

Book Briefs

In this section we acknowledge new books we have received over the last year for which we have not provided full book reviews. We have organized these into topical categories to help readers become aware of new books in specific areas. Unsigned book briefs in the first section *Christianity in Africa* are by the editor.

Christianity in Africa

***Pentecostal Theology in Africa.* Ed. Clifton R. Clarke. African Christian Studies Series 6. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014, 226 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62032-490-5**

One cannot understand 20th and 21st century Christianity in Africa without attempting to understand “Pentecostalism” on that continent, theologically, historically, and culturally. This collection of essays will help us in this regard in many ways. It is not definitive, due to the incredible complexity of the subject, yet it does offer many penetrating descriptors and analyses. The work very much takes into account the influence of the late African scholar, Ogbu Kalu. Clarke helps us to understand very well Kalu’s approach to Pentecostalism in Africa and Kalu’s guiding theses, but Clarke is also not afraid to critique Kalu, which I would agree with. There are thirteen essays and eleven different contributors. The editor has contributed four of these chapters. The influence of Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia Beach is clearly there as four of the writers are associated with that institution. In terms of theology, the heart of the book is really found in two essays: the one on Jesus and African Pentecostalism and the one on African pneumatology. They are not exactly “neat” as the movement is not a nice and neatly unified grouping. This is a helpful book written at an advanced level. A very large bibliography has been included.

***Zion Evangelical Ministries of Africa (ZEMA): A Ministry among the Zionists of Southern Africa.* Andy Sullivan. No place: Viking, no year, 98 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-620-68840-6**

Since there is so little available to gain a better understanding of Zionism in Southern Africa, this will be a welcome addition. The book, originally a SATS thesis written by a missionary of ZEMA, begins by developing the context of John Alexander Dowie and Zion, Illinois before proceeding to the emergence of Zionism in Southern Africa. This is then followed by the central history/story of the book, the Mahon Mission and ZEMA and the emergence of Bible schools, chiefly amongst the amaZioni through to today. The book is short and easy to read. It is very much an introduction to the subject and will provide some of the context and the concept of Bible schools for the amaZioni. The more critical issues raised by church historians and theologians, such as in the above mentioned book brief, are really not raised in this book. For posterity, books should include a year of publication or printing when an ISBN is included.

***Before the Scramble: A Scottish Missionary's Story – The Journal of James Sutherland, Agriculturalist, Livingstonia Mission Central Africa 1880-1885.* Roderick Sutherland Haynes. Renton, WA: Highlander Press, 2015, 179 pp.+ , paper. ISBN 978-1-5153-8079-5**

Artisan missionaries are usually neglected when mission history is being told or written. Yet in Protestant missions history they are an integral part, as one can see when one traces this grouping from the Moravians onwards. This book contains a primary source document, namely, a seven-month long journal (late 1880-May, 1881) of a Free Church of Scotland artisan missionary to the Lake Nyasa region of modern-day Malawi and three primary source letters by the missionary. In total, Sutherland (born in Wick, Scotland) served about five years in Africa and died there. He served at both Livingstonia at Cape Maclear and at Livingstonia at Bandawe as well as Njuju with William Koyi, the Xhosa evangelist to the Ngoni. References can be found to Drs. Laws and Waterson. The book has an attractive cover and contains many illustrations. The author personally transcribed the handwritten journal and letters. The whole text needs closer editing and also has some curious features such as an unusual pagination system following the journal portion. The work is helpful in making primary source materials on missions work in Malawi more available. However, I would have preferred the secondary comment not to have been included but only a brief biographical sketch by way of introduction.

Cruciform Press Series

The following Cruciform Press books are reviewed by Steve Mollins

***A World Upside Down: Four Essays on the Life and Theology of Martin Luther.* Charles E. Fry. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2015, 87 pp., pdf. ISBN 978-1-941114-08-7**

Reformation history often presents a daunting task – particularly as it pertains to understanding the reformers. The complexity of these characters makes their lives and theology difficult to synthesize. Charles E. Fry has masterfully handled just this task as he offers this overview of the life and theology of Martin Luther. The book is divided into four parts that commences with Luther’s biographical highlights, proceeds into his theological emphasis on gospel truths, continues into how these truths exalted God and humbled man, and concludes with an application to the modern reader. This book does a litany of things beautifully. Not only does it provide the essential information about Luther’s life and theology, it continually strikes a devotional note that pulls the reader into the material. Consequently, Fry gives us an excellent introduction to Luther’s thought which is both a suitable introduction for the novice and a refreshing approach for the accomplished historian.

***Anchored in Grace: Fixed Points for Humble Faith.* Jeremy Walker. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2015, 86 pp., pdf. ISBN 978-1-941114-04-9**

Jeremy Walker has jam-packed this book with all of the nuanced essentials of the gospel message. In five chapters Walker gives us the fundamentals of reformed soteriology but has stripped it of the typical “TULIP” heading and replaced it with some colloquial terms. This sets the tone for the remainder of the book, where our author expounds in beautifully concise phrases that will be understandable to the neophyte and edifying to the seasoned preacher. But this is much more than a readable textbook. Each chapter concludes with how the reader should respond to the truths that have just been presented and thereby compliments orthodoxy with the necessity of orthopraxy. *Anchored in Grace* adopts the feel of a good sermon series or an expanded gospel tract. However you perceive it, stock up on a few copies because you will find abundant use for this well-written gem.

***Do Ask, Do Tell, Let's Talk: Why and How Christians Should Have Gay Friends.* Brad Hambrick. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2016, 118 pp., pdf. ISBN 978-1-941114-11-7**

In the last few decades the church has been scrambling to formulate the appropriate strategy to interface with those who experience same-sex attraction (SSA). Brad Hambrick's contribution is a welcome addition that treads wisely across this controversial ground. Hambrick argues for sustained, redeeming interaction with these individuals in the context of friendships. Our author seeks first to establish the basis for such a relationship and then proceeds to explore the dynamics of faithful and loving conversation. Hambrick offers many practical techniques and even loose templates for how the Christian can lovingly engage someone who experiences SSA and not compromise the teaching of Scripture. Yet, at times, we believed the author to communicate an inappropriate passivity toward the sin of homosexuality. Many of the tactics suggested were aimed at saving the relationship while not offending the individual, giving the impression that friendship is as important as holiness. We are certain that this is not what the author intended but think that it could have been balanced with more ways to communicate truth rather than sympathize with the sinner. For that reason, our recommendation is qualified. However, Brad Hambrick's goal was to get the reader thinking more intentionally about relationships in this tense atmosphere; in that, he succeeded greatly.

***Good News About Satan: A Gospel Look at Spiritual Warfare.* Bob Bevington. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2015, 106 pp., pdf. ISBN 978-1-936760-67-1**

This contribution to the Cruciform Press repertoire wades through the often misunderstood territory of spiritual warfare. Bob Bevington presents a biblical theology of Satan and demons through nine chapters that briefly, yet systematically, expound upon the nature and reality of the unseen realm of fallen angels. Books dealing with this topic are often composed from the charismatic/mystical perspective that offers extra-biblical advice and experiential theology; *Good News About Satan* does not belong in that genre. Our author is balanced and biblical, rarely speculating on areas where God is silent. Bevington does not give firm answers to all of the questions raised in demonology, but he does bring Scripture to bear upon them and encourages the reader to incorporate those principles into their life. This is not a book just for those who "feel" that they are being oppressed by the demonic – it is for every Christian who desires to walk in holiness before God and resist the wiles of the world, the flesh, and Satan. The author's gospel emphasis will be an encouragement to the casual reader and a lifeline for the lost.

***Grace: A Bible Study on Ephesians for Women.* Keri Folmar. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2015, 151 pp., pdf. ISBN 978-1-941114-07-0**

Finding a catalyst for good Bible study can be a challenging task. Many study aides end up pulling the reader away from the text rather than into it. Keri Folmar seeks to avoid this error in her inductive consideration of Ephesians. Keri presents a five-step study that has the participant work through aspects of prayer, reading, observation, interpretation and application. The book is laid out on a ten-week schedule that proceeds through the entire book of Ephesians, each week containing five days of questions and exercises for the student. The title informs us that what follows is directed toward women, but there is very little content that is gender specific. In fact, Folmar is about as gender specific as the book of Ephesians. Thankfully, the study contains no cute anecdotes or emotional manipulation. Every word is written with the intention of getting the reader to go deeper in their study of Scripture and keeps with the main point of the text without deviating into peripheral topics. The book can be completed individually or in a group setting – either way, the women in your church will greatly benefit from this study as it pulls them into the Word of God.

***Inheritance of Tears: Trusting the Lord of Life When Death Visits the Womb.* Jessalyn Hutto. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2015, 95 pp., pdf. ISBN 978-1-941114-01-8**

It is difficult to imagine the pain that an expectant mother experiences when death steals her unborn child. The *Inheritance of Tears* is composed of five chapters wherein Jessalyn Hutto expounds upon a theology of suffering and applies those truths to the specific trial of miscarriage. Hutto, herself having gone through two miscarriages, brings an empathetic voice to this oft neglected conversation. She gives a candid perspective that simultaneously offers comfort to the sufferer and wisdom to the counselor. This comfort is provided by presenting miscarriage in the broader context of eternity and within the sovereign plan of our loving God. Consequently, the book leans heavily into the theological aspect of these trials and contains material relevant beyond the specifics of any difficulty. From any other perspective a book on miscarriage would be dismal and depressing. But here you will find the glory of our God and be filled with more reason to worship Him through life's tempestuous storms. We would highly recommend – at the least – having this book on hand to share with the women in your church.

***The Secret of Spiritual Joy*. William P. Farley. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2015, 93 pp., pdf. ISBN 978-1-941114-14-8**

One should be wary of a book that claims to have the secret to anything; especially a biblical truth. But *The Secret of Spiritual Joy* will strike a chord that most Christians neglect. William P. Farley has composed this work with the intent of getting behind the issues that prevent believers from living the life of joy that they have been commanded to. Through the introduction and five chapters Farley, like a wise counselor, identifies the common areas of difficulty for the believer and firmly promotes a biblical perspective toward life and our Lord. The reader is propelled through discussions of humility, gratitude, grumbling and self-pity to arrive at the last chapter where our author advocates the secret of spiritual joy in the amalgamation of these qualities. These components are not the perfect recipe for joy but they are the prerequisites for living a life of joy in the hope of Christ – a disposition that is anchored to our immovable Savior. Farley concludes the book by demonstrating how joy in Christ transcends the common challenges of daily life. Though spiritual joy is not a secret, this book comes as a fresh reminder to set aside our pride, live in gratitude, and rest in Christ.

Academic Articles

