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The Spoken Word

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preaching of other denominations. So here is a chance for me, a Lutheran, to discover the "saints" of the Salvation Army. William Booth and John Wesley I recognize; but who are (were) R. Brimsmead, John Hyde, Harry Ironside, Vance Havner, Sidlow Baxter?

Third, and this is definitely an editorial failing, the language of the book is totally masculine. Well, "humanhood" is used once (68). I believe all responsible publishers have established inclusive language policies some time ago, and after the "Montreal Massacre" the implementation of such a policy is no longer a matter of choice. It is also a considerable disappointment to see a Commissioner of the Salvation Army seemingly oblivious to this issue, when women, from Catherine Booth on, have played so major a role in the Army's work. Yet, except for a couple of instances which tell of women being called to ministry, women appear here only as cooks and housekeepers, and are totally excluded by the language.

In addition, there is one very distressing perpetuation of a hurtful and unfair negative stereotype. "Consider," Read writes, "the intensity of the struggle David Brainerd faced in his efforts to evangelize the North American Indian—a people utterly benighted and bound by superstition" (92). It is true that Brainerd and other early missionaries thought of the Native people in this way, but there is enough literature around today describing the vibrant and sophisticated traditional spirituality of our aboriginal peoples that anyone describing them so is simply ignorant and insulting.

And the quibble, which is also an editorial failing, namely, the irritating lack of consistency in arrangement, style, and numbering of headings and sub-headings. Not a fatal flaw; just irritating.

I hope that this volume, as well as the other volumes, will have a large and ecumenical readership; discovering the preaching of our neighbors can have significant educational, devotional, and reconciling effects.

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The Spoken Word

Sheldon Tostengard

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989

Fortress Resources for Preaching, 109 pp.

Tostengard, Professor of Pastoral Theology, Ministry, and Homiletics at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, is concerned about the severe devaluation of the spoken word in our society. Words have become containers of truth, not truth itself. This crisis in language poses a dilemma for the church's preaching, worship, and witness—the oral tasks of an oral community. After describing the problem (ch. 1)

and tracing the roots and progress of the depreciation of speech to the point where "talk is cheap" (ch. 2), Tostengard presents the theological, biblical, and interpretive resources the church has (ch. 3), and therewith illumines the acts of worship and preaching (ch. 4). Tostengard has the ability to sum up large movements and periods concisely (e.g., a history of language development and usage in ch. 2; the law and gospel dialectic in ch. 4) and to say things simply but forcefully. Of special interest to the lay person is the story of the depreciation of language and the theological valuation of language (e.g., the prophetic utterance "was God acting in history", i.e., speech is act). Worshippers and worship leaders will appreciate the discussions of prayer, silence, and sacraments. Preachers will be drawn to the discussion of textual interpretation (the text is a living oral word and a communication event, and therefore the old diad "what it meant" and "what it means" is a deadly reduction of the text to an "it") and sermon structures and the dialectic dynamic of law and gospel.

Having moved from an oral culture through the print culture into an electronic culture, it may be that the simultaneity and immediacy of media communication are helping us recover something of the power of speech again. However that may be, our God is the God who speaks, and whose Word is an incarnate Word: the speech of God is authentic and true human speech.

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Stepping Stones of the Steward

Ronald E. Vallet

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989

185 pp.

In the midst of declining memberships and shrinking financial offerings, there are many in the Christian Church who think of "stewardship" as the program for raising money or the means to increased voluntarism through the annual every member visit. Ronald Vallet, who is currently Executive Director of the Commission on Stewardship of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.—a position he has held for a number of years—was raised in a church tradition in which he was taught that "tithing was a requirement". Needless to say, this legalistic perspective and approach has had an impact on the author. "During my teen years, I learned the word 'stewardship' and was taught that God wanted not only 10% of my income, but also the giving of my time and talent. This was presented as a requirement as well" (1).