

very good, the videos consist of short presentations by Rae, which are rather dry and could stand to be improved with images and other visual content. Another shortcoming of the DVD lectures is that they sometimes refer to chapter and page numbers that match older editions of the text, which can be confusing.

I recently adopted *Moral Choices* for a Christian Ethics course, and, so far, I am glad I did. I got a sense that students *did* read the book (in contrast to other textbooks I had used in the past). While Lutheran instructors will find the need to explain some textbook content in light of confessional teaching and make some tweaks to the PowerPoint slides, much of the content can be used as is. Scott Rae is an unabashed advocate for the dignity of the human person from conception until temporal death. He does not apologize for applying normative biblical principles. The textbook is most suitable for a university setting, but it could also be used in upper-level high school courses and even for an in-depth Bible class series about Christian ethics. Rae presents biblical ethical principles in a straightforward way so that instructors with a minimal amount of theological and/or philosophical training can teach ethics competently.

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Prior, Karen Swallow. *On Reading Well: Finding the Good Life through Great Books*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2018. Hardcover. 267 pages. \$19.99.

Literature is a powerful medium for communicating moral and spiritual truths. The subtitle of this book points to a Christian understanding of “the Good” by means of Christian virtues. In twelve chapters, Prior, an acclaimed author and prolific English professor at Liberty University, illustrates and illuminates the four cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, justice, and courage), the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity/love), and the five heavenly virtues (chastity, diligence, patience, kindness, and humility) using, as she states, “works of enduring quality, notable for their form as well as their content” (10). She asserts in her introduction, “Reading literature, more than informing us, forms us” (22).

According to Prior, “reading well is, in itself, an act of virtue, or excellence, and it is also a habit that cultivates more virtue in return.... Reading virtuously means, first, reading closely, being faithful to both text and context, interpreting accurately and insightfully. Indeed, there is something in the very form of reading—the shape of the action itself—that tends toward virtue” (15). Her advice is simple, yet remarkably profound: “Read books you enjoy, develop your ability to enjoy challenging reading, read deeply and

slowly, and increase your enjoyment of a book by writing words of your own in it” (18). With such guiding principles, she explores the characters (flawed and/or faultless) in twelve stories by Henry Fielding, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Shusaku Endo, Cormac McCarthy, Leo Tolstoy, Edith Wharton, John Bunyan, Jane Austen, George Sanders, and Flannery O’Connor, offering insights and observations on a specific virtue as well as etymological facts, quotations from classical authors, and refreshingly personal reflections.

No one chapter stands out, since they are all well-constructed and, indeed, worthy of comment. For this review, I will allow Prior to draw you in to her magnificent manuscript as she extols the three theological virtues. Using Shusaku Endo’s, *Silence*, as her foil, Prior writes: “To read about an experience of faith as it falters is an opportunity to seek resolution not in the work of fiction but in the work of our own faith” (108). Citing Luther about faith being a gift, she concludes: “We can grow in faith only when we recognize that our faith is imperfect. Our faith is perfected only in Christ, not in ourselves or our understanding” (119). In defining hope, Prior says, “The four conditions of hope are that it regards something *good* in the *future* that is *difficult* but *possible* to obtain” (121). Regarding the virtue of charity/love, she asserts, “How we die will depend on how we live and how we love, as *The Death of Ivan Ilych* helps us see. Its vision of charity—love given and received—is the image of the servant who, by tending the feet of others, bears their suffering” (156). Each chapter has nuggets of insights and provides many opportunities for biblical and sermonic illustrations.

This book is wonderfully written and intentionally beneficial. As a gifted writer herself, Prior engages the reader as she brings in a depth of well-researched background information. My only frustration was with the subtitle, which led me to assume that Prior would be utilizing one of lists of the “Great Books” tradition (between Mortimer Adler’s 500 and Harold Brown’s 2,000). In fact, she only included a few (*Huckleberry Finn*, *The Great Gatsby*, and author Jane Austen). While not quite what I expected, the selections provided a wealth of illustrations of contemporary significance, worthy of being read again and again, which dealt with great ideas and issues (three criteria for a great book as proposed by Mortimer Adler).

Judicious reading is a joyous experience, especially with a guide such as Kathy Prior. From a Christian perspective, Prior does not force theology into her work, but draws theological insights from the texts themselves as noted above. This work has much to offer, especially for readers who desire to see value in fiction as avenues for growing spiritually. Each chapter is self-contained, yet the overall read is uplifting and even at times devotional. This is the kind of book that encourages reading good literature which also has real value for the Christian’s daily duties and delights. Students of theology will be amazed at and benefit from the approach Prior takes in reading “secular” literature. Pastors who love reading and preaching will find a

wealth of ideas for homiletic illustrations, too. It's time to take up one of those books, now, and read well.

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McKnight, Scot. *It Takes a Church to Baptize: What the Bible Says About Infant Baptism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2018. 128 pages. \$16.99 paperback.

Addressing the perennial topic of infant baptism (in the last decade or so, several books have addressed the subject), Scot McKnight, professor of New Testament at Northern Baptist Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, brings a unique perspective on the issue. Raised in the Anabaptist tradition, he “converted” to Anglicanism and was ordained as a priest in the Anglican Communion in 2014. He is a popular speaker, blogger, and writer, employing a very comfortable writing style on this important theological issue.

Noting his own “conversion,” Bishop Todd D. Hunter’s *Foreword* sets the tone for this short, very readable book. Hunter was also evangelically trained and questioned (even disavowed) baptism as regenerative (baptized as a Methodist, he was rebaptized as a leader of the Vineyard Movement). His conclusion, after studying the subject more carefully, is that infant baptism is theologically, biblically, historically, and personally the most credible position a committed Christian can take (xi). The endorses McKnight’s book, which McKnight admits is designed “for those who are considering infant baptism in the Anglican Communion” (15).

Giving a brief introductory *Preface*, McKnight launches into his presentation with his chapter: “Our Baptism: First Six Words.” The key words are family, Bible, gospel, conversion, debate, and heritage. Here Lutheran readers will already pause, since we would most likely look at Jesus’ invitation (John 3 and Matthew 28) as well as His promises. Regarding family, he states: “infant baptism is the deepest, wisest, and most historic Christian way of forming our children into the faith” (3) Admitting that “there is no text in the New Testament that explicitly reveals the *practice* of infant baptism in the apostolic church” (4), he does affirm that implicitly “a *theology* for infant baptism is to be found” (5) there (citing Acts 2:38 [although he misses v. 39]; Galatians 3:27; and 1 Peter 3:21).

Leaning heavily on these six words, McKnight delves into the Anglican context of baptism. Following the Anglican baptismal liturgy from the *Book of Common Prayer*, McKnight shows its biblical connections. He emphasizes the family context for baptism and its covenantal significance. Although this approach is not completely convincing, he does make some interesting points about our contemporary American individualism as well as a helpful analogy to citizenship: “one’s citizenship was established at birth by an act of