Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

God Made the Sun written by Mary Manz Simon; illustrated by Lizzie Walkley.

The Noble Servant by Melanie Dickerson.

Counted with the Stars by Connilyn Cossette.

Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification by Thomas Schreiner.
A Letter from the Publisher

Dear CLJ Readers:

Welcome to our second quarterly issue of the year! My apologies for its late arrival, and that it is less substantial than originally planned. This is due in part to the fact that, while we had intended to cover selected ALA titles as part of this issue, quite a few review copies had not reached our reviewers in time for our original publication deadline. Rather than break up our coverage of these titles, we decided to feature them in our next issue (in time for the new school year!).

The other reasons for the deviation from our plans for this issue are personal. After the expected school-year-end busyness, I was unfortunately ill for a spell, and then was completely occupied with a parent’s medical issues for several weeks.

I pray you will forgive our lapse and enjoy the reviews within—perhaps finding some great ideas for summer reading.

In Christ,
Angela Walsh
Publisher and Editor
editor@christianlibraryj.org.
The purpose of the *Christian Library Journal* is to provide reviews from a Christian point of view, of both Christian and secular titles for the Christian reader. Materials reviewed may reflect a broad range of Christian doctrinal positions and do not necessarily reflect the views of *Christian Library Journal*.

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Cover image taken from *God Made the Sun* written by Mary Manz Simon; illustrated by Lizzie Walkley. Copyright © 2016 by Mary Manz Simon. Used by permission of WorthyKids/Ideals.

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Review Rating System

*5 Outstanding — a book which impacts someone’s life or thinking
5 Excellent — well written, among the best
4 Very good — definitely worth reading
3 Good — may be a good source for relaxation or to meet needs for information
2 Fair — poor writing or editing; read only if very interested
1 Poor — not much going for this title.

Recommended with caution (may be used with any of the above ratings)–Note reservations within the review.
Not recommended (may be used with any of the above ratings)–Note problems within the review.

Value of the book:

With fiction, the rating includes the quality of plot development/pacing, characterization, sense of time and place, mood, and atmosphere, dialogue, depth of perception, sensitivity of writing, use of humor. Be aware that some books are character driven, so character development is extremely important. Others are plot driven, so character development isn’t as critical; plot is.

With nonfiction, the rating includes quality of the information, accuracy, up to date, stimulates further inquiry, adds to the understanding of the topic, illustrations which are informative and appropriate.

With picture books, first be aware that these are written today for various age groups, so don’t assume little children. The rating includes those above for fiction and nonfiction, and also emphasizes the illustrations.

Commonly used abbreviations in CLJ reviews

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PRIMARY FICTION

Our great big backyard / Laura Bush and Jenna Bush Hager ; illustrated by Jacqueline Rogers.
1 vol. (unpaged) : col. ill., col. map ; 29 cm. PS-Grade 3
E Rating: 4
Family life--Fiction. Summer--Fiction.

Former first lady Laura Bush and her daughter Jenna Bush Hager introduce the wonder of our national parks in Our Great Big Backyard.

Young Jane is planning to spend her summer watching movies and playing video games, until her parents announce “The Great American Road Trip” through some of America’s iconic parks. Initially Jane is too absorbed in her tablet to notice the passing scenery, but a meteor shower in Big Bend, Texas finally gets her attention.

As her family explores the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Yosemite, Jane comes to appreciate the beauty of the outdoors, swapping electronic games for real hands-on adventure (and even enjoys writing a postcard instead of sending an email to her friends).

Artist Jacqueline Rogers uses pen, ink, watercolor, gouache, and marker to produce lively scenes of the parks as well as busy images of a classic family car trip and a fun-to-study map inside the front and back covers. Rogers cleverly includes details from the children’s imagination, such as wearing moon suits as they traverse the desert and seeing a spaceship blasting out of Old Faithful.

With minimal text, Our Great Big Backyard is quickly paced and suited to early readers. It is hard to overlook Jane’s ill-mannered attitude at the beginning of the story (mom and dad allowing her to use a tablet while canoeing in the Everglades is also questionable!). Parents might use the opportunity to talk with children not only about our national parks and about traveling as a family, but about the distraction of electronics and the many other ways to have fun.

The publishing of Our Great Big Backyard was well-timed with the 2016 centennial of our national park system. The distinguished authors include a list of parks by state and several websites for further information.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

God made the moon / written by Mary Manz Simon ; illustrated by Lizzie Walkley.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 17 cm. PS-K
E Rating: 5

God made the sun / written by Mary Manz Simon ; illustrated by Lizzie Walkley.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 17 cm. PS-K
E Rating: 5
God Made the Sun and God Made the Moon are two preschool board books by the team of Mary Manz Simon and Lizzie Walkley.

Celebrating God’s creation of the moon and sun, the two books encourage children to see these natural wonders as gifts from God. Simon’s sweet rhyming quatrains are lilting and memorable, showing how the moon and sun light up our world both day and night.

In God Made the Sun, a young boy plays outdoors with his friends, swims, and enjoys a picnic with his family. In God Made the Moon, a young girl catches fireflies, listens to the crickets, and stargazes before her cozy bedtime bath and story.

Lizzie Walkley’s tender illustrations are brightly rendered, friendly, and heartwarming. The scenes are happy and loving, filled with charming details that toddlers will love to spot.

God Made the Sun and God Made the Moon are ideal first books for the very young. Sun and moon cut-outs on the cover and pages add visual and tactile interest for little ones. The small sturdy size (and wonderful rounded corners) of these companion books make them perfect for tucking into a stroller, diaper bag, or backpack.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

The Lion Storyteller Book of Parables presents 26 of Jesus’s parables retold in illustrated storybook format.

Author Bob Hartman prefaces the book with an explanation of what the parables are, how Jesus used them in His teaching, and how one can still listen for their meaning. Hartman invites adults to share these lessons with their children and provides ideas for group discussion at the end of the book.

Each parable is concisely told in one to four pages, with the first paragraph setting the stage and the final few lines summarizing the message. Hartman’s use of descriptive and conversational language keeps the content alive and relatable. Children will be easily engaged, whether as readers or listeners.

Wonderful bright artwork by Krisztina Kállai Nagy invigorates the pages. The gestures and facial expressions of her characters are delightful; even the animals seem to have personality. A final scene shows Jesus surrounded by a group of attentive children—a perfect image of the spirit of the parables.

The book’s table of contents includes the biblical references for each story. The Lion Storyteller Book of Parables would be a treasured gift for a child and a lasting addition to the family bookshelf.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

 PRIMARY NONFICTION

The Lion storyteller book of Parables / retold by Bob Hartman ; illustrated by Krisztina Kallai Nagy.  
Oxford: Lion Children’s, 2015.  
63 p. : col. ill. ; 27 cm.  K-Grade 5  
226.8  Rating: 5  
Jesus Christ--Parables--Juvenile literature.  
Parables, Biblical.

Jumping off library shelves / selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins ; illustrations by Jane Manning.  
LCCN 2014958686 ISBN 9781590789247,  
hardcover, $17.95.  
30 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm.  PS-Grade 3  
811.008  Rating: 5
Jumping Off Library Shelves is a delight! With 15 library poems selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins and written by such well-known author poets as Nikki Grimes and Jane Yolen, it covers library cards and their magic, librarians who read your mind because they know just the perfect book for you, canine reading buddies, literary dreams when you use your book for a pillow, and even dictionaries, story times, and the Internet.

The poems are written using different literary devices and illustrated very imaginatively—each one makes readers smile and nod their heads in agreement.

In the words of Michelle Kruegger in “At the Library”:

I’ve found a treasure,  
a literal pleasure.

For kids or adults, this book is a treasure and the poems will be enjoyed again and again.

_Ceil Carey, CLJ_

**INTERMEDIATE FICTION**

_Andi saddles up / Susan K. Marlow ; [illustrations by Leslie Gammelgaard]. (Circle C stepping stones; 1)_

104 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 3-5  
Fic Rating: 3

_Prolific children’s author Susan Marlow kicks off a new historical fiction series set in the Wild West in the late 1800s._

In **Andi Saddles Up**, nine-year-old Andi Carter wants to learn to do a trick on her palomino Taffy, but her older brother Chad doesn’t want her to do it. She disobeys her brother and injures herself, preventing her from riding for a month. Andi meets a new friend, Sadie, and they are caught up in a boundary quarrel between Andi’s brother and Sadie’s father. Will their friendship endure despite the fight between their families?

In **Andi Under the Big Top**, the circus comes to town and nine-year-old Andi can’t wait to see it, especially the bareback rider. She meets a young boy—Henry—selling concessions under the big top. When he tells her that he ran away from home to join the circus, she thinks he has the perfect life! But she learns his life with the circus is not as pleasant as she thinks. Problems develop when Andi wants to help him return home.

Marlow has written three historical fiction series for girls: Circle C Beginnings (ages 6-9), Circle C Stepping Stones (ages 7-10), Circle C Adventures (ages 9-13). She also has a series for boys: Goldtown Adventures (ages 8-12). The Circle C books follow Andrea “Andi” Carter at different
ages and are set in California in the 1880s.
The faith element is light but present, and the books focus more on character than plot development. Marlow does a good job of telling the story and keeping young readers engaged. These would be a good addition to a home school library, a church library, or a school library.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Stoner’s boy : a Seckatary Hawkins mystery / Robert F. Schulkers ; introduction by Randy Schulkers and Diane Schneider ; illustrations by Carl B. Williams.

364 p. : ill. ; 23 cm. Grades 4-6
Fic Rating: 4
Mystery and detective stories. Adventure and adventurers--Fiction.

In the early 1920s, Robert F. Schulkers created a series of 41 adventure stories built around the “Fair and Square Club.” The stories were first published in the Sunday edition of the Cincinnati Enquirer newspaper, then later syndicated in over 100 newspapers. Stoner’s Boy was originally published in 1921, and is the very first book in the series. This 2016 edition of Stoner’s Boy features an introduction by the author’s grandson Randy Schulkers, who explains that the riverbank boys exemplify “simple values of honesty, patriotism, loyalty to friends and family, and faith in God.”

The Fair and Square Club is located near the shore of a fictional Kentucky river, where the boys meet in a restored houseboat. At any one time, there are about a dozen boy members of the club. The club recorder is Seckatary Hawkins. His spelling is sometimes lacking (hence his misspelled title).

In this first book in the series, the club members are confronted with the shenanigans of a mysterious stranger, known as “Stoner’s Boy.” He secretly comes and goes, sneaking around the clubhouse and causing mischief in the ranks of the club. At one time, Stoner’s Boy even tries to set their clubhouse on fire. The club members are thrown into disarray, and must decide how to catch this interloper or at least protect their members from harm.

Each chapter in the book contains the journal entries penned by Hawkins. There is no meeting on Sunday, since the boys are at church or Sunday School. Each chapter concludes with some proposed action for the club members, and the line, “Which we did.”

Stoner’s Boy is a fun, wholesome adventure. The plot is quite tame by modern standards; no one uses drugs or even smokes, and none of the boys are seriously injured. Occasionally, the boys in the club start minor scuffles, which end quickly—usually with handshakes all around, or even a sing-along around the club organ. (Yes, the boys actually have an organ in their clubhouse.)

The adventures of the Fair and Square Club illustrate the values of friendship, loyalty, and forgiveness.

Chris Lawson, Bassocantor.com

The drum of destiny / by Chris Stevenson.

220 p. : map ; 20 cm. Grades 5-9
Fic Rating: 4
The American Revolutionary War is an exciting time for a boy, especially for a 12-year-old New Yorker. An avid reader and fluent in French (thanks to his patriot father who owned a book store and his mother’s French roots), Gabe suddenly finds himself orphaned and thrust into the home of a staunch British loyalist. The Reverend Loring, with ten children of his own, treats Gabe more like a servant than a child. Crisis strikes during dinner one night when Gabe refuses to toast King George III of England and is cast out of the house. He finds himself on the street where the only families that exist are gangs of thieves or pickpockets. Spending a solitary night by a river, Gabe finds a drum that inspires him to travel to Boston in hopes of becoming a drummer boy in George Washington’s army. The only problem is that he doesn’t know how to play the drum. Would they still accept him? Can he make it on foot from New York City to Boston? Through a series of mishaps on the road, Gabe learns the consequences of indecision and of ignoring good advice. He also painfully realizes that war recognizes no age.

Chris Stevenson leads the reader on a geographic tour and action-packed journey through old Manhattan and across King’s Bridge at the northern tip of the island toward Boston, as Gabe confronts troubles, dangers, and sickness, and finds friends as well as foes. He even meets Benedict Arnold! Significant historical information is conveyed through the characters’ eyes, making the facts meaningful in context and easy to remember.

Although Gabe’s resolve and determination are tested and often waver, he learns courage by staying true to his goals and to himself and grasps the importance of earning the respect of others by being truthful. *The Drum of Destiny* is an engaging historical adventure filled with life-lessons for young and old alike.

*Veronica Jorge, CLJ*

**INTERMEDIATE NONFICTION**

*God’s good news Bible storybook : devotions from Billy Graham / illustrated by Scott Wakefield.*


192 p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm. Grades K-6

220.95 Rating: 5


*God’s Good News* by noted Christian evangelist Billy Graham offers 74 illustrated Bible stories for young readers. Graham opens with an inspiring note inviting parents and children to read about God’s love and good news; he closes with a heartfelt prayer for his readers.

The stories are evenly divided between the Old and New Testaments, using scripture quotations from The New King James Version of the Bible. Brief italicized segments provide contextual information when needed, and accompanying each story is a related sidebar from Billy Graham offering additional details, questions to ponder, and spiritual “takeaways.”

For the very young, *God’s Good News Bible Storybook* is a wonderful introduction to events...
from the Bible. This is a book that children can grow up with: first by having a parent describe the stories depicted in the illustrations, later as independent readers with a fuller grasp of the actual text, and eventually as "tweens" re-reading their favorite stories and considering some of the author’s devotional messages.

Bright illustrations by Scott Wakefield are bold and active, capturing the history, drama, and awe of the subject matter. The artist adds visual interest and stimulates the imagination by showing scenes from varying perspectives—from inside the pit with Daniel, eye-level with Noah and a giraffe, gazing up at Moses atop the mountain.

God’s Good News would be a treasured gift at any age. This attractive book with its padded hard cover, embossed lettering, and almost 200 heavy pages, is practically destined to find an enduring place on a child’s bookshelf or nightstand!

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

12 Children Who Changed the World / by
Kenya McCullum. (Change makers)

LCCN 2015934288 ISBN 9781632351463,
hardcover, $31.35.
32 p. : ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 5-8
920 Rating: 4
Children--Biography.

12 Children Who Changed the World is one of six books in 12-Story Library’s Change Makers series for middle grade readers.

This small format book introduces 12 remarkable youth, some famous (Anne Frank) and some lesser-known (Samantha Smith), from ancient times (King Tut and Joan of Arc) to modern (education advocate Malala Yousafzai). All achieved a place in history by being leaders, challengers, and creators of change.

Six girls and six boys are featured for their involvement with issues including apartheid, the holocaust, racism, AIDS, and child labor. Others have made enduring contributions to math (Blaise Pascal) and music (Wolfgang Mozart).

Author Kenya McCullum provides engaging biographical details, along with significant facts and related social and cultural background. Each of the 12 children is presented over two pages highlighted with photographs. Helpful extras include "Think About It" questions, a glossary, and a list of books and internet resources. Readers are invited to "go beyond the book" for additional content on the publisher’s website.

12 Children Who Changed the World would be a compelling volume for a home or classroom library, manageable for younger readers, but with a range of topics that may be more suited to grades 5 and above.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Grover Cleveland, again! : a treasury of American presidents / Ken Burns with David Blistein and Cauley Powell ; illustrated by Gerald Kelley.

LCCN 2015043443 ISBN 9780385392099,
hardcover, $25.
89 p. : col. ill. ; 32 cm. Grades 5-7
973.09 Rating: 4

Grover Cleveland, Again! by noted documentarian Ken Burns is an illustrated collection of facts and stories about the U.S. presidents, culminating with
Barack Obama.

Each two-page spread features biographical details, brief anecdotes, and a description of significant aspects of that president’s term. Burns provides historic and political context to help middle grade readers begin to understand the pertinent issues. Multiple sidebars throughout supply additional information to help capture each leader’s personality and legacy. The end pages offer related sites to visit and a glossary of terms.

Handsomely and chronologically arranged, Grover Cleveland, Again! features large scale pencil and digital color illustrations by Gerald Kelley. Kelley captures the presidents in active and dynamic poses against dramatic backdrops that truly add a sense of realism. Rich red and blue highlights on each page create a patriotic feel. Each president’s official portrait is also included.

The author’s conversational tone at times blurs the line between fact and opinion on challenging topics such as slavery, Native Americans, war, and the economy. Children interested in history will enjoy this lively book, though parents may need to help them approach some of the content.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ
TEENS

BOOK REVIEWS

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

The noble servant / Melanie Dickerson.
336 p.; 25 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5
Nobility--Fiction. Impersonation--Fiction.

Award-winning author Melanie Dickerson continues her medieval retelling of fairy tales, this time focusing on the Little Goose Girl fairy tale.

In The Noble Servant, penniless Lady Magdalen of Mallin travels to meet her future bridegroom, the Duke of Wolfberg. Their marriage will bring her the monies to free her people from poverty. En route to Wolfberg, Magdalen’s maidservant forces her to switch places as part of a conspiracy. While her former maidservant receives the honor due to her, Magdalen is forced to take care of the geese on the Duke’s estate.

While her maidservant poses as Lady Magdalen, she is unaware that the Duke is also an imposter—he is the Duke’s cousin. After being attacked and left for dead, the real Duke has returned incognito, working as a shepherd on his own estate. The real Duke and Magdalen become friends as they uncover a plot against Wolfberg. Together they learn the meaning of sacrifice and true nobility as they adjust to their new stations in life and watch the imposters try to take what isn’t theirs.

As in her earlier books, the faith element is not preachy but clearly evident. Lessons are learned about sacrifice and true nobility. Dickerson’s tales feature wholesome relationships while still building a strong attraction between the main characters, making this a good choice for teen readers. Dickerson is a masterful storyteller with a carefully crafted plot, richly-drawn characters, and detailed setting. The reader is easily pulled into the story. Does everything end happily ever after? Read it and see!

Recommended for young adults and adults who are young at heart.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

In 27 days / Alison Gervais.
339 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5
Suicide--Teens--Fiction.

Archer killed himself. Even though Hadley barely knew him, she can’t shake the sense of loss. Feeling guilty, she attends his funeral and meets his family—and Death. Death offers Hadley a deal: she could go back in time 27 days to convince Archer not to commit suicide, but if she fails, he will be lost forever and it would be her fault.

Hadley is tossed back in time as Death promised, and she is prepared to do anything to save Archer’s life—if only he wanted to be saved. Hadley’s borderline-stalking behavior sets Archer on edge. He doesn’t want to be friends with the most popular girl in school. She was probably faking kindness anyway. Hadley is at a loss. If he won’t let her help, how can she save him?

Death left out one detail. Hadley’s life is in danger. The more she pushes Archer toward hope and life, the more Havoc tries to substitute her life for Archer’s. Is Hadley willing to give up her life if it means Archer can keep his, or would she rather break her contract with Death and let her new
friend die?

Race time with Hadley as she tries to force a relationship with the school misfit. Watty Award-winning author Alison Gervais will keep readers guessing whether Hadley can complete her mission before time runs out. Hadley and Archer’s relationship is one-of-a-kind as their banter and Hadley’s pesky intrusions develop into deep conversations and deeper feelings. Facing bullies, worst fears, and family drama, readers will experience through Hadley how much dedication it takes to be friends with someone who has PTSD and depression.

In 27 Days is an extremely well-written story. Readers will be forced to stop and think if they would follow in Hadley's footsteps to save a stranger’s life. They will giggle while watching this rich girl literally work her way into a poor boy’s heart and home. Even his family will fall in love before he will.

Rebecca Schriner, CLJ

For love & honor / Jody Hedlund.

239 p.; 21 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning historical fiction author Jody Hedlund presents the third book in her trio of related medieval young adult novels. For Love & Honor gives a nod to Beauty and the Beast.

In For Love & Honor, Lady Sabine is a young noblewoman. Although she is beautiful and wealthy, she has a physical flaw that could prevent her from making a good marriage as well as endanger her life due to 14th century superstitions.

Meanwhile, Sir Bennet is called home to rescue his family from financial ruin. His brother has incurred a debt that cannot be easily repaid. The only recourse is to marry a wealthy noblewoman, but Bennet doesn’t want to marry just for that.

Sabine travels to Bennet’s home, thinking she is purchasing some valuable art and unaware that her grandmother has her own plan. When Bennet’s home is attacked while Lady Sabine is there, they are forced to trust one another. Will they build a relationship based on love and honor? What will happen when Sabine’s blemish is revealed and she is called a witch?

Written from a dual viewpoint, the book employs two different fonts. Hedlund excels at showing how others judge by external appearances while God judges by the inward beauty. The spiritual element is evident but not heavy-handed.

Filled with descriptive narrative and endearing characters, For Love & Honor is an entertaining read—except for the necessary violence in the fighting scenes and Sabine’s imprisonment. Its believable plot has enough twists to keep the reader engaged. Fans of Lisa Bergren’s River of Time series, Dina Sleiman’s Valiant Hearts series, and Melanie Dickerson’s medieval young adult books will also enjoy Hedlund’s medieval stories. Recommended for teen collections in public libraries and school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Related Titles Reviewed by CLJ: An Uncertain Choice (Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr 2015); A Daring Sacrifice (Jul/Aug/Sep 2016).
The last ride: an Andrea Carter book / Sandra K. Marlow. (Circle C milestones; 3)
175 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 6-12
Fic Rating: 4

Courageous love: an Andrea Carter book / Susan K. Marlow. (Circle C Milestones; 4)
186 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 6-12
Fic Rating: 4

Andrea “Andi” Carter is growing up. Now a young lady, she must trade in her overalls for skirts and a side saddle. Thrilled that she is almost done with school for good, she is hopeful that her brother, Chad, will ignore the fact that she’s a girl and increase her responsibilities on the ranch.

In The Last Ride, Andi is paired with her cousin Daniel to teach him how things work on the Circle C. Sounds easy enough, but Daniel is a city-slicker who’d rather gamble and play pranks than work on a ranch or listen to a girl. Alternately rude and charming, he creates one dangerous situation after another. When his antics bring personal heartbreak to Andi, she closes herself off from her family and friends.

In Courageous Love, Andi has settled in to her ranch duties and racing her horse, Shasta. Convinced she is the only one who can work with Shasta, she is not happy when Chad puts wrangler Riley Prescott in charge of training all the horses, including Shasta. When some of her brother’s prize calves die, and the barn catches fire, Andi and Riley must put aside their differences for the sake of the Circle C.

As with books 1 and 2 in the Circle C Milestones series, each story is written in the third person and includes snippets from Andi’s diary, allowing the reader to experience her thoughts and emotions firsthand. Author Susan K. Marlow effectively captures the feelings of a teenage girl who struggles with growing up during a time when women’s options were limited. The series’ characters are further developed in these two sequels, and information about raising cattle and horses in the 1880s is provided through dialogue and description. Messages of faith, forgiveness, and God’s provision are presented in a natural way through characters’ conversations and prayers.

The Last Ride and Courageous Love are well-researched, highly readable fictionalized accounts of the life of a teenager in the Old West. Adults may also enjoy the Circle C Milestones series.

Linda Matchett, CLJ

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Thick as Thieves and Heartbreak Trail (Jan/Feb/Mar 2017).

YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION

12 incredible facts about the first moon landing / by Angie Smibert. (Turning points in US history)
LCCN 2015933666 ISBN 9781632351302, hardcover, $31.35.
32 p. : col. and black-and-white ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 5-8
629.45 Rating: 5
Project Apollo (U.S.)--Juvenile literature. Space flight to the moon.
12 incredible facts about the D-Day invasion / by Lois Sepahban. (Turning points in US history)

LCCN 2015933983 ISBN 9781632351289, hardcover, $31.35.
32 p. : ill., maps ; 24 cm. Grades 5-8
940.54 Rating: 5
World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--France--Normandy--Juvenile literature.

12 Incredible Facts about the D-Day Invasion and 12 Incredible Facts about the Moon Landing are two of eight books in 12-Story Library’s Turning Points in History series for middle grade readers. These small format books provide historical and political background, along with significant dates, places, people, and details. Each of the 12 “incredible facts” is expanded over two pages of compelling information, highlighted by related sidebars, maps, and photographs.

Lois Sepahban’s 12 Incredible Facts about the D-Day Invasion presents events leading up to the D-Day Invasion, the planning and strategy, the battle itself, and the aftermath. Contemporary photos illustrate wartime conditions including weaponry and the holding of prisoners.

Angie Smibert’s 12 Incredible Facts about the Moon Landing reviews the “space race,” the early U.S. space program, and the Apollo missions. Both triumphs and tragedies are included, along with thoughts about what the moon landing meant for America.

Each volume offers a great synopsis of a significant event in U.S. history, jam-packed with facts and figures, eye-catching page design, and helpful extras including a list of key dates, glossary, and references. The publisher also offers interactive content, videos, and updates on its website.

The Turning Points in History series would be well-suited to home or school reading. These concise books are manageable for younger history buffs, yet there is enough depth to the material to elevate the reading level for older students.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ
ADULT FICTION

Waves of mercy / Lynn Austin.

378 p.; 23 cm.  Adult
Fic  Rating: 4

Award-winning author Lynn Austin pens a turn-of-the-century story of two women: one a young Chicago socialite, the other an older Dutch immigrant. Their lives intersect when Geesje recounts her immigration story in preparation for their town’s 50th anniversary.

In Waves of Mercy, 23-year-old Anna Nicholson flees to Holland, Michigan after her wealthy fiancé ends their engagement. She befriends Derk Vander Veen, a seminary student working part-time at her hotel. Their conversations lead to a friendship that brings her in contact with Geesje, his neighbor. Derk sees a similarity between the two women.

In 1846, 17-year-old Geesje de Jonge crossed the ocean with her parents and other immigrants from the Netherlands to settle in the Michigan wilderness. In 1897, she is asked to write a memoir of her early experiences. As she recounts her experiences, no one expects the secrets revealed when the two women meet.

Anna suffers from nightmares she has experienced since she was a young girl; she dreams of drowning as a ship sinks. When she travels with her mother to Holland via steamship, she relives those dreams when they face a raging storm just before arrival. Geesje has had her share of hardships. Though her faith may have wavered, it stands the test of time, something she shares with Anna through her story.

Austin tells the story of two women, identifying the speaker at the beginning of each chapter. The stories are interwoven with the theme of family secrets, religious persecution, hardships, joys, and God’s faithfulness through it all. Austin’s characters are believable, as is her central theme: nothing can separate us from God. He is always with us, and has a plan for our lives.

Recommended for public libraries and Lynn Austin fans.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

A lady in disguise: a novel / Sandra Byrd.
(The daughters of Hampshire)

376 p.; 22 cm.  Adult
Fic  Rating: 4

Award-winning author Sandra Byrd pens a third novel in her Victorian England historical suspense series.

In A Lady in Disguise, a young Englishwoman works as a costume designer in London’s theater district. When Gillian Young inherits Winton Park, a family estate, following her father’s death, she also inherits questions about the circumstances surrounding his death.

In the course of seeking answers, she meets two young men who show an interest in her: her new neighbor Viscount Thomas Lockwood, and Frances Collingsworth, son of the local inspector. Is their interest genuine? Did her father leave
behind evidence that identifies his killer? Who can she trust when she tries to find it? How does her experience in costumes help her disguise herself to find answers she seeks?

Layers upon layers are revealed about her father’s life until she realizes her parents were very different from what she believed. She comes across young girls in the theater district working in almost slave-like conditions and helps them. But not everyone is in support of that charitable effort. Who is trying to stop her from helping the girls and solving the mystery about her father’s death?

Written in first-person narration, Byrd’s book is filled with mystery, romance, and plot twists—all the elements of a Gothic novel. *A Lady in Disguise* grabs the reader’s attention until its conclusion. The faith element is light, and the historical detail regarding human trafficking, the early days of the Salvation Army, and life in London’s theater district is exceptional.

Recommended for school and public libraries. Fans of Brontë and Victoria Holt will especially enjoy this series. Byrd gives a nod to *Little Women* with quotes sprinkled throughout.

*Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com*

**Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ:** *Mist of Midnight* (May/Jun 2015); *Bride of a Distant Isle* (Jul/Aug/Sep 2016).

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**The Inn at Ocean’s Edge / Colleen Coble.** *(A Sunset Cove novel; 1)*


x, 326 p.; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 4

Family secrets—Fiction. Murder—Investigation—


*The Inn at Ocean’s Edge* is an engaging story with a mix of mystery, suspense, tension, family secrets, betrayal, courage, assault, kidnapping, and murder. A budding romance hindered by doubts, trusting in God during highly stressful times, and a rescued baby orca are also woven into the storyline. Some interesting facts about orcas and their similarities to humans are included in the story. Readers will be invested in the outcome of the novel as the suspense continues to build until it culminates into a climatic ending.

Claire Dellamare has just arrived at Hotel Tourmaline on the island of Folly Shoals, Maine, to help her father with an important merger for the family-owned business. She begins to feel uneasy and ends up having a panic attack. To calm herself down, she goes for a walk on the beach, which leads to an unexpected encounter with Luke Rocco and his sister Megan. During their conversation, Claire is stunned to learn that she went missing at the age of four and spent one year lost in the island’s forest. Luke is hopeful she remembers seeing a woman on the night she disappeared, but Claire has no memories of the childhood incident. Claire confronts her parents about her past and comes to believe they are hiding important details about what happened. Subsequently, Claire and Luke work together to try and discover the truth. Even when a mysterious person threatens Claire’s life, she refuses to give up. Will Claire be able to unravel the secrets of her past, and will it change her life in any way?

The central theme of the book revolves around the complexity of family relationships. Colleen Coble has done a good job of showing the adverse emotional effects that lies and deceptions can
have on family members, while also showing how love, perseverance, and commitment can profoundly impact families. Questions have been included that can be used in group discussions about complex issues faced by characters in the novel.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

**Counted with the stars / Connilyn Cossette. (Out from Egypt; 1)**
345 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5
Women--Egypt--Social conditions--Fiction.

In *Counted with the Stars*, former-elite Egyptian Kiya is convinced the gods have turned their backs on her. Her father sold her into slavery, her betrothed left her, and her new mistress scolds her for everything. Kiya lives in the shadow of her mistress’s Hebrew servant, Shira, and resents her until Shira accepts blame for Kiya’s greatest mistake.

When a Hebrew man proclaims his God is mightier than Pharaoh’s, strange plagues begin tormenting Hebrews and Egyptians alike. After nine horrifying events, Moses says all firstborn boys will die—and Kiya believes him. What she doesn’t know is whether the God of the Hebrews would even spare his own people, let alone her Egyptian family?

In *Shadow of the Storm*, Shira and her family are terrified of the Levites slaying Hebrew idolaters. How could they have so little faith when Adonai has delivered them so far? The killings stress pregnant woman into giving birth. While Shira’s mother is reluctant to let her help, Shira is gifted at calming the to-be mothers. Disobeying her mother’s orders, Shira becomes an apprentice midwife.

Shira’s partner, Dvorah, wants nothing more than to escape with her son and serve her gods back in Egypt. She envies Shira’s perfect life and will do anything to make herself feel whole again. When Shira falls in love, Dvorah deceives them both to get the life she thinks she deserves. Could Adonai truly have a plan for both women when darkness appears everywhere in the desert?

*Counted with the Stars* is a story of accepting foreigners into a group that is not their own. Characters struggle with idolatry, holding onto their pasts, and lustful sins. *Shadow of the Storm* shows how God’s plan always prevails in the face of suffering. Readers should be aware of kidnapping, rape, and violent childbirth scenes.

Reading these books brings life to the great Exodus. Journey through the desert and hear the struggles and complaints of the Hebrews, even with God leading the way. Readers can explore how—despite social divisions, discrimination, and slavery—the Hebrews began to forgive the Egyptians. Connilyn Cossette tactfully creates realistic characters who struggle and fear God’s intervening hand. However, these stories have a clear message: God’s path does not waver or change—trust Him.

Rebecca Schriner, CLJ
The returning / Rachelle Dekker. (A Seer novel; 3)  
xiii, 415 p.; 22 cm. Grades 8-12  
Fic Rating: 5  

Carrington and Remko are back for the third and final chapter of the Seer series. It has been 20 years since baby Elise was taken, and her mother still hasn’t forgiven herself. While watching her second daughter mature, Carrington blames herself for letting Elise’s kidnapper get away. To cope, she writes letters to her firstborn. Carrington’s heart breaks again as her second child, Kennedy, is chosen as one of the Seven, a group prophesized to risk their lives to retake Authority City. How could the “loving” Father take two children from her?

Kennedy never knew Elise, but now she’s on a mission to find her older sister. If it wasn’t for a friend’s gift of dreams, Kennedy wouldn’t even believe her sister could be alive. Hopefully, the dream is also right that Elise is the key to overcoming brainwashing.

Elise believes she’s always lived in Authority City. Abandoned by her parents and immune to the brainwashing serum, Elise has lived in the care of the President and the Scientist. Dreams of darkness haunt her as the Scientist grows agitated by her presence, but Aaron is always there to show her the light within herself. Can the Seven find Elise before the darkness overtakes her?

Follow the next generation of Seers on their search for Elise and for a way to return the Father’s people home. Each of the Seven will have readers laughing at how closely he resembles his parents.

As with the first two books, elements of torture and evil conspiracy continue. This finale also plays heavily on the idea of demon possession. Because there is more darkness compared to the beginning books in the series, The Returning is also more overtly Christian.

Rachelle Dekker completes this series elegantly. Her writing style and characters have matured, forcing readers to feel a wide range of emotions. This idea, along with twists in the story, makes this novel the perfect conclusion to the Seer series.

Rebecca Schriner, CLJ

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: The Choosing (Jul/Aug/Sep 2016); The Calling (Jul/Aug/Sep 2016).

Moving target / Lynette Eason. (Elite guardians; 3)  
327 p.; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  

Bestselling author Lynette Eason continues her romantic suspense series featuring a female-owned agency of female bodyguards.

In Moving Target, Maddy McKay, a former FBI agent and now a bodyguard for Elite Guardians Protection Agency, and Detective Quinn Holcombe are ambushed and kidnapped by someone seeking revenge from their past. But from whose past and which case?

When they awaken in a concrete room, they are unable to remember exactly what happened. Now
the kidnapper wants to exact his revenge through a deadly hunting game on a remote island. Can they escape with their lives? Can they find out who is hunting them? Is it tied to a current case Quinn is investigating?

As always, Eason is an excellent storyteller, weaving plot twists along with her development of complex characters. Violence in the story is appropriate but not too graphic. The book starts off with the ambush and grabs the reader’s attention, keeping it until the very end.

The clean romance develops at a realistic pace, and faith elements are present but not overpowering. Though attracted to one another, Maddy and Quinn have yet to affirm their feelings for one another. In addition, both have family issues preventing them from moving forward in a relationship. They work together to escape their situation, unravel the mystery, catch the killer, begin rebuild family relationships, and plan a future.

Some characters from previous Elite Guardian books make an appearance, to the delight of the reader. The Elite Guardian series are unique in that each cover features a woman carrying a gun. Chasing Secrets (book 4) is due Summer 2017.

Eason’s newest series will interest fans of DiAnn Mills, Dee Henderson, Dani Pettrey, and Irene Hannon. Recommended for adult collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehring, worthy2read.wordpress.com

**Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ:** Always Watching (Mar/Apr/May/Jun 2016); Without Warning (Jul/Aug/ Sep 2016).

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**The imposter : a novel / Suzanne Woods Fisher. (The Bishop’s family; 1)**

299 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

**The quieting : a novel / Suzanne Woods Fisher. (The Bishop’s family; 2)**

Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2016.
340 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Sisters Katrina and Abigail Stoltzfus are highlighted in this series about family struggles, hard decisions, and trusting God with life choices in the Amish world. In The Imposter, Katrina sees her future plans and dreams crumble before her, so she eagerly starts on a venture that she believes will take her mind off her broken relationship and give her a new purpose in life. An unwelcome intrusion arrives in the form of a farmhand who seems too good to be true. Katrina has had her trust broken before—she will not allow it to happen again.

In The Quieting, Abigail has been assisting her father in his genealogical research. Although she is definitely interested in the subject of family history, she also hopes her part in it will help dispel the depression her widowed father is experiencing. Her grandmother has different plans for her. Hoping to play matchmaker, Mammi is insisting that Abigail come to Stoney Ridge to take her pick of the many bachelors there.

The Stoltzfus family is facing serious problems in
the church and at home. One problem is that everyone in the community expects David, as a minister, to fix things and to fix them fast. But David doesn't work fast; he waits for God to change hearts. The question on the hearts of many in this Amish district is whether a quieting—the revoking of the ordination of a bishop, minister or deacon—is the answer.

Fisher writes delightful stories of the Amish replete with the customs of this very interesting group of people, drawing the reader into their daily lives and tribulations. The astounding spiritual wisdom of the father is a highlight in both of these books. Very thought-provoking and inspirational and highly recommended.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

Life after: a novel / Katie Ganshert.
339 p.; 21 cm. Adult (YA)
Fic Rating: 5

Katie Ganshert’s novel Life After provides a narrative of brokenness and healing in the context of suffering. Paul Elliott and Autumn Manning, the main characters of the story, must figure out how to continue living after a train bombing turns their lives upside down. Paul loses his wife in the explosion and is left to navigate single fatherhood. Autumn, the sole survivor, experiences severe trauma from the explosion itself, as well as emotional turmoil and guilt.

This narrative speaks to the nature of God in suffering. Through the events that bring Paul and Autumn together and the details of each character’s experiences with the incident, Ganshert suggests to the reader that God is still good, though circumstances do not always point to that conclusion. As family members of the victims share their experiences with Autumn, she comes to learn that though God does not promise to answer why some things happen, he does promise to be with His people in every circumstance.

As the story progresses, Paul and Autumn slowly recognize the truth of God’s goodness, allowing them to piece their lives back together. Ganshert uses the discovery of truth as a theme throughout the story. Characters often lean on or learn biblical truths. In addition, Autumn and Paul both learn how important truth is in their own lives. For Autumn, remembering or discovering the truth of past events shapes her view of the present and her ability to move on in her life. Paul, on the other hand, learns that much freedom can be found in even difficult truths.

This book is recommended for older teens and adults. Life After addresses the heavy subjects of death and adultery, though no graphic details are involved. Once again Ganshert has cleverly written an original story with unexpected events and results—a story that touches on raw human emotion and experiences and the arduous process of redemption that God works in the lives of His people.

Elisabeth A. Orr, CLJ
Shadow of the mountain: Exodus / Cliff Graham. (Shadow of the mountain; 1)

302 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Shadow of the Mountain: Exodus is a fictional story centered around the biblical character of Caleb. Eighty-five-year-old Caleb is the leader of the Hebrew army. On the eve of battle, stormy weather has delayed the army, and Caleb’s nephew uses this opportunity to encourage his uncle to share details about his life as a young man in Egypt. The story moves between the present and the past with Caleb not only fulfilling his military duties but also relating his experiences in Egypt to his nephew.

Caleb’s narrative begins with him leaving his Kenazzite family and traveling to Egypt where he works mainly as a stone carver. A spur-of-the-moment decision made by Caleb changes the focus of his life from artist to warrior. After undergoing a grueling course of physical training, Caleb becomes a highly skilled and renowned soldier in the Egyptian army. Caleb is entrenched in the Egyptian’s idolatrous way of life until Moses and Aaron ask Pharaoh to release the Hebrew people from slavery. When Pharaoh refuses, God uses Moses and Aaron to bring down ten plagues upon the Egyptian people. Experiencing firsthand the devastating plagues and seeing the omnipotence of the Hebrew God have a profound effect on Caleb.

Cliff Graham has created a backstory of Caleb’s life in Egypt with realistic depictions of ancient Egyptian life. The story dramatizes fiction with biblical history. This gritty and suspenseful story encompasses tragedy, heartache, idolatry, unwavering faith, God’s love and sovereignty, joy, determination, revenge, and salvation. There are graphic descriptions of brutal military training, violent battles, and terrifying plagues. A glossary of terms is at the beginning of the book.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

Irish Meadows / Susan Anne Mason. (Courage to Dream; 1)

375 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

In Irish Meadows, Gil Whelan has finished business school and can’t wait to return home to Irish Meadows—where he was raised by the O’Learys—even if it’s only temporary. Since the O’Learys financed his education, he feels it’s only right to come home and try to help with the family business, a horse farm in Long Island, New York. His return is eagerly awaited by Brianna O’Leary, who was raised with Gil and is like a sister to him, but who can’t help the attraction now that they are grown. However, Mr. O’Leary has plans for Brianna and her sister, Colleen. He wants them to marry into rich, influential families and not have to struggle as his poor Irish immigrant father did. Colleen also has other plans, especially when a handsome distant cousin comes to visit.

Mr. O’Leary wants what’s best for his daughters and knows the hardships of financial struggle. He just seems to go about it the wrong way—preferring to bully his children into doing what he
wants. Brianna knows that her father wouldn't accept a marriage to Gil or the idea of her going to college, but she continues to pray that things will work out in her favor. Colleen also wishes to believe that she'll get to choose her future for herself, even if it's with whom she least expected. Will Gil be able to save Irish Meadows from financial ruin? Will the girls be able to follow their hearts?  

Author Susan Anne Mason deftly portrays early 20th-century life in Long Island. Her characters are well-drawn and grow throughout the progress of the story. Each of the main characters is determined and strong-willed in their own fashion, but their faith and prayers help them get through each day and look forward to a brighter future.

Recommended for public and school libraries.  
Trina Chase, CLJ

The body under the bridge / Paul McCusker. (Father Gilbert mystery)  
313 p.; 20 cm.  
Fic  
Rating: 4  
Priests--Fiction. Murder--Investigation--Fiction.  
Sussex (England)--Fiction.  

The Body under the Bridge finds former detective turned Anglican priest in a murder mystery that spans hundreds of years as well as natural and supernatural realms. A disturbing vision leads Father Gilbert to find a historic medallion of unknown worth and significance left behind on the belfry at St. Mark's in Stonebridge, England. Following the vision and subsequent discovery, police investigate a well-preserved “bog-body” found under a historic bridge on land in the center of a development controversy. As Father Gilbert and Father Benson, the new, young curate at St. Mark's, investigate further, more light is shed on dark matters until they fear for their own lives.

Father Gilbert's personality is easy to love. Paul McCusker excels at creating sympathetic characters. Gilbert's car is perpetually in the shop. He loves his church members and is dedicated to ministry and even prays occasionally for dead souls. Though he left Scotland Yard, the detective in him still can't seem to resist solving a crime. The plot churns up dead bodies and adds an element of the supernatural—even of demonic influence—creating a mood of darkness and suspense. An evil element oppresses certain characters making clear the difference between spiritual light and darkness. As Father Gilbert investigates further, he discovers that black masses have been held at St. Mark's. There are non-explicit references to sexual temptation and orgies, and even Father Gilbert seems affected by some of the demonic activity and is shown to struggle with temptation. Gilbert and Benson witness a stabbing at a black mass that they stumble upon. Astral projections and near-death occurrences are mentioned. A couple of the secondary characters use mild expressions such as “Good Lord” and a “Good God.”

In spite of the darkness that shrouds this book, the redeeming element, besides a good who-dun-it, is the wisdom sprinkled throughout. “I know that coincidences, the pull of Truth, are all part of a providential conspiracy to get us to Him.” (p. 203) “Ironically it was death, his great nemesis, that pointed him to life.” (p. 72)  
Kristina Wolcott, CLJ
Gathering shadows / Nancy Mehl. (Finding Sanctuary; 1)

316 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
Journalists--Missouri--Saint Louis--Fiction.
Broadcasting--Missouri--Saint Louis--Fiction.
Christian fiction.

Deadly echoes / Nancy Mehl. (Finding sanctuary; 2)

329 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
Christian fiction.

Rising darkness / Nancy Mehl. (Finding sanctuary; 3)

308 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
Mennonites--Fiction. Women journalists--Fiction.
Man-woman relationships--Fiction. Romantic suspense fiction.
Christian fiction.

The series takes place in Sanctuary, Missouri, where the population is predominately Mennonite and the townspeople are extremely protective of their privacy. Each book features different main characters, who go on spiritual journeys while trying to overcome challenges in their lives. Nancy Mehl has combined mystery, suspense, and light romance, along with inspirational messages of faith and hope not only for people who are going through difficult times but also for people who no longer trust God.

In *Gathering Shadows*, 23-year-old Wynter Evans is a television news reporter assigned to put together a documentary on small towns in Missouri. She decides to go to Sanctuary because she suspects a teenager who lives in the town is her long-lost brother, who was abducted at the age of seven and has been presumed dead. The abduction tore her family apart and destroyed her faith in God. After a chance encounter in Sanctuary with the teenager, she is convinced more than ever that he is her brother and is determined to prove it no matter the cost. Will Wynter find her brother and welcome God back into her life?

In *Deadly Echoes*, 24-year-old Sarah Miller is the school teacher in Sanctuary. Sarah’s life is thrown into turmoil when her sister, Hannah, is murdered. Sarah becomes the legal guardian of her 10-year-old niece, and it is not an easy transition for either of them. To complicate matters, the circumstances surrounding Hannah’s death are eerily similar to how their parents were killed. Because Sarah is dissatisfied with the police’s ruling in both cases, she decides to do some investigating on her own and runs into dangerous roadblocks. Is there a connection between the two cases that someone does not want her to find? Sarah is a woman of faith who struggles with self-esteem throughout the story. Will she be able to overcome putting herself down?

In *Rising Darkness*, 21-year-old Sophie Wittenbauer has turned her back on God, left her traumatic past behind, and created a new life for herself. She now goes by the name of Sophie Bauer and writes obituaries for the St. Louis Times, but she has her heart set on becoming a crime reporter. When she finds out from an old acquaintance that a fugitive believed to be dead may be alive and hiding out in Sanctuary, she uses
a false identity to go undercover in the town. While trying to track the man down, she not only puts her life in danger but also sets her past and present on a collision course. Will Sophie get the story she so desperately wants? Because of her horrid childhood, Sophie believes God does not answer prayers. Will she change her mind?

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

**Deep extraction / DiAnn Mills. (FBI task force; 2)**

xii, 396 p.; 21 cm. Adult (HS)  
Fic Rating: 4  

Award-winning author DiAnn Mills continues her contemporary romantic suspense series on FBI agents in the Houston area.

In *Deep Extraction*, Special Agent Tori Templeton is faced with a professional challenge: her best friend is the FBI’s prime suspect in the murder of her husband, an oil and gas corporation executive. Someone bombed his oil rigs earlier—was his death part of a larger conspiracy? Did someone hack into his pacemaker to cause his death or was it accidental?

Tori is joined by U.S. Marshall Cole Jeffers to investigate the executive’s business and personal affairs to discover the killer’s motives and identity. The closer they get to the truth, the more the killer is intent on silencing them. Will they unravel the mystery before it is too late?

Mills excels in plot development—the story keeps the reader’s attention until the final page. Flawed but realistic characters and a realistic plot with plenty of twists are what readers have come to expect from Mills. The faith element and the romance are present but not the main focus—the main characters are attracted to each other but keep the relationship light until the case is solved. Forgiveness and bitterness are themes in this book. Does one get better or bitter under trying circumstances?

*Deep Extraction* will appeal to readers who like suspenseful romance and carefully-researched details. Fans of Dee Henderson and Irene Hannon will also enjoy this series. An author note and discussion questions are also included.

Highly recommended for public and high school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

**Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Deadly Encounter (Oct/Nov/Dec 2016).**

**The midwife’s tale / Delia Parr. (At home in Trinity; 1)**

332 p.; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  

**The midwife’s choice / Delia Parr. (At home in Trinity; 2)**

328 p.; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  
Martha Cade comes from a long line of midwives, proud of this satisfying work and hoping to continue her vocation for many years to come. She loves ushering new life into the world and ministering to the mothers, but a consequence of being in so many homes and at a rather intimate time is that Martha knows all the secrets of her small Pennsylvania town—a blessing yet a burden at times.

Martha has been long widowed and raising her headstrong daughter Victoria can be a trial. She had hoped that this daughter would take over her midwifery practice in the future but Victoria has her sights set on a more worldly endeavor. At the onset of the first book in the series, The Midwife’s Tale, Martha has not heard from her daughter in months and is distraught, wondering where she might be. Will there be reconciliation?

The story continues in The Midwife’s Choice and The Midwife’s Dilemma. Throughout the series, other events also weigh heavily on Martha. This is the 1830’s and times are changing. The obstetric methods of a new young doctor in town are threatening her job, causing pregnant women to seek him out for their care instead of the traditional midwife. And there is romance in the air. As a young woman, Martha’s beau was Thomas Dillon, now the town’s mayor. Although each of them married another, now that they are both widowed, Thomas is determined to make Martha his bride.

Martha trusts the Lord and although her faith is often tested, she turns to Him again and again for strength and guidance. All three titles in Delia Parr’s At Home in Trinity series are enjoyable inspirational fiction.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

Ruth envisions an idyllic life with the man she loves, going to college, and becoming a teacher. When a terrible tragedy shatters her life, Ruth must decide how much she wants to live—and how to escape a domineering father. Her choice propels her on a journey through America’s 1930s western landscape dotted with Hoovervilles and plagued by state-sponsored racism.

After an assault and a false accusation derail her dream of school and uproot her again, she embarks on a new journey into the world of Mexican workers fighting illegal deportations. In the midst of her own grief and struggles, Ruth rises above herself and discovers the redeeming qualities of service to others that transforms her life and that of those around her. Teaching the Mexican children, she learns that every child should feel content, that education is a universal right, and that God is the God of all cultures and

Broken ground : a novel / Karen Halvorsen Schreck.

327 p.; 22 cm. Adult (YA)
Fic Rating: 5

fiction.

The midwife’s dilemma / Delia Parr. (At home in Trinity; 3)

317 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
languages.
Through thoughtful narrative, engaging dialogue, and descriptive scenes, Karen Halvorsen Schreck portrays a little-known part of American History. In addition, Broken Ground is a powerful reminder of the redemptive quality of suffering that leads to fruitful growth in God, and that proves that all things do work together for good, if you are open to God’s call and willing to go wherever that takes you.

Veronica Jorge, CLJ

Shine like the dawn / by Carrie Turansky.
352 p. ; 22 cm.    Adult
Fic    Rating: 4

Award-winning author Carrie Turansky pens a new Edwardian novel where childhood friends reunite after the deaths of their parents.

In Shine Like the Dawn, Margaret (Maggie) Lounsbury works in her grandmother’s millinery shop while caring for her six-year-old sister, Violet. They lost their parents several years earlier in a boating accident. Maggie is bitter towards God (and Maggie’s childhood friend Nathaniel Harcourt) for abandoning them after their accident, not knowing that his family kept Maggie and Nathaniel apart.

When Nathaniel returns home to deal with his father’s illness four years later, he discovers an unpaid debt to Maggie’s father and is committed to repaying it after his father’s death. Nathaniel takes over his father’s engineering company, dealing with worker conditions and problems with his stepmother. Meanwhile, Maggie begins to suspect her parents’ death wasn’t accidental, and asks Nathaniel to help her search for answers. Will the person behind it cause more “accidents”? Will this bring them closer to one another when they discover the truth?

Turansky excels in her writing—her books are filled with rich characterization and descriptive narrative. Historical details give the reader a glimpse into life in an English village. The faith element is present but not heavy-handed. Maggie’s bitterness prevents her heart from healing, and her faith is struggling. Maggie’s grandmother and Nathaniel do not preach but serve as examples of being strong in their faith, despite life’s struggles.

Fans of Turansky’s novels will enjoy this new work. Shine Like the Dawn is a joy to read, with its family drama, clean romance, and the restoration of an estranged relationship to God.

Recommended for adults in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

King’s blood / Jill Williamson. (The kinsman chronicles; 2)
603 p. ; 22 cm.    Adult
Fic    Rating: 4

Award-winning author Jill Williamson pens another volume in her epic fantasy series for adult readers, filled with political and spiritual intrigue.

In King’s Blood, those who escaped the destruction of the Five Realms live on hundreds of
ships, seeking a new home. They encounter giants and serpents, while their leaders face assassination attempts and coups. The people live in spiritual darkness—worshipping multiple gods, believing in superstition, and using dark magic. The king of Armania is dying, and Sar Wilek emerges as the leader of the Armanians. How will the prophecy of the promised Deliverer affect them?

Even longer than book one (by 50 pages, this one has almost 600 pages!), Williamson manages to produce another well-written volume with interesting characters and plot twists. The author carefully juggles multiple points of view by identifying the character at the beginning of each chapter. Although it is a lengthy book, it was originally published as three shorter ebooks: Kingdom at Sea, Maelstrom, and Voices of Blood.

Williamson does an excellent job of world building. Inspired by the corrupt kings of Israel, Williamson’s series is more appropriate for adults and teens over sixteen. The book includes a list of the key players and an author’s note; supplemental material is available on her website. The Kinsman Chronicles contains elements that foreshadow The Blood of Kings trilogy (for example, blood voicing which is similar to telepathic powers and only given to those in the royal bloodline).

Recommended for high school libraries, as well as adult fiction collections in public libraries. The third book, King’s War, will complete this series.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: King’s Folly (Jul/Aug/Sep 2016).

**ADULT NONFICTION**

God’s crime scene : a cold-case detective examines the evidence for a divinely created universe / J. Warner Wallace.


320 p.: ill.; 23 cm. Adult

213 Rating: 4

Creationism. Apologetics.

J. Warner Wallace uses his experience as a cold-case detective to explore the origin of the universe from a unique perspective. God’s Crime Scene follows the format of a court case, beginning with an opening statement, followed by the presentation of evidence and then the closing argument. Wallace discusses whether or not the universe was created by natural means or by the intervention of a Divine Intruder. He applies the same investigative techniques used in solving murder cases to evaluating evidence found at a crime scene. Just as a detective has to look at evidence both “inside” and “outside” the crime scene area to determine motive and intent, Wallace presents evidence from which the “prosecution” argues for the existence of God and His divine intervention in creation, while the “defense” claims that natural forces are behind how the world was created. It is left up to the readers to evaluate the evidence and come to their own conclusion.

Side bars, hand-drawn black-and-white illustrations, personal police investigation stories, and case files provide additional information beneficial for explaining the scientific and philosophical theories behind Wallace’s investigation into whether the universe was
designed and brought into existence by God. The side bars include a detective’s approach to solving a cold case and how that relates the question of universe’s origin, qualifications of key witnesses, ways to evaluate evidence, references to pages in the book for further information pertinent to each chapter, and an on-going “suspect” profile. Some of the key witnesses include physicists, philosophers, theologians, and evolutionary biologists.

The book concludes with three sections of case files. The first section gives readers an opportunity to examine detailed explanations of the evidence presented in each chapter that adheres to a more academic way of thinking. The second section provides information not only about whether the expert witness is on the “prosecution” or “defense” side of a case but also the names of books they have written. The third section includes Wallace’s case notes that he put together for his investigation into the creator of the universe.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

Core Christianity : finding yourself in God’s story / Michael Horton.

Grand Rapids, Mi: Zondervan, 2016.
187 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
230 Rating: 5
Theology, Doctrinal--Popular works. Christian life.

Westminster Seminary professor and theologian Michael Horton seeks to help the Christian reader to invite others into solid theological truths. Horton’s Core Christianity: Finding Yourself in God’s Story puts together systematic theology, biblical theology, and practical theology into one discussion. The twelve chapters of the book cover four themes: the drama of redemption, the doctrine of Scripture, doxology (praise/worship), and discipleship.

One particular strength of this work is the author’s emphasizing that it’s not so much that God is a part of our stories, but that we are a part of His. Another is the practical approach on what believers should be doing until Jesus returns, with a look at serving in our various callings—a discussion enabling believers to be more direct in handling challenges and doubts. A lingering consistent theme is Horton’s persistent focus on God and His Word. He is clear about enabling believers to know what they believe and why. Those having read Basic Christianity by John Stott will enjoy this clarifying work.

The discussion is well worth the time in reading. The print is somewhat small, with the font in the sidebars somewhat difficult to read. Younger believers can also consult Surprised by Faith by Don Bierle.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

The deity of Christ / John MacArthur. (The John MacArthur study series)

217 p. ; 21 cm. Adult
232.8 Rating: 4
Jesus Christ--Divinity--Biblical teaching.

This book represents a compilation of sections of the MacArthur New Testament Commentary. The 10 chapters are divided into three parts titled: 1) The Divine Glory of Christ, 2) The Divine

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Authority of Christ, and 3) The Divine Claims of Christ.

The first section deals with both the eternal glory of Christ as well as his preeminence. This section primarily addresses the explicit claims by two New Testament writers. Christ is shown to be eternal and over all via the text of the New Testament.

The second section discusses the authority of Christ over various aspects of creation. Thus, the case for the deity of Christ in this section is often more implicit than explicit. Christ shows his authority over demons, sin and disease, the Sabbath, and Creation. The cumulative argument is that Christ is shown doing and saying things that only God can do. The demons cower in fear in the presence of Christ (p. 52). Christ forgives the sin of the paralytic borne of four (Mark 2:5). The Sabbath was established and ordained by God. So, by implication, Christ's view of his preeminence over the Sabbath can only mean that this is an implicit claim to Deity (Mark 2:23-28). Christ's ability to walk on the water during a storm shows his sovereignty over creation (Matt. 14:22-33).

In the third section, MacArthur deals with the explicit claims of Christ in the Gospels, with a heavy emphasis on the Gospel of John, where Jesus’ claims to Deity are quite a bit more vocal in comparison to the other Gospels.

John MacArthur stays true to his view of himself as a pastor/teacher dealing with the interpretation of the text. Though he may mention liberal challenges to the claims of the New Testament, for the most part he steers clear of these. This book is recommended for those who would appreciate a primer on the subject of the deity of Christ from a pastor’s perspective. It is recommended for private and public libraries.

Michael Wilhelm, CLJ

The Jesus experience: journey deeper into the heart of God / Bill Myers.

175 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Adult
248.4 Rating: 5

Award-winning author Bill Myers shares his personal journey of how he falls deeply in love with God. The transformation of his walk with God does not happen overnight. After becoming overworked from all of the numerous projects he is doing in trying to please God, Myers comes to realize that he is emulating Martha from the Bible story of Martha and Mary. This is a turning point in his mindset and attitude regarding God and leads to his developing an intimate friendship with God. Meyers discusses three Scriptures that have had a major impact on his relationship with Jesus Christ and are the key elements of his deep, unwavering joy for God.

The Jesus Experience: Journey Deeper into the Heart of God offers practical ways for both recent converts and long-time believers in Jesus Christ to avoid the pitfall of allowing works of service to become the priority in their lives, instead of spending time with God and enjoying His company. The book is written in an easy-to-understand style, and Myers recounts his story with candor, insight, and humor. The anecdotes, personal testimony, Bible verses and passages, inspirational examples of God’s unfailing love, and challenging chapter questions to reflect on at the end of the book makes this an inspiring story for readers to explore their own relationship with God.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ
Contagious disciple-making: leading others on a journey of discovery / David L. Watson & Paul D. Watson.
xvi, 237 p.; 21 cm. Adult
253 Rating: 4
Discipling (Christianity)

Contagious Disciple-Making focuses on how to plant and grow churches in remote and difficult-to-reach areas. The father-and-son team of David and Paul Watson have started a multitude of churches and baptized a plethora of people in Africa, India, Central and South America, and the United States using the principles and strategies of their Disciple-Making Movement. The Watsons advocate evangelizing families and communities, rather than individuals. One of the main points made in the book is that trying to win people to a particular denomination or congregation is thought to be a hindrance for making disciples of Jesus Christ.

The book starts with a brief introduction, and the main portion is split into two parts. The introduction describes the motivation behind the launching of the Watsons’ Disciple-Making Movement. Part 1 explains the way of thinking required for a disciple-maker. There are nine viewpoints covered in the book, such as presenting the gospel without Western cultural influence, the importance of being obedient out of love for God, and understanding the difference between making disciples and making converts. Part 2 covers the essential components to be a disciple-maker and to start a Disciple-Making Movement. There are nine elements, such as an unwavering commitment to prayer, approaches to leadership development, and characteristics of mentoring relationships.

Biblical citations, passages of Scripture, paraphrasing of Bible verses, and personal experiences are included throughout the book to support the Watsons in their recommended way for disciple-making to succeed. The afterword is written by David Watson and is a testament to the unexpected results of the Disciple-Making Movement. In the appendix is a list of Scripture passages from both the Old and New Testament, which is for personal study about the creation of the world, the fall of man and its effect on humanity, and the redemption of mankind.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

ADVANCED INTEREST

Faith alone: the doctrine of justification: what the reformers taught and why it still matters / Thomas Schreiner; Matthew Barrett, series editor. (The five solas series)
288 p.; 22 cm. Adult
234.7 Rating: *5
Justification (Christian theology)

Author Thomas Schreiner provides a good summation of the book on page 179: “...this book is an introduction and a tour through the doctrine of justification –historically, biblically, and theologically...” This is precisely what the book provides.

In the first section of the book, the author moves the reader through samples of the writings of the early church fathers, culminating with the views
of Augustine. The historical tour continues through the Reformers, consisting of an exposition of their understanding of the doctrine of justification as well their unique formulations of the doctrine. The reaction of the Council of Trent is also considered. The tour progresses through Puritan authors such as John Owen and Richard Baxter, among others. The section concludes by considering the views of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley.

The next section considers the biblical evidence for the doctrine of justification by faith alone and its theological implications. This is where the author truly begins to hit his stride. As a professor of New Testament as well as associate dean of Scripture and Interpretation, Schreiner allows his expertise and facility with the biblical text really shine through in this section. His tone is consistently irenic. He sets out his opponents’ position very well and then begins to refute that position. However, this is not done in a polemical tirade but a point-by-point, reasoned refutation.

The final section of the book considers how Sola Fide (faith alone) is being challenged currently in New Testament studies. The work of N. T. Wright is highlighted for special attention. Once again, Schreiner does not simply find fault. On several occasions, he voices his appreciation for the work of Wright and points out specific insights that Wright’s scholarship has given to him. In the end, however, Schreiner is setting forth a historical, biblical, and theological argument that the doctrine of justification by faith alone is the most biblically faithful understanding of how man can be justified before God. The short concluding chapter to the book makes abundantly clear that the author holds to a Reformed understanding of the doctrine.

This book is highly recommended. Though intended as an introduction, it is not a light read and will challenge most readers. However, it is written in such a way that it does not presume any specialized knowledge on the part of the reader. In other words, if one is interested in the topic, this book would be a great resource for exploration. This book would be a welcome addition to public or private libraries. It also would likely function very well in group study.

Michael Wilhelm, CLJ

What Christians ought to believe : an introduction to Christian doctrine through the Apostles’ creed / Michael F. Bird.

239 p.; 24 cm. Adult
238.11 Rating: 5
Apostles’ Creed. Theology, Doctrinal.

Bringing together helpful illustrations, theological discussion, and ways to apply these to one’s life, What Christians Ought to Believe enables readers to see the possibilities of the Apostle’s Creed as a way to probe and understand the basic teachings of the Christian faith. The book provides a syllabus for summarizing what Christians believe about God, Jesus, the church, and the life to come.

Author Michael R. Bird begins by highlighting the importance of creeds for the formation of the Christian faith, with each chapter, following the Creed’s outline, introducing the Trinity and the church of believers. Bird notes that embedding the Apostles’ Creed in our corporate church life is an excellent way to ensure the integrity and orthodoxy of our faith and a great means to infuse some ancient wisdom into our spiritual journey.
An appendix includes the Apostles’ Creed in the original Latin and Greek.

*Leroy Hommerding, CLJ*
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