

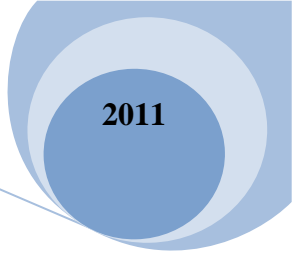


Believers & Doubters

Booklist

This document is a list of book titles from which members of *Believers & Doubters* periodically choose for their Saturday morning class discussions.

Karl Lawrence
13 August 2011



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Adventist History & Theology

1. *The American Religion*

Bloom, Harold

Synopsis

In this fascinating work of religious criticism, Harold Bloom examines a number of American-born faiths: Pentecostalism, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Southern Baptism and Fundamentalism, and African American spirituality. He traces the distinctive features of American religion while asking provocative questions about the role religion plays in American culture and in each American's concept of his or her relationship to God. Bloom finds that our spiritual beliefs provide an exact portrait of our national character.

2. *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*

Bull, Malcolm and Lockhart, Keith

"Make no mistake. For both its breadth and depth, this is the best study of Seventh-Day Adventism that has ever been written." -- Jonathan M. Butler

3. *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith*

Guy, Fritz

From the Author

Like many recent authors of books about theology, I intend this one to be "layreader friendly," and at the same time helpful to theological students and pastors, and perhaps interesting to professional colleagues.

I have endeavored to put into language accessible to a serious general reader some convictions and perspectives not commonly included in proposals for thinking theologically. So this is not, strictly speaking, a textbook; it is neither a summary nor a survey. I do not pretend to be theologically neutral; I have said some things I believe Adventists in general need to hear.

But caveat lector: let the reader beware. This is not a book for every Adventist. In particular, it is not for readers afflicted with a theological kind of attention deficit disorder, a malady that seems to be widespread among Adventists and Christians generally. This phenomenon is perhaps related to the general lack of thoughtfulness in popular culture, a lack painfully and pervasively evident in contemporary television and cinema. I have written for those who are interested in, at least to the extent of being curious about, what theological thinking is, why it is important, who needs to be doing it, and how it should be done.

4. *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian, Gospel Revivalist*

Hook, Milton

The book's publisher describes this book as "The first definitive biography of Desmond Ford, written by a recognized Adventist scholar..."

An Amazon customer describes the book as "much more than a biography of Ford. It is also the story of what must be seen as one of the worst periods of Adventist history when it comes to the way that theology has been done and people have been treated." Another review by Smuts van Rooyen, an Adventist theologian, can be found at <http://www.atoday.com/if-we-had-another-chance>.

5. *James K. Humphrey and the Sabbath-day Adventists (Hardcover)*

Jones, R. Clifford

Amazon Book Description

Humphrey was a Baptist minister who joined the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church shortly after arriving in New York City from Jamaica at the turn of the twentieth century. A leader of uncommon competency and charisma, Humphrey functioned as an SDA minister in Harlem during the time the community became the black capital of the United States. Though he led his congregation to a position of prominence within the SDA denomination, Humphrey came to believe the black experience in Adventism was one of disenfranchisement. When he refused to alter his plans for a utopian community for blacks in the face of dissent from SDA church leaders, Humphrey's ministerial credentials were revoked and his congregation dissolved. Subsequently, Humphrey established an independent black religious organization, the United Sabbath-Day Adventists.

Humphrey's break with the Seventh-day Adventists provides clues to the state of black-white relationships in the denomination at the time. It set the stage for the creation of the separate administrative structure for blacks established by the SDA church in 1945.

6. *Lest We Forget: Daily Devotionals*

Knight, George R.

Book Description

This book though written in a "devotional form" "takes a historical approach that seeks both to enlighten its readers on the development of Adventism and to inspire at the same time."

7. *Adventism in America: A History*

Land, Gary

Product Description

Written by Adventist scholars who felt a need to better establish and understand their denominational identity and the foundation of their theological beliefs, this book offers a comprehensive, nonapologetic history of the denomination. Accurate in scholarship, comprehensive in scope, and objective in tone, it synthesizes present knowledge of the history of the Adventist church in America, and lays the basis for further investigation.

8. *Lewis C. Sheafe: Apostle to Black America*

Morgan, Douglas

From the Back Cover

"My heart's desire and prayer is that this message may go to my people all over the United States."--Lewis C. Sheafe.

Born just as the Civil War began, Lewis Sheafe grew to manhood at a pivotal moment in American history. But instead of racial equality, the nation offered its freed slaves further oppression and injustice. Sheafe--strong-willed, dynamic, and seemingly tireless--had but two main objectives: uplift his people spiritually and socially, and consistently adhere to biblical principle in all aspects of life.

His thirst for truth led him first to the Baptists, where he became both an eloquent minister and a prominent leader of the Black community. Then his poor health led him to Battle Creek Sanitarium, where he encountered Seventh-day Adventism. Sheafe saw in the Adventist message the tenets of race relations he already championed, and he embraced it wholeheartedly. He was sent to lead the Black work in Washington, D.C., in 1902, and his evangelistic campaigns drew standing-room-only crowds of both Black and White listeners.

But during his turbulent years of Adventist ministry, he and church leaders could not agree on how to apply biblical principles of racial equality. The conflict eventually proved fatal to his ties with the denomination.

In this gripping biography Douglas Morgan pieces together the life of this forgotten leader whose story sheds light on the reason that no lasting, separate Black Adventist denomination ever formed.

9. *The Peacemaking Remnant*

Morgan, Douglas (editor)

The Peacemaking Remnant brings together essays by contemporary authors along with documents from the Adventist heritage in support of that thesis. Contributors include: Charles Scriven, Charles E. Bradford, Kendra Haloviak, Keith Burton, Zdravko Plantak, Ryan Bell, Ronald Osborn and Douglas Morgan. Among the historical documents: General Conference session resolutions on peace and nonviolence from 1865, 1867, 1868, and 1985; a "Letter on Disarmament" from church leaders to President Harding (1921); "A Seventh-day Adventist Call to Peace" (2002); and articles by 19th-century pioneers Ellen G. White, Joseph Bates, Alonzo T. Jones, and George W. Amadon.

10. *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-Day Adventism and Contemporary Ethics (Hardcover)*

Pearson, Michael

Product Description

Dr Pearson looks specifically at the moral decisions Adventists have made in the area of human sexuality, on such issues as contraception, abortion, the role and status of women, divorce and homosexuality, from the beginnings of the movement to 1985. He seeks to put such decision-making in perspective by providing the general social context in which it took place, and shows how Ellen White (whose charismatic leadership held the movement together in its first fifty years) has been a major source of moral authority in the Adventist church - her writings continuing to exercise authority in a contemporary society of turmoil and change. This important book, which conveys something of the general ethos of Adventism, is the first to investigate the ethics of the movement, and so fill a notable gap in the literature.

11. *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church*

Rice, Richard

"Community is the most important element of Christian existence. Believing, behaving, and belonging are all essential to the Christian life, but belonging is more important, more fundamental than the others. Moreover, because the Church is the creation of the Holy Spirit, it provides a fellowship that cannot be found anywhere else."—from the Introduction (Available from http://www.spectrummagazine.org/spectrum_store_0)

12. *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*

Rice, Richard

Product Description

A systematic approach to theology, presenting and discussing the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with striking simplicity and clarity. The theme of God's reign over His creation and His creatures unifies the entire presentation. Suitable for use in beginning courses in religion at the college level or for the layperson wanting to better understand basic Adventist beliefs.

13. *The Promise of Peace: Dare to Experience the Advent Hope*

Scriven, Charles

Product Description

Author Charles Scriven declares the Adventist vision in a manner at once practical and brief. This book is for Adventists, potential Adventists, and doubting Adventists who simply value conversation about the church and expect the Adventist way to be both relevant and faithful. In these pages, Scriven shows that as Adventist Christians our life mission is about staying true to God's covenant, contributing to the society around us, and honoring the value of every human face. You can live by the promise of peace!

14. *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*

Tonstad, Sigve K.

"This will be a classic! Truly a magnum opus on the Sabbath, it is this generation's most complete and insightful work on the topic. Not only does it satisfy the academic theologian with its fresh perspectives, but it also creatively shares practical gems that will inspire a lay believer." --Lawrence T. Geraty, President Emeritus, La Sierra University; Past President, American Schools of Oriental Research

Bibliography

1. *Great Christian Thinkers*

Kung, Hans

From *Library Journal*

Kung, the director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Tubingen, Germany, is a prominent but independent Catholic theologian and prolific author. Here, he attempts a new approach to the introduction-to-theology genre by critically tracing the developing thought of key, usually "paradigm-shifting," theologians (Paul, Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Schleiermacher, and Karl Barth) in relation to their social, intellectual, and religious environment. He explores the significance of their life and work for the Christian world in an interesting, quite understandable manner. Readers of this fair and thought-provoking survey, whether curious lay readers or beginning seminary students, will be inspired to delve into the well-chosen chapter bibliographies and extensive references.

Eugene O. Bowser, Univ. of Northern Colorado, Greeley

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Product Description

A brilliant assessment of the teachings and writings of the men Kung deems to be the greatest Christian thinkers of the past two millennia. Kung does not rest with summing up their theology, but asks what these thinkers have to offer to the present age, and the lessons for Christians today.

2. *Take and Read: Spiritual Reading: An Annotated List*

Peterson, Eugene H.

This book represents Peterson's attempt to rekindle the activity of spiritual reading. The present volume is an annotated list of the books that have stood the test of time and that, for Peterson, are spiritually formative for the Christian life.

Biography, Memoir

1. *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness*

Armstrong, Karen

Product Description

In 1962, at age seventeen, Karen Armstrong entered a convent, eager to meet God. After seven brutally unhappy years as a nun, she left her order to pursue English literature at Oxford. But convent life had profoundly altered her, and coping with the outside world and her expiring faith proved to be excruciating. Her deep solitude and a terrifying illness—diagnosed only years later as epilepsy—marked her forever as an outsider. In her own mind she was a complete failure: as a nun, as an academic, and as a normal woman capable of intimacy. Her future seemed very much in question until she stumbled into comparative theology. What she found, in learning, thinking, and writing about other religions, was the ecstasy and transcendence she had never felt as a nun. Gripping, revelatory, and inspirational, *The Spiral Staircase* is an

extraordinary account of an astonishing spiritual journey.

2. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*

Davies, Brian

The works of Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest Western philosophers as well as theologians of the Christian Church, are not only illuminating (for his questions as much as his answers) but surprisingly relevant to our concerns today. This book represents a long overdue modern comprehensive presentation of the total thought of Aquinas. While traditional studies of Aquinas invariably deal with either his philosophy or his theology, Davies introduces the full range of Aquinas's thinking, relating it to writers earlier and later than Aquinas himself. The book will be of considerable interest to professional theologians and philosophers, as well as to those with particular interest in medieval thinking. It is designed to be accessible to the general reader who has no specialist knowledge of medieval thought or professional training in philosophy or theology.

3. *A Hope in the Unseen, An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League*

Suskind, Ron

Book Description

At Ballou Senior High, a crime-infested school in Washington, D.C., honor students have learned to keep their heads down. Like most inner-city kids, they know that any special attention in a place this dangerous can make you a target of violence. But Cedric Jennings will not swallow his pride, and with unwavering support from his mother, he studies and strives as if his life depends on it--and it does. The summer after his junior year, at a program for minorities at MIT, he gets a fleeting glimpse of life outside, a glimpse that turns into a face-on challenge one year later: acceptance into Brown University, an Ivy League school.

At Brown, finding himself far behind most of the other freshmen, Cedric must manage a bewildering array of intellectual and social challenges. Cedric had hoped that at college he would finally find a place to fit in, but he discovers he has little in common with either the white students, many of whom come from privileged backgrounds, or the middle-class blacks. Having traveled too far to turn back, Cedric is left to rely on his faith, his intelligence, and his determination to keep alive his hope in the unseen--a future of acceptance and reward that he struggles, each day, to envision.

4. *Chesterton*

Wills, Garry

Chesterton is one of the most towering intellectual writers of the 20th century. Garry Wills does an amazing feat in exploring the literary development of Chesterton (instead of a normal biography as the events of one's life.) Reading Wills' book really illuminates the genius of Chesterton through his works and is a must read for all Chesterton fans. [Amazon customer review]

Christianity

1. *A Far Glory*

Berger, Peter L.

From *Library Journal*

Berger, a prominent religious sociologist, outlines his personal struggle and asks: "Where can an individual go whose religious position is liberal (not in a political sense, but in that of a long-standing liberal Protestant tradition), but who is nevertheless unwilling to go along with the various secular and secularizing agendas into which so much of Protestantism has fallen?" He arrives at a solitary faith only through a conscious act of will..."

2. *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*

Buechner, Frederick

From *Publishers Weekly*

Starred Review. Novelist and Christian writer Buechner (Brendan; *The Alphabet of Grace*) delivered a number of memorable sermons in more than four decades of service as a Presbyterian minister. This collection contains 37 of them, all featuring the intricate stories, fascinating connections and personal touches that are Buechner's signature.

3. *The Everlasting Man*

Chesterton, G. K.

Here is the book that converted C. S. Lewis from atheism to Christianity. This history of mankind, Christ, and Christianity is to some extent a conscious rebuttal of H. G. Wells' *Outline of History*, which embraced both the evolutionary origins of humanity and the mortal humanity of Jesus. Whereas Orthodoxy detailed Chesterton's own spiritual journey, this book illustrates the spiritual journey of humanity, or at least of Western civilization. A book for both mind and spirit.

4. *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*

Clapp, Rodney

A *Publishers Weekly* review of this book says, in part, that Clapp "redefines liturgy, social ethics and especially evangelism and missions for a postmodern church whose locus is not the individual but the faith community."

5. *Liberal Christianity at the Crossroads*

Cobb, Jr., John B.

"I have tried in these chapters to share, as a liberal Christian with other liberal Christians, an understanding of where we are and where we are called to go."

6. *The Future of Faith*

Cox, Harvey

Product Description

There is an essential change taking place in what it means to be "religious" today. Religious people are more interested in ethical guidelines and spiritual disciplines than in doctrines. The result is a universal trend away from hierarchical, regional, patriarchal, and institutional religion. As these changes gain momentum, they evoke an almost point-for-point fundamentalist reaction. Fundamentalism, Cox argues, is on graphic display around the globe because it is dying.

Once suffocated by creeds, hierarchies, and the disastrous merger of the church with the Roman Empire, faith—rather than belief—is once again becoming Christianity's defining quality. This recent move away from dogmatic religion is best explained against the backdrop of three distinct periods of church history:

The Age of Faith: the first three centuries of Christianity, when the early church was more concerned with following Jesus's teachings than enforcing what to believe about Jesus

The Age of Belief: marking a significant shift between the fourth and twentieth centuries when the church focused on orthodoxy and "correct doctrine"

The Age of the Spirit: a trend that began fifty years ago and is increasingly directing the church of tomorrow whereby Christians are ignoring dogma and breaking down barriers between different religions—spirituality is replacing formal religion

The Future of Faith is a major statement and a hopeful look at a movement that is surfacing within Christianity and other religious traditions by one of the most revered theologians today.

7. *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now*

Crossan, John Dominic

From Booklist

Starred Review By Crossan's lights, Jesus proposed the nonviolent kingdom of God to supplant Rome. And not just Rome but civilization per se may be the object of Jesus' revolution, for civilization building was Rome's pretext for imperial aggression and economic as well as physical violence against common people. Fighting Rome was folly, so the kingdom of God movement aimed to liberate ordinary people nonviolently. It threatened Rome because Jesus' proclamation of God defied the Roman emperor's institutional divinity, and because Jesus proposed peace through justice against Rome's conceit that it achieved peace through the violence of conquest. Paul sharpened the concept of equality in the kingdom of God by advocating for slaves and cooperating on equal terms with women; here Crossan goes Garry Wills' *What Paul Meant* (2006) one better by carefully explaining that pro-slavery and anti-women Pauline remarks come from epistles spuriously attributed to him. Later, the Revelation of John promulgated a "pornography of violence" and has malevolently affected Christianity ever since, most recently in rapture theology, whose influence on U.S. neoconservatives' bush-league Rome is the immediate provocation for this book. The opposition of God and empire, of justice and violence, persists. Despite a few rant-lines from the progressives' book of cant, this book makes the best reading for the most readers of any that Crossan has written. Ray Olson

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8. *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*

Crossan, John Dominic & Reed, Jonathan L.

From B&N Editors

No figure in the early Christianity is more controversial than the Apostle Paul. Fervent debates continue to rage around him: Did he "invent" Christianity? Did he reject Judaism? Was he a misogynist? Did he accept the institution of slavery? In this probing study, the author of *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* and a specialist in New Testament archaeology examine what we know about Paul of Tarsus and how we know it.

9. *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus: What's So Good About the Good News?*

Gomes, Peter J.

From Publishers Weekly

As minister of Harvard University's Memorial Church, Gomes was a popular preacher well before *The Good Book* became a bestseller in 1996. Several subsequent books were, or read like, first-rate sermon collections, but this is an incisive original aimed at cautious defenders of conventional wisdom. Asserting that we are meant to go beyond the Bible in order to discover the gospel, Gomes points away from the past toward a future in which promise and fulfillment meet. Meanwhile, we must manage to live in the world as it is—a world steeped in hostility, suffering and injustice. If we take the gospel seriously, then like Jesus we will risk all, and might even lose all. Still, we hang on to a muscular hope that is not mere nostalgia for what never was, but an earnest expectation of what is to be. A born storyteller, Gomes knows how to spin an aphorism: The opposite of fear is not courage but compassion. And indeed his tone is compassionate even when he chides those who fear conflict and change, but especially when he extols God's provision for the healing and care of all his creation, and not simply our little part of it.

10. Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony (Paperback)

(Amazon recommends this book as a companion to the title by Clapp, above)

Hauerwas, Stanley & Willimon, William H.

Description

In this book, two leading Christian thinkers explore the "alien" status of Christians in today's world, and offer a compelling new vision of how the Christian church can regain its vitality, battle its malaise, reclaim its capacity to nourish souls, and stand firmly against the illusions, pretensions, and eroding values of today's world. Hauerwas and Willimon call for a radical new understanding of the church. By renouncing the emphasis on personal psychological categories, they offer a vision of the church as a colony, a holy nation, a people, a family standing for sharply focused values in a devalued world. - This text refers to the Digital edition.

11. God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis (The Future of Christianity)

Jenkins, Philip

Product Description

Is the Christian church in Europe doomed to collapse under the weight of globalization, Western secularism, and a flood of Muslim immigrants? Is Europe on the brink of becoming "Eurabia"?

Though many pundits are predicting just such a scenario, *God's Continent* reveals the flaws in these arguments and offers a much more measured assessment of Europe's religious future. While frankly acknowledging current tensions, Philip Jenkins shows, for instance, that the overheated rhetoric about a Muslim-dominated Europe is based on politically convenient myths: that Europe is being imperiled by floods of Muslim immigrants, exploding Muslim birth-rates, and the demise of European Christianity. He points out that by no means are Muslims the only new immigrants in Europe. Christians from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe are also pouring into the Western countries, and bringing with them a vibrant and enthusiastic faith that is helping to transform the face of European Christianity. Jenkins agrees that both Christianity and Islam face real difficulties in surviving within Europe's secular culture. But instead of fading away, both have adapted, and are adapting. Yes, the churches are in decline, but there are also clear indications that Christian loyalty and devotion survive, even as institutions crumble.

The third book in an acclaimed trilogy that includes *The Next Christendom* and *The New Faces of Christianity*, *God's Continent* offers a realistic and historically grounded appraisal of the future of Christianity in a rapidly changing Europe. Read a New York Times review at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/28/books/review/Goldstein-t.html>.

12. Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 years

Jenkins, Philip

From Booklist

Jenkins condenses centuries of church and imperial strife with admirable clarity despite the continuous blizzard of historical names and ecclesiastical terms the narrative entails. He suggests that this era, not the later Dark and Middle Ages, is the most violent (un-Christian?) in Christian history and that it may have lessons for the present and future conflict between Christians and Muslims over the nature of God. --Ray Olson

13. *Great Christian Thinkers*

Kung, Hans

From *Library Journal*

Kung, the director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Tubingen, Germany, is a prominent but independent Catholic theologian and prolific author. Here, he attempts a new approach to the introduction-to-theology genre by critically tracing the developing thought of key, usually "paradigm-shifting," theologians (Paul, Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Schleiermacher, and Karl Barth) in relation to their social, intellectual, and religious environment. He explores the significance of their life and work for the Christian world in an interesting, quite understandable manner. Readers of this fair and thought-provoking survey, whether curious lay readers or beginning seminary students, will be inspired to delve into the well-chosen chapter bibliographies and extensive references.

Eugene O. Bowser, Univ. of Northern Colorado, Greeley

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Product Description

A brilliant assessment of the teachings and writings of the men Kung deems to be the greatest Christian thinkers of the past two millennia. Kung does not rest with summing up their theology, but asks what these thinkers have to offer to the present age, and the lessons for Christians today.

14. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*

Wilken, Robert Louis

Written by a preeminent religious historian, this book provides an introduction to early Christian thought.

15. *Head and Heart: American Christianities*

Wills, Garry

Book Description

A landmark examination of Christianity's place in American life across the broad sweep of this country's history, from the Puritans to the presidential administration of George W. Bush.

The struggle within American Christianity, Garry Wills argues, now and throughout our country's history, is between the head and the heart: between reason and emotion, Enlightenment and Evangelism. Why has this been so? How has the tension between the two poles played out, and with what consequences, over the past 400 years? How "Christian" is America, after all? Garry Wills brings a lifetime's worth of thought about these questions to bear on a magnificent historical reckoning that offers much needed perspective on some of the most contentious issues of our time.

As Wills examines the key movements and personalities that have transformed America's religious landscape, we see again and again the same pattern emerge: a cooling of popular religious fervor followed by a grassroots explosion in evangelical activity, generally at a time of great social transformation and anxiety. But such forces inevitably go too far, provoking a backlash as is happening right now with the forces of Creationism and the anti-abortion fundamentalists.

16. *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction*

Woodhead, Linda

Product Description

At a time when Christianity is flourishing in the Southern Hemisphere but declining in much of the West, Linda Woodhead offers a bold new overview of the world's largest religion, exploring the cultural and institutional dimensions of Christianity over two millennia. Christianity addresses topics that other books neglect, for example the competition for power between different forms of Christianity, the churches' uses of power, and their struggles with modernity. Woodhead also considers the recent charismatic explosion of Christianity in Latin America, Africa, and the Far East. She concludes by showing the ways in which those who previously had the least power in Christianity--women and non-

Europeans--have become increasingly central to its unfolding story. Up-to-date, authoritative, and filled with fresh insights, *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction* brings a vast and varied subject into sharp focus. *Linda Woodhead is Senior Lecturer in Christian Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University.*

17. *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision*

Wright, N. T.

Product Description

Few issues are more central to the Christian faith than the nature, scope and means of salvation. Many have thought it to be largely a transaction that gets one to heaven. In this riveting book, N. T. Wright explains that God's salvation is radically more than this.

At the heart of much vigorous debate on this topic is the term the apostle Paul uses in several of his letters to describe what happens to those in Christ--justification. Paul uses this dramatic image from the law court to declare that Christians are acquitted of the cosmic accusations against them. But justification goes beyond this in Paul's writings to offer a vision of God's future for the whole world as well as for his people.

Here in one place Wright now offers a comprehensive account and defense of his perspective on this crucial doctrine. He provides a sweeping overview of the central points in the debate before launching into a thorough explanation of the key texts in Paul's writings. While fully cognizant of tradition and controversy, the final authority for his conclusions is the letters of Paul themselves.

Along the way Wright responds to critics, such as John Piper, who have challenged what has come to be called the New Perspective. For Wright, what Paul means by justification is nothing less than God's unswerving commitment to the covenant promise he made to bless the whole world through Abraham and his family.

This irenic response is an important contribution for those on both sides of the debate--and those still in between--to consider. Whether you're a fan of Wright's work or have read his critics and would like to know the other side of the story, here is a chance to interact with Wright's views on the issues at stake and form your own conclusions.

18. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*

Wright, N. T.

From Publishers Weekly

Wright, one of the greatest, and certainly most prolific, Bible scholars in the world, will touch a nerve with this book. What happens when we die? How should we think about heaven, hell, purgatory and eternal life? Wright critiques the views of heaven that have become regnant in Western culture, especially the assumption of the continuance of the soul after death in a sort of blissful non-bodily existence. This is simply not Christian teaching, Wright insists. The New Testament's clear witness is to the resurrection of the body, not the migration of the soul. And not right away, but only when Jesus returns in judgment and glory. The "paradise," the experience of being "with Christ" spoken of occasionally in the scriptures, is a period of waiting for this return. But Christian teaching of life after death should really be an emphasis on "life after life after death"--the resurrection of the body, which is also the ground for all faithful political action, as the last part of this book argues. Wright's prose is as accessible as it is learned--an increasingly rare combination. No one can doubt his erudition or the greatness of the churchmanship of the Anglican Bishop of Durham. One wonders, however, at the regular citation of his own previous work. And no other scholar can get away so cleanly with continuing to propagate the "hellenization thesis," by which the early church is eventually polluted by contaminating Greek philosophical influence. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Christian Life, Discipleship

1. *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith*

Borg, Marcus J.

From Publishers Weekly

Borg follows up two of his previous releases about the Bible and Jesus with a volume that could easily have played on those titles, because this highly readable book is essentially about looking at Christianity again for the first time. In that respect, it provides a valuable glimpse into the essence of Christianity for those who have left the faith because they no longer believe its doctrines and those who are trying to remain in the faith while questioning its doctrines. With those people in mind, Borg emphasizes the transformational aspect of Christianity by examining the "emerging paradigm" that is gradually replacing the belief-centered paradigm of the last several hundred years. The new paradigm, Borg writes, is about loving God and loving what God loves, rather than rigidly adhering to a specific set of beliefs. In exploring this new way of "being Christian," Borg offers a middle ground for conservative and liberal Christians, though it's unlikely conservatives will conclude, as he does, that Jesus was not really the Son of God, nor are liberals likely to begin using the term "born again," as he advocates. Still, there's much here that both sides can agree on, possibly helping to bring them a step closer to the unity that has eluded them for centuries. As always, Borg writes with clarity and precision, which should also help the ongoing conversation.

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2. Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith

Butler Bass, Diana

Christianity for the Rest of Us tells the story of moderate and progressive mainline Protestant congregations—and how they found new vitality through spiritual practices and deeper meaning by pursuing God's hope for transformation in the world.

"The most important book of the decade about emerging Christianity and the renewal of mainline congregations. Exciting and encouraging, hopeful and helpful, and filled with examples of vital Christian practices from which all interested in the future of the church can learn."--*Marcus Borg, author of The Heart of Christianity*

3. Strength for the Journey: A Pilgrimage of Faith in Community

Butler Bass, Diana

"A compelling intertwining of a personal spiritual journey and the recent history of Protestantism. Diana Butler Bass makes the case that baby boom seekers are drawing the church into a new, more authentic Christianity."

Nora Gallagher, author, Things Seen and Unseen: A Year Lived in Faith

"With the insights of a mystic, Diana Butler Bass recounts her spiritual pilgrimage from Methodism to evangelicalism to the numbing diversity of the Episcopal Church, where she found a spiritual home. Along the way, she offers a guided tour of the crises and controversies afflicting mainline Protestantism over the past several decades. For anyone looking for evidence that the glass of mainline Protestantism is half full rather than half empty, *Strength for the Journey* offers a persuasive case." *Randall Balmer, author, Thy Kingdom Come*

4. Uncommon Gratitude

Chittister, Joan and Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Product Description

"To deal with the meaning of 'alleluia' in life means to deal with moments that do not feel like 'alleluia moments' at all." In this series of reflections it becomes clear that singing "alleluia" is not a way to escape reality but receptivity to another kind of reality beyond the immediate and the delusional, of helping us understand what is now and what is to come.

5. Unfettered Hope: A Call to Faithful Living in an Affluent Society

Dawn, Marva J.

"This book is not just another post 9/11 commentary on modern life. It certainly does contain a reflective and accessible synthesis of social commentary, philosophy and theology which itself affords a piercing critique of the world as it is."

6. *The Bible Salesman: A Novel*

Edgerton, Clyde

Set in the mid-20th-century rural southern U.S., this novel would be great to place in conversation with Brown's essay collection for a class or Bible study on biblical authority. Edgerton gives comic treatment to his title character, a young man who struggles to make sense of what he has been taught about the Bible, what the Bible teaches him and what life teaches him. The issues Edgerton raises will resonate with anyone who wonders about how to grow with the Bible and not away from it. [*Christian Century* review]

7. *The Good Life : Truths That Last in Times of Need*

Gomes, Peter J.

"Little of what Gomes writes is, by his own admission, particularly new. His thesis that doing good is essential to the good life is not radical, nor are his admonitions to pursue lives of prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, faith, hope and love." (Excerpt from Publishers Weekly review)

8. *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus: What's So Good About the Good News?*

Gomes, Peter J.

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. As minister of Harvard University's Memorial Church, Gomes was a popular preacher well before *The Good Book* became a bestseller in 1996. Several subsequent books were, or read like, first-rate sermon collections, but this is an incisive original aimed at cautious defenders of conventional wisdom. Asserting that we are meant to go beyond the Bible in order to discover the gospel, Gomes points away from the past toward a future in which promise and fulfillment meet. Meanwhile, we must manage to live in the world as it is—a world steeped in hostility, suffering and injustice. If we take the gospel seriously, then like Jesus we will risk all, and might even lose all.

9. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony (Paperback)**(Amazon recommends this book as a companion to the title by Clapp, above)*

Hauerwas, Stanley & Willimon, William H.

Description

In this book, two leading Christian thinkers explore the "alien" status of Christians in today's world, and offer a compelling new vision of how the Christian church can regain its vitality, battle its malaise, reclaim its capacity to nourish souls, and stand firmly against the illusions, pretensions, and eroding values of today's world. Hauerwas and Willimon call for a radical new understanding of the church. By renouncing the emphasis on personal psychological categories, they offer a vision of the church as a colony, a holy nation, a people, a family standing for sharply focused values in a devalued world. -This text refers to the Digital edition.

10. *At the Heart of the Gospel: Suffering in the Earliest Christian Message*

Jervis, L. Ann

Jervis approaches the question of suffering from the dual perspective of her personal experience and her considerable talents as a Pauline scholar, creating a fresh resource for Christians who struggle with the seeming incongruity of the world's suffering and God's love and grace. Because Jervis gives exegetical, theological and pastoral attention to the realities and depths of human suffering, her presentation of the gospel response to suffering is far from an offer of cheap grace. [*Christian Century* review]

11. *Growing Up Christian: A Congregational Strategy for Nurturing Disciples*

Nelson, C. Ellis

McGuffey's Readers. Public school. Family prayers. In the 1800s, these were primary — and successful — strategies by which children learned to become Christians. Sunday school was developed to support what was already being done at home and in school. Today many churches still rely on the nineteenth-century model to encourage young people to become disciples of Christ.

In *Growing Up Christian*, Dr. C. Ellis Nelson explores why these strategies are inadequate for the twenty-first century and offers practical, specific guidance for congregations who wish to nurture disciples of Christ more effectively. Part 1 describes the pattern of influences that form our images of God. Given the way culture and family influence the rising generation, Part 2 outlines a strategy for nurturing disciples that capitalizes on the persuasive power of the congregation in fellowship, worship, and instruction.

C. Ellis Nelson, research professor of Christian education at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, has written many books and articles about the biblical and theological basis for Christian education. Dr. Nelson has been a research fellow at Oxford University and has lectured in many seminaries and universities in North America, Australia, and Europe. His book *How Faith Matures* was named one of the ten best religious books of 1989.

Read Walter Brueggemann's endorsement at http://www.helwys.com/books/growing_up.html.

12. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*

Nouwen, Henri

With clarity and deep spiritual insight, this religious bestseller offers today's Christian a perceptive, systematic plan for living the spiritual life achieving union with God.

13. *The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time*

Sine, Tom & Claiborne, Shane

From Publishers Weekly

Organized as a series of conversations, this book explores the lively edge of Christianity in the U.S. and the U.K. Sine, who wrote *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy* in the early 1980s, has always championed Christian subversives and exiles who act in small but significant ways to care for the poor and marginalized. This book begins by delineating four streams of Christian expression that greatly challenge the norms and assumptions of traditional churches. These streams—emerging, missional, mosaic and monastic—frequently flow into one another, and Sine does a fine job of defining them as separate but interdependent entities. Sine looks to these streams for tentative answers to several difficult questions, such as Did we get what it means to be a disciple wrong? and Did we get what it means to be the church wrong? As he explores these questions, Sine considers the context, particularly what he calls the global mall, in which the church must define and distinguish itself. Sine is unflinching in his assessment of Christian consumerism, but his tone is never angry. Rather, he exudes childlike enthusiasm as he shares example after example of Christians all over the world who are expressing their faith through profoundly countercultural acts of mercy, justice, love and compassion. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

14. *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C.S. Lewis*

Vaus, Will, & Gresham, Douglas

From Publishers Weekly

"Over the years I have met many Lewis enthusiasts who have wondered, 'What did Lewis believe about _____?' (You fill in the blank)," writes Vaus. "This book is written to answer those many questions about what Lewis believed." Arranged topically, Vaus's book takes readers through Lewis's published thoughts on subjects such as creation, the Fall, Scripture, the Trinity, prayer, war, God's sovereignty, human free will and Satan. (There are also chapters on Venus, by which Lewis means sexual morality, and "the Tao," a term that he—oddly enough—uses to refer to the Jewish understanding of the law.) Vaus's chapters are remarkably concise and even-handed...

15. *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Paperback)

Volf, Miroslav

Book Description

An exploration of how we can be transformed by the God who gives abundantly and who forgives unconditionally.

Congregational Life, Practice

1. *From Nomads to Pilgrims: Stories from Practicing Congregations*

Butler Bass, Diana & Stewart-Sicking, Joseph

A follow-up to *The Practicing Congregation*, this book tells the stories of twelve mainline churches and how they changed by engaging a particular Christian practice. Each chapter is written by a pastor who led a church through change—and the unexpected things that happened along the way. *Nomads* offers church leaders dozens of ideas to implement in their own congregations. The book includes two essays by Diana Butler Bass.

2. *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church*

Butler Bass, Diana

"In *The Practicing Congregation*, Diana Butler Bass offers a compelling alternative to the flat and one-sided depictions of mainline Protestant decline to which we have become accustomed. Drawing on insights from recent studies of tradition, practice, narrative, and congregational history, she is able to identify emerging forms of congregational life that display an unexpected vitality, adaptability, and faithfulness."

E. Brooks Holifield, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Culture & Religion

1. *America's Prophet: Moses and the American Story*

Feiler, Bruce

Product Description

The exodus story is America's story. Moses is our real founding father.

The pilgrims quoted his story. Franklin and Jefferson proposed he appear on the U.S. seal. Washington and Lincoln were called his incarnations. The Statue of Liberty and Superman were molded in his image. Martin Luther King, Jr., invoked him the night before he died. Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama cited him as inspiration. For four hundred years, one figure inspired more Americans than any other. His name is Moses.

In this groundbreaking book, *New York Times* bestselling author Bruce Feiler travels through touchstones in American history and traces the biblical prophet's influence from the *Mayflower* through today. He visits the island where the pilgrims spent their first Sabbath, climbs the bell tower where the Liberty Bell was inscribed with a quote from Moses, retraces the Underground Railroad where "Go Down, Moses" was the national anthem of slaves, and dons the robe Charlton Heston wore in *The Ten Commandments*.

"Even a cursory review of American history indicates that Moses has emboldened leaders of all stripes," Feiler writes, "patriot and loyalist, slave and master, Jew and Christian. Could the persistence of his story serve as a reminder of our shared national values? Could he serve as a unifying force in a disunifying time? If Moses could split the Red Sea, could he

unsplit America?"

One part adventure story, one part literary detective story, one part exploration of faith in contemporary life, *America's Prophet* takes readers through the landmarks of America's narrative—from Gettysburg to Selma, the Silver Screen to the Oval Office—to understand how Moses has shaped the nation's character.

Meticulously researched and highly readable, *America's Prophet* is a thrilling, original work of history that will forever change how we view America, our faith, and our future.

2. *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*

Jacobs, A. J.

Amazon.com

Subtitled: "One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible," Jacobs, or A.J., as his two-year-old son calls him, does just that. It is likely that no one but A.J. Jacobs could have accomplished such a feat. After all, his last book, *The Know-It-All*, chronicles his reading of the entire *Encyclopedia Britannica*, from A to Z. No one but a smart, witty, self-deprecating, nitpicky kinda guy would undertake two such daunting tasks, and complete them with grace, no pun intended.

Jacobs, a New York Jewish agnostic, decides to follow the laws and rules of the Bible, beginning with the Old Testament, for one year. (He actually adds some bonus days and makes it a 381-day year.) He starts by growing a beard and we are with him through every itchy moment. Jacobs is borderline OCD, at least as he describes himself; obsessing over possible dangers to his son, germs, literal interpretation of Bible verses, etc. He enlists the aid of counselors along the way; Jewish rabbis, Christians of every stripe, friends and neighbors.

In an open-minded way he also visits with atheists, Evangelicals Concerned (a gay group), Jerry Falwell, snake handlers, Red Letter Christians--those who adhere to the red letters in the Bible, those words spoken by Jesus Himself, and even takes a trip to Israel and meets Samaritans. Through it all, he keeps a healthy skepticism, but continues to pray and is open to the flowering of real faith. Jacobs is a knowledge junky, to be sure. He enjoys the lore he picks up along the way as much as any other aspect of his experiment. One of the ongoing schticks is his meeting with the shatnez tester, Mr. Berkowitz. He is the one who determines whether or not your clothes are made of mixed fibers, in keeping with the Biblical injunction not to wear wool and linen together. The two become friends and prayer partners, in only one of the unexpected results of this year.

In the end, he says, "I'm now a reverent agnostic. Which isn't an oxymoron, I swear. I now believe that whether or not there's a God, there is such a thing as sacredness. Life is sacred." Not a bad outcome. --Valerie Ryan

3. *The Shattered Lantern*

Rolheiser, Ronald R.

In this wide-ranging analysis of the atheism of our age, Ronald Rolheiser identifies clear obstacles to our appreciation of God such as self-preoccupation, the emphasis on the useful and efficient, and the fast pace of life.

Devotional

1. *Harvard Diary: Reflections on the Sacred and the Secular*

Coles, Robert

Book Description

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Robert Coles has been variously identified as a child psychiatrist, a social anthropologist, a public speaker, a teacher, a husband, a parent, and, a friend. In all of his vocations, Coles is also recognized as a seeker of

enduring values. In *Harvard Diary*, he reveals his intimate thoughts and feelings on spiritual and other values that concern not only him but everyone.

One of those rare “religious” books with enormous general appeal, *Harvard Diary* records Coles’ own soul-searching. Written in the 1980s, in these fifty-five essays he shares with the reader his ongoing questions (which don’t always have clear answers), his struggles, insights, observations and experiences on issues that occupy his mind and heart.

2. *Harvard Diary II: Reflections on Values in Life & Literature*

Coles, Robert

Book Description

Harvard Diary II records Robert Coles’ soul-searching from 1990 to the present day. In fifty-six essays, Dr. Coles shares his observations and insights on issues ranging from preachers and politics to moral smugness and ideological conformity. He lays bare his faith and an uncommon sensitivity to people on subjects that include children and media violence, the seven deadly sins, the underclass, art and literature, vulnerability, doctors and death, moral necessity, and much more. Like its predecessor volume, *Harvard Diary II* is at once personal and universal—the perfect choice for those who appreciate enduring values.

Ethics

1. *Faith-Based Caregiving in a Secular World: Four Defining Issues*

Londis, James J.

Faith-Based Caregiving in a Secular World addresses some of the pressing issues facing believing caregivers working in secular settings.

Faith-based caregivers see themselves not just as medical professionals, but as religious workers and followers of Jesus. They believe their mission goes beyond curing the sick, but are not always sure how to identify what it is that they can offer patients that other caregivers cannot. They see their mission in spiritual terms, but may not be able to formulate a clear definition of that mission, or to explain how their work grows out of their spiritual commitments. Thus, they may ask, “Does my spiritual focus make any difference in the care my patients receive?”

This book offers wisdom and encouragement for caregivers and administrators in faith-based institutions, patients of faith, believers providing home care, hospital chaplains, and Christian nursing and medical students.

2. *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study of Ethics and Politics*

Niebuhr, Reinhold

The thesis elaborated in these pages is that a sharp distinction must be drawn between the moral and social behavior of individuals and of social groups, national, racial, and economic; and that this distinction justifies and necessitates political policies which a purely individualistic ethic must always find embarrassing.

3. *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-Day Adventism and Contemporary Ethics (Hardcover)*

Pearson, Michael

Dr Pearson looks specifically at the moral decisions Adventists have made in the area of human sexuality, on such issues as contraception, abortion, the role and status of women, divorce and homosexuality, from the beginnings of the movement to 1985. He seeks to put such decision-making in perspective by providing the general social context in which it took place, and shows how Ellen White (whose charismatic leadership held the movement together in its first fifty years) has been a major source of moral authority in the Adventist church - her writings continuing to exercise authority in a contemporary society of turmoil and change. This important book, which conveys something of the general ethos of Adventism, is the first to investigate the ethics of the movement, and so fill a notable gap in the literature.

4. *A Serious Way of Wondering*

Price, Reynolds

When renowned novelist and poet Reynolds Price, one of Christianity's most eloquent outlaws, was invited to deliver the annual Peabody Lecture at Harvard University Memorial Church in 2001, he chose to explore a subject that has produced fierce debate—even wars and crusades—and is still intensely relevant today: the ethics of Jesus. In two succeeding lectures at the National Cathedral and at Auburn Seminary, he continued the theme, exploring not only the apparently contradictory ethics that Jesus articulates in the Gospels but also constructing scenes that present Jesus with urgent dilemmas he never confronts there. In *A Serious Way of Wondering*, Price greatly expands those lectures and imagines Jesus in moments of confrontation with three problems of burning moral concern -- suicide, homosexuality, and the plight of women in male-dominated cultures and faiths.

Faith, Doubt**1. *In Praise of Doubt: How to Have Convictions Without Becoming a Fanatic***

Berger, Peter & Zijderfeld, Anton

Product Description

We are stuck. Both as a culture and as individuals, we find it much easier to articulate what we are against and find ourselves at a loss for words when we need to articulate what we are for. World-famous sociologists Peter Berger and Anton Zijderfeld team up to present a profound treatment of how we can have confidence in our convictions—in such ideals as democracy, human rights, equality under the law, etc.—without succumbing to the radical doubts of relativism and the certainties of fundamentalism. With new lenses for seeing the influence modernism, relativism, and fundamentalism, they explore the roles of humor, doubt, and social norms that help us have convictions without grasping them so tightly that we become fanatical.

2. *My Jesus Year: A Rabbi's Son Wanders the Bible Belt in Search of His Own Faith*

Cohen, Benyamin

Product Description

One day a Georgia-born son of an Orthodox rabbi discovers that his enthusiasm for Judaism is flagging. He observes the Sabbath, he goes to synagogue, and he even flies to New York on weekends for a series of "speed dates" with nice, eligible Jewish girls. But, something is missing. Looking out of his window and across the street at one of the hundreds of churches in Atlanta, he asks, "What would it be like to be a Christian?"

So begins Benyamin Cohen's hilarious journey that is *My Jesus Year*—part memoir, part spiritual quest, and part anthropologist's mission. Among Cohen's many adventures (and misadventures), he finds himself in some rather unlikely places: jumping into the mosh-pit at a Christian rock concert, seeing his face projected on the giant JumboTron of an African-American megachurch, visiting a potential convert with two young Mormon missionaries, attending a Christian "professional wrestling" match, and waking up early for a sunrise Easter service on top of Stone Mountain—a Confederate memorial and former base of operations for the KKK.

During his year-long exploration, Cohen sees the best and the worst of Christianity—from megachurches to storefront churches; from crass commercialization of religion to the simple, moving faith of the humble believer; from the profound to the profane to the just plain laughable. Throughout, he keeps an open heart and mind, a good sense of humor, and takes what he learns from Christianity to reflect on his own faith and relationship to God. By year's end, to Cohen's surprise, his search for universal answers and truths in the Bible Belt actually make him a better Jew.

3. Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate

Eagleton, Terry

Product Description

Terry Eagleton's witty and polemical *Reason, Faith, and Revolution* is bound to cause a stir among scientists, theologians, people of faith and people of no faith, as well as general readers eager to understand the God Debate. On the one hand, Eagleton demolishes what he calls the "superstitious" view of God held by most atheists and agnostics and offers in its place a revolutionary account of the Christian Gospel. On the other hand, he launches a stinging assault on the betrayal of this revolution by institutional Christianity. [Read more...](#)

Read a **NYTimes** review at <http://fish.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/05/03/god-talk/?em>. Walter Brueggemann also reviews the book on Christian Century at <http://www.christiancentury.org/article.lasso?id=8308>.

4. You Don't Have to Be Wrong for Me to Be Right: Finding Faith Without Fanaticism

Hirschfield, Brad

"Hirschfield's book is a breathtaking treatise on the perils of rigid religious behavior. A self-professed student of mercy and forgiveness as well as hatred and retribution, Hirschfield writes with compelling force about the need to challenge religious certainty gone awry—because when religious certainty is wielded as a weapon, some innocent person will pay the price and the world will become more dangerous." — Excerpted from a book review in **Christian Century**. Read the full review at <http://www.christiancentury.org/article.lasso?id=6105>.

5. Faith and Doubt

Ortberg, John

Product Description

John Ortberg demonstrates how doubt is very much a part of faith and how uncertainty can lead to trust. "The beliefs that really matter," he writes, "are the ones that guide our behavior." We all hope, Ortberg writes, but we cannot hope without faith, and so we must not hope for something but someone? Jesus Christ.

From the Back Cover

What if the most important word is the one in the middle?

We often think of doubt as the opposite of faith, but could it actually strengthen our relationship with God? According to John Ortberg, best-selling author and pastor, the very nature of faith requires the presence of uncertainty. In this refreshingly candid look at a life of faith, he traces the line between belief and unbelief: less a dividing line between hostile camps than a razor's edge that runs through every soul. His findings point us toward the relief of being totally honest. Questions can expand our understanding, uncertainty can lead to trust, and honest faith can produce outrageous hope. Written from Ortberg's own struggle with faith and doubt, this book will challenge, comfort, and inspire you with the truth that God wants all of us—including our doubts.

6. *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith*

Rawls, John Edited by Thomas Nagel, with commentaries by Joshua Cohen and Thomas Nagel, and by Robert Merrihew Adams

John Rawls never published anything about his own religious beliefs, but after his death two texts were discovered which shed extraordinary light on the subject. *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith* is Rawls's undergraduate senior thesis, submitted in December 1942, just before he entered the army. At that time Rawls was deeply religious; the thesis is a significant work of theological ethics, of interest both in itself and because of its relation to his mature writings. "On My Religion," a short statement drafted in 1997, describes the history of his religious beliefs and attitudes toward religion, including his abandonment of orthodoxy during World War II.

The present volume includes these two texts, together with an Introduction by Joshua Cohen and Thomas Nagel, which discusses their relation to Rawls's published work, and an essay by Robert Merrihew Adams, which places the thesis in its theological context.

The texts display the profound engagement with religion that forms the background of Rawls's later views on the importance of separating religion and politics. Moreover, the moral and social convictions that the thesis expresses in religious form are related in illuminating ways to the central ideas of Rawls's later writings. His notions of sin, faith, and community are simultaneously moral and theological, and prefigure the moral outlook found in *Theory of Justice*.

7. *What Good Is God?: In Search of a Faith That Matters*

Yancey, Philip

Product Description

Journalist and spiritual seeker Philip Yancey has always struggled with the most basic questions of the Christian faith. The question he tackles in *WHAT GOOD IS GOD?* concerns the practical value of belief in God. His search for the answer to this question took him to some amazing settings around the world: Mumbai, India when the firing started during the terrorist attacks; at the motel where Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated; on the Virginia Tech campus soon after the massacre; an AA convention; and even to a conference for women in prostitution. At each of the 10 places he visited, his preparation for the visit and exactly what he said to the people he met each provided evidence that faith really does work when what we believe is severely tested. *WHAT GOOD IS GOD?* tells the story of Philip's journey--the background, the preparation, the presentations themselves. Here is a story of grace for armchair travelers, spiritual seekers, and those in desperate need of assurance that their faith really matters.

History of the Bible

1. *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible*

Nicolson, Adam

Book Description

A net of complex currents flowed across Jacobean England. This was the England of Shakespeare, Jonson and Bacon; of the Gunpowder Plot; the worst outbreak of the plague England had ever seen; Arcadian landscapes; murderous, toxic slums; and, above all, of sometimes overwhelming religious passion. Jacobean England was both more godly and less godly than it had ever been, and the entire culture was drawn taut between the polarities.

This was the world that created the King James Bible...

About fifty scholars from Cambridge, Oxford and London did the work, drawing on many previous versions, and created a text which, for all its failings, has never been equaled. That is the central question of this book: How did this group of near-anonymous divines, muddled, drunk, self-serving, ambitious, ruthless, obsequious, pedantic and flawed as they were, manage to bring off this astonishing translation? How did such ordinary men make such extraordinary prose? In *God's Secretaries*, Adam Nicolson gives a fascinating and dramatic account of the accession and ambition of the first Stuart king; of the scholars who labored for seven years to create his Bible; of the influences that shaped their work and of the beliefs that colored their world, immersing us in an age whose greatest monument is not a painting or a building, but a book.

2. *Whose Bible is It? A Short History of the Scriptures*

Pelikan, Jaroslav

Product Description

Jaroslav Pelikan, widely regarded as one of the most distinguished historians of our day, now provides a clear and engaging account of the Bible's journey from oral narrative to Hebrew and Greek text to today's countless editions. Pelikan explores the evolution of the Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic versions and the development of the printing press and its effect on the Reformation, the translation into modern languages, and varying schools of critical scholarship. *Whose Bible Is It?* is a triumph of scholarship that is also a pleasure to read.

3. *The Bible: A Very Short Introduction*

Riches, John

Product Description

It is sometimes said that the Bible is one of the most unread books in the world, yet has been a major force in the development of Western culture and continues to exert an enormous influence over many people's lives. This *Very Short Introduction* looks at the importance accorded to the Bible by different communities and cultures and attempts to explain why it has generated such a rich variety of uses and interpretations. It explores how the Bible was written, the development of the canon, the role of Biblical criticism, the appropriation of the Bible in high and popular culture, and its use for political ends.

John Riches is Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow.

History of Religion

1. *A History of God: The 4000 Year Quest for Judaism, Christianity and Islam*

Armstrong, Karen

"Karen Armstrong, one of Britain's foremost commentators on religious affairs, traces the history of how men and women have perceived and experienced God, from the time of Abraham to the present."

2. *The Battle for God*

Armstrong, Karen

In our supposedly secular age governed by reason and technology, fundamentalism has emerged as an overwhelming force in every major world religion. Why? This is the fascinating, disturbing question that bestselling author Karen Armstrong addresses in her brilliant new book *The Battle for God*.

3. *Story of Christianity: An Illustrated History of 2000 Years of the Christian Faith*

Hart, David Bentley

Amazon Customer Review

This is a magnificent and beautiful book. Exquisitely illustrated, it's the history of Christianity in brief -- as complete as one volume can put it and in words easily read and understood by the reader. It's easily worth several times what it costs, as it leaves one with a new assurance of what he or she believes and knows about Christianity. In very few words, Hart displays his excellent knowledge of the sweep of Christianity from its beginning to the present. There is beauty in both the illustrations and the prose. I highly recommend it!

4. *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*

MacCulloch, Diarmaid

Product Description

Once in a generation a historian will redefine his field, producing a book that demands to be read—a product of electrifying scholarship conveyed with commanding skill. Diarmaid MacCulloch's *Christianity* is such a book. Breathtaking in ambition, it ranges back to the origins of the Hebrew Bible and covers the world, following the three main strands of the Christian faith.

Christianity will teach modern readers things that have been lost in time about how Jesus' message spread and how the New Testament was formed. Read Jon Meacham's New York Times review of the book at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/04/books/review/Meacham-t.html?hp>.

Jesus

1. *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem*

Borg, Marcus J. and Crossan, John Dominic

Product Description

Top Jesus scholars Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan join together to reveal a radical and little-known Jesus. As both authors reacted to and responded to questions about Mel Gibson's blockbuster *The Passion of the Christ*, they discovered that many Christians are unclear on the details of events during the week leading up to Jesus's crucifixion.

Using the gospel of Mark as their guide, Borg and Crossan present a day-by-day account of Jesus's final week of life. They begin their story on Palm Sunday with two triumphal entries into Jerusalem. The first entry, that of Roman governor Pontius Pilate leading Roman soldiers into the city, symbolized military strength. The second heralded a new kind of moral

hero who was praised by the people as he rode in on a humble donkey. The Jesus introduced by Borg and Crossan is this new moral hero, a more dangerous Jesus than the one enshrined in the church's traditional teachings.

The Last Week depicts Jesus giving up his life to protest power without justice and to condemn the rich who lack concern for the poor. In this vein, at the end of the week Jesus marches up Calvary, offering himself as a model for others to do the same when they are confronted by similar issues. Informed, challenged, and inspired, we not only meet the historical Jesus, but meet a new Jesus who engages us and invites us to follow him.

2. *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now*

Crossan, John Dominic

From Publishers Weekly

In this fine study of civilization, culture and transformation, Father Crossan asks important questions: have those who resort to violence as a means of change succeeded in their quest for empire? Or has nonviolence been more effective in bringing about lasting change? Crossan, professor emeritus at De Paul University and author of several well-received works including *The Historical Jesus*, believes that the solution is not in violent intervention but in the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. But how, and when, will this Kingdom come? In comparing the missions of Jesus and John the Baptist, Crossan states his idea clearly: "Jesus differed precisely from John in emphasizing not the future-presence but the already-presence of God's Kingdom as the Great Divine Cleanup of the world." In other words, Christ saw the Kingdom as a present and active reality. Crossan uses the teachings of Jesus to promote his thesis, and then turns to an unlikely ally—the Apostle Paul—by suggesting that Paul's emphasis on equality and freedom helped carry forward Jesus' program of nonviolent change. Crossan's latest work presents a complex subject in a clear and powerful way, and it merits a wide readership. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the [Hardcover](#) edition.

3. *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years*

Jenkins, Philip

From Booklist

Jenkins condenses centuries of church and imperial strife with admirable clarity despite the continuous blizzard of historical names and ecclesiastical terms the narrative entails. He suggests that this era, not the later Dark and Middle Ages, is the most violent (un-Christian?) in Christian history and that it may have lessons for the present and future conflict between Christians and Muslims over the nature of God. --Ray Olson

4. *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*

Pelikan, Jaroslav

From the Publisher

One of the most highly regarded works of intellectual history of the past decade, *Jesus Through the Centuries* is an original and compelling study of the impact of Jesus on cultural, political, social, and economic history. Noted historian and theologian Jaroslav Pelikan reveals how the image of Jesus created by each successive epoch—from rabbi in the first century to liberator in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—is a key to understanding the temper and values of that age.

5. *The Man Born to Be King*

Sayers, Dorothy

Dorothy Sayers is widely and favorably known in this country as well as in England as the author of deservedly popular detective novels. In this book she appears as a deeply spiritual interpreter of the life of Christ and as a skilled craftsman in the presentation of that life in a dramatic form designed especially for radio broadcasting. This is a brilliant piece of work in its interpretation of the life of Christ and in the construction of what she calls "a play-cycle" of twelve dramatic episodes. In her introduction, the author explains the reasons for the presentation and for the methods used, and preceding each episode she gives a penetrating analysis of each character that is designed presumably for the guidance of

those who would present it. In view of the great popularity of Fulton Oursler's *The Greatest Story Ever Told* both on the radio and in its book form, one might expect a most favorable reception for this presentation, except for the fact that it is very similar. Miss Sayer's production, however, is adaptable for presentation in Church drama groups and for these it should be most valuable, while for the general public reading it should have a wide appeal. (Kirkus Reviews)

6. *Why Jesus Died*

Sloyan, Gerard S.

Book Description

Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross at the hands of Roman justice around the year 30 C.E. Thousands of others perished in the same way, and many people before and since have suffered far more gruesome torments. Why then is Jesus, asks Gerard Sloyan, uniquely and universally remembered for his suffering death? In this timely, expert, and fully engaging account, this widely acclaimed biblical scholar and historian adroitly discusses:

- how Jesus died
- who was responsible for his death
- how his death came to be seen as redemptive
- how accounts of his death figured in the rise of anti-Jewish sentiment

New Testament Studies

1. *Poet and Peasant through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*

Bailey, Kenneth E.

Study of the literary structure and cultural milieu of sixteen of Jesus' most significant parables as they are recorded in Luke.

2. *The Cross & the Prodigal: Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants*

Bailey, Kenneth E.

Where is the cross in the parable of the prodigal son? For centuries, Muslims have called attention to the father's forgiveness in this parable in order to question the need for a Mediator between humanity and God. In *The Cross and the Prodigal*, Kenneth E. Bailey--New Testament scholar and long-time missionary to the Middle East--undertakes to answer this question. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of both the New Testament and Middle Eastern culture, Bailey presents an interpretation of this parable from a Middle Eastern perspective and, in doing so, powerfully demonstrates its essentially Christian message. Here Bailey highlights the underlying tensions between law and love, servanthood and sonship, honor and forgiveness that grant this story such timeless spiritual and theological power.

3. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*

Meeks, Wayne A.

Wayne Meeks analyses the earliest extant documents of Christianity - the letters of Paul - to describe the tensions and the texture of life of the first urban Christians.

4. *Three Gospels*

Price, Reynolds

A leading American novelist's version of Jesus' life, based on Mark, John, and his own imaginative reconstruction.

New Testament Studies

1. *Mark As Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*

Rhoads, David M., Joanna Dewey, Donald Michie

Amazon Reader's Review

Most churches teach "the gospels" as if they were one story told by someone named Matthew Mark Luke John. So it's very hard to read any one gospel as if for the first time. They all wind up sounding like random collections of sayings and miracles by Jesus leading up to Good Friday and Easter. What Rhoads and Michie do is to treat the Gospel of Mark as a work of literature in its own right, apart from anything else we know or think we know about Jesus. They examine Mark's rhetoric, settings, plot, and characters to see how he tells the story. In the process, they enable us to experience Mark's gospel in a completely fresh way. Now I'm waiting for them to do the same thing for Matthew, Luke, and John--especially John.

2. *Paul: A Very Short Introduction*

Sanders, E. P.

Product Description

Missionary, theologian, and religious genius, Paul is one of the most powerful human personalities in the history of the Church. E.P. Sanders, an influential Pauline scholar, analyzes the fundamental beliefs and vigorous contradictions in Paul's thought, discovering a philosophy that is less of a monolithic system than the apostle's convictions would seem to suggest. This volume offers an incisive summation of Paul's career, as well as his role in the development of early Christianity. Both lucid and judicious, it is the most compelling short introduction to Paul now available.

E. P. Sanders is Arts and Sciences Professor of Religion at Duke University.

3. *What the Gospels Meant*

Wills, Garry

Product Description

Garry Wills's recent New York Times bestselling books *What Jesus Meant* and *What Paul Meant* were tour-de-force interpretations of the teachings of Jesus and the Apostle Paul. Now Wills turns his remarkable gift for biblical analysis to the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Wills brilliantly examines the goals, methods, and styles of the evangelists and how these shaped the gospels' messages. The earliest book, Mark, emphasizes Jesus the sufferer; in Matthew, Jesus the teacher; in Luke, Jesus the reconciler; and in John, Jesus the mystic. Hailed as "one of the most intellectually interesting and doctrinally heterodox Christians writing today" (The New York Times Book Review), Wills guides readers through the maze of meanings that have accrued around these foundational texts, revealing their essential Christian truths. *What the Gospels Meant* will prove to be a valuable source of wisdom and inspiration for all.

Old Testament

1. *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*

Coogan, Michael

Product Description

Eminent biblical scholar Michael D. Coogan offers here a wide-ranging and stimulating exploration of the Old Testament, illuminating its importance as history, literature, and sacred text. Coogan explains the differences between the Bible of Jewish tradition (the "Hebrew Bible") and the Old Testament of Christianity, and also examines the different contents of the Bibles used by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Protestants. He looks at the rise of modern biblical scholarship as well as the recovery of ancient Near Eastern literatures and their significance for biblical interpretation.

Michael D. Coogan is Professor of Religious Studies at Stonehill College and Director of Publications for the Harvard Semitic Museum.

2. *The Prophets*

Heschel, Abraham J.

According to the popular definition, a prophet is one who accurately predicts the future. But in the Jewish tradition, as Abraham Joshua Heschel explains in *The Prophets*, these figures earn their title by witnessing the world around them with outstanding passion. Prophets are those whose "life and soul are at stake" in what they say about "the mystery of [God's] relation to man." They are "some of the most disturbing people who have ever lived," and yet they are also "the men whose image is our refuge in distress, and whose voice and vision sustain our faith."

3. *Who is Afraid of the Old Testament God?*

Thompson, Alden

This book is for those who have serious questions about the meaning and relevance of the Hebrew scriptures, and strikes at the heart of Christian teaching and our understanding of God.

Prayer

1. *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit*

Brueggemann, Walter

A readable and powerful call, by a leading Old Testament scholar, to pray with and through the Psalms.

Walter Brueggemann pushes his readers to recognize the full gamut of passions reflected in the Psalms: joy and exultation but also disappointment, sorrow, anger, resentment, even the desire for vengeance. We are invited into a daring relationship with the God who calls us to pray with honesty.

In the spiritual classic readers are guided into a thoughtful and prayerful encounter with God through the Psalms.

[Review in AuthenticMedia.co.uk]

2. *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord's Prayer*

Crossan, John Dominic

One reviewer says this about the book, "Crossan takes key words from the prayer (Father, name, kingdom, will, bread, debt, and temptation), examines their meaning in a biblical context, and concludes that it is a revolutionary manifesto, proclaiming nonviolence and distributive justice. This seemingly radical exegesis will be as welcome to some as it is disconcerting to others."

3. *With Open Hands*

Nouwen, Henri

Henri Nouwen had a great ability to take something rather simple and ordinary, and use it as a way to help people understand and experience God. Nouwen's now classic book WITH OPEN HANDS is an excellent example of using a simple image to invite a person to prayer and a deeper experience of God. Clenched fists demonstrate being closed to God, and through reflections on prayer: silence, acceptance, hope, compassion, and prophetic criticism, Nouwen invites us to open our hands and thus, be open to God. This work is excellent for people who are new to prayer or are trying to discover new prayer techniques, but it is profound enough to help all people experience God. [Amazon customer review.]

Psychology

1. *Man's Search for Meaning*

Frankl, Viktor E.

Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's memoir has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for spiritual survival. Between 1942 and 1945 Frankl labored in four different camps, including Auschwitz, while his parents, brother, and pregnant wife perished. Based on his own experience and the experiences of those he treated in his practice, Frankl argues that we cannot avoid suffering but we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward with renewed purpose. Frankl's theory—known as logotherapy, from the Greek word logos ("meaning")—holds that our primary drive in life is not pleasure, as Freud maintained, but the discovery and pursuit of what we personally find meaningful.

2. *Further Along the Road Less Traveled*

Peck, M. Scott

To the famous opening line of *The Road Less Traveled*—"Life is difficult"—Dr. M. Scott Peck now adds, "Life is complex". There are few truer statements about modern-day life. *Further Along the Road Less Traveled* takes the lectures of Dr. Peck and presents his profound insights into the issues that confront and challenge all of us today: spirituality, forgiveness, relationships, and growing up.

Religion & Philosophy

1. *Between Relativism and Fundamentalism: Religious Resources for a Middle Position*

Berger, Peter L.

Product Description

Our contemporary culture is dominated by two extremes - relativism and fundamentalism. Neither is desirable: relativism claims that all questions of truth are irrelevant, whereas fundamentalism insists on sole possession of absolute truth. Internationally renowned sociology of religion scholar Peter Berger has gathered a group of scholars to consider how,

from out of different traditions, one can define a middle position between both extremes.

In *Between Relativism and Fundamentalism* Peter Berger introduces and gives a comprehensive overview to the complex issues involved by in sorting out a middle ground between Relativism and Fundamentalism. His work is followed by three essays or "sociological descriptions", giving an objective picture of how relativism and fundamentalism play out in today's world.

Next, "theological directions" are given by authors from several different Christian traditions, and one conservative Jewish tradition and flesh out a normative middle ground that is neither relativist (thus the authors affirm specific truth claims), nor fundamentalist, their affirmations include tolerance of others' claims.

It is obvious that such an approach not only has much relevance to the contemporary world, but also has the potential to affect disputes raging with Evangelical circles about the nature of truth, and to what degree Christianity can become conversant with postmodernism. This book, edited by the leading religion sociologist of the 20th Century will be of immense benefit to all who study ecclesiology, and philosophical theology.

2. *The American Religion*

Bloom, Harold

Synopsis

In this fascinating work of religious criticism, Harold Bloom examines a number of American-born faiths: Pentecostalism, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Southern Baptism and Fundamentalism, and African American spirituality. He traces the distinctive features of American religion while asking provocative questions about the role religion plays in American culture and in each American's concept of his or her relationship to God. Bloom finds that our spiritual beliefs provide an exact portrait of our national character.

3. *On Moderation: Defending an Ancient Virtue in a Modern World*

Clor, Harry

Product Description

Moderation suffers in today's culture of excesses. In resuscitating this discarded virtue, Harry Clor unveils the intrinsic power of moderation to influence and engage, from the public square to the deeply personal. A mature book from a senior scholar, *On Moderation* answers critics of this misunderstood value, demonstrating its continued relevance to human flourishing. Reviewed in Christian Century: <http://www.christiancentury.org/article.lasso?id=8307>.

4. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*

Davies, Brian

The works of Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest Western philosophers as well as theologians of the Christian Church, are not only illuminating (for his questions as much as his answers) but surprisingly relevant to our concerns today. This book represents a long overdue modern comprehensive presentation of the total thought of Aquinas. While traditional studies of Aquinas invariably deal with either his philosophy or his theology, Davies introduces the full range of Aquinas's thinking, relating it to writers earlier and later than Aquinas himself. The book will be of considerable interest to professional theologians and philosophers, as well as to those with particular interest in medieval thinking. It is designed to be accessible to the general reader who has no specialist knowledge of medieval thought or professional training in philosophy or theology.

5. *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*

Feiler, Bruce

At a time when conflicts among three of the world's major religions--Islam, Judaism, and Christianity--are in the global spotlight, Bruce Feiler offers a stunning biography of the one man who unites all three religions: Abraham.

6. *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible*

Kugel, James L.

In glimmering prose, Kugel leads us on a mesmerizing tour of the differences between early and modern conceptions of God.

7. *God is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World*

Micklethwait, John and Adrian Wooldridge

In a July 12, 2009 Washington Post review, Diane Butler Bass said "Conventional analysis of contemporary faith divides the world into two camps of political engagement: liberal secularists, who reject any role for religion in public life, and conservative believers, who strive for a Christian or Muslim state. As a result, discussions on religion and politics degenerate into arguments over excising religion from or adding more religion to public life.

"Readers who subscribe to this dualistic view will be surprised by "God Is Back." At first glance, the title gives the impression that John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge are arguing for an international faith-based political agenda. But this is a cool-headed book, more analytical than partisan, marked by crisp prose and well-formed insights into politics and policy. Although the authors are sympathetic to religion, they recognize its limits and problems, especially the tensions between fundamentalist forms of Christianity and Islam. While explaining the worldwide renewal of faith, they also examine the flash points of religion and politics. In the end, they criticize both secularists and believers. They argue that the main fault lies not with religion but with the "union of religion and power," used coercively. They urge their readers to move beyond a good/bad view of religion toward a more thoughtful approach that considers the role of churches in strengthening economies, providing meaningful work and reducing poverty...

"I have a few quibbles with their argument. In the historical sections, they depend too heavily on evangelical historians, thus giving their overview of American religion -- and Christianity in general -- an overwhelmingly Protestant cast. In addition, they accept the theory that people choose religion rationally on the basis of its social benefits; this is a hotly debated topic in religious studies. As journalists, however, Micklethwait and Wooldridge excel: Their eye for detail, ability to see the other side of the story, sense of nuance and irony are all highly developed.

"God is Back" is an intelligent account of contemporary religion and the role it might play in making the modern world more open, tolerant and peaceful. In the end, the authors confess that their basic message "is a profoundly liberal one." Complete religious freedom -- including the freedom to reject religion -- is the best human path to the future..."

8. *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*

Niebuhr, Reinhold

Review

"This splendid volume has very great potential as ecumenically significant, useful to Catholics and Protestants alike."-Choice

"The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr is a treasure of little-known essays and sermons framed by a brilliant introduction. It reminds us, once again, how eloquently Niebuhr speaks to the problems of our age."-Peter Beinart, Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

"To return to these penetrating reflections is to be reminded yet again of the intellectual void-still today unfilled-left by Reinhold Niebuhr"s passing."-Andrew J. Bacevich, Boston University

9. *Good Book: The Bizarre, Hilarious, Disturbing, Marvelous, and Inspiring Things I Learned When I Read Every Single Word of the Bible*

Plotz, David

Product Description

Like many Jews and Christians, David Plotz long assumed he knew what was in the Bible. He read parts of it as a child in Hebrew school, then attended a Christian high school where he studied the Old and New Testaments. Many of the highlights stuck with him—Adam and Eve, Cain versus Abel, Jacob versus Esau, Jonah versus whale, forty days and nights, ten plagues and commandments, twelve tribes and apostles, Red Sea walked under, Galilee walked on, bush into fire, rock into water, water into wine. And, of course, he absorbed from all around him other bits of the Bible—from stories he heard in churches and synagogues, in movies and on television, from his parents and teachers. But it wasn't until he picked up a Bible at a cousin's bat mitzvah...that he couldn't put it down. Read an excerpt at <http://www.slate.com/id/2212616/?from=rss>.

10. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*

Putnam, Robert D. & David E Campbell

Product Description

America has experienced three seismic shocks, say Robert Putnam and David Campbell. In the 1960s, religious observance plummeted. Then in the 1970s and 1980s, a conservative reaction produced the rise of evangelicalism and the Religious Right. Since the 1990s, however, young people, turned off by that linkage between faith and conservative politics, have abandoned organized religion. The result has been a growing polarization—the ranks of religious conservatives and secular liberals have swelled, leaving a dwindling group of religious moderates in between. At the same time, personal interfaith ties are strengthening. Interfaith marriage has increased while religious identities have become more fluid. Putnam and Campbell show how this denser web of personal ties brings surprising interfaith tolerance, notwithstanding the so-called culture wars.

Read a *Washington Post* review at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/10/AR2010121003184.html>.

11. *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith*

Rawls, John Edited by Thomas Nagel, with commentaries by Joshua Cohen and Thomas Nagel, and by Robert Merrihew Adams

John Rawls never published anything about his own religious beliefs, but after his death two texts were discovered which shed extraordinary light on the subject. *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith* is Rawls's undergraduate senior thesis, submitted in December 1942, just before he entered the army. At that time Rawls was deeply religious; the thesis is a significant work of theological ethics, of interest both in itself and because of its relation to his mature writings. "On My Religion," a short statement drafted in 1997, describes the history of his religious beliefs and attitudes toward religion, including his abandonment of orthodoxy during World War II.

The present volume includes these two texts, together with an Introduction by Joshua Cohen and Thomas Nagel, which discusses their relation to Rawls's published work, and an essay by Robert Merrihew Adams, which places the thesis in its theological context.

The texts display the profound engagement with religion that forms the background of Rawls's later views on the importance of separating religion and politics. Moreover, the moral and social convictions that the thesis expresses in religious form are related in illuminating ways to the central ideas of Rawls's later writings. His notions of sin, faith, and community are simultaneously moral and theological, and prefigure the moral outlook found in *Theory of Justice*.

12. *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time*

Shulevitz, Judith

Product Description

“Everyone curls up inside a Sabbath at some point or other. Religion need not be involved.”

The Sabbath is not just the holy day of rest. It’s also a utopian idea about a less pressured, more sociable, purer world. Where did this notion come from? Is there value in withdrawing from the world one day in seven, despite its obvious inconvenience in an age of convenience? And what will be lost if the Sabbath goes away?

In this erudite, elegantly written book, critic Judith Shulevitz weaves together histories of the Jewish and Christian sabbaths, speculations on the nature of time, and a rueful account of her personal struggle with the day. Shulevitz has found insights into the Sabbath in both cultural and contemporary sources—the Torah, the Gospels, the Talmud, and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, as well as in the poetry of William Wordsworth, the life of Sigmund Freud, and the science of neuropsychology. She tells stories of martyrdom by Jews who died en masse rather than fight on the Sabbath and describes the feverish Sabbatarianism of the American Puritans. And she counterposes the tyranny of religious law with the equally oppressive tyranny of the clock. Can we really flourish under the yoke of communal discipline, as preachers and rabbis like to tell us? What about being free to live as we please? Can we preserve what the Sabbath gives us—a time outside time—without following its rules?

Whatever our faith or lack thereof, this rich and resonant meditation on the day of rest will remind us of the danger of letting time drive us heedlessly forward without ever stopping to reflect.

13. *Allah: A Christian Response*

Volf, Miroslav

Product Description

Three and a half billion people—the majority of the world’s population—profess Christianity or Islam. Renowned scholar Miroslav Volf’s controversial proposal is that Muslims and Christians do worship the same God—the only God. As Volf reveals, warriors in the “clash of civilizations” have used “religions”—each with its own god and worn as a badge of identity—to divide and oppose, failing to recognize the one God whom Muslims and Christians understand in partly different ways.

Writing from a Christian perspective, and in dialogue with leading Muslim scholars and leaders from around the world, Volf reveals surprising points of intersection and overlap between these two faith traditions:

- What the Qur’an denies about God as the Holy Trinity has been denied by every great teacher of the church in the past and ought to be denied by Christians today.
- A person can be both a practicing Muslim and 100 percent Christian without denying core convictions of belief and practice.
- How two faiths, worshipping the same God, can work toward the common good under a single government.

Volf explains the hidden agendas behind today’s news stories as he thoughtfully considers the words of religious leaders and parses the crucial passages from the Bible and the Qur’an that continue to ignite passion. Allah offers a constructive way forward by reversing the “our God vs. their God” premise that destroys bridges between neighbors and nations, magnifies fears, and creates strife.

Religion & Politics

1. *Progressive Christians Speak: A Different Voice on Faith and Politics (Paperback)*

Cobb, Jr., John B. (Editor)

In this earnest discussion, revolutionary theologian John Cobb Jr. implores Christian churches to take a more active role in the solution of contemporary issues such as food security and the ever-expanding world population, the welfare system, civil and human rights, the war on drugs, abortion, immigration, and the destruction of ecosystems. Remaining passive under the guise of "separation of church and state" and being subsumed in the media by the vocal conservative church, mainline Christians have allowed to proliferate a warped view of where the majority of Christians stand. As Cobb explains, religion is an important factor in the solution of our current issues, and he points to the Members of the Mobilization for the Human Family as an exemplary Christian organization devoted to dealing with contemporary problems.

2. *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now*

Crossan, John Dominic

From Booklist

"By Crossan's lights, Jesus proposed the nonviolent kingdom of God to supplant Rome. And not just Rome but civilization per se may be the object of Jesus' revolution, for civilization building was Rome's pretext for imperial aggression and economic as well as physical violence against common people. Fighting Rome was folly, so the kingdom of God movement aimed to liberate ordinary people nonviolently. It threatened Rome because Jesus' proclamation of God defied the Roman emperor's institutional divinity, and because Jesus proposed peace through justice against Rome's conceit that it achieved peace through the violence of conquest. Paul sharpened the concept of equality in the kingdom of God by advocating for slaves and cooperating on equal terms with women; here Crossan goes Garry Wills' *What Paul Meant* (2006) one better by carefully explaining that pro-slavery and anti-women Pauline remarks come from epistles spuriously attributed to him."

3. *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study of Ethics and Politics*

Niebuhr, Reinhold

The thesis elaborated in these pages is that a sharp distinction must be drawn between the moral and social behavior of individuals and of social groups, national, racial, and economic; and that this distinction justifies and necessitates political policies which a purely individualistic ethic must always find embarrassing.

4. *The Irony of American History*

Niebuhr, Reinhold

Product Description

"[Niebuhr] is one of my favorite philosophers. I take away [from his works] the compelling idea that there's serious evil in the world, and hardship and pain. And we should be humble and modest in our belief we can eliminate those things. But we shouldn't use that as an excuse for cynicism and inaction. I take away . . . the sense we have to make these efforts knowing they are hard."—President Barack Obama

Forged during the tumultuous but triumphant postwar years when America came of age as a world power, *The Irony of American History* is more relevant now than ever before. Cited by politicians as diverse as Hillary Clinton and John McCain, Niebuhr's masterpiece on the incongruity between personal ideals and political reality is both an indictment of American moral complacency and a warning against the arrogance of virtue. Impassioned, eloquent, and deeply perceptive, Niebuhr's wisdom will cause readers to rethink their assumptions about right and wrong, war and peace.

Religious Novels

1. *The Idiot*

Dostoevsky, Fyodor

Dostoevsky's motives for writing *The Idiot* stem from his desire to depict the "positively good man". This man is naturally likened to [Christ](#) in many ways. Dostoevsky uses Myshkin's introduction to the Petersburg society as a way to contrast the nature of Russian society at the time and the isolation and innocence of this good man. [*Wikipedia note on major themes of the novel.*]

2. *The Bible Salesman: A Novel*

Edgerton, Clyde

Set in the mid-20th-century rural southern U.S., this novel would be great to place in conversation with Brown's essay collection for a class or Bible study on biblical authority. Edgerton gives comic treatment to his title character, a young man who struggles to make sense of what he has been taught about the Bible, what the Bible teaches him and what life teaches him. The issues Edgerton raises will resonate with anyone who wonders about how to grow with the Bible and not away from it. [*Christian Century review*]

3. *Fiction as Soul-Truth, or Theology has a Lot to Learn*

Lahey Hess, Carol

The Irwin Lecture by Dr. Carol Lahey Hess, Claremont School of Theology, January 22, 2004 The text is available at http://www.cst.edu/academic_resources/lectures_and_sermons.php?article=4.

4. *God's Grace*

Malamud, Bernard

Product Description

"Malamud's vision is personal, original, and almost wholly unrelated to the most characteristic or normative Jewish thought and tradition. As for Malamud's style, it too is a peculiar (and dazzling) invention." --Harold Bloom
God's Grace (1982), Bernard Malamud's last novel, is a modern-day dystopian fantasy, set in a time after a thermonuclear war prompts a second flood--and, as such, a radical departure from most of Malamud's previous fiction. The novel's protagonist is paleosist Calvin Cohn, who had been attending to his work at the bottom of the ocean when the Devastation struck, and who alone survived. This rabbi's son--a "marginal error"--finds himself shipwrecked with an experimental chimpanzee capable of speech, to whom he gives the name Buz. Soon other creatures appear on their island--baboons, chimps, five apes, and a lone gorilla. Cohn works hard to make it possible for God to love His creation again, and his hopes increase as he experiences the unknown and the unforeseen in this strange new world.

5. *Life of Pi*

Martel, Yann

Life of Pi is a masterful and utterly original novel that is at once the story of a young castaway who faces immeasurable hardships on the high seas, and a meditation on religion, faith, art and life that is as witty as it is profound. Using the threads of all of our best stories, Yann Martel has woven a glorious spiritual adventure that makes us question what it means to be alive, and to believe.--Excerpt of a LitLovers review. The complete review is available at http://www.litlovers.com/guide_lifepi.html.

Science & Religion

1. *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives (Paperback)*

Bull, Brian et al.

Product Description

In his *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism*, the distinguished American historian, Ronald Numbers documented in detail the essential role that a devout Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) believer, George McCready Price (1870-1963), played in creating the initial set of modern fundamentalist arguments to support a so-called Flood Geology as a means of explaining the geological column, a position that the scientific community totally rejects. In recent official pronouncements, the SDA Church continues to endorse an essentially literalistic interpretation of the Genesis creation narratives and a geologically recent (<10,000 years) creation and worldwide flood. What may not be known outside of the Adventist subculture is that there has been for many decades major criticisms and exceptions voiced by a number of moderate and progressive SDA theologians and scientists to many aspects of the traditional Adventist understandings promulgated by fundamentalist and conservative elements within the SDA faith tradition. *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives* is a volume of papers written by SDA theologians and scientists, most of which hold faculty appointments at Adventist colleges and universities in North America. The various chapters provide a spectrum of views on a variety of topics, including non-fundamentalist interpretations of the Genesis creation and flood narratives, a consideration of theistic evolution or progressive creationism, the validity of the evidence dating the geological column and human prehistory, and other related topics.

2. *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*

Collins, Francis S.

From Publishers Weekly

Collins, a pioneering medical geneticist who once headed the Human Genome Project, adapts his title from President Clinton's remarks announcing completion of the first phase of the project in 2000: "Today we are learning the language in which God created life." Collins explains that as a Christian believer, "the experience of sequencing the human genome, and uncovering this most remarkable of all texts, was both a stunning scientific achievement and an occasion of worship." This marvelous book combines a personal account of Collins's faith and experiences as a genetics researcher with discussions of more general topics of science and spirituality, especially centering around evolution. Following the lead of C.S. Lewis, whose *Mere Christianity* was influential in Collins's conversion from atheism, the book argues that belief in a transcendent, personal God—and even the possibility of an occasional miracle—can and should coexist with a scientific picture of the world that includes evolution. Addressing in turn fellow scientists and fellow believers, Collins insists that "science is not threatened by God; it is enhanced" and "God is most certainly not threatened by science; He made it all possible." Collins's credibility as a scientist and his sincerity as a believer make for an engaging combination, especially for those who, like him, resist being forced to choose between science and God.

3. *The Beginning of All Things: Science and Religion*

Kung, Hans

Product Description

In an age when faith and science seem constantly to clash, can theologians and scientists come to a meeting of minds? Yes, maintains the intrepid Hans Küng, as he brilliantly argues here that religion and science are not mutually exclusive but complementary.

Focusing on beginnings—beginnings of time, of the world, of man, of human will—Küng deals with an array of scientific precepts and teachings. From a unified field theory to quantum physics to the Big Bang to the theory of relativity -- even superstring and chaos theories -- he examines all of the theories regarding the beginning of the universe and life (of all kinds) in that universe.

Küng seeks to reconcile theology with the latest scientific insights, holding that "a confrontational model for the relationship between science and theology is out of date, whether put forward by fundamentalist believers and theologians or by rationalistic scientists and philosophers." While accepting evolution as scientists generally describe it, he still maintains a role for God in founding the laws of nature by which life evolved and in facilitating the adventure of creation.

Exhibiting little patience for scientists who do not see beyond the limits of their discipline or for believers who try to tell experts how things must have been, Küng challenges readers to think more deeply about the beginnings in order to facilitate a new beginning in dialogue and understanding. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

From the Back Cover

"Many will find it fascinating to see how a distinguished theologian offers his personal contribution to the dialogue between science and theology, writing in a bold and challenging manner and making good use of his wide reading and personal encounters."

-- John Polkinghorne, Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral

4. *Finding Darwin's God*

Miller, Kenneth

This fascinating book is written by Kenneth Miller, a cell biologist at Brown University. He is a well-respected advocate of evolution, the co-author of a popular biology textbook, and the go-to guy when biologists want someone who can defend evolution in debates and trials. He is also a Christian. Not a vague, "God is the sum of the universe," kind of believer but a practicing Catholic who believes in a loving personal God; one who forgives sins and answers prayer. This book is Dr. Miller's attempt to demonstrate why the acceptance of evolution and the belief in a Christian God need not be at odds. [Excerpt of a review in *Spectrum* magazine. Read the full review at http://www.spectrummagazine.org/reviews/book_reviews/2008/10/28/review_miller%E2%80%99s_%E2%80%9Cfinding_darwin%E2%80%99s_god%E2%80%9D]

5. *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design, Expanded Edition (Paperback)*

Numbers, Ronald

From Publishers Weekly

Pious charlatans, firebrand demagogues and scientific cranks stalk the pages of this scholarly, thoroughgoing, at times plodding history of the modern revival of creationism. Unlike 19th-century creationists, who rejected Darwinian evolution but acknowledged that life on earth has spanned millions of years, today's creationists believe that God made woman and man in a single act of creation within the last 10,000 years. They draw inspiration for their beliefs from George McCready Price, a Seventh-day Adventist who in the 1920s pioneered "flood geology," which traces most fossils back to Noah's flood and its aftermath. Numbers, a professor of the history of science at the University of Wisconsin, unravels the tangled religious roots of creationism. His evenhanded treatment incorporates a quietly devastating critique of the modern creationist movement and its efforts to influence school curricula. He reveals creationists to be a divided and contentious lot, squabbling fiercely with one another. Illustrated.

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6. Evolution and Christian Faith: Reflections of an Evolutionary Biologist

Roughgarden, Joan

Product Description

"I'm an evolutionary biologist and a Christian," states Stanford professor Joan Roughgarden at the outset of her groundbreaking new book, *Evolution and Christian Faith: Reflections of an Evolutionary Biologist*. From that perspective, she offers an elegant, deeply satisfying reconciliation of the theory of evolution and the wisdom of the Bible.

From Publishers Weekly

"Roughgarden, a Stanford biology professor and author of *Evolution's Rainbow*, is impatient with the current tone of creation/evolution debates, but takes them seriously as an expression of a "pent-up urge for talking about God" in American public life. Attentive to "the spiritual yearning of people that compels them to overlook the evidence" if evolution is portrayed as an enemy of faith, Roughgarden urges science educators to show "more sympathy and willingness to accommodate people of faith, to offer space for seeing a Christian vision of the world within evolutionary biology." The book's main argument is that a suitably flexible reading of the Bible and Darwin bears out common, or at least compatible, themes, and that evolution can be read within a broader perspective of divine design. Roughgarden sees room in the biblical account for the common ancestry of all life on Earth, as well as the possibility that evolution is "guided by the hand of God, even if the mutation process is random" as described by Darwinian theory."

Social Criticism

1. *What's Wrong With the World*

Chesterton, G. K.

1912 work by the highly influential English writer of the early 20th century. Includes chapters on the homelessness of man, imperialism, feminism, education and the home of man.

Spirituality

1. *Man's Quest For God*

Heschel, Abraham J.

The book is on prayer and symbolism.

2. *Overcoming Life's Disappointments (Hardcover)*

Kushner, Harold S.

Book Description

From Harold S. Kushner, the author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, a book that shows us how to be our best selves even when things don't turn out as we had hoped—that is, how we can overcome life's disappointments.

Kushner turns to the experience of Moses to find the requisite lessons of strength and faith. Moses towers over all others in the Old Testament: he is the man on the mountaintop to whom God speaks with unparalleled intimacy, and he leads his people out of bondage. But he is also deeply human, someone whose soaring triumphs are offset by frustration and longing: his people ignore his teachings, he is denied entrance to the Promised Land, his family suffers. But he overcomes. From the life of Moses, Kushner gleans principles that can help us deal with the problems we encounter. Through the example of Moses' remarkable resilience, we learn how to weather the disillusionment of dreams unfulfilled, the pain of a lost job or promotion, a child's failures, divorce or abandonment, and illness. We learn how to meet all disappointments with faith in ourselves and the future, and how to respond to heartbreak with understanding rather than bitterness and

despair.

This is a book of spiritual wisdom—as practical as it is inspiring.

3. *Grace (Eventually): Thoughts of Faith*

Lamott, Anne

"Anne Lamott is...a swearing spiritual pundit who prays for redemption but brags about her offenses. Lamott's latest tell-all is *Grace (Eventually): Thoughts of Faith*, a searching memoir full of...offbeat spiritual humor. What makes Lamott's writing powerful isn't her unconventional faith. Rather, it's the profound message about God's grace and redemption often lurking underneath all the...brutal honesty."-Chicago Sun-Times

4. *The New Man*

Merton, Thomas

The New Man shows Thomas Merton at the height of his powers and has as its theme the question of spiritual identity. What must we do to recover possession of our true selves? By way of an answer, Merton discusses how we have become strangers to ourselves by our dependence on outward identity and success, while our real need is for a concern with the image of God in ourselves. At a time of retrieval of our religious traditions, Merton's voice is both intelligent and spiritually compelling.

5. *Confession*

Tolstoy, Leo

Amazon.com Review

Confession is Leo Tolstoy's memoir of midlife spiritual crisis. In 1879, having written *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, the 51 year-old Tolstoy began to believe that his life was meaningless. *Confession* is his account of the limited satisfactions he derived from his aesthetic and intellectual triumphs, and of his first yearnings for real faith. This book marks the turning point in his career as a writer: after 1880 he would write almost exclusively about religious life, especially devotion among the peasantry (in works such as *The Death of Ivan Ilych* and *Resurrection*). Near the end of *Confession*, Tolstoy describes the desolation he felt upon deciding that he could not solve his crisis of faith by taking refuge in the church. "I have no doubt that there is truth in the doctrine," he writes, "but there can also be no doubt that it harbors a lie; and I must find the truth and the lie so I can tell them apart." *Confession* does not find the full Truth, but it offers an inspiring example of a man rejecting the lies that cling to unthinking orthodoxy. Its final, exhilarating, heart-rending account of a spiritually awakening dream ranks with the best of Christian mystical writing. --Michael Joseph Gross

6. *Waiting for God*

Weil, Simone

Amazon.com Review

Simone Weil is an outsider's saint. The daughter of an agnostic French family of Jewish descent, Weil was never baptized ("God does not want me in the Church," she wrote), and her conversion to Christianity at the age of 23 took her by surprise. Until then, she had been a solemn, committed leftist intellectual. Now she was moving toward a life of divine encounters whose desolate ecstasy, as described by the journals, letters, and essays excerpted in *Waiting for God*, bear comparison to St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. As Leslie Fiedler writes in her introduction to Weil's book, "She speaks of the problems of belief in the vocabulary of the unbeliever, of the doctrines of the Church in the words of the unchurched." The book is most notable for Weil's lengthy letter titled "Spiritual Autobiography" and for her "Meditation on the Pater Noster," which is the discursive record of a spiritual process that led to her almost daily attainment of a mystical vision of God. This is not pretty writing; it is an agonized record of amazement. --Michael Joseph Gross

7. *Rumors of another World: What on Earth are we Missing?*

Yancey, Philip

"In *Rumors of Another World*, Yancey investigates the natural world and discovers the supernatural hiding in plain view.

He grapples with why God made the world and what our role truly is, and seeks to answer the question, "How do I live in the natural world while expressing the values of the supernatural?"

8. *The Best American Spiritual Writing 2007*

Zaleski, Philip (Editor), Cox, Harvey (Introduction)

Product Description

This edition of this annual, assembled by the acclaimed writer and editor Philip Zaleski, not only showcases some of the finest writing of the year but offers astute perceptions on subjects that are universal, timeless, and yet deeply personal. Culled from an impressive variety of sources and ranging over topics as disparate as Shaker furniture, perfume, and the monastic life, the essays and poems collected here share a search for purpose beyond the mundane -- and find answers in the likeliest and unlikeliest of sources... Including powerful poetry from notable contributors such as Deborah Digges, Galway Kinnell, and John Updike, and an introduction by Harvey Cox, *The Best American Spiritual Writing 2007* is one of those transformative "magical books" that Zaleski describes in his foreword, a volume that gracefully probes the role of faith in modern life while offering both spiritual insight and literary excellence.

9. *The Best American Spiritual Writing 2008*

Zaleski, Philip (Editor), Jimmy Carter (Introduction)

Graham Christian - *Library Journal*

This annual (formerly Best Spiritual Writing) is always cause for rejoicing. Zaleski, coauthor with wife Carol Zaleski of the justly acclaimed *Prayer: A History*, has assembled a remarkable constellation of penetratingly thoughtful pieces that range from memoir to diatribe to travel essay to reflection on the Holocaust. The authors, e.g., Wendell Berry, Pico Iyer, Maxine Kumin, Robert Pinsky, Oliver Sacks, and John Updike, signify not only the quality of this year's anthology but the temper of our times. Highly recommended.

Theology

1. *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination (Paperback)*

Brueggemann, Walter

From the Publisher

Old assumptions - rational, objectivist, absolutist - have for the most part given way to new outlooks, which can be grouped under the term postmodern. What does this new situation imply for the church and for Christian proclamation? Can one find in this new situation opportunity as well as dilemma? How can central biblical themes - self, world, and community - be interpreted and imagined creatively and concretely in this new context? Our task, Brueggemann contends, is not to construct a full alternative world, but rather to fund - to provide the pieces, materials, and resources out of which a new world can be imagined. The place of liturgy and proclamation is "a place where people come to receive new materials, or old materials freshly voiced, which will fund, feed, nurture, nourish, legitimate, and authorize a counterimagination of the world." Six exegetical examples of such a new approach to the biblical text are included.

2. *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*

Ford, David F.

Product Description

This book offers a concise and original introduction to the whole of the theological discipline. Writing with a focus on Christianity, David Ford provides a trenchant and balanced discussion of the study of faith and religion. He describes the development of the field of theology, and explores such issues as knowledge, community, worship, salvation, God, prayer, and evil. Ford also weaves the idea of the quest for wisdom into the entire fabric of his discussion, and concludes with a look ahead to the theology of the next century. *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* tackles the questions raised by and about religion in a thought-provoking and engaging manner. [David Ford is Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.]

3. *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith*

Guy, Fritz

Guy offers his philosophy of how North American Seventh-day Adventists ought to go about the business of doing theology.

4. *The Best of All Possible Worlds: A Story of Philosophers, God, and Evil*

Nadler, Steven

In this book Nadler writes about three 17-century theological thinkers who debated and corresponded with each other about the nature of God. The three thinkers are Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (who along with Isaac Newton independently discovered calculus), Nicolas Malebranche and Antoine Arnauld. These men held "differing theological views of God and His universe." In his November 30, 2008 review of this book in the *Washington Post Book World* <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/26/AR2008112603521.html> Michael Dirda writes, "I can't imagine a better guide to 17th-century philosophical thought. Aimed at the general public, *The Best of All Possible Worlds* is written simply and clearly, without condescension, flashiness or over-simplification. But it's a demanding book nonetheless, and you need to pay attention. You'll be amply rewarded if you do."

5. *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*

Rice, Richard

Product Description

A systematic approach to theology, presenting and discussing the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with striking simplicity and clarity. The theme of God's reign over His creation and His creatures unifies the entire presentation. Suitable for use in beginning courses in religion at the college level or for the layperson wanting to better understand basic Adventist beliefs.

Women in the Bible

1. *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels*

Bauckham, Richard

(Reviewed in *Theology Today*.)

This book has been described as a "scholarly study of the women of the Christian Scriptures."

2. *Hidden Women of the Gospels*

Coffey, Kathy

Of the 1,426 people given names in the Old Testament, only 111 are female. The proportion is twice as great in the New Testament. *Hidden Women Of The Gospels* brings to life those very real women who were among Jesus' disciples. They take on color and flesh, and are "named".

3. *Reading the Women of the Bible : A New Interpretation of Their Stories (Paperback)*

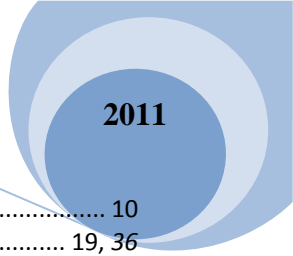
Frymer-Kensky, Tikva

(Reviewed in *Theology Today*.)

"A major voice in feminist reading of the Hebrew Bible, Frymer-Kensky advances our understanding of the gender issues in the Bible by proposing a fresh and suggestive taxonomy of four discourses concerning women. Her persuasive power rests upon her immense capacity to read texts carefully and discerningly. *Reading the Women of the Bible* lets us move back and forth between ancient text and contemporary gender issues in a generative way--a most welcome and important read!" --Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Columbia Theological Seminary

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