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# Book Reviews

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*The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, Volume I, by Richard P. Heitzenrater. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 220 pages. \$9.75.

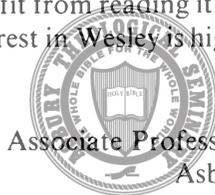
All devotees of Wesley will welcome the appearance of the first of two volumes on Wesley, written by one of the major interpreters of Wesley in our time. And one does not have to read far before the appreciation grows. In short, Dr. Heitzenrater has given us a valuable work.

The strengths of the book are many. Every page breathes the spirit of the careful historian, this giving the reader a sense of confidence in the book's quality. At the same time, the style is pleasant, thus making the work quite readable. Perhaps most delightful is the richness of primary material used in telling the story. Much of it is largely inaccessible to most of us. And finally, the author gives us a view of Wesley from a number of vantage points: preacher, missionary, theologian, poet, husband, etc.

The weakness of the work is one which even Heitzenrater would acknowledge: selectivity. In the introduction he notes that it is not possible to command any *single* work on Wesley as telling "the whole story." Neither does his. For example, his opening chapter on the Epworth year focuses almost entirely on two events, the fire and the ghost.

The weakness is better understood when we remember that one major purpose of Heitzenrater is to "deny theologize" Wesley. Two hundred years of embellishment have often made him appear other than he really was. So much of the selectivity is intentional, aimed at restoring a better perspective on key events and aspects of Wesley's life and ministry.

This book is like a lens. Through it, Wesley is brought into clearer *focus*. Anyone will profit from reading it. And happily, it appears at just the time when interest in Wesley is high, and a new, realistic view is needed.



**Dr. Steve Harper**  
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*Religious Education Development: Images for the Future*, by Gabriel Moran. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1983.

No one who cares deeply about Christian education has been able to survive the last twenty years without “buying in” to some developmental theory or other. Gabriel Moran has now summarized several of the more powerful of these — all in one book. He offers his own critique of each, then proceeds to offer his own “proposed theory for religious educators.” There are extensive summaries of Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and James Fowler. Craig Dykstra comes in for a dozen lines and Carol Gilligan for a half-dozen pages. The Erikson chapter is enriching. Moran does not comprehend Piaget’s adaptation process as is evident by his discussion of “equilibration.” And since he has not conquered Piaget’s empirical research on “justice” he is unable to critique Kohlberg’s use of the Piaget justice construct. Otherwise his critique of Kohlberg is highly analogical to my own (*Moral Development Foundations* . . . Abingdon, 1983).

In the final third of his book, Moran puts forward “a grammar of religious development,” “a grammar of educational development,” and “a theory of religious education development.” What Moran offers is a hypothetical structure which deserves to be validated and refined; it is not a theory in the usual sense, since it, like Dykstra’s work, is something invented in an office, not tested in classes and on the street.

Those of us who take any sort of developmental approach to understanding the life pilgrimage of faith must take Moran seriously. What he offers as his unique “model” is certainly one which deserves to be experimentally validated. In that sense it is a “speculative model” on the order of Erik Erikson’s “eight stages.” While Erikson has not verified his stages empirically, others are using the model as a guide to their own experimental testing. Moran deserves the same sort of serious consideration.

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*Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Richard S. Taylor, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983. 559 pages.

This dictionary of theology, covering some 954 articles, covers the ground that one would normally find in a standard systematic

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theology. Obviously, the subjects covered are condensed into small articles, and they are arranged alphabetically for easy reference. Thus, one can pursue one's particular interest of the moment or seek out the answer to some puzzling question, without having to wade through the normal volume of material contained in a systematic theology.

The articles are cross-referenced and they are written in a concise manner. The volume has been designed for the busy pastor, evangelist, missionary or student who desires to acquire a basic understanding of fundamental theological themes.

Over 150 contributors present articles in areas such as philosophy, psychology, history and spiritual formation. Thus, this theological dictionary is enhanced by the addition of articles on subjects related to theological concerns and interests. The dictionary is written from a distinctly evangelical and Wesleyan point of view, and the volume will prove valuable to those who are seeking to understand the Wesleyan-Arminian interpretation of scripture and theology. It may be the most comprehensive and definitive dictionary of theology in that tradition.

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