

on the occasion of a daughter's birthday, there is time for practicing the pace he seeks to achieve. In "A Gift for Nancy's Birthday," Chafin captures the celebration in and depth of their gift. Nancy, a future lawyer, receives "a starter kit for a ranch," her first cow (pp. 74-75).

Chafin's pulse with Barbara, his wife, is vibrant. Whether in the passionate intimacy of "Full Circle" or the removed perspective on her mothering skills in "Barbara," we touch the timbre of this constant pulse in his life.

As Chafin moves us easily through these transitions and stations, he maneuvers like a master composer in capturing the major themes in a final showcase of tones and textures called "Sunday Morning Prayer." My daughter's trumpet resounds more boldly now; my son's afternoon dance is brisk and full of life. May you find this, his pace in prayer and in life.

Help me to find a rhythm for my life
which is in tune with my body,
with my gifts, with my opportunities,
with my responsibilities,
with my commitments,
and with thy larger purpose
Let there be in me a celebration of life,
the building of relationship,
and the nurturing of others. . . .

Let there come to me a quietness of soul,
a relaxed mind, a focused purpose,
a gentle touch, an inner security,
and integrity of being. Amen (pp. 103-04).

E. Dale Melton

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Andrews, Dale P. (2002). *Practical theology for black churches*. (2002). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN: 0664224296. 150 pp. \$18.95.

According to Dale Andrews, at the very heart of black faith identity lays a deep dialectic between "personhood" and "peoplehood," between the cultivation of one's own selfhood and esteem and the nurture, support, and liberation of the black community. During the last century and a half, how-

ever, this dialectic has been disrupted by the powerful mythology of individualism within North American culture and religious piety. At the heart of this mythology is an assumption that proves to be exceedingly dangerous to black faith identity and which has increasingly fragmented black churches, especially its middle class adults and urban youth. This is assumption that, above all else, what it means to be an individual is to be someone who has internal control of one's life, trusting one's own abilities, at the same time that one feels able to take internal responsibility for one's personal and social destiny. Making use of David Augsburg's research on this topic, Andrews points out that whereas a certain portion of the black middle classes are able to achieve this sense of internal control and responsibility, many members of black churches, black urban youth, and black theologians, are aware that the picture is far more complex. Some black urban youth, for instance, while feeling some sense of internal responsibility for their lives, believe that in fact their possibilities for fullness of life are controlled mostly by forces that are exterior to them—creating a sense of paradox and frustration. Other black urban youth feel that both the responsibility for their destinies and the control of their immediate circumstances are external to them altogether—prompting nothing short of a feeling of despair and hopelessness. On the other hand, some within the black middle class and many black theologians are willing to make society take external responsibility for the conditions within much of black America, while at the same time they still feel that they have some internal control over their situation.

According to Andrews, this fragmentation of black cultural identity by individualism has wrought tremendous deleterious effects within black churches and within the academy. Not only does it weaken the ability of black churches to hold together all black people (peoplehood), but it tends to make black churches subsume black liberative praxis, or the task of resisting oppression and seizing the means for external control and external responsibility, within an individualistic religion focused mostly on personal salvation. This situation has created and exacerbated a deep division that now exists between black churches and black liberationist theologies. Black theologians have tended to accuse black churches of a loss of social and political responsibility altogether, and of retreating into a gospel of self-fulfillment and escapism.

Instead of blaming black churches for this situation, Andrews would prefer that black theologians pay more care-

ful attention to the effects of American individualism. In fact, what Andrews discovers when he looks more deeply into the practical theology at work within black churches is a remnant of a form of covenant theology in which personhood and peoplehood can be held together in a way that includes the praxis of liberation. In the covenant traditions Andrews finds a form of liberation that goes beyond the critique posed by black theology since it allows also for genuine forms of communal/individual repentance, reform and reconciliation. In this way, prophetic critique is bound deeply to a practical theology of black churches that interprets liberation always within the faith community itself and within its dialectic between personhood and peoplehood.

Andrews is trying to do a lot in this book, and he succeeds primarily by way of being suggestive and provocative. Although he shows several ways that the covenant traditions could heal the rift between black theology and black churches, he has yet to demonstrate how this same covenant theology, when preached, taught, and lived, can heal the significant issues posed by American individualism for black urban youth and the black middle class. Of course, one cannot do everything in a book of this size and scope. It is to be hoped that Andrews will pursue these crucial issues that impinge upon the black families and black churches in future works.

John S. McClure

Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, TN

McAvoy, Jane. (Ed.). (2003). *Kitchen talk: Sharing our stories of faith*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press. ISBN: 0827219008. 149 pp. \$19.99.

This collection of narratives comes from a group of women theologians who take their name, Forrest-Moss, from Christian women leaders of the past. Their work, however, situates itself very much in the present as they meet together for support, encouragement, and dialogue around issues that Christian women face today. Several themes tie the essays together: community and belonging, vocation and identity, and relationships and honesty in sharing life experiences. Many other themes emerge in particular essays. A final chapter which records a conversation among the authors on the significance of the writing process, as well as how the

stories influenced their friendships and their theologies, draws the reader into their circle.

Each author captivates the reader with her dilemma and her struggle for resolution. Journeys into and out of the church, interactions with family members, wonderings about God's call, and insights gained from friendships will call out an empathetic response from Christian women readers. The struggles of these women are the struggles of Christian women and families in the church today. Issues of spiritual yearning and belonging, connectedness versus distance, changes in lifestyle and church tradition, and the risk-taking of honest sharing and action confront us all.

This book is especially suited for women in ministry and professional academic careers. The personal stories give the reader a glimpse into how academic theologians utilize everyday events in their lives as sources of theological reflection. Discussions about the connections between experiential writing and theological reflection can become an asset to pastors in sermon preparation—and perhaps even professors in lecture preparation.

Throughout the book, the relationship between experience and theology is treated with some ambivalence. Jane McAvoy's introduction states that the goal of the book is not theologizing but describing women's experience with a goal of mutual support (p. 2). Rita Nakashima Brock comments in the concluding conversation that "What we are doing is theology" (p. 143). This ambivalence and the discussions of theological method in the last chapter demonstrate the group's conviction that narrative theology is a complex and demanding task—one that needs refining to be useful to Christian theologians today. This book takes another step in that refining process. Sometimes it is in the particulars that one glimpses the big picture.

Frances S. Adeney

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Sakenfeld, Katherine Doob. (2003). *Just wives? Stories of power and survival in the Old Testament and today*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN: 0664226604. 136 pp. \$14.95.

Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, Professor of Old Testament Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary serves women