

## Book Reviews

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*Mark Safstrom, lecturer in Swedish and Scandinavian studies,  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

*Cindy M. Wu, freelance writer and researcher,  
Access Evangelical Covenant Church, Houston, Texas*

*Stephen J. Chester, academic dean and professor of New Testament,  
North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois*

*Alice Hague, PhD candidate, University of Edinburgh, Scotland*

*Jesse Slimak, pastor, Evangelical Covenant Church of LeRoy, Michigan*

**Christopher Gehrz, ed., *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education: Forming Whole and Holy Persons* (IVP Academic, 2015), 236 pages, \$26.**

The relationship between Christian denominations and their colleges and seminaries is seldom a dull subject, particularly when it comes to the history of American evangelicalism. Fierce battles have been waged between self-proclaimed liberals and conservatives over ideologies, curriculum, and faculty of these schools regarding professors suspected of heretical leanings, campus life becoming too “worldly,” and the curriculum too secular—or conversely, whether the school has retreated too far from the mainstream culture or has abandoned its emphasis on academic excellence. Even the 125-year-long history of North Park University and Theological Seminary has witnessed similar episodes, and early opposition to the school almost derailed the enterprise altogether. Why should a denomination have a school at all? Isn’t a Bible college sufficient? What does studying biology and literature have to do with Jesus? Or the classic question, “what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”

Readers with these kinds of questions and concerns may benefit the most from reading *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education*. History professor Chris Gehrz and sixteen additional contributors with ties to Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota, explore the legacy of the Pietist heritage of their school and its implications and benefits for their research, teaching, and campus life. As the authors make a range of connections between academic pursuits and the Christian faith, the touchstone in all of their essays is the conviction that Christian liberal arts education ultimately must be part of the formation of students into “whole and holy persons.” This volume follows a flurry of other conferences, books, articles, and blog posts that Gehrz and other Bethel faculty have produced in recent years on this subject. For instance, readers of this publication may recall a review of the multi-author volume *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity* (2011), which was the product of a major colloquium on Pietism studies that Bethel hosted in 2009. This event inaugurated the “Bethel Colloquium on Pietism Studies,” the third installment of which the university will host December 2016.

As the editor of this current book, Chris Gehrz gives an overview of these previous research collaborations as well as a brief state-of-the-field regarding the relevance of Pietism studies in relation to the concerns of higher education today. These themes are picked up and expanded upon by the other contributors and are grouped in four sections: the integration of teaching, scholarship, and community; “changed people changing the world,” focusing on the university community’s engagement in outreach and service; perspectives from the natural sciences, including science education and nursing; and identification of problems and proposed solutions to the challenges facing Christian universities in the twenty-first century. A strength of this book is the breadth of topics covered, which provides readers a chance to glimpse the wide vision the authors are attempting to cast. Although some of the essays are highly specialized, there will be something here for most university educators and administrators, as the book takes into account student campus life, philosophies of the classroom, and service learning. Denominational presidents and administrators should also take note of this book, as it has much to offer in fostering understanding between churches and their schools.

From a historical perspective, this book makes a valuable contribution by identifying a trans-denominational conversation that stretches back to at least the 1940s between Baptists (such as Adolf Olson, Virgil Olson,

Carl Lundquist) and Covenanters (T.W. Anderson, Karl A. Olsson, Zenos Hawkinson), in which concerted efforts were made to articulate how the Pietist heritage ought to inform the educational priorities of denominational schools. The Baptist General Conference (now Converge Worldwide), Bethel's founding denomination, and the Evangelical Covenant Church share a considerable amount of history, with common roots in the Lutheran Church of Sweden. In the United States, the two groups have danced around one another for more than a century.

For many years North Park has been referred to jokingly as the "citadel of Pietism." Perhaps that distinction now belongs to Bethel. What Gehrz and other Bethel faculty members have managed to do in these Pietism studies conferences and publishing ventures is remarkable. They have engaged and inspired Covenant scholars, as well as Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, and several other traditions, in an ongoing discussion of the "useable past" that can be found in Pietism as it appears in the background of the history of American Christianity.

MARK SAFSTROM

**Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (Schocken, 2015), 320 pages, \$28.95.**

Sociologists once predicted the demise of religion in the modern technological era. The opposite has happened. In fact, religiosity is on the rise. If religion is the source of violence, as some suggest, then we are in trouble. But is religion the root of violence? How can we confront religious violence, and what is at stake if we don't? These are the questions Jonathan Sacks, former chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, sets out to address in his timely and incisive work, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence*.

The book is divided into three parts, beginning with a philosophical, theological, and Scriptural analysis of religious violence among the three Abrahamic faiths—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The second part frames religious violence as sibling rivalry at its worst. The third part issues a sober, humanitarian call to mutual love and understanding.

Sacks opens the book with this statement: "When religion turns men [sic] into murderers, God weeps" (p. 3). According to Sacks, while many invoke religion to justify violence, God does not rejoice at this distorted form of service. Instead, he weeps: to commit violence in God's name is to take his name in vain. Perpetrating harm against others, whether

they are of the same or different faith tradition, is to commit what Sacks calls “altruistic evil”: evil committed for a sacred cause and in the name of high ideals (p. 9)—resulting in an ideology taking the place of God.

According to Sacks, altruistic evil derives from “pathological dualism”—an “us” versus “them” mentality. Pathological dualism “sees humanity itself as radically, ontologically divided into the unimpeachably good and the irredeemably bad” (p. 51). In this line of thinking, the “other” becomes a dehumanized enemy. Viewing the “other” as an evil force helps one think more positively about oneself. It also helps to explain suffering in the world, thus placing the blame on the other without having to ponder one’s own complicity. This dualistic thinking seems to resolve complexity, but it is, in fact, the root of many evils against humankind.

The fifth chapter of the book, “Sibling Rivalry,” stands out as the most salient exposition of Sacks’s ideas. He draws from philosopher René Girard’s mimetic theory, which views desire as imitative. Mimetic desire often leads to violence because each side wants what the other has or wants to be what the other is, resulting in sibling rivalry. The book of Genesis opens with this motif in Cain’s fratricide of Abel. The theme of sibling rivalry runs through the patriarchal narratives as sibling pairs seek to harm or deceive one another. Sacks makes the case that the sibling relationships between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are also shaped by each tradition’s desire for the same thing: Abraham’s promise.

But how does each faith understand Abraham’s promise? If differently, then rivalry is inevitable. For Sacks, the solution is a radical rereading of the classic Bible stories, “tak[ing] seriously not only our own perspective but also that of others. The world has changed. Relationships have gone global....For the first time in history we can relate to one another as dignified equals” (p. 103). This rereading involves a clear understanding that the Genesis narratives of sibling conflict and the counter-narratives of God-facilitated sibling reconciliation ultimately reveal that brothers *can* live together in harmony.

*Not in God’s Name* is a stimulating read. Sacks’s interpretations and insights from Jewish scholarship are fascinating. His tone is forceful but irenic. With its broad outlook, this book would serve as a great platform for interfaith discussion. Sacks appeals to a common humanity as a foundation for peace. His prescriptions for peace are more theory than praxis, yet it is clear he believes something can be done. Sacks is convinced that bad religion causes violence; good religion does something about it. Christians can start doing something about religious violence

by listening to authoritative voices like Sacks's. Christians, Muslims, and Jews together must disavow violence and oppression that exploits God's name for evil. Too much is at stake if we don't.

CINDY M. WU

**Richard N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, 2nd ed. (Eerdmans, 2015), 435 pages, \$34.**

It is not often that a scholar is blessed with sufficient longevity to publish a second edition of a book more than fifty years after the first. Yet happily Richard Longenecker has been able to do just that with the republication of his classic 1964 treatment of the main themes in Paul's theology. The original text is unaltered, but a lengthy addendum supplements this edition. An additional foreword by Douglas Campbell praises Longenecker's work as an evangelical forerunner to E.P. Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, published in 1977. Sanders's text initiated significant changes in Pauline interpretation, often subsequently summarized as "the new perspective." As a consequence, within contemporary scholarship, Second Temple Judaism is usually described in positive terms, as itself a religion of grace rather than simply a negative foil for Paul's theology. Like Sanders, Longenecker refuses to caricature Judaism as a religion of works righteousness but is arguably more nuanced than Sanders in his insistence that there was more than one possible approach to understanding law observance within Second Temple Judaism. Also like Sanders, Longenecker highlights the significance of being in Christ ("union with Christ" or "participation in Christ") and life in the Spirit for Paul's theology. Longenecker's book was well ahead of its time and should now be given recognition for the paradigm shift it truly represented.

Is Campbell correct in this assessment of Longenecker? The answer is both yes and no. On the positive side, Longenecker's exegetical skill and theological good judgment are evident everywhere. Even if readers do not agree with all his conclusions, they will be enormously helped in their efforts to understand Paul's texts. A particular highlight is his treatment of Romans 7. It is also undeniable that dominant scholarly opinion is now much more favorable toward Longenecker's perspectives on Judaism and central issues in Paul's theology than when the first edition was published in 1964. The passage of time has vindicated Longenecker in many details.

Yet, perhaps inevitably, the book is not only ahead of its time but also

of its time. Longenecker describes Second Temple Judaism in a manner much more accepting of a clear distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism than recent research suggests, and he relies on later rabbinic materials to an extent that would be unusual today. Further, parts of the book are preoccupied with answering the allegation that Acts must be historically unreliable in its portrayal of Paul since he is there portrayed as participating in Jewish practices inconsistent with the Christian freedom from the law articulated in his letters. Longenecker provides a compelling case for consistency between Paul's own statements and his actions as portrayed in Acts, but he does not directly ask whether the tension only arises because Paul's statements about the law were misinterpreted. Similarly, he rejects the view that Paul's detailed ethical instructions to his congregations contradict his emphasis on the inward guidance of the Spirit but does so without questioning whether there really exists a tension to be explained. In retrospect, Longenecker did not quite shatter the paradigm of Pauline interpretation as it existed in the 1960s, but he did contribute greatly to the build-up of pressure within it.

In the new material included in this second edition, we might have expected Longenecker to provide a judicious reflection on subsequent developments in Pauline interpretation, locating his book in relation to them and indicating what he would write differently today. Instead he offers a lengthy overview of the history of Pauline interpretation, with detailed consideration of significant interpreters from a number of different eras. There is much valuable material here, and the characterization is often deft, although he contrasts Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis in terms that fail to reflect recent research. The overall impact is that Longenecker's added section reads like a short second book. Yet his emphasis on the history of reception does yield some interesting results. A strong appreciation emerges at some points for Luther as an interpreter of Paul. Longenecker also sharply rejects James Dunn's interpretation of Paul's insistence that justification is not by "the works of the law." Dunn's contention that the phrase denotes boundary markers, such as circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath observance, that separate Jews from Gentiles is often understood as one of the main planks of "the new perspective" and as essential to a more positive appreciation of Second Temple Judaism. Yet for all that Longenecker refuses to regard Jewish law observance in general as characterized by works righteousness, he insists that Paul's use of the phrase reflects and rejects the conviction of some (but not all) Jews that human actions in fulfilling the Torah bring

about righteousness and acceptance before God. In this crucial respect Longenecker does not simply anticipate contemporary scholarship but perhaps points back to earlier interpretations as well as forward to future ones. Ironically, it may be that fifty years is actually too short a time for the full significance of *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* to emerge.

STEPHEN J. CHESTER

**Norman Wirzba, *From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World* (Baker Academic, 2015), 176 pages, \$19.99.**

In this insightful book, Norman Wirzba, professor of theology and ecology at Duke Divinity School, traces the development of modern and postmodern thought regarding the place of humans in the world. He analyzes how utilitarian thinking, modern economic practices, and “pervasive ingratitude” have distanced and disconnected humanity from God and God’s creation. This sense of disorientation has led to ways of human living that are destructive to creation. The author calls on Christians to develop “an imagination of the world as created, sustained, and daily loved by God” (p. 3) in order to reframe their understanding of creation as a gift from God, thereby impacting their action in the world.

*From Nature to Creation* begins with Wirzba’s emphasis on the formative role of words in determining how one views and responds to the world. How we treat a plant, for example, depends upon whether we are told it is a flower, a weed, or a vegetable. He suggests that, in the same manner, “the way we name and narrate the world determines how we are going to live within it” (p. 18). Embracing an understanding of creation not simply as a one-time account of the world’s origin but rather as an ongoing process and an expression of God’s love, reframes our relationship with the world with a sense of humility and gratitude. It is this reframing that ultimately enables us to live in the world in a manner that reflects and shares God’s love.

Wirzba argues that modern, industrialized societies have idolatized nature, seeing it either as a pristine wilderness or as an endless source of natural resources. He explains how this idolatry is grounded in self-worship, denying dependence on God and others. The author challenges his readers to not view themselves as autonomous individuals but instead to embrace their “creatureliness,” understanding themselves as fundamentally connected with and dependent on the land as the source

of life. Doing so requires pursuing “economies that promote the health of people and land *together*” (p. 99).

While the language of creatureliness can seem odd—and Wirzba acknowledges that we do not like to think of ourselves as creatures—he helpfully explains the impact of such thinking. Drawing on the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Wirzba argues that human life is irreducibly interdependent. Our daily need to eat, drink, and breathe demonstrates that “we cannot stand on our own” (p. 133); it is only through relationship with others that life is possible. The author closes by inviting his reader to adopt practices and postures of gratitude as an acknowledgment that all of life and its sustenance are gifts from God.

*From Nature to Creation* is a detailed and thought-provoking book that starts by outlining “a Christian vision for understanding and loving our world” and leads well beyond to deep theological reflection on how to live well as a follower of Jesus in God’s world today. It offers an insightful perspective for reflection and action, challenging the reader to embrace creation as the embodiment of God’s love and to understand human beings as interdependent creatures within creation. In doing so, we reorient ourselves within the world to live more faithfully in a way that honors God.

ALICE HAGUE

**Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Zondervan, 2015), 187 pages, \$19.**

Historically pastors have been the primary theologians of the church, yet in today’s church what once was the rule is the exception. *The Pastor as Theologian* attributes to the loss of this vision theology that is “ecclesially anemic” and a church that is “theological anemic” (p. 13). This book identifies the divisions between the academic and pastoral worlds and offers suggestions for reclaiming the vision of the pastor as theologian as antidote to the anemia of both church and academy.

Authors Hiestand and Wilson begin with a brief overview of the long history of ministers serving as practicing theologians. They discuss the relatively recent bifurcation between professional academic theologians and pastoral practitioners, resulting from the European Enlightenment and the Revolution and the Second Great Awakening in North America. It would be easy for the authors to blame the academy for perpetuating the divide between theological and pastoral work, but they do not. Instead



they claim, “The problem is not that we have academic theologians; the problem is that we no longer—in the main—have pastor theologians” (p. 78). Pastors should not expect the academy to have the same concerns as the church. On the other hand, scholars should avoid the temptation to direct the intellectually gifted exclusively into the academy.

The alternative model to the existing paradigm is the “pastor theologian,” that is, “a pastor who is engaged in a kind of theological scholarship that is as intellectually robust as academic theology yet distinct from academic theology” (p. 18). Hiestand and Wilson contrast this person with the local theologian or the popular theologian. Some have argued that the pastor’s job is to be a liaison between the academy and the church. Although pastors often find themselves in this position, the authors contend that this model is insufficient. Instead of merely acting as brokers of theology, pastors should themselves be *doing* theology.

Ecclesial theology is “a theology that is germinated within the congregation, that presses toward distinctively ecclesial concerns, and that is cultivated by practicing clergy” (p. 18). Ecclesial theology is important because pastors are the church’s natural theological shepherds; individual churches and the church as a whole will not grow beyond the theological maturity of their pastors. According to the authors, direct service in clerical ministry gives pastors a distinct perspective for doing theology that can contribute to academic theology. The functions of the pastorate shape ecclesial theology in unique ways, and pastors are able to avoid the scholarly pressures that many academics encounter. Pastor theologians do theology that is driven by the needs of the church and are not burdened by the narrow specificity of their expertise. The authors encourage theologians in the academy and the pastorate to work alongside one another.

Hiestand and Wilson recognize that not every pastor is necessarily gifted for this task, and they make clear that ecclesial theological work does not mean that one neglects the ministerial work to which he or she is called. However, they persuasively argue the irreplaceable benefit of gifted pastoral theologians engaging in ecclesial theology and give suggestion for how pastors may pursue this.

I recommend this book to every pastor and especially to those who have not experienced the pastorate as a welcome home for the serious theological work to which they feel called. Even for those who do not feel gifted for ecclesial theology, this book explains the necessity of recovering this ancient model of doing theology within the pastorate.

JESSE SLIMAK



