

ACADEMIC ALERT

VOL. 11, NO. 1

IVP's Book Bulletin for Professors

WINTER 2002

INSIDE

Wheaton Theology Conference

The 2002 conference is almost upon us; here's what's in store3

New & Noteworthy

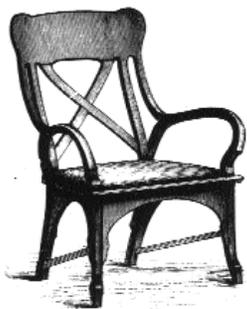
A new book from John Stott and a new addition to the Bible Speaks Today commentary series4

"What's it got in its pocketses?"

Introducing two new volumes from IVP's diminutive new Department of Pocket Dictionaries 5

New Books on Islam

We've moved these several books up in the production schedule in hope of providing some timely and relevant resources 6



VINDICATING THE INTEGRITY OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

Dan Reid recently had the opportunity to ask Craig Blomberg a few questions about his new book *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*.

REID: How would you summarize the current state of scholarly opinion when it comes to the historical reliability of John's Gospel?

BLOMBERG: There are two conflicting trends. On the one hand, the Jesus Seminar—which has gained so much recent press despite representing only the most liberal fringe of scholarship—discounts John almost entirely for use in reconstructing the historical Jesus. In England, Maurice Casey's 1996 book *Is John's Gospel True?* is scathing in its denunciation of the "sub-Christian nature" of John. On the other hand, the "silent majority" of scholars—including a considerable number of non-evangelicals,—continues to amass more and more evidence for its historical reliability, even if few go as far as I have in presenting the case in this much detail.

REID: Did you encounter any surprises along your

research trail? For instance, was the case for historicity better or more difficult or in any way different from what you had supposed at the beginning?

BLOMBERG: I didn't expect to find as much support as I did. There were an enormous number of articles and chapters in books tucked away in comparatively obscure sources that gave me much more evidence to consider than I imagined would already exist. Also, when I began to think through Tom Wright's double similarity and dissimilarity criterion—which is pretty new and untested outside the Synoptic tradition—it struck me that it had repeated application to John, and I might actually be able to say some new things, not just catalog what others had already done.

REID: You have taken a commentary approach for much of your book. What led you to adopt this format rather than a strictly topical approach? What are the advantages?

■ continued on page 2

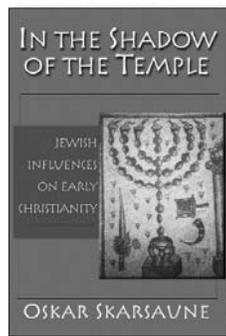


Craig L. Blomberg

A New Take on NT Backgrounds

One of the things that keeps editors intrigued with publishing is the surfacing of manuscripts that promise to change the way we view important issues. A couple of years ago Oskar Skarsaune, professor of church history at Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology in Oslo, Norway, sent us one of those. As IVP editor Dan Reid read the manuscript, he was increasingly impressed and excited by what he found. *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* is a book not to be missed by students and teachers of the New Testament, Christian origins and early church history (see the endorsements on page 3). We hope the following interview with the author will give you a few hints why.

REID: Some may assume that *In the Shadow of the Temple* is just one more book on the Jewish background of



Christianity. But you have a new perspective to offer. How would you summarize the thesis of your book?

SKARSAUNE: It is commonly assumed that Christianity originated in a Jewish setting, but that "the parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity occurred very early. And [it is also assumed] that, let's say, from the beginning of the second century, there was no more fruitful interaction between the two. Like some other scholars recently, I challenge that picture. I think the interaction continued all through the pre-Constantinian period and even beyond.

REID: What do you think is the strongest evidence against this notion of an early parting of the ways?

SKARSAUNE: There are traces of live interaction between church fathers and Jews not only in the dialogue-type of writings, but also in part of the non-polemical exegetical writings of the fathers—in Origen, for example, in the middle of the third century. With this point of view, I now find myself in good company. A colloquium at Princeton in January 2002 has the overarching theme "The Ways that Never Parted." There may now even be a

■ continued on page 3

John's Gospel: continued from page 1 ■

BLOMBERG: The introduction comprises about one-quarter of the whole book and is entirely topically arranged. Most previous works trying to defend historicity in John have been entirely topical in approach and my sense in reading them has always been, "Yes that's good, they make some telling points on the particular topics they've chosen, but what about this or that specific text that they didn't address?" Putting it another way, if there's something in virtually every passage in John that the Jesus Seminar thinks disqualifies it from

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THEMATICALLY HERE.

being historical, then any completely credible case for historicity—on whatever scale—sooner or later had better tackle just about every passage in the Gospel.

REID: How reliable does a Gospel need to be to serve as inspired Scripture? That's not a question for us to answer, I guess. But can't we cut the Evangelists some slack as interpreters of Jesus, perhaps allowing the notion that they composed or embellished an episode in order to drive to the heart of who Jesus was?

BLOMBERG: Narrative material can be entirely fictitious and still be inspired, as all of Jesus' parables demonstrate. Theoretically, the Bible could have included an entire book that was written in the genre we call historical fiction in order to communicate theological truths, though I don't believe this actually happened with any of our Scriptures. But when it comes to the historical Jesus, given the unique claims of Christianity as based on the life, death and resurrection of this man at a certain point in human history, certainly the major contours of the Gospels' portraits need to be historical if Christianity's claims are to stand. Could a Gospel satisfy these requirements but also contain minor fictitious embellishments and still function as an authority for believers in matters of doctrine and morals? Yes, I believe it could, though then we would be speaking of a "looser" kind of inspiration than the church has historically defended, and again, I don't think that's what does actually happen in John. But my book really isn't about those matters; it's simply looking at the Gospel of John as we have it, assessing the historicity via the various

standard criteria and observing what a surprisingly positive case does emerge.

REID: Focusing in on a specific point, you essentially argue that the temple event that we find in John 2 may or may not be identical with the temple event we find at the end of Jesus' ministry in the Synoptics. The evidence is not as clear as we would like, and it is possible that such an event took place earlier in Jesus' ministry, just as John's order has it.

But if John did actually "move" the event from back to front, so to speak, would that undercut the case for historical reliability?

BLOMBERG: Not in the least, just as few would feel threatened by the observation that Luke, as shown by a comparison with Matthew and Mark, has moved the account of Jesus' preaching in Nazareth to the front of his narrative (Luke 4:16-21) as a programmatic introduction to his whole Gospel. Interestingly, the temple cleansing is the first incident in John not specifically introduced with reference to time that requires it to have happened immediately after the preceding events of the Gospel. That might well be John's tip off that he is arranging material more thematically here.

REID: You comment that even conservative scholars—such as Tom Wright and Ben Witherington—shy away from appealing to the Fourth Gospel in reconstructing the historical Jesus. But that is understandable, is it not, if one is trying to gain a broader hearing in today's "quest"? How would you like to see them operate and still gain a hearing?

BLOMBERG: It is often an important first step in arguing a controversial position to begin from some agreed-on common ground with one's critics. I'd just like to see somebody take the second step. Now that there is so much support for historicity behind at least a critical mass of John's distinctive content, let's use this material too and see what that does to our picture of the historical Jesus.

REID: Well, how would you sum it up? How reliable is John's Gospel?

BLOMBERG: I think John is extraordinarily reliable once one makes all the necessary allowances for him writing in literary genres and using the freedom historians felt in his day to put things in their own words, with their own interpretive spins, that they nevertheless believed were faithful to the people and events surveyed.

REID: Finally, what do you hope your study will do for the present state of scholarship?

BLOMBERG: I hope it will help John be less the

orphaned child of Gospels scholarship when it comes to historical Jesus research. Paul Anderson, a Johannine scholar at George Fox University, has just written an essay speaking of Mark and John as the "bi-optic" Gospels, and I think he's exactly right. In other words, there are basically two Gospel traditions in our New Testament—Mark's (used and varied slightly by Matthew and Luke) and John's. Both are historical, both are theological, both are literary—both must be mined for any balanced or full-orbed understanding of Jesus on any topic we might wish to pose of him. ■

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING

"*The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* accomplishes exactly what is needed at this juncture in Johannine scholarship: a decisive vindication of the integrity of John's Gospel in matters of history." **Andreas Köstenberger**, assistant professor of New Testament, Southeastern Baptist Seminary

"Not since John A. T. Robinson's work has there been such a tour de force argument about this Gospel and its origins and historical substance. Highly recommended."

Ben Witherington III, professor of New Testament, Asbury Theological Seminary

"Craig Blomberg's highly acclaimed volume *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* is now matched by an equally persuasive and compelling treatment of John's Gospel."

Gary M. Burge, professor of New Testament, Wheaton College & Graduate School

NT Backgrounds: continued from page 1 ■

tendency to overstate this new perspective. Scholarly speaking, these are interesting times indeed.

REID: Why do you suppose we have learned so little about this early Jewish-Christian conversation in our customary accounts of Christian origins and the history of the early church?

SKARSAUNE: Simply because most textbooks are written on the assumption that no such interaction occurred after, let's say, A.D. 70 or A.D. 135 at most. This means, for example, that all literary "dialogues" between Jews and Christians written after this period are considered purely literary exercises with no basis in an ongoing dialogue in real life. I used to share this view, but intensive work with part of this dialogue literature has convinced me of the opposite.

REID: How did this book begin for you? Was there anything in particular that led you down this research trail?

SKARSAUNE: My work on the book began, in fact, in 1983, during a seven-month stay in Jerusalem. I believe it was the Jerusalem setting—including the input from scholars at Hebrew University in Jerusalem—that triggered the whole thing, plus the fact that I originally wrote for an audience of Jewish believers in Jesus; that makes you approach the New Testament and early church history from another angle than the common one.

REID: One aspect of your book that first interested me is its time frame—basically, from the Maccabees to Constantine. You bridge at least two scholarly specialties: the New Testament and its background, and the history of the post-apostolic early church. As an early church historian, is there anything you would like New Testament scholars and students to learn from this?

SKARSAUNE: In the good old days the leading New Testament scholars were often also great patristic scholars. If, in addition, they were at least

a little competent in Second Temple Judaism and rabbinics, they were the greatest New Testament scholars around, in my view. It all has to do with seeing the New Testament in its most relevant context, and *Nachgeschichte*—the "history afterward"—belongs to that context. In much New Testament research, the time perspective is limited to the first century A.D. It may be too narrow. I think it is.

REID: There does seem to be an ever increasing interest in the subject of Judaism and Christianity today, don't you think?

SKARSAUNE: Yes, no doubt. It took quite some time before academic theology began working on the heavy theological questions that remained in the wake after Holocaust. But once begun, this quest for the origins and background of Christian anti-Judaism has become increasingly important in all disciplines of theology, not least within historical theology of the New Testament and the early church period. In addition, there has been a remarkable shift of paradigms within scholarly work on Second Temple Judaism. This too has fertilized much scholarly work on Jewish-Christian relations in general.

REID: Occasionally, as I have been teaching the New Testament and describing in some detail the Old Testament or Jewish background of something that, say, Paul or Mark has written, a student has asked, "How could Paul have ever expected his audience to have understood that?" A good question. How would you answer it?

SKARSAUNE: I believe the explanation lies with the kind of people Paul and other early missionaries addressed when they turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, as indicated in Acts 13:46. Their primary target group among the Gentiles were people who had already visited the synagogue for some time, who had listened to the Scripture readings and a considerable amount of Scripture exposition. In Acts they are called the

God-fearers among the Gentiles. If we imagine this type of Gentile as the majority group in the communities Paul wrote to—in Rome or Galatia, for instance—we would be wise not to underestimate their capacity for rather advanced Jewish exposition of the Scriptures.

REID: Finally, what do you hope to achieve by publishing this book?

SKARSAUNE: I like to think of it as my personal synthesis of the many bits and pieces of a recently deconstructed jigsaw puzzle. There is a need for new attempts to bring the pieces together again, to launch a new connected narrative of Christian beginnings and of the first centuries of the church's life. I do not claim to have achieved a total picture, but maybe provided some pointers in the right direction. I have also had the ambition to provide the reader with a good read, first and foremost because I find the subject so immensely interesting myself. ■

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING:

"Skarsaune has produced a gem that deftly lays out the major events, institutions, beliefs and figures of Judaism of late antiquity and how they shaped early Christianity." **Craig A. Evans**

"[Skarsaune] has not only harvested much specialized scholarship on this crucial question regarding Christian origins but also has his own personal contribution to make. This attractive presentation is a 'must' for all students of the early church."

I. Howard Marshall

"In binding together the New Testament's Jewish roots with the life of the early Jewish and Gentile church, this is an outstanding textbook of Christian origins."
Markus Bockmuehl

WHEATON THEOLOGY CONFERENCE 2002

The theme of the Eleventh Annual Wheaton Theology Conference will be "Catholics and Evangelicals in Conversation."

It will be held on the Wheaton College campus April 11-13, 2002. Keynote speakers include: Francis Cardinal George (archbishop, Chicago Archdiocese), Timothy George (dean, Beeson Divinity School), James I. Packer (Regent College), William Shea (St. Louis University), Mark Noll (Wheaton College), Susan K. Wood (St. John's University), Daryl Charles (Taylor University), Brian Daley (Notre Dame), Gerald Bray (Beeson Divinity School), Howard Loewen

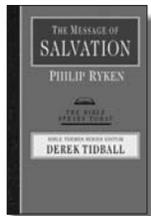


(Fuller Theological Seminary), Thomas P. Rausch (Loyola Marymount University), Ralph E. McKenzie (Trinity International University, San Diego), Margaret O'Gara (St. Michael's College) and others.

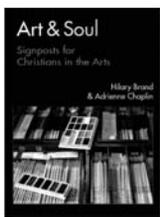
The conference is designed to facilitate discussion around themes such as: the relationship between Catholic and Evangelical Christians, the doctrine of justification, the relationship of Scripture and tradition, and the call to evangelize the culture. ■

New & Noteworthy

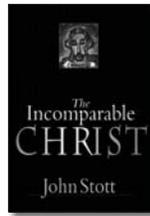
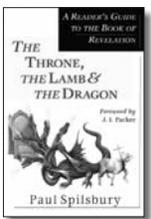
Salvation is a well-worn Christian term. We think we know what it means. But biblically speaking, salvation is one of those big terms that encircles a number of others, each of them reflecting a stunning facet of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Philip Ryken, the newly installed pastor at Tenth Presbyterian in Philadelphia where James Montgomery Boice held forth for so long, offers a masterful example of thematic exposition with nineteen biblical passages that take us deeper into the biblical teaching on salvation. The centerpiece of each passage has a familiar ring: election, deliverance, redemption, expiation, reconciliation, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification. If this world is indeed lost, then understanding and proclaiming the grammar of God's gracious salvation exceeds by bounds the significance of a Human Genome Project or any other great human endeavor.



For years our friends in the arts have been imploring us to do books and provide texts in this field. When *Art & Soul* came along, we dutifully sent it out for peer review. One reviewer responded with the usual suggestions for revision but then finally (in bold type) wrote, "This book is strategic and perhaps one of the best of its kind, if not the only of its kind out there right now. I plan to use it with my Contemporary Art Trends class because it raises significant issues for people serious about art and Christianity. If you don't print it, someone else should!" Well, we got the point! As Calvin Seerveld says, "Everything about this book by Hilary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin rings true. It is written with verve, sparkles with inside artistic knowledge, and simultaneously breathes a generous love for the reader." Illustrated with historical and contemporary examples, this text encourages artists and those interested in the arts to develop a Christian worldview from which they can approach their crafts.



Paul Spilsbury of Canadian Bible College had not thought deeply about the Book of Revelation until he was asked to teach a course on it. He did, he dug in, and out of that came the idea for a book on Revelation. His book would focus on the big picture rather than the details. It would harvest the fruit of what the best scholars—the Aunes, Bauckhams and Beales—were saying, and would bring it down to the level of the average Christian and student of the Bible. The result is *The Throne, the Lamb & the Dragon: A Reader's Guide to the Book of Revelation*. As J. I. Packer says in the Foreword, interpreting Revelation has become "sort of a Christian puzzle corner, especially in the West, where dispensational hermeneutics and millennial dreams made the brew headier." Here is a book that winsomely introduces readers to what is truly important in Revelation.



In recent years numerous books have been written on Jesus, books that are shaped by faith or skepticism or follow the Western academic quest for the historical Jesus. The result has been a kaleidoscope of Jesuses and a thicket of viewpoints, some troubling to faith, some puzzling to the intellect and a few that enrich our vision. With *The Incomparable Christ*, John Stott offers us a vision of Christ from four perspectives: The Original Jesus (how the New Testament writers saw), The Ecclesiastical Jesus (how the church has presented him through the centuries), The Influential Jesus (how he inspired fifteen individuals from St. Francis to Gandhi) and The Eternal Jesus (how he challenges us today). Few could hope to succeed in offering such a sweeping series of portraits in such a small space of 250 pages. Yet this is what we expect from Stott, and he does not disappoint. Unlike the minimalists who weigh the authenticity of Jesus' sayings and deeds, unveiling only a thin outline, Stott shows us the one figure who, like no other, has changed lives, shaped culture and offers one sure hope for the future.



Race is a social and mythical construct—an idol. This is the argument Douglas R. Sharp, professor of systematic theology at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, presents in *No Partiality*. Craig Keener (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*) offers the following summary of this groundbreaking book: "Sharp's work is well-informed by the social sciences, and it takes the Christian discussion of race, racism and reconciliation to a new level of sophistication, and in a framework suitable for academic dialogue." Douglas Sharp is frank about writing as a European American primarily for other European Americans. At the same time *No Partiality* is an invaluable resource for all who want to both understand the dynamics of racism and take greater responsibility in dismantling it. ■

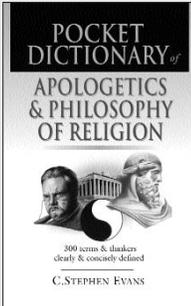
WHAT ARE IVP'S EDITORS READING?



David Zimmerman is assistant editor at IVP—and responsible for final copyediting work on several volumes in the Ancient Christian Commentary Series. Here's what else he's been reading:

- Søren Kierkegaard, *Provocations*. *Provocations* is a survey of Kierkegaard's spiritual writings.
- Alan Jacobs, *A Trip to Vanity Fair*. Jacobs continues the tradition of the moral essayists with an eclectic collection of his writings.
- David Hansen, *Long Wandering Prayer*. Hansen is helping me to round out my bookish faith by pursuing a more meandering, reflective communication with God. ■

WHAT'VE YOU GOT IN YOUR POCKETSES?

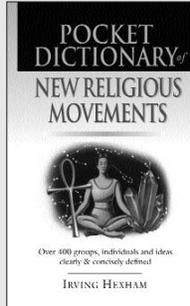


Students not “in” on an IVP secret will be hissing with Gollum of Hobbit fame, “What’s it got in its pocket, eh? What’s the nasty noser’s secret to passing exams? S-s-s-s . . . we think it’s in its pocket.”

The secret, of course, is IVP’s pocket dictionaries. And IVP’s new Department of Pocket Dictionaries is now open for business. Small but productive, it’s housed in a Hobbit-sized hole situated between our editorial and marketing departments. But you

will need cargo pockets to keep up.

This winter we release two more in the series. C. Stephen Evans, University Professor of Philosophy and the Humanities at Baylor University, has produced the *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion*. This is going to be a lifesaver for students in Christian colleges or seminaries who are approaching philosophy from the standpoint of religious or apologetic issues. Evans’s precision in defining the nuts, bolts and gears that make up the



engine of philosophical thinking will endear his name to many a student. And professors will give him a high five for relieving them of the burden of defining every word and concept.

Irving Hexham teaches religious studies at the University of Calgary and is an expert in new religions. He has written the *Pocket Dictionary of New Religious Movements*, a sort of tour guide to the leaders and movements, ideas and practices that make up the varied and exotic religious movements of our

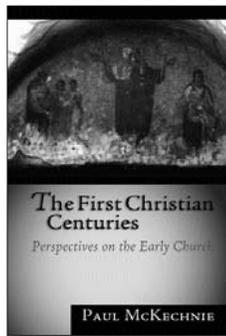
times. From *Ankh* to the *Zion Christian Church*, Hexham explores the basic facts, features and follies of the quest for new religious truth and experience. A valuable feature of this little book is its coverage of the religious dimensions of modern European intellectual movements, such as fascism and Nazism. This Dictionary Lite is a browser’s delight, but it will also be a great boon to students in religious studies courses. ■

LOOKING CLOSELY AT THE EARLY CHURCH

Paul McKechnie teaches in the department of classics and ancient history of the

University of Auckland, New Zealand. He was invited to teach a course on church history to ministerial students, and out of that experience, he decided that should he ever write a book on the early church “what I would say would not be like anything I had ever read.” The idea developed into a booklet, and the booklet developed into a 272-page book entitled *The First Christian Centuries: Perspectives on the Early Church*. And it is fair to say that it is not like any book on the early church that we have ever read.

It does not attempt to be a full accounting of those first Christian centuries. Rather

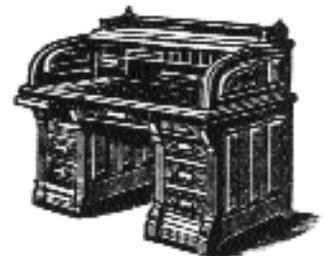


it tries to solve “just one element in the puzzle which the growth of Christianity poses: how did the churches change the religion of the Roman empire? Specifically, what factors produced an organization with the capacity to produce such a great social upheaval?” Along the way to answering this question, McKechnie explores a variety of facets and issues, including current debates about which sources are reliable (interacting with Dominic Crossan et al.), Christianity’s rate of growth (with an assessment of Rodney Stark’s thesis), the Roman persecutions, Gnosticism and the question of Christian diversity, women within the churches (some valuable new perspectives here) and more.

Most illuminating is McKechnie’s exploration of the “safe enclave” that Caesar’s household (read: imperial civil service) provided for a growing number of Christians, even through the periods of persecution. Even if the rest of this book were so-so—and it is decidedly not—this chapter would be, as some book buyers like to say, worth the price of the book. McKechnie concludes his study

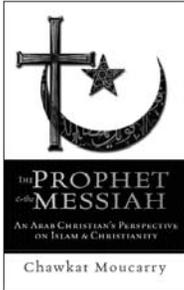
with Constantine and the edict of Milan in 313. As he sums it up, “A vigorous, highly adaptive movement since its inception, the church had won the argument against illegality and made Christianity into the official religion of the Roman empire.”

For those of you who teach early church history, this is a supplementary textbook in the truest sense, one that can come alongside any contemporary early church history textbook and offer its informed perspective on key historical issues. ■



NEW BOOKS ON ISLAM GO BEHIND THE VEIL

Even before the events of September 11, we were developing several titles on the topic of Islam. As these books now take on greater significance, we have moved them up in the production schedule in hopes of providing timely and relevant resources.



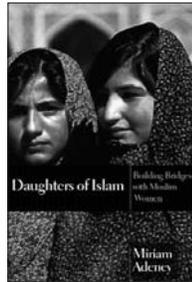
The Prophet & the Messiah: An Arab Christian's Perspective on Islam & Christianity comes to us from Chawkat Moucarray, tutor and lecturer in Islamic studies at All Nations Christian College in England. Originally from Syria, for many years Moucarray has

worked to build authentic relationships and genuine dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

The uniqueness of Moucarray's book is that it provides an even-handed presentation of both Christianity and Islam that Christians and Muslims can study side-by-side. In straightforward fashion, he presents the basic tenets of both faiths, explaining what Christians and Muslims believe about the Bible, the Qur'an, Jesus and Muhammad. While unapologetically Christian in perspective, Moucarray writes to both audiences.

Christians will come away with a better grasp of Islamic thought, and Muslims will learn why Christians are convinced of the truth of Christianity.

The Prophet & the Messiah is an ideal text for world religions and apologetics courses, providing substantive content as well as a model of graciousness and humility in Christian witness. Christian and Muslim students could read the book together and then discuss it afterward.



Renowned anthropologist and missiologist Miriam Adeney provides a different perspective on the Muslim experience in *Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women*. Offering case studies from around the world as well as sound analysis and insight, Adeney examines the distinctive challenges facing Muslim women and the opportunities available for contextualized ministry and outreach.

Widely anticipated in the missions community, *Daughters of Islam* is commended by J. Dudley Woodberry of Fuller Seminary this way: "Miriam Adeney lifts the veil that has obscured the faces of Muslim women and

details the everyday lives those faces express." This landmark book will be a valuable resource to anyone involved in mission work with Muslim women, whether overseas or domestic.

For an on-the-ground report of life in the Middle East, see Christine Mallouhi's *Waging*



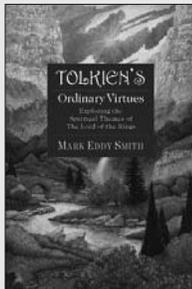
Peace on Islam. An Australian married into a Muslim family, Mallouhi tells the story of her experience in the Arab world during the Gulf War with scenes remarkably contemporaneous to the current situation. Her model for engagement

with Muslims comes from the life of St. Francis of Assisi, whose witness of peace and love stood in stark contrast to the Crusaders of his time.

These books will all be available February 2002. But if you can't wait that long, go to <www.ivpress.com/islamebook> and download our e-book *Islam: A Christian Introduction*. Originally appearing as a chapter in Winfried Corduan's world religions text *Neighboring Faiths*, this brief e-book offers the basics on Islam's history, teachings and practices as well as how Christians can engage Muslims in conversation. ■

Here's a Good Read . . .

. . . it's Tolkien's *Ordinary Virtues*. Written by Mark Eddy Smith—one of IVP's own employees—this book is the product of a lifetime of reading and pondering the meaning of *The Lord of the Rings*.



Mark writes not as a specialist but as one who can point the way for us in discovering and embracing the simple virtues and sagacious life lessons Tolkien's tale brings to life.

In fact, his book is creating quite a

prepublication stir with international and British rights already secured. Here are some comments from a Dutch publisher's review: "Because it doesn't deal with 'why' Tolkien wrote it and what influenced him and so on, but concentrates more on 'what' Tolkien wrote, the story itself, it gets at the essence of what Tolkien wanted his book to achieve in readers. Something more academic books on Tolkien and his work miserably fail in."

This is a book that will provide valuable supplementary reading and spiritual nourishment for both novices and long-time fans of *The Lord of the Rings*. ■

ACADEMIC ALERT

IVP'S BOOK BULLETIN FOR PROFESSORS

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