

Strangely familiar: Imagined book tables

by [Sarah Morice Brubaker](#) in the [May 17, 2005](#) issue

At a recent theology conference I made a beeline for the book table the instant a coffee break was called. But all the volumes seemed strangely familiar. Later that night, in that famed space between dreaming and waking, the trends in Christian publishing became even clearer.

Evangelical

Modest Girls Are Hot.

By Betty Shayford, 174 pp., paperback.

A 23-year-old Dartmouth graduate calls young women to reconsider the virtue of Christian modesty, which she claims is one of the most effective and least appreciated man-snares around. She argues that Christian guys find women who ignore them irresistible; therefore the best way to accomplish the all-important goal of snatching up a man is to pretend that doing so is the farthest thing from your mind. In the afterword the author discusses the importance of honesty in a relationship.

What's So Amazing About Lewis and Tolkien?

By Carmen DeLucia, 342 pp., paperback.

DeLucia examines evangelicals' bizarre fixation on Oxford-educated, pipe-smoking, port-drinking, tweed-jacket-with-elbow-patch-wearing Christian authors. She determines that these authors provide evangelical men with a model of masculinity that doesn't require the purchase of hundreds of dollars worth of Promise Keepers merchandise.

A Virtuous Church: Character and Practices.

By Stephen N. Veranda, 219 pp., paperback.

In this book that is indistinct from at least a dozen other books, Veranda argues that the Christian church must be a community distinct from all other communities. Important to the church's identity, Veranda suggests, are such notions as virtue,

character, practices—oh heck, you know all this.

Marriage for Christians.

Edited by Brian F. Sonne, 332 pp., paperback.

This volume presents a range of opinions and guidance on the topic of Christian marriage from a variety of deferential wives and muscular white men with father issues. Essays include “Girls? Ew!” and “Masturbation Is Wrong, Unless You’re Reading Alasdair MacIntyre at the Time.”

The Bible Marketer’s Bible.

Edited by Shannon Galbraith and Francis Toomey, 1,032 pp., paperback.

Bible marketers make God’s word fresh, appealing, relevant and interesting to literally hundreds of market segments. Until now, however, no one had created a Bible format specifically for them. *The Bible Marketer’s Bible* includes quizzes, journaling sections, fresh study guides (such as “The Edict of Cyrus: Israel’s First Best-Seller”) and one-, two- and five-year reading plans. Makes a great gift!

Mainline

A Community of One.

By Tyler Eubanks and Melinda Eubanks, 347 pp., paperback.

In 2004 Tyler and Melinda Eubanks moved into a downtrodden, dirt-poor area of Appalachia and started a Christian community to help the unwashed masses in the name of Jesus. The community consists of their own household. In this book they share all they have learned from this extended experience of Christian community and show the “trinitarian logic” of gracing the less worthy with one’s own presence.

12 Months of Prayer Journals: A Calendar, in boxed set with 365 Days of Religious Calendars: A Prayer Journal.

By Eudora Greer, with photography by Tyrone Ellis, 365 pp. (journal), paperback.

Greer combines her characteristically profound prose with Ellis’s breathtaking photographs of Christian prayer journals to create a calendar that serves as a reminder of the importance of daily prayer. Once you’re inspired to pray daily, you’ll love the second item in this boxed set, *365 Days of Religious Calendars*, in which Greer’s daily meditations accompany Ellis’s gorgeous photographs of religious calendars in a variety of settings.

Caring for the Incredibly Boring: Advice for Pastors.

By Maureen L. Hindlowist, 189 pp., paperback.

Hindlowist, a pastoral counselor with 23 years of experience working in a large, white, affluent midwestern congregation, shares her considerable insight into how to provide pastoral care to several common types of boring people, including the gentleman who took a theology course 50 years ago and thinks himself an expert, the 18-year-old posing as an angst-ridden skeptic, and the high-strung woman who lies awake nights worrying about coffee-hour logistics.

Thorn in Paul's Flesh? A New Look.

By the Very Rev. John Paine Spellman, 255 pp., paperback.

Through a careful exegesis of scripture, best-selling author, iconoclast and Episcopal bishop John Spellman advances the thesis that the "metaphorical" thorn in Paul's flesh was in fact a literal thorn embedded when, in his temporary blindness, Paul stumbled into a sticker bush on the way to Damascus. With characteristically tight argumentation, Spellman shows the momentous implications of this discovery for Christianity: namely, that we should all be wearing natural fibers.

When God Wears a Girdle: Finding the Divine in the Senior Women's Fellowship.

By Jennifer Mack, 200 pp., paperback. What happens when a bohemian, street-smart and somewhat cynical performance artist begins attending meetings of the senior women's fellowship at her parents' Methodist church? And does anyone care? Jennifer Mack, in this deeply moving and often hilarious first-person account, shares the ups and the downs of the months she spent participating in the "Golden Rule Gals" group and tells how she learned to appreciate the wisdom (if not the fashion sense) of her elders.

James the Less, Assistant Account Supervisor for Media Outreach: Ancient Wisdom for Mindless Bureaucracy.

By Adele Towson Smith, 264 pp., paperback.

How can faceless midlevel bureaucrats who've been promoted beyond their competence benefit from Jesus' visionary model of leadership? Smith answers this important question in her sequel to the best-selling *Jesus, Senior Vice President for East Coast Operations*. By examining James the Less's relationship with Jesus, his immediate supervisor, Smith shows bureaucrats how to fly completely under the radar, neither royally screwing up nor distinguishing themselves in any way.

Dear God! Not Another Book About Divine Suffering.

By Emile Colsen, 129 pp., paperback.

Colsen explores several pressing questions: Does God suffer? Does God suffer alongside the poor and the oppressed? Does God suffer when we reject the Divine? And perhaps most pressingly, does God suffer as a result of all of the books exploring the question, Does God suffer?

Academic

It's All His Fault: Scotus and the Univocity of Brown.

By Greg V. Ronagle, 366 pp.

Ronagle argues that all the problems in Western Christian theology and fashion may be traced back to Scotus and the “univocity of brown”: the wearing of Franciscan habits of a uniform brown color, rather than the two-tone “analogical” habits worn by the Dominican Thomas Aquinas, whose *Summa Theologica* Ronagle calls the “apex and culmination of human history.”

Christology from Beside.

By Rolf Gschwanzig, 218 pp.

Shattering what he calls the “false choice” of Christology from “above,” “below” or “ahead,” Gschwanzig calls for an emphatically orthodox Christology “from beside”—that is, Christology articulated in a way that makes it appear utterly irrelevant to 99 percent of actual Christians.

Meeting Hauerwas Again for the First Time.

By Oliver K. Tandy, 301 pp., paperback.

In this breakthrough work in “historical Hauerwas” scholarship, Tandy argues that most of the sayings attributed to Hauerwas by his disciples could not have been said by him, or at least could not have been said quite so frequently.

Stroking the Canon: Postliberal “Feminists” in “Dialogue.”

Edited by Alana K. Heyton-Plechette and Trina V. Rader-Hausen, 297 pp., paperback.

This is a thought-provoking collection of 12 essays from women who decry the feminism that gave them access to the education necessary to understand the Thomas Aquinas that they all hold dear. The essayists conclude that anyone who disagrees with them is outside the bounds of Christianity and should leave.

Christian Everything!

By Randolph Nieberger, 87 pp.

Nieberger, who lives in a cave and has marginalized himself from academe, argues that Christians can have nothing to do with any institution that is not explicitly

Christian. (Publisher's note: This title will not be released as scheduled. Apparently Nieberger discovered that the cave he'd been living in was not explicitly Christian and set fire to its contents, destroying the manuscript.)

Naming, Pres(ci)ence, Pre-Science, and the Be-Sotted.

By Carleton Cox, 675 pp., paperback.

In this in-depth volume another admirer of Derrida tries to mimic his style and ends up just looking silly.