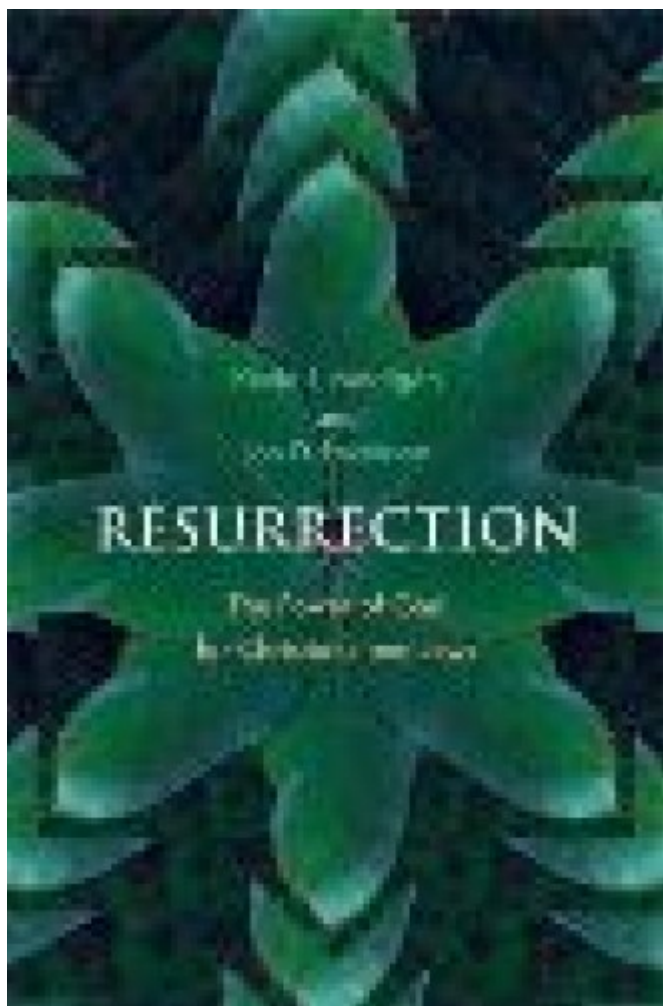


# The Century recommends

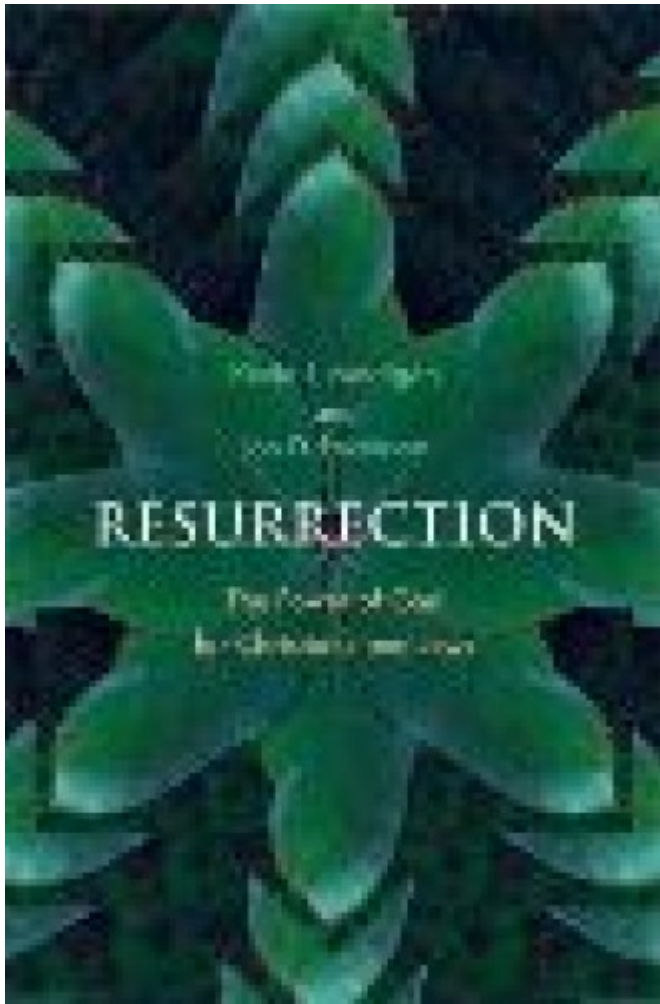
Books in the [December 16, 2008](#) issue

## In Review



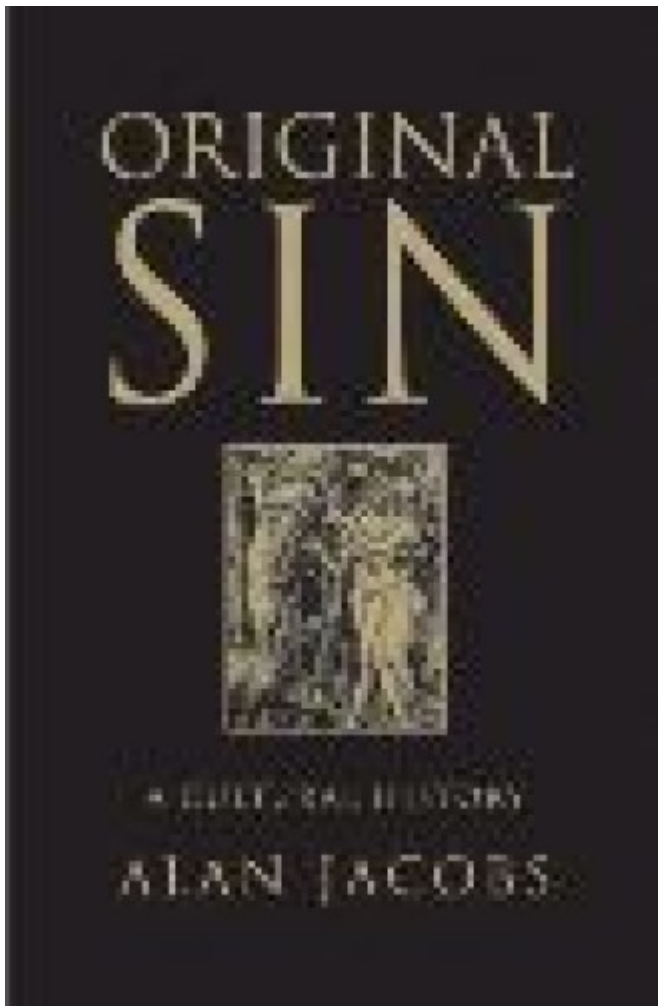
## **Resurrection: The power of God for Christians and Jews**

Kevin Madigan and Jon D. Levenson  
Yale University Press



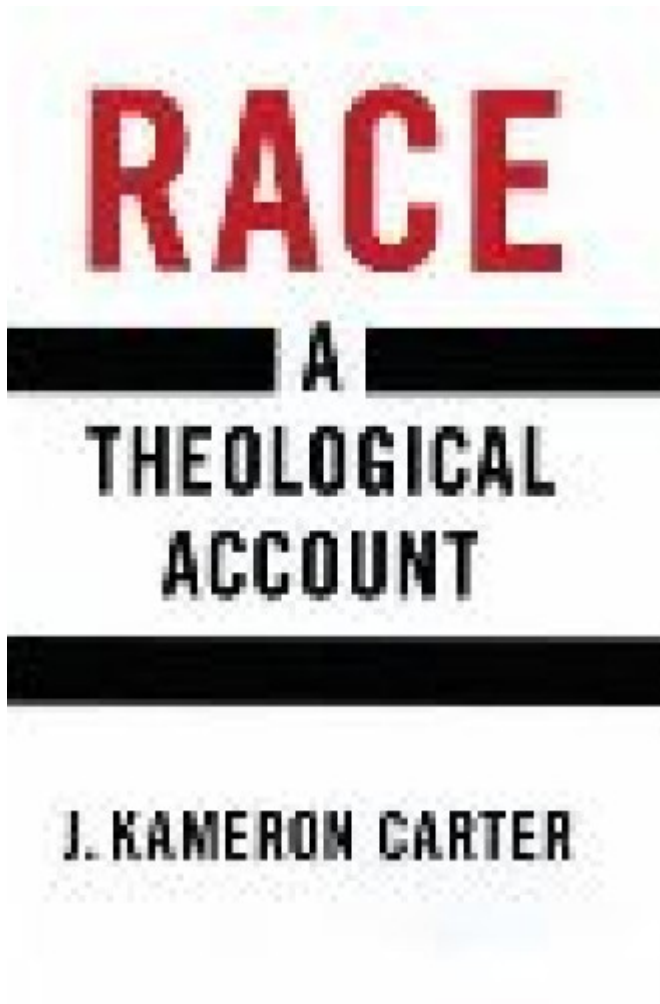
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**Original Sin: A Cultural History**

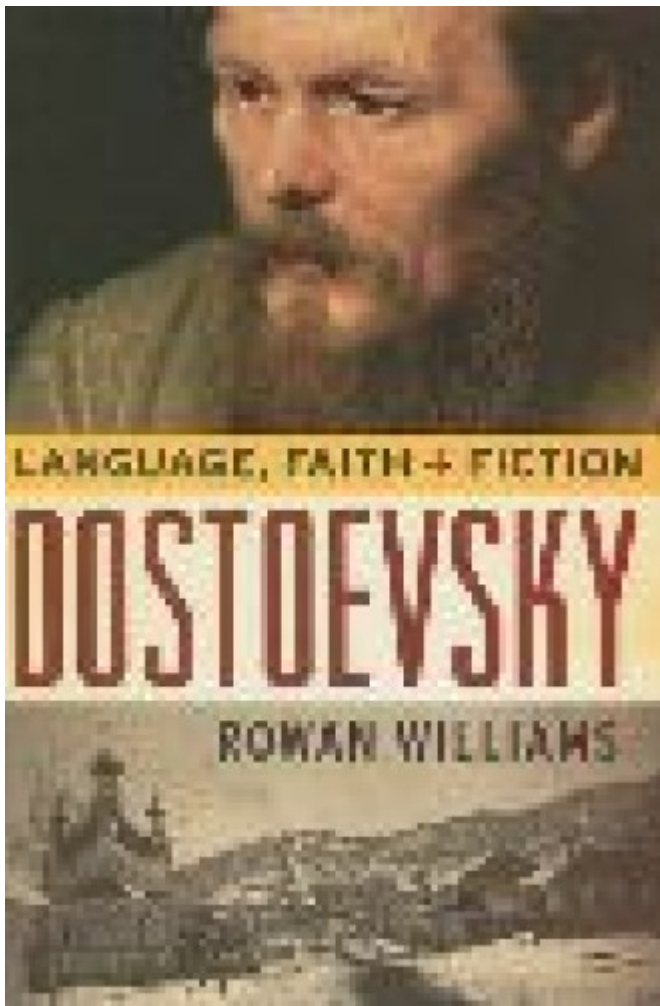
Alan Jacobs  
HarperOne



**Race: A Theological Account**

J. Kameron Carter

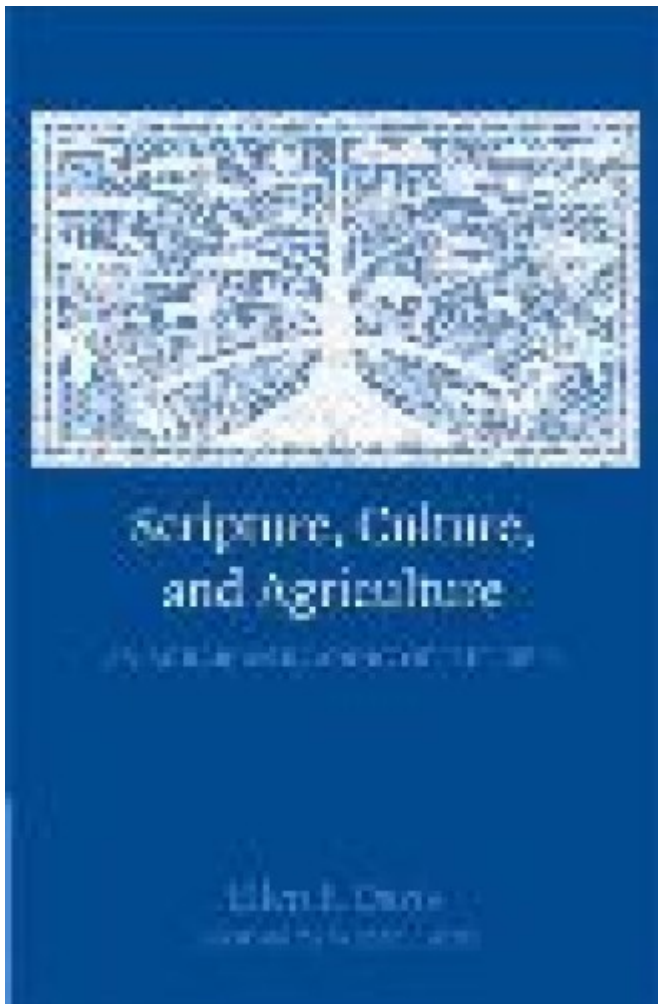
Oxford University Press



## **Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction**

Rowan Williams

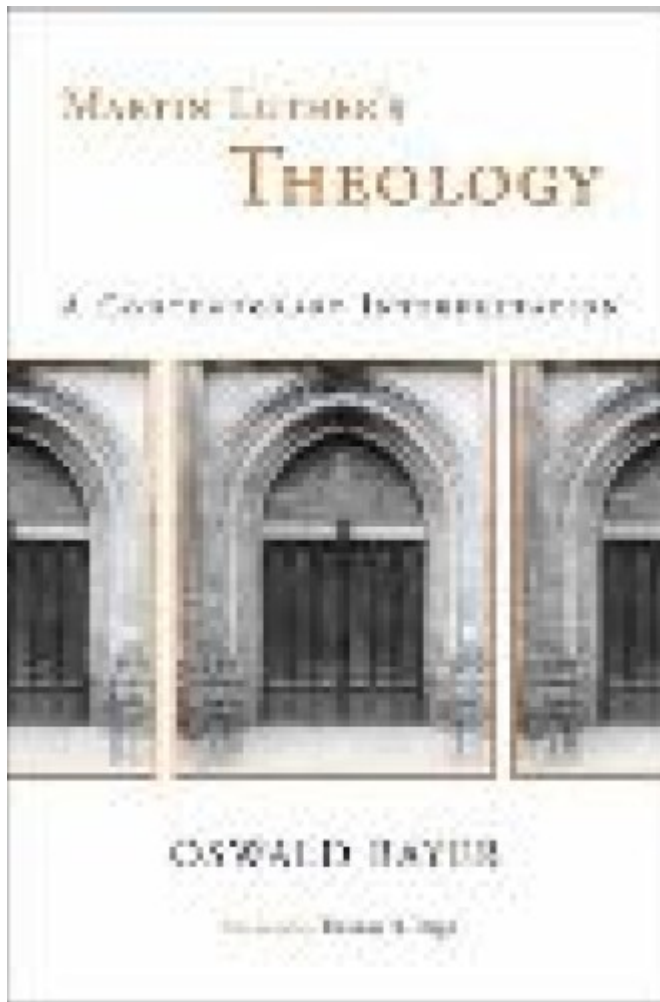
Baylor University Press



## **Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible**

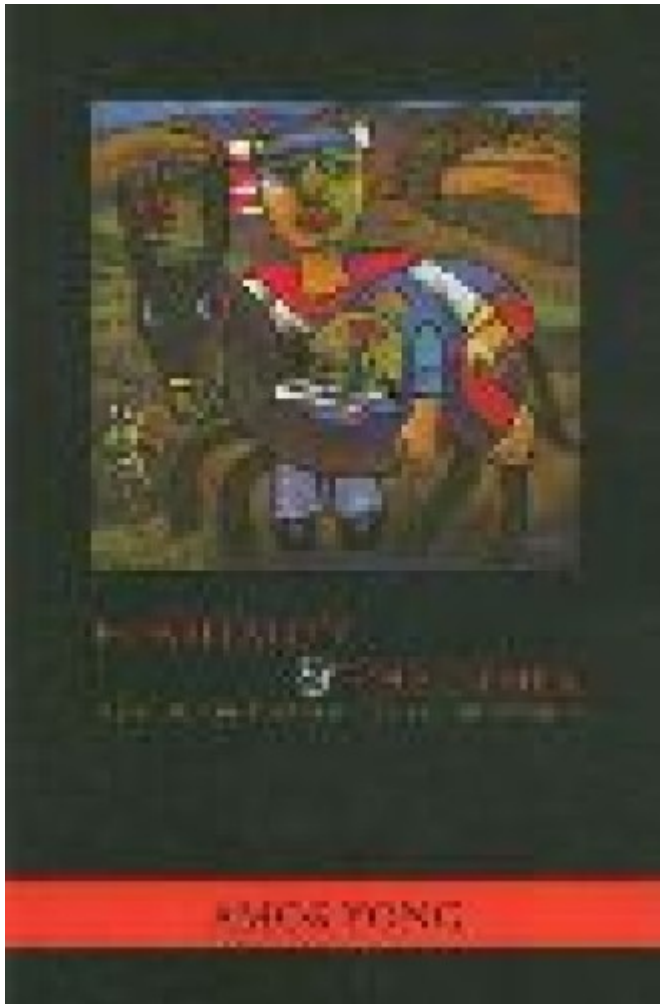
Ellen F. Davis

Cambridge University Press



## **Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation**

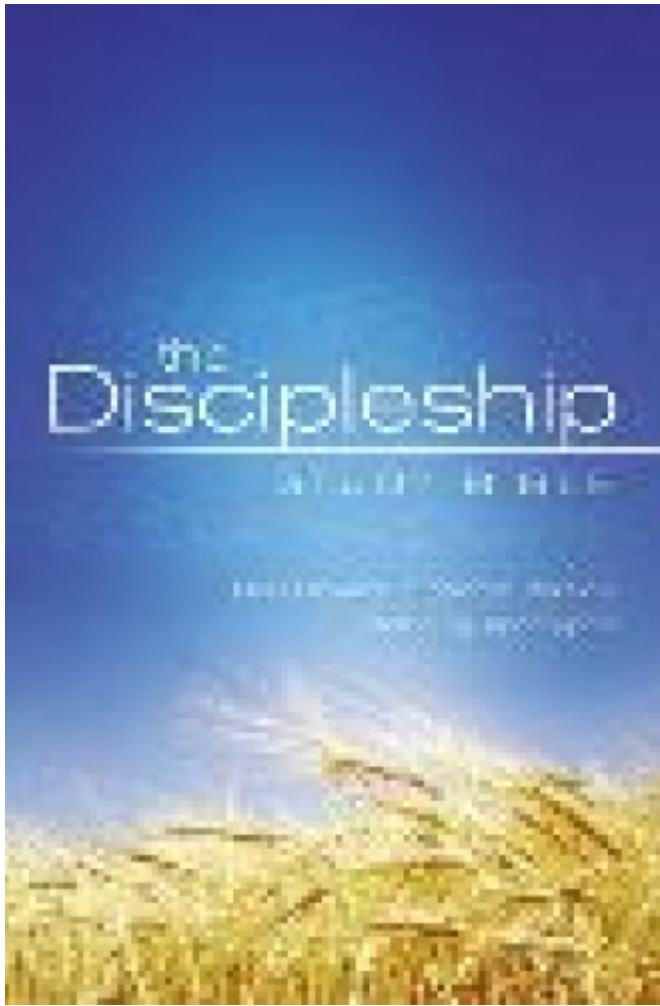
Oswald Bayer  
Eerdmans



## **Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor**

Amos Yong  
Orbis

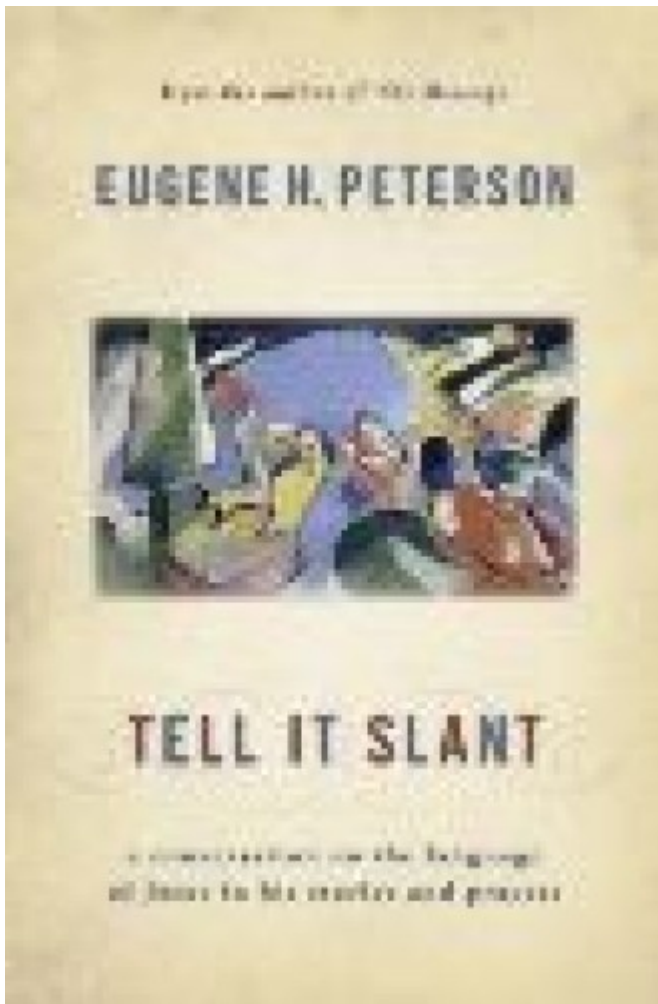




## **The Discipleship Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version Including Apocrypha**

Bruce C. Birch, Brian K. Blount, Thomas G. Long, Gail R. O'Day and W. Sibley Towner,  
eds.

Westminster John Knox



## **Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers**

Eugene H. Peterson  
Eerdmans

### **Theology and Bible**

Levenson is a seasoned interpreter of the Hebrew scriptures, and Kevin Madigan is a specialist in medieval texts. This book builds on Levenson's *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* and moves into a conversation with Christianity. The authors expound on what some consider a provocative claim—that Judaism and Christianity share a common faith in the resurrection, which is the power of God over both death and injustice.

One wouldn't expect a book about original sin to be entertaining, but Jacobs, professor of English at Wheaton College, makes it so with deft prose and a touch of humor. Augustine, the devil and Rousseau make important appearances in this history. Jacobs contends that our concept of human nature matters in how we view politics, education and the economy.

Carter, a professor at Duke Divinity School, argues that Christians formed their identity early on by racializing the Jews and turning them into Semites, and that the practice of locating racially marked others has been central to Christian theology. Carter's work is not only deconstructive, however. He aims to find a "new theological imagination for the 21st century," which for Christians involves a recovery of Jewish roots. Carter also finds sources for an alternative logic in Gregory of Nyssa and in antebellum slave narratives that understand whiteness as a theological, not merely a cultural or a racial, construction.

Blending theology and literary criticism, Williams rebuts those who view Dostoevsky as one of the first "death of God" theologians or as a rigidly conservative proponent of Orthodoxy. Dostoevsky's primary question was not Does God exist? but, If God exists, what are the consequences? What do we owe to one another? Williams is interested in how contradictory ideas can be held in one framework, one story and one person—and perhaps in one church.

The biblical writers were familiar with disputes over land use and land care, and the economics of food production were critical to their perspective. Reading the Bible from this perspective opens up dialogue with contemporary agrarians like Wendell Berry, who wrote the foreword for this book. However far from the land we may live, issues of stewardship, care and justice remain crucial. Davis argues that the Bible provides "vision and principle" for land use in our time.

This volume, which appeared in German in 2003, is as comprehensive as one would expect from a German theologian, but also impressively concise. On topic after topic Bayer, a retired professor at Tübingen, discerns the heart of Luther's faith in the promises of Christ—promises that come from outside ourselves and yet come from One who is "with us in the muck and in the work that makes his skin steam."

This book is proof of a new theological configuration: it is written by a Pentecostal theologian who teaches at Regent University (headed by Pat Robertson), and it is published by a Catholic press known for its books on liberation theology. Yong takes

exception to the usual options—exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist—for Christian approaches to other religions. He maps out what he calls a pneumatological theology of hospitality which recognizes that “people of all faiths are aliens and strangers but also neighbors one to another.”

Besides offering the usual features of a study Bible—introductions to each biblical book, running footnotes, maps, a chronology and a concordance—this volume aims to “help readers recognize that Christian faith makes claims upon every aspect of our lives.” The notes aim to “invite the reader to see, in the biblical witness, God’s invitation to live faithfully and redemptively in the world.”

Peterson, a master with language himself, looks at Jesus’ use of language, which was often metaphorical and indirect, and invited listeners to use their imagination. In the first part Peterson explores Jesus’ words used in everyday contexts, and in the second he looks at the language of Jesus’ prayers. Preachers especially will find themselves returning to Peterson’s imaginative expositions of Jesus’ words and encounters.

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