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## Book Reviews

### **The Works of John Wesley: Medical Writings, Vol. 32**

Edited by James G. Donat and Randy L. Maddox  
Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books  
2018, 788 pp., hardcover, \$59.99  
ISBN: 978-1-501-85901-4

*Reviewed by R. Jeffrey Hiatt*

*Medical and Health Writings* is volume 32 of the *Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*. It is a critical edition, with annotations and comments by noted Wesley scholars of the last 60 years. This work is offered to the Church, scholars, and novices as the new standard resource in Wesley studies.

This latest volume by Donat and Maddox of the *Medical and Health Writings* of John Wesley, one of England's most noteworthy 18th century personalities, is the focus of this 788-page exhaustive tome. It details the historic tug-of-war between medicine and religion as medicine struggled to stand as its own field. This salient work draws heavily upon Wesley's own writings, as well as other pertinent period writings, to illumine the context for Wesley's study and use of medicine in his practice of ministry (20). It provides an array of technical and specialized appendices to allow either novice or veteran scholar to dig deeper into the fine details on subjects such as 18th century diseases (Appendix E) or herbs (Appendix F) (731, 741 respectively).

This monograph highlights Wesley's decidedly theological concern for the spiritual, physical, mental, and social health needs of those who had no regular access to doctors, priests, affordable medicines, or

regular clergy care (21). The Methodist system to “visit the sick” was in place (1740s to early 1770s), including medical advice (c.1750), especially to the poor (23). In this volume, it is showcased in the examples of personal letters to and from Wesley (Appendix C), articles, tracts, and books written or summarized by Wesley that are collected or referred to in this volume (373, 389, 653, et al).

Wesley drew from sacred Christian writ and his Anglican ministerial training and heritage for his understanding of both physical and spiritual healing, rooted in the Church’s long established teaching of *caritas* (27). This part of Wesley’s ministry relates the study of medicine and the practice of relief to the poor, as both customary among many English priests of the 17th and 18th centuries. Wesley believed that Christ’s healing work conveyed the multidimensional work of the gospel. Thus, one of Wesley’s approaches to his mission, helping restore people to health, was a visible, tangible expression to “offer them Christ” in a practical way (16).

Wesley made the art of “physic” a life-long focus (23). He was expected to pray with, and advise the people within his sphere of ministry on health (as well as, work, financial, and political) matters, or any other subject related to living the Christian life (28). The rural and urban poor, who could not afford nor had limited access to, “regular” physicians, or other clergy, responded joyfully to being visited, prayed for, and advised on matters of health by a trusted cleric who loved them enough to help (13). Donat and Maddox discuss those who supported Wesley’s theological presuppositions, and personal dedication to be an instrument for making people whole as part of a minister’s sacred responsibilities (11ff). It also provides the counterpoints of the detractors, pointing to both real issues, (e.g. the issue of a “receipt” that could be fatal if followed), the need to be corrected, and to those detractors who wished to sideline Wesley’s influence in matters of theology and politics (Appendix D, 675ff). The analytic comparisons and multiple editions of his writings allow the serious student of either Wesley or medical history to cover significant ground (389, 397, etc.).

Far from being an amusing avocation, John Wesley’s interest in health and healing was a central dimension of his ministry and of the mission of early Methodism (24, 392). Moreover, when considered in its historical context, Wesley’s precedent provides an impetus of the concern for holistic health and healing, and faithful theological creativity that is instructive for his present ecclesial heirs, but does not suggest practicing

medicine without a license! Although the text refers to “Wesley’s work as a priest/physician,” (612, et al.,) I caution using the terminology this way, because Wesley never explicitly accepts “physician” as an official moniker, since he was never “certified.” However, I agree with the authors that since Wesley had done extensive medical reading and more, and since he knew as much or more than many of the certified physicians of his day that, *de facto*, the description is accurate.

This secondary reference preserves and analyzes the primary records of the founder of the Wesleyan/Methodist movement, John Wesley’s medical writings, as crucial to an understanding of the beginnings of that movement, its reflection of the context from which it emerged, and its lasting impact on English and American Methodism within the broader cultures. It is an important contribution to the “History of Medicine and Wesley Studies” (ix). It is likewise essential for anyone who wants to understand the context and sensibility issues of human health and Christian salvation with respect to Euro-American 18th century medical developments (including electricity) (311), and its impact on Wesleyan theology, spirituality, hymnody, worship, conferencing, and other practical ministry concerns (30).

For a church or movement that declares salvation and wholeness as works of divine presence impacting embodied life in the real world, Wesley’s reflections on human health and salvation are not just vestiges of a bygone era, but expose a deeper sensibility about spiritual health, principles, and practices pertinent to the contemporary church’s ongoing commitment to a holistic approach for ministry in the global arena.



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## **Public Faith in Action: How to Engage with Commitment, Conviction, and Courage**

Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz

Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press

2017, 256 pp., paperback, \$19.99

ISBN: 978-1-58743-410-5

*Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts*

In a politically polarized time, there are issues of great ethical and religious import to Christians that cannot be neglected but are also volatile and difficult to broach. It is easy to recognize our need to foster more open and respectful conversations yet, seemingly, difficult to create a safe space for those encounters which does not devolve into shouting and defensive tribalism. In these times, we are in great need of the soft, wise voices of gently challenging friends like Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz. If you are looking for a book to guide a careful and sensitive discussion with a small group on the major issues of our time, I would seriously recommend *Public Faith in Action*.

When I first scanned *Public Faith in Action*, one of my initial concerns was that the format of the main chapters on current issues would push the ethical balance of the book toward a wishy-washy relativism. Each chapter on issues like borrowing and lending, new life, migration, policing, war, and torture begins with a thesis, leads the reader through an exploration of the issue in the main body of the chapter, has a section called “Room for Debate,” and then closes with a nicely annotated bibliography divided between books for introductory reading and those for more advanced study. My concern was that the “Room for Debate” section would come across as contrived or end up putting more gray into the conversation just for the sake of making things more gray.

However, on that point I was happily surprised by the way the authors push each conversation into a Christian ethical range before allowing for the fact that there are debated positions within that range. This is not a wide-open field where anything goes. In many chapters the authors narrow the debate in such a way that many positions, which pass for conservative, American evangelical political stances, would be obviously defined as insufficient. One example of this is the chapter on the environment. After looking at multiple objections to “making ecological

preservation a public priority” (43), the authors judge that these objections are not morally sufficient for a Christian interacting in the public square. The “Room for Debate” section at the end of the discussion is not about whether or not we should do something about the degradation of the environment; it is about what environmental issues should be addressed first and when legal coercion should be used to enforce care for the environment (47). Chapter by chapter, the reader is led through a conversation where the ethical focus is sharpened and refined before the debate is opened. I am sure that the range of the room for debate would itself become a topic of debate in many small groups reading this book together, but *Public Faith in Action* at least gives a solid starting point for those conversations to begin.

The selection of issues, background information, and illustrations is very contextually situated in the debates that are currently on going in the United States. Because of that, I think there is value in reading this book now with a few other people rather than waiting to pick it up in ten years. It will still be a good book in ten years, but a great part of its value is in the way the authors skillfully navigate the hard questions being asked today.

### **Preaching with Empathy: Crafting Sermons in a Callous Culture**

Lenny Luchetti

Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

2018, 112 pp., paper, \$19.99

ISBN: 978-1-5018-4172-9

*Reviewed by Scott Donahue-Martens*

Lenny Luchetti continues to contribute meaningfully to the practice of preaching with his newest book. He shows how a callous apathetic culture has created a dire need for empathy. Empathy is crucial to the task of preaching because empathy fosters loving connections between the pulpit and the pews. One definition of empathy explored is “the skill and... grace that bridges the gap of distance between my reality and another’s” (11). Empathy can be developed within people and communities. The work is driven by the hope that preaching can respond to cultural apathy with Christian empathy.

Chapter one reveals the need for empathy to address widespread apathy. Luchetti explores how culture and relationships have become

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divisive. Apathy has seeped into the pulpit, leading many to question whether preaching can adequately respond to modern life. Preaching can only respond if it is rooted in God and God's loving empathy. The second chapter addresses how empathy in the pulpit can respond to affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of people. Empathy can help bridge cultural, racial, economic, and other factors in the preaching event. The work turns to theological anthropology to envision how grace can transform sin and bitterness into love and empathy that is grounded in the empathic God.

The third chapter focuses on the relationships between theology, preaching, and empathy. Preaching is a theological task and theological beliefs impact preaching. Luchetti shows that empathy is in God's nature, which can be seen in the incarnate Christ. *Perichoresis* within God draws people into empathic relationships. The theological engagement in this chapter is rich without ever losing sight of the practice of preaching. The focus on the practice of preaching is extended into chapter four which describes the lives of John Wesley and Martin Luther King Jr. Luchetti explores how their theological beliefs and contexts shaped their empathic preaching in distinct manners. The final two chapters focus on cultivating and incorporating empathy in the life of the preacher and the practice of preaching. Luchetti offers practices to grow and barriers to overcome for embracing empathy as a way of life, ministry, and preaching.

The work reflects wisdom gleaned from years of preaching and teaching preaching. These insights are communicated theologically, clearly, and practically. For those struggling to connect or communicate with parishioners, this book offers a fresh approach. Empathic preaching seeks to connect the word of God with the people of God. Luchetti offers an approach to preaching that illustrates how the people of God can be in faithful relationships with God and each other. I would recommend this book to any preacher, especially to preachers who feel burdened by the demands of the preaching task. Empathy is not a panacea to the difficulties of the preaching task, nor is it a replacement of exegetical engagement. Empathy is a crucial ingredient of a sustainable preaching life and effective preaching ministry. Preaching has the power to transform people through empathic participation with God and humanity.



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## Introducing the Old Testament

Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. and J. Andrew Dearman

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans

2018, 560 pp., hardcover, \$40.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-6790-2

*Reviewed by David Nonnenmacher, Jr.*

It would be an understatement to say that there is an abundance of preliminary literature on the Old Testament. As the conversations surrounding method and biblical interpretation grow and change, so too must the way in which one is introduced to them. Robert Hubbard, professor of biblical literature at North Park Seminary, and Andrew Dearman, professor of Old Testament studies at Fuller Seminary, combine their efforts in their latest work, *Introducing the Old Testament*. They establish early on in their text that their goal is akin to a swimming curriculum: one must first learn how to wade in the shallows before diving into the deep end. The basics (or shallows) in this case are mentioned as being “how [each] book originated, its historical and culture background, its literary features and main characters, and its structure” (3). The goal (or deep end) is the invitation to the reader to engage with the biblical text itself and grapple with “every chapter, warts and all” (4).

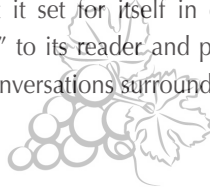
*Introducing the Old Testament* is divided into six parts. Part one, appropriately labeled “Getting Started,” makes more transparent the authors’ tilt toward a historical-critical methodology that seeks to illuminate the context of the Old Testament in the subsequent chapters. Beginning with part two, each part is further divided into introductory chapters and single-book analyses. For example, chapter two’s coverage of the Torah begins with a section labeled “What is the Torah?” before granting a brief yet concise chapter for each of the books therein. This structure remains consistent until the book’s conclusion in part six. Part three, after providing a discussion on historiography and classical use of the text, carries the reader over from the Torah into the Historical Books, all the while staying in line with the ordering of texts set forth by the Protestant canon.

Parts four and five address the prophets and biblical poetry, respectively, though in some ways these two parts operate hand-in-hand. For example, the chapter labeled “What is Hebrew Poetry” is found in part

four. This was done intentionally in order to study the more poetic elements of the prophets before arriving at the traditionally recognized poetic books such as the Psalms (261). This chapter especially shines in its discussion on Hebrew parallelism and its comparisons with English poetry. Finally, part six finishes the book with a detailed conversation on canonization and textual transmission. It also takes some time to discuss the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the benefits of utilizing extra-biblical texts in research, thus making the reader more aware of both the internal *and* external influences that played a role in the compilation and canonization of the Old Testament.

Of this publication's many strengths, the two that are especially conspicuous include its diverse chapter features and its continuous emphasis on the Old Testament's original context. The benefits of the former make themselves known within the first few chapters of the text. Colorful maps, timelines, and charts are thoughtfully placed in a user-friendly fashion. Most notably, however, are the discussion questions that follow up on each chapter's reading which prompt the reader to engage with its contents on a critical level. At times, however, it feels as if the preference given to historical context supplants rather than supplements theological discussion. Issues on the more controversial end of Old Testament Studies are glossed over more quickly (or not at all) with assumed confirmation (i.e. the enforcement of the Deuteronomic History, the belief that Jonah is merely a parable, and the assertion of the three-fold division of Isaiah, amongst others).

Hubbard and Dearman's *Introducing the Old Testament* is very approachable by both lay persons and students of the Bible. Its concise chapter lineup provides just enough information to the reader about a given topic without overburdening them in exhaustive fashion or wordiness. While this text could absolutely be used in a seminary environment, it would perhaps be best to pair it with other resources that address the more practical side of biblical interpretation. Overall, this book undoubtedly accomplishes the goal that it set for itself in chapter one: to impart a valuable "swimming lesson" to its reader and provide a connection with the several-millennia-old conversations surrounding the Old Testament.



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## **Approaching the Study of Theology: An Introduction to Key Thinkers, Concepts, Methods and Debates**

Anthony C. Thiselton

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

2018, 255 pp., paperback, \$24.00

ISBN: 978-0-8308-5219-2

*Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts*

*Approaching the Study of Theology* is part of Anthony Thiselton's recent offerings for students and teachers of theology. I had previously reviewed Thiselton's *Systematic Theology* and *The Thiselton Companion to Christian Theology*, both of which were insightful and eminently useful books. While *Approaching* is also a useful book, there are a few points where I found myself disappointed. Even with its weak points, though, it will still be a useful quick-reference book in the classroom for giving students historical and contextual orientation to many theological discussions.

At 255 pages, *Approaching* is not a large book, but it is a book that covers a massive amount of content within that space. It begins with a largely chronological survey of theology before entering the three main sections of the book. The first section covers different approaches to theology (biblical, hermeneutical, historical, etc.), the second, "Concepts and Issues," is a tour of twenty major themes in theology, while the third is a glossary of key terms. Both the second and third sections are very similar to Thiselton's *Companion*, providing reworked and abbreviated versions of the articles found in that much larger work (over 800 pages).

It is in the introductory survey and the first section, though, that I found myself most disappointed. The text here is very dense and moves at a breathless pace. Basically, Thiselton attempts to survey the entire history of Christian theology within a thirty-one-page introduction. This is a nigh impossible task and the style of the text tends to move very abruptly from one extremely brief summary to the next. The balance of the history is also uneven, giving twelve pages to the modern era and more emphasis to those theologians in which Thiselton is most interested. The first section on approaches slows down and opens up slightly, but it still gives the impression of a person rushing to hit all the highlights on a given topic.

These sections are meant to give the student a kind of outline to the context of theology, and it succeeds on that count. However, the abrupt

style and pacing of the text make it often little more than an outline. There were many places where Thiselton brings up a very interesting point in these sections but does not expand on those ideas and leaves the reader wanting. For example, in a chapter on historical theology, he starts a paragraph with a note on how it is valuable to compare Tertullian and Origen, which sounds like the opening of an interesting discussion. Five sentences follow on that topic before the reader is whisked into a discussion of creeds in the next paragraph (51). It succeeds at being an outline for theology students but may be frustrating reading for those expecting more thorough discussions and development.

In the last two sections where space is devoted to narrower topics, though, the writing returns to Thiselton's usual style. Because these issues and terms are covered in his *Companion* in a more expanded form, though, I would recommend that the avid reader of theology pick up that book over this one. For an introductory theology course, though, this is a cheaper and more accessible format. The issues and terms covered, of course, show the preferences of the author, but the range of entries is wide enough to provide a strong starting point for many theological discussions.

### **Integrative Preaching: A Comprehensive Model for Transformational Proclamation**

Kenton C. Anderson

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2017, 208 pp., paper, \$23.00

ISBN: 978-0-8010-9887-1

*Reviewed by Michael Whitcomb-Tavey*

Ever since the inception of the Church, the word of God has been preached. Depending on the culture and generation, there have been books written with the sole purpose of giving guidance toward how one ought to preach. In modern times, there have been quite a number of books written that address this topic. *Integrative Preaching: A Comprehensive Model for Transformational Proclamation*, by Kenton C. Anderson, is one of those books. However, whereas other books focus more on the mechanics of preaching, Anderson focuses more on the philosophy of preaching, teaching various aspects of it. Afterward, he gives instruction on how to

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integrate these aspects into a practical model for preaching. Thus, as the name implies, his book is more a model for preaching, than a mechanical guide for it. His book is separated into four sections, with each section having four segments.

The first section addresses the *fundamental elements* of his model. These elements are the essential foundations for preaching. The first foundation of preaching is an integrative one, whereby much of the concepts of the Bible are cohesively understood. Therefore, as we preach from the word of God, we are reminded to think in a “both-and” fashion when exploring certain Biblical ideas and concepts. The second foundation is a human one, whereby preaching engages both the head and heart of a person. The third foundation is a heavenly one, whereby preaching primarily should point one toward God, specifically Jesus Christ. The final foundation is effective, whereby one incorporates certain *functional elements* of preaching, thereby giving the sermon its force and power.

The second section elucidates these functional elements. This section addresses engagement, instruction, conviction, and inspiration. Anderson postulates that a sermon ought to engage the congregation in a meaningful way. He advocates story telling as an effective means to do so. Secondly, he states that a sermon ought to instruct the congregation. Such instruction is intended to teach the congregation Biblical truth. This is connected to the third functional element. According to Anderson, all Biblical truth ought to lead to Christ, which is understood as conviction. Thus, preaching ought to both teach the congregation of Biblical truth, whilst also convicting them toward the person of Truth: Jesus Christ. Finally, a sermon ought to inspire the congregation toward Christian living, in all its vast nuances and understanding. Such living is not imprisoned in mere behavior, but toward an orientation toward kingdom living and the emulation of Christ.

The third section of his book addresses how one understands “preacher” as it relates to preaching. The first segment addresses the preacher as pastor. As a pastor, the preacher engages the congregation in both word and life. Secondly, the preacher is a theologian, with the sole task of teaching the congregation. Thirdly, the preacher is a worshipper, who along with the congregation, convicts him/herself toward Christ. Lastly, the preacher is a prophet, given the responsibility of inspiring the congregation toward Holy living. As can be observed, there is a strong connection between sections two and three. Section three builds upon section two,

explaining how the functional elements of preaching personally relate to the preacher him/herself.

The last section addresses the actual method of preaching. This section takes all the previous instruction and seeks to create an effective model for preaching. The first segment addresses prayer and exegesis as the proper way of discovering the content of the preaching. Secondly, Anderson postulates that one needs to craft the sermon, which is based on the exegesis. This is typically done by writing the sermon out. Third, the preacher is encouraged to apply the sermon into his/her own life, and to also practice it before actually preaching it to a congregation. In this way, the preacher embodies that which he/she seeks to preach. Finally, Anderson addresses how to enhance the sermon through various techniques, like dress and prop use.

Anderson's book will provide teachers, students, pastors, non-pastors, and others with an acute understanding of the Biblical philosophy of preaching. This is especially helpful to the pastor and preacher, who will primarily benefit from this book as they continue to improve upon their preaching skills and habits. His integrative model is an insightful and informative one, and will be a great boon for anyone seeking to preach in a more effective manner.

### **Preaching by the Book: Developing and Delivering Text-Driven Sermons**

R. Scott Pace

Nashville, TN: B&H Academic

2018, 144 pp., paper, \$19.99

ISBN: 978-1-4627-7334-3

*Reviewed by Scott Donahue-Martens*

*Preaching by the Book* is an introduction to a textual method of preaching. While preaching involves human and divine elements, Pace situates the task of preaching with God's Word. He notes that the preacher's approach and relationship to scripture greatly impact preaching. Pace describes the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God that provides the content, form, and rationale for preaching. Scripture is the revelation of God's redemptive work in the world in which preaching can participate. In delineating between human and divine elements of

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preaching, this work serves as a careful reminder of the limitations of the human preacher. At the same time, the Spirit works with preachers enabling preaching to be more than what would otherwise be humanly possible.

Given Pace's theological beliefs and commitments to scripture, it is natural to see why the textual approach to preaching is essential for him. The hermeneutical method suggested seeks to be receptive to the unchanging divine truth of the text. This attempts to uncover the authorial intent and how the original audiences would have interpreted the text. Pace provides seven steps to help preachers interpret scripture and craft textual sermons. Sermon formation must begin with prayer before moving to the chosen passage. These first two steps, along with the other five, intentionally put the preacher in a place of reception to the Spirit and the text. The third step is to determine the point of the selected passage. Pace offers guidance on how this is done and what needs to happen once the point is uncovered. In step four preachers seek to understand the form and context of the passage by studying its parts. This is helpful for the next step, discerning the precepts of the passage by identifying theological, doctrinal, and spiritual truths. The final two steps, applying the principles and developing the plan, consider how to preach the text in the context effectively. Ultimately, the sermon culminates with an application from the text that leads people to action. After explaining the method, Pace offers guidance on sermon introductions, illustrations, and invitations. These practical sections compliment the wealth of wisdom provided earlier.

One of the most helpful elements of this work is its discussion on a theology of preaching. The integrative method allows the reader to see how theological beliefs shape what a person preaches and how they preach. However, Pace's assertion that preaching needs to uncover an unchanging divine point, linked with authorial intent, can be tenuous hermeneutically. Besides historical limitations, the issue of what constitutes a text is problematic. For example, the process of choosing a text, and which verses are considered to be that text as distinct from other texts, is subjective. While Pace accounts for human and divine elements in preaching, his method fails to recognize how the subjectivity of the preacher shapes preaching.

For those with a high view of scripture looking for an introduction to textually based preaching, this work provides a coherent text to sermon method. I would recommend this work for an undergraduate preaching course or for new preachers, who have not been exposed to textual preaching methods. Preachers with different beliefs about scripture may

find the theological and hermeneutical approaches challenging. Overall, Pace offers a concise introduction to textual preaching that places preaching in God's redemptive work.



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