

times with great poignancy. It is clear that he wrote this book carefully, prayerfully, and with consistent attention to the accuracy of such historical detail as it contains.

Ziefle's style is clear, frequently compelling in its descriptions, and always appropriately simple. Some of its passages, particularly those in which he describes the devastation of war, could be profitably used even toward the close of first-year German courses. And particularly in the aftermath of September 11, teachers and students alike can surely benefit from the book's compelling reminders that even in the most dire circumstances, there is an Anchor that holds.

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**Smith, David I., and Carvill, Barbara.** *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, xv + 233 pp., ISBN 0-8028-5708-0, \$15.

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Between the Foreword by Ron Wells of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship and the last chapter, which samples curricular materials from the Charis Project of the Stapleford Centre in Nottingham, UK, *The Gift of the Stranger* is anchored between two institutions dedicated to fostering Christian scholarship in academic disciplines. At the same time, the work embodies the considerable talents and experience of its two authors intent on establishing Christian foundations for the discipline of foreign languages.

The US scholars David Smith and Barbara Carvill are leading exponents of the thesis that one can theorize in a Christian way about the teaching and learning of second languages. With their roots in European and Continental cultures, and their additional combined experiences and research foci touching at least the Australian and Asian continents—if not the whole globe—the authors have produced a book of fundamental interest to language educators.

The authors seek understanding of their own work as language

teachers; and by dint of being self-consciously Christian scholars, they partly speak for others who wish to start from the same vantage point. In addition, they challenge scholars of alternative persuasion to examine the assumptions and consequences of the theories and methods current in language teaching.

Is there a Christian approach to the question of teaching languages? An initial three-chapter section of *The Gift of the Stranger* considers the apparent lack of direct biblical reference to the topic. But in what I consider to be brilliant reasoning and hermeneutics, the reader is enabled to see what both the Old and New Testament bring to bear on the matter after all. God's delight in the earth, the error of the Babel city-builders, the plethora of languages at Pentecost—all these biblical passages, and more, show how one can think biblically about teaching and learning languages. The book performs a valuable service in showing that Christian thought about the topic is by no means as new as it may seem to present-day readers. With insightful scholarship David Smith starts his review with the early Christian thinkers; the historical retrospective ends with a significant discussion of Comenius.

The point having been established that Christian thinking about language learning indeed does have a venerable tradition, Barbara Carvill begins Part II with a stunning personal anecdote leading into the central metaphor of the book: hospitality toward the stranger. The book treats hosts and strangers as complementary, the one receiving the other, and the other entering the cultural and lingual realm of the first. Both sides have gifts to offer, and Carvill develops the section masterfully. The discussion of hosts and strangers is rewarding reading, and it bears careful study. Concepts of hospitality not only trace to Scriptural injunctions upon the people of Israel, but are developed by important writers of recent times such as Henri Nouwen, Miroslav Volf, and others. Are there ways in which the concept of hospitality relates to education generally? In what ways can it be shown that perversions of hospitality have occurred in history, and what can be learned from the past? Readers will find questions of this sort adroitly handled.

For teachers to think of their students as preparing to become hosts of strangers, as gaining in their language lessons the skills and attitudes required to respond to the needs of the other, or as offering to others the gifts of curiosity, interest, understanding and the like – such thinking is

likely to lead teachers to construct their theoretical framework in new ways. The authors examine motives by which language professionals typically justify the existence of their discipline, and what rationales students might have for learning an additional language. As various commonly held notions are weighed in the balance, the reader learns how to apply faith principles and the notion of hospitality to actual language learning in the classroom. David Smith presents outlines of a model for that purpose in a chapter called 'Faith and Method.' Additionally, both the Community Language Learning approach (C.A. Curran) and C. Kramersch's culture-based approach are critiqued in some detail. Not only does a clear view of these two methodologies emerge, but the reader also benefits from the analytical and critical exercise. Part Three concludes with the curriculum samples mentioned initially.

The book is a serious scholarly work, containing a bibliography that represents a valuable instrument in itself. The work provokes those who own a Christian faith to consider how assumptions implicit in that starting point might be fleshed out in the practice of language teaching and learning. For those who hold to a methodology of any sort, *The Gift of the Stranger* invites attempts to make explicit some of the assumptions that underlie the practice. Whether starting from a biblical faith or from another set of assumption, a *fides quaerens intellectum* is the sum and substance of what the book urges. It is for that reason, perhaps, that this landmark contribution reflects the organizational mission of NACFLA, and has already served the Christian community of language professionals as a kind of touchstone.

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