

Spring books: Reviews

Books in the [April 30, 2014](#) issue



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Our spring books issue includes the following reviews:

[Greg Carey](#) on *Coming Out Christian in a Roman World*, by Douglas Boin: The "Fall of Rome...is not a historical event; it's more akin to a theological idea." So proclaims Boin, sacking the understanding of early Christian identity that has prevailed since at least the second century.

[Amy Frykholm](#) on *God Help the Child*, by Toni Morrison: In her 11th novel Morrison returns to the foundation of most of her fiction: childhood and its traumatic effects

[Philip Jenkins](#) on *"They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else,"* by Ronald Grigor Suny: Study of the Armenian genocide has attracted many fine scholars, but Suny's book stands out.

[Katherine Willis Pershey](#) on *Wearing God*, by Lauren Winner: I read Winner's new book with the sort of joy one feels when watching someone utterly hit their stride.

[Jason Byassee](#) on *Reading Backwards*, by Richard B. Hays: Hays has said for years that he's working on something about "echoes of scripture in the Gospels." But life

intervened, so he has produced this slim volume as an appetizer.

[James Howell](#) on *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, by J. Richard Middleton: These days, we need a strong current of theological explication of Christian eschatology. Middleton has stepped forward—and his book doesn't even mention zombies.

[Robert Westbrook](#) on *The Age of Acquiescence*, by Steve Fraser: Why was the first Gilded Age a time of sometimes violent resistance, while ours is an age of acquiescence? Fraser's answer is twofold: capitalism has changed, and so has the social imaginary that enfolds it.

[Heidi Haverkamp](#) on *Change of Heart*, by Jeanne Bishop: When Bishop learned of her sister's murder, she found herself saying aloud, "I don't want to hate anybody."

[Timothy Renick](#) on *Caught*, by Marie Gottschalk: Gottschalk describes an American penal system that has all but abandoned any real attempt to rehabilitate its inmates.

[LaVonne Neff](#) on *A Spool of Blue Thread*, by Anne Tyler: Tyler's 20th novel is, like her previous 19, about a mildly dysfunctional Baltimore family of loyal yet infuriating people who love one another, but not always helpfully.

[Edward J. Blum](#) on *Gateway to Freedom*, by Eric Foner: Foner resurrects the history of the Underground Railroad, its powerful place in New York City, and how it helped Harriet Beecher Stowe and others bring about the war that ended slavery.

[Valerie Weaver-Zercher](#) on *Vainglory*, by Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung: If vainglory is about stealing glory from God, it is unintelligible outside the house of faith. This may explain why DeYoung's book flows against the current of attempts to reclaim narcissism and pride.