titled "Varieties of Christian Teaching." Here discussion focuses on teaching in the family, church, Christian school, Christian college, and community.

The editors and contributors must be commended for producing a profitable resource tool. The book rightly claims to be "a trusted resource for Directors of Christian Education, Sunday School superintendents and teachers, Christian School administrators and teachers, and Christian parents." I highly recommend this book for a variety of reasons. First, it is practical and usable. The handbook provides ideas and instruction that can and should be used by Christian educators. It discusses important theories and educational principles but also identifies specific methods and materials

to be employed. Second, it is well written and thorough. Each chapter includes a helpful bibliography relating to the area discussed. Though not intended to be exhaustive, the book provides a wide variety of helpful information pertaining to many areas of Christian Education. For the most part, the book is readable and very interesting. Third, this resource tool is motivating. The writers challenge readers to accept their responsibilities as Christian educators. Fourth, it is relevant. The topics discussed relate to the real world of Christian Education.

This book is a valuable resource for every pastor who recognizes the importance of both his role as teacher and the many teaching activities involved in a local church ministry. It will provide him with needed information for teaching all age groups. This book will be a help to all those involved in the many areas of Christian Education.

Hillerstrom, P Roger, *Intimate Deception: Escaping the Trap of Sexual Impurity* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1989, 156 pp, paper, \$7.95) reviewed by Charles E McLain

The author has provided the pastor, youth or singles worker, and counsellor with a concise, well-written book on a topic of great importance to those dealing with people who are longing for or languishing in marriage. The author's handling of the delicate subjects of sexual impurity reflects not only a wealth of experience and a sound Biblical foundation but also a sensitive heart moved by people's needs but not moved beyond the limits of Scriptural principles.

Although a short book, no page is wasted. The presentation is pointed, covering sources, symptoms, and cures for various "traps" of sexual impurity. He deals with the extremes from sexual addiction, pornography, and technical virginity to total abstinence (of intimacy) by pointing out their dangers and offering hope through the application of Biblical principles.

Each chapter includes a "Growing Closer" section designed for further consideration and practical application by both unmarried and married couples of the principles presented. Several references are made to other bibliographic materials for further and more concentrated study of various areas.

I highly recommend this book for any Christian worker who counsels and guides people through the maze of sexual impurity which is so much a part of our contemporary culture. It would also be beneficial reading for parents with children approaching or in their teen years.

Lingenfelter, Shirwood, and Mayers, Marvin, **Ministering Cross-Culturally** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986, 125 pp); reviewed by W Lynn Snyder

In this book the co-authors stress the need to understand the cultural values of those to whom you minister. Drawing from the model of Christ's own incarnation, the authors highlight the need for incarnational evangelism and ministry. Jesus' offer of salvation is effective, they maintain, because of His ability to adapt to the human situation. The major assertion in the book then is that people will not identify with you or your values unless they sense a willingness on your part to identify with them and their values.

In chapters 3-8, the authors focus on key areas of cultural understanding and adaptation. In chapter 3 time is the cultural value under consideration. Are the people schedule oriented or event oriented? In chapter 4 the authors scrutinize the area of moral judgment. Do the people make judgments on the basis of specific acts of behavior ("dichotomistic" approach) or are they more concerned about a person's overall pattern of behavior ("holistic" approach)?

In chapter 5 the authors highlight crisis-orientation. Are the people "crisis-oriented," that is, are they always prepared for the worst, or are they "non-crisis-oriented" with a nonchalant approach to managing crisis? In chapter 6 the subject is that of goals. Are the people "task oriented" or "people oriented," that is, willing to sacrifice personal goals for the strengthening of personal and group relationships?

In chapter 7 a sense of worth is discussed. Is worth or prestige assigned by birth and family rank or attained by personal achievements? Finally in chapter 8 the cultural view concerning vulnerability is considered. Is it customary to hide or to expose vulnerability among the people?

At the end of each chapter, the authors present what they consider to be the biblical position on each cultural issue. Their proof texts are, for the most part, biblically developed. In order to minister effectively in the cross-cultural context, you must immerse yourself in the culture of the people. You must understand and accept the cultural values of those to whom you minister.

Maier, Paul L, transl, **Josephus the Essential Writings: A Condensation of Jewish Antiquities and the Jewish War** (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988, 413 pp, cloth, \$19.95) reviewed by Gordon H Lovik

Translated by a consulting editor to the most recent English translation of Josephus, *The Jewish War*, this volume contains select portions from

both the *Antiquities* and *Wars*. It is an entirely new translation centered around key people or events. The writer deletes what he considers non-essential from the significant passages.

Within the volume are numerous photographs, maps, and charts to illuminate the text. The numbering of the paragraphs follows the Loeb classical library numbering system. This abridged edition of Josephus provides any reader with an introductory tool to the valuable world of this first century Jewish historian. It is clearly written and should become a volume in every library. It would be nice if Christian colleges would make this required reading for all their students. While it is not a "scholar's version," it is a welcome addition to the tools which provide understanding for both the OT, the inter-testamental period and NT.

Riggs, Jack R, *Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Lamplighter Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1987, 92 pp, paper, \$7.95) reviewed by Warren Vanhetloo.

This study of the prophecy of Micah is a commendable addition to the Bible Study Commentaries series. It maintains the pattern of clarity and conciseness which a Bible student will greatly appreciate. Interpretation is premillennial, clearly distinguishing OT fulfillment to Israel, the first coming of the promised Messiah, and final dealings of God with Israel in the tribulation and millennial periods. The outlines are very helpful. Explanations of language and customs are clear. The applications of teachings built on figures add clarity to the message of Micah. Yes, this is a volume to buy now and use frequently.

Silva, Moises, *Has the Church Misread the Bible?: The History of Interpretation in the Light of Current Issues, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, Vol I* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, Academic Books, 1987, 136 pp, paper, \$12.95) reviewed by Gordon H Lovik

Some books are written to answer questions while others to raise questions. Occasionally a volume will greatly stir thinking. This is such a volume. In order to properly prepare a pastor for the important work of interpreting the Word of God, the author handles numerous issues pertinent to contemporary hermeneutics. He also deals with obstacles in the study of the history of interpretation, the question of literal or figurative interpretation, of scripture being clear or obscure, and of scripture being relative or absolute--the problem of contextualization. To what extent have human interpreters errantly handled God's Word?

Important questions have been presented and they need a fair hearing by all contemporary interpreters.

As volume one in a series on hermeneutics, it is only right to raise questions and stimulate thinking. While a reader may disagree with some points suggested or conclusions given, it is imperative for all who interpret God's Word to ponder right questions. His three-page supplemental bibliography will prove helpful to the serious reader.

Van Der Puy, Abe C, **Like a Mighty Army** (Lincoln, NB: Back to the Bible, 1988, 143 pp, paper) reviewed by John M Garber

This is the third and final small volume of Van Der Puy's commentary on the book of Acts. This edition covers chapters 13 through 28. The author has been a missionary and is presently the "Voice of Missions" of the Back to the Bible broadcast; thus he is well qualified to comment on the great missionary book entitled "The Acts of the Apostles."

This volume deals with two missionary journeys from the church at Antioch. The account of the ministry of Paul and Barnabas along with Silas and Luke would be enhanced by the use of a map. Of special note is how the Lord opened and closed doors for the missionaries, and how He enabled them to face their adversaries. The Lord's provision of joy even during hardship, shipwrecks, and stonings is an encouragement for those of us who usually endure less intense difficulties.

The men and women of Acts were not super men or women, but were people just like us, with the same nature, feelings, and weaknesses. They had some differences of opinions but through it all the Lord worked mightily by His Spirit.

A useful, doctrinally sound tool and very easy reading for anyone who would study or teach the book of Acts.

Vos, Howard F, **Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther** (Grand Rapids, MI: Lamplighter Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1987, 191 pp, paper, \$8.95) reviewed by Warren Vanhetloo.

This Bible Study Commentary is one that pastors and Christian leaders can use beneficially. The language is clear. The comments clarify. Contemporary applications make clear the eternal principles of godly conduct. Treatment of problems is brief, adequate. The setting of each book is up to date. The author's respect for the revealed Word of God is evident throughout. If a pastor is able to afford only one recent commentary on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, he will find this one adequate.

Woodbridge, John D, **Great Leaders in the Christian Church** (Chicago, ILL: Moody Press, 1988, 384 pp, cloth, \$22.95) reviewed by John M Garber

Dr. John Woodbridge, with the contributions of more than 40 authors, has edited a fine volume providing an introduction to 64 significant leaders of the Christian church. Arranged chronologically, each chapter considers a leader from the Apostle Peter to Dr. Francis Schaeffer and Evangelist Billy Graham. Each chapter contains a chronicle of the person's life and works, a general introduction to his thinking and influence as well as a biographical sketch.

Evangelists and martyrs, Catholics and Protestants, writers and preachers, orthodox and not so orthodox, who emerged from all walks of life, are included among these few chosen from the millions who not only have gone before us in the church but also have brought us to the place in history where we find ourselves today. They all are men who have had a significant influence on Christian thought and practice throughout the history of the church.

This volume is well illustrated with maps, charts, and photographs, many of which are in color to produce an attractive and interesting edition to any Christian's library. The book is useful for church history survey and provides a ready review of individual men and their times. It is a worthwhile tool for the study of the history of the Christian church.