The Rev. John Yuen-Han Yieh, Ph.D., The Molly Laird Downs Professor in New Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary, recommends the following books as part of the Bishop Payne Library’s monthly series highlighting a faculty member’s “picks”:


How do you answer the questions from your parishioners who have just read the popular Left-behind series? The Book of Revelation continues to fascinate and bewilder readers today. Does it offer prophetic insights on eschatology, cryptic messages for Christ’s return, or a vision of God’s justice to be de-mythologized? In order to avoid exegesis, professors often advise students to leave their prejudice behind and read the scripture as if for the first time. In the case of Revelation, however, no readers can escape their presuppositions regarding God or the Final Judgment, so they may as well be clear and honest about their own perspectives. The most important contribution of this book is Chilton’s review of major interpretations of Revelation in history, such as Papias’ millenarian kingdom, Augustine’s vertical ascent to heaven, Origen’s transcendent meaning, and Dionysius’ hidden message, to help today’s readers understand themselves before reading the book.


During Advent season, virgin birth is often a lurking question behind the joyous Christmas pageant. In *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (2nd ed., 2009), Markus Borg and N. T. Wright have offered two opposite views on the physicality of the virgin birth: confessional versus symbolic. But how does virgin birth affect Christian theology? To answer the question, Lincoln compares the two nativity accounts in Matthew and Luke in conjunction with other NT views, such as incarnation. He also surveys major interpretations of virginal conception by key theologians, such as Irenaeus, Augustine, and Schleiermacher, to “reconceive” Jesus in light of scriptural hermeneutics, Christology, and creed. This is a thoughtful and accessible study of a difficult topic for any serious Christian.


The Lord’s Prayer is central to Christian doctrine, spiritual life, and common worship. Biblical scholars consider it a quintessential summary of Jesus’ kingdom theology. The church has used it in catechism, baptism, daily offices, and the Eucharist from the beginning till now. Bishop Stevenson tells a learned and captivating story of the Prayer to show how it has been interpreted throughout history and how it has shaped the belief and practice of the church until today. It is informative and interesting, useful for adult forum and group discussion.


If you miss your struggle to understand Paul in seminary classes, this massive two-volume set by the passionate and eloquent former Bishop of Durham provides an up-to-date and comprehensive treatment of Paul’s theology. To understand Paul’s theology, Wright argues, one needs to place it in the Jewish, Roman and Greek worlds Paul lived in, the worldview of God in full control he subscribed, and the momentous stories of salvation he believed. At the center of the grand scheme of Paul’s theology is the faithfulness of God that is revealed in Jesus the Messiah and conveyed to the faith community by the Spirit. Wright’s compelling account of Paul’s theology takes a patient read, but it is full of historical information, exegetical insights and theological acumen.