

Luke Timothy Johnson  
**The Living Gospel**  
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This collection of essays, many of which have appeared in *Priests and People*, is designed to appeal to a wide audience. The essays include a variety of styles, though almost always with a strong scriptural reference. There is exegesis of a gospel passage or theme, such as 'The Not-So-Empty Tomb' (on Luke 24.1-11) and on John the Baptist; theological discussions which include that on sacrifice which Johnson suggests understanding in terms of a 'love-gift', on the Holy Spirit as an agent of transformation through humility and service and another which is a critique of the modern quest for the historical Jesus in the form of the Jesus seminar; and there is discussion of contemporary ethical issues including wealth and property, sexual abuse of children, marriage, and homosexuality. A number of essays reveal the author's Roman Catholic background and expectations about parish life and others have a specifically Roman Catholic orientation, most notably 'Renewing Catholic Biblical Scholarship'.

The essays vary in length from about six to ten pages, so none is too weighty for one session, though a number are worthy of more than one reading. While there are new insights in some places, on other occasions Johnson seems to rehearse old arguments, or perhaps because of the non-specific nature of his readership, to be too vague and inconclusive. It is a book worth having to stimulate one's thought on various aspects of Christian faith and practice, and once aware of its contents, to dip into when provoked by sermons, news items or moral debates.

**Maureen CSF**