
Book Reviews

God's Healing Community, by Frank Bateman Stanger. Nashville: Abingdon, 1978. 143 pp. \$4.95.

Frank Stanger has given years of his life to the study of Christian healing. He has, in fact, taught a course on the subject at Asbury Theological Seminary yearly, attended and participated in healing conferences, preached on the subject, held countless healing services, and engaged in virtually every phase of pastoral ministry relative to the healing of persons. He is widely known as a leader in the field.

Dr. Stanger now brings together a summary of his lifetime of study. In language the ordinary reader can quickly grasp, he makes clear the biblical basis of healing, comes to terms with the knotty problems (Why isn't everyone healed? e.g.), and demonstrates how healing prayer groups and services can be established and serve effectively in local churches.

If the book succeeds in launching healing ministries over the country and elsewhere in the world, it will have succeeded indeed. At last we are coming to realize Jesus called us not only to preach and teach but also to heal, and that, in fact, He called us to nothing else but these three assignments. (Over and again, our author calls attention to the three.) Perhaps the best place to begin healing ministry is the study group; pastor and teacher will find the questions at the close of each chapter useful for instruction.

Through definition, theology, and practice, then, President Stanger walks with us through the mysterious, yet illuminating pathways of Christian healing. We stand grateful for this contribution to the growing literature in the field.

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John Wesley: His Life and Thought, by Robert G. Tuttle. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Corporation, 1978. \$9.95.

Dr. Tuttle has written a valuable book growing out of his doctoral studies at Bristol. A broad ranging biographical and historical analysis, the work reflects Tuttle's special interest in the influence of

mysticism upon Wesley.

To help the reader “get into Wesley’s mind,” the author uses the first person in the biographical sections. One fourth of the book is devoted to theological analysis (written in the third person).

Dr. Tuttle works with four objectives: to write a readable biography, to present a “fairly comprehensive theological analysis,” to attract his readers to the writings of Wesley, and to inspire the contemporary church with the vision God gave to Wesley.

How successful is the book when measured by the author’s objectives? The first person style is both simple and complex. In appearance, it is similar to Wesley’s *Journal*. In fact, it is quite different in some particulars. The psychological exercise required in moving *from* the mind of the reader *through* Tuttle’s mind *to* Wesley’s is not simple. It may raise a barrier for some readers. This progression through another’s mind is necessary to any interpretive study. It is better to read the primary sources, i.e., Wesley’s own writings. Of course, Tuttle knows and affirms this. The problem with the style employed is that the reader finds difficulty in separating Wesley’s thought from Tuttle’s. Further, the transitions used by Tuttle make Wesley’s life and thought flow much more smoothly than Wesley’s own *Journals*. That has strengths and weaknesses, giving needed coherence and clarity to a “life” of Wesley but also creating some artificiality.

The author does not produce “a fairly comprehensive theological analysis.” Tuttle interprets Wesley’s theology correctly, capturing its nuances well. In the biographical sections, Tuttle carefully discusses the developing theology of Wesley on faith, justification, and sanctification. Drawing upon his Bristol dissertation, he thoroughly analyzes mysticism. His intensive interest in mysticism pervades the book, narrowing its scope. This is the most valuable contribution of the book. The point is that Tuttle’s second objective is only partially realized.

Professor Tuttle comments frequently on the stages of mysticism: 1. Awakening, 2. Purgation, 3. Illumination, 4. The dark night of the soul, and 5. Union with God, or perfection. How important is the mystical spirit to Wesley’s theology? It is well known that Wesley broke from mysticism, the rock on which he almost foundered. Yet it was not a total break, nor could it be. Religious phenomenology has demonstrated that mysticism is common to many religions of man, e.g. — the Essenes and Hassidim in Judaism, the Sufis in Islam, and the Buddhist/Hindu preoccupation with absorption into infinity.

Certainly mysticism is present in all theistic religions. Wesley's break was not total but came at the point of antinomianism, or "stillness," and solitary religion.

What is the historical and theological relationship between the last stage of mysticism — perfection — and Wesley's doctrine of perfection? Tuttle follows Outler in tracing Wesley's sources particularly to "Macarius the Egyptian" (Gregory of Nyssa?) and Ephraem Syrus with their emphasis on *teleiosis*. But other sources are important: the larger Catholic heritage mediated through the Anglican Church (Law and Taylor), the Moravians, especially Arvid Gradin (George Turner *The Vision Which Transforms*), and, above all, the Bible for the "man of one Book." A great lacuna exists on this question: What were Wesley's sources for the doctrine of perfection?

The content of Tuttle's work should attract interest in reading Wesley himself. The book should be introduced to a wide reading audience. Not adequate for an introductory course in Wesley studies, it can be very useful as a supplement to Albert Outler's *John Wesley* or Colin William's *John Wesley's Theology Today*. It lacks the comprehensive summary pertinent to a good introduction. A. Skevington Wood's *John Wesley: The Burning Heart* is preferred for its inspirational value.

These obviously are the reviewer's conclusions. Some will be as enthusiastic about the style as is Bishop Hunt's testimonial. Measured by its overall value and potential for encouraging a deeper understanding of Wesley, there is cause for enthusiasm. It is an authentic commentary and adds to our understanding of Wesley. There is a growing understanding that Wesley's theology is superbly balanced, avoiding the dangerous polarities so often found in theological study. A "back to Wesley" crusade movement is not desired. The fact, however, is that Wesley was a theological genius, drawing upon a vast tradition, fleshing out Christian faith with an integrity and coherence which usually equals and often excels the other great theologians. Tuttle assists significantly in overcoming the stereotype of Wesley as simply a superb administrator or inspired evangelist. For this he deserves our accolades.

The book includes an excellent index and a good bibliography. Four or five typographical errors are found, which only underscores the difficulty of producing a flawless manuscript.

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The Essentials of Evangelical Theology, Volume One: God, Authority, and Salvation, by Donald Bloesch. New York: Harper and Row, 1978. 263 pp. \$12.95.

Donald Bloesch has written a timely book. As he observes, "I believe that the time has come to spell out evangelical essentials, the fundamental tenets for the faith once delivered to the saints, (ix)." His book is just that sort of work.

Bloesch's ordering of the doctrines diverges slightly from the traditional outline of systematic theology. "The chapter headings focus on controversial themes that have proven barriers to Christian unity in the past (xii)." These same chapter headings are the essentials of the evangelical faith: The sovereignty of God, the primacy of Scripture, total depravity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the substitutionary atonement, salvation by grace and faith alone.

The author's treatment of these doctrines is a synthesis of biblical and historical theology. The development of each section follows this order: (1) the biblical understanding of the doctrine, (2) the various traditional interpretations and controversies involved in the doctrine, (3) the constructive formulation of the doctrine, and (4) the misunderstandings and treatment of the doctrine in modern theology. It represents systematic theology at its best — the great truths of Scripture and the Christian past stated afresh in dialogue with the theology of our own day.

Bloesch's doctrinal work is well done. He shows a broad knowledge of Scripture and tradition, and the book is well documented in both of these aspects. Each chapter is followed by copious notes, giving the serious reader a springboard for further reading.

Probably the most crucial sections of this first volume are those on "The Meaning of Evangelical," (Chapter II), and "The Primacy of Scripture," (Chapter IV). These issues occupy a place of prominence in contemporary evangelical theology and are, therefore, of particular interest.

Bloesch counters the charge that "evangelicalism" connotes a particular experience rather than a particular doctrinal stance. He sees evangelicalism as a wedding of doctrine and experience. Thus, the experience of personal salvation is co-essential with the doctrinal basis of that same experience.

He defines "evangelical" biblically and historically. It is derived from the *evangelion*, the good news of salvation through the atoning

sacrifice of Christ. “In its historical meaning ‘evangelical’ has come to refer to the kind of religion espoused by the Protestant Reformation (7).” Evangelicalism also describes the spiritual movements within Protestantism subsequent to the Reformation — Pietism and Puritanism — as well as the revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, “when the term is used in its strict theological sense, it crosses all sectarian lines (7).”

Bloesch uses the term “evangelical” as a big umbrella — one large enough to cover most of biblically oriented Protestantism. This means that the reformers, Protestant Orthodoxy, the Pietists, Puritans, revivalists, fundamentalists, and neo-Orthodox are all included in Bloesch’s definition of the term “evangelical.” This catholicity of evangelicalism did not blind Bloesch to the shortcomings of the various branches of the movement, but it did allow him to affirm their essential unity in matters crucial to the faith.

The author affirms the inspiration of Scripture in accordance with Timothy 3:16. This inspiration is both verbal and conceptual, in that it pertains to the thoughts as well as the writing of the apostles (55). He holds to the plenary inspiration of Scripture, meaning that Scripture in its totality is inspired. This is paralleled by a view of progressive revelation which finds God most clearly revealed in the Christ event. Bloesch will not follow that trend which makes the Bible merely a record of revelation; the Bible is also a part of the revelation (63).

The infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture are affirmed in the language of the Lausanne Covenant but in such a way that does not deny culturally-conditioned ideas and historically-conditioned language in the Bible. The Bible is seen as both a human and a divine book — each side of this paradox is affirmed. “The doctrine or message of Scripture, which alone is infallible and inerrant, is hidden in the historical and cultural witness of the Biblical writers (65).”

Bloesch agrees with the Reformers that the Scriptures do not convey error. The chief question is in what sense is this inerrancy to be understood. Bloesch follows Berkhouwer in stating that “. . . inerrancy in the Biblical sense means unswerving witness to the truth, a trustworthy, and enduring witness to the truth of divine revelation. It connotes not impeccability, but indeceivability, which means being free from lying and fraud (67).” Bloesch, therefore, seems more willing to speak of an inerrant message than an inerrant text.

It is ironic that the strengths of Bloesch’s *Essentials* are also the

sources of its weaknesses. Bloesch's emphasis on essentials allows him to demonstrate the catholicity of evangelicalism; that it is a broadly based, biblically and historically grounded movement. But this emphasis on essentials also means jettisoning the distinctives of the various segments of the evangelical tradition.

Bloesch recognizes that he is not speaking for all evangelicals, but what he affirms *are* essential evangelical doctrines. Virtually every evangelical will want to affirm as much as Bloesch, though there are evangelicals who will want to say more than he does or add a different emphasis to what Bloesch has said.

This is an important book! Its importance will be enhanced as Don Bloesch rounds out the work in two additional volumes.

For evangelicalism to have a continued impact on the contemporary theological scene, it must present a unified front and one that is mobilized for dealing with the issues of the day. Bloesch's *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* will be an aid in this task. He presents a summary of evangelical theology in a fresh and constructive manner. The caliber of his scholarship is such that evangelicals will want to read the book and the critics of evangelicalism will need to read it.

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Poet and Peasant: A Literary Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke, by Kenneth W. Bailey. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976. 238 pp.

Scholarly attempts to understand the synoptic parables in light of their cultural context are not new to New Testament studies. But several features of this stimulating work by Dr. Bailey make significant advances over previous work in the field.

First, through 20 years of resident work in the Middle East, the author was able to develop widely scattered, authentic informants on village life, which he used according to carefully formulated guidelines to insure integrity. Previous attempts to see the ancient Middle East through the eyes of modern bedouin or villagers receive balanced criticism in the process (Thomson, Dalman, Bishop, Rihbany and Levison).

Second, Dr. Bailey's facilities in Arabic and Syriac give him access to the New Testament textual traditions rising out of cultures most

similar to those of the parables themselves. Dr. Bailey uses these oriental translations as commentaries in their own right. In so doing, he gives us access to entire exegetical traditions almost, if not completely, ignored in recent Western scholarship on the parables. Similarly, the author's review of pertinent ancient literature includes but goes beyond the standard early Jewish works to encompass the labors of the early Syrian, Arabian and Coptic exegetes, making a significant addition to the standard resources.

Third, Dr. Bailey's understanding of the function of the parable itself in its cultural setting leads him to reject a rigid insistence that each parable has but a single point (an *a priori* dictum brought to the parables from outside their context). From the cultural referents, he looks instead for a "theological cluster" around the single response the parable was most likely intended to elicit from the hearers.

Fourth, the author integrates thorough analysis of literary structure of both the larger (book/document level) context and the smaller (segment/paragraph) units which detailed study of individual words and phrases, to produce a wholistic exegetical method too seldom seen and certainly worthy of careful study as a model of methodical exegesis.

In my judgment, the author's "oriental exegesis," as he styles it, succeeds admirably in expanding our understanding of the parables by more precisely delineating significant cultural elements in them and by a skillful discernment of the literary structure of the documents involved. His breakthrough in understanding the enigmatic parable of "The Unjust Steward," Luke 16:1-13, is typical of the work done.

Chapters 1-3 set forth the task and establish the methodology. Chapters 4-7 are devoted to an analysis of the Lukan travel narrative ("Jerusalem Document," Lk. 9:51-19:48) and to the exegesis of several parables in Luke. The entire work involves continual critical conversation with the best in modern parable research and so provides helpful critiques of the work of Bultmann, Dodd, Jeremias, Jones, Linnemann and Via, as well as Bornkamm, Fitzmyer and others. Numerous *ad hoc* "cultural illuminations" and *a priori* theological assumptions of much contemporary New Testament redaction and form criticism are re-evaluated by Dr. Bailey.

Two appendixes list and describe the oriental versions and resource persons used. In addition to the author and text indices, a Greek/Hebrew/Aramaic word index would have been appropriate,

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since even the New Testament lexicon profits considerably from this research.

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The Holy Bible: New International Version. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1978.

Now we have still another English version of the Scriptures. This one was initiated by a group of evangelical scholars nearly 25 years ago, sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals and, since 1967, by the New York International Bible Society. Perhaps no translation has ever been undertaken by a larger group of participants. Other ecumenical translations have been undertaken by scholars appointed by their respective denominations.

The unusual thing about this version is that the participants were not chosen by church organizations, or by the publisher, but rather by a self-appointed group of scholars who share in common a conservative view of the Scriptures — most, if not all, of them committed to biblical inerrancy. Unusual care was taken both in the translation, in the board of review, and in the concern for literary style. Unlike the Revised Standard Version, they did not envision themselves as following the precedent of the King James or Authorized Version, nor did they, like the New English Bible, aim primarily for an idiomatic translation. The volume is less literal than the RSV but more literal than the NEB. Instead, they aimed at something in between these two, and the results are quite commendable.

Several features commend themselves to the present reviewer. The format is good. The paragraphing is judicious, and the naming of segments is useful for rapid reading. Footnotes are useful in alerting the reader to alternative readings and the like. Helpful, also, is the frequent translation of biblical measures in contemporary equivalents following the metric system.

Frequently, the rendering of oft-used phrases provides both clarity and beauty. Some of the Old Testament changes are noteworthy, such as “asses” becomes “donkeys” (Gen. 12:16), “leprosy” becomes “skin disease,” “peace offering” is changed to “fellowship offering” (Lev. 3:1). Occasionally, the translators also interpret, as changing “unclean” to “ceremonially unclean” (Lev. 5:2). The “breastpiece of judgment” becomes the “breastpiece of decision” (Exodus 28:29).

“Mercy seat” becomes “atonement cover” (Exodus 37:6) or “place of atonement” (Heb. 9:5). The rendition of the kenosis passage is commendable where the “form” of God becomes the “nature” of God (Phil. 2:6).

Occasionally one may wonder whether the changes are for the better. Where Paul places a contrast between the spiritual and fleshly, this version is between the spiritual and the worldly (I. Cor. 3:2). The “mind of Christ” becomes “attitude of Christ” (Philippians 2:4). Very questionable is the substitution of “goat skins” for the skins of “sea cows” (Exodus 25:5; 26:14; 35:7; 23; 36:19). Occasionally, the language is more explicit than earlier translations — e.g., (Ezek. 23:20, 21). In such places, perhaps something less explicit would be more convenient for public reading. The debated immanuel passage returns to “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14, thus making it consistent with Matthew 1:23. For some readers, the change in John 17:19 will create problems by making it synonymous with 17:17 but obscuring the similarity to John 10:36, where sanctify is correctly rendered “set apart.”

This Bible, to date, comes out in two formats, one with double-column lines, one with larger print and with some colored maps from the Exodus to Paul’s travels. Some may feel that the maps are too colorful. The table of weights and measures is also helpful. The India paper edition makes for convenience in handling but does not lend itself readily to marking and note taking. On balance, this reviewer finds the volume responsible in its translation, felicitous in its language, and, on the whole, a trustworthy addition to the succession of English versions of the Scriptures. Time alone will be the best judge of its relative merits.

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BC: She Archaeology of the Bible Lands, by Magnus Magnusson. London: The Bodley Head Ltd. and the British Broadcasting Corporation, 1977, 239 pp. \$10.00.

Designed for the general public, this survey of archaeology in lands of the Bible is very readable, profusely and beautifully illustrated. The author is Rector of Edinburgh University and a well known television personality. This book, the work of many scholars, researchers and assistants, is a result of a series by the British

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Broadcasting Company of the saga concerning archaeological discoveries in the Middle East to and including the year 1976. The author credits Dr. James B. Pritchard, of the University of Pennsylvania, with expert editorial assistance, whose judgment was often appealed to in the many uncertainties incidental to archaeological reports.

The reader is taken through the panorama of history from earliest man to 73 A.D., when the Jewish fortress at Masada fell to the Roman armies. An introductory chapter briefly sketches the progress of archaeology in uncovering the ruins of ancient civilizations prior to the time of Abraham. Included in the survey is a report on the sensational discoveries at Ebla (2400 to 2250 B.C.), where, in 1975, some 15,000 clay tablets were discovered and first reported to the world in the fall of 1976. This sensational discovery was comparable to the uncovering of Nineveh in the early nineteenth century. The author traces Middle East archaeological discoveries along the sequence of the biblical record, beginning with Abraham and taking us to the New Testament period. Magnusson keeps aware of the discussions among contemporary archaeologists as to the significance of recent archaeological discoveries and their relevance to the text of the Bible.

The chief value of the book is the report of interviews with representative archaeologists and biblical scholars. Thus, the reader is taken, for example, to the site of Beersheba, with which Abraham's name is linked, to discoveries relevant to the story of the Exodus, findings at Jericho and the interpretation thereof, to Jerusalem through the ages, including a report on recent excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the old city and around the south and east of the temple mount.

Among the chief values of the volume are the pictures, well chosen to illustrate the theme of the story; many are new, and many are in color, the result of the British team with on-site photography by experts. Another advantage of the book is the report of archaeologists who differ from each other in interpretation. The perspective is that of an informed news reporter knowing the issues and whom to consult (the author himself maintaining a low profile). The third value of the book is its overall survey, brought up to date by an expert team cooperating in an effort to make archaeological discoveries and their significance available to a wide public; it is well documented yet not unduly technical.

Many readers will be disappointed in the author-editor's point of

view. Biblical records tend to be taken as legendary. The author dismisses the Genesis account of origins, putting them on the same level as Mesopotamian accounts of the similar origins. Abraham is seen as a legendary figure reconstructed in the imagination by later writers. The author fails to report the judgment of other archaeologists who point out evidence that substantiates the patriarchal stories in Genesis. Instead, authorities are featured who discredit not only the traditional interpretations but also modern scientific discoveries which lend authenticity to the biblical accounts. Moses and the Exodus fare little better, being cast in the category of legends with little historical basis.

There are some instances of carelessness in reporting, as when the Dead Sea is put at 1,500 feet below sea level — an item which could have been easily checked before getting into print.

In summary, the chief value of the book is the listing of archaeological discoveries that are up to date and the exposure of different points of view. If the reader can tolerate the prejudice against the historicity of the biblical narratives, he will find the volume useful.

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