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Places along the Way: Meditations on the Journey of Faith

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Places Along the Way: Meditations on the Journey of Faith

Martin Marty and Micah Marty

Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1994

\$15.00 paper

As a lay person, who has, as recently as the Spring of 1994, visited the Holy Land, I find this book of particular interest.

Martin Marty, historian, and Micah Marty, his photographer son, have produced a book that is appealing in both narrative and picture, as well as inspiring and easy to read.

I found it particularly rewarding in that it allowed me to undertake my own spiritual journey, in Christ's name, with the Bible providing the plot, by referring to the landmark places along the way. The photographs offer a clear image of the places visited, and allow for one's personal reflection, interpretation, and meditation.

Each "Place along the Way" presents a Scripture reading, a meditation, an illustrative photograph, along with an appropriate, accompanying prayer. Each Biblical event or place is discussed and related to today's temptations and problems, thus linking us to our Biblical ancestors. The narratives put forth a strong message which cannot be ignored, and offer reassurance and comfort by making us aware that, e.g.

- (1) God is always present to lead and guide us.
- (2) The problems with which we wrestle can be overcome by the blessing of God.
- (3) All things happen according to the will, word, and love of God.
- (4) God provides a cure for our misplaced priorities, and so, the contents give us a guideline for living in our troubled world.

By reading this book, I was able to vividly recall and appreciate more fully the places I had been privileged to visit. It has made me more aware that one can see God working to guide us through our disappointments and problems, and that nothing need divert us from our march of faith. I found an enrichment to my faith, and my memories, and would suggest:

- (1) Anyone planning a trip to the Holy Land using it as part of his/her daily devotions.
- (2) I think it could be a useful aid when conducting family devotions, and could see possibilities in using the book as a "stepping-off" point for Bible Studies with a variety of groups such as Evangelical Lutheran Women or Seniors' clubs.
- (3) Shut-ins, or the hospitalized, might appreciate receiving the book as a gift, or having it read to them by a visitor, friend, or family member.

In any event, I feel strongly that *whoever* reads "Places Along the Way", they will most certainly be enriched by travelling on this spiritual journey of faith.

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The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction

Eugene H. Peterson
Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993
171pp.

"One of the things I fear most as your pastor is that out of fatigue or sloth I end up going through the motions, substituting professional smoothness for personal grappling with the life of the Spirit in our life together" (p. 145). So writes the author of this wonderful little book that speaks to the heart of every bona fide pastor. The author, a seasoned pastor himself, continues, "The demands of pastoral life are strenuous, and there is no respite from them. There are not many hours in the day when I am not faced with the struggle of faith in someone or another, the deep, central, eternal energies that make the difference between a life lived to the glory of God (sounds like Luther, doesn't it?) and a life wasted in self-indulgence or trivialized in diversions. I want to be ready for those encounters" (p. 146).

If you feel you are not as ready for "those encounters" as you would like to be, then this book may help you and me rediscover the sinew of pastoral work and what it really is all about.

Again, permit me, the reviewer, to let the author Eugene Peterson, a parish pastor of twenty-nine years and now a resident in Regent College, Vancouver, speak from his own experience. He writes, "I have been a pastor for thirty years to American Christians who do their best to fireproof themselves against crises and urgency. Is there any way that I can live with those people and love them without being shaped by the golden-calf culture? How can I keep from settling into the salary and benefits of a checkout clerk in a store for religious consumers? How can I avoid a metamorphosis from the holy vocation (another good Lutheran word that has fallen into unknown disuse and abuse among us, as Lutherans) of pastor into a promising career in religious sales?"

Have I, the reviewer, hooked you, the reader of this review, with these quotes? I hope so! This is not a "how to do it book". This book, written by a pastor, deals with the interior life of the pastor. By reflecting on his own